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THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY
VOLUME II
CHAPTER VIII: WELLESLEY IN
INDIA: DOMESTIC POLICIES
Wellesley's career in India consisted of more than plans for territorial expansion, battles with the court of directors, and negotiations with the board of control. He was virtually an unfettered master of his own vast domain. To him was granted an opportunity to attempt a program of social and economic reform and reconstruction in British India, if he dared to undertake it. To him was given the chance to govern in whatever style he chose, limited only by some delicacy in his treatment of his fellow British subjects. His advisors were men of his own choosing. In all this India was a forum for the relatively unfettered expression of his personality, and the ramifications were bound to be enormous. One cannot resist attempting to suggest what Wellesley might have done in Ireland had he been placed in a similar situation. What would the autocrat with a program of institutional reform, often along liberal lines, have done in his native land, without ministry and parliament to fetter him?

The diversity and durability of Wellesley's achievements in India is impressive. By virtue of his personality and his autocratic demeanor he set a tone for British government in India which would endure virtually to the end of the Raj. His inclination to centralise authority diminished the autonomy of the Madras and Bombay presidencies; eventually they would
disappear. He challenged the claims of the company to staff the most important administrative positions in Britain's Indian bureaucracy. The company's shipping and trading monopoly, already under pressure from outside interests, was further restricted as Wellesley put into effect some provisions of emerging free trade doctrines. He laboured to establish at Fort William in Calcutta a school for training civil servants. His effort here was largely compromised, but the concept of training for Indian service was thereupon incorporated into the company's school at Haileybury. Wellesley enjoys apparently irreconcilable reputations as a strong advocate of Anglicisation and a devotee of India's ancient indigenous literature and languages. He was genuinely interested in the amelioration of social inequities and he was suspicious of proselytism. He emphasised the role of Britain as trustee for India in suppressing what he considered were dangerously inflammatory elements in the press. Wellesley talked of raising India to a level of prosperity and tranquility which might presuppose eventual self government and independence, yet he thought that Britain must remain in India indefinitely, perhaps forever.

The rapid territorial expansion of British India under Wellesley, and his prolonged acrimonious battles with the company, have tended to obscure his achievements in other areas. Too
much has been attributed to the act of 1784. This legislation permitted the company to assume "the image of a responsible public corporation" and to encourage British observers to see in it a proper and effective device for marrying humanitarian responsibilities to the nation's imperial destiny. But in fact the act did not constitute a watershed. The company's involvement in the government of India had grown steadily if haphazardly throughout the eighteenth century, but before Wellesley there was no systematic desire to conquer and govern. Some observers have detected a "swing to the east" in British imperial affairs following the loss of the American colonies, with an emphasis on trade in place of dominion. If so, the shift was accomplished on the spot rather than as a result of calculations in London: Pitt was not extremely interested in the empire and his administrative reforms of 1794, which placed all imperial affairs in one department, actually intensified rather than reduced an element of chaos in the conduct of Indian affairs. As a result, imperial policies limped along the same "pragmatic conservative" lines which guided domestic affairs

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during the same period. As a result, Wellesley was very much the architect of the policies carried out during his administration.

No one has disputed the fact that Wellesley's style was a product of his own personality and his prejudices. As Curzon wrote one hundred years later, Wellesley's work reflected wisdom and imagination, but smacked of "self advertisement, . . . always operating . . . as a gracious dispensation from a benign Providence." Much of it was, moreover, a dispensation technically unconstitutional in the context of British law, and for this reason many historians have tended to condemn the results along with the methods. In 1806 Arthur Wellesley anticipated this problem in part by presenting his version of the Wellesley years, as one writer has put it, to show "the natural connection" of various measures, and to suggest that these achievements comprised "a series of graduated upheavals from chaos to cosmos" rather than intemperate and unconstitutional initiatives. The Duke's technique has been vindicated. It is not, as Roberts has observed recently, necessary to attach to

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any appreciation of Wellesley's achievements a "sweeping condemnation of the efforts of the court of directors to control him; Wellesley's work deserves to be judged without prejudice to that of others, and in doing so the problem of his highhandedness and illegalities will not overwhelm the larger point. 6

In this frame of mind we can proceed to an evaluation of Wellesley's most important achievements within the boundaries of India and to a study of his stewardship there, keeping in mind their impact upon him in later years as well as on India itself.

II: Subordinates and Disciples

Wellesley governed India as a monarch; he made no apologies for this and his reverence for the British constitution does not seem to have occasioned any qualms of conscience. Wellesley appreciated the sanctity of a division of government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. But in India he believed that these principles must be introduced only with a "variety of modifications." Of these the most important was the principle that India be governed effectively, and he could not see the day coming when the native inhabitants of


7Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley, to the Court of Directors, 9 July 1800, printed in Montgomery Martin, ed.,
India would be admitted to a share in the government of the country. Wellesley did not help pave the way for an independent India; he did, however, by virtue of the vigor of his administration, supply that element of cohesion fundamental to the survival of modern India.

Nothing is more impressive than the energy displayed by Wellesley in consolidating his power in India. In later years poorer health and an enervating sense of frustration would reduce these periods of high productivity to isolated instances. In India, however, he demonstrated a capacity to exact enormous work from his subordinates, to entrust them with heavy responsibilities when he decided to intervene in the affairs of remote principalities, and to support fully the decisions they made on his behalf. He tolerated no opposition in his efforts to reform the company's service, and, to the distress of Leadenhall street, he seems to have encountered almost no effective resistance, even from the supreme council. There was, at any rate, room for considerable improvement in the conduct of India's affairs. In July 1800 he informed London what these standards were. The empire was now a permanent trust, he observed, and a civil service "conformable to an

Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During his Administration in India (5 vols.; London: John Murray, 1836), I, 677.

Roberts, India, pp. 5-6.
extensive empire" was in order. The commercial basis long used to recruit company servants must be abandoned, and adventurers must give way to administrators systematically trained.

"In the civil service," he concluded, "we must now seek not the instruments by which kingdoms are overthrown, revolutions are accomplished, or wars conducted, but an inexhaustible supply of useful knowledge, cultivated talents, and well-ordered and disciplined morals." Few of the company's employees were qualified to serve the new empire. Wellesley's survey early in 1800 led him to pension off a considerable number of them without waiting for further instructions from London.

Indeed, it was a "lamentable fact," he told Dundas, "that I have not found two men in all India, whom I would trust to write a common despatch without accurate revision." Wellesley therefore proceeded to lay the basis for an entirely new tradition of service in India.

Even Wellesley's fiercest critics were forced to acknowledge the governor general's skill in recognising talent and

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9 Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 10 July 1800, Martin, Despatches, II, 339.

in establishing an ascendancy over even the most brilliant of his subordinates. John Stuart Mill conceded that "amid the talents for command which he possessed in a very unusual degree" none was greater than Wellesley's ability to identify potential in others. He instilled in these subordinates a "largeness of outlook" akin to the romantics' sense of being an instrument of history in raising up "a monument of glory in the eastern empire." In time Wellesley became more attached to these young men than to his own family. He trained them and gave them great powers, so that each could demonstrate the full range of his talent. He browbeat and stimulated them to perform in a superior fashion, and indeed goaded them to excel the master himself. Observers wondered from where came this "unprecedented amount of public probity, moral worth, intellectual eminence and military daring." In fact, to Wellesley is


14Martin, Despatches, IV, 205.
due enormous credit by virtue of his readiness to remove obstacles in their path and to demand from them a level of performance often far beyond what they themselves thought possible.\textsuperscript{15}

Several students of Indian history have attempted to capture the essence of Wellesley's relationship to his subordinates. All agree that Wellesley's system was founded strictly on merit.\textsuperscript{16} They celebrate his willingness to shoulder the blame if his subordinates in adhering scrupulously to Wellesley's directives found themselves in difficulty.\textsuperscript{17} Beyond this, however, Wellesley succeeded above all other viceroys in infusing an "awareness of the historical importance of their work" into his relationship with his assistants.\textsuperscript{18} This relationship, as Butler observes in an acute analysis, "had an emotional quality not to be interpreted physically but intellectually."\textsuperscript{19}

These disciples became Wellesley's admirers if not always his friends.\textsuperscript{20} Herein lay a dangerous and perhaps fatal weakness.\textsuperscript{21} Wellesley consistently identified his conduct with

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{16}John Malcolm, Sketch of the Political History of India from 1784 to 1823 (2 vols.; London: J. Murray, 1826), I, 331-32.

\textsuperscript{17}Wellesley to General Gerard Lake, 11 September 1804, cited in Malleson, Wellesley, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{18}Stokes, Utilitarians, pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{19}Butler, Eldest, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{20}Roberts, India, p. 9; See Malcolm, Political History, I, 331-32.

\textsuperscript{21}V. B. Kulkarni, British Statesmen in India (Bombay:.
the public good; the two were indistinguishable. It led to terrible tantrums when his commands were altered in the slightest degree. It encouraged a rigidity of policy because to change plans was to admit an error on Wellesley's part. Wellesley was feared, and, as Arthur Wellesley lamented on one occasion, no one around the viceroy dared to oppose his sentiments when he was wrong.

Who ranked among the brightest of these subordinates? Arthur excepted, the honour most go first to John Malcolm. Malcolm was born in 1769 and entered the company's service in 1782. Wellesley was immediately impressed by him, and sent him as envoy to Persia from 1799 to 1801. On his return from that mission Malcolm became private secretary to the governor-general. He was political agent to Wellesley during the Maratha wars and in this capacity wielded enormous power. In many respects he reproduced Wellesley's temperament: a capacity for enormous labour interrupted from time to time by bouts of melancholy; a sense of the grandeur of history and his role in it. For a busy man Malcolm's literary achievements were remarkable: his History of Persia (still regarded as a standard reference work), the Political History of India, and several other extended

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23 Martin, Despatches, I, 524.

24 Ibid., I, 316.
works are still read by students of history and politics in South Asia. His influence on Wellesley was a wholesome one, for he restrained him from some of his bolder and least practical exploits. His special relationship to Wellesley will be noted later.  

If Malcolm displayed an impressive combination of administrative and intellectual achievements, Mountstuart Elphinstone was a scholar-statesman par excellence. He went to India in 1796, only a year before Wellesley himself. He served with distinction during the Mysore and Maratha campaigns, and wrote verse in his spare moments. He was Wellesley's representative at Nagpur in 1804, ambassador to Afghanistan in 1808, and resident at Poonah from 1810 to 1819. His diverse interests were reflected in some of his diary entries: "I breakfasted with Kennedy and talked about Hafiz, Saadi, Horace and Anacreon," he noted on once occasion. "At nine I left him and went to the trenches." Like Malcolm, he suffered bouts of melancholy, but survived them to become a successful governor of Bombay. Subsequently he declined the honour of being governor general and refused an invitation to undertake a special mission to Canada. He

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finally retired to write his own history of India. 26

In some respects Elphinstone represented the apotheosis of the romantic tradition as it was translated to India from the Lake District and Byron's writings. He rode in the hunt, lived on occasion in the villages, and enjoyed the native dances and festivals. His enthusiasm and youth delighted and astounded Wellesley, who probably remained unaware of Elphinstone's discreet display of disrespect towards "Old Villainy" in his private correspondence. As a younger son of an ancient Scottish baronial family Elphinstone looked with a certain sense of detachment on Wellesley's Anglo-Irish pomp. For all this, he enormously admired Wellesley and all his works. With his death in 1859 the last of Wellesley's protégés passed away. 27

Wellesley's blessings rarely extended to members of the company's service, especially to its veterans. 28 But there were


27 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 42.

28 Mornington to Dundas, 25 January 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 217.
exceptions, such as Barlow. "I never met with a man of more worth in any part of the world," he told Dundas shortly after arriving in India.29 Perhaps the man most closely identified with the company and yet palatable to Wellesley was Charles Theophilus Metcalfe. Metcalfe was born in Calcutta in 1785. His father was a major in the Bengal army who became a director of the East India company when Wellesley went to India. The younger Metcalfe returned to Calcutta in January 1801 and became the first student admitted to Fort William college. Thereafter his advancement was rapid and was intimately identified with Wellesley. In April 1803 he succeeded Malcolm as secretary to the governor general, and for the next thirty-five years he held virtually every position of responsibility available on the subcontinent. In 1836 he reached the post of governor general itself, and later still was governor of Jamaica and of Canada. His honesty and common sense recommended him to everyone but the court of directors of the East India company, who opposed many of his policies. Metcalfe and Wellesley communicated regularly for almost forty years, and they exchanged complaints about their treatment at the hands of the honourable company.30

29 Ibid., 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 73.

One other official of the company whom Wellesley claimed to have rescued from undeserved obscurity was Thomas Munro. Munro can hardly be labelled a disciple of Wellesley; he was only one year his junior and arrived in India almost twenty years earlier. From the first he advocated rapid territorial expansion as a necessary means to dislodge the French and to protect the company's stake in India. He identified himself with Mysore, and after serving with distinction during the march to Seringapatam was selected along with Malcolm and Arthur Wellesley to superintend the affairs of the late Sultan's dominions. His integrity and sympathy for the principle of peasant proprietorship made him extraordinarily popular in South India and he capped his Indian service with a decade as governor of Madras.31

Many lesser lights filled up the ranks of Wellesley's band. Thomas Sydenham and his brother Benjamin remained closely associated with Wellesley after India. They were sons of Major-General Sydenham of the Madras presidency's army and served in the Mysore campaign. In India both of them formed part of Wellesley's staff, although one or other of the brothers returned to England when Addington was still in office. Little is known about their place in Wellesley's

life. Irish Butler claims that Benjamin exerted considerable influence over Wellesley, especially after Hyacinthe abandoned Apsley house in 1810. She claims that Wellesley permitted the Sydenhams "to take major decisions and mix in matters beyond their scope." In this she may be correct, although there is no trace of it in India. Benjamin's major contribution in India seems to have been making one James Paull angry, and Paull would get his revenge on Wellesley. 32

On the edge of Wellesley's circle of friends and colleagues was Jonathan Duncan, governor of Bombay. Duncan shared Wellesley's point of view about the desirability of British ascendancy in India, but Wellesley was skeptical of his abilities. Unlike the Madras presidency, Bombay retained considerable autonomy because it lacked the territorial commitment of Madras and Bengal and because Duncan's strict rule eliminated all trace of scandal. Wellesley apparently never visited Bombay. 33

Others among Wellesley's Indian colleagues are but half-remembered in the passage of time, and yet many of them made their mark on Wellesley's career, as Wellesley made his imprint


33 Mornington to Dundas, 28 February 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 39; DNB,
on them. It is an attractive feature of Wellesley's voluminous correspondence that he complained almost as much about London's neglect of the accomplishments of his subordinates as of his own. "If it is to be understood," he thundered towards the end of his tenure as viceroy, "that brilliant deeds achieved in India cannot cast their rays as far as St. James', public spirit, honourable ambition, bold enterprise, and labourious perseverance will vanish from the British empire. Wellesley's complaints reflected his own special interest in a certain number of his subordinates who met his own demanding standards. This should be remembered as one reads the many long paragraphs in which he condemns and demeans the talents and accomplishments of those whom he could not commend.

The two most important characters on the Indian scene during the Wellesley years have already been introduced. They deserve further study, for their influence on Wellesley, and his on them, transcended the Indian years. For many decades Wellington hagiography accepted as almost axiomatic the idea that Wellesley owed most of his military and political triumphs in

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34 Butler, Eldest, p. 548.

35 Stokes, Utilitarians, p. 13; Roberts, India, p. 76.

India to Arthur. This is no longer entertained seriously. It is quite clear that Wellesley drew up the outline for each military initiative and at times supplied even minute details. Arthur's role as confidential advisor in a non-military capacity has also sometimes been exaggerated. In his introduction to Wellington's Indian despatches Owen celebrates Arthur's role as a "confidential advisor, a diplomatic mediator, a skillful organiser and director of forces that were to be wielded by others." This is correct. It is more debatable however that "his information and his counsels enabled the governor general to shape his early course with a precision, a confidence, and an adaptation to the circumstances of the case, which would otherwise have been almost incompatible with his recent arrival in the country." We have seen already that the new viceroy was in fact well prepared before he left England, and his conversations with Kirkpatrick produced very detailed proposals for handling the danger in Hyderabad and Mysore. The younger brother's role has perhaps been described most convincingly by Roberts. Although conceding that it is difficult to measure Arthur's contribution to the formulation and execution of Wellesley's policies, Roberts believes that the combination of the Marquess' "soaring imagination and compre-

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37 Owen, Wellington, p. ix.
hensive grasp in the realm of political idealism, and the younger brother's magnificent common sense" forged a "superbly efficient instrument for the task of governing men."38

In Mysore Wellesley introduced Arthur to his first substantial non-military responsibilities. Here Arthur also made his debut as an officer "among scenes where he was destined to attain the most brilliant reputation" as a soldier, and this has tended to obscure his special services in the Madras presidency.39 Wellesley assigned him to Madras in late 1798 to assist the new governor, Clive, and to cope with opposition in the Madras bureaucracy to Wellesley's plan to subdue Tipu Sultan. Arthur was entirely successful in cultivating in Clive a commitment to support Calcutta and in isolating the malcontents.40 In May 1799 Arthur was appointed governor of the conquered territories in Mysore and six months later was entrusted with the command of the army. In this capacity he destroyed a large army of freebooters and established the Mysore administration on a permanent basis.41

38 Roberts, India, p. 2.


41 DNB, XX, 1083-84.
loudly proclaimed that he had not met a man so qualified in all respects, and recommended him to London for promotion to major general. 42 Dundas agreed in principle. Wellesley's solicitude towards his brother generated criticism in India and in Britain. Wellesley loudly denounced all these critics, and declared that talent should not go unrewarded simply because it surfaced in his brother. He was vindicated.

Arthur's enormous reservoir of common sense benefitted his elder brother. He took the lead in urging Richard to resist the offer of a share in the prize money from Seringapatam, warning him that acceptance would deprive him of any happiness in India in the future. 43 He urged restraint in undertaking new campaigns; in Mysore his advice was ignored but elsewhere Wellesley sometimes saw wisdom in it. 44 Arthur supported Wellesley's efforts to justify territorial annexation in order to sustain adequate armies, and in doing so saved Wellesley from an early condemnation by the court of directors. 45

42 Mornington to Dundas, 31 July 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 172; Anon., "Wellesley," p. 411; Mornington to Dundas, 26 November 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 112.


45 Owen, Wellington, p. xxxviii.
After Seringapatam relations between Arthur and the Marquess were not always smooth. When Wellesley tried to repair the damage done to Baird in giving Arthur command in Mysore by placing Baird at the head of the April 1801 expedition to the Red Sea, Arthur exploded. He complained violently that giving the command to Baird after he, Arthur, had outfitted the expedition at Wellesley's command was an intolerable affront. Arthur's anger soon subsided, but few pieces of correspondence addressed to Calcutta during that viceroyalty were sharper in tone. The war with Holkar brought them close to an open break. Arthur complained that his brothers's policies had grown impractical, and that he himself had become too impervious to advice and much too easily self-convinced. But Arthur remained loyal; he was indeed the foremost of the viceroy's talented servants, and at no time could he condemn a policy which had metamorphosised India in so short a time. Far from blaming his brother, Arthur returned to England in 1805 prepared to defend Richard's record against the company with all resources at his disposal.

Wellesley's relationship to Malcolm is perhaps more interesting because intimacy was not reinforced by family ties.

47 Owen, Wellington, p. lxv.
Malcolm identified himself with Wellesley more completely than any other man, and towards him Wellesley was both a stern lord and an affection surrogate father. They shared dreams of British supremacy in India. Malcolm's boyishness undoubtedly compensated for the absence of Wellesley's own sons, and the young man's devotion so moved Wellesley that when once he failed to follow instructions in negotiations with a Maratha chief Wellesley reacted more in sorrow and disappointment than in anger.

Malcolm's official biographer assures us that the young John Malcolm "had been longing for the advent of a governor general of vigor and determination, not weighed down by a sense of the responsibility of his position." When he met the new viceroy at Madras in the spring of 1798, Malcolm was only twenty-eight. He was the son of a Scots border farmer, one of the very type which populated the bureaucracies of the empire. He had first come to India at age fifteen, fallen ill, and returned to England. He came out again in 1796. He possessed a marvelous facility for languages and a mind which like Wellesley's forgot little. At Madras he talked briefly to Wellesley and submitted some observations on the state of India.

49 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 43.
Apparently Wellesley was immediately impressed, and when Malcolm subsequently applied for the post of assistant resident at Hyderabad Wellesley approved it at once. In September Wellesley summoned him to Calcutta to inform him "of circumstances relative to the political system of India which it is proper you should learn." Wellesley referred to his still maturing designs on Mysore, and his plan for the expulsion of the Nizam's French contingents. From that point on Malcolm was a Wellesley intimate.

Wellesley knew little about Malcolm when he summoned him to Calcutta. To Dundas he wrote that he seemed to be a "very promising young man." His lack of familiarity with Malcolm was soon enough rectified, for Wellesley's "household" at the time consisted only of Elphinstone, Henry Wellesley, and Kirkpatrick. Malcolm was soon recognised as the governor general's most intimate advisor: "Lord Wellesley's factotum, and the greatest man in Calcutta," as one jealous observer put it.

51 Mornington to Dundas, 11 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 100.
52 Woodruff, Founders, p. 206.
53 Kaye, Malcolm, I, 177.
more equanimity than usual; in 1804 Arthur lamented that when Malcolm was away on a mission to the Marathas there was nobody near the Marquess "with capacity to ... oppose his sentiments when he is wrong."

Malcolm's mission to Persia marked the ascendency of this "political" servant in Indian affairs. Subsequently he negotiated the treaty of 1804 which reduced Scindia to the status of a dignified company client. A misunderstanding about the disposition of the small fortress of Gwalior produced the most detailed evidence in Wellesley's India of the Marquess' behaviour when challenged on an issue where his considered opinion had assumed the nature of an eternal verity. One is reminded of Wellesley's later relationship with Perceval. In this case, Malcolm conceded jurisdiction over a fortress west of Delhi to the defeated Maratha chief Scindia. Wellesley replied opposing the concession. Malcolm apologised, and declared that he misunderstood Wellesley's directives. But he also proceeded to criticise Wellesley's position, being encouraged to do so by Arthur. Wellesley at first sent a letter sharply rebuking Malcolm, written in Meyrick Shawe's hand. But the viceroy's anger and disappointment was apparently not easily

54 Owen, Wellington, pp. lxiii-lxv.

molified. He reviewed all Malcolm's correspondence, and finally exploded with the following letter to poor Malcolm: "Although Lord Wellesley is excessively angry at your conduct, every admonishment which he has found it necessary to make upon it cost him pain." Then he turned bitter in the fashion which characterised his relationship to Grenville when in 1806 the prime minister proved unable to force Fox to oppose Pulte's impeachment proceedings against Wellesley; "your having shown a great disposition to admit the justice of Scindia's claim to Gwalior . . . is likely . . . to give his enemies in Leadenhall street room to found an accusation against Lord Wellesley of injustice and rapacity. . . ."

Malcolm was angry that Shawe had shown Wellesley his private correspondence on this point, and was "brokenhearted" by Wellesley's letter. He refused to retract his opinions, however. Arthur sided with Malcolm and labelled his brother's conduct "quite shocking." But Wellesley had sorrowed enough, and he wrote in his own hand a fifteen hundred word letter explaining his censure and extending forgiveness. It was Wellesley in his most magnificent if somewhat contradictory

56 Kaye, Malcolm, I, 271-75.
posture, scolding and forgiving his favourite simultaneously. He had objected to Malcolm's "more zealous desire to reduce my judgement to your opinion, than to examine carefully the real objects and foundation of my instructions." Freedom of discussion was necessary and proper in its place, "but it can never be a duty to circumvent or to influence the deliberate judgement of those who are responsible to their country for the discharge of high functions of state." The matter was closed. But henceforth there must be no discussion of Wellesley's policies except in letters addressed to him or in conversations in his presence: "you are aware of my aversion to every description of attack upon my judgement excepting fair, distinct, and direct argument." But now "the vexation and distress which I have suffered (and never have I suffered more), have been entirely removed. . . . I have dismissed all trace of my suffering from my mind."

This monumental language moves the observer to wonder how anyone could feel affection for its author. But Malcolm did; there must indeed have been a "real warmth that glowed behind the pompous mask." Malcolm remained completely loyal, and testified over a course of forty years that no master


61 Woodruff, Founders, p. 209.
Malcolm paid dearly for his loyalty, for he was identified by the company and the government "with the magnificence of his master, with his extravagance, his disregard for his employers, his large ideas of empire." Malcolm's own notes suggest, however, that the price was not too high. Perhaps he would have concurred in the judgement on Wellesley rendered by that other distinguished disciple, Thomas Metcalfe:

I have a right to attribute all of good that has since happened to me to the countenance and favour with which you distinguished me at that early period. My public principles were learned in your school, preeminently the school of honour, zeal, public spirit, and patriotism, and to my address to the principles there acquired I venture to ascribe all the success that has attended me.

III. Consolidation of Power in Calcutta

The mainspring of Wellesley's Indian policy was centralised control; he announced the necessity of having "one government, through every part and ramification of which his authority was practically and constantly to pervade." He trained his subordinates to execute rather than to formulate policies, and

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62 Ibid.

63 Thomas Metcalfe to Wellesley, 23 December 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 198.

64 Martin, Wellesley, I, 528; Board of Control to the Court of Directors, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, f. 34.
he was horrified, as the incident with Malcolm suggests, when opposition raised its head. He pursued his policy of centralisation on several levels: by asserting his authority over the Madras and Bombay presidencies; by reducing the prerogatives of his council; by demanding complete control over the military; and by claiming the final word in patronage matters.

Shortly after Wellesley reached India he prepared for the edification of the court of directors a plan to consolidate and to reform the administrative responsibilities of the East India company. He recommended that the three presidencies be replaced by two councils, headed by the governor general and two vice presidents. London would appoint these. The governor general would always be a peer of Great Britain and would enjoy full authority over the distribution of patronage and the army and navy. The supreme court's power to oppose the governor general would be reduced, but the courts would be made more independent of the company in its normal functions. This interesting memorandum constituted a blueprint for Wellesley's initiatives during the next six years. In part these proposals reflected efforts by Cornwallis and Warren Hastings before him to establish a "single despotic authority to whom people

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65 Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 1799, India Record Office, Home Miscellaneous MSS 461, ff. 729-52.
could look for the redress of all their grievances." But Cornwallis and Hastings had referred only to devices for the collection of revenue; Wellesley wanted it extended to every facet of government. There was an element of "Whiggishness" in all this, despite the invitation to despotism: the courts would enjoy expanded powers to protect the common citizen; the government would reduce its interference in local affairs; and local magistrates drawn from the landed classes would maintain law and order. The keynote was paternalism and efficiency, not democracy in any form. Wellesley was determined to effect these changes before he quit India.

The question of patronage may be addressed first. Wellesley sailed for India proclaiming his steadfast support for recognition of ability. This was a brave statement. Dundas in London had developed an intense dislike for Hobart in part because Hobart blocked Dundas' patronage schemes in the Madras presidency. Members of the court of directors


expected to be gratified in their wishes for offices for relatives and friends. Because no standards were applied to nominations for overseas posts in the company, it was difficult to enforce appointment and promotion on the basis of merit. One of Wellesley's most important contributions in India was his success in raising the calibre of the company's employees in India. He did this by establishing standards high enough to make impossible an indiscriminate nomination of incumbents from London, by insisting on language training where appropriate, and by reorganising the company's bureaucracy so as to attack special functions to each office. He also declared his complete independence of the company in patronage matters, insisting among other things that the court of directors "not be permitted to interfere, by direct appointments from home, in the local executive administration of any of the presidencies."69

The Prince of Wales, long an active channel for incompetent favourites to tap India's patronage potential, "seems to have hesitated to air his fine moral taste by favouring Wellesley, as he had favoured Cornwallis, with insidious petitions on behalf of his hangers-on, wrapped up in unctious compliments."70


70 Owen, Wellington, p. lxxv.
India benefitted from Wellesley's determination to control all patronage.

The reforms were quickly felt in Calcutta. At the time of Wellesley's arrival in India the business of the governorship was divided into four branches: political; commercial; revenue and judicial; and military. Each was headed by a poorly paid assistant secretary, who in turn was responsible to a secretary, also inadequately paid. Because salaries were low incumbents were often grossly incompetent. The assistant secretaries proved incapable of settling even minor questions, which then ascended to the secretary and often to the governor general himself. Wellesley elevated the stature of the office of secretary by attaching to it a handsome salary, eliminating the burden of details, and styling it the office of the chief secretary. Subordinate secretaryships were likewise given larger salaries and were granted complete authority over their departments. New departments were added: Oudh under Henry Wellesley, expanded and restyled the "department of ceded provinces" and in 1803 "ceded and conquered provinces" in 1804; a separate Persian branch, which became a secretariat in 1806. The impact was


72 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
soon felt. Employee turnover declined sharply. Staffs increased in size and the pace quickened. Loyalty to Wellesley rose sharply. Wellesley taxed the resources of his enlarged bureaucracy by dictating long despatches and by demanding volumes of detailed information. He reported home on one occasion that he had succeeded in assembling in his secretariat men who combined "the industry of clerks with the talents of statesmen." Handed down to us is the anecdote of Wellesley driving his subordinates to prepare new despatches, and encouraging them with the word that supper was cooking and champagne was chilling; when work was finished they were to drink and revel as if in their own houses.

Wellesley's attention to detail when a great campaign was underway contrasts sharply with his defects as a man of routine. Although he raised his staff to new levels of competence, his steadfast refusal to address himself to matters of routine meant that months passed while company despatches remained unanswered. This should have bothered his staff more than perhaps it did, but Wellesley's recruits were more than simply bureaucrats: many of them made their mark in the literature of the period, or formulated ideas on the subject of Britain's role in the east which soon made them impatient with

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73 Roberts, India, p. 13.
74 Ibid., p. 279.
the cautious policies of Leadenhall street. Evenings spent discussing "Hafiz, Saadi, Horace, and Anacreon" should perhaps have been devoted to transcribing missives for London.

Wellesley's patronage and administrative reforms extended to the judiciary and to the supreme council. Here interests were deeply entrenched and London attempted to protect its appointees. Wellesley's assault, therefore, was a forceful one. Soon after reaching Calcutta in 1798 he submitted to Dundas a report of gross mismanagement of patronage by the council and the profligacy of various incumbents. He preferred to dispense with it than to recruit new members from London, and he declared to Dundas that he would brook no opposition from the company's employees. He concluded by reporting happily that "without one harsh word" he had reduced the pretensions of the council "to a nullity."

All this came as a shock to Dundas. More shocks soon followed. When Dundas refused to support Wellesley's decision to reduce the council to a cypher, Wellesley simply ignored it. He withheld Clive's reports on the Carnatic and permitted

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76 Stokes, Utilitarians, p. 11.

77 Mornington to Dundas, I, 10 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 68-70.
the governors of Madras and Bombay to prepare correspondence without the concurrence of their councils. Later he ratified the treaty with the Nawab of Oudh on his own authority and adopted the strategem of submitting political correspondence to the council only when it ceased to be relevant. Dundas in some alarm reminded Wellesley that his task in India was to preserve and not to destroy the company's prerogatives and that the system employed by Wellesley would permit a bad governor general to do as much mischief as a good one to effect improvements. By the time these letters reached Calcutta Wellesley had reduced the council to the level, as he observed somewhat maliciously, of the privy council in Ireland. Soon, he forecast, the council would serve only as a "court of registry" and would be deprived of corporate character.

Wellesley's highhanded initiatives eventually became part of the court of directors' charges against him. The court employed some strong language, and there is no doubt that the

78 Wellesley to Dundas, 25 March 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37275, ff. 25b-26a.
79 Misra, East India, p. 45.
80 Dundas to the Court of Directors, 2 April 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37275, f. 28a.; Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37275, ff. 207a-b.
81 Misra, East India, p. 44.
company was on solid ground in so doing. It was not merely that Wellesley's conduct was offensive and disrespectful. The council had been established by an act of parliament, and were Wellesley's "wanton disobedience of orders so sanctioned," it "might lead to consequences in our Indian empire the magnitude of which we cannot contemplate," the court believed, "without experiencing a considerable degree of emotion." 82

Wellesley's conduct was indeed illegal. Roberts has suggested that Wellesley's relations with the council were "so cordial and close" as to encourage him to take their consent for granted; this hardly suffices as an explanation. By the amending act of 1786 Wellesley was permitted to dispense with the advice and consent of the council in an emergency, as Dundas noted, but only in an emergency. 83 When in Madras and Bombay he was obliged to act in concert with the councils there. In fact, however, he simply gradually ceased to use any of them. He attended his own council only one-fourth of the time; his predecessors had rarely missed a meeting. Well might the court of directors declare that the governor-general "has not the right to assume to himself even in appearance the whole

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82 Court of Directors to the Board of Control, India Office Library, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 70-71.

83 Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37275, ff. 206b-207a.
power of the government to the depression of the character of the council: neither had the council any more right to abandon in appearance their part of the government."84

Wellesley's audacious response to this type of criticism was that the law must be changed to sanction his own reluctance to consult the council or to attend its sessions. "Great inconvenience arises from no provision being made in the act of parliament for sittings in council without the actual presence of the governor or governor-general," he wrote to Dundas in 1799. "If the governor happens to be indisposed or occupied by business of a more urgent nature, the current affairs of the government must be stopped until he is able to be personally present in council."85 This attitude of course the court could not tolerate, and eventually the court of directors conceded in full the need to discipline Wellesley on this point. The court's draft despatch of 1805, approved by the board of control, observed with a ring of finality in its pronunciation that Wellesley apparently

had considered his council as a body to whom he might resort for advice, or not, at his discretion. It is impossible to maintain such a proposition, nor can the constitutional principle be satisfied by any other description of

84 Wellesley to the Court of Directors, cited in Roberts, India, p. 274.

85 Mornington to Dundas, 1799, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 481, ff. 729-51.
communication with those who are joined with him in the
government than the established deliberation which shall
record the opinions and determination of the respective
members of council. ... We are decidedly of the opinion
that in conducting the affairs of an extended empire,
remote from the seat of government at home, power is best
checked and controlled by the measures being brought into
discussion before they are carried into execution, and
that a discretion unqualified, even by the power of
remonstrance, cannot with safety be entrusted to a single
individual. 86

The court's observations were far from hypothetical.
Wellesley not only reduced the council to a nullity, but
also bestowed enormous powers on his personal representatives.
This point further enraged the court and the company's legal
staff was directed to confirm this additional defiance of
the law. In London eminent lawyers encountered no problems
in amassing precedents to support their contention that "in
point of law no high act of state, especially regarding foreign
princes or communities, could properly be done by the governor-
general himself, except in council; far less could he clothe
another with discretionary powers to bind his employers or
his sovereign, with powers which he did not himself possess. 87
This pronouncement persuaded Arthur Wellesley that his brother
had damaged his reputation perhaps irreparably and injured that

86 Board of Control to Wellesley, 1805, India Office Records,
Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, f. 569.

87 Carver MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest Brother, p. 343.
of his various subordinates as well. But the Marquess was not to be bothered.

Wellesley also attacked the prerogatives of the council from another direction; here history has been more appreciative of his objectives. Since 1772 the company's highest judicial tribunal in India had been the governor-general and council sitting as the supreme court of judicature. Cornwallis had advocated vigorously the Whig doctrine of separation of judicial and executive powers but was unable to implement it except at the lowest levels. The company was suspicious of any body over which it could not exercise immediate legal control; it was eager enough to discourage corruption among its servants in India but it feared that an independent judiciary might carry this principle too far.

One of Wellesley's first recommendations to Dundas after reaching Calcutta was to implement Cornwallis' scheme. Wellesley was probably prompted to do this after enduring several meetings of the court in the pre-monsoon heat of May 1798, and he complained to Dundas that it was urgent that judicial matters be placed "in hands less embarrassed with labour." By the following October Wellesley's recommendations had become more detailed and he was poised to implement them. He wrote to Dundas recommending that additional judges be appointed

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88 Mornington to Dundas, 23 June 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 52.
to handle the increased burden of work. Their salaries were to be supplied by abolishing some useless offices. New courts were also needed, but details were not supplied. In characteristic fashion Wellesley declared his intention to proceed on the assumption that he had the power to make the recommended changes unilaterally; if not, he hoped that Dundas would persuade parliament to change the law. 89

Dundas saw no difficulty in expanding the number of judges. He was probably alarmed more by Wellesley's intemperate assault on some of those already on the bench. One whom Wellesley disliked intensely was Sir Henry Russel, who became a judge on the supreme court of Bengal the same year that Wellesley arrived in India. Wellesley wrote to Dundas wondering how he had been selected: "he is a vulgar, ill-bred, violent and arrogant brute; he gives universal disgust. I hope you will never allow him to be chief justice." 90 In fact it is quite clear that Wellesley's displeasure was prompted by some brave if futile efforts on Russel's part to oppose his overbearing viceroy. The company eventually rewarded their lonely ally in India; Russel was appointed chief justice in 1807 and

89Ibid., 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 78-79.

90Ibid., 25 January 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 217.
served until 1813.

Others were quickly brought into line. In some cases, genuine friendship followed. Sir William Borroughs, advocate general in Bengal since the days of Cornwallis, later served in parliament as M.P. for Enniskillen and on the supreme court in India. He was regarded as a member of Wellesley's lonely parliamentary group after 1816. Sir John Anstruther, chief justice in Bengal during Wellesley's entire tenure, was also a close friend. Dundas was "remarkably fortunate" to have appointed Anstruther, wrote Wellesley in 1798; Wellesley derived "great benefit from his friendly, able and honest advice." Upon returning to Britain in 1806 Grenville made Anstruther a privy councillor, probably in deference to Wellesley's wishes. Grenville contemplated placing him on the board of control just before the ministry was overthrown. In late 1809 Wellesley invited him to join the new ministry, but he refused; this marked his separation from Wellesley and his adherence to Grenville. He died two years later.

91 Arthur Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962ff.), VI, 233; also see Castlereagh to the King, December 1805, Aspinall, Later Correspondence, IV, 371.

92 Mornington to Dundas, 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 86.

wayward officials. Beyond this, Dundas continued, the judiciary must retain some area of discretion in its dealings with the viceroy. 95

The prospect of Wellesley extending his powers at the expense of the judiciary in India was more than the court could swallow, and as a result it determined to postpone all reforms until a later and perhaps safer occasion. 96 As soon as Wellesley departed India, his plans for the creation of new puisne courts were implemented, and the principle of judicial independence at all levels was vindicated. Wellesley would have accomplished more had his relationship with the court of directors been less acrimonious.

IV: Relations with the Madras and Bombay Presidencies

Whether sanctioned by the court of directors or not, Wellesley's authority at Calcutta was supreme by 1800. New fields awaited his conquest, and Wellesley was determined to concentrate in his own hands a superintending authority over Britain’s possessions at Bombay and Madras, and over the company’s allies and dependents in all parts of the peninsula. Wellesley’s

95 Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 289-92.

celebrated struggles with Britain's outpost at Madras may be addressed first. Until the reforms of the early 1780s Madras and Bombay were virtually independent of Calcutta. Relations among the three of them were similar in some respects to those of friendly sovereign powers. The supremacy of Bengal was formally acknowledged in 1784, but in fact neither Madras nor Bombay was subjected immediately to close supervision from the banks of the Hoogly. Cornwallis complained that in order to insure that his orders were enforced he had to proceed to Madras in person. If Wellesley was not already determined to deflate Madras' pretensions before he reached India he certainly lost no time in coming to this conclusion when he arrived. There were several reasons why he should choose to do so. Hobart had already been recalled and his replacement, Lord Clive, had not yet arrived. Secondly, Wellesley had determined that his first order of business would be the removal of the Nizam's French contingents at Hyderabad and the subjugation of Tipu Sultan. Madras was the base of operations for both endeavours. Finally Wellesley was, or at least pretended to be, appalled at the state of morale and the

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quality of service among company personnel at the Madras presidency. This was salted by demonstrations of opposition to the new governor-general, and it persuaded him to undertake a series of reforms which would, among other effects, increase his power.

On his first brief visit to Madras enroute to Calcutta Wellesley seems to have been too overwhelmed by the spectacle of India to deliver too many censures. He marvelled at the black naked natives who pulled the boat ashore and even complimented Dundas on the state of the army. His subsequent sojourn at Calcutta prior to returning to Madras for the Seringapatam campaign gave him time to develop opinions congenial to his new plans. He claimed to have read at Calcutta a series of insolent letters from Madras addressed to Shore, and at length attributed to one Josiah Webbe of the Madras staff the principal credit for writing them.99 As will be seen Webbe was to move from the edge of expulsion from India to being one of Wellesley's closest associates, but in 1798 and 1799 Wellesley reserved for him some of his most violent language.

Webbe could take comfort in noting that he was only one

99Mornington to Dundas, 6 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 87.
of Wellesley's targets. There were the junior civil servants, "idle, dissipated and extravagant." The old were simply ignorant and stupid. The proximity of the Nawab of Arcot and his insatiable demand for loans has already been adverted to. Wellesley was upset to discover that many of the most talented civil servants were turning to private business, and many were corrupt. The new governor, Clive, was also the object of a campaign on Wellesley's part in which ulterior motives were so obvious that it finally injured the viceroy's reputation. Wellesley met Clive in October 1799 at Madras. Clive immediately promised not to act unless upon a direct order from Wellesley. But Wellesley wrote to Dundas reporting that Clive "was not equal to his situation, either in point of talents, or in knowledge." His intentions were "so pure," and he was so cordial, however, that he would be a "useful support" were he not under Webbe's influence.

Dundas was probably relieved to hear that Arthur took a

100 Ibid., 31 July 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 170.

101 Mornington to Dundas, 5 March 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 245.

102 Wellesley to Dundas, 29 April 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37275, f. 58b.

103 Mornington to Dundas, 12 November 1798, 6 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 104, 89.
different view; his "heavy understanding" made him appear more dully than he was. Wellesley himself could not decide whether Clive's apparent docility and friendship would not make him a convenient subaltern in India or a source of trouble in the south. During the winter of 1798-99 Wellesley's ambivalence continued, and his letters to Dundas were almost schizophrenic in their reference to Clive. By January 1799 Clive was demonstrating more efficiency than Wellesley had expected; he had become a "very sensible and discreet person." 104 In April Wellesley told Dundas that he could not speak highly enough of Clive's temper and honour and was apparently prepared to address the question whether he would make a good governor-general. 105 At the end of the same month he was prepared to suggest that Clive take his place ad interim in the event that he, Wellesley, resigned his office at the end of the year. 106 In May Clive made a less favourable impression. Clive was "susceptible to friendship" by which Wellesley meant that he was not immune to his subordinates' blandishments. He

104 Ibid., 12 January 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 119-20.

105 Ibid., 21 April 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 144.

106 Wellesley to Dundas, 29 April 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 261-62. This is apparently the first despatch in which the new title is used. A private letter written earlier the same day is signed "Mornington."
was totally ignorant in business, and his comprehension was "nearly the slowest and most perplexed" Wellesley had ever encountered. Wellesley therefore recommended that North, the governor of Ceylon, be transferred to Madras at some future date and be designated Wellesley's immediate successor should he return to England. At the end of July the tone was sharper; Wellesley's capacity for character assassination had been polished. Clive was by now "totally deficient in firmness and vigor of mind," and he had an "extraordinary love for money." He urged Dundas to find "some handsome retreat for him from this government," a red or bluish ribbon and a step in the peerage.

These letters reached Dundas in early October 1799. He was "truly embarrassed beyond expression" and saw no way to recall Clive to England unless a substantive reason could be adduced. Dundas need not have worried and perhaps he did not, for the court of directors was more than willing to have Clive replaced. They were enormously angered that Clive would

107 Mornington to Dundas, 16 May 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 151-53.

108 Ibid., 31 July 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 167-68.

109 Dundas to Mornington, 16 October 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 196-97.
subordinate himself to Wellesley, and agree to his plans for extinguishing the remnants of independence which Madras and Bombay still enjoyed. It was sufficient to float the rumor that Hobart might be sent back to India, first to Madras and then to Calcutta, to elicit from Wellesley high praise of the lovable but allegedly incompetent Clive, "of whose integrity, honour, and correct principles of Indian government" Wellesley by October 1800 "entertained the highest opinion." By virtue of Wellesley's continued recommendations Clive remained at Madras until January 1803, when Wellesley took possession of the post pending the arrival of his successor William Bentinck. It was not an elevating chapter in Wellesley's conduct in India.

Is there a convincing explanation for the shifts in Wellesley's behaviour? None has hitherto been advanced, and it is difficult to believe that the changes reflected bouts of indigestion or ill-health. It is possible that Wellesley was extremely upset at the prospect of Clive proving incapable

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110 Misra, East India, p. 47; Mornington to Dundas, 7 June 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 161-62.
111 Wellesley to Dundas, 4 October 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 303.
112 Ingram, Two Views, p. 12.
of managing the additional territories which come in the wake of the victory of Mysore. It may also have been related to the animus displayed toward him by the company's servants at Madras. If so, Arthur Wellesley played an important role in assisting Clive and in quelling opposition in the lower ranks. 113

But in fact criticism of Clive sharpened subsequent to all this. The key to Wellesley's behaviour may lie in the correspondence which passed between Frederick North and Wellesley shortly after North arrived in Ceylon in 1798. Wellesley wrote Dundas that he was deeply impressed by North's ability to do business. 114 But North and Wellesley were in fact arranging a deal designed to help them both; North upon coming to Madras would bring Ceylon with him. An expedition to the interior of Ceylon would suffice to defeat the Kandyan kingdom much as Mysore had been shattered. Ceylon was a highly prized possession and for Wellesley the maritime and fiscal advantages would have proven enormous. 115 Wellesley twice more urged in strong language that North be transferred to

113 Mornington to Dundas, 12 January 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 120.

114 Ibid., 21 April 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 144.

Only when Wellesley was persuaded that Ceylon would remain autonomous did his enthusiasm for North flag and that for Clive rise. It is unfortunate that this project, morally innocuous in isolation, should have required of Wellesley an assault on Clive's reputation.

Webbe's rehabilitation came fast on the heels of his decision to cease opposing the viceroy's grand plans for British expansion in India. Webbe was appointed secretary to the Madras government in 1797. On his first acquaintance with Wellesley Webbe must have tried to protect the independence of the Madras presidency, Clive not yet having arrived. Webbe also resented Wellesley's role in removing Hobart. At any rate, he showed Wellesley "the most violent and un-governable temper I have ever encountered in the whole course of my public life."117 Worse yet, he had mobilised the Madras bureaucracy to resist Wellesley and, according to the viceroy, had written to the court of directors suggesting that Tipu was a moderate and inoffensive neighbor free of French associations. He hoped Dundas would not protest should it be necessary to dismiss anyone who engaged in "factious

116 Dundas to Mornington, 12 October 1799, Mornington to Dundas, 31 July 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 196, 172.

117 Mornington to Dundas, 6 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 87.
Webbe's rehabilitation was swift. Only two months later Wellesley informed Dundas that Webbe had "entirely changed his conduct and is now become a very useful servant to me." 119 By 21 April he had "obliterated all his offences by the most diligent, active, and zealous service." 120 Wellesley attributed this miraculous transformation to his success in stripping the Nizam of his French officers and to Arthur's influence. Perhaps this explanation is sufficient. At any rate Webbe's reputation continued to grow. On 31 July 1799 Wellesley praised Webbe for having "contributed materially to our brilliant success" at Seringapatam. 121 He also played an important role in preparing Britain's case against the Nawab of Arcot. 122 Webbe's change of heart must have thoroughly displeased the court of directors, for while

118 Ibid., 12 November 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 106-108.
119 Ibid., 12 January 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 118-19.
120 Ibid., 21 April 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 142.
121 Ibid., 31 July 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 170.
Wellesley induced Clive to raise Webbe to the rank of chief secretary in 1800, the directors were planning to have him dismissed as chief secretary and removed from the council. This indeed happened in late 1801. Wellesley villified Webbe's successor as chief secretary, Deschamps Chamier, as an "idle, silly, and ridiculous coxcomb" dedicated to re-establishing corruption at Madras and likely to drive Clive to England. He secured for Webbe as handsome consolation the residency at Mysore.

By 1800 Wellesley's ascendancy at Madras was as complete as that at Calcutta, perhaps more so. For a time it appeared that Henry Wellesley would succeed Clive at the presidency; this prospect proved to be a casualty of the intercepted despatches and Henry's uncomplimentary references to the court of directors. It was with this in mind that the court submitted the following observations:

The principle of extending the controlling powers of the supreme government over all the details of the other presidencies is not only directly avowed, but even a decent freedom of opinion on their part censured as a resistance of it. We are aware that it might be

123 Wellesley to Dundas, 30 September 1801, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 332-34.
124 Mornington to Dundas, 5 March 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 241.
125 Wellesley to Dundas, 7 March 1801, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 323.
difficult and would be inexpedient to define by any exact line the limits beyond which the interference of the supreme government ought not in any case or circumstances to go, and we would be far from countenancing in them anything like a spirit of disobedience or resistance; but we think it clear that the law did not intend the supreme government should assume the direction in detail of the business of the other governments as it does the direction of the divisions of the country under the Bengal government. 126

On the west coast Wellesley's interference was also felt, but here the court of directors offered less resistance and indeed the resident merchant class encouraged many of the changes. Bombay had been somewhat obscured late in the eighteenth century by the rapid growth of Calcutta and Madras. In January 1800 General Stuart wrote a long letter to Dundas petitioning London to recognise Bombay's potential as the center of India's richest region, and decrying the fact that so much attention was being devoted to Bengal. 127 Wellesley was certainly not opposed to more vigorous policies in the area, but his influence in Bombay was considerably smaller than in Madras. Bombay was closer to London and enjoyed greater intimacy with London because of the size and stability of its merchant colony. Unless these merchants were willing to support a program of expansion, Wellesley

126 Court of Directors to the Board of Control, 1805, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 40-42.

could do relatively little until the Marathas came to heel. This could not be done immediately.

By 1800 the Bombay merchants were prepared to commit themselves to territorial power. The native government of the area had deteriorated, and commercial interests of British traders had suffered. In early 1799 negotiations were opened with the Peshwa and with Poona to prepare a treaty conceding an extended territorial jurisdiction to the Bombay presidency. While it was true that David Scott and others supplied information and pressure in London to convince Dundas of the need to expand Bombay's territorial possessions, the Poona correspondence suggests that Wellesley was far from indifferent. In March 1800 Wellesley approved an agreement with the Peshwa whereby the Nawab at Bombay was pensioned off and the government entrusted to the company. One observer has held that in all this Wellesley "imparted vigor and authority in his directions, but set no new policy. This piece of Wellesley's imperialism," the author continues, "was made by the Bombay government, encouraged by the court.

128 Nightingale, Trade, p. ix.


130 Nightingale, Trade, pp. 240-41.
of directors, and awaited only the opportune moment for its fulfilment."\textsuperscript{131}

Was this so? Wellesley's letter to Duncan dated 18 April 1800 is a model of the viceroy's highhandedness and haughty tone.\textsuperscript{132} Wellesley spelled out in great detail Bombay's place in British India, adverted to the problem of the French, and cited the need for expansion and consolidation south along the Malabar coast and northwestward into Sind. To Wellesley the best method of achieving this was to extinguish the Bombay presidency and to extend Calcutta's authority in its place. He was opposed by the court of directors and even by his friend David Scott, who during his tenure as chairman turned back a parliamentary bill to that effect. But Bombay lost its jurisdiction over the Malabar coast to Madras, and in way of compensation over the next two years moved northwestward.\textsuperscript{133} Merchants approved this policy, but Wellesley also gradually tightened his control over Bombay. Finally he

\textsuperscript{131}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 170-71.

\textsuperscript{132}\textit{Mornington to Jonathan Duncan, Governor of Bombay, 16 April 1800, quoted in Owen, Wellesley, p. 694; Mornington to Dundas, 1 October 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 74.}

\textsuperscript{133}\textit{Nightingale, Trade, pp. 124-25. Bombay's territorial government was complicated by a curious policy sustained by Duncan, in which every petty local prince was recognised as having a right to a separate political jurisdiction, so that within the immediate proximity of Bombay there were placed some six hundred princes, or fifteen times as many as the rest of British India combined.}
arrested Duncan's curious policy of converting commoners into potentates and his region into "a veritable museum of toy principalities."¹³⁴ He greatly improved Bombay's security by challenging the Marathas. And he pursued economic policies which profoundly influenced Bengal’s trade.

V: Territorial Expansion

Wellesley committed himself to the territorial extension of British India. It complemented his drive to concentrate power in Calcutta by employing a system of subsidiary alliances in which the native powers were forced to look to Calcutta for direction. It has been observed that Pitt and Dundas displayed a sound instinct in making an Irish landlord governor general. Wellesley, according to this view, recognised the "essential character" of East Indian properties - and applied the landowning principle that more land means more rent.¹³⁵ Perhaps this is true, even if Wellesley’s inability to manage his Irish estates more effectively weakens one of the premises. It is incontrovertible that "by the end of Wellesley's government in 1805 the East India company was irrevocably committed to territorial expansion."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Kulkarni, British, p. 74.


¹³⁶ Nightingale, Trade, p. 3.
tunately, Wellesley's grand initiatives took place in time of war, which postponed the larger surplus revenue which should have accrued from control of more land. And therein lay, as has been seen, much of Wellesley's problem with the court of directors.

Was a program of territorial expansion necessary for the protection of the interests of the East India company? The court of directors argued forcefully in the negative, and their arguments are solid. Charles Grant, the court's chief spokesman on this issue, conceded Wellesley's case in Mysore, but not elsewhere. Outside Mysore the impact of territorial expansion and the subsidiary treaties was to prompt Indian princes to make war against the company, according to Grant. The astonishing additions formed a "splendid road to ruin," the beginning of that false dream that had beguiled every Indian conqueror, the belief that India could be unified under one sovereignty. Grant indeed deprecated the expansion in Bengal which resulted from Clive's victory at Plassey; he would echo the words of the directors who observed in 1687 that "the foundation of a large well-grounded and sure English

137 "Treaty . . . between the . . . Company and . . . the Nabob Nizam . . . .", 12 October 1800, printed in Martin, Despatches, II, 709-12.

dominion in India for all time to come had already been supplied by the factories then in the company's possession. Grant encountered no difficulties in obtaining the company's approval for a declaration that "to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of the nation." But here the company was to be proven quite wrong. The government of the day might deprecate the extension of a system of subsidiary alliances, but such opposition was based squarely on the proposition that these alliances could not endure. Castlereagh wondered whether such an alliance could "rest upon any other foundation than mere force; and if not, whether the means by which it was to be upheld" were "not destructive of its professed advantages." In fact, these alliances survived quite well; after the defeat of Holkar they would gradually become recognised as the basis for a new and more secure imperium in India. Castlereagh's "platitude, based upon half-truths and imperfect knowledge," were swept away.

139 Embree, Grant, p. 209.

140 Court of Directors to the Board of Control, n. d., India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 153-54.

What persuaded Wellesley to proceed with a policy of territorial expansion, and how was it justified? A number of considerations were involved: a fear that the French would attempt to form alliances which could be forestalled only by British alliances; a "restless spirit of ambitions and violence . . . characteristic of every Asiatic government," which constituted an endemic threat to British interests; an increased opportunity for commercial profits; a chance to prevent the Indian states from quarreling among themselves.

"We must either be a predominant military power," Wellesley wrote to Dundas in June 1799, "or we must be content to suffer the fate of those whose minds are unequal to the magnitude of their fortunes, or who are afraid of their own strength." Through one of his secretaries, Charles Metcalfe, Wellesley

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142 Wellesley to the Secret Committee, 13 July 1804, quoted in Martin, Despatches, IV, 177.

143 Lyall, British Dominion, first ed.; p. 268.

144 Mornington to Dundas, 5 March 1800, quoted in Martin, Despatches, II, 225-49.

145 Wellesley to the Secret Committee, 13 July 1804, quoted in Martin, Despatches, IV, 177.

146 Mornington to Dundas, 7 June 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 163.
wrote that British India must grow until it could "with safety
determine to confine [itself] within fixed limits, and abjure
all further conquests." 147

It is clear that the terms of debate, the very premises
upon which the conduct of British affairs in India was based,
were interpreted differently by Wellesley and the company.
To Wellesley the company was simply another agency of the
crown. If unsuited to the conduct of affairs in India, it
must be recast. Trade was secondary; territorial dominion
was primary. The company resented being appropriated to the
work of imperial expansion. The company was dedicated to
trade and profits, and an older generation in Britain shared
this prejudice. 148 Pitt's disciples wanted to create a new
empire. Some such as Castlereagh came to oppose Wellesley
because they thought his aggressiveness would lead to disaster.
They did not in this become supporters of the company with
its commercial monopolies, antiquated trading practices, and
dedication to large profits. In the struggle over economic
issues Wellesley had many friends.

VI: Finances

"The directors dreaded his victories more than his defeats,"

147 Edward Thompson and G.T. Garratt, The Rise and Fulfillment
148 Embree, Grant, p. 215.
wrote one of Castlereagh's biographers; "for from the former they anticipated an increased expenditure — from the latter, a salutary check to ambition." Wellesley's tenure in India is the story of increased revenues and sharply increased expenditures, of increased trade but a diminished company trade monopoly. Wellesley's record of improved efficiency in revenue collection and support for free trade principles recommends him to many modern observers of the history of India. His extravagances, on the other hand, were monumental, and his assault on the company's commercial prerogatives were so direct as to undermine completely the concept that he was the company's faithful and obedient servant.

Wellesley increased the debt of the East India company by almost twenty million pounds during his tenure. This frightened London, but not Wellesley. A modern observer has written that only "honest but stupid" men lost sleep over these deficits, for all should have seen that the company would eventually come under the crown. The company's debts,

149 Archibald Alison, Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart (3 vols.; Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1861), I, 175.


151 Hansard VII (10 June 1806), 104; Cyril Henry Philips, The East India Company, 1784-1834 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1940), p. 142.
therefore, would prove to be an academic consideration only. Perhaps, but the company's directors would have violated every norm of fiscal responsibility had they taken this view. As it was, by 1805 the Indian government's credit had been exhausted and its obligations to the army were in arrears. Well might the company complain of an unauthorised and unreported expenditure of 3167,359 for the construction of a new residence in Calcutta, which formed a "striking contrast" to a detailed account of 97 rupees on some trifling military matter.

The issue was much larger than even the expenditure of such lavish sums on the new residence. There was the cost of territorial expansion in India. Wellesley's finance minister in Bengal, St. George Tucker, proved remarkably successful in obscuring and digesting the expenses of war against Tipu Sultan and it was not until 1800 that a deficit appeared in the India accounts. The deficit was not large,


153 Ingram, Two-Views, p. 9:

154 Court of Directors to Wellesley, n. d., India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, f. 61.

155 Roberts, India, p. 177.
but it sufficed to prompt in Dundas both fear and trepidation. In October 1799, immediately after hearing of the victory at Seringapatam, Dundas urged a reduction in the size of British and Indian military contingents in the peninsula. The alternative to a speedy reduction in the debt would be calamity and the dissolution of the empire. Wellesley's debts mounted rather than decreased. In July 1803 Wellesley wrote to Castlereagh pretending to be surprised that the secret committee of the court of directors should oppose increased military expenditures if war resumed with France. He proceeded to increase the debt sharply when the Maratha wars began. The company later complained that for this period alone it had been forced to borrow six and one half million pounds at an annual interest payment of one half million pounds, while the cost of maintaining the army had risen in addition by another six hundred thousand pounds. For the fiscal year 1805-1806, when Wellesley left India, the company's debt was twenty-eight million pounds, of which two thirds

156 Dundas to Mornington, 16 October 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 189-92.


had been added during Wellesley's administration.\textsuperscript{159}

Wellesley was far from oblivious to the fact that he was adding substantially to the company's debts. He justified his increased expenditures in three ways: the pressing need to protect India against French designs during the war; the prospect of vastly increased future territorial revenues by virtue of his annexations; a conviction that a temporary increase in the size of the debt constituted no burden when revenues were also increasing steadily. In general it was a struggle between the company's concern with the absolute size of the current debt and Wellesley's conviction that it was the relationship of debt to revenue which mattered most. Later generations, privileged to see the immense long term success of Wellesley's policies, have generally criticised the company for having demonstrated "a craven fear of being great" when it came to the issue of finances. It is unfair to test the company's behaviour against fiscal practices of our own age, even if one marvels how accurately Wellesley anticipated Keynes. Beyond this Wellesley excited enormous opposition by virtue of the way he saw fit to handle the court of directors' feelings.

When Wellesley reached India in 1798 the company's

\textsuperscript{159}Ibid., f. 195.
fiscal condition, measured by the standards of the time, was already unsettling. The annual revenue of eight million pounds was slightly smaller than the revenue of 1793, when the war began. Meanwhile, the debt had already exceeded ten million pounds, with interest payments of seven hundred fifty thousand pounds. Credit was at a low ebb, and money could not be borrowed in Bengal at twelve per cent. The company's bonds and securities circulated at a low rate. Wellesley immediately instituted several revenue reforms which had the effect of increasing the company's income, but at the price of stepping on the toes of some of the company's most entrenched vested interests. Dundas encouraged Wellesley to develop more alternatives to the traditional land revenues. Wellesley responded by demonstrating that even better than this was the favourable impact on the company of the conquest of Mysore, which discouraged unhealthy transfers of "flight" capital to England.

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161 Thompson and Garratt, British, p. 263.

162 Dundas to Mornington, 21 March 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 137.

163 Mornington to Dundas, 22 September 1799. 5 March 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 179, 230-33.
1801 Wellesley excused an immediate need to add to the debt by promising a large surplus in 1803-4, and Castlereagh was persuaded that Wellesley's projections were reasonable. In turn he forecast elimination of the company's debts within six years. 164 Wellesley proclaimed that India enjoyed "unexampled prosperity" and that this "must carry him triumphant over the heads of all these cent, percent, rascals." 165

In view of the fact that Wellesley left India having tripled the company's debts one is tempted to ask whether this exultation was not a deliberate attempt on his part to deceive Dundas, Castlereagh and the directors. Wellesley did not anticipate the high cost of the Maratha wars. Nor, in 1801 and 1802, did he foresee with certainty a resumption of war with France. He chose to base his predictions on continued peace, which allowed him to paint a rosier fiscal picture. His territorial annexations, moreover, increased the company's annual revenue from eight million pounds to fifteen million pounds in seven years, a notable achieve-

164 Castlereagh to Dundas, 6 September 1802, PRO, Chatham MSS 121; Castlereagh to Pitt, 11 September 1802, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, f. 1.

165 Malcolm to Henry Wellesley, 19 June 1802, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 229.
ment. It is probably safe to say that Wellesley was sincere, even if unduly optimistic. His own vigorous policies subsequent to 1802 were largely responsible for his tendency to accumulate debts. Beyond this, it is safe to say that they rarely bothered him.

The company also took offence at the manner in which Wellesley chose to meet his deficit spending requirements; indeed, this appears to have been the heart of the problem. The company's profits, other than those obtained from the limited territorial revenues available before 1760, were made by the sale in England of purchases made in India on behalf of the company. To finance these purchases, called the "investment," the company was accustomed to borrow funds in England on a short term account, and to repay them upon sale of the "investment." From the profits which remained after extinguishing these debts the company paid "rent" to the crown for use of British possessions in India, which were vested in the crown and not in the company. This "rent" ceased in 1773, but in time the company began to accumulate a permanent debt which required servicing every year. During the first years of war the company's

166 Parry and Grant to Robert Dundas, 26 January 1808, Calcutta Record Office, Home Miscellaneous MSS 816, f. 193.
expenses in India increased while profits from "investments" stagnated. These expenses were absorbed by new loans floated in London. In 1799 Wellesley moved a step further. When bullion which the company purchased in London by floating the traditional loans was delivered in India to purchase the next year's "investment," Wellesley appropriated it to pay his immediate military requirements. Dundas had already warned Wellesley not to do this; the "investment" was a "sacred principle" in the company. 168 To Wellesley this was absurd; if an "extreme case" could not be held to justify any diversion of funds from trade, then the defence of India was "simply impracticable." 169 By the middle of 1800 he had appropriated more than two and one half million pounds. After much effort Castlereagh was able to convince the directors that Wellesley would not do this again, and they duly despatched another four million pounds in 1802-3. Wellesley used this to finance the Maratha wars. 170

Nothing excited the directors' displeasure more than this audacious appropriation of their borrowed funds. Wellesley

168 Dundas to Mornington, 23 July 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 166.
169 Mornington to Dundas, 25 January 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 218.
170 Philips, East India, p. 124.
had continued to receive financial support after his first seizure of "investment" funds on the basis of a strict understanding that the "investment" was to be used to make a profit, the "sine qua non of the existence of the British empire in India."\(^{171}\) In 1802, upon his retirement from office, Dundas declared that "the most immediate, pressing business" was the Indian debt, which was by this date rising rapidly.\(^{172}\)

The Maratha wars were still to come, and they were to make the problem of Dundas' tenure modest by comparison.

Many historians have tended to place all the blame on the court of directors. They have maintained that the policy of the directors was dedicated to maintaining dividends at a high level, even if it required augmenting the debt to purchase bullion for the"investment." They have accepted at face value the contention that the mounting debt reflected this rather than the cost of Wellesley's military expenditures.\(^{173}\) But Charles Grant was able to demonstrate that in fact the profits from and expenditures for purely commercial

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\(^{171}\) Bosanquet to Wellesley, 10 September 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37278, f. 93.

\(^{172}\) Dundas, memorandum, 1802, Indian Record Office, Home Miscellaneous MSS 341, f. 535.

\(^{173}\) Perkinson, Trade, p. 17; 1 Hansard VII (10 July 1806), 1063 ff.
transactions during the fifteen year period previous to 1803 had been virtually in balance, but thereafter had declined sharply because of a dearth of "investment." He was able to show as well that, despite the assertions of Wellesley's protesting friends, the directors had not borrowed from Indian territorial revenues (which expanded rapidly under Wellesley) to bolster the company's allegedly declining, ill-managed commerce. History preferred Wellesley's glorious annexations to Grant's balance sheets.

Wellesley himself would never have bothered to justify his Indian expenditures, his appropriation of the "investment," or his snubs of the court of directors. The validity of his position was to him obvious; he saw no need to humor company accountants and unimaginative directors. But Wellesley did possess a full-blown economic policy which transcended his avowed determination to defend India and to expand Britain's eastern dominions. This policy manifested itself in his dispute with the company concerning the Indian shipping monopoly. Here not only was the judgement of history on his side, but that of the board of control as well.

Wellesley derived his economic philosophy from the school of Adam Smith. He instinctively opposed monopolies.

174. *Hansard VI* (19 July 1807), 1074; *VII* (10 July 1806), 1044.
His support of the Anglo-French commercial treaty of 1787 was certainly prompted by Pitt's request that he labour in support of the government in the house of Commons. He read a great deal on this occasion, and the experience probably sharpened his opinions and increased his sophistication. But his attitudes were probably ingrained. As an Irish landlord he had suffered much at the hands of merchants, and his disdain of those gentlemen was reflected in the jaundiced view that this class manipulated markets to their own petty advantage. 174

The East India company was a monopoly write large. Parliament confirmed its monopoly in India every twenty years. On each occasion lonely voices suggested that its vast area of operation be opened to the fresh air of competition. Slight concessions were made, but the strength of the company interest invariably sufficed to close these loopholes. In parliament the company's leading merchants preached the efficacy of monopoly and the sanctity of property rights. Until war began in 1793 the company's pretensions seemed reasonably secure.

War exposed a weakness in the East India company's monopoly. The weakness lay in shipping. Ever since

175 W. Bowden, "The Influence of the Manufacturers on Some Early Policies of William Pitt," American Historical
the American revolution it had been apparent that the company's fleet of ships was insufficient to carry the entirety of the annual investment to England. Because of the monopoly, however, the remainder went in foreign bottoms; ships owned by British interests were forbidden to participate. For years this extraordinary anomaly was tolerated in the belief that company shipping would expand to assume control of the entirety. It did not; the healthy economic discipline of smuggling spread as foreign bottoms provided efficient service at far cheaper rates. Even so, the number of ships remained inadequate, and there were unchallengeable complaints that British ships outside the company should not be barred from a trade in which foreign ships were often encouraged to participate by the prospect of high profits, by the need to transport the investment to London, and finally by the advent of war. War demanded that a certain number of the company ships be converted to military purposes, and neutral shipping's immunity from war dangers widened the gap in shipping costs.

After two years of war pressure mounted to permit private British shipping to enter the Indian trade. Dundas

took the lead after learning that the Americans had secured for themselves an abnormally large share, and at times even half, of the total. 176 The court resisted strenuously. David Scott of the court of directors took the lead in advocating reform, but not enough others followed his direction. In January 1795 an effort to modify the monopoly was narrowly defeated. 177 In May Scott became deputy chairman. 178 In the summer he secured a modest reduction in the rates charged by the shipping monopoly, and early the next year the circle of shipowners was enlarged. 179 The monopoly survived, however, and had regained strength by the time Wellesley reached India.

The reforms did little to stop the intrusion of foreign shipping and nothing to help the large British carrying trade which sat outside the monopoly. In 1800 Dundas tried to strengthen his hand by inviting Charles Grant, champion of the monopoly, to take up a post in India. Grant


177 Dundas to Devoynes, member of the Court of Directors, 12 January 1795, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 404, f. 385; General Court Debates, 21 January 1795.

178 India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 67, f. 107; 728, f. 63.

179 True Briton, 17 February, 12 March 1796; General Court Minutes, 8 March 1796.
refused. At the same time Dundas took advantage of permission from the directors to build a certain number of ships in India as a means of weakening the monopoly. Wellesley went beyond this and permitted these new ships to set rates low enough to compete with foreign shippers. Dundas secretly approved this. The company responded angrily; Dundas temporarily backed off but Wellesley proceeded as if he continued to have full support from Dundas. In 1801 the court publicly aired the dispute, and it was one reason why Dundas resolved to resign.

By 1801 bad blood was evident everywhere. Dartmouth as successor to Dundas was manifestly incapable of handling the monopolists. Scott was ousted. The shipping lobby threatened to take the issue to parliament. Addington depended upon the shipping interests' votes and supported their pretensions. Dartmouth refused to abide by Addington's...
decision and in March 1802 he also resigned. Animosity gradually focused on Wellesley. To the shipping interest Wellesley's initiatives to break the company's monopoly were not something which could be left unchallenged until some remote impeachment proceedings. Wellesley began to receive threatening and angry letters from London. He wrote to Addington warning the prime minister of this venom. Later he wrote that he was convinced that his conduct on the question of private trade had been "the main source of the virulence which has been betrayed by the court on various other topics." In a rare show of unanimity Wellesley's friends and foes conceded that the Marquess' observation was accurate.

On the occasion of leaving office Dartmouth warned Wellesley that he should return to England immediately unless Addington saw his way to offer "the most unequivocal

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186 Wellesley to Addington, 10 January 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37282, f. 295.
187 Martin, Despatches, III, 54.
188 Malcolm to Wellesley, 19 June 1802, India Record Office, European MSS E. 176, f. 181; Scott to Addington, 26 August 1802, India Record Office, Home Miscellaneous MSS 731, f. 64; Bosanquet to Wellesley, 29 May 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37278, f. 83.
assurance of support" on the shipping question. On this issue, however, Wellesley felt so confident of the strength of his position that he simply decided to ignore criticism. If he prevailed, the company's consolation would be an increase in the size of the "investment" which he could send to England. If he failed, prices of Indian goods sold in England would rise and the pernicious effects of the monopoly would be accentuated. As it happened, the company continued to condemn Wellesley for his assaults on the shipping monopoly long after he left India. History has been infinitely kinder. Wellesley introduced the concept of free trade to India and within a generation he was vindicated.

VIII: The College at Fort William

Free trade principles constituted only a small portion of the corpus of innovative ideas which Wellesley was determined to translate into policy in India. His most cherished project was the foundation for the training of company servants, a depository fertile with new ideas for British

189 Liverpool to Wellington, 20 January 1812, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 256-57.

190 Arthur Wellesley, memorandum, July 1805, quoted in Parkinson, Trade, p. 361.
government in India. Nothing in Wellesley's long career demonstrated his faith in education more brilliantly than Fort William college. Never was his complete confidence in the propriety of his actions so easily turned to condemnation at the hands of the court of directors.

There is no evidence that Wellesley harboured a scheme for establishing a school for the education of company servants when he originally sailed for India. Nor were there precedents for such a school, although Warren Hastings in praising Wellesley's endeavour claimed later that he had proposed to the company the establishment of a special program in eastern studies for company servants proceeding to India. Wellesley was certainly aware of the deficiencies inherent in the company's ancient system of recruitment for India. Young men, sometimes only thirteen, were despatched to India and apprenticed as copy clerks. Many were quite ignorant of the rudiments of education; all were exposed to the temptations of corruption inherent in the company's service. Many turned out well; Wellesley considered it something of a miracle that this was so.

But even if the traditional system had been free of

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abuse, the expansion of British India called for major reforms to cope with the attendant increasing responsibilities. "To dispense justice to millions of people of various languages, manners, usages, and religions; to administer a vast and complicated system of revenue throughout districts equal in extent to some of the most considerable kingdoms in Europe; to maintain civil order in one of the most populous and litigious regions of the world; these are now the duties of the larger proportion of the civil servants of the company.\textsuperscript{192} So wrote Wellesley to the company in 1800, and the truth of his observations could not be denied. But Wellesley wanted more than a corps of functionally efficient bureaucrats who could staff the judiciary and supervise commercial transactions in various languages. The company's servants should be statesmen by disposition, and in Wellesley's opinion "their education should be founded in a general knowledge of those branches of literature and science which form the basis of the education of persons destined to similar occupations in Europe."\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{192}Wellesley to Dundas, 10 July 1800, printed in Owen, Wellesley, p. 719.
\textsuperscript{193}Ibid., pp. 722-23.
dedicated to preparing young men for such employment in India. As a result, young employees arriving in India were unequal to their duties, Wellesley reported. They sank into indolence, and the "public integrity" was necessarily damaged. Others of stronger fibre and better habits attempted to educate themselves. But "harrassed with the ungrateful task of transcribing papers and accounts, ... their pursuit of useful knowledge [could] not be systematic." Eventually they too became discouraged, and succumbed to the many vices which their handsome incomes permitted them to enjoy. 194

Even if by happy chance there could not be discovered in India any considerable body of public servants deficient in their morals and in the execution of their duties, the school which Wellesley envisioned was in his mind still necessary. India was not to be administered "as a temporary and precarious acquisition" but as a "sacred trust, and a permanent possession." The stability of this empire could be secured only by a "succession of able magistrates, wise and honest judges, and skillful statesmen, properly qualified to conduct the ordinary movements of the great machine of government." 195 All this required a love of India and of

194 Ibid., pp. 726-27.
its languages, and it is here that Wellesley dreamed of the future greatness of his Oxford or Cambridge of the east.

Wellesley's letter to the court of directors containing all these sentiments was one of his most brilliant defences of British involvement in India. This minute was written 10 July 1800. Unfortunately, he had already committed a damaging error in strategy. Rather than await the company's considered approval of this scheme, approval which could not easily be withheld after so masterly a defence of the need for the proposed college, Wellesley proceeded at once to purchase a campus and to hire a faculty. Even as he wrote London he had delineated the faculty professorships: Arabic; Persian; Sanskrit; six Indian vernacular languages; political economy; English law; jurisprudence and laws enacted by the governor general in council; history; botany; chemistry; and astronomy. Only one month after forwarding his initial proposal to the court of directors Wellesley petitioned Dundas to help him fill some of the professorships. "I know you will find it a pleasure doing some of these things," he wrote to Dundas. Other scholars, it


197 Wellesley to Dundas, 18 August 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 282-83.
later transpired, had already been appointed to professorships as early as 1798.\textsuperscript{198} By the spring of 1803, when London was still undecided as to whether a college should be established in Calcutta, Wellesley had already implemented his proposal to the tune of £224,000.\textsuperscript{199}

Wellesley's approach was certainly inept. There was no need for such haste, and Dundas was understandably upset when he heard that Wellesley was busily hiring a faculty before the company had considered the proposal.\textsuperscript{200} The court of directors, faced with a \textit{fait accompli}, was initially disposed to accept the proposal, as there was "a disposition not to blame anything which was sanctioned by his Lordship."\textsuperscript{201} Wellesley had also assured them that the expense involved would not be significant, and for the moment the court was prepared to accept these assurances at face value. But by the end of the year 1801 the court had concluded that Wellesley was proceeding too far too fast, and the process of dismantling the school now began. Wellesley's precipitous behaviour

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200}Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 191.
\textsuperscript{201}Toone to Hastings, 12 July 1799, BM Add. MSS 29177, f. 38.
supplied the necessary excuse, but it seems clear that the college was also a victim of the court's displeasure at Wellesley's assault on their shipping monopoly. Dartmouth attempted to support Wellesley by demanding that the directors' draft be stripped of all reasons for the abolition except financial ones. But in June 1802 the court's decision to abolish the school reached Calcutta. Wellesley decided to delay the execution of the order until the end of the following year, but to proceed immediately with the sale of the college's property and facilities in order to reduce expenses and to appease the court of directors. The school would not be disbanded until Wellesley had appealed to London; his plan attempted to prevent the school from being destroyed beyond a possibility of resuscitation but without outright defiance of the company.

Pressure mounted in India for Wellesley to return to London immediately in order to press his case for maintaining the college. Josiah Webbe, by now one of Wellesley's closest advisors, urged Wellesley to return on the basis that the

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202 Mornington to Dundas, 26 October 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 200-201.

203 Scott to Wellesley, 23 April 1802, India Office Library, European MSS E. 176.

college had been sacrificed because of the weakness of the ministry. Wellesley, he believed, could supply that want of vigor, reverse the decision, and perhaps gain decisive influence in the government. Dartmouth held out some hope of a change in the company's attitudes when he thought he detected sentiment within the company for a school of some type, upon which a "superstructure may hereafter, by degrees and in more favourable times, be raised." But Arthur Wellesley discouraged his brother from making the pilgrimage home, and his advice seems to have been decisive. He argued that the ministry should be given an opportunity to reverse the company's decision; if they were unsuccessful, then Wellesley should return. Wellesley thereupon vented his anger in a long and vehement memorandum "on this painful and most afflicting occasion." He reported that the college had "already corrected many of the defects" in the company's Indian service; it had "raised a standard of public honour which is become the general resort of diligence, order, good

205 Josiah Webbe to A. Wellesley, 8 July 1802, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 227.

206 George Legge Lewisham, Earl of Dartmouth, to Thomas Pelham, 31 December 1801, BM, Add. MSS 33108, f. 486; Dartmouth to Scott, 15 December 1801, India Office Library, European MSS F. 13, f. 177.

morals, learning and religion."  

Arguments based on the proven performance of an institution which the directors had not sanctioned in the first place were not calculated to make a salutary impression. But prospects had improved by virtue of the appointment of Castlereagh. Dundas had never supported the school, which he had feared might "ultimately resolve itself into a school of Jacobitism." Dartmouth was an enthusiastic but ineffective lobbyist. At the court of directors Scott was a warm supporter, but he could do little without substantial assistance from the board of control. Castlereagh, on the other hand, combined a disposition to support with a capacity to make an impression on the company. Upon receipt of Wellesley’s memorandum of July 1802 he informed the company that his object was "to prevent the dissolution of the institution til we are quite sure that we have a satisfactory substitute." Under intense pressure from Castlereagh, and inclined to some type of accommodation in the wake of their

208 Martin, Despatches, II, 640-66.

209 Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 287.


211 Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 22 April 1803, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, f. 349.
victory on the shipping issue, the directors agreed to rescind the abolition order. For the moment it appeared that Wellesley had been vindicated.

Such optimism was soon proven unfounded. The court soon discovered that Castlereagh wished to preserve the college at Fort William in the extended form defined by Wellesley. In July 1803 the court of directors imposed new restrictions, prefacing their decision by a vigorous denial of Wellesley's anticipated imputation that the restrictions were petty. One of these restrictions held that the school serve only Bengal: Bombay and Madras would receive separate educational establishments if they were deemed necessary. Preliminary training for all new company servants would be provided in England.

Castlereagh correctly concluded that Wellesley would indeed regard such restrictions as crippling. He asked the court to postpone implementation of these terms for at least a year. The court appealed the powers reserved to it under the acts of 1784 and 1793, and adopted an uncompromising tone. It claimed absolute control over such matters, and declared as well that such a college "ought to be specifically adapted to its professed end, and should be limited to objects of

212 Court of Directors to the Board of Control, 1 July 1823, cited in Philips, East India, pp. 127-23.
real necessity, or material utility, excluding superfluous pursuits, unsuitable expense, and needless display." And it hit hard at Wellesley's conduct. "In our opinion Marquess Wellesley would have best consulted his own dignity, and set an example to the service, at least equal in importance to any lesson it could have derived from the college, by a regular obedience to that authority under which the law had placed the government of India." 213

Castlereagh and the court now found themselves locked in a legal battle to determine jurisdiction over the school. An appeal to the authorities produced a verdict favouring the company. Castlereagh's reaction was to take the matter to parliament and to request a change in the law, despite the fact that Addington's ministry depended on the East India interest for critical support. 214 Castlereagh's rather sweeping proposal was designed to "give the King in council jurisdiction in all doubts arising under the act." The court thereupon agreed to postpone putting their restrictions into effect, except that no writers from Madras and Bombay were


214 Dundas to Scott, 10 August 1803, India Office Library, Home Miscellaneous MSS 731A, f. 923; Castlereagh to Pitt, 12 September 1803, PRO, Chatham MSS 121.
to be educated in Calcutta in the interim. 215

The issue remained here until Wellesley left India. Castlereagh summarised his feelings on the matter in a long letter to Dundas. The college, he observed, had become the victim of the court's anger against Wellesley and a pawn in its determined strategy to assume a greater powers. To Castlereagh it was important that the board of control view "with extreme jealousy the disposition of the court to assume a power, which they can never exercise directly for any other purpose than that of corruption and to the absolute disqualification of themselves from any useful or efficient control over their servants abroad." 216 Government in India was supposed to be responsible to parliament. Patronage in the hands of the company will ruin all. Later Castlereagh wrote to Wellesley noting that only part of the college had been salvaged, and that a greater part of Wellesley's original principle had been mutilated. "We are all called upon in our turn, he concluded, "to endure that which is equally repugnant to our understandings and to our feelings." 217 Castlereagh did not


216 Castlereagh to Dundas, 1805, India Office Library, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, ff. 36-44.

217 Martin, Despatches, IV, 39.
add what he probably also suspected: that the school would be destroyed at the earliest possible moment.

In time the court won a complete victory. As soon as Castlereagh left his post as President of the board of control the court imposed drastic reductions on the college. They elicited from Wellesley an expression of his "unqualified contempt and abhorrence of the proceedings and propensities of the court of directors." What remained, as Mill observed, was only "a meagre contrivance" for teaching minimum language requirements. This school could produce only clerks, and such products discouraged efforts to establish good schools in the other presidencies. In England the East India college opened at Hertford castle in 1806 and moved to Haileybury in 1809. The curriculum was constructed along the lines of Westlesey's at Fort William, but the school suffered from inadequate funding and made a weak impression. Wellesley vowed that upon his return from India he would propose legislation for an institution similar to that he proposed for Calcutta. He never did so, perhaps because he refused to take

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219 Roberts, India, p. 162.

220 Woodruff, Founders, p. 280; Philips, East India, p. 130.
his seat in the house of Lords until the impeachment contro-
versy had run its course.\textsuperscript{221} Wellesley never paid Haileybury
a visit, and indeed never mentioned it in his correspondence.
His scheme was buried in Calcutta, and the greatest of all
his objectives in India was almost completely frustrated.

But a scheme so grand and indeed so revolutionary could
not be forgotten completely. A generation before Wellesley,
Warren Hastings had offered his credo for rule in India: "to
rule effectively, one must communicate with her people; to
communicate with her people, one must acquire her languages.\textsuperscript{222}
The college at Fort William was, however, much more than a
school of languages. Even in its brief period of splendor
Wellesley's creation made a permanent impact on India. The
faculty which Wellesley hired included William Carey as pro-
fessor of Hindu languages. By virtue of the resources thus
placed at Carey's disposal, he was able to reinvigorate the
venerable but failing Asiatic Society of Bengal and transform
it into a highly successful agency for the revitalisation
of Indian culture. Through this society began the famous
work of publishing translations of Indian classics. At Fort

\textsuperscript{221}Torrens, Marquess, p. 245.

\textsuperscript{222}Kopf, Orientalism, p. 95.
William between 1801 and 1805 some fifty civil servants were exposed to the rich intellectual heritage of India. Metcalfe, one of the school's products, demonstrated in a career which took him from India to the Caribbean the magnificent calibre of the students produced by the college during this short period. 223 The college also confirmed Wellesley's advanced attitudes towards India's inhabitants and traditions; it was "the first European-created institution of higher learning in India to welcome Indians as faculty members and to encourage cultural exchange between Europeans and South Asians." 224

Few achievements of Wellesley's long public career have elicited such a universal positive response. A recent observer held that "Wellesley's education program was a unique experiment in the history of European colonialism." 225 The court's decision to remove the European portion of the curriculum to England and to establish colleges at Madras and Bombay had the effect of ultimately converting Wellesley's "university of the east" into a college more responsive to the tastes of Calcutta's Hindu intelligentsia. After 1806 the college


224 Kopf, Orientalism, p. 6. There is a fine tribute to Wellesley in The Friend of India, VII (November 1841), 722-23.

225 Kopf, Orientalism, pp. 95-96.
received a fairly substantial annual allowance, and indifference was sufficient to discourage the court of directors' interference in the college's policy of generous literary patronage. For two decades its graduates dominated the company's positions in India. Although later on Charles Trevelyan and Thomas Macaulay repudiated Wellesley's orientalist ideals, much had by then been done to insure that Wellesley's reputation was secure.

The college also focused attention on Wellesley's dedication to the principle of education as a liberating and elevating principle; the sentiments he shared with young William Gregory in Dublin in the 1820s were here practiced with a dramatic commitment. It was not merely that Wellesley personally directed examinations and established prizes for excellence. Around him developed a small group of students who shared an esprit de corps based on their high talents and on Wellesley's personal supervision. This

226 The whole question of Wellesley's place in the "orientalist" movement has not been resolved. Some historians classify Wellesley among the "Westernisers" because of his innovative pedagogical tendencies. Others, impressed by the content of his curriculum at Fort William, have no problem identifying him as an "orientalist." The latest discussion of the issue is in Clive's Macaulay: the Making of a Historian.

227 Kopf, Orientalism, pp. 50-51, 62-63.

small group took immense price in the mission of building a new empire. These students not only worked for Wellesley:

They worked with him. No statesman ever took a livelier interest in the intellectual development of the disciples who sat at his feet. He watched their progress with affectionate concern; he encouraged and stimulated them by judicious praise. He was at once their master and their friend; and there was not one of them who did not identify himself with his policy, and was not eager to contribute to its success.229

These men became the nucleus of a school of orientalists who made their mark on British India.

Wellesley was prepared to accept the genius and traditions of India on its own terms. This was sharpened by his contest with Grant. Wellesley and Grant both agreed on the need for a highly trained civil service. Grant also enjoyed a reputation as an intellectual and as a reformer.230 Grant opposed Wellesley on the issue of the college on grounds other than "shallow commercialism." To Grant Indian civilisation was barbaric because its religion was degrading. To tolerate, much less to celebrate, such a culture violated Christian principles and corrupted Christian values.231 Thus the British civil servant must be an agent of cultural change and not a

229 Ibid., I, 81.
230 N. K. Sinha, "Beginnings of Western Education," Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta, I, 5.
231 Embree, Grant, p. 148.
perpetuation of Indian institutions.  

This, coupled with Wellesley's insensitive treatment of the directors, explains the defeat of the college at Fort William. Wellesley's demand for a program of training for the company's servants could not be shunted aside. Grant perceived that the court must respond with a plan of its own, and Haileybury was the result. Grant went on to advocate a bishopric for Calcutta, freedom of entry and movement for missionaries in India, and the admission of teachers there so as "to transform and deliver a whole people from superstition to light through the educational process." Grant and his Clapham sect colleagues Wilberforce, Shore, Macaulay and others "enunciated for the first time the evangelical mission of Britain, modeled on Rome's example of civilising the world." Grant and his friends were prepared to challenge Hastings' and Wellesley's call for a reconciliation of European and Indian cultures. Wellesley in India, through his social and cultural policies, proved offensive to the new religious and moral impulse which would gain ascendancy.

\[232\] Kopf, Orientalism, p. 134.
\[233\] Stokes, Utilitarians, p. 30.
\[234\] Knopf, Orientalism, pp. 133-34.
in the Victorian world. The school as Wellesley conceived it was destroyed, but Wellesley's wider legacy was eventually appreciated for its true worth.

VIII: Morals and Mores

Butler has observed that Wellesley was "an eighteenth century man and free of the 'moral vanity' of the nineteenth century." His vanity was "universal"; he was convinced he was right and he hoped that this truth would eventually be recognised. But he was not inclined to despise Indians or to change them simply because they were Indians.\(^{235}\) The accuracy of this is attested to in examining Wellesley's social and religious policies in India.

Wellesley's biographers in the Victorian age went to extraordinary lengths to defend their subject against the allegation that the governor-general was indifferent to Christianity and perhaps to religion. Because his domestic life did not admit of that innocence and familial virtue found in Charles Grant, Hutton and others compensated by advancing the thesis that "Lord Wellesley was the first ruler of India to stand forth as a Christian" by virtue of his efforts to translate the Bible into indigenous languages, to reform the

\(^{235}\)Butler, Eldest, p. 147.
church, and to establish an episcopacy. Malleson celebrated the fact that Wellesley was the first to enforce Sunday as a day of rest for the company's servants and to prohibit the publication of newspapers on the sabbath; these he was probably glad enough to see silenced at least one day a week. Curzon, looking at Wellesley from the other end of the great Victorian experiment in public morality, was happy to report that Wellesley firmly opposed Sunday races. On 9 November 1798 Wellesley issued a proclamation to the effect that those who violated this rule would "be liable to forfeit the protection of the honourable the East India company and to be sent to Europe." But Calcutta continued to bet and the famous Bengal Jockey club was launched with great fanfare in 1803.

Of course these items prove nothing. Wellesley detested the races and all such games, but he was no Charles Grant. Grant wanted the company to serve as an engine of Christian proselytism in India. But in 1793 the company and the British government had both rejected the idea of support for the missions, and there was little sentiment outside the company

238 Embree, Grant, p. 209.
for changing this policy. Perhaps in the hope that he could achieve his objectives circuitously, Grant offered Wellesley something of a bribe in the context of Fort William college: "If he had seen fit to recommend the diffusion" of Christianity "among the heathen," Grant wrote later, "no one could have done this with so much effect." Wellesley did not take the hint.

Wellesley did not oppose the work of Christian missionaries in India; even Grant could acknowledge that he had done a great deal "in countenancing ministers of religion and ministerial labours," and added that "if anything could have bribed me to wink at enormous faults in his administration, this would." Wellesley's policy was one of great moderation, however. In 1813, when reviewing developments in India for the benefit of parliament, he declared that for Christianity to succeed in India "it must proceed form gradual and temperate proceedings, and by no means better than combining religion with education." Wellesley's predecessors had often blamed

241 Grant to David Brown, 20 June 1807, quoted in Morris, Grant, p. 302.
242 Hansard, XXV (9 April 1813), 675-754.
missionaries for inciting unrest among the natives. But Wellesley's rule was so effective and his own confidence so complete that this proved no problem.²⁴³ He barred them from disseminating their spiritual translations without his express permission, and he moved on one occasion to deny a printing press to a cluster of missionaries at the Danish settlement of Serampore. The missionaries made themselves popular by agreeing to help staff the college at Fort William.²⁴⁴

So Wellesley's policy towards Christianity was moderate and pragmatic. He was no enthusiast, and he appreciated the enormous potential represented in men such as William Carey for the development of his orientalist philosophy of education. Events conspired to help Wellesley translate the missionary impulse from a dedication to immediate anglicisation into the experiment in encouraging a meeting of east and west on an equal basis. At Serampore the Danish were expelled in 1800 when Denmark became a belligerent.²⁴⁵ Carey, lulled into accepting a place on the faculty of a college which could boast a budget equal to that of Cambridge, saw the


²⁴⁴ Hansard, XXV (9 April 1813), 675-754.

²⁴⁵ Kopf, Orientalism, p. 76.
college as a vehicle for the dissemination of Christianity throughout India. But it was Carey who was "corrupted"; within two years he was writing in a marvelously innocent way celebrating the publication of the Hitopodesa from Sanscrit into Bengali and the Mahabharat. Some Indians were destined to become Christians out of all this. But a whole generation of Englishmen would fall in love with India. Charles Grant was not pleased, and many evangelicals joined him in condemning Wellesley.

Wellesley’s attitude towards India’s indigenous religions was much the same as his attitude towards Christianity. He rejected Grant’s contention that Hinduism enshrined a range of vices, and he denied the premise that the religions of the east corrupted Europeans. He was impressed with the value of religion as an agency of social control, and by counteracting the influence of Grant and the Clapham sect Wellesley contributed much to Britain’s commitment to rule through rather than in defiance of India’s indigenous institutions. On one occasion he spoke of the need to digest the energies and

246 William Carey to Fuller, 21 January 1802, Carey MSS, Box 3, cited in Kopf, Orientalism, p. 76.


abilities of Islam into British rule, and of the "radical imperfection" of opposing this vast religious institution. His reverent appreciation of the role of Hinduism was absorbed by Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe, and was not challenged until the arrival of Trevelyan and Macaulay three decades later. By that time it was too late to change course.

Wellesley has sometimes been criticised for his reluctance to stamp out social practices offensive to European morals and habits. His policies have the appearance of indecisiveness rare to Wellesley's conduct. Wellesley asked Carey to investigate the practice of throwing children into the Ganges and the ancient ritual of sati, or widow immolation.

In August 1802 he issued orders suppressing human immolation and the sacrifice of the firstborn child of long-barren women. More obnoxious yet, certainly, was sati, but while Wellesley was inclined to abolish it, he was more sensitive than most of his European associates to the equally distressing fate of many widows who survived their husbands. He referred the

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249 Torrens, Marquess, p. 241.

250 Stokes, Utilitarian, pp. 8-9; Charles Trevelyan, J. Prinsep, et al, The Application of the Roman Alphabet to All the Oriental Languages (Serampore, 1834), p. 16.


252 Thompson and Garrett, British, p. 195; Misra, East India, pp. 48-49.
matter to his new judicial creation, the Nizamut Adalat or court of appeal in criminal law. The court ruled that the government would be best advised to be guided by "the religious opinions and prejudices of the natives." These religious opinions, however, were different depending upon the educational and social strata referred to. Wellesley eventually issued orders prohibiting widow immolation in February 1805. But when Wellesley departed India the practice resumed and the problem was not even addressed again until 1812.

Wellesley's policy of inviting indigenous institutions of social control to share in the government of India certainly agreed with his attitudes towards techniques of British rule in Ireland, where he championed the principle of religious toleration and wide enjoyment of civil rights in an effort to enlist the support of those Irish Catholic institutions which could help keep peace in the country. In the arena of the intellect Wellesley's toleration knew no limits whatsoever. In the field of executive power, however, Wellesley was an unabashed autocrat; neither India nor Ireland was prepared for any substantial degree of self-government or reference to the democratic principle. Wellesley's approach


was frankly hierarchical, so much so that one historian has concluded that it was during his tenure in India that any tendency towards an amalgamation of the European and indigenous races "was rapidly stultified by the psychological need of a conquering minority to preserve social distance."255

It is perhaps safer to look at Wellesley's policies in the field of censorship as an example of his philosophy of government. Prior to India Wellesley's relationship to the issue of press freedom had not been clear-cut. He had on one occasion defended the Irish press in the Irish House of Lords, but his private correspondence of the same period made it quite clear that he thought libel should be punished harshly. In 1791 he urged Grenville to apprehend Thomas Paine and hang him if possible. In 1794 he supported Pitt in suspending habeas corpus and his speech supporting the seditious meetings bill of 1795 earned him an instant reputation as another Lord Eldon. But in 1794 and 1795 Britain was at war, and perhaps this accounts for much of Wellesley's antipathy to the press.

In India he quickly made it clear that a free press was inconsistent with Britain's rule. Shortly after reaching Calcutta in 1798 he heard of reports in American newspapers critical of British policy in India. The reports reflected an

intimate knowledge of Indian affairs. Wellesley tried without success to pin the blame on an unsympathetic Calcutta editor and then asked Dundas to help find the author. 256 The next year, while directing the Mysore campaign, he heard of further incendiary editors in Calcutta. In April 1799 he wrote to his governor there, Sir Alured Clarke, promising to forward "rules for the conduct of the whole tribe of editors" at an early date; in the meantime Clarke was advised to suppress the papers and send the editors to Europe if he could not "tranquilise" their publications. 257

The press regulations when printed proved drastic enough: the editor's name was to be printed at the end of every journal; every editor and proprietor of a newspaper was enjoined to submit his name and place of residence to the secretary of the government; no Sunday newspapers were permitted; no paper could be published until inspected in its entirety by the proper authority. The penalty for violating these regulations was immediate emabarragement for Europe. 258 Wellesley extended these restrictions to Madras and to Bombay as

256 Dundas to Mornington, 21 March 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 136.


258 Ibid., I, 286.
well. Later they were amended to prohibit publication of any war intelligence regarding the departure of ships from any port in India. Pearce, almost always the first to defend Wellesley, was prompted to observe that these regulations varied "in no material particular from the ordinances promulgated by the Star Chamber in A.D. 1585." And they were implemented. On 26 April 1799, immediately after the attack on Seringapatam and simultaneous with the promulgation of his new press regulations, Wellesley ordered the deportation of the editor of one Calcutta newspaper, whose publication "continually appeared tending to magnify the character and power of the French." The editor disappeared from the Indian scene.

Others followed. One, Charles MacLean, decided to challenge the censorship regulations. He was a merchant, and on becoming incensed at the verdict handed down in a certain party's case, wrote a letter criticising the judge and magistrates. Wellesley called upon MacLean and the editor of the paper in which the letter appeared to make a public apology to the judicial office because they had "assumed a privilege

259 Mornington to Dundas, 5 March 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 236.
260 Pearce, Memoirs, I, 286.
of amidadvertising, through the medium of a public print, upon the proceedings of a court of justice, and of censoring the conduct of a public officer for acts done in his official capacity."262 The editor gave way, but Maclean refused, calling Wellesley's behaviour "the ne plus ultra of human despotism."263 Soon enough he was back in England, partly to stone for his audacity and partly because it was discovered that he had entered India without the company's permission. He penned a vituperative letter for publication. "You annihilated the personal freedom of the subject," he told Wellesley, "and extinguished the freedom of the press in India." And in an observation perhaps inspired by testimony given during Hastings's impeachment trial, Maclean declared that "the silent progress of Asiatic influence" under Wellesley's superintendence was sufficient to corrupt Britain and to destroy its freedom.264

Wellesley's espousal of press censorship was sharply criticised in England. Torrens holds that Wellesley eventually came to doubt the efficacy of this policy.265 It was for him,

263 Ibid., p. 106.
264 Ibid., pp. 8, 14-15.
265 Torrens, Marquess, pp. 224-25.
nonetheless, more than a wartime measure. He made no move to ease such censorship after the treaty of Amiens was signed. He believed, and he convinced his disciples, that India was inherently unsuited to press freedom. Such arguments have been voiced by others in India, even subsequent to the colonial period. In Ireland Wellesley was to find himself confronted by a vituperative press, part of which he could not discipline because it enjoyed the support of an influential local class and even official backing in England. In India limits on press freedom were destined to survive Wellesley and even the defeat of Napoleon. It was inherent in the system of evenhanded but autocratic rule.

IX: The Army

Wellesley's "despotism" pervaded his style of government. Almost all of Wellesley's proposed reforms, Dundas reminded him, "suggested an unlimited form of government in India."

Wellesley never saw himself as chief employee of the East India company, but always as a representative of the King. He made himself "inviolable in India" by emphasising rank and by surrounding himself with every conceivable

266 Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 294-95.
He despised the tone of government which Shore had set: "his low birth, vulgar manners, and eastern habits, all added to indolence, timidity and bad health, [has] contributed to relax every spring of this government from one extremity of the empire to the other; and at the seat of government established a systematic degradation of the person, dignity, and authority of the governor-general." Wellesley quickly effected what he considered to be the necessary changes.

Centralised authority is normally expressed most forcefully and graphically in military affairs. Here, ironically, Wellesley's powers were limited, at least initially, by several factors. In the first place his formal jurisdiction comprehended neither the army nor the navy, both of which were commanded by the appropriate military officers under instructions to report directly to London. Secondly, although the defence of India was in the last resort the responsibility of the government rather than the company, the company bore much of the expense and could not be disregarded. Third, after the Mysore campaign the court of directors began to intrude them-

267 Mornington to Dundas, 25 January 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 214-17.

selves more actively in military affairs. Wellesley responded to all these factors by viewing himself as a giant enchained.

At the onset Wellesley was quite unaware of the limitation of his powers. He complained that the army was full of foreigners and deficient in artillery and too small for its responsibilities in India. But in London, especially after Tipu Sultan was crushed, the demand was for a reduction in the size of the army. Wellesley discovered soon enough that he could not have his way. Although he could commandeer the company's bullion he could not recruit the men, and disease and desertion gradually undermined the size and efficiency of the European units at his disposal. He was supported in his criticism by Castlereagh, who was less alarmed than Dundas at the cost of Wellesley's military programs, but up to the moment of his departure Wellesley complained, amid his splendid victories, that the army was not prepared to defend India.

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269 Mornington to Dundas, 10 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 79-81.

270 Dundas to Wellesley, 15 July 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 279-80.

271 Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, 12 November 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 265-66, 312.

To be sure, numerous changes were in order. Early in
the 1790s the home government had made clear its determination
to reorganise the Indian army. The company resisted, but the
most serious opposition came from officers of the company's
Indian forces, especially those stationed in Bengal. This
resistance marked the point of transformation of the company's
officers from a motley collection of adventurers into a self-
conscious officer corps with distinct aims. They success-
fully defied Cornwallis. One observer has blamed Cornwallis
for having permitted this defiance, but he left India before
the full effects were felt. Shore in turn dared not defy
the officers, and fear of the Indian army was one reason why
he remained so passive. Wellesley immediately altered the
state of affairs by giving the army something exciting to do.
There was too much in prospect, and Wellesley was much too
tough, to admit of resistance. "We hear no more of mutinous
combinations of officers," note Thompson and Garratt.275

273 Raymond Callahan, The East India Company and Army
Reform, 1783-1798 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972),
pp. x, xi.

274 "As in the case of Yorktown, Cornwallis walked away
unscathed from a disaster largely of his own making," observes

275 Ibid., p. 207. Background information for this
paragraph was obtained from Arthur N. Gilbert, "Recruit-
ment and Reform in the East India Company Army, 1760-1800,"
Journal of British Studies, XV (1975), 89-111.
Immediately upon arriving in India Wellesley also began to enlarge his geographical jurisdiction in military matters. On 6 July 1798 he wrote to Dundas in a querulous tone asking whether the company's innocent observations about what would constitute a French attack on Britain's Indian possessions was to be construed as placing limits on his discretion. And in the wake of the Mysore campaign, which Wellesley conceived and directed with deliberate detachment from his military advisors, he felt strong enough to launch a campaign of another sort, this one to gain the office of commander-in-chief. This he would obtain by riding roughshod over the reputation of the incumbent and the prominent candidates for succession to the office.

The incumbent commander-in-chief of British forces when Wellesley reached India in 1798 was lieutenant general Sir Alured Clarke. Clarke had entered the office only the year before, and preceded it by serving one year as commander-in-chief at Madras. At first Wellesley was much impressed by Clarke, and for all the wrong reasons: "Clarke is no maker of difficulties," Wellesley wrote happily to London, "and is always ready to encounter them in his own person." Before

276 Mornington to Dundas, 6 July 1798, cited in Torrens, Marquess, p. 163.

277 Ibid., 12 November 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 112.
the end of the year Clarke had proven less accommodating, perhaps because he had become aware that Wellesley coveted his office or wished at least to see it reduced to insignificance. In October 1798 Wellesley sent Dundas a long memorandum declaring that the commander-in-chief should not be seen to be equal to the governor general in council, should not be permitted to communicate directly with London, and should submit all his correspondence to the scrutiny of the viceroy. Wellesley also requested a "concurrent commission from the crown over the army and the navy," much like that of the lord lieutenant in Ireland under Cornwallis. The company, he had assured himself, would be happy to see military authority united in the person of their representative in India. 278

Military correspondence in 1799 was burdened by Wellesley's campaign to remove Clarke without creating a vacancy for another soldier. In April 1799, as Seringapatam lay under siege, Wellesley heard that Clarke was to be replaced. The prospect alarmed him because he had received no satisfaction concerning his request for jurisdiction over the forces. "Let me have a sober, well-mannered, tractable man," Wellesley wrote to Dundas, pending a determination in London that he

278 Ibid., 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 83-84.
himself be made commander-in-chief.279

The impact of the glorious and decisive victory at Seringapatam on Wellesley's bid for supremacy was two-fold: it enhanced his own reputation and it produced a crop of military heroes who might challenge Wellesley's pretensions. Clarke, whom Wellesley had been careful to remove from the scene of combat in Mysore, was deeply injured when the list of honours prepared to celebrate the victory omitted his name. Wellesley laboured to have this reversed, partly because Clarke had indeed rendered valuable service in mobilising resources in Bengal for the campaign, partly because Wellesley felt that he had become too powerful in Calcutta in Wellesley's absence, and partly because in his unhappiness he seemed determined to challenge Wellesley's pretensions.280 In June 1800 Wellesley complained to Dundas that Clarke's mind had been so inflated by his contributions to the Mysore campaign that he now considered Wellesley to be "nothing more than the first member of the government." Forgetting his earlier pleasant comments on Clarke, Wellesley now talked of his "false and frivolous mind," and of his character, composed

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279Ibid., 21 April 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 142-43.

280Mornington to Dundas, 27 January 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 223-24; Mornington to Dundas, 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 72.
of low pride and ridiculous vanity." Clarke was the first of several unfortunate public servants who would serve as targets for Wellesley's character assassination exercises. Even more spectacular cases would follow.

The decline and fall of Harris' reputation was even more precipitous. Major General George Harris served as commander-in-chief in Madras from 1797 to 1800. Again Wellesley's first reports were favourable. In October 1798 he told Dundas that Harris' honesty, evenness of temper, zeal and activity made him valuable at Madras, although not equal to the responsibilities of the post of commander-in-chief at Calcutta. A week later, on 6 October 1798, he declared that it was Harris who had been principally responsible for the preservation of the British empire in the south of India. Perhaps more importantly, Harris had helped to counteract the pernicious influence of the unreconstructed Josiah Webbe. Wellesley wanted him promoted and honoured. What a surprise it must have been, then, when Wellesley told

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281 Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 265-66.
282 Mornington to Dundas, 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 80.
283 Ibid., 6 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 88.
Dundas only six months later that Harris was "the most stupid and inefficient of human beings," continually interfering in military affairs! Having delivered that bolt of lightning, Mornington declared that he would prefer him to others as commander-in-chief at Calcutta. In 1800 he left India after being offered an Irish peerage, which he considered inadequate recognition for his services as commander-in-chief at Mysore.

Service outside India was no protection against Wellesley's assaults. Major General Sir James Craig, commander-in-chief of the garrison at the Cape of Good Hope in 1796 and 1797, was also a candidate to succeed Clarke. In 1798 he arrived in India to take command of troops in India's northern frontier area. Wellesley acknowledged his ability and energy, but he complained that it was married to such ill-temper and rudeness that should it persist Wellesley would be compelled "to teach him his duty." Unfortunately, Craig was a great favourite in the company. With difficulty Dundas frustrated Craig's

284 Ibid., 16 May 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 153.

285 Mornington to Dundas, 25 March 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 255-56.

286 Ibid., 1 October 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 79-80.
ambitions when Wellesley declared that he would leave India if Craig became commander-in-chief. 287 There was also Sir Charles Stuart, fourth son of Lord Bute. Wellesley responded to rumors of his candidacy by declaring to Dundas his confidence that such a "madman" would never be permitted to enter India. 288 Six months later Wellesley changed his mind and conceded that Stuart would do well enough at Madras. 289 Stuart arrived in 1800 and died there in 1804.

Wellesley could not know that by 1800 his own objectives had been secured and that he need not fear the pretensions of India's soldiers. In August 1799 Henry Wellesley sailed from Madras equipped with evidence to show the "great inconvenience" which Wellesley had experienced in Mysore by virtue of his limited authority over the army. Henry reached London in December and remained a year. He succeeded in obtaining for his brother a commission as "captain-general" which included complete control over the army. 290 From that point he was,

287 Mornington to Dundas, 21 April 1799, Dundas to Wellesley, 4 September 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 142-43, 293-94.

288 Mornington to Dundas, 21 April 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 142-43.

289 Ibid., 12 October 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 192-95.

in terms of the Irish analogy, viceroy of India, and his authority on the subcontinent was unquestioned. He could afford to be generous without harm to his own pretentions, and he lavished praise on his subordinates in a way which does infinite credit to his best instincts. For the most part his generals responded with service and great sacrifice; Wellesley as the supreme military commander was a success. 291

But there was also the Indian ocean, a forum over which no governor-general of India had ever enjoyed military or civil jurisdiction. In July 1798 Wellesley laid claim to sweeping powers over the navy east of the Cape of Good Hope, telling Dundas that such claims were justified by the governor general's responsibilities over all matters "affecting the general interests whether civil, military, or political, of the company's possessions." 292 Three months later, on 1 October, Wellesley professed to be shocked to learn that rear admiral William Cornwallis had ordered his entire squadron home to England without first obtaining the viceroy's permission. To Wellesley this offered conclusive proof that there must be a superintending power to coordinate land and sea operations,

291 Wellesley to Grenville, 1 January 1804, Fortescue MSS, pp. 381–82.

and that this power must rest in Bengal.\textsuperscript{293} One year later the capture by the French of the British vessel Kent distressingly close to Calcutta confirmed in Wellesley's mind the impression that the navy could no longer remain autonomous: "an insult offered to the British flag at the mouth of the Ganges ought not to be felt with less indignation than an insult offered at the mouth of the Thames."\textsuperscript{294} It followed that he must be able to coordinate all military and naval movements or see India exposed to the danger of a successful conquest by France.

Wellesley's efforts bore no fruit. In London Henry Wellesley quickly discovered that there was no disposition to give his brother authority over the Indian Ocean fleet. Dundas made an effort, but resistance at the Admiralty was so strong that he persuaded Henry nothing was to be gained by continuing to press it.\textsuperscript{295} Back in India, Wellesley tried to obtain by intimidation what London declined to concede him as a right. With the departure of Cornwallis Wellesley was left to face admiral Rainier, whose place in history is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{293} Mornington to Dundas, 11 October 1798, printed in Ingram, \textit{Two Views}, pp. 81-82.
\item \textsuperscript{294} Wellesley to Dundas, 25 October 1800, printed in Ingram, \textit{Two Views}, p. 309.
\item \textsuperscript{295} Henry Wellesley, \textit{Diary}, p. 35.
\end{itemize}
assured more by his addiction to mangoes than by the vigor of his maritime activities. In 1800 Wellesley asked, and Rainier refused, to undertake an expedition to capture Mauritius, where a cluster of French warships and pirate craft played havoc on British shipping. On 5 February 1801, therefore, Wellesley despatched to Rainier a lengthy memorandum asserting Wellesley's right to command the navy's resources. He observed that "if no advantage can ever be taken of the temporary or accidental weakness of the enemy's possessions in India, without express orders from England signified through the usual official channels" then Britain could not defend its possessions in the east. It was the duty of the navy to aid the governor general; he could refuse only if his ships were in disrepair or if the project was judged too dangerous. His refusal in this case had impaired the predominant strength of British interests. For the future Rainier would be well advised to remember, in Wellesley's words, that "in time of war, great latitude has always been afforded to the discretion of the government on the spot" and that "the arduous powers vested in me by parliament" were certainly "sufficient to render my opinion in India a substitute for the occasional and unavoidable defect of precise and express commands from the sovereign authority of the British
Rainier, perhaps to his credit, was not browbeaten into submission, and his refuge at sea reduced Wellesley's leverage. Wellesley did not adorn his tenure in India by presiding over a series of naval victories. He never ceased to complain of this.

X: Display

Wellesley's extravagances were impressive. One was the new residence, patterned on that of the Curzon family at Keddleston, and designed by Robert Adam to be a symbol of the new empire which Wellesley was determined to create in India.297 His enormous and costly entertainments, calculated to overawe Indians and Europeans alike, was the talk of Calcutta. There was also Barrackpore, which he seized from the commander-in-chief.298 When he traveled he dressed impeccably and spectacularly, wearing diverse medalions received from foreign governments.299

296 Owen, Wellesley, pp. 756-59.


299 Asiatic Register, 22 September 1802.
Wellesley "never failed to justify his acts of extravagance by considerations of public advantage." Barrackpore became a place for cattle breeding and a forum for agricultural experimentation. Wellesley maintained that Indians would never change their ways unless given the proper example. At his command, therefore, the swamps around his rural retreat were drained and cattle were imported for breeding purposes. The new residence in Calcutta was justified to the itinerant Lord Valentia in the following frank terms: "I wish India to be ruled from a palace, not from a counting house; with the ideas of a prince, not those of a retail-dealer in muslin and indigo." He also justified the need for a personal bodyguard of three hundred men equipped with two light guns.

300 Curzon, British Government, II, 16.

301 H. R. C. Wright, East Indian Economic Problems in the Age of Cornwallis and Raffles (London: Luzac and Co., 1961), pp. 345-46. "Adverting to the genius and habits of the natives of India, it cannot be expected that any attempts will ever be made by them to improve the system of agriculture practiced for ages by their ancestors, unless the example shall be given to them by the government. . . ." (Bengal Public Consultations, 6 June 1805, in Wright, East Indian, pp. 345-46).

302 Cornwallis gave away the cattle as soon as Wellesley departed: Wright, East Indian, pp. 346-47.


Regrettably, justification was often tardy: accounts and estimates related to the new residence were not received at Leadenhall street until 1802, when the new edifice was completed. Well might a writer of doggrel recall in 1824 that

When o'er the dams and banks of Leadenhall
His grand magnificence poured forth its tide
Directors' tears cemented each fair wall
And joint stock sighs but firmer
Knit each rising fall. 305

Thus did Wellesley secure for himself entry into the category of those "sultanised Englishmen" corrupted by despotic power. 306 For Wellesley, however, it was an entirely deliberate process.

XI: Style

In all the analyses of Wellesley's governor-generalship little attention has been given to his style of life and government. The publication of his letters to Hyacinthe permits us to know that he found most vexing the inability or unwillingness of wife and associates in England to understand and defend his policies and aspirations. We also know that he worked hard when in good health, or when engaged in a great


campaign. Years later Arthur told his friend Arbuthnot that his brother "as a man of very fine understanding, but indolent unless compelled, and then he was wonderful as a man of business." He told Arbuthnot of visiting Wellesley in Calcutta after the battle of Assaye and being petitioned by Wellesley's aides to induce him to tend to the despatch boxes; "none of their boxes were [sic] ever opened, and . . . the whole business of the country was in such horrible arrears that the government would get into disgrace with the directors and everyone else." Arthur offered to help his brother, who was so stung by the criticism that he stayed up several nights and cleared away the backlog. 307 This alleged indolence cannot have been the usual state of affairs; the very volume of his despatches suggests the contrary.

Wellesley cultivated a remoteness from his subordinates designed to reinforce his sense of authority. He admitted that he found this loneliness painful but thought it necessary. He felt compelled to entrench himself "within forms and ceremonies . . . and to expel all approaches to familiarity." He found Calcutta society vulgar, and he was determined to effect a "thorough reform of manners." There was, his brothers and a few protegés excepted, no one to relieve "the perpetual

Part of his campaign for a "thorough reform of manners" was conducted under the auspices of lavish official entertaining. Wellesley was permitted to spend £1000 per annum for entertainment and he regularly exceeded this allowance. He built the new residence to accommodate his guests, and then justified the scale of his parties by maintaining that the residence should be used. Thrice a year seven hundred guests were invited to celebrate the King's and Queen's birthday and the new year. Each year one or two other celebrations were arranged. Each included a durbar for prominent Indians, a dance over which Wellesley presided as he sat on a crimson and gilt chair under a crimson canopy, a magnificent sit-down supper, and fireworks and illuminations. The directors of the company could not have been pleased when they received a bill for £3,248 for the fireworks for one night alone. It is clear that Wellesley himself did not bear the burden of these entertainments, for he wrote to Hyacinthe that "although my household is magnificent, and my table open to every respectable person in the settlement, I find my savings far greater than I

308 Mornington to Grenville, 1798, Fortescue MSS, IV, 383.
expected."310 One wonders what the directors thought of such economy.

Wellesley described his daily routine in a letter to Grenville. He rode before breakfast, and worked steadily from 8:30 until 4 p.m. He interrupted the labours of his day only to attend council to go to church on Sundays. He went for a drive at five and dined at six. He seems to have made some friends among the merchant community in Calcutta when he first reached India, but they could not compensate for the loss of the company of friends in England. In Calcutta the number of associates dwindled as they came to see that Wellesley was not interested in matters commercial, and as others died. Mortality was high: "in this county the cry of death is forever in one's ears," he complained to Grenville. His dinner company, as a result, was meagre, for he found most of it "so vulgar, ignorant, rude, familiar, and stupid, as to be disgusting and intolerable."311 And after dinner, because of the heat, no one attempted to write or read, and Wellesley was forced either to endure the company of his subjects or resort to solitude. Generally he preferred solitude.

310 Embree, Grant, pp. 217-18.
311 Mornington to Grenville, 1796, Fortescue MSS, IV, 383.
No taint of scandal touched his administration in India. Stories of Wellesley's sexual liaisons circulated in London and Wellesley was candid enough and insensitive enough to inform Hyacinthe that such activity was necessary during his sojourn in India. \(^{312}\) She seems to have agreed graciously; it is far from clear that he ever formed a local attachment, if his letter to Grenville about Indian women is valid. \(^{313}\) At any rate, his behaviour was certainly discreet, contrasting sharply with his conduct during the decade which followed his return to England.

Wellesley fought boredom in several ways. He tried tiger hunting on one occasion; it intrigued him but by nature sports did not appeal to him and apparently he never hunted again. \(^{314}\) He travelled inland on a couple of occasions, but he carried so large a retinue with him that his aides much preferred to see him remain in Calcutta. They were probably not unhappy to see him devote much effort to the gardens at Barrackpore, where he created a perfect English park,

\(^{312}\) Carver MSS, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 224.

\(^{313}\) Mornington to Grenville, 1798, Fortescue MSS, IV, 383.

including some small hills and a road from the residence at Calcutta cutting straight through the crowded slums and flanked with trees. In 1804 he appointed an expert to collect materials for a scientific study of Indian fauna, and he established a zoological garden at Barrackpore. This he filled with strange and expensive birds, at the company's expense. He bought jewels for Hyacinthe and sent her expensive presents, which she accepted by admonishing him to save money instead.

In the first year he repeatedly urged Hyacinthe to join him in India. She felt compelled to remain in England with the children. Wellesley's friends, bothered by her origins, urged her not to go. Her failure to come reinforced Wellesley's loneliness; he became a Bengal tiger "without even a friendly jackal to soothe the severity of [his] thoughts. He described the melancholy of being separated from

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316 Embree, Grant, p. 212.
318 Bathurst to Lady Mornington, 30 April 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 234.
319 Dundas to Mornington, 4 November 1799, Mornington to Dundas, 21 April 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 209-10, 143.
320 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. i.
his family and talked frequently of returning to England. Instead, however, he dedicated himself to his brilliant despatches and to writing increasingly venomous letters to Hyacinthe. They form the heart of Butler's book and reveal how destructive to his happiness and mental health his self-imposed loneliness had become.

XII: The Marquisate

Wellesley's unhappiness expressed itself most forcefully in the issue of his Irish marquisate. His disappointment at his country's failure to appreciate his achievements in India cast a spell over the entirety of his career in British and Irish politics. After years of frustration in England he had received a chance to establish himself as one of the nation's leaders. Within the first fifteen months of arriving there he vindicated his claim to high honours, at least in his own eyes. They were to be denied, and he would suffer this humiliation the rest of his life.

Before sailing for India Wellesley appears to have left instructions with Hyacinthe in the event honours came his way. He counselled her not to accept an English earldom on his behalf, but would accept a marquisate under the style

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321 Mornington to Dundas, 9 March 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 253-55.
of Wellesley, or the garter. Butler hypothesises that Hyacinthe
did not appreciate the difference between English and Irish
titles and accepted an Irish marquisate. Wellesley, she main-
tains, subsequently used it as a stick to beat her.\footnote{Butler, Eldest, p. 182.}

The real problem seems to have been, as Butler also
realises, that Wellesley’s own high self-esteem had not included
the possibility of so spectacular a victory as Seringapatam
and the chance of obtaining something higher than an Irish
marquisate. Wellesley had left with his banker and confidant
Scrope Bernard in London instructions regarding the question
of honours.\footnote{Dundas to Mornington, 4 November 1799, printed in Ingram,
Two Views, pp. 210–11.} As Wellesley himself put it, he had told Bernard
that if any opportunity arose he should accept an Irish
marquisate on Wellesley’s behalf. “Now, as soon as the well-
meaning fool” received news of Mysore he asked Dundas for an
Irish marquisate, “forgetting that after such glorious
achievements” Wellesley would demand and deserve more.\footnote{Carver MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 211.}

Over the next two years the pouches between London and
Calcutta were weighed down with correspondence concerning the
Irish marquisate. Hyacinthe was more concerned about money
and respect than any particular title. She berated Wellesley
when he refused a prize of £100,000 from the booty of Seringapatam and he accused her of being a thief.\textsuperscript{325} She demanded to be received at court; he agreed, but believed that she had \textit{contributed} to her own ostracism by permitting the crown to bestow a \textit{cheap} marquisate. All of this is discussed in great detail by Butler. There was, however, also a political side to the matter. Wellesley became convinced in the first place that the \textit{Irish} honours confirmed an alienation from Pitt. This correspondence, most of which was subsequently printed by Lord Roseberry, offers valuable insights into the relationship between the two men.

Wellesley's correspondence with Grenville follows another tack. Here Wellesley voiced the opinion that a conspiracy had been hatched among Pitt's friends to insure that Wellesley would never enter the most intimate Pitt circle. He believed that he had been sacrificed to Cornwallis' reputation "or rather to the weak jealousy of his friends," including Hobart.\textsuperscript{326} He at least pretended to believe that Pitt's friends wanted him out of the way, and at length his conviction that this was the case prompted him to decide that he would remain in

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\textsuperscript{325} Owen, \textit{Wellington}, pp. 239-40.
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\textsuperscript{326} Wellesley to Grenville, 4 October 1800, \textit{Fortescue MSS}, VI, 337.
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India to spite his enemies by punishing himself. The Irish marquisate, he told Hyacinthe, had "positively stupified" him and he regarded exile in India or humiliation in England with complete indifference. Only Grenville was excepted from his list of wrongdoers, and he was to find upon his return that apparently Grenville had been corrupted along with the others. Wellesley would never conquer this tendency to assume that all opposition to him was conspiratorial.

There was also the question of the role of the company and Wellesley's position in India. In May 1799, at the moment of triumph in Mysore, Wellesley wrote to Dundas claiming exclusive credit for the victory. If blame had been called for, Wellesley observed, it would have been directed to him; in the same fashion, "I must claim the sole and exclusive merit of whatever is honourable, proud and commending, in our present situation in India." In August he urged Dundas to make the reward immediate and ample; otherwise, he should prefer to remain totally unnoticed. By the time

327 Wellesley to Grenville, 1 May 1800, 4 October 1800, Fortescue MSS, VI, 209, 336-38.

328 Wellesley to Lady Wellesley, Carver MSS, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 266.

329 Mornington to Dundas, 16 May 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 154.

330 Ibid., 8 August 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 174-75.
he received news of the Irish marquisate the need for high honours was identified in his mind with the challenge of ruling India. The victory at Seringapatam, he assured Grenville, had been "received with exultation, and even with the most unqualified admiration in India." Unless in England there appeared a similar feeling, India would inevitably conclude that Wellesley's policies had been judged wrongly, that the company opposed any extension of power in India, and indeed that Britain would not assume the burden and privilege of empire in that part of the world.

Inevitably, the Irish marquisate produced in Wellesley's mind the impression that India was laughing at him. "Never was so lofty a pride so abased," he cried to Grenville in October 1800. "Never was reward so effectively perverted to the purpose of degradation and dishonour." The honours "produced in India precisely the effect which I anticipated," he told Dundas. To Hyacinthe he wrote in terms of unparalleled

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331 Mornington to Grenville, 12 May 1799, Fortescue MSS, V, 49.
332 Ibid., 20 November, 29 November 1799, Fortescue MSS, VI, 49-50.
333 Wellesley to Grenville, 4 October 1800, Fortescue MSS, VI, 336-37.
334 Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 267.
distress: "In my mind I suffer martyrdom... I am ruined here, everyone feels my degradation, everyone pities me."

And finally the most poignant of all his complaints was addressed to Pitt: "I confess to you openly that as I was confident there had been nothing Irish or pinchbeck in my conduct or in its result, I felt an equal confidence that I should find nothing Irish or pinchbeck in my reward... You must therefore expect either to hear of some calamity happening to me or to see me in England... in the most firm resolution to pass the remainder of my life in the country, endeavouring to forget what has been inflicted upon me."335 Wellesley could not rule India under these conditions.336

Of course the Irish marquisate did nothing to undermine Wellesley's power in India. It gave him boils, but that was all. He was praised in England and in India. Letters of congratulation poured in. Wellesley refused part of the Seringapatam booty but received an annuity of £5,000 for twenty years instead; to ease Wellesley's sensitivities about taking a share of the captured loot reserved for the army, the company was forced to purchase the armaments and to give

335Wellesley to Pitt, 1800, PRO MSS 30/8/188, f. 109, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 259.

336Wellesley to Lady Wellesley, 6 June 1800, Carver MSS, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 225.
Wellesley refused a brooch of the order of Saint Patrick made from some of the Tipu's jewels, but he was glad to receive a handsome vote of thanks from the houses of parliament. After Mysore Wellesley's power was greater than ever; his rule in India went unchallenged. Wellesley scarred himself by his reaction to the award, and he was subsequently condemned by public opinion for having made so much of it.

**XIII: Wellesley's Legacy**

After 1805 Wellesley divorced himself almost completely from affairs in India. This divorce was conscious, and reflected Wellesley's angry reaction to what he continued to believe was calculated vicious maltreatment at the hands of government and company. He addressed himself to Indian matters only between 1812 and 1816. A decade later he was invited to return to India as viceroy, but refused. Finally, beginning in 1830, his reputation was vindicated and he determined to prepare a public and permanent record of his


338 Wellesley to Harris, 7 January 1800, Fortescue MSS, VI, 12; Wellesley to Dundas, 1 May 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 263-64.
by having his despatches printed. Across this long span of years Wellesley's Indian achievements at first prejudiced his role as a British politician, and at length raised him to the status of elder statesman. They form a backdrop to his career in British politics, and constitute so completely an extension of his Indian administration in its praiseworthy and regrettable aspects both, that it is worth including here.

Upon returning to England Wellesley was entirely engaged in defeating impeachment propositions. Cornwallis in India attempted to reverse his predecessor's policies, telling General Lake that it was "physically impracticable for Great Britain . . . to maintain so vast and so unwieldy an empire in India; . . . which yields little other profit except brilliant gazettes."339 His instructions were to reduce the extent of British territorial control in India, and Castlereagh urged him to return British rule in India to a state conformable to the acts of 1784 and 1793. It was possible to reverse Wellesley's policy of further expansion, Cornwallis soon discovered, but not to dismantle Wellesley's system of subsidiary treaties.340 Cornwallis was forced to

340Roberts, India, p. 294.
rely on the services of such men as Malcolm, whose talents could not be dispensed with even if loyalty to Wellesley made the new viceroy suspicious of their motives. He was right to be suspicious: Malcolm wrote to Wellesley in September 1805 wishing it had been possible for him to remain in India long enough to dictate a peace which "would have secured the permanent tranquility of India," and trembled at Cornwallis' system.\footnote{Malcolm to Wellesley, 15 September 1805, cited in Kaye, \textit{Malcolm}, I, 330.} Cornwallis did not improve his image in the eyes of these men by scolding Wellesley's disciples for the "almost universal frenzy . . . for conquest and victory" which he found in India.\footnote{Cornwallis to Malcolm, c. July-August 1805, cited in Kaye, \textit{Malcolm}, I, 328.} At any rate the new viceroy was already mortally ill when he reached India, and he died within a few weeks.

News of the death of Cornwallis reached London the same month Wellesley himself returned. Because Cornwallis, in Wellesley's opinion, "had commenced a systematic demolition of all my plans of policy, and had thrown many of our affairs into confusion," it was necessary to give full powers to someone on the spot. He recommended his faithful assistant Barlow.\footnote{Wellesley to Grenville, 29 January, 30 January 1806, Fortescue MSS, VI, 347-48.} Barlow was installed, and although he turned against
Wellesley on many points, he refused to abrogate either the treaty of Bassein or the subsidiary alliance with the Nizam. Lord Minto soon replaced Barlow and by 1809 Wellesley was able to confirm in his own mind the disposition of the new viceroy to refuse any further contraction of British power in India.

In 1811 something of a rapprochement between the court of directors and Wellesley could be discerned, when the company supported a forward policy towards British India's hostile neighbors along the Himalayas. Grant, however, continued to exercise great influence on company affairs, and again in 1812 was able to insist on a policy of retrenchment. In 1813 the company was forced to submit to parliament, as was the case every twenty years, a justification for a renewal of its charter. Wellesley took the occasion to praise the company for its record of service in India but pressed for vesting complete political authority in the government rather than in the company. Wellesley's words of praise were in part self-serving, for they included a eulogy to his favourite subject - the college at Fort William - and they may also have

344 M. Elliot, Countess of Minto, Lord Minto in India (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1880), pp. 183, 194.

encouraged the company in its determination to make the £5000 annual stipend perpetual. In 1816 Wellesley delighted the company and astonished everyone else by opposing Lord Moira's proposal to destroy Maratha power forever by extending the subsidiary system.

Moira, or Lord Hastings, finished a long tenure of nine years in 1822. Hastings had vindicated Wellesley's policies. Wellesley's candidacy was rumored, and Grant, coming to the end of his public career, saw the advantages for religious proselytism in a subcontinent securely attached to Britain. Wellesley did not receive a formal officer; Canning was appointed, but remained in England when Castlereagh committed suicide. Wellesley found an outlet for his talents in Ireland.

Between 1825 and 1830 Wellesley was several times considered a likely possibility for India and on one occasion was offered the post. The question was whether the company would be willing to forget the acrimony of the past. Wellesley would not sail unless vindicated in his policies; it was not, as Butler suggests, a case of there being little room for

346 Kopf, Orientalism, p. 142.
347 Philips, East India, p. 214.
new territorial acquisitions. In 1825 Henry Goulburn, who as Irish chief secretary was usually well informed on the activities of the Irish viceroy, reported to Peel that Wellesley had consented to take India and would be replaced in Dublin by Hastings. Peel in reply observed that because of depressed economic conditions the company was likely to send a "safe stockholders" man. Peel was correct in guessing that Wellesley had not been asked, but the obstacle appears to have been Wellesley. In a letter to a member of the court dated 31 January 1826 he declared that he hoped his political career would not close "without some testimony of rumors" on the company's part. "Any unsolicited symptom of a desire to employ me again would be the most unequivocal retribution," but he saw no possibility of leaving Ireland in the near future, and to wait much longer would see him too old. This was, in effect, an impossible demand to place on the company: an invitation designed to constitute an apology with foreknowledge that Wellesley would decline to go to Calcutta was more than the

348 Butler, Eldest, pp. 502-503.

349 Henry Goulburn to Robert Peel, 19 November 1825, BM, Peel MSS 40331, f. 222.

350 Wellesley to William Wynn, 31 January 1826, BM, Wellesley MSS 37304, ff. 91-93.
company was prepared to do. In March 1827 Canning asked Wellesley about India. Again he refused, and probably because the company had yet to apologise in some form.

Wellesley lived long enough for reconciliation with the company to take another form. In 1827 Wellesley supplied documents to the company demonstrating the injustice of the financial reward of 1799-1800 compared to rewards voted for Cornwallis and Hastings. He noted the heavy expenditure he entailed in refuting Paull's charges, and declared that reconciliation "would be equally honourable to both parties."

There was no response. But in 1836, two years after his final retirement from active public life, Wellesley insured himself a place in the pantheon of India's greatest rulers by superintending publication of his Indian despatches. The first volume of this work appeared in March 1836; by midsummer public reaction was enthusiastic. Brougham praised Wellesley in the Edinburgh Review; Joseph Hume congratulated Wellesley on his having been indicated in the revival of his policies after "twenty years of fruitless negotiation and unsuccessful experiment." Such enthusiasm pressured the company into

351 Wellesley to Col. Merrick Shawe, 14 August 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 268.

action. In October 1837 the court of directors, noting that of the £5,000 supplied annually the company had "too much reason to apprehend that his lordship has very little if any, beneficial interest," voted a supplementary £20,000, which Wellesley's trustees used to purchase an annuity for life of £3,650. 353 Wellesley called the gesture most handsome, and was further delighted to be heralded as "the modern founder of the British empire in India." 354 "In truth," he wrote, "they have awarded to me an inestimable mead of honour, which has healed much deep sorrow, and which will render the close of a long public life not only tranquil and happy, but bright and glorious." 355

The company rushed to do more. It authorised the purchase and distribution in India of Wellesley's despatches, and proclaimed that Wellesley had placed the British empire in India "on a basis of permanent security." 356 On 10


March 1840 the company resolved, "nemine contradice," that Wellesley's services "in establishing and consolidating the British dominion in India upon a basis of security which it never before possessed" warranted that a statue be placed in India house as a "public, conspicuous, and permanent mark of the admiration and gratitude of the East India company."³⁵⁷

On 18 March Wellesley drew up one of his finest letters, nearly the last of thousands which he had composed over a long life:

So high is my estimation of the transcendent honour conferred on me by the unanimous resolution of the whole body of the East India company, that my first emotion was to offer up my thankful acknowledgements to the Almighty power which has preserved my life beyond the ordinary limits of human nature, to receive a distinction, of which history affords so few, if any, examples. Three years have elapsed since this great and powerful body conferred on me a signal mark, not only of honour, but of generous and affectionate consideration. The wisdom of that great body does not deem the value of public services to be diminished by the lapse of time; it is for weak, low, and frivolous minds, incapable themselves of any great action, to take so narrow a view of public merit. True wisdom will ever view time as the best test of public services, and will apportion its rewards accordingly. I, therefore, consider the former act of the East India company as greatly enhanced in value by the deliberation which preceded it. The present consummation of their justice and wisdom is marked by the same spirit of deliberation, reflecting equal honour on those who confer, and on him who receives, this high and glorious reward. At my advanced age, when my public career must be so near its close, it would be vain to offer any other return of gratitude, than the cordial acknowledgements of my deep sense of the magnitude and value of this unparalleled

reward. May my example of success and of ultimate reward, encourage and inspire all the servants of the East India Company to manifest similar zeal and devotion to the service of the company, and of the British empire in the east, and may their continued efforts preserve and improve to the end of time, the interests of that great charge, so long entrusted to my hands.\footnote{Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 18 March 1841, BM, Wellesley MSS, quoted in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 385-86.}

Every generation reassesses Wellesley's impact on India. For the Victorians he became the apotheosis of the imperial statesman. His conceits and vanity, unattractive and often indefensible, constituted an important extra dimension in his ability to impress his ideas and personality on that vast part of Asia. Wellesley himself at the close of his life proclaimed Britain's rule in India to be "the noblest work of humanity, justice and piety ever attempted by any state since the foundation of civilised society."\footnote{Wellesley to Metcalfe, August 1839, BM, Wellesley MSS 37512, f. 161.} "No greater blessing," he also observed, "can be conferred on the native inhabitants of India than the extension of British authority."\footnote{Kulkarni, British, pp. 61-62.} A century and one quarter later there are a surprising number of historians who concede much of what Wellesley claimed as an appropriate verdict for his work in India. Indian historians in general agree with Kulkarni that

\footnote{Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 18 March 1841, BM, Wellesley MSS, quoted in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 385-86.}

\footnote{Wellesley to Metcalfe, August 1839, BM, Wellesley MSS 37512, f. 161.}

\footnote{Kulkarni, British, pp. 61-62.}
while Wellesley's methods and bouts of sham reasoning are very much susceptible to criticism, he was "fully justified in pushing to oblivion as many relics of medievalism as he could."361 In Britain Wellesley has increasingly been judged as a highly effective instrument in an era of almost inevitable expansion of British political power on the subcontinent. After 1750 the unstable world of India did not permit the company to continue expanding its trade in the region without exercising political control, and once obtained political control led naturally to the enforcement of a trade monopoly.362 Indeed, they observe, the dislocations to trade caused by war, followed by realisation that territorial revenues could supplement commercial profits, transformed the company into an instrument of empire.363 Wellesley was among the first to recognise this, and by virtue of his annexations and victories the British attained by 1805 a "position of unassailable supremacy."364

361 Ibid., p. 73.
362 John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade, Economic History Review, second series, VI (August 1953); Wright, East India, pp. 293-94.
Wellesley himself would probably have chosen the words of Wilberforce to commemorate his Indian years: "May it please God," he told Wellesley on the occasion of completing his first year in India, "to crown with success your counsels and undertakings, and render you thus a fresh exhibition and illustration of that phenomenon, never known to the world till the period of the British constitution, of an immense kingdom at the distance of half the globe, governed with a disinterested regard for the happiness of the subjects, ... ruled over with a firmness and a moderation and an enlarged and benignant policy which imparts to the bulk of the people more than they ever before tasted of the blessings of rational and practical liberty."365 Instead, Wellesley returned to England at the beginning of January 1806 to find Pitt dying, the country dispirited, and he himself vulnerable to impeachment.

365 Wilberforce to Mornington, 20 April 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 228.
CHAPTER IX:

IMPEACHMENT
Wellesley arrived in England in January 1806. He was well aware of a groundswell of opposition to his Indian policies within the East India company and parliament’s East India interest. He had returned because impelled to do so. He anticipated a sharp short debate in parliament ending in his vindication. He was upset at the behaviour of the ministry in deying him total support and further honours. He claimed to be saddened and disappointed, and talked insincerely of retiring to the country. His ambition, almost certainly, was to pick up the threads of his parliamentary career which he had abandoned in 1797, supported as he was now by vastly improved finances, a family name which was almost a household word, and brothers who had vindicated the immense trust (enemies called it jobbery) placed in them by Wellesley in India.

What happened was quite different. Impeachment proved expensive and protracted. Much of his savings, funds intended for election activities, went to defend his name. He delayed taking his place in the house of Lords for two years. Pitt died and the Pittites divided.1 Grenville, heretofore his closest friend, combined with Fox, Wellesley’s longtime opponent,

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to form a government which gave aid and comfort to the impeachment drive's supporters. Henry Wellesley, a potential parliamentary force, was indirectly implicated in the Marquess' alleged errors. Arthur was eager to return to the war on the continent. William, loyal though he was, was no match for the artillery marshalled by the opposition. Wellesley had plans to save the country; now he must first save himself.

In retrospect it is quite clear that the impeachment charges could never succeed. They were too vague. They rested upon the testimony of unattractive characters. They threatened to implicate too many people. They were unpopular in a period when the people hungered for news of victories rather than reverses. But Wellesley by his behaviour increased their gravity and, indeed, almost allowed them to succeed. He was not content to see the charges dropped, or quietly forgotten. He wanted vindication and indeed an apology from parliament and its servants for having permitted the issue to attract its attention. Wellesley made no attempt to deny that he had acted in a highhanded manner. He almost seemed prepared to prove, once the charges had been levelled, that whatever their validity the country could not get along without his

services and leadership. Impeachment itself became an avenue for affirming a right to a prominent place in the affairs of the nation for himself and his family.

Impeachment left permanent scars on Wellesley and injured his public career. His brothers' attachment survived Wellesley's vanity, impatience and bad humor; his marriage did not. Wellesley's misreading or at least his extremely prejudiced view of Grenville's conduct during this period led to a permanent breach in their relationship, a breach which injured both parties substantially. His self-imposed isolation from the nation's affairs for two critical years mystified and upset his Pittite colleagues, so that when he took office they were prejudiced against him.

I: The Context

The genesis of impeachment charges against Wellesley lay in the Indian experience of one James Paull. Paull was the son of a clothier, a fact which always bothered him. He was educated at St. Andrews, and dabbled in the law. He went to India at the young age of eighteen and settled in Lucknow about 1790. Within two years he was financially secure. He returned to England in 1801 and set out again for India in 1802. Shortly after his return he was sufficiently well established in business to earn himself the honour of represen-
ting British commercial interests there in negotiations with Wellesley in Calcutta.  

In a lapse from his usual superior ability here, Wellesley misjudged the man and, as far as Wellesley could, befriended him. Paull had apparently been expelled from Oudh shortly after his return to India and had appealed to Wellesley for assistance in returning to his post. Wellesley obliged. Paull subsequently visited Calcutta where he befriended Wellesley's assistants. He seems to have taken especial interest in Benjamin Sydenham, one of Wellesley's aides, and Sydenham was indiscreet enough to betray some confidencies. Sydenham eventually came to despise Paull, and a duel was narrowly averted. Hours before departing India he declared his true reason for associating with Wellesley's friends: to gather information for a group in England who wished to attack Wellesley's politics in India, especially his method for expanding British supremacy in the Oudh and the Carnatic.

Paull's motives have been the subject of considerable speculation. He may have seen this as a short cut to a parliamentary career: Arthur Wellesley was convinced that this was


4Col. Merrick Shawe to David Scott, 3 March 1804, cited in
the case. Paull resented references to his low birth (he lost an arm in India in a duel resulting from his sensitivity) and may have translated Wellesley's addiction for the high style into personal animosity. Nothing is certain of his motives; one modern writer declared that "it is difficult to believe that they were not discreditable."6

Paull would never have succeeded without an audience composed of sympathetic listeners with powerful connections. Sympathisers harboured varied but complementary motives. Some British traders in India claimed to have been subjected to injury under Wellesley's rule. Sir Philip Francis was animated by a desire to inherit Wellesley's old office.7 Sir Charles Grant articulated the grievances felt by the East India company against Wellesley's cavalier disregard for their instructions.8 Pitt's enemies saw a way to strike at him


7George M. Curzon, Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, British Government in India (2 vols.; London: Cassell and Co., 1925), II, 76, 85. Abbot in his diary said that the emissary was Lady Devonshire: Charles Abbot, Baron Colchester, Diaries and Correspondence (3 vols.; London: Murray, 1861), II, 74.

8Hansard XXVI (28 June 1813), 927.
(and, like Lord Howick, the future Earl Grey, lost interest when Pitt died). Lord Temple was moved by questions of Britain's moral right to conquests in India. Richard Sheridan had long opposed Wellesley, and would do so until he was challenged by Paull in the Westminster constituency.9 Lord Grenville, although opposed to impeachment, believed that Wellesley had dangerously overextended British power in India. A large and undifferentiated body in and out of parliament envied or feared the influence and rising fortunes of the Wellesley family: Thomas Creevey recorded their sentiments in his notebook.10 A few, apparently including the Prince of Wales at one point, thought that rattling Wellesley a bit would be fun.

The parliamentary history of Wellesley's impeachment has never been given the treatment it deserves. From 1805 until 1808 it constituted one of the primary issues of debate in the house of Commons, and made a periodic appearance in the house of Lords. The composition of the group which supported the charges inspires little respect. After purchasing himself a seat for Newton, Isle of Wight, in 1805,

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Paull attempted to ingratiate himself with Carlton house. He lost in a contest against Sheridan at Westminster in November 1806, duelled with Francis Burdett, an early and enthusiastic supporter, squandered his wealth, and committed suicide in April 1808. The Prince of Wales apparently encouraged Paull as early as 1804 by giving him praise for having "opened a battery against the Marquis" and his "truly shocking" conduct. He reneged on a promise to Paull to give him a seat in the wake of the dissolution of parliament in January 1806. Carlton house was hardly in a position to bemoan Wellesley's Indian extravagances, and the Prince was probably eased out of the picture by Grenville. Fox and Windham were early supporters, but Fox's enthusiasm waned quickly when Grenville and he formed a government. Francis, aspirant to the Governor Generalship ever since he had helped to impeach Warren Hastings, placed his hopes in Fox in 1806. Fox refused, they quarrelled violently, and Francis allegedly

11 *DNB*, XV, 544-45.
offered to drop the charges if Wellesley would recommend him.\footnote{Abbot, Diaries, II, 74; J. Parkes and H. Merivale, eds., Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis, K. C. B., with Correspondence and Journals (2 vols.; London, 1867).} Of course Wellesley refused.

Serving as a backdrop and precedent for the impeachment bid of course was the Warren Hastings trial of two decades earlier. There were some striking parallels. Hastings had overborne opposition in India in an effort to achieve a fundamental and on the whole salutary reform of the company. The company was grossly misinformed, and its most powerful members convinced themselves that Hastings plotted the extinction of their privileges. Hastings sailed home in January 1785 anticipating a hero's welcome and high honours. Pitt had neatly sidestepped the burden of defending Hastings. During the impeachment trials there were plenty of long and rambling speeches, and Hastings spent most of £100,000 before he was acquitted in 1795. He lingered on to see Wellesley attacked, and most of those who formed the corps pressing for Wellesley's condemnation were still fit and hearty in 1806. Edmund Burke had died, however, and none of the proceedings in Wellesley's case matched the eloquence of the earlier period.

That the impeachment issue did not collapse at the outset was due in part to the widespread feeling that British rule in India continued to rest on a precarious principle, despite the
airing out the question received during the Hastings trial.

Grant was the principal spokesman for those who rested dissatisfied. As chairman of the court of directors Grant was able to fashion a case against Wellesley which was at once political and moral in its main features. To Grant, Wellesley's fundamental objectives tended towards that kind of absolute authority which Portuguese governors had enjoyed in India two centuries earlier. The company, however, had learned by experience that absolute power was no more necessary in India than in England, and he had concluded that India would be "best administered and the national character, of which a just liberty is the animating principle, . . . best preserved from degenerating by a due portion of the mixed government which we enjoy at home." 16 This "mixed government" was the combination of the authority of the governor general, the supreme council, and the London administrative apparatus, all functioning within the limits defined in the company's constitution. Wellesley, concluded Grant, had by his actions rejected that concept. "The governor general had negotiated subsidiary treaties, added vast territories to the company's dominions, and declared war on other states, all without the

16 Court of Directors to the Board of Control, 6 November 1805, Calcutta Record Office, Letters from the Company to the Board, III, 33.
knowledge or consent of the council." Grant's attitude was Gladstonian in its insistence that the home administration must be supreme, and Wilberforcian in echoing the need for granting to Britain's subject peoples the fundamental rights enjoyed by Britain's inhabitants in the home isles.

As was inevitable in the context of a parliamentary debate of the issue, Grant's condemnations sorted themselves out into specific charges of great complexity and precision. Some charges were petty, and the ramschackle nature of the impeachment drive encouraged many wayward arguments and inconsistencies. A weary parliamentary audience was forced to repair to its maps and asked to read thousands of pages of subsidiary documents. Questions of morality jostled amid-adversions against Wellesley's life style at Barrackpore and in the new residence. The landscape was so vast that Wellesley was forced to hire a staff full time to organise answers to the charges; he spent £30,000 in so doing.18 At the end of it all Paull was dead, the ministry of all the talents out of office, parliament bored, and Wellesley in danger of permanent isolation.

17 Court of Directors to Wellesley, 28 November 1804, Calcutta Record Office, Bengal Despatches, XLII; India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 15-19.

18 Wellington, Ireland, p. v.
Wellesley’s defence was founded on several general principles, which made little immediate impression, and on a concerted ad hominem assault on impeachment advocates, a tactic which won the day. Wellesley’s supporters denied of course that allegations about annexations and subsidiary treaties constituting evidence of bad faith towards India’s princes and violations of the company’s constitution were true. But even if true, Wellesley’s supporters maintained that the viceroy’s policies had been fully justified by the Indian political situation. The subsidiary treaties, which constituted the basis of Wellesley’s policy, were based on a critical and realistic appraisal of current conditions. They saved British interests in India from being destroyed and also established a new financial base for the company. Wellesley, his supporters claimed, had been "the efficient cause of our present transcendent situation in the most valuable branch of our foreign empire." Beyond this, they argued that continued British territorial expansion in India was morally justifiable: good government had replaced a corrupt and  


20 Wellesley to Grenville, 24 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 203-204.
tyrannical one.21 Therein lay the central theme for the British presence in India during the next century and one half.

II: The Political Scene in 1806

By the time Wellesley reached England in January 1806 parliament had already witnessed the preliminary round of the impeachment issue. By the end of 1804 the government had made it clear to Wellesley that trouble was brewing and that his return was expected; this obviated the need to recall him formally.22 The court of directors was almost unanimously opposed to Wellesley by this time, but they were unsure how to proceed. Under Charles Grant's leadership they prepared a draft to be sent to India giving the home administration's criticism of the way the company's territories had been ruled under Wellesley. The board of control, under Castlereagh's direction, refused to send the despatch, on the grounds that it was unwise to question publicly Wellesley's actions when they could not be reversed.23 As a result it constituted a protest for the record only.24 In

21Wellesley to the Secret Committee, 14 November 1801, Martin, Despatches, II, 607.


23Board of Control to the Court of Directors, 30 November 1805, India Record Office, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 615-19.

24Ibid., p. 216.
January 1805 Francis moved for papers on the Maratha wars and, to Castlereagh's regret, took the occasion to criticise the military in India. In March Francis wondered aloud why Wellesley had not communicated with the government for more than a year about the war against Holkar. Castlereagh admitted that nothing had been received.

In a related debate Temple claimed to see no bounds for British expansion of British India "but the wall of China." Fox spoke, nothing that conquerors always plead as an excuse the safety of the state. A resolution to condemn the Maratha war was defeated 105 to 46. In June Paull urged parliament to consider Wellesley's maltreatment of the Nawb of Oudh, and reminded his listeners, somewhat extraneously, that Wellesley "was second to no other man in pomp and magnificence on this earth." Castlereagh again admitted that Wellesley had not yet reported in, but advised that a packet from him had been intercepted by the French.

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25 Hansard III (21 January 1805), 47.
26 Ibid., IV (15 March 1805), 29.
27 Ibid., IV (5 April 1805), 244-53.
28 Ibid., V (25 June 1805), 562-66.
29 Ibid., pp. 566-67.
Charles Abbot, the speaker, could note in summarising the major issues of the session that India "excited much astonishment both in and out of parliament," and more so the lack of any communication from Wellesley for more than a year.\textsuperscript{30}

Behind the scenes Pitt's government was trying to hit upon a course of action which would deflate the drive for impeachment, save Wellesley's reputation, and demonstrate that there was concern about Indian conquests. During 1804 Pitt's hold on public opinion, and on life, waned simultaneously. The nation had demanded his return when war resumed, but this represented more a hopeless disenchantment with Addington than solid support for Pitt. Grenville had already split away, and of course now the Addington interest, short of talent but long on parliamentary seats, would also oppose Pitt. Hyacinthe wrote perceptively to Wellesley that Pitt had finally come to Wellesley's defence, but only after the Grenvillites had done so. Both sides hoped to gain Wellesley's support.\textsuperscript{31} Indeed, a monitoring of opinion inside the government and among the prospective opposition should Pitt's government fall would have comforted Wellesley. The King was prejudiced against him, but more so for personal than political

\textsuperscript{30}Abbot, Diaries, II, 20.

reasons. He thought there would be "no enduring" his pretensions, but realised almost everyone was willing to try to, so great was the competition for his support. The government of course could promise immediate office, and the abundance of rumors suggested that upon return he would be invited to join the government immediately, whatever the temper of the impeachment group. As early as August 1804, with the incumbent Foreign secretary Lord Harrowby in ill health, Henry Wellesley wrote to his brother that he was thought to be the likely successor. The rumor was still fresh in January 1805. Later Wellesley was considered heading for the Admiralty. Thomas Grenville, usually a very well informed observer, was certain that Pitt would have a cabinet post ready for Wellesley upon his return. Mulgrave, who had succeeded Harrowby by this time, was referred to as

33 Ibid., II (13 October 1804), 180.
36 Ibid., II, 159.
Wellesley's stand-in. 38

The opposition was equally expectant. Sidmouth, Grenville and Fox, an unlikely group, were working towards a coalition which might supersede Pitt if he faltered or resigned for reasons of health. Grenville and Fox had been concerting their program for more than three years before Wellesley returned. Grenville was eager that Wellesley join their group. In December 1805 he subjected Arthur Wellesley to two days of intensive conversation in which reasons for Wellesley to deny a union with Pitt formed the principal topic. Grenville noted that Pitt had failed to give Wellesley the garter, and assured Arthur that his group had stipulated with Fox that they were to give Wellesley full support in defending his administration. Grenville went so far as to suggest that the King's precarious health and advanced age would mean an early accession of the Prince of Wales. 39 The juncture of Sidmouth posed no problems; Wellesley's relationship with Addington had been one of the closest he had among the old Pittites. 39a Fox's participation in the June 1805 debates on


India, albeit brief, was embarrassing, but Grenville proposed to remedy that deficiency. 40

Wellesley was undoubtedly flattered at the prospect of being much sought after on his return. He had his own objectives. Inevitably his aspirations encompassed all factions, all of Pitt's old friends who now so cordially despised each other. As early as February 1803 he had declared to Addington that his "greatest ambition" on returning to Europe was "reconciling those who ought never to have been divided." 41 A year later, with problems obscuring his hopes, he told his friend and assistant in India, Thomas Malcolm, that he would neither retire from public life (or as he put it, pursue "any conduct so unmanly and unworthy of an hereditary councillor of the empire as a retirement from the public councils of the nation") nor accept office while under a cloud of suspicion. 42 These objectives finally reconciled themselves in Wellesley's mind to a determination not to accept an office which did not vindicate his conduct in India, galvanise the country for war, unite Grenville and Pitt, and enjoy access to wide executive powers.

40 Butler, Eldest, p. 370.

41 Wellesley to Addington, 12 February 1803, Fortescue MSS, VII, 145.

He confessed that he would be the most appropriate leader if the country decided to turn from "a debating society to a limited monarchy." 43

Wellesley was disturbed and astonished to see the strength of the opposition against him when he returned. Even more distressing was the condition of Pitt, whose imminent death meant the loss of a father and friend and the best shield against Wellesley's enemies. Pitt had urged Wellesley to "reckon confidently upon the highest honours and rewards the state had to bestow." 44 Wellesley so reckoned. He was proud of his accomplishments and overestimated his fame. He had, to borrow a telling phrase from an earlier biographer, "stared at the blaze of his own glory till he had grown blind to the dull and disenchanting truth that ninety-nine out of every hundred people in England knew nothing about him." 45

He confessed to his wife that he could not believe that the court of directors would have dismissed him from office; in fact they had attempted to do this and had been frustrated

by Castlereagh and the board of control. It was true that Pitt had pledged to Arthur that Wellesley would be protected. But Pitt had bestirred himself late, and much damage had been done. Many within the government, including Castlereagh, believed a number of the charges to be true. Pitt alive and in good health might have silenced criticism in the house of Commons in a couple of brilliant speeches. But by the time Wellesley sailed from India Pitt was ill and weak. He could no longer maintain the cohesion of his old disciples. His trusted helper Dundas was under the threat of impeachment by the house of Commons, with Addington leading the drive. Grenville and Pitt were estranged, and Fox benefitted from this.

And then by the end of January, days after greeting Wellesley on his return from India, Pitt was dead. His lieutenants were not eager to try to substitute for Pitt in defending Wellesley, and in any case they lacked the skill to do so. As Arthur warned his brother, the people were "much prejudiced" against the conduct of affairs in India. They did not understand the necessity for the recent wars, but their attention could not be held long enough to provide the answers. A parliamentary decision was unavoidable. It would be a burden upon whatever

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ministry held power. 47 This turned out to be, in the first instance, the ministry of all the talents.

It was probably unfortunate that after assessing the situation Wellesley decided to shape his conduct for the immediate future to complement in part the suggestions given him in a long letter from Arthur, written from the continent in December 1805. The letter was a reasoned justification for Wellesley's avoiding attachment to any parliamentary interest for the foreseeable future, and at least until the India impeachment issue had been laid to rest. Pitt had promised to oppose the impeachment faction vigorously. Arthur had also been wooed by Grenville, as has been seen. He thought it best for Wellesley "to remain neutral for some time, and to observe the course of events." He should stay on the defensive: "keep Pitt well charged with information and prepared in the house of Commons, and yourself in the Lords; and whenever an attack is made, lay forth all your strength upon the particular point. . . ."

This advice assumed an active Pitt. It also assumed that Wellesley would be active on his own behalf in the house of Lords. Neither proved correct, the first by circumstance, the

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48 Ibid., p. 539.
second because Wellesley could not bring himself to enter the chamber with his honour sullied. Under these conditions Arthur's advice, to which Henry and William also adhered, turned to dust. Wellesley became a pawn in the relationship between Grenville and Fox when they held power, and there was no protector in the Commons. Wellesley boycotted the house of Lords. The people wondered. An anonymous correspondent asked why Wellesley had immobilised himself in the face of the accusations made by "some narrow-minded commercial men." Torrens agreed: "he had no right to renounce office at the questioning of men whom in private he branded with every epithet of scorn." The Marquess' honour, at which his wife often laughed and sometimes sneered, had combined with the efforts of his enemies to subject him to "a species of persecution perhaps unparalleled in the modern history of England, ... a perpetual and indefinite state of accusation." These were Wellesley's words, and he chose them carefully. Wellesley's primary hope was Canning. Canning's party and Wellesley's party, when the latter was reestablished and expanded, were distinct. But both thought of each other at first as an attractive


51 Ibid., p. 297.
prospective recruit; Canning's group had covered every facet of government activity but the military, and its leader looked to Wellesley to perform this service. Wellesley wanted Canning's services to command the attention of the house of Commons. What transpired between 1806 and 1809 and beyond were two distinct parties with several connections fostered for the most part by the leaders themselves. Among them would be Wellesley's son-in-law Edward Littleton and Wellesley Pole's son-in-law Charles Bagot, both Canningites. Much effort would be devoted after 1806 to fashioning a common course of action. If they held together no Pittite ministry was likely to survive without them. But their ambition in this area was to be compromised by their even higher opinions of themselves.

Wellesley and Canning shared one additional problem: how to deal with Lord Sidmouth. For Canning, the alienation was so complete that after 1805 neither Canning nor Sidmouth could suffer the other to hold office in the same ministry. For Wellesley, there was at least the diametrically opposite views on the Catholic question to divide him from Sidmouth.


54 Denis Gray, Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime
During Wellesley's absence in India Sidmouth had set in motion a political career peculiar beyond that of any contemporary in England. Perhaps no politician, as an early commentator noted, managed to make himself so indispensable to government after having demonstrated that he could not himself manage the country. After 1804 no ministry was safe without his support. In late 1804 Addington was brought into the cabinet and given a peerage to prop up Pitt's new administration. In 1805 Melville's impeachment resulted from Sidmouth's animosity. Fox in 1806 sought and obtained his support, and the collapse of that ministry resulted in part from Sidmouth's desertion.

Almost alone among the Pittites, Addington had remembered to correspond on a fairly regular basis with Wellesley in India. Undoubtedly this lightened Wellesley's low opinion of Addington's ability to govern and his softness on the war. Wellesley was perhaps appalled to see how intense was the animosity between Canning and Sidmouth; at any rate there was little he could do, barring alienation from Canning, except to maintain a civil if far from affectionate relationship with Sidmouth. And this it remained for thirty years. One of the minor notes of Wellesley's later years was the periodic crossing of paths with Sidmouth. Both men lived to an old age, minds clear and prejudices intact.

Minister (Manchester University Press, 1963), p. 224.
As historical figures in the eyes of a younger generation, however, they shared a certain incarnation of those days when both served under the great Pitt. They were at least able to celebrate his memory together. But in politics they never agreed on the issues after India.

The state of the nation and its political condition in 1806 invited every prediction as to who should inherit Pitt's mantle, or indeed whether he had left any inheritance at all. Parliament had retreated some distance towards the factionalism which characterised the confusion following the American rebellion. Pitt had revived Britain and had silenced extreme factionalism for twenty years; he had not eliminated conditions which cultivated this situation. Grenville, Canning and Sidmouth claimed the inheritance he left, and would do so for the next twenty years. Fox, durable and somewhat mellowed, passed from lethargy to the proximity of power under the impact of Grenville's solicitations. Wellesley returned, promising leadership. The country, however, suffered already from a superabundance of leaders. Wellesley, moreover, had impeachment to worry about. For two years he would lead a sort of double life, on the one hand harrassed by his opponents on the impeachment issue, and himself pursuing the phantasm of Pitt's

It fell to the newly installed coalition of Foxites and Grenvillites to brave the crossfire between Paull's impeachment enthusiasts and Wellesley's defenders for the duration of 1806. It was not a position appealing to Grenville. Pitt's death was a great personal blow to him, and the growing roar of Wellesley's enemies constituted an embarrassment. In Grenville's eyes Wellesley had not returned in disgrace, and he knew that had Pitt lived he would have defended Wellesley's record vigorously. But Grenville was less confident of Wellesley's innocence, despite their close personal friendship. And there was Fox to think about. He hated the East India company and abhorred British policy in India. The result was another one of those pragmatic compromises which characterised the ministry of all the talents. Grenville stipulated with Fox that Wellesley should not be made a cabinet issue, nor should it be promoted by any person connected to the board of control in his official capacity. No Foxities were placed on the board itself, a measure perhaps used by Grenville to

Fox reserved the right to make an independent judgement as to Wellesley's guilt or innocence. He believed that Wellesley had definitely overreached himself but he was eager to alienate Grenville on an issue where Grenville's status as "Wellesley's closest friend" made it impossible for him to act as a disinterested party. Among Grenville's own friends, Windham voted with Paul, as did several others. Another group once attached to Grenville now also supported Paul. Grenville opposed giving an office to one member of this group (French Laurence) on the grounds that he was anti-Wellesley. Grenville himself defended Wellesley, but with a discretion irksome to Wellesley and one destined to sour their friendship. By virtue of the moderation displayed by both Fox and Grenville the Wellesley impeachment affair was not likely to destroy the government.

The year 1806 saw a scrupulous adherence to the terms


61 Eastby, "Fox," p. 152.
of the Grenville-Fox understanding on this issue. On 27 January Paull was summoned to Carlton house and informed by Colonel McMahon on behalf of the Prince of Wales that Grenville ("expectant premier") favoured Wellesley. Paull was urged "to lay upon his oars" as others, Francis and Sheridan among them, were willing to do. Paull rejected this course of action, and on the next day was summoned in turn by Fox. Fox said that Grenville was resolved to stand by Wellesley and regretted the fact that Paull had refused the Prince of Wales' request of the day before when the cause could have been given up "with honour." Fox would now "countenance a fair investigation" and would do his duty when the question came before the house of Commons. He would not lend other support. Fox died before the appropriate opportunity came to "do his duty." Francis continued with his "brilliant and mordant" speeches but concluded that impeachment was inappropriate. He was rewarded with membership in the knights of the Bath the following October. Charles Grant, by far the weightiest factor in favour of condemning Wellesley in 1805, made it clear


63 Ibid.

64 Cotton, "Paull," p. 84.
that he would also oppose impeachment, ironically because Francis in his presentations was condemning the company as violently as Wellesley. After the shakedown cruise, then, Paull was left with a core of support consisting (according to Paull himself) of a dozen M.P.s and a couple of peers.

All this was small consolation for Wellesley. A government neutral on an issue central to Wellesley's reputation and future political career was hardly satisfactory. As he told Grenville, he could not oppose the idea of an inquiry without in appearance suggesting that the inquiry was valid. He must, on the other hand, defend himself. If Grenville remained neutral, a private defence was called for. Drawing liberally on his Indian savings, he opened an office in London. At Arthur's suggestion he made friends with journalists who might support his cause, and employed the services of Henry Redhead Yorke, a violent anti-French zealot. His Yorke's Weekly Political Review was one of the most vitriolic papers in the country, and for the proper fee he inserted in its pages

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65 Hansard VI (22 April 1806), 870.
67 Wellesley to Grenville, 23 January 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 75-76.
68 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 3 October 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37415, f. 19.
everything favourable to Wellesley. Paull for his part pushed equally inflammatory material through such rags as the *Aurora* and *British Imperial Reporter*. On a more dignified level, Wellesley's friends confirmed their support for him in an expensive testimonial dinner attended by more than two hundred politicians. Foxites stayed away, but Grenvillites, Pittites, and the Sidmouth interest showed up in impressive numbers.

The position of the Grenville ministry, Wellesley's focus on Paull's charges, and the relevant parliamentary activities were all put into motion 23 January 1806. On that day Wellesley wrote to Grenville adverting vaguely to Paull's intentions and declaring confidently that he feared no investigation. He did not know that Grenville would take a neutral position, because within twenty-four hours, probably after hearing rumors of Paull's boasts that he enjoyed the support of no less than the Prince of Wales, he sent Grenville an urgent note asking for an early meeting. Grenville was out of town and replied that he would intercede with

69 Charles Yorke to Wellesley, 29 December 1805, BM, Wellesley MSS 13806, f. 121.

70 *Aurora and British Imperial Reporter*, included in BM, Wellesley MSS 37416, f. 353.

71 Abbot, *Diaries*, II, 46-47; the dinner cost 2250 gns.

72 Eastby, "Fox," p. 147.
Fox. Grenville's reply did not reflect zeal, and Wellesley wrote in even greater alarm on Saturday the 25th asking for an immediate meeting to discuss Paull's motion to have produced papers needed to frame charges against him. He repeated Paull's boast that Francis, Windham and the Prince of Wales supported him. Wellesley found this incredible, declaring that an honest investigation of Indian affairs would first ask him for all the information at his disposal before going to Parliament. Paull's procedure, he maintained, revealed a vindictive design to "cast a shadow over my reputation in this critical moment for the express purpose of excluding me from public affairs."

He wanted Grenville to see Fox immediately for a full explanation; if not done by Monday "the shaft may be shot and I may be separated from you by absolute necessity." There could be no chance of acting with Fox under these circumstances. 74

The letter ranks as one of the most interesting in Wellesley's large correspondence. Was he as ignorant of Fox's sympathies for Paull's campaign as he appeared to be? Was he giving serious thought to entering the Grenville ministry? He is unlikely to have been ignorant of Paull's relationship to Fox and the Prince of Wales; even the correspondence

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74 Ibid., p. 336.
which has survived shows the contrary, and corridor gossip must have explained all. Prior to seeing Wellesley, probably on Sunday, Grenville asked Buckingham to see the Prince of Wales. He must have done so that very day, because the Prince examined Paull's charges and summoned Francis. Francis led the Prince to understand that he would not "support the charges at present" (although he proceeded to do so). Francis also assured the Prince that Paull could be induced to desist, a prediction which was equally wide of the mark. Meanwhile, Wellesley sent Grenville a second note before the day closed. Things apparently looked darker than ever, for he asked Grenville to secure for him a place in the cabinet so that Fox would be forced to defend him against Paull. This spectacular request was not again the subject of correspondence between the two. Wellesley may have withdrawn it, for subsequently he declared flatly that he would not enter any government until the issue was settled. It is also possible that Grenville did not see Fox prior to debate on the motion 27 January, when Fox declared his neutrality (but not his opposition) to the investigation. Most likely, however, Grenville did see Fox, or at least heard from him enough to

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75 Francis' sentiments were reported by the Marquess of Buckingham to Grenville, 25 January 1806, Fortescue MSS. VII, 337-38.
know that at the present time Wellesley could not be absorbed into the cabinet, or that Fox could not defend Wellesley. Probably Grenville was satisfied with Fox's promise not to participate in the debates, and afraid that Paull's refusal to desist (which was established on the 28th) would expose Fox to a savage attack while Paull proceeded with his campaign against Wellesley. The effect of Wellesley's petition was to moderate but not to reverse Fox's position.  

The issue made its first parliamentary appearance on schedule 27 January. Paull's motion for papers related to Oudh was approved. He denied any animosity towards Wellesley and levelled no specific charges. Fox dutifully declared his neutrality. Then and later much time was consumed by house members who knew little about parliamentary rules and less about India. The procedure was repeated on the 29th, and four more times in February. Wellesley's supporters, unable to oppose the motions without injury to their cause, entered motions of their own for East India company papers going back to the time of Warren Hastings. Paull branded this

78 1 Hansard VI (27 January 1806), 36-41.
79 Ibid., VI (29 January 1806), 108-11; VI (1 February 1806), 118-19; VI (11 February 1806), 162-63; VI (25 February 1806), 187-90; VI (27 February 1806), 229-31.
80 Ibid., VI (1 February 1806), 118-19.
merely a strategy of delay, which, however, was exactly his own, in the hope that at some future date his cause would gain a majority. One long debate produced an accusation that Castlereagh had conspired to hide the company's parlous financial condition. 81

More important was a long and bitter speech by Francis on the 25th. He apparently came to the house in bad humor. He had probably heard just before rising to speak that his hopes for the governor-generalship had been set back. 82

A despatch confirming George Barlow as interim governor to replace the deceased Cornwallis went out the same day. 83

He reminded the house that "a continued labour and perseverance of two and twenty years in the same unprofitable course" of trying to educate England as to the evils of her government in India had "incurred many enmities ... and forfeited every prospect of personal advantage." 84 He was exhausted and embittered and would "never be concerned in impeaching anybody."

81 Ibid., VI (25 February 1806), 192-93.
82 Grenville to Wellesley, 17 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 192.
83 Minutes, 8 March 1806, Board of Control MSS 3, f. 211; cited in Cyril Henry Philips, The East India Company, 1784-1834 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1940), p. 146.
84 Cotton, "Paull," p. 84.
His strident condemnation of the whole system of government astonished Grant. Francis held that Wellesley's conduct, far from being exceptional, was precisely what could be expected under the company's government. Grant rose to defend his company against its Whig opponents, such as Francis, and its Tory opponents, who felt Wellesley was right in curtailling its monopolies and curbing its antiquated private powers.

In March Paul continued to present motions for more documents. Wellesley's supporters pressed Paul to disclose the charges he proposed to lay on Wellesley. He refused. The spectacle presented by Paul angered Wellesley and threatened to disrupt the coalition, still in its early days. On the 8th Grenville and Fox tried again to rid themselves of Francis. For Grenville the attacks on Wellesley were unbearably harsh; for Fox Francis' attack on the company was alienating the court of directors. But Francis would not accept the governorship of the Cape of Good Hope at £10,000 per annum. On the same evening Sidmouth warned Grenville that the government:

85 Embree, Grant, p. 218. Francis condemned Wellesley and the company at the same time, saying that the company's failures made possible a phenomenon like Wellesley.

86 Gray, Perceval, p. 465; John Malcolm, A Sketch of the Political History of India from 1784 to 1823 (2 vols.; London: J. Murray, 1826); Roberts, India, pp. v, vi-vii.

87 Francis to William Windham, 8 March 1806, BM, Add MSS 37383.
must take a stand on the Wellesley issue. Sidmouth himself wished to support Wellesley and Hiley Addington was despatched to deliver a speech on his behalf. Fox was pressed by Paull on the 10th to declare his position. His lame reply was that he "had not yet formed an opinion" and "even if he had would not express it until charges had been placed." Fox urged Paull to bring his charges to the bar of the house immediately, advice which pleased Wellesley's friends. Paull read Fox's remarks to mean he might prove favourable, but lashed out at him for pleading neutrality when he knew Wellesley was guilty.

Fox was growing increasingly sensitive to Paull's taunts; they rang true. In February he had let it be known that he would introduce a motion in parliament against "schemes of conquest in India." He also supported the right of Paull's ally Lord Folkestone to ask for financial information about East India company employees without the necessity of a motion, a device intended to focus on Wellesley's extravagance. When asked to provide an explanation of the difference between Grenville's ministry's Indian policy and that of Wellesley's time, Fox refused. But he did not discourage the inference that

88 Abbot, Diaries, II (9 March 1806), 44.
89 Ibid., II (10 March 1806), 44.
90 1 Hansard VI (1806), 479-81.
Wellesley had been dismissed from his post in India. On 5 March, therefore, Grenville implored Fox not to "persecute" Wellesley. Fox agreed: he would do "precisely and exactly" what Grenville wished, but he thought that an attack on Wellesley "would be very advantageous." Only five days later, however, Fox in the house gave the impression in a short speech supporting Cornwallis' Indian policies that Wellesley's were wrong. Wellesley did not hold Grenville responsible for Paull, but he did for Fox. He asked Grenville on the 14th whether Fox had abandoned his neutrality. The tone was one of high indignation, but Wellesley's correspondence with Buckingham and Temple, who had now determined to support Wellesley, showed an acute awareness of Grenville's dilemma.

Fox was irrepressible. Did he favour impeachment?

"It might happen that a person might disapprove a bad system without being committed to support a criminal charge," he told Paull and the house. It was better to remove the person "when a bad system of government prevails" and insure that

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91 Fox to Grenville, 5 March 1806, Fortescue MSS, VII, 46.
92 Abbot, Diaries, II (10 March 1806), 44.
93 Wellesley to Grenville, 14 March 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37284, ff. 43-44, and Fortescue MSS, VIII, 55.
94 Grenville to Buckingham, 17 February 1806, 12 March 1806, Buckingham, Courts and Cabinets, I, 37.
the system was not subject to such people in the future. Did Fox by chance refer to Wellesley? He refused to say, but the inference was clear. Paull, meanwhile, demanded more and more evidence. When he asked for the court of directors' 1804 and 1805 correspondence condemning Wellesley, correspondence which had been rejected as unsuitable by the board of control, Wellesley wrote to Grenville asking him to press Fox to deny Paull's request. Wellesley argued that his defence should be published simultaneously. The bulk would be so great as to force the house to appoint a committee which would have to sit for two or three years. Grenville replied to Wellesley that he saw greater difficulty in resisting the latest demand for evidence "after what has been granted." He confided to Lord Temple that to resist would lead to a slur on Wellesley's reputation. But he comforted Wellesley by saying that if the court of directors' condemning letter was produced, the evidence used by the

95 Hansard VI (1806), 801.
96 Wellesley to Grenville, 24 March 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 68.
97 Grenville to Wellesley, 24 March 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 69.
court to build this case against Wellesley would also have to be produced, and this could not be submitted without the board of control's testimony explaining why they blocked the letter. Fox, meanwhile, seeing to what lengths Paull was now determined to go, was content to rest his argument on the observation that it was perhaps enough that Wellesley had been dismissed from office. This, of course, Wellesley was not prepared to admit. He concluded the month by pointing out that Castlereagh agreed as to the wisdom of keeping out the papers in question, and thought it was clear that the directors were bent on regaining that measure of control in Indian affairs which they had enjoyed prior to the reforms of 1784.  

V: The Debate: April to June 1806

Wellesley's friends counted some gains. The Sidmouth interest, the actions of which were usually a good bellweather of the prospective victor, had already decided to support Wellesley. On 19 March Hiley Addington introduced a motion commending Wellesley on his management of Indian affairs. The speaker, Charles Abbot, graced the table at a dinner held

99 [Wellesley to Grenville, 26 March 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 71.]

100 [Cotton, "Paull," p. 85.]
in Wellesley's honour on 20 March. Somewhat ominously, Warren Hastings was in attendance. Grenville did not come, but he sent a message regretting that indisposition preventing him from honouring Wellesley in person. Somewhat less confidently Wellesley's supporters interpreted other rumors as a sign that Paull was growing desperate. It was reported that Paull had threatened to produce a hair-raising tale prejudicial to Wellesley. Wellesley's interest also heard rumors that a split between the board of control and the court of directors was developing over the question of a permanent successor to Cornwallis in India.

On 1 April 1806 Arthur Wellesley was returned to parliament for Rye, a government seat which he accepted in order to respond to Paull's charges. The Marquess' defence began to respond with some effect to Paull's continuing accusations. Paull secured further papers on 18 April but still refused to define the charges. Three days later, however, Paull's

101 Ibid., p. 86.
102 Ibid., p. 85.
103 Philips, East India, p. 146.
104 DNB, XX, 1086.
105 Hansard VI (18 April 1806), 796-805.
efforts to secure the controversial correspondence surrounding the court of directors' unsent despatch was defeated by a narrow vote, with both Fox and Castlereagh calling the production inopportune. This forced Paull to unveil his charges or lose further votes on requests. On 22 April, therefore, he hurried through two charges after apologising for their unprofessional appearance. The first charge held that Wellesley had violated the company's financial instructions. Wellesley, it alleged, had in extracting funds from the Nawob of Oudh exceeded the company's resources in his expenditures on various projects in Calcutta, and had lived in an extravagant manner.

A sharp debate followed, in which Wellesley-Pole played a prominent role. Wellesley-Pole observed that while some of the charges at hand extended back to 1798, the court of directors had not seen fit to reprimand Wellesley until 1804. Grant replied effectively by saying that Wellesley had not seen fit to communicate promptly with the company, so that they in turn could not move expeditiously. Grant's success here was obscured, however, by Sheridan's irrelevant allusion to Francis' quest for Wellesley's old office, and by Fox's observation that Paull had not asked for documents germane to the charge. The request was withdrawn and the charge

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106 Cotton, "Paull," p. 87; Hansard VI (21 April 1806), 810-34.
107 Ibid., VI (22 April 1806), 853-54, 857.
expunged from the record. Paull attempted unsuccessfully to have the charges reinstated the next day. The house agreed with Arthur Wellesley that parliamentary practice held that "the evidence should . . . precede the charges."

In retrospect Paull's campaign lost in April the momentum critical to its success. Paull contributed to this by presenting sweeping, vague charges and by showing a flaring temper. Sheridan, an early ally, now became his sharpest critic and was destined to defeat Paull at Westminster at year's end. More important was the strain of impeachment proceedings on the coalition. Central to these proceedings was the question of a permanent successor to Cornwallis. Barlow's temporary appointment had been confirmed in a despatch dated 25 February. Francis had responded, as has been seen, with a vitriolic attack on the whole system of government in India, and Grenville had tried to remove him to the Cape. But Francis had persuaded the Prince Regent that he deserved India. Fox, once an ally, had turned to the Earl of Lauderdale, whose qualifications for the post no one could divine, least of all the court of directors, who were determined to send a man pledged to financial economy, contraction of territories and

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109 Hansard VI (28 April 1806), 945-48.
vigorous defence of the company's anomalies. The alternative was to extend Barlow's tenure long enough to end the Maratha wars and to give the cabinet more time to select a successor. Wellesley had urged this course in February, and the directors reluctantly agreed to the temporary extension. 110

The competition between Francis and Lauderdale became a sensitive cabinet issue in April. Fox was willing to withdraw all support from Paull if Lauderdale was approved. 111 The court threatened to intensify its support for Paull if forced to accept any nominee not originally approved by the court, which once again leaned to Francis. 112 Grenville was reluctant to offend either Fox or the court by selecting Francis or Lauderdale, and entered his own nominee, Charles Ellis, a popular Pittite. Grenville appeased Fox in April and May by making a serious effort to obtain the directors' sanction for Lauderdale. 113 The effect was to mute Fox's opposition to Wellesley, and to increase that of the board. Fox informed

110 Philips, East India, p. 144.
111 Ibid., p. 145.
112 Board of Control to the Court of Directors, 29 May 1806, Board of Control, Letters to the Company, 1784-1836, II, 359; Col. Sweeney Toone to Hastings, 21-30 May 1806, BM, Add MSS 29181, ff. 155-69; Court of Directors to the Board of Control, 7 June 1806, Court of Directors, Letters to the Board of Control, 1784-1836, III, 129.
113 Grenville to Fox, 19 May 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, cited
the house on 18 April that while he was not willing to give
up the India question entirely, it was the system, not alone
Wellesley, which was to blame. Paull misinterpreted Fox's
remarks (an easy thing to do) as constituting an invitation
to attack Wellesley even more vigorously, and he apparently
phrased his 21 April charge in more extravagant terms at the
last minute. Fox, however, joined with Wellesley's defenders
to remove the charge, and upbraided Paull for his ineptitude.

As Paull's position weakened, Wellesley's strengthened.
The two sides, as Fox complained, were locked in a contest
in which Paull's provocations were now being matched by those
from Wellesley's camps. As a result, Fox feared Wellesley's
friends as well as his foes. His efforts to restrain Paull
were being compromised by the Wellesley party's determination
to destroy Paull completely. For the remainder of the spring
Paull continued to demand more papers. His voracious appetite
alarmed the house of Commons, overwhelmed the printing facili-
ties, and angered Arthur Wellesley. Paull's strategy of

in Philips, East India, pp. 147-48; Toone to Hastings, 21
May 1806, BM, Add. MSS 39181, f. 155.

114_1 Hansard VI (21 April 1806), 801.

115_Ibid.

116_Lady Bessborough to Granville Leveson Gower, 23 April
1806, quoted in Castalia Rosalind, Countess Granville, ed.,
The Private Correspondence of Granville Leveson Gower, First
II, 189.
delay was intensified. The Wellesley interest was forced to abet it by demanding papers for the defence. Under pressure Paul formulated a second charge ("high crimes and misdemeanors committed by ... Wellesley in his transactions with ... the Nawab Vizier of Oudh") and obtained a three weeks' extension before debate because of the volume of papers to be read.

Buoyed by the turn of events, Wellesley's defenders and Wellesley himself pressed in June for an immediate resolution to the impeachment issue. It proved to be premature and it provoked Fox into a spate of obstructionism in the last months of his life. On 3 June Lord Temple, supported by Wellesley's defenders, moved for an immediate termination of all proceedings. Fox opposed so precipitous a conclusion of debate and the Oudh charge was set for 18 June. Wellesley in anger wrote to Grenville that "the affair has been suffered by Mr. Fox to proceed to such an extremity as absolutely to require some immediate determination." Two days later he pressed Gren-

117 Hansard VII (8 May 1806), 68.
118 Ibid., VII (12 May 1806), 103-105; VII (30 May 1806), 414-19.
119 Ibid., VII (28 May 1806), 366-94.
120 Wellesley to Grenville, 11 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 184.
vil to ascertain how far Fox intended to let the inquiry go. 121 Afraid that Fox might desert him completely, Paull raised the Oudh charge to a sensational level by blaming Wellesley for the deaths caused in enforcing the treaty—a charge of murder. 122 The government made no move to throw this out, to Wellesley's amazement. It prompted Wellesley to put pen to paper, and to strengthen his resolve not to end his boycott of the house of Lords. "In my present situation, accused of every crime which man can commit, and that accusation having been admitted on the table of the house of Commons without a word of defence from those who hold that house, I really think that it would be indelicate of me to take any part... 123 The charge was read on 9 June. 124

The charge of murder altered the nature of the impeachment struggle just as the Wellesley interest was persuaded that it had defeated Paull. It posed new questions of jurisdiction, for if charges were criminal and not political the East Indian judicature might be responsible. Arthur Wellesley said that

121 Ibid., 13 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 87.
122 Hansard VII (2 June 1806), 482; VII (3 June 1806), 508–514.
123 Wellesley to Grenville, 11 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 184.
124 Hansard VII (9 June 1806), 562–70.
the deaths had occurred in the course of enforcing a valid treaty, and were not murders. Fox agreed with this observation, but based his case against Paull instead on the prospective damage to the dignity of the house of Commons if a charge within its jurisdiction was moved to another forum. While parliament was still in session Wellesley once again wrote to Grenville asking him where Fox stood on the Oudh charges and on prospects for having the matter transferred to the court of India Judicature. He also asked whether Grenville would oppose having the charges dismissed. Arthur took the letter to a meeting with Grenville. Grenville reluctantly hazarded a guess that Fox would oppose Wellesley, but he did not know "how much." Grenville refused to be more specific. Arthur thereupon met with Fox and concluded that Grenville's assessment was accurate. Wellesley's supporters reluctantly concluded that they could not block the hearing of evidence on the murder charge.

Against this bleak background the signal failure of

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125 Ibid., pp. 511-13.
126 Ibid., VII, 66.
127 Wellesley to Grenville, 17 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 191.
128 Grenville to Wellesley, 17 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 191.
Paull on 18 June surprised everyone and again prompted Wellesley to think that the issue was almost settled. Fox had hidden his intentions well enough, for on the 18th, one day after meeting Arthur and emitting such unfavourable signals, Fox attacked Paull hard for framing charges that the evidence would not sustain. He demanded that Paull's request for a further delay be turned down. This ended any chance of moving the murder charges to another forum. Paull's witnesses proved hostile enough to Wellesley, but far from convincing.

Then followed for three days a parade of witnesses defending Wellesley's dedication to economy (defined as his ability to maintain so large an army at so small an expense), to peace (the attainment of which depended upon annexations), and to the company's welfare. The court of directors for their part behaved as if they believed all this. Fox's nominee Lauderdale had already withdrawn his application for Calcutta, and the directors themselves, suddenly aware of their need for a parliamentary grant, abandoned Francis and Barlow. They also tempered their previous support for some condemnation of Wellesley. Paull's motion that the charges

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129 Hansard VII (18 June 1806), 736-52.

130 Ibid., VII (19 June 1806), 776-78; VII (20 June 1806), 780-83; VII (23 June 1806), 799-801.

131 Philips, East India, pp. 148-50.
be printed was deferred by a vote on 25 June. 132 Wellesley was sufficiently encouraged to proceed with plans to leave London for the summer. 133 He even talked of returning to India as governor general. Grenville told Sidmouth that he now believed that the whole thing could be wrapped up quickly. 134 The "impression was very general" that Paull had failed to prove his case, and that he now sought only to delay a final settlement indefinitely.

Grenville was eager to conclude the matter but proved unable to do so. The correspondence for the month of July is scanty, and what happened is unclear. Prior to leaving town Wellesley delivered a valedictory speech complementing his own followers for their work in defending him. 135 Two days later he confided to Grenville his impression that the issue could be left entirely in Grenville's hands, and that his brothers would offer whatever assistance Grenville might request. 136 Certainly Grenville was encouraged to believe

132 [Hansard VII (25 June 1806), 830-32.]
133 Wellesley to Grenville, 26 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 205.
134 Grenville to Sidmouth, 26 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 206.
135 Wellesley to Grenville, 24 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 202-203.
136 Ibid., 26 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 205.
that Wellesley's friends were satisfied to rest their case. If so, Grenville may have been the inspiration for Earl Temple's motion of 6 July to dismiss the first charges against Wellesley, those concerned with financial extravagance. Temple himself said that he had discussed his plan with Wellesley's friends and that they supported it. When the plan was offered to the house of Commons, however, Wellesley Pole and others rose to oppose it and induced the mortified Temple to withdraw his motion on the grounds that any resolution to the question should not be rushed. Temple wrote to Wellesley expressing in heated language his impression that he had been betrayed and refused in the future to take the lead in the matter.137 He sent a copy of this letter to Grenville. Grenville regretted that Temple had seen fit to withdraw from the front ranks of the defence but admitted that this incident demonstrated how grievously "Wellesley suffers from the absurdity of others whom he cannot control. We must now look to do what we can for him next session."138 Paull thereupon brought in a supplementary charge regarding Oudh (the original second charge) with the murder allegations deleted. Permission was granted to print

137 Temple to Wellesley, 5 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 222-23.

138 Grenville to Temple, 6 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 221-23.
What moved the Wellesley interest to foil an effort to dismiss the first charge, an effort which had every prospect of success? In retrospect it seems clear that had the first charge been dismissed, leave to print the second charge might have not have been granted, and Wellesley's torment would have been over. This was Grenville's feeling as well. Grenville of course also knew that Fox was dying, and with his departure were likely to go Paull's prospects for doing anything in the future if no charges remained on the house of Commons' docket. The house had grown impatient with Paull, and probably impatient of the testimony of the defence as well. The conviction was strong that things were not altogether satisfactory in India, and that Wellesley was in part to blame. But even Wellesley's era was now history, and more encouraging reports on the settlement of the Maratha dulled the edge of Paull's criticism of Wellesley's behaviour. Did Wellesley's friends have some enormous counter-charge to bring against Paull? There is no evidence of it, certainly there was no need for it, and with parliament prorogued on 22 July, there was no time to have such items heard. It is probably safest to say that Wellesley wanted vindication rather than release from Paull's

139 Hansard VII (7 July 1806), 958-40.
harrassments in the future, and wanted all charges to be dropped simultaneously. He would eventually secure the vindication he wanted, but not until almost two more years had passed. During those two years Wellesley would remain outside his proper milieu, the house of Lords.

VI: Politics in 1806

The political drama of January 1806 revolved not around the return of the Marquess Wellesley from seven years in India, but around the death of Pitt. Everyone realised this except perhaps Wellesley. Pitt's position in the opening days of the new year was weak. He had handled his commitments as head of the ministry with surprising skill through the year 1805. He had not the chance to meet parliament after Sidmouth left the government and before he himself died, so there was no way to measure whether he would have survived the opening of the new session or not. With Pitt gone, however, the cabinet quickly concluded that the King's call for reconstruction of the existing government was out of the question. Portland advised the King to call at least some of the opposition into government, and Castlereagh urged him not to exclude Fox. The King agreed and on 27 January commissioned Grenville to form a ministry excluding no one.

Wellesley was of course a candidate for office. A cabinet
post was thought by many probably, and some assumed it was inevitable. Paull's charges, or the prospect of them, was not generally considered serious enough to isolate Wellesley. Pitt, as has been seen, was entirely sympathetic, and Grenville offered no problems. The main question was what Wellesley himself wanted to do.

If Pitt had lived, there is every reason to think that Wellesley would have entered the government shortly after his return. Arthur had urged against it, but an appeal from Pitt would probably have proven irresistible. Pitt had made it clear that he intended to offer Wellesley a place, and the weakness of his government would certainly have dictated that he do so immediately. \(^{140}\) There was, in his mind, the unfulfilled promise of the marquisate of the United Kingdom which he might have assumed appropriately enough at the moment he entered office. \(^{141}\) Wellesley was fully prepared to talk to Pitt about this when he rushed to see him within a week of disembarking. \(^{142}\) He saw, however, what no one else had quite


\(^{141}\) Wellesley, memorandum, August 1840, Wellesley MSS, 37317, f. 80.

\(^{142}\) Pitt to Wellesley, 12 January 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, f. 48; Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 188-189.
Wellesley was so convinced that Pitt was dying that he informed Grenville of this on 20 January. Grenville suspended plans to push a motion of censure against Pitt's government when parliament convened. The prospect of Pitt dying disoriented Wellesley as well; this, more than anything else, explains the confusion regarding officeholding reflected in Wellesley's correspondence that month.

Every historian who has looked at Wellesley's conduct during January 1806 has concluded that his refusal to take his seat in the Lords was a "fatal error," for it created a temporary disqualification for office, just what his "ill-wishers most wanted." His self-imposed exclusion was seen as an incentive for competitors to support Paull; the longer his absence, the weaker the threat he posed. Most of these historians have concluded that the "sultanisation" of his character prevented him from lending his honour enough to take his seat. The vivid protraits of Wellesley's return to England

143 Butler, Eldest, pp. 370-71.


painted by Torrens and Malleson are familiar enough: Wellesley
unable to comprehend that few cared for or knew much about
India, and that none of his colleagues was "prepared to admit
as incontestable the predominance of ability which, in his
heart, he claimed for himself." Extended one step further,
this analysis holds that had Wellesley taken his seat, office
would have followed, and the government would have been forced
to defend him in their own interest.

A closer examination of the events of January suggests,
however, that Wellesley's determination not to take his seat
may have been the result and not the cause of his exclusion
from office. There is no doubt that Wellesley found the
transition to life in Britain painful. Lady Bessborough,
whose correspondence contains much that is sensible, wondered
why Wellesley was not sent to Ireland rather than Robert
Clive, Lord Powis (who, as it turned out, did not go either);
the post would constitute a midway resting point between
"sovereign splendor and solitude on one hand;" and private
society on the other. This post was not offered, and thus
affords no indication of how he would have responded. But

146 G. B. Malleson, Life of the Marquess Wellesley, K. G.
pp. 152-53.

147 Lady Besborough to Graville Leveson Gower, 15 January
1806, Granville, Correspondence, II, 159.
an interesting project involving Lord Sidmouth is instructive. On 11 January Buckingham wrote to Wellesley asking him to help bring Sidmouth into a combined opposition against Pitt's government. Wellesley was on good terms with Sidmouth and paid several visits to Richmond Park to discuss the political situation. Sidmouth refused to join the combined opposition. The incident would mean little except that Wellesley's papers contain a note prepared for Sidmouth in which Wellesley declared his appreciation of Sidmouth's support while Wellesley was in India, and added that he would not support any government "constituted upon the principle of excluding your Lordship or your friends." Wellesley did not send this, but he was certainly thinking of his options here. Pitt had died only two days earlier, and on the 23rd the cabinet was considering the King's request to reconstruct and move on. There was every prospect that it might try to do so. Sidmouth would almost inevitably have been excluded for having deserted Pitt at the close of the previous session. Wellesley

148 Buckingham to Wellesley, 11 January 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, f. 27.

149 Sidmouth to Bathurst, 16 January 1804, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Bathurst MSS.

not want to be excluded as well.

At the moment Wellesley was reconsidering the wisdom of obligation to Sidmouth he was calling for a ministry to his heirs. There is no evidence that he planned to be himself. The possibility that Wellesley might have called on to lead the Pittites has been almost universally wanted. To say that there was "not a shadow of that Wellesley was seen as a possible premier says this would apply to others as well. Pitt left his. Grenville was the most likely candidate, and Wellesley urged Grenville to take on the responsibility. Repeated the idea to Wilberforce, calling in his usual rate language for a "union of the approved talents and highest character of the nation." At the same time he never assist "any system of administration evidently equate to the difficulties and dangers of the crisis."


Wellesley sent the same message to Grenville, but also apprised him of his "determination to cooperate" if a non-exclusionary principle was in force. All this said very little, but it did not suggest that Wellesley planned to sit out the process of forming any new government.

The most convincing proof of Wellesley's desire to take office came on 25 January when he told Grenville flatly that it would be "very desirable" that he be in the cabinet, with or without office. This was not perhaps a direct solicitation for office because the King did not commission Grenville to form a government until the next day. Grenville certainly treated the letter as an indication of Wellesley's willingness to serve. A letter probably sent in reply to Wellesley's of 25 January offered him the board of control. With good reason Wellesley said that it was the last office he would want. Grenville may have had other offices in mind, but between satisfying his grasping relations and accommodating the heavier than usual pressures which attend broad bottom governments he may have had little room to maneuver. At any

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155 Wellesley to Grenville, 23 January 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 75; Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 198.

156 Wellesley to Grenville, 25 or 26 January 1806, Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 203.

157 Ibid.
rate, he was saved the burden of a futile exercise by Fox's statement that he definitely opposed putting Wellesley in any post.\textsuperscript{158} Fox told Grenville that Wellesley was the most serious problem confronting the ministry. Grenville and Fox may have concluded that the best solution would be for Grenville to honour Fox's wish to bar Wellesley and Fox to respect Grenville's desire to bar anyone who took an active part in the proceedings against Wellesley.\textsuperscript{159} Grenville had already told his brother that if Fox forced him to make a choice between Wellesley and him, Wellesley would win.\textsuperscript{160} But he was also well aware at this stage what Paull was planning to do, and that Wellesley would certainly pose problems for the government for some time in the future.\textsuperscript{161} But Fox was accommodating, and Grenville proceeded to put together his ministry in remarkably short time.

It seems quite clear, then, that Wellesley was not opposed to taking office. Collectors of idle chatter picked up

\textsuperscript{158}Fox to Grenville, 28 January 1806, BM, Add. MSS 41856, f. 197.

\textsuperscript{159}\textit{Ibid.}.

\textsuperscript{160}Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 25 January 1806, BM, Add MSS 41852, f. 220.

Wellesley's comments that he wanted to rest awhile before returning to public life. This is a politician's normal way of protecting his image in the event his services are not wanted. Had Wellesley entered office in January he would certainly have taken his seat in the house of Lords. Fox opposed Wellesley's admittance to the highest offices; it is not clear whether Fox had agreed to allow him to serve as president of the board of control. This would not seem to be a suitable office for a man whose India policies Fox condemned. On the other hand it was not one of the great offices, and it did not necessarily carry cabinet rank. Fox may have concluded that Wellesley would not take the office. He was, of course, correct: Wellesley in seeking office wanted only one of the very highest places. Indeed, his dream was to unite Pitt's disciples and perhaps lead them. This ambition underlay his actions for the remainder of the year and into 1807.

Wellesley's unhappiness at Grenville's inability to pledge the government to a defence of his India policies did not destroy his intimacy with Grenville. On the surface, relations had never been closer. The India problem notwithstanding, there were large areas of common agreement, and these areas grew as it became apparent that Fox was dying.

\[162\] Lady Bessborough to Gower, 15 January 1806, cited in Granville, Correspondence, II, 155; Wellesley to Grenville, 22 May 1805, BM, Wellesley MSS 37283, f. 346.
Grenville was cut off from the Pittites, and wanted some type of reconciliation. The Pittites for their part still regarded Grenville as one of their own, and indeed even Pitt's heir. Grenville endangered his claims to their affection by allying with Fox. Wellesley was friendly with both groups and served as intermediary for most of 1806.

When Grenville presented his government to the King at the end of January all talents were represented; few were Pittites. The Pittites were leaderless and lacked direction, factors which reduced Grenville's difficulties. At first the Pittites were reluctant to commence systematic opposition to Grenville's ministry, in part because of continuing affection for him, in part because the King needed a government and they could not supply it. They resented Fox. When Pitt died, they approached Grenville through Wellesley to persuade Fox not to oppose a public memorial to Pitt. Grenville assured Wellesley that there would be no problem. But apparently he neglected to consult Fox, for Fox and his friends proceeded to vote against the motion to bury Pitt at public expense. The incident intensified dislike of Fox. It also cast doubts on Wellesley's value as the remaining link between Grenvillites and the Pittites. Most important it sank Grenville's reputation in Pittites' eyes.

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Until they could find a leader to replace Pitt the Pittites were reluctant to confront Grenville openly. At first Canning, Hawkesbury and Castlereagh continued to urge that Grenville be considered Pitt's natural successor. They immediately discarded the idea of an alliance with Sidmouth to overturn Grenville. They hoped also by moderating their opposition to the ministry that Grenville might separate himself from Fox, with Grenville then proceeding to form a new Pittite government. The strategy of a "corps of observation" to keep a jealous eye on measures and a cordial eye on the ministry soon grew tiring. Grenville's attachment to Fox strengthened rather than weakened. Pittites began to dispute among themselves who should be leader, and a deadlock developed among the claims of Hawkesbury, Castlereagh, and Canning. To prove their devotion to the cause Castlereagh, Canning and Perceval began to attack the government with ever increasing intensity. By June every major government measure was being opposed. Grenville himself was attacked for having excluded Pitt's disciples.

The collapse of hopes for weaning Grenville from Fox led to new developments which directly involved Wellesley.

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164 Ibid.
On 10 June Pittites Canning, Castlereagh, Hawkesbury, Eldon and Chatham concluded that they were prepared to form a government if invited to do so by the King. The Pittites, quite unaware that Fox was dying, concluded that they must organise themselves more effectively and behave as a normal opposition. The "corps of observation" idea was abandoned. The efficient cause of this determination was Canning's receipt of overtures from Grenville asking him to join the government. The intermediary between Grenville and Canning, and later Canning and one or two other Pittites, was Wellesley.

It is not clear whether Grenville at first planned to request Wellesley's services as intermediary. He probably inspired Wellesley to meet with Canning on 20 June to discuss Pittites' future plans. Canning told Wellesley that the Pittites planned a second meeting in the near future to discuss their summer and autumn plans. Wellesley advised Grenville that he could not measure Pittites' cohesiveness until they had met. On 30 June Grenville sent a note to Canning asking that they meet secretly. They apparently did so. Canning

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167 Wellesley to Grenville, 2 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 213.


attacked Grenville for impeaching Melville and said that he could not act except in concert with his friends. The conference ended on a bitter note.  

Grenville thereupon abandoned the idea of direct meetings but he must have persuaded himself that Canning's attitude could be changed. Grenville's friends heard rumors that almost every Pittite was eager to join the government in some capacity or other. He called on Wellesley to sound out Canning as to whether he was disposed to join the ministry under certain conditions, and what precisely were these conditions. Wellesley had a lengthy conversation with Canning on 2 July, immediately after a meeting of Pittite leaders. Wellesley reported back to Canning on 3 July that the Pittites were "well disposed" towards Grenville personally. They would act only in a body, and wanted any offer from Grenville to have the approval of the King. They demanded the dissolution of the incumbent government. They were willing to permit Grenville to form the ministry; they were in fact inviting him to lead the Pittites.

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170 Canning to Grenville, 1 July 1806, Canning MSS 63, f. 32; Canning to Mrs. Canning, 1 July 1806, Canning MSS 21, f. 15; Julian R. McQuiston, "Rose and Canning in Opposition, 1806-1807," Historical Journal, XIV (September 1971), 503-527.

171 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 5 August 1806, Fortescue MSS, IX, 440; Carysfort to Grenville, 27 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, IX, 441.

172 Grenville to Canning, 1 July 1806, Canning MSS 63, f. 32.

173 Wellesley to Grenville, 2 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 213.
For Grenville the offer was far too handsome; it would force him to eject the Foxites, which he was not prepared to do. He continued to think that Canning could be tempted to act independently. Canning was remarkably well suited as successor to Fox, and he was ambitious for office. No evidence exists that Wellesley encouraged Grenville to think that Canning might change his mind, but he may have; he did not resist Grenville's request to make another offer in early August, an offer which clearly ran contrary to Pittite guidelines as reported to Grenville on 3 July. Grenville renewed his offer 31 July and repeated it 6 August. It was public knowledge at this point that Fox was dying, and Grenville in effect wanted Canning to take his place. 174 Canning again refused, through Wellesley. On 2 September Grenville sweetened the offer by promising places for Canning's closest friends, such as Spencer Perceval. 175 Wellesley then asked Canning for a list of his minimum requirements. Canning referred this to the Pittites. They demanded five cabinet seats and the exclusion through Wellesley refused this politely.

175Wellesley to Canning, 2 September 1806, Canning MSS 61.
Negotiations continued, however, and Pittite resistance weakened. Some Pittites wanted to see whether Grenville would resist the temptation to negotiate with France. Others wanted to wait until Fox died. But almost all of them were eager to continue talking. Wellesley shuttled between Grenville and them. On 13 September, the day of Fox's death, Wellesley reluctantly concluded that prospects for a settlement were so remote as to end his usefulness as intermediary. On the 16th, however, Canning wrote to Wellesley reviving the idea of negotiations. Early in the month, it transpired, the Pittites had split into two groups, one led by Canning and willing to reduce their demands so as to accommodate Grenville, and another lead by Hawkesbury and Castlereagh, which wanted to follow a course of determined opposition to the ministry. Canning's new initiative came just too late. Grenville told


177 Canning to Lowther, 26 September 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 78.

178 Wellesley to Grenville, 22 August 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 292.

179 Ibid.

180 Wellesley to Grenville, 17 September 1806, encl. Canning to Wellesley, 16 September 1806; Grenville to Canning, 18 September 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 315-19.

Wellesley that he had advanced too far in replacing Fox with Lord Howick (the future Lord Grey) in the Commons to be able to accommodate the Pittites. Grenville succeeded in his negotiations, and also called for a general election before the end of the year.

Wellesley has invariably been cast in the role of impartial intermediary in all this. What did Wellesley see for himself? It is clear that he undertook the mission at Grenville's request rather than on his own initiative. He did not hesitate, however, to urge Grenville to reconstruct his government after Fox died so as to include Canning and his friends and abandon most of the Foxites. In September Wellesley on at least one occasion acted on his own in an effort to keep the negotiations alive. At first Grenville and he had good reason to hope that Canning's allegiance could be secured. Both Wellesley and Grenville stood to gain much if he came in. Prior to the meeting

182 Grenville to Wellesley, 18 September 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 337.

183 Observation by Wellesley on Canning's Letter to Earl Lowther, 2 October 1806, Canning MSS.


185 Wellesley to Grenville, 2 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 212-14.

186 Ibid., 13 September 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 331.
of parliament on 7 July it seemed clear that Wellesley would soon be released from his self-inflicted isolation from the house of Lords, and on his own terms. Wellesley was already thinking of a triumphant return to the Lords, to be celebrated by a thundering speech defending Grenville's policies. Wellesley was apt to prepare many more great speeches than he ever delivered, but times did seem auspicious. With Fox leaving the scene the principal objection to an alliance with Grenville would disappear. Wellesley could expect to take one of the principal offices of the government. The adhesion of Canning would assist Wellesley if Paull continued to pose any problems in the house of Commons. Canning was also close to Wellesley, and his presence would dilute the danger of united opposition from those Pittites who remained outside.

The failure of negotiations, viewed from this perspective, must also have been a disappointment for Wellesley. Wellesley cannot have been pleased with Grenville's refusal to abandon the Foxites in order to accommodate the necessary corps of Pittites. Undoubtedly he shared Canning's amazement that Grenville should think he could have the best of both worlds. He told Grenville as much. He might have succeeded, nonetheless, in his role as mediator if Grenville had been willing

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187 Wellesley to Grenville, 11 June 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 184.
188 Canning to Boringdon, 29 August 1806, BM, Morley MSS, 48219.
to give Wellesley a wider negotiating mandate, especially in August. The Pittites might have cracked then rather than in September, when it proved too late. Certainly Canning regretted his scrupulous loyalty to the Pittites when he heard that Grenville had celebrated the failure of negotiations by calling general elections. Coupled with the revival of Paull's case as the 1806 session drew to a close in July, Wellesley's prospects on the eve of the election of 1806 must have been unsettling indeed.

The incumbent parliament was only four years old when Grenville requested and was granted a dissolution. An election normally heavily favoured the incumbent ministry, but Grenville dissolved too hastily in his effort to capitalise on what he though was a surge of popularity following the breakdown of negotiations with France. The Pittites had reason to fear that Grenville would strengthen himself to the point of virtual invulnerability. Having burned their bridges in the recent negotiations, the Pittites realised that their options were closed. Wellesley on the

189 Wellesley to Grenville, 2 July 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 212-13.
190 Canning to Wellesley, 14 August 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 283.
191 Canning, memorandum, November 1806, BM, Add. MSS 38833, ff. 216-18, cited in Foord, Opposition, p. 43b.
other hand was now on very favourable terms with the ministry. Fox was gone, and his successor Howick was much less concerned with Wellesley's alleged irregularities in India. It was the first election since Wellesley returned and an opportune time to reconstitute his parliamentary interest. A successful showing would cow Paull and perhaps make Wellesley strong enough to enter the Grenville government on the basis of a commitment from his colleagues to silence Paull at the beginning of the next session.

Wellesley's preparations for the poll began well enough. Canning agreed to forsake his safe seat at Tralee and stand against Paull at Newton, Isle of Wight. There was some risk involved in this exercise. Canning may have appreciated Wellesley's efforts during the negotiations, or he may have been eager to get Wellesley into an active role in the house of Lords as soon as possible. His relationship to the main body of Pittites had not improved despite his impeccable response to Grenville's overtures. In any event, Canning defeated Paull. Paull then ran against Sheridan at Westminster. Sheridan had incurred Paull's displeasure during the previous session by criticising Paull's careless presentation of evidence to support his charges. Sheridan was also a Foxite, and relations between Paull and Fox had turned bitter by summer. Wellesley feared that Paull might win at
Westminster, and may have helped Sheridan to purchase votes. Parliament subsequently denied Paull’s claim of election irregularities, and Paull was left without a seat. 192

Establishing a strong parliamentary interest proved much more difficult. The Marquess was better situated financially now than ever before, but there was a distressing dearth of suitable candidates. The nominees in his interest included a heavy dose of Indian acquaintances: Cols. Bannerman, Symes and Montgomery; Major Gore Ouseley and General Harris’ son; and two civilians, Wyatt and Farquhar. 193 These were not India’s best, nor were they members of the very talented group that Wellesley had recognised and trained in India. Wellesley’s protégés were, unfortunately for Wellesley, still on the subcontinent. Wellesley was asked to provide £3000 to finance the efforts of seven of his nominees. A man of more ability, Stephen Lushington, joined the Wellesley interest but paid his own way (he subsequently turned against Wellesley during the impeachment hearings). Arthur Wellesley, who had come in at considerable cost in April, stood again for Rye. William of course stood for

192 Wellesley to Grenville, 3 November 1806, Fortescue MSS, IX, 166-67.
193 Canning to Lowther, 26 September 1806, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 77.
the Queen's country. Henry did not stand; he had returned to his career in the diplomatic field. Standing as an ally but not obligated to Wellesley in any way was Sir John Anstruther, fresh from an impressive career in the Indian judiciary.

Pending the result of the election Wellesley maintained close ties with Grenville. He made no attempt now to hide his desire to win a seat in the cabinet. He was also convinced that his ambition rested upon a future agreement between Grenville and Canning. For the moment he was hopeful that the rhetoric which the election naturally encouraged would not draw these two men apart any further than necessary. There was need, therefore, for a statement agreeable to both Grenville and Canning describing the summer negotiations. Wellesley proceeded with an effort to get this, if at all possible. Starting with a defence of Canning's conduct in a letter written by Canning and dated 26 September, Wellesley suggested detailed changes, which might then be sent to Grenville for his review. Wellesley's suggested alterations were for the most part matters of form. The sensitive subject of Lord Melville was reduced to a safe generality, and the whole negotiation exercise was described in terms of preliminary

194 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 22 October 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37415, f. 21.
conversations rather than direct offers. Canning accepted all of Wellesley's amendments in good humor, and returned the proposed draft to Wellesley on 3 October. Wellesley thereupon sent Grenville Canning's statement and the relevant correspondence. Grenville examined the material and made some minor changes. By the time the statement was ready the polling was in progress, and the force of the common statement was to that extent diluted. It stands, nonetheless, as an impressive indication of Wellesley's objectives at this stage, and of his ability to maintain the friendship of both Canning and Grenville at this critical juncture.

Wellesley also kept in close touch with Grenville for other reasons. Grenville was faced with the unhappy prospect of losing Lord Howick as his replacement for Fox as leader of the house of Commons. Howick's father was gravely ill, indeed on his deathbed. With Howick forced to go to the


197 Ibid., 9 October 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37295, f. 93.

198 Grenville to Wellesley, 16 October 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 95.
Lords, Grenville would have need for Canning's services again, if they could be obtained. Wellesley apparently had long conversations with Grenville about this and other issues, and on 26 October offered to arrange a meeting of the two of them.\textsuperscript{199} The elder Grey survived into the new session, however, and nothing materialised. Wellesley did not deny himself a chance to press upon Grenville, now that amity seemed completely restored, the needs of his family: a bishopric if possible for poor Gerald; a promotion for Henry at the Foreign office; further recognition of Arthur's services in India; and finally a promotion in the peerage for himself.\textsuperscript{200}

These requests stemmed from an assumption that the new parliament would boast a handsome Wellesley interest. This did not happen. Arthur was defeated at Rye. Of the eight "vassals" for whom Wellesley provided funds and exerted himself, only Lushington, the least beholden of all, was successful. William and Anstruther were returned. At considerable expense Arthur finally came in for the Treasury borough of St. Michael's in Cornwall, a place

\textsuperscript{199}Wellesley to Grenville, 26 October 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 401.

\textsuperscript{200}A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 22 October 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37415, f. 21.
in the gift of the crown and at the disposal of the ministry.  

The interest therefore faced the opening of parliament in December with only a half dozen M.P.s pledged to the Marquess. Equally disturbing was the performance of the ministry itself. Grenville's interest and the Foxites gained only about thirty seats. This encouraged the Pittites to revive the prospect of early access to power if Grenville faltered. Within four months Grenville did indeed stumble badly on the old issue of Catholics and the King's tender conscience.

VII: Impeachment Concluded

For a year and one half after the prorogation of parliament in July 1806 Wellesley's impeachment rarely surfaced as an issue in the house of Commons. Most activity took place within the anti- and pro- impeachment camps. It is to be wondered that the impeachment drive's momentum survived the vicissitudes of its foremost supporters. On 20 October Paull's bid for Westminster was pronounced a failure; he had already lost to Canning at Newtown, Isle

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201 T. Brookshank to Wellesley, 19 December 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, f. 152.

202 Foord, Opposition, p. 437.

203 Richard Brinsley Sheridan to Cobbett, 27 October 1806, printed in Price, Sheridan, II, 290-91; Wellesley to Grenville, 3 November 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 421.
of Wight. He made a public plea to Lord Folkestone to carry on, and denounced the Prince of Wales for ignoring his earlier commitment to provide Paull a safe seat. He vowed to continue his campaign until death, and if unsuccessful by that time would resume the crusade in the "uncorrupt parliament" of heaven.

Ten days later he printed a scurrilous letter against Wellesley which incensed the Prince of Wales enough to move him to state publicly his support for the Marquess. Paull petitioned for a reversal of the Westminster verdict, charging bribery and corruption. His presentation was inept and the case was quickly dismissed. His misfortunes continued to multiply. When parliament was again dissolved in the spring of 1807 Paull stood at Westminster, this time against Sheridan and Burdett. The bitter irony of facing as opponents at Westminster both of his earliest supporters proved unbearable. After losing to Burdett he charged him with treachery and challenged him to a duel. Both were seriously wounded, and Paull committed suicide shortly thereafter.

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205 Ibid.
206 H. R. H. The Prince of Wales to Grenville, 30 October 1806, Fortescue MSS, VIII, 413.
207 Butler, Eldest, pp. 373-74.
Partly by virtue of Paull's conduct the impeachment faction was reduced to a handful by the middle of 1807. Grenville had no desire at all to raise the issue. The primary question was whether the case should be moved to an appropriate court. The speaker, Charles Abbot, saw Wellesley on 25 December, and Wellesley impressed on Abbot his opposition to moving the case elsewhere. Abbot reported the conversation to Grenville two days later. Grenville thereupon persuaded Howick to oppose moving the issue of Wellesley's impeachment to a court. Howick observed, however, that Paull on his own initiative might bring charges in the Court of India Judicature. Grenville went further, offering to appoint Arthur Wellesley to the presidency of the board of control to replace Ellis, who as Lord Minto was enroute to India. The Foxites offered no resistance to this. But Arthur preferred not to enter a ministry in opposition to the Pittites, a course which Wellesley may also have urged inasmuch as Grenville's parliamentary majority was small and not likely to survive. The Addington portion of the ministry strongly opposed any assistance to the impeachment forces. On the Pittite side, Castlereagh had

208 Abbot, Diaries, II, 85-86.
209 Philips, East India, p. 150.
defended Wellesley in India and could not change now. Wellesley's position seemed to be one of a superabundance of powerful friends and a small, isolated group of enemies.

Why did impeachment drag on until 1808? The answer almost certainly lies in Wellesley's overdelicate sense of honour and some strategic errors. Wellesley was assured by the speaker that he would be wise to take his seat in the Lords at the beginning of the new parliament. Wellesley still refused. Arthur, moreover, appears not to have altered his view either, even though the advice given in December 1806 was framed in the context of Pitt in power. On 30 November 1807 Arthur provided another round of advice: 1) do not take the initiative in raising the issue; 2) if the issue is raised, move that charges be deleted from the house of Commons journal only if the move was likely to succeed; 3) if the motion would not succeed, do not resist printing of charges, etc.; 4) do resist attempts to transfer the case to another jurisdiction; 5) move immediately to determine the government's attitude towards the case. The last point has already been discussed: the government was friendly. This being so, Arthur's guidance elsewhere was unreasonably conservative. By remaining on the defensive and by refusing

to take his seat in the Lords the Marquess certainly lent credence to the allegation that he regarded the charges as grave rather than frivolous and the threat to his career as serious rather than simply vexatious.

Neither the prosecution nor the defence, as it were, could find many opportunities to attack each other in 1807. On 26 January 1807 Lord Folkestone moved to reprint the Oudh papers. He now disclaimed any intention of proceeding criminally against Wellesley and simply wished to obtain a reading of sentiment on the issue. Permission to reprint was granted in a small and disinterested house. Parliament was dissolved 26 April and reassembled 22 June. Not until 9 February 1808 was the issue raised again. Folkestone was in no hurry to debate the issues; defeat was certain. Thomas Creevey, his colleague, suggested a month's delay which Wellesley's friends failed to block. On 9 March Folkestone submitted twelve resolutions condemning Wellesley's conduct regarding Oudh but not recommending impeachment. The twelve were rejected by a margin of six to one. Anstruther then moved that Wellesley be commended

211 Hansard X (9 February 1808), 410.
212 Ibid., X (22 February 1808), 699-708.
213 Ibid., X (9 March 1808), 993-1042.
for his "ardent zeal for the public service . . . and for the safety of British territories in India." This was approved 180 to 29.\footnote{Ibid., X (15 March 1808), 1089-1148.} A proposal to compensate the Nawob of Oudh was rejected easily on 31 March. Paull committed suicide 15 April; Wellesley upon hearing of it observed that he "could not have died by a more ignoble hand."\footnote{Shawe to Wellesley, 16 April 1808, Wellington, Ireland, p. v.} A last effort to revive the issue came in May when Sir Thomas Turton, undeterred by Paull's sad fate, opened the question of the treatment accorded the Nawob of Arcot. He amazed all by speaking for four hours "without a pause or hesitation."\footnote{Perceval to the King, 18 May 1808, printed in Arthur Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, ff.), V, 78.} It was a futile if heroic effort, because the charges were dismissed 1 June.\footnote{Hansard XI (1 June 1808), 767-98.} On 17 June Wellesley's Indian policies were again commended, this time by a vote of 124 to 15. On 20 June, his forty-eighth birthday, all charges were dismissed.\footnote{Ibid., XI (20 June 1808), 944.} After two and one half years the drama of
impeachment was finally over.\textsuperscript{219}

In: The Death of Pitt and the League of Cabinets

Following the death of William Pitt, the ancient "proprietary political groups" which had been submerged by Pitt's coalition surfaced for the last time before "melting away into the two great political parties." Graville put together a majority of all non-Pittite elements, a considerable accomplishment. Wellesley was content to join Graville, the satisfaction of demonstrating that the Pittite interest was not exclusive. Wellesley did not join, however, and his role as intermediary served as a vehicle for the leading Pittites to impose upon Graville their determination to act in unison, even if they were unacquainted leaders.

Throughout the Graville years, the party that simply the fate of Pitt's dissolution. Beyond the death of Pitt there was the paramount understanding of hostility on the part of the King. Despite some Pittite reservations of acting on "the fixed principle of giving no systematic or serious objection" to the government, and of discouraging the

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I: The Death of Pitt and the Leadership Crisis

Following the death of William Pitt the ancient "proprietary political groups" which had been submerged by Pitt's coalition surfaced for the last time before "melting away into the two great political parties."\(^1\)

Grenville put together a ministry of all non-Pittite talents, a considerable accomplishment. Wellesley was tempted to join Grenville. This would have given Grenville the satisfaction of demonstrating that the Pittite interest was not cohesive. Wellesley did not join, however, and his role as intermediary served as a vehicle for the leaderless Pittites to impress upon Grenville their determination to act in unison, even if they were themselves leaderless.\(^2\)

Throughout 1806 Grenville had more to worry about than simply the fate of Pitt's disciples. Besides the death of Fox there was the persistent undercurrent of hostility on the part of the King. Despite loud Pittite protestations of acting on "the fixed principle of giving no systematic or factious opposition" to the government, and of discouraging

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any hope on the King's part that they would protect him from Grenville and his Foxite friends, the King looked longingly to a change of ministers. The election of late 1806 strengthened Grenville's hand, but not enough to discourage the King, and the untenable situation was ended when the Catholic issue intruded in March of the next year.

The Pittites' conduct in opposition had prepared them for a return to power. Their "corps of observation" served as an interim philosophical base for Pittite cohesiveness. As 1806 wore on, Pittite attacks on the ministry intensified steadily. Until the end of the year they resisted Grenville's tempting offers to join his ministry. The period of greatest danger came in January, only three months before the "Talents" were swept away. Charles Long, one of Pitt's election managers in the Treasury, complained that Pittites still had no head, no positive program, and no possibility of forming a party. Long's melancholia came on the heels of Grenville's success at the polls. But he was probably more worried about Canning, who at last seemed about to succumb to Grenville's overtures.

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4Charles Long to William Huskisson, 12 January 1807, BM, Huskisson MSS 38737, ff. 183-84.
Canning's frustrations at the failure of the "corps of observation" to topple Grenville were reinforced in early 1807 by new offers from the prime minister. Wellesley was not involved as intermediary, but his own political future was directly tied to whatever decision Canning made. In January Grenville sought out Canning. Canning prepared a list of candidates for Prime minister under whom Grenville and he could both serve. Wellesley was not among them, but Wellesley was assured one of the senior cabinet places. Canning had three interviews with Grenville before March. Fortunately for the Pittites, two problems could not be resolved. The Grenvillites despised Canning's friend George Rose ("devoid of all public character," they said) and would not give him a place in the cabinet. The Addingtonians for their part refused to serve with Canning; this was perhaps the only matter of principle which distinguished Addington's friends and they held to it tenaciously. Canning warmly shared a dislike for Addington. Grenville, however, could see no way to proceed without the Doctor's


6 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 27 February 1807, Leeds, Sheepscar Library, Canning MSS 27, f. 7. Used by the permission of the Earl of Harewood.

7 George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, First Marquis of Buckingham to William Grenville, Baron Grenville, 15 February 1807,
support.\textsuperscript{8}

Negotiations on this front were overtaken by events elsewhere. In mid-February the King reluctantly consented to a bill admitting Roman Catholics as officers in the army and navy. This led to a series of misunderstandings. On 12 March Portland exploited these divisions by assuring the King that there was no shortage of able men to replace the "Talents". Portland also encouraged the King to veto any bill prepared on behalf of Catholics.\textsuperscript{9} The King thereupon demanded of the Whigs that they never again raise the Catholic issue. When they refused Portland's impropriety was rewarded with a royal invitation to form a new government.\textsuperscript{10}

Wellesley remained apart from all negotiations leading up to the collapse of the Whig ministry. Grenville had intended to give Wellesley a cabinet post at the time of

\textsuperscript{8}Julian R. McQuiston, "Rose and Canning in Opposition, 1806-1807," \textit{Historical Journal}, XIV (September 1971), 526-27.

\textsuperscript{9}William Bentinck, Duke of Portland, to the King, 12 March 1807, Windsor, Royal Archives, Windsor MSS.12706.

the election. Wellesley had refused. In January and February 1807, when Grenville was pressing Canning, Wellesley was absent from London. He may have been sick, or Grenville may have preferred that this time negotiations with Canning be conducted by a member of the family. Wellesley determined to remain clear of the contest when Grenville sought him out in mid-March. Grenville wanted Wellesley's advice on how to handle the King on the Catholic issue. Wellesley complained that he had been too ill to pursue the matter in any detail, and he suggested rather lamely that Grenville seek a "compromise". Wellesley must have known that no compromise was possible when it came to the question of the King's religious scruples, and Grenville was left stranded. Thus in March, when Grenville resigned, Wellesley was completely neutral, one of only two or three prominent Pittites who had not divided for or against Grenville in any way.

As Foord observed many years ago, "the construction of Portland's government in 1807 established in power the administrative core that ruled Britain for twenty years."
At the beginning it was narrowly based; at the end it comprehended politicians as diverse in their ideologies as Peel and Canning. The coalition would pick up several young recruits, but an impressive number of its most prominent members were present at the creation: Canning; Liverpool; Castlereagh; and Bathurst among them. There would always be a Wellesley presence as well. But the list of ministers submitted by Portland to the King in late March 1807 did not include the Marquess. Wellesley refused an invitation to join the ministry. This refusal was perhaps "one of the greatest errors of his life." Why did he refuse?

On 20 March Eldon and Hawkesbury were authorised to construct a new government under the aging Duke of Portland. Canning urged his colleagues to include Wellesley, and he approached Wellesley on 21 March on their behalf to offer him the office of secretary of state for War and the Colonies. Wellesley accepted the invitation the next day. On 23 March Wellesley changed his mind.

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17 Wellesley to Grenville, 23 March 1807, Fortescue MSS,
face of it Wellesley presumably declined because the impeachment question had not been resolved. Perhaps he also considered the office to be inferior to his talents. It is also not impossible that Canning encouraged him to set his sights higher, for on 21 March, the very day when he carried to Wellesley the proposal for the war ministry, he wrote to his wife Joan that it was "of the utmost importance for the well-doing of the government - and for my personal weight and consequence in the cabinet" that Wellesley be Foreign secretary. It would be "the greatest imaginable stroke that could be struck." On the same day Portland offered Wellesley the Foreign office. According to Canning, Wellesley "wavered all day." At first he refused, and then he retracted his refusal, telling Canning that he would serve if the King commanded him to do so. "He wants this pleasing violence," Canning observed wryly, "to reconcile him to breaking Lord Grenville's fetters." Wellesley also insisted that the King exact no preconditions, and he was duly assured that the King had not. Not until the moment when Portland

IX, 123; Wellesley to Canning, 22 March 1807, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 107-108.


was about to place the cabinet list before the King did Wellesley forward a "positive refusal". The government was formed without Wellesley.

What inclined Wellesley towards a "positive refusal"?

The evidence clearly supports the view that impeachment proceedings were not in themselves a major factor. In later years Wellesley justified his refusal by declaring that he could not enter the house of Lords until he had been vindicated. Both Torrens and Malleson accepted this interpretation at face value. In fact, however, it was Grenville who played the decisive role.

Grenville was still Wellesley's closest friend. At considerable cost to the viability of his ministry he had laboured to attenuate criticism directed by Fox's friends towards Wellesley. He had proclaimed his support for Wellesley's work in India, and betrayed his anger "at seeing my oldest and most intimate friend exposed to the most unjust persecution, after a series of such services as no other man now living has been happy enough to render to his country." He had even denied office to some of

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20 Ibid., 25 March 1807, Canning MSS 22; James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury, diary entry, 24 March 1807, Diaries and Correspondence (4 vols; London: R. Bentley, 1844), IV, 376.

of Wellesley's critics even when they were perfectly qualified and strongly supported. And now, in March 1807, he expected Wellesley to reciprocate.

Upon receipt of Canning's offer 21 March Wellesley told Canning that he must first consult Grenville. He did so late the following afternoon. Grenville must have pleaded forcefully for Wellesley to decline Canning's offer, although no record of the conversation seems to exist. Wellesley wrote to Canning late in the evening saying simply that he had changed his mind and would not accept the secretaryship for War.22 To Bathurst at the same time he merely said that "some circumstances have happened, which have induced me to reconsider the subject."23 On the following morning he received from Grenville a letter which suggests that Grenville was afraid that Wellesley could still be induced to take office, if a more prestigious one was tendered. He warned Wellesley not to join the ministry and thus to expose himself to "almost universal reproach."24 Grenville had good reason to be worried. The offer of the Foreign secretary-

22Wellesley to Canning, 22 March 1807, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 107.

23Wellesley to Bathurst, 22 March 1807, Bathurst MSS, p. 56.

24Grenville to Wellesley, 23 March 1807, Fortescue MSS, IX, 124.
ship was handsome; except that of Prime minister, Wellesley thought it to be the most important in Britain. His own ambition, his resentment at the Whigs' involvement in the impeachment charges, the entreaties of three younger brothers, and the prospect of the garter all encouraged Wellesley not to reject Portland's invitation. Against all this was his oldest and staunchest friend and again he declined. 25

As Canning observed, "Lord Grenville has shaken him to pieces. In such a state of nerves," Canning added philosophically, "it is quite as well that he has not this situation to encounter. It is well for us too, for he might fail us at a moment of need." 26

Grenville had triumphed. Or had he? On the occasion of his first refusal Wellesley assured Canning that he was determined "to have no concern in any opposition which may be forming against the new ministry, and on all occasions I shall be most happy to be of service to you and to them." 27

More important, as the Morning Chronicle was quick to note, the membership of Portland's new government proved to have

26 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 25 March 1807, Canning MSS, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, IV, 537.
"a strong Wellesley complexion." Henry was appointed one of the secretaries to the Treasury. Arthur became chief secretary to the Irish viceroy. William was made secretary to the Lords commissioners of the Admiralty at £4000 per annum. In Henry's case the office was clearly predicated on the eldest brother's approval. In the case of William and Arthur the situation was more complicated. William had never been close to the Grenvillites and certainly felt none of the ties to that family which worked to immobilise Richard at this critical moment. Arthur, on the other hand, had given Grenville military advice on the Cape colony and on the feasibility of conquering Mexico and Argentina. He had negotiated with the Whigs with an eye to assuming a position of importance in Germany or even the post of commander-in-chief in India. But the Grenville ministry had not proven very active in military affairs. Whereas Arthur had earlier advised the Marquess to avoid identification with either the Grenville faction or the Pittites, he was prepared to join a new Pittite ministry as early as October 1806. It was therefore almost

28 Morning Chronicle, 29 November 1806.

29 Arthur Wellesley to Wellesley, 30 October 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37415, f. 19.
inevitable that when the opportunity arose he would join Portland. In a letter to Wellesley dated 27 March he justified his decision. It was obvious, he had concluded, that the Marquess could not oppose the new government, or to go into opposition with Grenville "in aid of those who have always treated you ill" and against those who had been Wellesley's principal defenders. 30 Beyond this, Arthur observed, Wellesley must rely on the good will of the new ministry to put to rest the impeachment controversy once and for all.

Thus Wellesley found himself closely identified with the new ministry, to the prejudice of his relations with Grenville, but not in office himself, to the consternation of Canning and his friends. Wellesley tried to justify his pledge to support the new ministry in a note to Grenville on 23 March. He called Grenville's attention to the continuing hostility of the Foxites towards him and to the intense pressure from his family to participate in the new ministry. 31 On the other hand, by rejecting Portland's offers for a place in the government Wellesley weakened his claims on the new

30 Ibid., 27 March 1807, BM, Wellesley MSS 37415, f. 39; Ibid., Fortescue MSS, IX, 128.

31 Wellesley to Grenville, 23 March 1807, Fortescue MSS, IX, 125.
ministry. This weakness was made more serious by the fact that Wellesley demanded a great deal in return.

Wellesley's fence-straddling — his family in the ministry and he himself outside — was made possible in part by the growth of Wellesley's own parliamentary interest. As Hawkesbury observed when the King asked why Wellesley's inclusion in the cabinet was so necessary, it was important to secure "the active cooperation and exertion of all his family connexions" in order to provide a margin of safety for the new government. 32 The creation of this interest stemmed from certain steps taken a decade and more previous to Wellesley's return from India, and it continued even while he was away. Awe and fear of the Wellesley family interest would surface frequently during the next half-decade. Was this fear justified?

II: The Development of the Wellesley Family Interest

The eighteenth century political interest group in parliament was essentially a family affair. The bedrock of political power was control of seats in the house of Commons. These seats were, ideally, completely under the control of the head of the family. Most of these seats were

boroughs which had been prominent at some time in the distant past. The march of progress had eventually drained them of all claim to parliamentary representation on any grounds other than prescription. Prescription, sanctified by the widely shared belief that the system was virtuous because rather than inspite of its anomalies, constituted the core of influence.

Even in the eighteenth century there were insufficient numbers of pocket boroughs to build a viable parliamentary system. Fortunately, another group of seats could be purchased at any given election from those patrons who had only one or two seats and who were not interested in building a house of Commons interest. Beer Alston, which Wellesley represented from 1784 for several years, was one of these. Its use could be guaranteed only until the next general election or until such time prior to a general election when the incumbent was forced to resign his seat in order to accept an office of profit. Other seats were often the scene of an incessant struggle among a couple of families with historic claims to prominence in the area. This led to a profitable (for the enfranchised voters) battle and a periodic shift in the franchise from one interest to another. Sometimes the clash of family interests involved ideological principles as well; this was the case when the Bedfords
opposed Wellesley at Windsor in 1788.

The system was expensive. Costs, at least those which could be measured in tangible terms, ranged from next to nothing up to £10,000 and more per election. Wellesley's last parliamentary resting place before he went to India was virtually free. His cost was a fundamental commitment to the Grenville interest, which meant a tight rein on private parliamentary initiatives. Grenville was close to Pitt, so Wellesley in effect paid for the seat by voting and speaking as Pitt would want him to. At Windsor he was also subsidised, at least in part. He enjoyed some assistance from the crown, which traditionally provided about £50,000 at each election to the incumbent party. The money and other factors contributed to the tendency in British politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for the party in power to strengthen itself at a general election. This did not always happen, as Wellington discovered in 1830. At Saltash Wellesley bore expenses of more than £2,000 and was unseated on petition. Had he held the seat, he would have gained a foothold at Westminster pretty much on his own initiative. His bargaining power vis-a-vis the Pitt interest would have been higher; he would have owed no one his support.

What incentives stimulated men to enter a game which
involved large expenses, high risks, subservience to a patron on some occasions, and no sure prospect of a meaningful role in the system? Wellesley never recorded his reasons; probably he thought them so obvious that this was unnecessary. On the most pragmatic level there was the prospect of enriching oneself in a perfectly respectable manner. There was no logical correlation between the burden of responsibility and the emolument attached to any office. Sinecures, especially those which paid well, represented capital assets of a sort which could be purchased by a sufficient financial investment, a demonstration of skill, and a modicum of luck. The likelihood of amassing a great fortune in politics was certainly decreasing when Wellesley entered public life. He might have made much more money by sailing to India in 1781 to make his fortune in the trade; one suspects that he would have done well enough. His family's inadequate reserves of money and influence put him at a serious disadvantage in this type of enterprise. If money alone was the incentive, he chose unwisely.

Money, of course, was only one stimulus. Finances troubled Wellesley only when his creditors wondered how they would be repaid. Wellesley's commitment to politics reflected a strong conviction that this was the proper profession for a gentleman. Would he have sought success in other lines had he not known Grenville? Probably he would have entered
politics anyway; his penultimate escapade at Harrow suggests that he was already finding the public forum an exciting place. Grenville may, however, have added fuel to Wellesley's ambition. The gap in their initial prospects, the ease with which Grenville achieved public prominence, the grace and easy superintendence the Grenville family exercised over their offices, parliamentary clients and party affiliates must have struck Wellesley forcefully. He was exceedingly proud and excessively confident of his own abilities. He reflected his relatively precarious beginnings and the great impression made on Eton in attempting to overcome his comparatively modest beginnings. Only a successful political career in the context of the value system of the day was sufficient in the rewards it offered to meet his requirements. His immense correspondence reveals that he apparently never considered any other line of employment. He never pretended, except in periods of his greatest despair, that he would rather be a gentleman farmer or retire from public view. Many of Wellesley's colleagues purported to prefer the private life, and some of them probably did. This was never the case with him.

Other, higher motives may also have intruded. Wellesley declared regularly that his highest ambition was to serve the King, protect the ancient constitution, and preserve the
nation. We need not accept them all at face value, but there was an element of pride in the empire. Wellesley's pride was not directed to his native island; when late in life the Countess of Blessington appealed to his vanity and to his Irish nationality he was probably not amused.\(^{33}\)

No one in the family, in fact, seems to have stressed the Irish heritage, even modestly. But his faith in the empire, in the special dignity and worthiness of British institutions, and in the nation's role as a guardian of civilisation was far more than just an ornament to his public speeches and writings.

For all these reasons Wellesley was dedicated to a career as politician and statesman. The commitment having been made, successful implementation necessarily involved the family. Was the family content to play such a role? Again the immense correspondence of the Wellesley family reveals no ambition other than to public service. The single shade of rebellion of the family against the eldest brother was Arthur's expression of unhappiness when Wellesley refused on one occasion to permit Arthur to purchase his way out of his regiment. Arthur admitted that a bigger stake than merely regimental service was involved; he may have wanted to

\(^{33}\) The Countess of Blessington to Wellesley, 27 March 1840, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 289.
go abroad rather than proceed with the burdens of managing the family's parliamentary interest at Trim.\textsuperscript{34} It is also possible that Wellesley would have preferred to see Gerald not enter the church, but brief references in Wellesley's Indian correspondence indicate that he had a low opinion of Gerald's abilities. Wellesley's ambitions for William were reinforced by the timely inheritance of his namesake uncle's properties and influence in the Queen's county. Henry in his memoirs is candid in admitting that Wellesley made the decision that he should enter the Foreign office.

The final ingredient was Wellesley's out-of-family connections. He was the link between the Wellesleys and the Grenvilles. Arthur does not appear to have secured a position on his own initiative until he became Irish chief secretary in 1807, although his entry into parliament in 1806 in order to assist Wellesley in fending off impeachment charges may have been assisted by contacts he made within the Pitt ministry upon his return from India in 1805.\textsuperscript{35}

After 1790 Wellesley Pole's Irish political base was strong enough to permit him to join Wellesley at Westminster as

\textsuperscript{34}Buckingham to Grenville, 9 January 1791, Fortescue MSS, II, 11.

as an "ally" rather than as a client.

Henry was also needed on the political front. Without interrupting his diplomatic career he stood for Trim in 1795, the third brother in succession to hold the seat. The decision to nominate Henry followed a period of uncertainty and depression for Wellesley. His financial situation was desperate, forcing him to sell the family home in Merrion Street in 1791 and to make plans to abandon Dangan in 1796. He was tempted to go into opposition at that time but saw no future in that direction. Wellesley did not, however, urge Henry to abandon his diplomatic career, and after his election at Trim Henry's responsibilities there were virtually extinguished. He took no role in constituency politics, in sharp contrast the labours of his brother Arthur. By 1807, nonetheless, the combination of Wellesley's Indian friends and his family gave the Marquess sufficient weight so that despite his refusal to serve in Portland's ministry his influence in the new government was considerable.

III: Further Negotiations

After Wellesley had refused two handsome offers the King

Tralee, which, like many Irish seats, was very expensive. He was glad enough to accept Newport instead at a cost of £800 for eighteen months, and held it while he served as Irish chief secretary.

36Butler, Eldest, p. 84.

37A. Wellesley to Sir Chichester Fortescue, 20 December
was opposed to any further efforts to bring Wellesley into the ministry. The rumor mill predicted nonetheless that Wellesley would succeed to the Foreign secretaryship or to some other high office at the first vacancy. In November Castlereagh became ill, and many assumed that he would be forced to vacate the War office. Opinion was nearly unanimous in holding that Wellesley would take his place. 38 But the ministry grew stronger, Castlereagh was restored to health, and no vacancies appeared. 39 It was just as well, because Wellesley himself could not decide on a consistent course of action. In April, only a month after spurning Portland's offers, he wrote to assure the Prime minister of his readiness to serve at home or abroad. 40 Wellesley was reported to have told Sidmouth that he wanted to be reconciled with the East India company and sent out again as viceroy. 41 On 15 November Thomas Grenville predicted


39 Gray, Perceval, p. 158.

40 Ibid., p. 92.

41 Charles Abbot, Baron Colchester, Diary and Correspondence
that Wellesley would soon take office; three weeks later
he was just as confident that Wellesley would not. 42

Thomas Grenville's confusion can be excused. In
parliament some of Wellesley's followers supported and
others opposed the government. 43 Wellesley hid his own
feelings by continuing to stay away from the Lords. From
time to time he erupted in anger at the ministry's conduct of
foreign affairs. 44 At other times he seemed determined to
destroy his relationship to Grenville. Correspondence
between Wellesley and Grenville dropped off. Whig stalwarts
began to write off Wellesley as a political force. 45 Wellesley
in London became as isolated as Wellesley at Barrackpore.

One theme was consistent. Wellesley wanted a suitable
mark of appreciation for his India service. The Whigs had
failed to provide it. Would Portland and his friends prove
more generous? In a long letter to Portland written only
one month after the new ministry was installed Wellesley

42 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 15 November 1807, Fortescue
MSS, IX, 145-46; Ibid., 5 December 1807, Fortescue MSS, IX, 56.


44 Wellesley to Bathurst, 6 April 1807, Bathurst MSS,
cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, IV, 550-57.

45 Roberts, Whig, pp. 335-37.
described his demands in great detail. Pitt had promised that Wellesley would not leave India "without receiving some additional public mark of the cordial sense entertained of his services" and referred specifically to the garter. Pitt died. Grenville though in office could not help. Wellesley had not been able to join the government but he supported it. He deserved the garter, or a garter and a step in the peerage, or a dukedom instead. 46

Portland was reluctant to press Wellesley's claim; the King was unlikely to respond in a generous way, and indeed Portland went so far as to express a fear that the King might go insane at the thought of it. But when the subject of a rise in the peerage for General Lake came up several months later, Portland expressed a wish that Wellesley get the garter before anyone else. The King responded by berating Wellesley. Wellesley, he observed, had received the "highest title he had ever conferred except in a very few instances." He resented Wellesley's "tyranny". He promised to consider Wellesley's claims but refused to pledge anything. 47

The King moved slowly, and the year passed on.

46 Wellesley to Portland, 21 April 1807, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 101-105.
47 Portland to Wellesley, 1 September 1807, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, ff. 179-80.
Wellesley's mood was somber, and, if we trust Hyacinthe's account, he spent most of his time in an elaborate "toilette" surrounded by "low flatterers" and mistresses. He was edgy and imperious; he could not stand to hear praise of others. Arguments with Hyacinthe intensified, and Butler has captured the savagery of the exchanges preserved in the Carter papers. He even fled to his brother's home on one occasion. Hyacinthe recorded every morsel with verve; he dictated replies "in his best treaty-making style." By early 1808, however, Wellesley's mood had brightened. Impeachment charges had been virtually stilled. There was no garter at hand, but Wellesley had "at length got the better of the effect which these base attacks had made upon his mind." He was prepared to resume a public career. He would abandon Grenville and support the government wholeheartedly. And he would also discover that entering the government was more difficult than he had supposed.

IV. The Iberian Scene

Wellesley made his debut in the house of Lords on 8 February 1808. The occasion was an assault by the opposition on the Copenhagen expedition. Grey, Grenville, Moira, Holland

48 Butler, Eldest, p. 384.

49 Richard Colley Wellesley, The Wellesley Papers: The
Erskine and Sidmouth all condemned it. As a brazen act the bombing of Copenhagen and the capture of the Danish fleet had few parallels in British history. The position of the government was made more difficult by the fact that the cabinet had acted on the basis of knowledge of the secret clauses of the Tilsit treaty. This information could not be disclosed. Eloquence was much in demand to supply the want of candor.

Wellesley had been involved in an informal way in preparing the expedition. Wellesley's advice was carried to the cabinet by Canning, and the world was content to believe that such audacious proposals sprang from the head of Lord Chatham. 50 Defending Britain's policy would have been easier if Copenhagen had not been shelled, but Canning and Wellesley proved equal to the task in parliament.

Wellesley's presentation does not strike the reader as either a "masterly argument" or a "triumphant vindication." Vindication had to await the day when the government could reveal that the secret clauses of Tilsit had pledged Russia to force Sweden and Denmark into an alliance against

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Britain. Russia would despatch a fleet to Copenhagen if Denmark refused to cooperate. The "masterly argument" was to some degree circular. Wellesley noted that Denmark could not prevent France from seizing its navy, which France inevitably would do. The navy would be used against Britain. Seizing it was therefore justified by the law of nations, which was "founded on the law of nature," which in turn comprehended the law of self-preservation as its most sacred part. 51

Both houses were treated to a good many speeches on 8 February. Canning's was the best but supporters and opponents of the government alike gave second honours to Wellesley. The house of Lords responded by denying a move for papers by a margin of two to one. 52

On the basis of this performance Wellesley expected an early invitation to join the government. None was forthcoming. Grenville theorised that Perceval was quietly encouraging Wellesley's opponents to keep him out of office. Portland was chronically ill and his death was expected at any time, and Grenville was convinced that Perceval did not

51 Great Britain, The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time (First Series; London: T. C. Hansard, 1820), X (1808), 348.

52 Ibid., X (8 February 1808), 340-83.
want Wellesley to interpose his candidacy between the Prime minister's office and Perceval's aspirations. Canning, who later could be relied on to oppose Perceval at every turn, was still upset at Wellesley's refusal to take office in 1807, or so it was reported. Canning would warm to Wellesley when he cooled to Castlereagh and demanded his ouster. In 1808 rumors of Wellesley's entry were connected to Canning's possible departure. Up to mid-summer these rumors may have had some basis in fact. Canning was certainly not popular with the King, especially after a skirmish in parliament on 25 May in which he virtually conceded the justice of demands for Catholic relief. Portland's various incapacities continued to excite popular opinion, and the Duke of Northumberland recorded for the benefit of his relatives a rumor that Wellesley, Moira, and Melville would act "to restore the confidence not only of this kingdom, but all of Europe."

53 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 10 December 1807, BM, Add. MSS 41852, f. 344; 30 October 1807, BM, Add. MSS 41852, f. 314.

54 William Eden, Baron Auckland, to Grenville, 20 July 1808, Fortescue MSS, IX, 210; Samuel Whitbread to Earl Grey, 6 June 1808, Howick MSS, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 81.

55 Whitbread to Grey, 6 June 1808, Howick MSS, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 81.

56 Hugh Percy, Duke of Northumberland, to Sir Charles
Prospects for a leading role for Wellesley seemed bright. Nonetheless, from mid-summer onwards Wellesley once more found himself back on the defensive much as he had been during the impeachment proceedings. The occasion was Arthur's alleged collapse of sound judgement in Portugal, confirmed in the Convention of Cintra. The real reason was a rising tide of hostility towards the Wellesley family.

Arthur Wellesley's campaign in Portugal was the result of a miscarried plan to capture Venezuela, and bitter infighting in the cabinet, all in the early months of 1808. The original proposal was to seize Venezuela (Spain at this time having succumbed to French forces after the abdication of Charles IV at Bayonne) after a month's foray into northwestern Spain to disorient the French. The French had already managed to outflank the British by inviting Charles IV and his disaffected son Ferdinand to Spain in May 1808, where he extracted an abdication agreement from both (and from other aspirants) and placed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. 57

Hastings, 8 May 1809, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of the Late Reginald Rawdon Hastings (London: HMSO, 1934), pp. 272-73. Northumberland was far from convinced that this trio would amount to anything: "I should look upon this triumvirate more like to accelerate the ruin than the salvation of the country."

Spain was furious, and British hearts warmed to the idea of a groundswell of support for the incarcerated if thickheaded Bourbon king.\textsuperscript{58} Parliament was eager to do something to help the insurgents in Spain, but was quite unfamiliar with the implications of guerrilla warfare, reports of which increased steadily during the summer of 1808. The Whigs, who were already proving under the parliamentary leadership of George Ponsonby to be inept as a parliamentary opposition, divided into two camps and thus left the field free for the Portland ministry, if it could in turn fashion a viable policy.\textsuperscript{59} The ministry at first decided upon an expedition to South America to save the colonies from Napoleon. But as the revolt in Asturias and other areas took on the dimensions of a national movement, it was decided to divert the American expedition to Spain as a show of support. Arthur Wellesley was called upon to assemble troops at Cork, and he proceeded to so in June 1805.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 48-49.


\textsuperscript{60}W. S. Robertson, "The Juntas of 1808 and the Spanish Colonies," \textit{English Historical Review}, XXXI (October 1916), 579; Severn, "Wellesley," p. 50.
While Arthur was trying to assemble the requisite troops, the Duke of York and Lord Chatham competed for control of the expedition in London. Other candidates were considered and rejected. Arthur Wellesley was therefore despatched as temporary head of the expedition. Arthur proceeded to defeat the French at Vimiero in Portugal on 21 August after landing at Corunna in Spain. Just as Wellesley defeated the French, officers senior to the young general reached Spain. One of them, General Harry Burrard, forbade pursuit and Marshal Junot, the defeated French commander, retreated towards Lisbon. Junot proposed a convention under which French troops were to evacuate Portugal in return for safe conduct for his troops. All French proposals were conceded. Delighted at the victory, the British public could not understand why terms for Junot had been so generous. Arthur was one of the three generals who signed the convention. All three were summoned to London to appear before a committee of inquiry.

In London first reports suggested that Arthur had not been involved in negotiations; he had merely signed as instructed by his superiors. 61 News circulated that he

61 Butler, Eldest, p. 395.
would receive a peerage and be elevated to commander-in-chief in Spain. But soon Arthur was also implicated: the Marquess was said to have wept for half an hour and then set about to drum up support.\(^{62}\) He had been following events in Spain closely, and he was fully prepared to act decisively.\(^{63}\) He realised that many who had supported the impeachment proceedings would now turn on Arthur, and Arthur was urged to return to London immediately.\(^{64}\) Many members of the cabinet were prepared to abandon the generals in order to save themselves, and Canning was one of them.\(^{65}\) Castlereagh took a bolder line and supported by the Marquess, he prevailed in the cabinet.\(^{66}\)

Richard and William planned Arthur's defence. They preferred a comprehensive and open inquiry, confident that Arthur would be vindicated. "Unless the public mind is restored to health," William wrote to Arthur, "you can

\(^{62}\) Ibid.

\(^{63}\) Wellesley's Correspondence with Major Campbell, BM, Wellesley MSS 37286.


\(^{65}\) Gray, Perceval, p. 183.

\(^{66}\) Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, to Perceval, 27 September 1808, quoted in Spencer Walpole, Life of Spencer Perceval (2 vols.; London: Longmans, 1874), I,
never recover your place in the public estimation, and to restore the public mind I am sure it is necessary for you to take the pains of having your conduct placed fairly before the public."67 Full disclosure, however, was the last thing the ministry wanted. The committee of inquiry was eager to find no wrong and proceeded to do so. The vote, however, was only four to three in favour of exoneration, and this was valid only in a legal sense. Dalrymple and Burrard were never again employed on active service. Arthur's reputation was sullied, but not irreparably so.

Arthur owed a great deal to his eldest brother. His innocence was not plain to all, although it appears that he would not have permitted Junot to dictate terms as he did if Burrard and Dalrymple had not wanted it. Wellesley may have threatened to take the issue directly to the King if Castlereagh hesitated, and perhaps this helps to explain the decision of the secretary for War to stand by the military trio. There is no evidence, however, what happened except that Wellesley threatened to entrust his political future to Grenville and the Whigs if


not supported.

The initiative came from Grenville. A Grenville "spy" in Wellesley's household reported that the Marquess was indignant at Canning's failure to rush to his brother's defence. Grenville promptly wrote to Wellesley offering support in Arthur's cause and discussing their ancient friendship "in such endearing terms ... as to cause him to shed tears for half an hour." After drying his eyes this second time the Marquess showed the letter to Arthur, who expressed his own gratitude by writing a friendly letter to Buckingham. Both Richard and Arthur proceeded to employ the good offices of Earl Temple, who took Arthur's case to the Whigs and reduced the political pressure directed against the government.

The clamor against Arthur abated. Some effects were permanent. Portland reported to Wellesley that the King was "always ready to reward merit," but would "not

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69 Ibid.

70 A. Wellesley to George Nugent Temple Grenville, First Marquess of Buckingham, 11 October 1808, Buckingham, Courts, I, 260.

71 A. Wellesley to Temple, 14 October 1808, Wellesley to
withhold blame where it shall be proved to have been incurred." The reference was to Arthur, and the Marquess was not comforted. Not only the King was disinclined to support Arthur. Samuel Whitbread wrote to Thomas Creevey that a condemnation of the young general would lower the influence of the arrogant Wellesleys, a good thing indeed. The Morning Chronicle spelled it out in greater detail: "It is evident to the whole nation," reported the paper, that the government was determined "to screen" Arthur Wellesley, since his family was "the most powerful and eminent of any in this country - a family raised to predominance, not by any great or shining talents, nor by actions of a sort that can have been deemed even meritorious. They have beaten the poor Indians, just as dogs would do a flock of sheep out of a field." Cobbett, the great publicist of the age, accused Arthur of lying to the court of inquiry. "It is evident," he told Folkestone, "that he is the prime cause - the only cause - of all the mischief... . Thus do we pay for the arrogance of that damned infernal

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72 Portland to Wellesley, 7 September 1808, quoted in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 240-41.

73 Whitbread to Creevey, 25 September 1808, William Cobbet to Forkestone, 9 October 1808, cited in Gore, Creevey, p. 54.

74 Morning Chronicle, 4 November 1808; Michael Glover,
The fame of the Wellesley family was lowered in the eyes of many people in Britain, but not in the cabinet. When General Moore died Arthur was despatched to Spain a second time. Cobbett was right; the Wellesley family was indeed powerful enough to protect its members. For the Marquess, however, the lesson to be drawn was that he had few friends. He also concluded that the ministry's policy in Iberia was insufficient to meet the needs of the moment. Wellesley was determined to gain entry to the ministry by raising his voice against current policy. In this approach he found an ally in George Canning.

V: Canning's Strategy

Canning was not happy with either the policies or the performance of his colleagues in the Portland ministry. His dissatisfaction centered around two major policy items: Catholic relief; and the conduct of the war in Spain. As to the first, there was little to be done in 1807 and 1808.

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The government had been constructed on the implicit understanding that the King would never again be forced to confront the Catholic question. Canning was a party to this understanding. The war was a different matter, and Canning's discontent increasingly focused on events in Spain. In 1809 Canning and Wellesley were destined to repair their strained friendship; Spain was to serve as midwife and catalyst.

By the end of 1808 Canning and Wellesley had concluded independently that the demands of the war were more than Portland could bear. Canning within the ministry judged Portland to be perfectly inert. Canning was unable to challenge Portland or his principal amanuensis by a frontal attack. He needed allies and a flexible strategy. He had been defeated in his effort to dislodge the Duke of York from control of the army, and he had been thwarted in his project for a descent on Cadiz. Canning was convinced that Castlereagh was incompetent, and that he was deliberately denying to the peninsula sufficient forces for an early and complete victory.

Canning needed Wellesley's assistance, not only because Castlereagh was more popular than he in the cabinet, but because Wellesley was one of the few who also advocated a policy of concentrating forces in the peninsula.
In December the Grenville clan received information suggesting that Wellesley planned to attack the government early in the next session of parliament, without, however, joining the Whigs. Others reported that Wellesley planned an alliance with Lord Sidmouth. In January 1809 Wellesley confided to Thomas Grenville, according to the latter, that he was prepared to blame the ministry for having permitted the collapse of Bourbon Spain the previous year. He also denied having any influence within the government.

Allying with Sidmouth was perfectly impossible unless Wellesley was willing to sacrifice Canning. Sidmouth, moreover, was unpopular for having agreed to form a government in 1801 and by doing so denying Pitt's supporters a chance to demonstrate the impossibility of prosecuting the war without Pitt in charge. Wellesley shared Canning's conviction that a majority of the cabinet was incompetent. He entertained a particular dislike of Castlereagh, as did

76 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 31 December 1808, Fortescue MSS, IX, 254.

77 William Eden, Baron Auckland, to Grenville, 10 December 1808, Fortescue MSS, IX, 248.

78 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 11 January 1809, Fortescue MSS, IX, 268-69.

79 Auckland to Grenville, 10 December 1808, Fortescue MSS, IX, 248.
Canning. This prejudice extended back to Ireland, where Castlereagh was a traditional rival. While Canning was convinced that Castlereagh laboured to support policies calculated to embarrass him and to slow his progress, Wellesley preferred to believe that Castlereagh was simply incompetent. This meant, nonetheless, that Wellesley could anticipate little from an alliance with Sidmouth. In the final analysis there was no choice but an alliance between Wellesley and Canning, and one based on the fixed principle that Castlereagh must be removed.

Wellesley did not attack the government during January and February 1810. The Spanish refused to sanction a British invasion of the peninsula through Cadiz. This embarrassed Canning, who blamed this demonstration of noncooperation on Spain's part on the supine policies of his colleagues in the cabinet. For a moment Wellesley toyed with plans to find a new theatre in which British troops could challenge France.

The government also moved to placate Wellesley. When parliament convened in January Liverpool proposed a vote of thanks to Arthur for his "skill, valour, and ability" at Vimeiro. The Whigs did not protest. Two months

80 Hansard XII (23 January 1809), 133.
later Castlereagh responded favourably to Arthur's premise that Portugal, if not Spain, could be defended with 20,000 British troops and a reconstituted Portuguese army. 81 Arthur was appointed commander-in-chief of Britain's peninsular forces. 82 The ministry's instructions to Arthur Wellesley reflected a more determined effort to see Napoleon defeated in Spain. This commitment could not turn the tide in the peninsula, but it was a beginning.

Canning and Wellesley wanted to see this commitment expanded, and they resented what they detected continued to be a spirit of caution in the secretary of War, even after the ministry as a whole began to show more enthusiasm. They were not unhappy to see the Whigs concentrate their fire upon the ministry's Spanish policy. The Whigs despaired of saving Spain, encumbered as it was by priest-ridden and ancient institutions, or so they claimed. After extensive debate a Whig motion was defeated on 25 February by a margin of ninety-three votes. They then concentrated on John Hookham Frere, ambassador to Spain, and on his penchant for meddling in matters military. This led to a demand


82 Castlereagh to the King, 26 March 1809, Castlereagh, Correspondence, VII, 43-44.
for the publication of correspondence related to the entire Spanish campaign. The correspondence, with some omissions, was duly produced, and Frere was roasted for his incompetence. Castlereagh defended Frere and the ministry with skill, and on 21 April a motion to censure Frere was defeated by fifty-three votes. 83

The Whigs had been defeated twice on the Spanish question, and in no small measure by their own ineptitude rather than by the weakness of their cause. 84 The government's Spanish policy of "too little, too late" was most unimpressive, and Wellesley and Canning were quick to press for a change. The element of caution in Spain continued to reinforce their antipathy against Castlereagh, and the fact that he managed to defend his office in the house of Commons only made them unhappier. Canning was determined to oust Castlereagh. His campaign was destined to follow a tortuous and indeed bizarre course for six months. Canning would permanently injure his own reputation. He would manage to separate himself from the cabinet, and his behaviour would open the way for Castlereagh to preside over the triumph of British foreign policy on the continent. Canning's behaviour would also invite accusations that

83. Hansard (21 April 1809), XIV, 172.
84. Michael Roberts, "The Leadership of the Whig Party
Wellesley had contributed in a dishonourable way to demeaning Castlereagh. Wellesley thereby alienated those whose support was vital for an assault on the office of Prime minister at a later date.

VI: Canning vs. Castlereagh

Canning's campaign began 24 March when he told Portland that Castlereagh must go: he had mismanaged Britain's military policies on the continent. He was incompetent as secretary for War, although perhaps adequate to the demands of another office. 85 Portland chose to interpret Canning's message as a suggestion rather than an ultimatum, and Canning cast it so enigmatically when he put his observations to paper that Portland concluded Canning could be mollified if he resigned as Prime minister. 86 But the King divined Canning's true intentions. He refused to accept Portland's resignation and suggested in turn that Castlereagh be transferred to another post after parliament was prorogued in the summer. Portland thereupon assured Canning that if he would temporise Wellesley would be in the House of Commons from 1807 to 1815," English Historical Review, I (1935), 620-38.

85 Canning to Portland, 24 March 1809, quoted in Walpole, Perceval, I, 347n-350n; Fortescue MSS, IX, Introduction, lxxxvi.

86 Walpole, Perceval, I, 350.
invited to succeed Castlereagh in due time. He swore Canning to secrecy.

Portland's agitation demanded some company in his misery. He confided to Bathurst what Canning had told him and also swore him to secrecy. In early April it appeared that ousting Castlereagh would not prove difficult. Castlereagh was under fire for a patronage indiscretion. A small group of Whigs and Radicals hoped to embarrass the government and to ruin Castlereagh by bringing in a charge that he had misappropriated funds as President of the board of control four years earlier. Bathurst urged Canning to do nothing until the charge had been voted on; prospects for Castlereagh's survival were dim. 87

Castlereagh survived by a vote so narrow as to represent a defeat. In this poll Wellesley's supporters cast their votes against Castlereagh, and in the debate which preceded it Canning delivered "a most feeble and washy speech of a few minutes only." 88 Despite this unenthusiastic demonstration of support from his colleagues Castlereagh did not resign as expected. 89 The affair

87 Gray, Perceval, p. 215.
88 Grenville to George, Second Earl Spencer, 28 April 1809, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 264.
89 Gray, Perceval, p. 215.
served to weaken the government, and Castlereagh's decision
to remain in office persuaded others that he must be
dismissed. Canning now had allies. Portland told Earl
Camden, a relation of Castlereagh and Lord President of the
council, of Canning's desire and swore him to secrecy.
Camden agreed that Castlereagh must go. 90 Lord Grenville
confided to Spencer that the government was in confusion:
"half the government want Castlereagh out."

By the end of April Canning was threatening to resign
at once and to breach the wall of secrecy surrounding the
proposed arrangements for Castlereagh. Canning's threat
was parried only by Portland's willingness to nominate
Wellesley as envoy to Spain, with the promise of high
office upon his return. This concession "materially
contributed" to reconcile Canning to a temporary further
postponement. Portland insisted that Wellesley not be
informed of plans to remove Castlereagh from the War office,
or even that Wellesley would be admitted to the cabinet
upon his return. 91

On 1 May Wellesley's appointment as special emissary to

90 Ibid.
91 William Huskisson to Henry Dundas, 19 September 1809,
cited in Joceline Bagot, ed., George Canning and His Friends
Spain first appeared in the press. The Times saw the appointment as an "unequivocal pledge" that the government was "resolved to adopt no half-measures." Wellesley's cardinal virtue, fortitude, was judged to be indispensable at this crucial hour. The decision to replace John Hookham Frere also met complaints raised in debate earlier in the spring. These charges had not been effectively silenced, and the ministry was eager to remove him from so important a theatre of the war. Canning's letter informing Frere of Wellesley's appointment adverted to the need for placing British representation in Spain on the "highest footing in respect to personal rank and diplomatic character." The British public accepted this explanation and did not suspect that it was connected to an effort to displace Castlereagh.


95 Canning to John Hookham Frere, 1 May 1809, printed in Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley, The Despatches and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During His Lordship's Mission to Spain as Ambassador Ex-
Wellesley was not unhappy to sail for Spain. The assignment offered the chance for a signal change in the conduct of British policy. Arthur was in Portugal with a large army, busy making plans to advance into Spain. Wellesley was ready to return to public service. It is almost certain that he would have accepted an invitation to replace Castlereagh in March and April if Castlereagh had resigned. He told Canning that his desire for office was strong; he would support Canning on any military policies if placed in the War office, and he would even consent to serve under Canning as Prime minister. Canning was to discover, indeed, that Wellesley would accept any major office, whether or not Castlereagh had been removed. And while Canning congratulated himself on restoring Wellesley to active politics under his own extraordinary to the Supreme Junta in 1809 (London, 1838).

96 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 17-18.
97 Auckland to Grenville, 14 April 1809, Fortescue MSS, IX, 304.
98 Wellesley, Copy of a Statement Forwarded by Wellesley Pole to Perceval, 30 October 1809, quoted in Gray, Perceval, p. 216.
99 Dardis to Buckingham, 4 December 1809, Buckingham, Courts, II, 392.
tutelage, Wellesley was dreaming of the Prime ministership. Such a divergence of objectives would cause serious problems at a later date.

Wellesley had personal as well as professional reasons for wanting to leave England. Spain was not comparable to India, but in the peninsula there would be opportunities for regaining a sense of independence. With Arthur in command of the British army Wellesley could hope to fashion a policy which would push the French over the Pyrenees. In Spain he could also sweep aside his troubles with Hyacinthe, at least temporarily. On this front he made plans to take with him, according to Canning, a "common whore" named Sally Douglas. This Canning and the King refused to let Wellesley do; happiness would have to be based simply on the joys of separation from Hyacinthe.

An ambassadorship was in no sense comparable to a cabinet post, and Wellesley's problems with his family could have been resolved without recourse to flight to Spain. There was a more compelling reason: if Canning was to succeed in removing Castlereagh, it was best that Wellesley was as far removed as possible from ministerial politics;

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100 Canning to Bathurst, 29 April 1809, Bathurst MSS, p. 91.

101 Canning to the King, 28 April 1809; Windsor MSS 14377-79; George Hylton Jollife, Baron Hylton, The Paget
Canning insisted on this. 102 Wellesley agreed. 103 In effect, by sending Wellesley to Spain Canning made a commitment to Wellesley for a subsequent cabinet office which he would prove unable to deliver.

Wellesley's departure was delayed two months. The public prints attributed all of this to a temporary deterioration in Wellesley's health and to difficulties involved in disengaging himself from his mistresses. Canning encouraged this interpretation. 104 In fact Canning was responsible for the delays. He refused to issue the necessary instructions to Wellesley until the cabinet moved against Castlereagh. Canning also foresaw the strong possibility that Portland must soon resign on account of ill-health. He wanted Wellesley out of England when this happened, to avoid having Wellesley rather than he become Prime minister. He knew that Wellesley would not consent to remain long in Spain; a couple of months wrestling with the Junta would

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102 Hinde, Canning, pp. 218-20.
103 Gray, Perceval, p. 221.
104 Canning to Charles Bagot, 5 October 1809, Bagot, Canning, I, 335.
surely suffice to persuade Wellesley that he must return. Therefore the question of timing was a most delicate one.

Added to all this was the Walcheren expedition. Both Canning and Wellesley opposed it. It meant that troops intended for Spain were to be diverted, and Wellesley at one point considered refusing to undertake the mission to the Junta. More importantly it increased the difficulty involved in removing Castlereagh, the principal ingredient in the elaborate exercise. On 10 May Canning once more urged Portland to replace Castlereagh with Wellesley. He also advised Portland to resign at the same time and suggested that Lord Chatham be made Prime minister. Portland dutifully relayed all this to the King, who rejected Canning's proposals. The King in turn offered his own plan: Canning to have full charge of the war; Castlereagh to keep the colonies and become President of the board of control; nothing at all to be done before the summer recess. To Canning all of this sounded very

105 Dardis to Buckingham, 4 December 1809, Buckingham, Courts, II, 393.
107 Colchester, Diary, II, 201.
much like what he had heard in early April. Again, however, he agreed. By consenting Canning left the impression that he was not prepared to sacrifice everything to see Castlereagh removed.

The Walcheren expedition was approved 21 June. The vote was unanimous. Canning once more pressed Portland to put the King's plan into immediate operation. Portland proved more reluctant than ever, and sentiment in the cabinet would certainly have opposed relieving Castlereagh of his duties as secretary for War while the Scheldt campaign was in progress. Portland eased his misery by letting one more person in on the secret. This time it was Perceval. Perceval was appalled at the history of the whole affair and at the clandestine flavour of Canning's approach. He defended Castlereagh in an acrimonious exchange with Canning towards the end of June. But Portland once more persuaded Canning to hold off a little longer.

Camden volunteered to break the news of what had transpired to Castlereagh.

Camden's resolve melted in the summer heat. On 11 July Camden told Perceval that rather than face the unpleasant prospect of speaking to Castlereagh he would resign his

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108 Huskisson to Dundas, 19 September 1809, Bagot, Canning, I, 325-31.
office as President of the council. Castlereagh would surrender the War department and succeed Camden. This did not please the King. Portland expanded the circle of intimates, this time to include Chatham, Liverpool and Harrowby. Liverpool volunteered to resign if this would keep Castlereagh in office. Portland and the King amended this so as to place Wellesley at the Foreign office. Perceval was so distressed at the intensifying embarrassments that he declared his willingness to "submit to any arrangement," even serving under Wellesley if necessary, to save Castlereagh from humiliation. Again Canning agreed to postpone apprising Castlereagh of his demands, this time until after the results of the Walcheren expedition had been digested.

By the end of July intrigue had triumphed and Wellesley was involved. Canning had continued to delay Wellesley's departure from Spain in an effort to extract from the cabinet a commitment for either the War or Foreign


110 Liverpool to the King, 11 July 1809, Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 310-12; and BM, Liverpool MSS 38243, ff. 124-27.

111 Perceval to Dudley Ryder, Earl of Harrowby, 31 July 1809, Harrowby MSS, quoted in Gray, Perceval, p. 220; Perceval to Portland, 13 July 1809, Perceval MSS, quoted in Gray, Perceval, p. 220.
office upon his return. On 25 July the cabinet finally agreed that Wellesley should become secretary of War after his Spanish mission; Castlereagh was not privy to these decisions. The King was most unhappy, but "behaved most perfectly throughout," reported Canning to his wife. "It is true that he does not like Wellesley at all." Canning also wanted this commitment made known to Wellesley so that he could be induced to leave immediately for Spain. Perceval for one pledged to agree to Wellesley's admittance to the cabinet only on the condition that Wellesley was not informed. Likewise, the King refused to let Canning speak to Wellesley. Canning promised to abide by these restrictions. But Wellesley refused to sail without a promise, and Canning therefore obliquely violated his pledge by telling Wellesley before he left "that it was positively determined to make the proposed arrangement for the War department." Canning also assured Wellesley that his embassy to Spain would last only two months and that he would be taken care of immediately after his return.

112 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 25 July 1809, Canning MSS, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 316.

113 Portland to Perceval, 11 July 1809, Perceval to Portland, 13 July 1809, Perceval MSS, cited in Gray, Perceval, pp. 221-22; Portland to the King, 21 July 1809, Windsor MSS, cited in Gray, Perceval, pp. 221-22.

114 Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 315-16; Gray, Perceval, p. 222.
Wellesley was not completely satisfied. He fully recognised Canning's predicament; if Castlereagh learned of the conspiracy against him the ministry might well collapse, Canning singled out for especial blame, and Wellesley's political prospects undermined. He was therefore determined to extract a pledge. Wellesley certainly realised that Canning was driving towards the office of Prime minister. With a pledge of office in hand, and perhaps without knowledge that Canning would violate his promise to the cabinet by giving it, Wellesley was quite willing to head for Spain. Canning's oblique way of assuring Wellesley that a place awaited him on his return was put in writing. For Wellesley it was a binding pledge. For Canning it became the occasion of serious, even permanent, embarrassment.

VII: Spain

Arrangements for Wellesley's departure were complete by the end of July. In June Canning had begun preparing a series of instructions - seven long letters in all - covering all aspects of the Anglo-Spanish relationship. In general terms Wellesley was urged to avoid overt interference in the affairs of the Spanish government (the Junta) but to recommend "a more enlarged and liberal policy" towards the colonies, a diminution of restrictions on personal
liberties in Spain, and increased efforts to free Spain's military exertions against France from corrupt and incompetent leadership. Unfortunately, Wellesley was not able to promise Spain much in return. Little British aid could be expected in the coming months; military supplies would continue to reach Spain, but pecuniary assistance would prove negligible. Wellesley was to tell the Junta that Britain's commitment to the Scheldt lay behind all this, but that success on the Scheldt would materially reduce French pressure in Spain. It was not a convincing argument.

And indeed the situation in Spain was discouraging. A year earlier, in June 1808, Joseph Napoleon had been proclaimed King of Spain. Simultaneously a Junta of Spanish aristocrats bound to the ancient Bourbon dynasty had declared their allegiance to the incarcerated sovereign, agreed to an alliance with Britain, summoned the guerrilla fighters to recognise their role as regents until the sovereign returned, and established their temporary capital in Seville. The movement to save Spain thrilled the world. In the colonies Ferdinand was toasted and cheered. In Spain enthusiasm for the ancient monarchy ran high, and in England observers predicted that Spain would be liberated with the coming of spring.

115 Wellesley, Spain, pp. 183-91.
By early 1810 such optimism had faded. The Junta lacked a capacity for leadership, in part because of internal feuding, in part because of a suspicion of Britain's motives, and in part because of incompetence and corruption. Their soldiers were brave but the leadership proved singularly inept. British assistance was squandered, and by mid-winter British troops had been thrown back to Lisbon. Napoleonic power was consolidated in Spain, and between the Junta and Britain there developed suspicion and hostility. British and Spanish ships clashed on the high seas as London merchants challenged imperial trade restrictions. Spain's inability to defend the harbour of Ferrol, and the loss of a portion of the Spanish navy with it, angered the British. Spain refused to negotiate a modification of her trade monopoly unless Britain agreed to a specified yearly subsidy. As a result of all this, "Anglo-Spanish relations were based on merely a vague pledge of mutual friendship and cooperation." Diplomacy became a day affair, resulting in numerous misunderstandings.

Arthur Wellesley's appearance in Portugal in April

116 Sherwig, Guineas, p. 205.

promised to restore allies' prospects. Under his direction British, Portuguese and Spanish armies swept into Spain. Oporto in northern Portugal was captured, and Marshal Nicolas Soult and his French forces fell back into Spain. Arthur then advanced on another French force and agreed to join Spanish troops under the command of General Gregorio de Cuesta on 21 July 1809. It appeared that Wellesley's mission to Spain was to be identified with a celebration of the liberation of much of the peninsula. But this euphoria was also shortlived. Canning became angry when Spain delayed granting a licence for the purchase of specie in Mexico. Spain at the same time continued its relentless requests for British aid.\footnote{Correspondence between Canning and Admiral Apodaca, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, 86, 88.} Aware of his own impending recall, Frere did little to reduce tensions. By the time Wellesley was prepared to sail, a major crisis was brewing between General Wellesley and the Junta.

The crisis stemmed from Arthur's shortage of supplies.\footnote{A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 8 August 1809, Wellington, Supplementary, ITI, 404-405.} The Junta refused to place Spanish troops under British protection. Spanish leaders, especially General Cuesta,
squadroned supplies reserved for British forces. By late
July General Wellesley's troops faced starvation unless
they returned to Portugal. 120 This he threatened to do.
The Spanish promised to produce the necessary footstuffs
and ammunition, but in private they doubted that the
British commander would want to tarnish his reputation
by retreating. In Cadiz itself schemes for an accommo-
dation with France dominated all conversation. In London
Canning heard that the Junta was prepared to concede to
France some colonial possessions in return for France's
willingness to withdraw from Spain. He heard rumors as
well that the Junta was prepared to offer the Spanish
throne to the French Bourbons. 121 In parliament the
Junta was criticised bitterly. Demands for a British
withdrawal increased, and Canning mollified the opposition
temporarily only by instructing the new ambassador to insist
on the admission to Cadiz of a British garrison, a detailed
pledge for provisioning British forces, and a promise not
to negotiate with Napoleon under any circumstances. Beyond
this Canning urged Wellesley to insist upon British control

120 A. Wellesley to Wellesley Pole, 15 July 1809, printed
in Sir Charles K. Webster, ed., "Some Letters of the Duke of
Wellington to His Brother William Wellesley Pole," C. T. S., LXXIX;
A. Wellesley to J. H. Frere, 24 July 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS
37286; Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 301, 315, 317.

121 Canning to Wellesley, 18 July 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS
of all allied military forces in the peninsula if his brother Arthur recommended it.

Wellesley boarded ship 25 July 1809, minus a mistress but accompanied by his doctor William Knighton, who would subsequently plan a considerable role in British politics. Wellesley had little idea what to expect when he reached Cadiz, and Canning's lengthy despatches emphasised the vital importance of Wellesley's firsthand assessment of the Spanish situation. Wellesley was not unprepared. He had read voluminously while waiting for Canning to extract a promise of office from the cabinet. He was to impress knowledgeable Englishmen with his detailed command of the Spanish political labyrinth. His analyses, penned in a strictly formal sense for Canning but in fact written with an eye towards a much larger audience, were to prompt the staid Earl Bathurst to declare that they "exceed [ed] all that ever appeared of the same nature, in the best period of our formal diplomacy, and that they would serve as models for that of the future." Wilberforce agreed, and

37286, ff. 94-99; 20 July 1809, Wellesley MSS 37286, ff. 100-103.

122Torrens, Marquess, p. 356.

Britain was prepared to applaud as well. Wellesley was qualified to superintend a new policy for Spain. It was far from clear that Spain was prepared to accept it.

Wellesley's entry into Spain struck two themes which proved to be singular exceptions to the remainder of the embassy. When Wellesley stepped ashore at Cadiz an enthusiastic crowd energetically refused to accept pieces of gold which Wellesley planned to scatter among the crowd gathered at the pier. They threw at Wellesley's feet a French flag for Wellesley to step ashore on. It is not clear whether Wellesley obliged, but it was reported as fact in London and Wellesley was mundly criticised.

Perhaps he did. It is significant, however, that the remainder of his embassy was marked by a display of eminent good sense. He cultivated the crowds, visited churches, attended vespers, and chatted with the common people. At Saragossa he was captured by an agile and fulsome female, who carried him up the steps to the cathedral. Wellesley was more surprised than pleased,


125 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 22-23.

126 Knighton, Memoirs, I, passim.

especially when she capped her exploit with a kiss. One cannot imagine Wellesley permitting himself to meet the people in India. In Spain he displayed little of his notorious arrogance; he struck the proper balance between dignity and popular appeal for perhaps the first and last time in his public career.

Wellesley also contrived to reach Spain four days after his brother's outnumbered troops defeated the French at Talavera de la Reina. The victory revealed more the defective state of Spanish military leadership than anything else, because Cuesta refused to join General Wellesley in an attack until the French had retreated. The French regrouped and returned to fight. After two days of desultory action they again retreated and Spain celebrated Talavera as a victory. It was this victory which accounted in large measure for Wellesley's enthusiastic reception. In Seville Wellesley discovered that George III was almost more popular than Spain's Ferdinand.128 This delirium last two weeks more. By then General Wellesley was forced to report that he must retreat for want of support from his Spanish allies. In Seville, where the Junta was then situated, and in London, the prospect of retreat after so

magnificent a victory was more than public opinion could absorb: "What chief with Wellington can vie, who flies to fight, and fights to fly!"\textsuperscript{129} Wellington earned his own peerage on 4 September by virtue of his triumph, even as news began to reach London that he might be forced to return to winter quarters near Lisbon.

The month of August was dedicated to a frenzied correspondence involving Arthur, the Marquess, and the Junta. These exchanges saw Wellington justify to his brother his contention that he must retreat. Wellesley's letters to Arthur urged every possible delay so that the Junta could repair its woeful deficiencies. Another series of letters urged the Junta to reform itself, and threatened a fullscale British retreat if it did not. The Junta seems to have devoted most of its time to defending itself against charges of corruption and incompetence. When this failed, it accused General Wellesley of insincerity and even malefiance. By the end of the month the correspondence verged on acrimony, couched through it was in elegant and flowing language.

The opening volley came on 8 August, when Arthur reported that his army was starving and could not now fight

\textsuperscript{129}Pearce, Memoirs, III, 85.
a battle. Indeed, he observed, "a starving army was worse than none." 130 Two weeks earlier his army had defeated a force twice its size; now it could not have beaten one half as large. The officers were so restless that Arthur dared not leave them for a few days to visit his brother. 131 He repeated his complaints and threats four days later, and placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of General Cuesta:

It is useless to complain, but we are certainly not treated as friends, much less as the only prop on which the cause in Spain can depend. But besides this want of good will, which can easily be traced to the temper and disposition of the General commanding the Spanish army, and which ought to be borne with patience if there was any hope of doing good, there is such a want of resource in the country, and so little question of bringing forward what is to be found, that if the army were to remain here much longer it would become totally useless. 132

On 12 August Wellesley informed Don Martin de Garay, ranking member of the Junta, that British troops could not maintain even defensive positions in Spain unless the Junta undertook to guarantee adequate provisions and transport. 133

130 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 8 August 1809, printed in Wellesley, Spain, p. 23.
131 Ibid., Pearce, Memoirs, III, 47.
132 Ibid., 12 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 76.
133 Wellesley to de Garay, 12 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, p. 4; Ibid., Pearce, Memoirs, III, 33.
On the same day de Garay was happy to report that everything possible was being done. "Commissaries and persons of entire confidence" had already been despatched to General Wellesley; he would lack nothing. On 13 August Wellesley sent his brother a long formal letter repeating de Garay's assurances. Wellesley reported that the Junta had attempted to prevent the envoy from enjoying direct access to its members. This obstacle had now been removed. Wellesley apologised for the "inveterate defects of the military department in Spain" and assured Arthur that he was doing everything possible to reform this body.

One major difficulty was General Cuesta. Wellesley was reluctant to browbeat the Junta into removing him but he declared that he was willing to testify against his usefulness when invited to do so. It would help to have from Arthur "a regular and detailed statement of his misconduct," and with such information Wellesley planned to take the initiative. By this time his initial optimism

134 Wellesley to de Garay, 12 August 1809, Pearce, Memoirs, III, 34-35.

135 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 13 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS, f. 76.

136 Wellesley to A. Wellesley, 13 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, p. 9; Ibid., Pearce, Memoirs, III, 40-41.

137 An interesting series of reports submitted by George Erving, the American representative in Seville, to
had already faded; now he would pursue a strategy of threats. 138

Arthur was also at his desk, writing long missives to emphasise the urgency of the situation. "Either the British army must be fed with the necessaries which it requires," he declared on the 13th, "or I will march it back into Portugal." His first warning to the Junta had been sent 19 July, and, he added, now the threat was to be carried out. 139 On 15 August he repeated his intention to retreat. 140 Three days later he reported that there were increasing numbers of instances of Spanish forces commandeering forage collected by British sol-

Washington, reflects a strong anti-British bias. Erving conceded that Cuesta's pride and obstinancy were difficult to cope with but he believed Cuesta to be a good leader and disciplinarian. General Wellesley was "not deficient in pride" and Cuesta in his opinion more than General Wellesley was making the effort to keep the alliance running smoothly. Erving to Robert Smith, 3 August 1809, United States, National Archives, Department of State, Series 195, Vol. XI.

138 Wellesley to Canning, 15 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 76.

139 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 13 August 1809, Pearce, Memoirs, III, 44-45; and in Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda (8 vols.; London: John Murray, 1867-1880), V, 34.

140 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 15 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 17-18.
diuers. The army was indeed perishing.

All these dire missives reached Wellesley by 20 August. The following day Wellesley prepared an ultimatum for the benefit of the Junta: Arthur was retreating. He softened it by proposing a compromise, subject to Arthur's approval. The army would fall back to positions inside the Spanish border but closer to Lisbon than to Madrid. It would establish itself there on the left bank of the Guadiana river if the Junta proceeded to implement an extremely detailed and carefully considered program for the establishment of magazines and supply lines, and if it made the necessary requisitions on the provinces. In this position, Wellesley believed, the army could protect Portugal and Cadiz and Seville at the same time.142

This despatch, a copy of which went to Arthur, ranks with his finest in India. Wellesley demonstrated that he had retained his ability to absorb enormous amounts of material, to devise a bold but realistic strategy, and to

141 Ibid., 18 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, p. 33.
142 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 66-68.
present it persuasively. No wonder Wilberforce found them so impressive. 143 Unfortunately, the impression made on the Junta was not so efficacious. De Garay, Wellesley recorded, received news of retreat "with expressions of deepest sorrow and terror." 144 These expressions of "sorrow and terror" did not translate themselves into relief for the British army. Indeed, Arthur received from one General Equia a letter accusing him of using the excuse of short supplies to camouflage his determination to withdraw from Spain. 145 Arthur thereupon vowed not to communicate with the Spanish military leadership until the insult was addressed.

144 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 66-68.
145 The Junta also chose to believe a story that the retreat resulted from Spain's unwillingness to cede Cadiz and Havana: Wellesley to Canning, 24 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 76. Wellesley published a reply:

I declare on the part of the British Govt. that the army under the command of Sir A. Wellesley has neither been supplied by the civil authorities nor aided by the military powers of Spain in any degree sufficient to enable him to contend with the French forces opposed to him in the field; and that those causes alone have compelled Sir A. W. to retire within reach of more adequate assistance, and to resume the defence of Portugal as the sole object of his immediate operations. 1

1 Wellesley to de Garay, 8 September 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 76.
withdrawn. He also began the actual retreat on 22 August. Wellesley's compromise reached him two days later, too late to affect Arthur's plans. It made no difference, for by this time Wellesley had convinced himself that the Junta would not respond satisfactorily. Arthur for his part declared that Wellesley's plan was defective because the recent behaviour of Spanish troops was such that they could not be depended upon to hold up any part of a defence plan. The Junta confirmed this on 23 August by presenting a long and detailed list of accounting procedures for keeping track of utensils, horses, etc. There was even a plan to reform the system of keeping the ledgers. The larger issues went untouched.

By the end of August the French had regained the initiative on almost all fronts. On 8 August British troops retreated across the Tagus. Two days later the Spanish lost part of their artillery in their effort to

146 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 21 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, p. 49.

147 Wellesley to de Garay, 23 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 61-73.

148 A. Wellesley to Wellesley, 24 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 61-73; Ibid., 21 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 76.

149 Wellesley, Spain, pp. 77-82.
cross the same river. The Marquess tried to promote the idea of some Spanish military movement in the north to discourage the French from marching into Andalucia. It became necessary to determine whether in fact any British troops should remain in Spain, and a decision of such importance demanded consultations with Canning and the cabinet. The result was the development of yet another line of correspondence which reflected favourably upon Wellesley's abilities as analyst and observer.

Among the instructions Canning prepared was a short note dated 18 July cautioning Wellesley to consider carefully any deep intrusion of British forces into Spain if the Spanish patriots conceded complete jurisdiction in military matters to the British. On 12 August Canning described the collapse of Austria and the third coalition in letters to Wellesley. This left British forces in the Scheldt without allies and necessitated their early withdrawal. This development promised to release a larger portion of Britain's resources for Spain if Wellesley and his brother saw fit to request them. On the other hand France would augment its own Spanish contingents, and Canning doubted the wisdom of dedicating British reinforcements to the protection of liberated Spain unless Cadiz was garrisoned with British troops and Arthur offered
the supreme command. 150

When Canning wrote on 12 August he possessed news at Talavera. Even this encouragement, not yet adulterated by the distressing developments which soon followed, only ameliorated Canning's problems with Spain. On 31 July Admiral Apodaca renewed efforts to extract from Britain a treaty guaranteeing a subsidy. Canning met with Apodaca and was astounded by the extravagance of the proposal. 151 Canning had no trouble convincing himself of the impossibility of negotiations based on such a plan, but he was understandably reluctant to say this to Apodaca. 152

After a delay of six weeks Canning entrusted the negotiations to Wellesley. 153 This device cleared the table so that the Foreign office could absorb the bad news of Wellesley's retreat.

On 15 August Wellesley forwarded a long letter to Canning describing in great detail his relationship to the Junta, the "intractable disposition" of General Cuesta,

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150 Ibid., pp. 193-97.

151 Apodaca to Canning, 7 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 185, f. 17; Apodaca to Canning, 7 August 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 85.

152 Canning to Wellesley, 16 September 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 75.

153 Canning to Apodaca, 19 September 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 85.
and the folly of sacrificing the British army "to the erroneous policy of a weak administration" in Seville. 154 He urged that the British remove themselves from Spain if conditions did not improve. 155 A week later Wellesley confirmed earlier reports that the army was in retreat. Wellesley also described the "intermediate plan" he had prepared earlier, and the Junta's fatuous submission of bookkeeping reforms. He agreed with his brother in holding that it was now impossible to place any confidence in the Spanish. 156 On 30 August Wellesley forwarded all of Arthur's melancholy despatches. They told in great detail of the army's retreat, of the decision to abandon the artillery because horses were too weak to pull it, and of General Equia's slanders. 157 Wellesley observed that on the basis of his brother's experience he could not recommend that British forces remain on Spanish soil. 158

154 Canning's letters anticipated most of Wellesley's complaints; Apodaca was a reliable barometer of his country's difficult temper; Sherwig, Guineas, p. 221.

155 Wellesley to Canning, 15 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 21-27.

156 Ibid., 24 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 71-75; Wellesley to de Garay, 28 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 83-84.

157 Wellesley, Spain, pp. 55ff.

158 Wellesley to A. Wellesley, 30 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 87-91.
Wellesley was not happy to have to recommend withdrawal. He was pledged to a concentration of British resources in the peninsula. It was embarrassing to observe that what he considered to be Britain's best hope in the war on the continent, the Spanish patriot cause, was so deficient that British armies could not exploit their own victories. He urged his brother to keep in mind that retreat would throw the Spanish into a frenzy and would encourage the opposition at Westminster. When the army retreated he turned his attention to new projects. Foremost among them was reform of the Junta. This, rather than military considerations, dominated the final two-thirds of his mission to Spain.

The supreme Junta was born during the previous summer, shortly after the first French victories in Spain. Canning made it clear at this time that Britain could not aid Spain unless it devised a central authority. Most Spaniards favoured a regency, but no suitable regent could be found. A cortes was considered appropriate, but its

159. Wellesley to de Garay, 30 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 85-86.

160. Wellesley to A. Wellesley, 29 August 1809, 30 August 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 337, 339-42; "The longer you can delay your actual passing the Portuguese frontier, the less will be the ill-temper and alarm. . . .": Wellesley to A. Wellesley, 29 August 1809, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 337.
revival after many decades would have required far more time than was available.\footnote{Severn, "Wellesley," p. 146.} It was agreed, therefore, that each of the provincial Juntas would nominate two delegates to form a central government. It numbered between twenty-four and thirty-five members.\footnote{Gabriel H. Lovett, \textit{Napoleon and the Birth of Modern Spain} (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 292.} Unfortunately, the new body proved defective. Provincial Juntas continued to exercise a high degree of independence, while the central body clung tenaciously to its prerogatives and blocked attempts to convene the cortes. By the spring of 1809 the Junta's failings were widely advertised.\footnote{William Jacob, a British traveler in Spain in the spring of 1809, noted that "the best informed people here} Finally, in May 1809, the Junta promised to call the cortes to life, but no date was set. Intrigue, inefficiency, addiction to ceremony, and patronage matters seemed to consume most of the Junta's energies. There were several competent individuals, but the majority was profoundly unequal to the task of guiding Spain through war.

At first Wellesley was predisposed to see the Junta reformed rather than abolished. There were serious objections to entrusting the destiny of Spain to a cortes, where democratic tendencies, subject to no check, might lead to
the spread of the revolutionary virus already ranging in France. Wellesley took some time to measure the Junta's performance, and indeed did not propose any specific suggestions until they were solicited in mid-August by one of the Junta's most respected members, de Garay. To de Garay he volunteered several observations. He urged that the Supreme Junta nominate immediately a council of regency composed of not more than five members to assume executive

thought that a revolution in the government is absolutely necessary to save the country. A change which, by concentrating the feelings of the people and directing them properly, without the cumbersome load of forms now existing, would do more to baffle the enemy than any effort which the present body are likely to desire.1

Another traveler observed that "the Junta appears to be feebleness itself, too numerous for an effective or strong government, and too few for any purposes of popular representation; for indeed they are in other respects altogether unfit.... With respect to military talents, the want of them is sufficiently apparent in the whole scheme of their campaign, and almost in every battle that has taken place."2

1William Jacob, Travels in Spain (London, 1810), p. 60.

2John Wishaw to Henry Brougham, 19 August 1809, quoted in Henry Peter Brougham, The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham (New York, 1871-72), 1, 313.

164Wellington, as he had become by this point, reflected this view: "I acknowledge that I have a great dislike to a new popular assembly. Even our own ancient one would be quite unmanageable, and, in these days, would ruin us, if the present generation had not before its eyes seen the example of the French Revolution; and if there were not
power. The cortes should be convened immediately. The Junta should undertake "a redress of grievances, correction of abuses and relief of exaction in Spain and the Indies" and concede to the colonies "a due share in the representative body of the Spanish empire." Finally, the first act of the new regency should be to reform the military system.

Nothing was committed to paper. Many Spaniards resented British interference of this type, and they impugned British motives. They concluded, as Erving observed with some satisfaction, that "if this plan can be executed, the Marquess of Wellesley will in effect be Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom. . . and then the revolutionary energies upon which the cause of the patriots depends for success, will be completely extinguished." Erving's summary was not wild speculation. Wellesley wrote in a memorandum for certain rules and orders for its guidance and government, the knowledge and use of which render safe, and successfully direct its proceedings." Wellington to Wellesley, 22 September 1809, Wellington, Despatches, V, 172.

165 Wellesley to Canning, 15 September 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 76.

166 Erving to Smith, 25 August 1809, United States, National Archives, Department of State MSS 195, Vol. XI.
for his own benefit that nothing could be done until Britain
secured "a decided influence over the civil government
of Spain and Portugal together with the efficient direction
of the military force of both countries." After the
retreat of General Wellesley's forces to the Portuguese
frontier Wellesley determined that it was time to press
these measures more forcefully and on 8 September he
drafted a despatch which contained most of the sentiments
he had shared earlier with de Garay. The pressure was
applied at an inopportune moment. The Junta received
news of the Walcheren disaster in mid-September, and was not
slow to realise that Spain was now Britain's only ally.
It could afford to stall.

The Junta's confidence was rudely shattered by the
attempted coup of 17 September, and finally on 3 October
the Junta conceded the need for some sort of reform. Meanwhile, public opinion in Spain began to run strongly
in the same direction and in Britain the press betrayed
a more violent language. On 23 October the Junta sub-

167 Wellesley, memorandum, c. September 1809, BM,
Wellesley MSS 37287.

168 De Garay to Wellesley, 30 October 1809, PRO,
Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 77.

mitted a detailed plan of reform. The most important provision called for an executive committee of seven, based on a rotating membership of the Junta, to supervise Spanish military affairs. Wellesley found it inadequate. The Junta also pledged to convene the cortes the following March. Wellesley saw no need for such delay and expressed his dismay in strong terms. The Junta in reply rejected Wellesley's call for a regency, which "would disgust the colonies, trample on the King's rights, would never assemble the cortes and be corrupted by the French." On that note Wellesley left Spain.

The Junta remained. This body was the depository of the nation's legitimate executive in the absence of the King, yet it was neither a regency nor a popular institution. Its membership included shrewd and foolish men alike. A few old grandees and men of lower but still aristocratic pretensions superintended a revolutionary movement, including guerrillas with their slogans of

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170 Wellesley to Canning, 24 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37288.

171 Wellesley to de Garay, 24 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37288. As Wellesley observed, "these objects are inseparable from the interests of the alliance."

freedom and equality. The Junta sought freedom for Spain but wanted desperately to retain the colonies. In Seville and Cadiz, the ancient merchant monopolist group preferred to see the old empire move to the edge of disintegration rather than concede the merits of more equitable imperial commercial regulations. Towards Britain it demonstrated a hostility and suspicion equal to British assistance. For Britain Spain was the worst possible ally, and yet the only major power in Europe where opposition to Napoleon took the form of a popular and patriotic cause. The army's retreat unnerved the Junta. Wellesley warned them that it was time that they be aware of the extent of the calamity.\footnote{Wellesley to Canning, 2 September 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 103-107.} There were rumors of an attempted coup in the air.\footnote{Wellesley to A. Wellesley, Viscount Wellington of Talavera, 19 September 1809, printed in Wellington, Despatches, VI, 573; Wellington's peerage was conferred 4 September 1809. Had Wellesley not acted, the coup would probably have succeeded. Several regiments were implicated, and plans had been made to transport key members of the Junta to Manila. The plotters proposed to}
reform them." In this vein he took great satisfaction in sending de Garay sharp and ably worded letters making invidious comparisons between Portugal's effective support and Spain's string of failures. Until reforms were affected, Britain would supply Spain with "every other species of assistance than military." The Junta, of course, wanted military support without gratuitous advice. This Wellesley could not forebear to give.

The Junta's resistance to change was shortsighted, but understandable in part. Wellesley's reform program in fifty-nine long paragraphs was heavy-handed, and his aphorism that the Junta combined all the deficiencies of an assembly (too deliberative) with all those of an authoritarian executive (lack of popular support) was insulting. But perhaps worse was the danger that the substitute a council of regency, much along lines suggested by Wellesley, and this probably persuaded the plotters that Wellesley would support a coup. He did not, and when given advanced word of it informed the Junta. Wellesley to A. Wellesley, 19 September 1809, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 372-73.

175 Wellesley to Wellington, 19 September 1809, Wellington, Despatches, VI, 573.

176 Wellesley to de Garay, 8 September 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 113-19.

177 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 77.

178 Wellesley to Canning, 15 September 1809, printed in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 80-81.
the cortes would reflect the popular, middle class aspirations which animated many people in Spain to support the patriot cause. It was also possible, the Junta feared, that the cortes would accede to the wishes of the colonies to enjoy a larger share of the management of the empire, and the merchants of Seville and Cadiz supported the Junta therefore in resisting convening the cortes. 179

The question of the colonies extended beyond the question of representation. For Britain an especial grievance was the Junta's steadfast refusal to admit British trade to the colonies. During the eighteenth century some colonies had been opened to foreign traders. The principle of exclusion had thus been compromised, but not destroyed. 180 Exclusion was also undermined as Britain resorted to various illegal devices to gain entrance to the empire. 181 After Napoleon's seizure of the greater part of Spain the power of the monopolists in Cadiz and

179 Wellesley to Canning, 15 September 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 131-32.


181 Dorothy B. Goebel, "British Trade to the Spanish
Seville, which dominated the remainder of unoccupied Spain, was increased; at times, indeed, little more than these trading centres, with their immediate hinterlands, remained to the Junta. Their merchant class was easily persuaded that Britain's motives in the liberation of Spain comprehended the destruction of the Spanish colonial monopoly.\textsuperscript{182}

Wellesley made no progress at all in liberalising Spain's commercial system during his brief mission to Spain. As Foreign secretary he was to see the trade controversy dominate Spain's relations with Britain. In other areas Wellesley also came to feel that while in Spain he was able to make only a slight impression on the Junta. In holding this conviction he was probably too severe on himself. He conceded that not all was gloomy. In respect to military resources many provinces possessed adequate supplies and had conducted effective campaigns.\textsuperscript{183}


\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 119.
Spain required better coordination of her military efforts rather than a larger total commitment. This would eventually appear, Wellesley told Canning in September, in spite of the incompetence of the nation's self-appointed leaders. The people were deeply opposed to the French and would prevail. In the interim he urged his colleagues in Britain to preserve the British army as an effective fighting force in the peninsula. Britain could not "permit troops to operate in Spain, under circumstances which must lead to their certain destruction, without any benefit" to Spain. This did not, he ventured, mean that Britain should abandon Spain altogether. Portugal was an efficient based from which to harrass the French, and whenever Spain saw fit to make an effective contribution, Britain would be ready. The Junta or the regency might in time see the wisdom of conceding the value of a British garrison in Cadiz, and of giving Britain supreme military authority over the combined armies. This should not and need not be demanded at the risk of undermining Britain's popularity in the peninsula.

184 Ibid., printed in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 83.
185 Wellesley to de Garay, 29 October 1809, Wellesley, Spain, p. 168.
Wellesley departed Spain 17 November. The heat, he told Bathurst, had been insufferable, but he was in good health. He had kept up his spirits by scolding Spanish officials twice a day. He urged the King not to accept the award of the order of the golden fleece, and when it was offered to Wellesley instead he also refused it on the grounds that it came from an authority whose conduct he could not approve. The Junta brooded over this insult and over the new Viscount Wellington's retreat to Badajoz, and then to a point inside Portugal's borders. Wellesley waxed despondent. This country was "on the verge of total ruin," he told Wellington shortly before departing. "I am worked like a galley slave, and I can effect nothing." And indeed news from Spain continued to depress Britain's leaders after Wellesley returned. The military situation continued to deteriorate: the Supreme Junta's inept rule

186Wellesley to Bathurst, 19 September 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37314, f. 4.
187Wellesley, Spain, p. 160.
188De Garay to Wellesley, 3 October 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 147-48.
189Wellesley to Wellington, 17 October 1809, Wellesley, Spain, p. 162.
prevailed; the Spanish military's leadership performed no miracles, Britain failed to secure commercial and fiscal concessions from Spain, and mistrust persisted everywhere. Nonetheless progress was made in several quarters. Wellesley's diplomacy made possible Wellington's retreat from Spain without a collapse of the alliance. In doing so Wellington impressed upon Spain his determination to defend Portugal because Portugal was prepared to help defend itself, and if necessary Wellington was prepared to leave Spain to its fate. Wellesley's despatches delivered the ministry from one possible source of mortal danger and helped to impress upon public opinion at home the feasibility of defeating Napoleon by concentrating British resources in the peninsula.

There were personal triumphs as well. Wellesley recovered quickly from three years of vexatious and demeaning indolence. His correspondence, much of it written during the heat of a south Spain summer, demonstrates a mastery of detail and a willingness to labour steadily. His lifestyle was temperate, and he accumulated experience crucial to the tasks he would face as Foreign secretary.

Wellesley would find many in Britain willing to agree with his private assessment that while in Spain he accomplished
little. But he would soon enough take quite a different view of the future. For at the end of November he left Spain to assume the exalted office of Foreign secretary, therein to vindicate his embassy to Spain and to praise his achievements in that distracted land.

VIII: Negotiations in London

Wellesley's departure from England in July had done nothing to quiet the tempo of events at home. Canning remained at the center of a vortex which threatened to destroy the ambitions of most of the leading politicians of the day. And as Lord Harrowby once remarked, in a crisis of this sort Canning always managed to make the wrong decision. In June 1812 he failed to accept Liverpool's terms for entering the ministry and thus conceded to Castlereagh the opportunity to preside over the great peace settlement of 1815. He lost face by refusing to resign over the Queen's divorce issue in 1820. And in 1809

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190 The Examiner, 31 December 1809.
he consigned himself to the political wilderness in an attempt to become Prime minister before his allotted time. During August news from the Netherlands worsened. Castlereagh's position weakened steadily; Canning's grew stronger. Camden failed to inform Castlereagh of plans to remove him from the War department. On 6 August Portland decided to take the unpalatable task on himself. Before he could see Castlereagh, and perhaps because of the discomfort involved, Portland suffered a stroke. Perceval initiated discussions to find a suitable successor. The King hoped to retain Portland, but the severity of his stroke would not long permit it. Perceval noted that there were many potential chiefs but few willing followers. The most acceptable nominees seemed to be Harrowby or Bathurst, but the most eager aspirants were Canning and Perceval himself.  

During August Canning's claims to succeed Portland

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194 Portland to the King, 6 August 1809, Windsor MSS 14556-57.
195 Gray, Perceval, p. 223.
196 Perceval to Huskisson, 21 August 1809, Huskisson to Perceval, 24 August 1809, printed in Gray, Perceval, p. 223.
steadily strengthened. Every despatch from the Scheldt served to reinforce the wisdom of the Canning-Wellesley position that British forces must be concentrated in the peninsula. It was now clear that there was no potential for a popular revolt in the lowlands, and Chatham's armies gradually succumbed to disease and boredom. The collapse of Austria presaged the complete destruction of Britain's military forces unless they could be evacuated. Evacuation was ignominious. The army therefore sat in the quagmire brought on as autumn rains swept across the North sea.

On 30 August Canning launched his own ill-fated expedition, an assault on Portland's office. He announced to Portland that Castlereagh must go at once. On 2 September London received two further bouts of bad news. Chatham had abandoned the idea of attacking Antwerp and General Wellesley's army had retired across the Tagus. On the same evening Canning amended his ultimatum of 30 August to demand that the Marquess Wellesley be admitted to the cabinet at once. On 5 September Portland met with


198 Portland to Perceval, 3 September 1809, Perceval MSS, cited in Gray, Perceval, p. 225.
Canning. After listening once more to Canning's demands Portland explained that the burdens of office had become too heavy for him, and apprised Canning of his intention to proceed with earlier plans to resign. At this point Canning again raised his demands. He submitted his own resignation to the King on 8 September, ostensibly because nothing had been done about Castlereagh. He made it clear that he wanted to be Prime minister or nothing at all.

Canning's bid was not an impulsive one. As early as 3 September Wellesley Pole had written to Wellesley conjecturing that Canning would make a bid for the premiership. Benjamin Sydenham became aware of the Canning-Castlereagh at this time and predicted a decisive context between Perceval and Canning for Portland's place. Castlereagh was among the last to know but when Canning absented himself from a cabinet meeting on the 7th Castlereagh finally became suspicious. His uncle Earl Camden finally confessed all.

199 Bathurst, notes on the dissolution of the Portland ministry, BM, Bathurst MSS, Loan 57, vol. 4, no. 324.
200 Perceval to Lord Arden, 9 September 1809, BM, Perceval MSS 49188.
201 William Wellesley Pole to Wellesley, 3 September 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309.
202 Benjamin Sydenham to Wellesley, 5 September 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.
On 8 September Castlereagh resigned and the Portland cabinet lay in complete disarray.\textsuperscript{203}

What prompted Canning to believe that he could storm the royal closet, as it were, where the King had already made it quite clear that he did not like Canning? In the first place he relied on the dearth of talent, as he saw it, to sustain his pretentions. Chatham had disqualified himself by his disasters on the continent, and Castlereagh was unpopular enough to insure that the government could not survive a day with him in command.\textsuperscript{204} This left Perceval and Liverpool, both of whom had yet to make their mark as statesmen and political figures of the first rank. Outside the government rested Grenville and his Whig friends. Grenville was enormously unpopular for having severed himself from the main Pittite body in 1804; he was even referred to as the "enemy".\textsuperscript{205} The King was thought to dislike the Whigs even more than he disliked Canning. Among Canning's assets was the universal impression Wellesley would not serve unless under Canning as Prime minister, and Canning's

\textsuperscript{203}Perceval to Arden, 9 September 1809, BM, Perceval MSS 49188.

\textsuperscript{204}Richmond to Bathurst, 12 September 1809, Bathurst MSS, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{205}Duke of Richmond to Bathurst, 12 September 1809, Bathurst MSS, p. 102.
impression that the country saw the Marquess as indispensable to a new ministry.

It is difficult to know whether Canning had been persuaded that these factors insured success for his highhanded initiative, or whether his case was still so weak that only pressure and blackmail would work. Canning's friends were certain that the King would never allow him to be Prime minister, although Canning's wife might have thought otherwise. 206 The Marquess and the Wellesley family, moreover, were far from popular in the country. Wellington's retreat to the Tagus and then beyond was hardly calculated to illuminate London. Many felt that there were too many Wellesleys identified with Spain and that their motives were not always disinterested. Byron captured this mood in *Childe Harold*:

.. . You may read, with spectacles on eyes  
How many Wellesleys did embark for Spain,  
As if therein they meant to colonise. 207

Tierney wrote to Earl Grey that the Wellesleys were in bad odor, in part because of problems in Spain, and in part because of their connection to Canning. 208

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Canning's tactics served to undermine his relationship to Wellesley even as sought to rely on his support in a bid for the Prime ministership. On 12 September Perceval suggested to Canning that they both serve under a Prime minister in the house of Lords. Canning refused. He insisted that the next Prime minister sit in the house of Commons; the perils of the hour demanded that the more popular house be the forum for determining government policy. Canning's arguments were valid enough, but they were also self-serving. Canning was not only eager to block Perceval. Perceval was obviously prepared to forego a chance to be Prime minister; this was clear. He wanted to keep Wellesley out of the office as well. To Perceval these conditions were perfectly unacceptable. The King faced a choice: he could allow Canning to try to form a government, or let Perceval treat with the Whigs.

Canning promised to produce a list which would constitute a new government. The King marveled at Canning's cocksureness and at his boast that he could fashion a government which excluded Perceval and the bulk of the old Portland

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209 Canning to Portland, 12 September 1809, Windsor MSS, quoted in Roberts, Whig, p. 349.

210 Roberts, Whig, p. 349.
Canning's bid was soon terminated. He could not produce a list. More important, he found himself in a duel with Castlereagh.

The famous Castlereagh-Canning duel has been examined in detail elsewhere. From the point of view of this study the duel is significant not only because it forced the removal of both men from office, but also because Canning asked Henry Wellesley to serve as his second. Canning knew Henry only casually; at least Henry so claimed. Henry was certainly correct in seeing in this invitation a bid by Canning to reinforce his identification with the Wellesley family. By refusing, Henry saved his brother Richard from having to cope with Canning's first bid to force Wellesley to accompany him into the political wilderness.

The duel ended Canning's bid for the premiership. Perceval was now free to treat with the Whigs, if the King could be induced to accept them. On 22 September the King

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211 Walpole, Perceval, II, 22; Bathurst to Richmond, 20 September 1809, National Library of Ireland, Richmond MSS 72, f. 1522.

212 Henry Wellesley, Diary, pp. 48-49. When Henry refused Canning did not despair. He offered Henry the vacancy in the Lisbon embassy immediately after the duel. Henry also declined this.
assented. Grenville was ready to treat; Grey was not. Grey hurried to break off talks, which forced Grenville to reject a sincere offer from Perceval which might eventually have seen Grenville rally the old Pittites under his standard. The refusal left Perceval with no choice but to reconstruct the government using existing material. Castlereagh refused to remain in office; he was angry that everyone had conspired to remove him and knew that Canning by wishing to force the issue early was in fact more innocent than some of the others. Canning's friends also left office: Huskisson, Leveson Gower, Sturges Bourne and Bagot were young and talented and their absence would be felt. Perceval turned to Wellesley: would he serve?

Wellesley in Spain knew nothing of the duel and of Canning's extraordinary behaviour until the beginning of October. That was soon enough. By this time Liverpool and the other Pittites had persuaded Perceval that he was

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213 Roberts, _Whig_, pp. 350-59. Many people thought that Perceval negotiated with the Whigs only to gain time until he could hear from Wellesley. This is probably not true. See Horner to Allen, 30 September 1809, in _Francis Horner, Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner_ (London, 1853), I, 469.

the fittest individual to form a government. They had urged him in early September not to give way before Canning. Now they convinced him that the King would be most reluctant to accept Wellesley as Prime minister. If this were true, and it most probably was, Wellesley was safer being in Spain, away from Canning and from the complicated and unelevating intrigues of October 1809.

On 20 October extraordinary news reached Wellesley in Spain. In his last days of office Canning had produced a letter written by Wellesley 18 July, just before he set off for Spain. The letter stated that Wellesley under no circumstances would remain in office if Canning resigned, and it instructed Canning to recall him if this should happen. Wellesley had indeed written such a letter. It was intended to support Canning in his efforts to concentrate British resources in Spain, and to remove Castlereagh so as to make room for Wellesley as the new secretary for War. Wellesley never envisioned a situation in which the letter would become an instrument to blackmail Canning's colleagues into accepting him as Prime minister.

Canning wrote a letter recalling Wellesley on his own authority, but it was detected before it was despatched.

215 Castlereagh to the King, 8 September 1809, Windsor MSS 14597-98, Gray, Perceval, pp. 226-27.
Either Liverpool saw it by accident during a visit to the Foreign office and insisted that it be placed before the cabinet, or Canning informed the King privately in a new effort to persuade him that Perceval would not be able to form a new government. At any rate Perceval soon heard of it and moved to have the letter held back. He told Wellesley Pole of Canning's plans. William immediately wrote to his brother explaining in great detail what Canning had tried to do.²¹⁶ Bathurst also wrote offering Wellesley a place in the cabinet under Perceval.²¹⁷ Benjamin Sydenham was despatched to Spain laden with invitations and correspondence for Wellesley's edification.

It is not clear whether Canning contrived to disclose the contents of the letter or to hide them. By disclosing Wellesley's commitment to stand by him he could hope that Perceval would be convinced that no ministry was possible without Canning at its head. But this strategy was also fraught with danger. The letter in Wellesley's hand proved what Canning's colleagues had long suspected: that he had promised Wellesley a cabinet office in order to induce him

²¹⁷ Gray, Perceval, pp. 255-56.
to go to Spain. In June Perceval had told Canning, it will be remembered, that he would not support any effort to remove Castlereagh if Wellesley was promised Castlereagh's office. Canning had violated this understanding, or so the letter suggested. It was not less inexcusable that Canning would so inflate his personal considerations as to recall the nation's plenipotentiary "in a crisis of negotiation" with a "fluctuating and precarious authority" like the Junta. Thus the disclosure completed Canning's alienation from most of his colleagues in the old Portland ministry.

Wellesley escaped unsathed. His letter was innocent enough in that he need not have known of the cabinet's injunction on Canning regarding disclosure of plans for removing Castlereagh. That his views on public affairs concurred with those of Canning was not intolerable, especially after the fiasco at Walcheren, which fulfilled Canning's direst warnings. Beyond this, Canning's conduct made the adhesion of Wellesley more important than ever, important enough so that Perceval chose not to weigh too seriously his suspicion that Wellesley may very well have conspired with Canning to remove Castlereagh. Even the

—— 218 Rose, Rose, diary entry, 20 October 1809, II, 400.
King's objections were overcome.

The initiative passed to Wellesley. Would he separate from Canning? Wellesley's relationship to Canning remained anomalous and contradictory. Wellesley had converted Canning to an enthusiast for Spain. Canning had paved the way for Wellesley to take office. Both admired the talents of the other, but neither would concede superiority. Canning had been candid about this at one point, though he salted his confession with flattery. He would oppose Wellesley as Prime minister, he said in the year 1807, "because of your reputation, talent and activity of mind," which would "reduce all the rest of us to mere cyphers."\(^{219}\)

Now in October 1809 Canning's jest about cyphers suddenly took on a more sinister meaning. Wellesley reacted to news of the duel with some horror and considerable astonishment. He defended Canning's integrity at this point and deprecated Castlereagh's conduct.\(^{220}\) He penned these sentiments on 10 October. A few days later he received a note from Perceval dated the 5th. From this letter Wellesley concluded that Perceval had suggested that Canning and he serve under Wellesley rather than merely an undesignated


\(^{220}\)Wellesley to Bagot, 10 October 1809, printed in Bagot, Canning, I, 337.
peer. That in fact Wellesley was only one of a half dozen names considered would not have mollified Wellesley, for he could not avoid coming to the conclusion that Canning wanted to block Wellesley's candidacy. **Beyond this, Wellesley took strong exception to Canning's thesis that Wellesley had entrusted to him a blank commission governing his relationship to the Portland ministry. In a statement prepared just before leaving Spain Wellesley argued that he had empowered Canning to pledge him to a place in the cabinet, "being persuaded that his Majesty would never command him to accept any situation inferior to his just pretensions, and to the scale of his public services." He had accepted the mission to Spain, he observed, because Canning had urged it. He had understood that Castlereagh would be transferred to a new office, whatever the outcome of the Walcheren expedition. He had promised Canning that he would not join a government which barred Canning. But never did he pledge himself to assist Canning to become Prime minister.**

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221 Perceval to Wellesley, 5 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 136.
222 Wellesley to Canning, 7 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 141
223 Wellesley, memorandum, October 1809, Windsor MSS 14769-74.
Wellesley's anger at Canning waxed stronger as news poured in from London. Wellesley was astounded to discover that his friends and disciples had persuaded themselves that Wellesley was pledged to making Canning Prime minister.  

Being committed to leave office if Canning were not made Prime minister, he wrote to William, "would be a fantastic example of self-devotion to the personal views of another without any benefit to the public service." He heartily disliked Castlereagh, as heartily as Canning did. "I always thought Canning's antagonist very expert in the management of that article [a pistol]," he told Bagot, "and I have scarcely ever entered the house of Commons without receiving from that noble Lord a bullet hole in the thorax." But it was hard to accept Canning's apparent treachery with equanimity. He was moved to write Canning on 7 October suggesting that he could not accompany him out of public office. And on 30 October he severely reproached Canning, charging that he had behaved so

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225 Wellesley to Wellesley Pole, 8 October 1809, Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 263-64.

226 Wellesley to Bagot, 8 October 1809, printed in Bagot, Canning, I, 336-37.
foolishly that he might not be able to recover his former reputation.227 Meanwhile, he resolved to return to England to demonstrate that he was not Canning's lackey, and on 13 October he requested from Rear Admiral Purvis the use of a ship.228

A ship was not available immediately. This proved fortunate, for Wellesley had not yet received the invitation to join the government which Perceval had extended in his letter of 5 October. Wellesley at first was inclined to fear that no offer would be forthcoming. Certainly Wellington felt this way. Wellington advised his brother to sit tight and not to leave Spain. "Even the actions of a man like you," he warned, "are never either fully represented or fairly appreciated" in situations such as this. The cabinet was likely to be prejudiced against Wellesley because of his association with Canning, and only time would change that.229

227 Dardis to Buckingham, 11 December 1809, Buckingham, Courts, II, 397-98.

228 Wellesley to Rear Admiral Purvis, 13 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS. 37288, f. 172.

229 Wellington to Wellesley, 5 October 1809, Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 386-87; Wellington to Wellesley Pole, 6 October 1809, quoted in Sir Charles Webster, ed., Some Letters of the Duke of Wellington to His Brother, William Wellesley Pole (London: Royal Historical Society, 1948): "I am not sorry that Wellesley was in Spain during these discussions. He could have taken no advantage of, at the
Wellington unconsciously reflected the contemporary opinions of some of the leading Whigs. Lord Auckland doubted that the Perceval cabinet and Wellesley could work in harness, or that Wellesley would constitute an accession of strength. Wellesley's admission to the cabinet, believed Auckland, would sharpen attacks on his "unwise mission" and on his brother's calamitous exploits. Wellesley would therefore choose to remain outside. Thomas Grenville came to the same conclusion using different arguments. He reasoned that Wellesley would not help Perceval enough to obviate the need for accessions from other quarters. With Canning out of the way the ministry was likely to make an approach to Sidmouth. This would discourage Wellesley from coming in. Thomas reported that his brother hoped this would not be the case. He wanted same time that he would have been involved in them; which would have been a disadvantage; and as thing now are he has time to hear how matters are settled, and to consider what line he will take under the settlement."

231 Thomas Grenville to Earl Temple, 19 October 1809, Buckingham, Courts, II, 385.
232 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 5 October 1809, printed in Buckingham, Courts, II, 382-83.
Wellesley to join if only to spite Canning.

Perceval waited anxiously to hear what would be Wellesley's reaction to the prospect of being Foreign secretary. Would he subscribe to the view of Charles Yorke, brother to the Earl of Hardwicke, that it would "become a mere office of detail and subordination under the First Lord of the Treasury in the house of Commons; and details, too, of an irksome and unpleasant description just now..."?233 Yorke claimed to have refused the office before it was offered to Wellesley, a bad omen and potentially demeaning to Wellesley's dignity. Would Wellesley, like Canning, demand to be Prime minister instead? The letter from Perceval was accompanied by something of a commentary from Wellesley Pole.234 There were also private pleas from Wellesley's friends and disciples.235 Some condemned Canning and urged Wellesley to vindicate himself.236 Others, including his Indian colleagues, had returned to England confident that Wellesley's power and influence would open new opportunities for all of them.

233 Charles Yorke to Philip Yorke, Third Earl of Hardwicke, 4 October 1809, BM, Hardwicke MSS 35394, f. 55.
234 Gray, Perceval, pp. 254-57.
235 Walpole, Perceval, II, 40-41.
236 Gray, Perceval, pp. 254-57.
Members of Wellesley's family also urged that he enter the ministry. Wellington was under pressure to justify his retreat to Portugal. Henry looked for a diplomatic post. Most eager of all seems to have been William. His long letters painted Canning's behaviour in entirely unsympathetic terms, and he strongly urged a positive reply. Wellesley decided to accept office. There were several reasons. It was important at this juncture to demonstrate to the political world that he was not beholden to Canning. He was convinced that Canning had used Wellesley's reputation and friendship in a base way. In a long letter to Canning Wellesley justified his decision by pointing out that the two had concerted their actions over the previous year ostensibly to strengthen the government and not to destroy it. Canning had, during Wellesley's absence in Spain, rejected several arrangements which would have done this. Then he had resigned, breaking up a government

237 In 1802 Henry returned from India and was promised the embassy in Madrid. The outbreak of war between Britain and Spain prevented Henry from taking up the assignment. He accepted and then resigned the Lisbon posting when Canning resigned. He seriously considered accepting a place in Buenos Aires. Richard urged him to be patient and when Madrid was again offered he eagerly accepted the assignment. (PRO, Cowley MSS, Foreign Office MSS 519, f. 67).

238 Bathurst to Richmond, 6 November 1809, NLI, Richmond MSS 70, f. 1349.
which Wellesley was pledged to support.  

The letter was ably drawn. The arguments were cogent, and because of this the immediate effect was to antagonise the Canningites. Wellesley was determined, however, to confirm his independence against "our new enemy." He also hoped to satisfy the pretensions and expectations of his family and friends. "Rally my Indians," he urged Pole on 30 October, "and look about for any who may be disposed to come to my standard." Wellesley urged Robert Hobart, Earl of Buckinghamshire, his old nemesis, to assist him. He tried to detach from Canning certain of his disciples, especially Huskisson. "I entertain the greatest regard and esteem for his character," Wellesley confessed when

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239 Dardis to Buckingham, 4 December 1809, Buckingham, Courts, II, 396-97.


241 Wellesley to Wellesley Pole, 30 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 151.


Huskisson insisted on remaining with Canning; "in any view which I have ever formed of acting in the King's councils I have always looked to him as a main source of assistance." 244

Wellesley looked forward to gratifying long-suffering friends, and he felt the pressure of family. 245 In Spain his brother Arthur finally saw fit to arrange to come to Seville to see the Marquess. Wellington's army was in a chaotic condition on the Tagus and there was "little time for brotherly affection." But it was important for the family that Wellesley join the ministry and Wellington pressed the point vigorously. 246 Wellington had his peerage but even the King believed that the decision to entrust affairs in Iberia to "so young a Lieut-general as Lord Wellington was the best guarantee that the scale of activity would remain moderate." 247 This is not what the Wellesley interest wanted to hear.

Even more important was Wellesley's conviction that he would enjoy enormous weight and authority in the new cabinet. His friends contended and Wellesley accepted as

244 Gray, Perceval, p. 267.

245 Wellesley to Perceval, 30 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 171.


247 Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 392.
fact the assertion that the ministry could not be launched without his participation. Gratitude would translate itself into deference. Wellesley confided to one of his friends from India that he would enjoy sufficient weight in the government to satisfy the fondest expectations of all of his friends. He expected "a principal lead in the government, sufficient to justify those who may think favourably of me in supporting the system as being essentially mine." The inclusion of some of his good friends, such as Lord Melville, the son of his old colleague Robert Dundas, suggested that his influence would reign supreme in the area of war and diplomacy. Finally, Wellesley entertained so low an appreciation of most of the new ministry that he foresaw no way not to dominate it. Perceval was not only well-disposed but incompetent; even the cautious Wellington believed that Perceval must give way before the Marquess. Wellesley chose to interpret Perceval's invitation as an admission that the new prime minister would prove to be suitably deferential. And even Liverpool, no friend of

248 Wellesley to Anstruther, 30 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MS 37295, f. 176.

249 Ibid.

251 Merrick Shawe, memorandum, c. 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 257-58.
Wellesley, seemed to petition in an obsequious tone for Wellesley to enter the ministry.251

On 4 November Wellesley Pole received from his brother a detailed defence of his conduct during the spring of 1809. One the same day Earl Bathurst, who had been designated Foreign secretary pending Wellesley's response to Perceval's invitation, was informed that the Marquess was prepared to accept office. "I am as eager to return," he proclaimed to Bathurst, "as you can be to receive me; as for abuse, I am so accustomed to that diet, that it is now become necessary to my constitution."252 He promised to work in harness with the remainder of the ministry.253 In this frame of mind Wellesley made preparations of the journey home.

IX: The Garter

He left Spain elated and yet troubled. He was glad enough to put Spain behind him; he sent his acceptance in


252 Wellesley to Bathurst, 30 October 1809, Bathurst MSS, p. 130.

253 Wellesley to Wellesley Pole, 30 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 151.
in triplicate so that there would be no doubts.\textsuperscript{254} Wellington celebrated his brother's departure by burdening him with an enormous amount of evidence of the perfidy and incompetence of the Junta.\textsuperscript{255} Wellesley anticipated every success in achieving for his Spanish policy as Foreign secretary what he believed he had not accomplished in Spain.\textsuperscript{256} Some shared his enthusiasm; many did not.

Wellesley did not reach London until the end of November. Bathurst continued to hold the post in the interim; the weeks had stretched into almost three months. Bathurst disliked the office intensely but the King thought him magnificent and regretted Wellesley's impending return.\textsuperscript{257} The King continued to oppose Wellesley even after Perceval assaulted him with arguments demonstrating why he was so important to the ministry. The King's premonitions were that Wellesley would prove most troublesome. In this he was to be proven correct. Indeed, the first point of con-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{254} Bagot, Canning, I, 339.
\item \textsuperscript{255} Wellington to Wellesley, 30 October 1809, Wellesley, Spain, pp. 168-79.
\item \textsuperscript{256} Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 39.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Wellesley to Arbuthnot, 30 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 165-66; Wellesley to Perceval, 2 December 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 191-92.
\end{itemize}
tention was raised even before Wellesley settled into office.

Wellesley's three letters formally accepting Perceval's invitation reached London 10 November. They ended a week and more of confusion. Wellesley's letter defending his policy and conduct and his informal letter to Bathurst accepting office had not arrested rumors that he might change his mind upon his return. Perceval was angered to read in Wellesley's statement of justification the inference that in July Perceval had acceded to Canning's request to offer Wellesley a place in the cabinet. Perceval hurried off to the King to deny this; there he heard that the King's informants were convinced Wellesley would not in the last resort accept the portfolio. Perceval was now inclined to share the monarch's hopes. But by the 10th news of Wellesley's acceptance was circulating in London. Tierney and the Grenvilles were informed by their diligent agents that Wellesley was "considered as having accepted."

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258 Perceval to the King, 7 November 1809, Windsor MSS, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 447.

259 Ibid., 4 November 1809, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 441-42.

260 The King to Perceval, 5 November 1809, Windsor MSS 14775, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 445-46.

261 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 10 November 1809,
held out even after official confirmation was received. At last, on 23 November, Perceval told the King that Wellesley had accepted office "without reserve or hesitation"; there was no way to bar him.

The King surrendered. Others abandoned their doubts even more reluctantly. "It is confidently said that [Canning's] letter lying for him at the office, will prevent Lord Wellesley from joining the ministry," wrote Lord Brougham to Earl Grey on 29 November. Brougham noted that Wellesley had not had an opportunity to measure the weakness of the ministry. Once he perceived this, the weakness might persuade Wellesley that Perceval and his friends had represented themselves to be more powerful than they in fact were. Wellesley might refuse to kiss hands. "If this does not make him shy of joining them," Brougham concluded, "it will at any rate, one should think, make him extravagant in his terms, and lead to more

Fortescue MSS, IX, 369.

262 The King to Bathurst, 24 November 1809, Windsor MSS 14798.

263 Perceval to the King, 23 November 1809, Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 451; Ibid., November 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 167.
squabbling and bargaining."  

Wellesley accepted office, as Canning noted, as if he were to manage the ministry. And, as it happened, there were stipulations, as Brougham had predicted, although the stipulations were not those that anyone had anticipated. The subject of the moment was the garter. Wellesley returned from Spain prepared to resume his agitation for compensation for the inadequate honours conferred on him after Seringapatam. The issue remained an obsession with him, and it waxed stronger rather than waned as the years passed. Wellesley decided to promote his candidacy and to lobby vigorously at the very moment when he was expected to launch his drive to vanquish Napoleon, vindicate his record in Spain, and save the empire. It was a distressing spectacle, and was made no less so by the fact that there was some truth to Wellesley's claims that he had been treated in a niggardly way.

The garter was always a painful subject for the incumbent ministry. Commitments always exceeded places. Some promises were vague, and all were subject to long

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264 Henry Brougham to Grey, 1 November 1809, printed in Henry Brougham, Life and Times (3 vols.; Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons), I, 479.

265 Canning to Bagot, 24 November 1809, Bagot, Canning, I, 341.
delays. The King continued to look on this honour as one reserved to his own discretion. He made some selections quite independent of the wishes of his principal ministers, and he sometimes ignored or rejected their nominees. From recipients' point of view the honour was well worth the demeaning petitions required to extract a promise, and to get it implemented. The order of the garter was the premier mark of distinction.

When Wellesley decided to terminate his special mission to Spain there existed a vacancy caused by the death of the Duke of Portland, and a contest of sorts was soon underway between the Duke of Richmond and Lord Aylesford. Both claimed to have been promised the next vacancy. Aylesford was the nominee of court interests. Richmond claimed that he had accepted the onerous post of Irish Lord Lieutenant on the condition that he be honoured at the next opportunity. 266 Even before Wellesley appeared on the scene Richmond delivered an ultimatum to the new ministry and to the King that he would surrender his post if not made a knight of the garter forthwith. The snub stemming from a refusal, he told Bathurst, would be more

266 Richmond to Bathurst, 2 November 1809, NLI, Richmond MSS 72, f. 1489.
than he could endure. 267

Perceval had already promised the vacancy to Richmond, 
unaware that the King considered himself bound by a 
pledge made to Aylesford in 1804. 268 On 8 November 
Perceval received even more shocking news. Charles Arbuthnot 
submitted an application for the garter on Wellesley's 
behalf. To support this claim he produced a packet of 
correspondence between Portland and Wellesley in the spring 
of 1808. The correspondence, as Bathurst admitted in a 
letter to his friend Richmond, supported Wellesley's 
claim that when he had asked Portland to recommend him to 
the King on the basis of a promise made by Pitt, Portland 
had replied by saying that the King had given him every-
thing except a direct promise that Wellesley's wishes would 
be satisfied. 269 There were now three claimants.

Bathurst and Perceval were shocked that Portland 
should have made so grave a commitment to Wellesley without 
first informing the cabinet of his plans; they were more 
upset that Wellesley should ask for the garter when he 

267 Richmond to Perceval, 2 November 1809, NLI, Richmond 
MSS 72, f. 1488.

268 Perceval to Richmond, 30 October 1809, NLI, Richmond 
MSS 72, f. 1502.

269 Bathurst to Richmond, 6 November 1809, NLI, Richmond 
MSS 70, f. 1349.
was taking office. As Bathurst observed, Wellesley's claims for the garter would be stronger if advanced as a reward for supporting the ministry in the past. By asking for the honour now it was impossible to escape the inference that he would not enter office without it. "But he is so great a card at the present moment," Bathurst concluded, "and so aware of it" that Wellesley would probably get his way, unless his unpopularity in the eyes of the King upset his calculations.²⁷⁰ Perceval, however, could not afford to take so detached a view. He had to face the very real danger of Wellesley returning to London and refusing to take office. He was forced to conclude that Wellesley had a good claim if he chose to exercise it. He could only hope that Wellesley would prove amenable to a proposal for delay.²⁷¹

This was a forlorn hope. Wellesley landed on 23 November determined to have the garter immediately. Perceval wrote bravely to Richmond on 30 November that Wellesley must take precedence because word was circulating that he had been selected; to deny the garter to him under these circumstances would constitute an embarrassment which

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Perceval to Richmond, 18 November 1809, NLI, Richmond MSS 72, f. 1518.
By this time Richmond had already agreed to let Aylesford precede him. The Wellesley candidacy, however, was almost more than he could bear. In a long letter to Bathurst Richmond poured out his long pent-up frustrations. Why, he asked, if Pitt had promised Wellesley the garter so long ago, had he not supplied it? If Grenville in turn had also made a commitment, as Wellesley alleged, it was "most extraordinary," with his principal ally Fox supporting the movement for Wellesley's impeachment. As for the late lamented Portland, he was always too indulgent to deny a petition, however foolish. Richmond declared to Bathurst that he could easily have secured the first vacancy had he made it a "sine qua non" for going to Dublin. "The world will never be persuaded," he warned the innocent temporary Foreign secretary, "that the garter was not the price government offered and he accepted for taking office; it will make him extremely unpopular and consequently it will hurt government."\(^{273}\)

Richmond's anger did not disqualify him from fore-

\(^{272}\) Ibid., 30 November 1809, NLI, Richmond MSS 72, f. 1501.

\(^{273}\) Richmond to Perceval, 4 December 1809, NLI, Richmond MSS.72, f. 1485.
casting accurately the impact of his reputation of Wellesley's pursuit of the garter. The King's instinctive animosity towards Wellesley sharpened. On 30 November Perceval made a skillful pitch in Wellesley's favour, basing his argument largely on the contention that unless granted the garter Wellesley might bolt the government. The ministry might collapse, a prospect even more unpalatable to the King than honouring Wellesley, especially if it meant the Whigs would triumph. One 1 December, therefore, the King assented to Perceval's pleas. Wellesley asked that the investiture take place immediately so as to identify the garter with Wellesley's mission to Spain. This was a bold and unexpected tack after Wellesley's repeated references to Pitt's promise. The King conceded only part; he would move the investiture from March to February. Investiture in fact took place on 10 March 1810.

So Wellesley entered office having contrived to anger his King and his colleagues even before his first meeting with the cabinet. The air was filled with suspicion. Par

274 Perceval to the King, 30 November 1809, Windsor MSS 14809-10.

275 Ibid., 2 December 1809, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 464-65.

276 Torrens, Marquess, pp. 381-85.
from being greeted as a hero, a possible heir to Pitt, Wellesley was cast as something of a grasping accumulator of honours and offices. It presaged an unhappy career at the Foreign Office.

277 Brougham to Grey, 30 November 1809, Brougham, Life, I, 483.
CHAPTER XI: FOREIGN
SECRETARY AND DOMESTIC POLITICIAN
I. Fair Promise

From 1800 to the end of 1809 Great Britain saw fit to entrust its affairs of state to no fewer than six ministries. War dominated politics for the entire period. For two years a precarious peace prevailed; it featured recriminations over the peace settlement. Subsequently the country mobilised itself for war as completely as the technology and social order of the day permitted. Defeatism and occasional elation gave way to a surprisingly popular dogged determination to see Napoleon put in his place. By 1809 the ideological tones of the early years had been muted. Napoleon was to most Englishmen only another powerful leader of an unfriendly power. These perceptions eased class tensions at home; rich and poor people alike hated the French. It reduced for a while the need for domestic surveillance. It became safer once more to be both a liberal and a patriot. Schemes for parliamentary reform gradually took shape. After George III succumbed to insanity Catholic emancipation also became a legitimate subject for debate. Although each ministry was conservative to some degree, the long years of the Tory ascendancy had not yet really begun.

The move towards party cohesion and away from small family groups seemed to have slowed and perhaps reversed by
1809. Pitt had effectively combined the virtues of party (size) and personal interest (cohesion) into an effective political instrument. After his death party cohesion gradually eroded, although the party held together long enough to permit Portland to form a ministry from the Pittite interest in 1807. But Perceval complained in October 1809 that the magic of Pitt's name was "in a great degree dissolved." The government was forced to rely on the popularity of the aged King to muster help from the "floaters".¹ Portland's ministry would later be seen as the beginning of the Tory party in its modern form, a political body founded on an ideology of pragmatic conservatism. This was not apparent in 1807, and even less so in 1809. It was still a period of "group politics," and since Pitt's death had removed one cohesive force, there were more party groupings on the scene in 1809 than in 1800.²

The groups tended to be more even in size as well. There continued to be a very large Foxite interest. Because Foxites were permanently excluded from power until 1830,


they tended to form a steady opposition. Their size constituted a destabilising factor for every government of the day, rather than the basis of a new stable coalition in power. The Grenvillites were declining. At its height in 1807 the Grenville interest consisted of about forty members, divided between those in the patronage of the Marquess of Buckingham and those who were old Portland Whigs associated with Grenville for ideological reasons. The Grenville group became disillusioned as years passed without the prospect of a return to office. Lord Grenville himself seemed to lose interest in office. The Canningite group, numbering about a dozen, remained extraordinarily cohesive and active. Close to Wellesley in their point of view on major issues, the Canningites served as an extension of Wellesley's own interest when relations between Wellesley and Canning were repaired.

From 1810 to 1817 the Wellesley party in parliament was at the height of its powers. The Marquess was Foreign secretary, Henry Wellesley was ambassador to Spain, upon which Britain's hopes rested when Austria was forced to make

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3 Ibid., p. 333.

peace with France. The Wellesley party therefore constituted almost a lobbying interest in its own right. The number of adherents in parliament never exceeded fifteen, but they held the key to government's access to support from Canning and to those representatives of popular boroughs who looked to Canning. Many country gentlemen were attracted to Wellington, if not to the Marquess. They were attacked with more frequency and zest than was any other faction supporting the government, which indicates in its own way to their influence. There was always the possibility that through them a rapprochement might be effected with the Grenville interest, either with or without the collaboration of the Canningites.

Viewed from inside and outside government, prospects for Wellesley and his parliamentary interest seemed better in the final days of 1809 than ever before. The entry of the Marquess into government was the event the entire family had been eagerly awaiting. In forwarding a copy of Wellesley's confidential memorandum justifying his decision to accept office Wellesley Pole told Perceval that it showed

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6Sack, "Grenvillites," passim.
his brother to be "a man of honour, an attached friend to
the King, and a true patriot." Wellesley Pole greeted
his brother's decision to take office with such ecstasy
that his friends in jest saw need for a straightjacket to
protect him. Charles Paget, whose family that very year
had been involved in a scandalous clash with Henry Wellesley
over his wife, conceded that the adherence of the Marquess
to the ministry, viewed from the offices and influence
which the family possessed, would govern everything else.
Wellesley "ere many months are gone by" would be "at the
top of the tree, having ousted the generality of the present
set." The press supported this view. The Times, one of the
more sober organs, greeted the news of Wellesley's adhesion
without reserve: "The keystone of the arch is supplied, which
the current of public opinion, however violent or adverse

7 William Wellesley Pole to Perceval, 30 October 1809,
printed in Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley,
The Wellesley Papers: The Life and Correspondence of
Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley (2 vols.;
London: Herbert Jenkins, 1914), II, 263.

8 Richard Ryder to Charles Lennox, Fourth Duke of Richmond,
23 November 1809, National Library of Ireland, Richmond MSS
72, f. 1521.

9 Charles Paget to Arthur Paget, 16 November 1809, printed
in George Hylton Jollife, Baron Hylton, The Paget Brothers,
its direction, can, it is supposed, neither injure nor undermine."

10 A few newspapers, to be sure, raised doubts as to the inevitability of the Wellesley ascendancy.11 But few observers would have supported the prediction made by Thomas Grenville that Wellesley's alliance with the Pittites would not supply sufficient strength for the government to survive.12


11 The Day, 25 November 1809. Wellesley's appointment generated considerable newspaper interest. In general the opposition press believed that Wellesley was prepared to take office in any government. The Morning Chronicle took the high line for the opposition: "It is well known that the Noble Marquess loitered three months in London, after his appointment to the Spanish Embassy, in hopes of getting into the cabinet through the secret arrangement of his friend Mr. Canning; and he is now expected to hurry home, that he may take advantage of the success of his friend Mr. Perceval." The Post was kinder: it hoped that Wellesley would "be more fortunate in obtaining justice for his motives than he has been on other occasions, when everything that office and honours could confer was obviously within his reach." The Chronicle alleged that Wellesley was prone to his disciples' influence, who made him seem more brilliant than he was. The new ministry would fill the same role: "That he should appear a great man to his Majesty's present ministers is exceedingly natural. All magnitude is relative. When Lord Wellesley comes to Downing Street, he will find himself back in Lilliput, without having had the trouble of doubling the Cape."3

1 The Morning Chronicle, 4 October 1809.

2 The Morning Post, 5 October 1809.

3 The Morning Chronicle, 27 October 1809.

12 Thomas Grenville to Richard Grenville, Earl Temple,
Two years later Wellesley would no longer be hailed as the saviour of the nation. Wellesley was to demonstrate to the satisfaction of his colleagues in government that his achievements in India did not qualify him for cabinet-style government, whatever his genius in British India. He would acquire a reputation for intrigue which was quite foreign to the character of his rule in India and to his public protestations. In the minds of many contemporaries and most modern analysts his alleged incompetence at the Foreign office would place him among the very worst incumbents of that high office. The family interest was to prosper largely by adopting an independent course, using the positions secured for them by the Marquess' energies to move forward spectacularly in their own areas of competence.

What factors were responsible for this dramatic gap between expectations in 1809 and subequence developments? In general terms, perhaps three factors may be isolated: a preview of them here will serve to focus attention on their importance as they make their appearance in the conduct of the Marquess Wellesley's political adventures up to the point of his resignation in February 1812.

II. Cabinet Colleague

Wellesley proved to be a most difficult colleague in the cabinet. "One of the greatest of eighteenth century empire builders . . . was temperamentally unfitted for cabinet office . . . on account of his autocratic habits and ill-concealed contempt of his less able colleagues, whose opinions he seldom sought. . . ." This is the shorthand verdict of two modern observers of the period, and it is in many respects an accurate one. He found cabinet conversations to be boring and desultory, no match for the sprightly, incisive exchanges of the drawing room. He resented his colleagues and considered most of them stupid.

At the beginning of his career as Foreign secretary Wellesley was pleased to discover that some members of the cabinet, including Bathurst and Liverpool, were "entirely devoted to him." The remainder were "either so insignificant, or so divided among themselves, as to offer no inconvenience." If this was indeed his true impression, it was soon proven wide of the mark. Liverpool soon disassociated himself from

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Wellesley, and he and Bathurst were soon treating one another "with great acrimony."\textsuperscript{15} Perceval's steady dedication to cabinet business contrasted sharply with Wellesley's flamboyant and unpredictable temperament. Perceval soon strengthened his position as a result.\textsuperscript{16} Wellesley took as a personal affront any sign of inattention to his own testimony, and on one occasion upbraided the somewhat rustic Lord Westmoreland when he raised his dirty boots to the table during Wellesley's presentation to other members of the cabinet.\textsuperscript{17} He came to think of the ministers as undisciplined and perhaps incorrigible children; they called him the "grand Llama" in their private conversations.\textsuperscript{18} Wellesley was the only newcomer in the cabinet, but he attempted to carry his points by exerting pressure rather than by resorting to persuasion.\textsuperscript{19} Inevitably this was resented.

\textsuperscript{15}Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Supplementary Despatches and Memoranda (15 vols.; London: John Murray, 1858-1872), VII, 266.


\textsuperscript{17}Anon., "Wellesley," pp. 446-47.

\textsuperscript{18}Gray, Perceval, p. 274.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
As his contempt for his colleagues increased, Wellesley's attendance at cabinet meetings became less frequent. His preparations became more haphazard. His friends as well as his opponents in the ministry complained that he rarely discussed with them the affairs of the Foreign office; he treated it as a private preserve. Wellesley could not endure the alteration of a single word in his despatches, but he was quick to criticise the drafts of others in such detail that the authors despaired of rescuing their work from Wellesley in recognisable form. He made independent decisions on matters of foreign policy sufficiently weighty to embarrass and exasperate the cabinet when he confronted them with his **fait accompli**. At Christmas 1811 Perceval learned by accident that a professional diplomat, Sir Robert Wilson, was about to set out on a new diplomatic mission. "As I know not whither he is going, whether to Egypt, Constantinople, Palestine or elsewhere," he wrote to Wellesley, "I am sure you will not be surprised at my request to know something concerning it." Wellesley replied that Wilson

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22 Perceval to Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley,
was heading for Constantinople to work for an armistice in the Russo-Turkish war. He thought that he had mentioned it "some time ago and would certainly have discussed it more thoroughly if I had thought it deserving of your attention." On another occasion the understandably irritated Prime minister expressed regret that Wellesley had not seen fit to summon the cabinet to consider so important a proposal as the signing of the preliminary articles of peace with Russia. In a magnificent understatement Perceval observed that "our colleagues would be a little surprised to find such a measure taken without any previous communication with them." The correspondence of the period, unfortunate, does not preserve what answer, if any, Wellesley provided on that occasion. Perhaps he concluded that it deserved one. Under pressure he would profess himself ready to review a series of subjects, only one or two of which he would in fact review when the cabinet met. On balance

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23 Wellesley to Perceval, 26 December 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 161.


25 Ryder to Harrowby, 22 October 1811, Harrowby MSS, V, 70.
his participation in cabinet government proved to be one of the most unfortunate experiences of his public career. Late in life he continued to vow that he would never again enter the cabinet unless he were head of the government holding a stick in hand to keep his colleagues in their place.\(^{26}\) His companions in office from 1809 to 1812 were probably relieved to hear that he had pegged his conditions so high.

III. The Foreign Office

Not a few politicians feared Wellesley's disruptive potential in the cabinet. Some thought him worth enduring there because the administrative ability he had demonstrated in India, applied to the conundrum of the Foreign office, would more than supply his potential deficiencies as a cabinet colleague. It was not long before stories of confusion at the Foreign office were matching the gossip requirements of London society. He started off with a great flourish, writing and dictating a mountain of correspondence in December and January.\(^{27}\) The King saw fit to complement him


on his "clear and concise manner" in drafting despatches. This did not last long. Very soon Canning was telling his wife that reports were circulating that Wellesley "does little or nothing, . . . sees nobody, and answers no letters." Canning regarded the reports as ominous.

Within six months of Wellesley's installation in office the department was in a "pretty tolerable state of disorganisation." In September 1810 Wellesley fell ill and William Hamilton, his principal assistant (other than Culling Smith, amiable but notoriously inefficient), found seventy books of unopened and unanswered incoming correspondence. Of these only six were still current enough to warrant a reply. A colleague from Wellesley's Spanish days described the confusion as "incredible"; his subordinates put off everything; "procrastination and indecision are the order of the day."

Wellesley's relationship to Britain's young represent
tative in Constantinople, Stratford Canning, is instructive. Canning complained that he heard from Wellesley only sixteen times in eighteen months, and that most of the instructions "related to some manuscript copies of classical works supposed to have been stored away in the Seraglio."\textsuperscript{32} Perhaps this was exaggerated, but the truth was not much more reassuring: seven of the sixteen acknowledged receipt of despatches; a few announced such public events as the death of Princess Amelia or the blockade of the Guadalquivir. One asked all ambassadors to use thicker envelopes!\textsuperscript{33} So exasperated was Canning that when in London on one occasion he refused to call on Wellesley. When escorted to Wellesley's door (perhaps by Wellesley's son Richard, who was his good friend and schoolmate at Eton), his repugnance was so great that at the last moment he could not go in.\textsuperscript{34}

Wellesley was unable to delegate work in the office. Most commentators have considered this rather odd in light of his ability in India to give trusted subordinates immense

\textsuperscript{32}Stratford Canning, memorandum, printed in Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1888), I, 91.

\textsuperscript{33}Lane-Poole, Canning, I, 45.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., I, 193.
powers. Two factors must be considered, however. The first was Wellesley's tendency, even in India, not to interfere in the work of subordinates unless he was dissatisfied. Wellington unwittingly supplied evidence of this in regard to Stratford Canning. At the end of Wellesley's tenure Britain secured a peace settlement between the Porte and Russia. This permitted Russia to fight France unencumbered by war on the Turkish front. Wellington praised his brother; if Wellesley had succeeded in nothing else "his name would have gone down to posterity as the man who had foreseen and had afterwards seized the opportunity of rendering to the world the most important service that ever fell to the lot of any individual to perform."35 One of Stratford Canning's admirers later exclaimed incredulously that this great service was effected by Stratford Canning "without one word of instruction or even of notice, and still less of encouragement, from the Foreign office, then fast asleep under the Marquess of Wellesley.36 Perhaps Wellesley's inaction signified approval; if so, Straford Canning and his admirers might have done well to count their blessings.

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., I, 56.
The Foreign office bureaucracy which Wellesley inherited also left much to be desired. The staff consisted of two undersecretaries, one "permanent" and the other "parliamentary." There were also twelve clerks (a chief clerk, two senior clerks, four decipherers, and five junior clerks), and a precis writer, two officekeepers and a housekeeper. Procedures were haphazard and tended to change with each new undersecretary. Well before Wellesley took charge, Sir James Burges Lamb, one of the undersecretaries, provided a somber description of the Foreign office bureaucracy:

The immense number of despatches which come from agents to foreign courts are filled up in large presses, but no note of them is taken, nor is there even an index to them; so that, if anything is wanted, the whole year's accumulation must be rummaged over before it can be found, and frequently material concerns must be forgotten for want of a memorandum to preserve their sense. It is not to be wondered that envoys complained of a want of attention. Sir Robert Keith, ambassador at Vienna during the 1770s, complained that fifty-two successive despatches went unanswered. He received one reply for every forty of his own letters. One wonders why he continued to labour.

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so diligently. 39

One reason why despatches went unanswered, therefore, was the sheer burden of work. Foreign courts and British ambassadors were not alone in making demands upon the small, harried staff. During the eighteenth century parliament discovered the device of requesting selected and edited extracts from official correspondence. Soon enough these modest requests expanded. MPs began to demand hundreds of documents. The burden thus placed on the Foreign office was enormous. The state of affairs gradually encouraged diplomats to retreat to private correspondence as a way to guarantee privacy for their more pointed observations. 40 This in turn reduced the incentive to treat official as opposed to private communications with deference. Not until 1810 - under Wellesley - did the clerks of the Foreign office institute a comprehensive register of correspondence. 41

Selection of the Foreign office staff left much to be desired. Clerks were nominated on the basis of family


41 C. S. B. Buckland, "Some Early Foreign Office Registrars at the Public Record Office," English Historical Review, XXXVII (1922), 567. Earlier attempts to catalogue correspondence included a filing system introduced by James Bland Burges c. 1789. Precis books were prepared for the
connections. In 1812 and 1813 "Castlereagh took advantage of an almost clear field to provide for his relatives and friends." His vigor dwarfed Wellesley's record. Overseas, at least until the early 1800s, diplomats assembled their staffs without even the pretence of obtaining London's sanction: "a couple of dozen of young men scattered over Europe," one historian has described them, "owing no allegiance and taking diplomacy only as subsidiary to amusement." Some were conscientious, but even these could plead on occasion that they were accountable to more than one master, for the department of War and the Colonies often corresponded directly with them. Perhaps all this explains in part why Wellesley refused an invitation to increase the size of his staff when Perceval offered to do so if this would reduce the neglect of important despatches.

Wellesley's problem was not only connected to an inefficient bureaucracy. His devotion to duty was directly

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related to his interest in the subject, and the frustrations which resulted from the virtual absence of a regular diplomatic community in London during the war years added to the burden of written correspondence. He was disinclined to meet personally with representatives of interests whose objectives he opposed or to whom he could offer no encouragement. But London's gossips cited his wayward sexual habits as the primary cause of his inefficiency. Jackson noted that "he never goes to the office, and is visible nowhere but in his harem. Anybody going to Turkey might have a good chance with him by sending him over a couple of Georgians or Circassians."45 In Spain Wellington heard stories of the collapse of Wellesley's marriage to Hyacinthe and of his compensations. Rather harsh he told his brother William that he wished "Wellesley was castrated; or that he would like other people attend to his business and perform, too."46

By the end of 1811 so many foreign affairs items required the attention of the cabinet that Wellesley was forced to request almost daily meetings to clear away arrears before

45Arthur Aspinall, ed., The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, 1770-1812 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), VII, 228; F. G. Jackson, 5-9 March 1811, Bath Archives, I, 94.

the next session of parliament. His colleagues, despite the burden imposed on their time, were delighted to see Wellesley discomfitted. As Bathurst unkindly put it, "it will prove to the Llama his own utter inefficiency." The new system was perhaps not in effect long enough before Wellesley surrendered his seals the following month. Perceval warned Castlereagh, the new Foreign secretary, that he would find "much employment of a very pressing nature" in clearing away Wellesley's arrears. Strangford, who had often complained of a want of attention to his despatches from Rio and Portugal, declared that "more will be done in six months with Lord Castlereagh, than in two years with his predecessor." Later he testified that the increase in efficiency had indeed proven dramatic.

The tendency to confuse efficiency in the running of the Foreign office with excellence in the formulation of foreign policy itself is a natural one. It has certainly

47 Ryder to Harrowby, 21 December 1811, Harrowby MSS, V, 79.

48 Perceval to Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, 18 February 1812, BM, Perceval MSS.


50 Ibid., I, lxxix.
encouraged historians to place Wellesley in the lowest rank of British Foreign secretaries in the modern period. Succeeding pages will suggest that Wellesley was not "an unconscienably bad Foreign secretary." His defects as an administrator should not be confused with his strategy as architect of foreign policy: a pernicious policy vigorously executed would have been far worse than a good policy inefficiently implemented. Procrastination and indecision may indeed have been "the order of the day," but these devices can defend a commitment already in place. At any rate, the surprise which Wellesley's colleagues registered was his inability to reproduce in the Foreign office what he had done in India.

To recall a phrase used earlier by Addington, it is clear that once again Wellesley was suffering "from the cramp." The Foreign office was a bureaucracy which he believed was not worth his prolonged attention. It was small and inbred, physically and psychologically stifling. To equate India with the Foreign office was to miss all the important characteristics of each. Wellesley could build empires; he could not superintend a bureaucracy. He was not the first to discover this, nor was he the last.

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51 Jackson, July 1810, Bath Archives, I, 145.
This environment of restraints imposed on a minister's conduct by virtue of the ministry's collective responsibility to and dependence on parliament constituted a third disorienting feature for Wellesley. It might be true that "in constitutional theory neither house of parliament had any share either in formulating or in executing foreign policy." The Earl of Chatham had alleged in a former period that "unless it can be alleged that this prerogative of the Crown has been made a bad use of or that it has been to the great hurt of the people neglected, the parliament ought never to impose in any affairs relating to peace or war, negotiating or treating." But in fact parliament often did interfere, even if usually in "a negative and indirect manner." This was sufficient, for there was of course nothing approximating the discipline in party politics exerted by leaders on their parliamentary followers today. Maintaining support for foreign policy was an interminable exercise in humoring, cajolling, outfoxing and compensating supporters for their help, and in tempting, undermining and frightening the opposition. The dynamics of such business held no appeal for Wellesley. He was extraordinarily uneasy with anyone but his very closest friends. Wellesley never had a "circle" 52

of acquaintances; his was a world of intimates and enemies. Soliciting support from backbenchers, and even from his colleagues in the cabinet, was inherently demeaning to him. He discouraged political supporters when he should have urged them to support him. In the ministry he complained that he had so little influence as not to be able to "make an exciseman." He favoured a meritocracy; most men convinced of their own superiority are inclined to do so. For him enforced intimacy resulting from working with others often bred contempt, and he was isolated in turn.

One observer concluded that as early as April 1810 Wellesley was hated, despised, and "out of friendship, or even intimacy with every one of his colleagues." This may be overdrawn, but there was considerable truth in Liverpool's observation that his habits were such as to breed an isolation neither to his advantage nor to the benefit of the government. Unable to wield power in the cabinet in the manner to which he had become accustomed in India and as he had expected upon taking office, he populated his house with terrified if talented syncophants who applauded his eloquent, undelivered

53 Merrick Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 260.

54 Dardis to Buckingham, 25 April 1810, Buckingham, Courts, II, 435.

55 Ibid.
speeches. His reputation for inordinate display (a compensation, perhaps, for lost glories) and for an addiction to "women of easy virtue" weighed heavily upon his effectiveness and increased his isolation.\textsuperscript{56} Wellesley was not an easy colleague; from 1809 to 1812 he was inevitably "either a most troublesome friend, or a most formidable enemy."\textsuperscript{57}

IV. Cabinet Politics in 1810: Relations with Canning

Perceval's ministry was launched in mid-October 1809 amid widespread speculation that it could not survive any length of time at all, or only through Wellesley's efforts. The King liked Perceval. Perceval certainly encouraged the King to believe that Wellesley's adhesion was necessary for the viability of the new ministry.\textsuperscript{58} Perhaps this encouraged him to show Wellesley "super-gracious" attention when the Foreign secretary kissed hands for the seals on 6 December.\textsuperscript{59} He may also have been warmed to the task by

\textsuperscript{56} Earl of Galloway to Arthur Paget, 1 July 1810, cited in Hylton, \textit{Paget}, pp. 142-43.

\textsuperscript{57} Dardis to Buckingham, 25 April 1810, Buckingham, \textit{Courts}, II, 436.

\textsuperscript{58} Aspinall, \textit{Later Correspondence}, V, 451.

\textsuperscript{59} Dardis to Buckingham, 11 December 1809, Buckingham, \textit{Courts}, II, 399.
reports that his son the Prince of Wales was at the moment decidedly opposed to Wellesley for having deserted Grenville. But it was far from clear that Wellesley had deserted anybody. Grenville was still in touch with him. To the distress and surprise of his colleagues Wellesley continued to say kind things about Grenville (but not Grey) and to hope that he might be brought into government. Wellesley's supporters even sided with Grenville from time to time in parliament. In return Grenville orchestrated praise for Wellesley at dinners where the opposition planned their strategy.

More spectacular was the rapprochement with Canning. Until Wellesley reached London at the end of November both Canning and he boiled over at each other's conduct in correspondence with their friends. Wellesley continued to labour under the misimpression that Canning had excluded him from office until, upon his return, he discovered that the story stemmed from a misreading of correspondence by his brother William. This helped to clear the air. For his part

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61 Dardis to Buckingham, c. 21 December 1809, printed in Buckingham, Courts, II, 408.

62 Charles Arbuthnot to Wellesley, 12 December 1809,
Canning thought that the July pledge remained valid. When he confirmed on Wellesley's return that he was determined to take office, Canning confessed that this conduct vexed him to the heart. By 15 December, however, the rift had apparently been repaired. Canning for his part persuaded Wellesley that even if he had wished to block Wellesley's candidacy for the premiership he could not have done so. He coupled this with expressions of contrition for having attempted to recall Wellesley. Canning's most recent biographer finds Canning's readiness to swallow his pride and restore himself to Wellesley's good graces somewhat inexplicable: Canning was undoubtedly impressed by Wellesley's pronouncements on what the British should do in India, ideas

BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, ff. 319-20.


64 Ibid., 23 November 1809, 24 November 1809, Bagot, Canning, I, 341, 342.


66 Canning to Wellesley, 28 October 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 141-42.

67 Dardis to Buckingham, 4 December 1809, printed in Buckingham, Courts, II, 397.
which "could be described as sensibly statesmanlike or foolishly grandiose according to taste. . . . Canning . . .
must have taken Wellesley at, or near, his own high estimate of himself." 68 But in fact Canning's bargaining position
was weak. Even some of Canning's closest friends refused to resign along with him in September. Perhaps most notorious
was the conduct of Rose, who owed virtually everything to Canning, and who made it clear that he was prepared to
support Wellesley in exchange for a diplomatic post for his son. 69 This was the type of conduct which disgusted
Wellesley, and Rose went away disappointed.

Wellesley for his part concluded rather naively that Canning had acted imprudently but not in bad faith. 70 His
forced retirement from office after unsuccessful efforts to establish himself at the head of the government by ul-
timatum became for Wellesley so much more incentive to


69 George Canning to George Leveson Gower, 19 September 1809, Granville MSS, cited in Arthur Aspinall, "The Canning-
ite Party," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, XVII (1934), 188; George Rose to Wellesley, 19 December 1809,
quoted in George Rose, Diaries and Correspondence (Leveson Vernon Harcourt, ed.; 2 vols.; London: R. Bentley, 1860),
II, 360-62; Rose, Diary entry, 5 December 1809, Rose, Rose, II, 434.

70 Arbuthnot to Huskisson, 29 November 1809, BM, Huskisson MSS 38737, f. 395.
restore Canning to power. The major theme of Wellesley's negotiations with the cabinet until he left office in February 1812 was his effort to restore Canning to office.

Wellesley's effort to reconcile Canning to the Pittites was more than testimony to mutual esteem and affection. Wellesley was convinced from the very beginning that the government was impossibly weak. Few disputed him on this score; some however, thought Wellesley himself was the problem. But Wellesley, surely with unconscious modesty, said that the government could not survive unless some of the Pittites outside the government were brought in.

The three groups which fit this description were the Canningites, Sidmouth and his friends, and "Saints" such as Wilberforce. The "Saints," despite or because of their moral fervor, did not amount to much. Sidmouth, while personally well disposed to Wellesley, was the sworn enemy of Canning and was Wellesley's own opponent on the important issue of Catholic emancipation. There was also Castlereagh, who very much wanted to return to office. And of course there was Canning, who was not quite so sure. Beyond the laudable objective of strengthening the government on general grounds, there was the impending confrontation with the opposition over the Walcheren disaster. Wellesley was free from any blame for that fiasco. Most of the cabinet, however, could be held to
account unless one of their members could be induced to shoulder all the blame and persuade the house of Commons that this was the proper course. In any event there was a good chance that the ministry might not survive a vote on the issue, as the ministry was at present constituted.

It demanded little insight to see that Canning's adherence would strengthen the ministry in facing Walcheren. If he remained in opposition it was possible that he would attack Castlereagh and Chatham, the two most closely identified with it. If so the ministry would probably collapse. If Castlereagh and Chatham shouldered the blame, Perceval would also likely feel obliged to resign at least from his present situation. Wellesley had opposed Walcheren (it drew resources from Spain) and he knew his candidacy for the premiership would become more credible if the opposition carried a censure motion against the government. Canning's skills would be needed to replace the loss of Perceval and others. There was, as a result, a strong thread of self-interest woven into the campaign to restore Canning to office, with or without other Pittites.

Rumors as to Canning's admission, Perceval's exit, and Wellesley's elevation to the office of first Lord of the Treasury began as soon as Wellesley kissed hands. It is
possible that he inspired some of them. It is quite unlikely that Wellesley contemplated "making war upon Castlereagh" in order to pave the way for Canning's return; at no time did Canning decline to take office on the condition that Castlereagh be excluded. It may be true that he pressed Perceval to invite Huskisson, a Canningite, to take high office, with Canning to follow later. Rumors that Wellesley would become Prime minister, Perceval the Lord Chancellor, Canning the Foreign secretary, and Huskisson the Chancellor of the Exchequer became so frequent that the Grenville interest felt almost compelled to believe them. Some credence was lent to them by Canning's decision to support the Perceval ministry during debate on the throne speech delivered 23 January. Canning undoubtedly inclined to regulate his conduct by the fact that the policies enunciated there were those which he had supported when in government. His followers therefore felt obliged to concur in Canning's

71 Thomas Grenville to Temple, 23 December 1809, printed in Buckingham, Courts, II, 409.

72 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 22 December 1809, printed in Fortescue MSS, IX, 433.

73 Ibid., 30 December 1809, Fortescue MSS, IX, 439.

74 Ibid., 27 December 1809; the Bishop of Lincoln to Grenville, 16 December 1809, Fortescue MSS, IX, 438, 415; Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 24 December 1809, BM MSS 41853, ff. 162-63.
decision to support the ministry despite Perceval's "treacherous, hypocritical, mean and jealous spirit." 75 And although relations between Canning and Wellesley were still far from intimate, Canning was likely to have known that the throne speech was composed in considerable part by Wellesley. 76

Canning's speech was an undoubted success; even Creevey admitted that it had been "a most produceable Pittish performance." 77 It reflected Wellesley's insistence on guarantees for Spain and Portugal, and it offered high praise for Wellington's conduct at the battle of Talavera. On the subject of the Walcheren expedition it noted that "rigorous and effectual inquiries" were in order, and conceded that the country had been subjected to unexampled calamity and disgrace." 78 The speech momentarilily put to rest rumors that Perceval and Wellesley had clashed over issue of the commitment to Iberia, and that they had both

75 Bagot, Canning, I, 336, 346.

76 Arbuthnot to Huskisson, 5 January 1810, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, f. 8; Butler, Eldest, p. 440.


received severe wounds in a duel. The speech prompted a spirited rebuttal from Earl Grey, who focused on the victory at Talavera as an example of British self-delusion in Spain. By doing so Grey moved directly to challenge Wellesley's major policy objective during the next two years: the war in the peninsula and support for Wellington.

V: Cabinet Politics: The Walcheren Question

Wellesley did not begin his parliamentary service as Foreign secretary in an auspicious fashion. He suffered a bout of nervousness in the debate which followed the throne speech and did not speak at all. Canning believed that this behaviour "sunk him in the opinion of all the world." Grey would be encouraged to goad him, and Grenville would move to ambush the Marquess at the first possible opportunity; if Wellesley failed to meet their challenges, it would mean his downfall. Grey did indeed goad him. As his friend Lord Moira admitted to a relative, Grey's rebuttal "was specifically arranged in detail" to force Wellesley to lose his temper. But Wellesley remained

79 Arbuthnot to Perceval, 9 January 1810, Perceval MSS, cited in Gray, Perceval, p. 277.

80 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 25 January 1810, Canning MSS, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 492.

81 Francis Hastings, Second Earl Moira, to Sir Charles
silent. Two days later Grey tried again. Grey declared that Talavera was no victory at all; Wellington had not taken Madrid; the Spanish had proven untrustworthy; Wellington had captured few prisoners, had retreated, and had abandoned his sick and wounded. This time Wellesley rebutted with the energy and confidence he had failed to demonstrate two days earlier. Wellington, he argued, had sought to defeat the French rather than capture Madrid, and had done so. He had undertaken the campaign at the request of the Junta, and he could hardly refuse. Retreat Wellington had, by virtue of the Spanish being "oversanguine." But the French were on the whole in a defensive posture since Talavera, and southern Spain's newfound security allowed that nation and Portugal greater time to summon new strength.

Wellesley's crisp and candid presentation was warmly applauded. The cabinet was delighted. Grenville,
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prepared to rebut sharply, replied lamely. The Whigs gave notice of their plans to force a division on the issue. But the division was cancelled at the last moment because the Grenvillites were disinclined to vote against the Wellesley interest. Some avid foes of Wellesley, Folkestone and Creevey among them, pressed for a vote, but it was denied them, and the only result was the advertise dissen-
sion among the Whigs. And Canning's dismal forecast about Wellesley, a forecast which the cabinet would have shared had they seen his letter, was proven wrong. After an initial mistake Wellesley had recovered his poise; this augured well for what promised to be an extremely difficult

deprecatory. Lord Holland, the dispassionate recorder, may be relied on to provide a balanced perspective:

Lord Wellesley made his debut in the character of minister upon the thanks of the house being moved to Lord Wellington. Some commend, and others disparage his speech; perhaps the middle line of praise would be nearest the truth. He was rather oriental in his style of praising his brother, but much may be owing to his feelings upon such a subject as that of his brother's merits undergoing a slighting review.¹


851 Hansard XV (26 January 1810), 152-53.

and most interesting session.

Wellesley was reportedly sufficiently impressed by his own performance to organise a "shadow cabinet" in anticipation of his own appointment as premier if Perceval stumbled on the Walcheren issue the following month. In Spain the stature of Wellington loomed larger, and it cast a shade in Britain as well. Grey had misjudged the degree to which Wellesley was already a hero in Britain and among the backbenchers. Wellesley was prepared to exploit his brother's successes and to rise higher in the esteem of his colleagues as these victories multiplied. Only slowly did he come to realise that Wellington by virtue of his success sustained Perceval when he might otherwise have been forced to resign. In doing so he frustrated Wellesley's ambitions to become Prime minister.

Wellesley did not repeat his performance in the house of Lords for some time. Indeed, because the next issue was Walcheren, he took advantage of his record of opposition to remain silent. His colleagues admitted his right to do so, but he coupled his ostentatious reticence here with a flurry of backstage maneuvering. The ministry's exposed

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88 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 260.
position was confirmed when on 24 February the opposition secured a majority of seven on the Scheldt issue. The tally was swelled by votes from some who wanted Perceval to realise that he could not carry on the government without additional strength. Percival was not discouraged. 89

Canning felt obliged to defend Walcheren in principle but to condemn Chatham, which he did in a motion offered to the house of Commons 6 March. This had the effect of widening the breach between Canning and the ministry at the very moment Wellesley was trying to convince Perceval that Canning must be given office, or at least promised office after the Walcheren debate.

Canning may have thought that his motion would bring down the ministry, and Perceval certainly waxed more despondent. 90 The Whigs and Grenville were now dedicated to an all-out attack on the ministry and on Wellesley. Evidence of friendship with Grenville was more difficult to detect, and Creevey's gossip mill was feeding Grey every tintillating morsel of Wellesleyan foibles he could uncover

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89 Wellesley Pole to Richmond, 24 February 1810, NLI, Richmond MSS 73, f. 1715.

90 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 3 February 1810, Canning MSS, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 506.
Wellesley preserved his influence with Perceval by urging him, sincerely or not it is hard to know, not to surrender even while he held a majority of one.  

Perceval laboured to preserve his majority of one, Canning indirectly tried to bring him down, and Wellesley remained active behind the scenes. On 10 March Canning sat silent when Chatham was attacked; Canning's silence supported the charges. Two days later he confided to his wife the impression that popular agitation for him to return to the Foreign office was on the increase.

Wellesley, thus displaced, would need compensation, such as Perceval's position. According to Canning, support for removing Perceval was in part strengthened by the awareness that Wellesley was not performing satisfactorily in his office. If Wellesley could be made to disappear things would be easier for everyone, because Perceval would never give way to Wellesley voluntarily.

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92 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 3 February 1810, Canning MSS, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 506.

93 Ibid., 10 March 1810, Canning MSS, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 539.

94 Ibid., 12 March 1810, Canning MSS, cited in Aspinall,
Wellesley was of course not privy to Canning's revelations to his wife. Indeed, on the day following the Marquess recorded on paper his private thoughts. The government could not carry on without the support of Canning, Castlereagh and Sidmouth and their disciples. Wellesley declared his readiness to surrender the Foreign office to Canning. He doubted that Perceval would welcome Canning's adherence, but such was the desperation of the hour that perhaps this problem could be overcome. Canning seemed prepared to come in. Addington's strength was also increasing, and he was now "in highest favour with the King." There was the danger, Wellesley observed, that if Sidmouth's support could not be obtained for the present ministry he would soon have the opportunity to construct a new one of his own on the ruins. This would probably insure Canning's continued isolation and would certainly destroy Wellesley's bid for supremacy. With Castlereagh Wellesley claimed to be on the closest terms.

Later Correspondence, V, 542.

95 Wellesley to unnamed correspondent, 13 March 1810, Wellesley, Wellesley, II, 5.

96 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 12 March 1810, Canning MSS, quoted in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 542.

97 Dardis to Buckingham, c. 30 March 1810, Buckingham, Courts, II, 430.
On 17 March Arbuthnot told Canning's friend Bagot that Wellesley was "hard at work" drafting proposals for Perceval's approval. Wellesley had already proposed, according to this intelligence, to take the office of President of the council in order to make way for Canning's return. Perceval in turn had told Wellesley to put the proposal in more general terms. Wellesley submitted a second draft, but it was stronger than the first.  

These things could not remain secret long, especially with the diligent Dardis reporting every move at Apsley house. Eager to exploit what they perceived to be a rift in the government, the Whigs in March suddenly ceased their attacks on Wellesley. Grenville proceeded to denounce the Walcheren expedition in "scathing terms" but did not mention Wellesley's diplomatic mission. Grey contented himself with a reference to Wellesley's absence during the debate. Odds favoured the ministry's collapse as the crucial votes approached in late March. Wellesley's shadow cabinet was regarded in some quarters as virtually the new government. Perceval's resignation was expected almost

98 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 17 March 1810, Canning MSS, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 543.

99 Torrens, Marquess, p. 391.

100 Dardis to Buckingham, January 1810, quoted in Torrens,
momentarily. 101

It did not come. The ministry survived the vote of censure by a margin of almost fifty ballots, a narrow but not precariously narrow difference. What explained the government's ability to survive one of the most notorious calamities of the war? On balance, did Wellesley's behaviour tend to sustain or to undermine the government? In large measure Perceval's survival rested on the support of Canning and Castlereagh, whose position outside the government actually improved the ministry's chances for survival. They shouldered the responsibility for having conceived the Walcheren expedition in principle, and persuaded the house that the plan was viable. They disclaimed responsibility for its execution, and particularly for the retention of the army in the Netherlands when failure had already been long established. Since both men were out of the government by early October, this was not difficult to do. Indirectly, therefore, they called for a scapegoat rather than for a condemnation of the entire ministry. A scapegoat there was: Chatham. Perceval at first refused to abandon him, and Chatham himself showed no desire to resign from the cabinet. At length he did so, and disappeared from public life. The government remained.

Marquess, pp. 396-97; Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 17 March 1810, Fortescue MSS, X, 20; Buckingham, Courts, IV, 434.

101 William Eden, Baron Auckland, 23 March 1810, Fortescue
What was Wellesley's role? Later it was widely alleged that he had conspired to destroy the government. He was pictured as being astonished and profoundly disappointed at the government's survival. 102 His friend Shawe in 1814 took issue with this interpretation. He claimed (other sources do not substantiate this claim) that Wellesley and not Perceval persuaded Chatham to resign and to face a committee of inquiry, and that this saved the government. 103 Other sources do show that Wellesley assisted in preparing Wellesley's speech on the Walcheren issue, but in Wellesley's case he may have inspected Perceval's work to satisfy himself that he had not been implicated in the disaster. 104 Wellesley could claim, even if his motives were somewhat self-serving, that his relationship to Canning was a strong inducement for him to exert himself actively in defending Walcheren in its conceptual aspects. Wellesley's efforts to reconcile Canning to the ministry reinforced this effort. Even

MSS, X, 21-22.

102 Butler, Eldest, p. 441.

103 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 260; Walpole, Perceval, II, 78-79.

104 Gray, Perceval, p. 287.
Canning’s attack on Chatham for delaying the repatriation of troops diverted the main thrust of the opposition against the entire ministry.

Unfortunately, Wellesley’s ambition to replace Perceval was ineffectively concealed. At the end of March, immediately after the crucial Walcheren vote, Wellesley completed the steps necessary for his own reconciliation with Canning. The timing distressed Wellesley’s own friends and cannot have humored Perceval. It stood out as Wellesley’s answer to the disappointment of not having seen Perceval removed from office. Wellesley would press for Canning’s admission to the government more actively than ever before.

VI: Cabinet Politics 1810: Canning In Or Out?

There was no disagreement between Perceval and Wellesley on whether Canning would be a useful addition to the ministry. But Perceval would not see Canning admitted without Castlereagh, and Wellesley would not permit the reverse. It was easy for Wellesley and Perceval to place the blame for the stalemate on each other’s candidate. Perceval claimed that even Wellesley appreciated the undesirability of applying only to Canning,

105 Dardis to Buckingham, 2 April 1810, printed in Buckingham, Courts, II, 431.
who was not popular with most members of the ministry. Wellesley probably did subscribe to this view, but would not have done so had resistance to Canning's admission been less intense. Sidmouth's role was a complicating factor. He would not join the government unless Canning was excluded; old animosities could not be forgiven or forgotten. Wellesley had little to gain and much to lose by Sidmouth's accession, even with that of Canning to balance it. Sidmouth would oppose Wellesley on Catholic relief and might challenge him for the premiership if it fell vacant. Faced with a choice, the cabinet might have preferred Sidmouth; better in this case a man who had been Prime minister and failed than one who had never been Prime minister at all. Because Sidmouth wore his anti-Canning credentials on his sleeve, it was not necessary for Castlereagh to take on himself the unpleasant task of refusing to enter the government unless Canning was kept out.

This deadlock was not necessarily a source of dismay to Wellesley, for one way to break it was to place Wellesley

106 Perceval to Richmond, 30 April 1810, Perceval MSS, cited in Gray, Perceval, p. 393.
107 Walpole, Perceval, II, 80.
108 George III to Perceval, 26 April 1810, Windsor MSS 15103.
at the head of the ministry. Sidmouth was not adverse to serving under Wellesley. Perceval would not serve under Sidmouth; Sidmouth's desertion of Pitt was still remembered here, too. But he might serve under Wellesley. Of course Perceval would not accept Canning as his superior; Wellesley might do so. If Perceval's participation in the government was held to be indispensable (because of his popularity with other members of the cabinet it probably was), then one way to secure the services of Canning and Perceval both was to make Wellesley Prime minister. Under this arrangement Castlereagh might also adhere. Sidmouth was likely to stay out, but it was not impossible that Wellesley could persuade him to overcome his antipathy towards Canning.

It remained true, nonetheless, that the government must manifest a serious and indeed fatal weakness in its support in the house of Commons before changes could be made in the composition of the ministry. This weakness had to be seen to have come about in spite of and not because of Wellesley's efforts. It would also require a demonstration of good behaviour on Canning's part. The Walcheren issue, so appropriate as a vehicle for effecting change, had failed. Now hopes must rely on the success of a concerted opposition

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109 Dardis to Buckingham, 2 April 1810, Buckingham, Courts, II, 432.
by Foxites, Grenville and his friends, the Addingtonians, and anyone else inclined to unhappiness at the current state of affairs. Weak as the ministry was, this was not as likely a prospect as had been the case on the eve of the Walcheren vote.

A second question was also posed: if Wellesley proved successful in destroying the incumbent ministry, was there a chance that he could construct a new ministry under his own command on the ruins of the old? Canning certainly doubted that he could. Wellesley had the King against him, especially if he moved to displace Perceval. He had Perceval against him. Even without the injury to their relationship which undermining the ministry would necessarily entail, their ties deteriorated sharply in the aftermath of the Walcheren debate. Perceval could not hide his resentment at being talked about as if he were dead and buried before the motion of censure had been entertained, and Wellesley could not hide his surprise that Perceval still remained at the head of the ministry. The stronger any alliance Wellesley made with Canning, the weaker Wellesley's prospects were of maintaining the support of those attached to Perceval and Sidmouth. 

On the other side, animosity between Grenville and Wellesley

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110 Ibid., 25 April 1810, 2 April 1810, Buckingham, Courts, II, 435, 430.
had certainly risen sharply since Wellesley entered office. In part it resulted from the Whigs' decision to make Spain the central point of their opposition. Wellesley was cut to the quick on this. The Whigs' strategy was probably determined not by Wellesley's support of it but by the need to find a viable issue. In their eyes British policy in Spain filled this need. Buckingham may have attempted to make this point when Wellesley met him at Carleton house in late April. If so, Buckingham was not successful. The impact of the February exchanges on the Wellesley-Grenville tie was devastating and, as it proved, irreparable.

The ministry's principal players in this little drama showed little enthusiasm for any attempt to widen the basis of support. At the beginning of April the cabinet permitted Wellesley to sound out Canning. Philip Yorke extended a general invitation to Sidmouth in the middle of the month. Sidmouth denied Yorke permission even to disclose his refusal to serve with Canning, and Canning, more coy yet, declined to give "any gratuitous declaration of my opinions upon questions

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111 Wellesley Pole to Richmond, 26 March 1810, NLI, Richmond MSS 73, f. 1699; Torrens, Marquess, p. 408.

112 Dardis to Buckingham, 25 April 1810, Buckingham, Courts, II, 439.

113 Walpole, Perceval, II, 79-81.
involving matters of so much personal delicacy. Off the record, he did not deny his desire to join. Castlereagh was never approached, because Wellesley of course would do nothing without Canning.

Canning's influence over Wellesley certainly increased in the aftermath of Walcheren. The influence was tentative at first, but eventually it developed into an ascendancy which the cabinet described as inappropriate and even dangerous. Wellesley played Canning to Canning's Wellesley of 1809. Canning offered to speak on Spain and to include anything Wellesley wanted the house of Commons to hear. But he was slow to learn the lesson of his own defeat the previous autumn. It is probably safe to say that the Walcheren vote so disoriented Canning that he momentarily lost a sense of direction. To his wife, who was privy to most of his secrets, Canning wrote that it was best that the ministry had not fallen. Wellesley and he were not strong enough to form a new government, and once the Whigs had installed themselves it would have proven very difficult

114 Canning to Wellesley, 10 April 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 401.

to get them out. At the same time, however, he urged Wellesley to resign, and warned that if he did not the King and Perceval would combine to throw him out of the government within three months. Soon after this Francis Burdett excited crowds to riot (they attacked Wellesley's house and that of Wellesley Pole to vent their frustrations against the war). The cabinet deliberated for three days before arresting Burdett, a delay which many thought demonstrated its weakness. Canning told Wellesley to take advantage of the agitation to press upon the King the need for a stronger government. To what end? If Wellesley and he alone could not form a government, and if only the opposition would benefit, this seemed a futile exercise. But Canning and Wellesley shared the conviction that given a chance, their opponents would always destroy themselves, and the defect of this outlook was no more amply demonstrated than in the way they rather than their opponents managed to place themselves in exile in 1812.

116 Canning to Mrs. Canning, 1 April 1810, Canning MSS, Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 554; Charles S. B. Buckland, Frederick Von Gentz' Relation with the British Government During the Marquis' Wellesley's Foreign Secretaryship, 1809-1812 (London, 1932), pp. 7-12.

117 Canning to Bagot, 10 April 1810, Bagot, Canning, I, 351-52.

118 Bagot, Canning, I, 351.
Perceval plodded on. He had a way of reducing Wellesley's grand arguments to commonplaces, and turning the commonplaces to his own advantage. When the elaborate design to gain the services of Canning and Castlereagh and Sidmouth collapsed, Perceval moved to patch up holes by Chatham's resignation. He shifted Mulgrave to the Ordnance and placed Philip Yorke at the Admiralty. It was a sensible move, but Wellesley believed that it would constitute an "additional weakness" in the ministry. Perceval neatly chose to ignore Wellesley's suggestion that weakness in the ministry was to be measured by contrasting these appointments to the strength which Canning's accession could have provided. Perceval confessed an inability to see how filling a vacancy could be construed as an "additional weakness." Unfortunately for Wellesley, the ministry's fortunes also improved at the same time. By May the Walcheren issue was fading and the ministry was gaining enough strength to stagger forward.

For Wellesley the adhesion of Canning remained the paramount consideration. After the Walcheren vote there seems to have been no other subject before the cabinet in which

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119 Wellesley to Canning, 3 May 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 282-84.

120 Perceval to Wellesley, 28 April 1810, 4 May 1810, Wellesley to Perceval, 3 May 1810, printed in Wellesley, Wellesley, II, 9-10.
Wellesley felt personally involved. Providing a place for Canning became a primary justification for Wellesley's continuation in office, or so it seemed to his cabinet colleagues. No doubt Wellesley felt very strongly about the need to secure Canning's services. But the principal justification for this—strengthening the government—was obscured and vitiated by the continuing agitation. Wellesley was quite aware that his increasing estrangement from Perceval, and from many other members of the cabinet as well, was directly related to this point. Perceval's replies grew sharper in tone as Wellesley became more persistent. Wellesley began to contemplate seriously the idea of leaving the ministry and Perceval began to hope that perhaps he would.

Wellesley launched another campaign on Canning's behalf on 12 June. On that day he met with Sidmouth, after obtaining Perceval's permission, in a vain attempt to induce Sidmouth to withdraw his objections to Canning. Sidmouth could not be moved. The following day Canning

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121 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 261.

warned Wellesley that other arrangements were being discussed by members of the cabinet. These discussions might force Wellesley to resign. On 14 June Wellesley met Perceval. He protested that Sidmouth should no longer be allowed to exclude Canning, especially since Lord Grey had opened a full-scale assault on all the principles which had constituted the basis of Pitt's governments. He reminded Perceval that Sidmouth, not Canning, had deserted Pitt. Wellesley also made an explicit commitment to vacate the Foreign office in order to admit Canning. He was prepared to accept "any other suitable office in the cabinet, or to remain in the cabinet without office, until a vacancy can be conveniently made." He assured Perceval that Canning would not turn down an invitation, and asked that his proposal receive an early hearing before the cabinet.

Perceval agreed to an immediate cabinet discussion of the proposal. Wellesley suffered an eye inflammation, however, and the meeting was postponed to 3 July. Wellesley was still incapacitated in early July and the cabinet met only to adjourn. On 23 July, at Canning's insistence, Wellesley asked Perceval to bring the question to an immediate resolution. Wellesley offered his opinion that Castlereagh could be induced to join;

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123 Canning to Wellesley, 13 June 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 304-306.

124 Wellesley to Perceval, 14 June 1810, Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 16; and Walpole, Perceval, II, 139-40.
if Sidmouth and Castlereagh refused, Canning should be invited alone. He advised Perceval to discuss the question with Canning when they met the following day on a matter probably contrived by Canning to secure a chance to talk to Perceval face to face.

Wellesley conducted his part of the correspondence from his summer residence at Dorking. To Perceval it was perfectly obvious that Canning was privy to the full range of negotiations taking place within the cabinet, and an examination of Wellesley's correspondence shows this indeed to have been the case. In mid-July Perceval told Wellesley that the cabinet had weighed Wellesley's view that Castlereagh was ready to enter the ministry along with Canning. According to Perceval the cabinet doubted that the deadlock could be broken. The issue would be taken up again on 26 July. Meanwhile, Perceval's interview with Canning passed without a reference to the issue. Wellesley devoted his

125 Wellesley to Perceval, 22 July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 310.

126 Ibid., 23 July 1810, printed in Walpole, Perceval, II, 141.

127 Gray, Perceval, p. 397.

128 Perceval to Wellesley, 23 July 1810, Walpole, Perceval, II, 143.
time at Dorking to preparing a lengthy memorandum warning Perceval that a new effort to recruit Canning and Castlereagh could not be long delayed, for all major policy decisions for the coming session of parliament and all military plans must be settled.\textsuperscript{129} The memorandum reached the cabinet before it met on 26 July. On this occasion Liverpool volunteered to vacate his office so that Canning and Castlereagh could be restored to their former places. The cabinet thought this unwise. Yorke and Ryder thereupon offered to resign from the Admiralty and Home office respectively.\textsuperscript{130} The cabinet agreed that new efforts should be made to recruit Castlereagh and Canning, and that Sidmouth could safely be excluded.

Because Canning was already prepared to take office, full attention was directed towards Castlereagh. Up to this time Castlereagh had not been required to disclose his position in any great detail. Now the shield formerly supplied by Sidmouth was stripped away. Perceval took up the burden of approaching Castlereagh. He spent much of the month of August preparing a heroically long draft for Wellesley's

\textsuperscript{129} Wellesley, memorandum, enclosed in Wellesley to Perceval, 23 July 1810, BM, Perceval MSS.

\textsuperscript{130} Walpole, Perceval, II, 137-39.
approval. In his clear, modern style Perceval presented a
candid account of the cabinet's efforts to gain Sidmouth,
Canning, and him. He reviewed Wellesley's refusal to admit
the other two without Canning, and earlier attempts to
invite all three. He described Sidmouth's position in some
detail. Perceval advised Castlereagh that Earl Camden
had announced that he would leave office if Canning was
allowed to join. This lengthy draft was submitted to
Wellesley, who proposed a large number of amendments.
Perceval accepted these in good grace, and Castlereagh
received the document at the end of the month. He promptly
replied in the negative.

Only at this late stage did Canning's own reservations
come to Perceval's attention. In the wake of Castlereagh's
categorical refusal to serve with Canning, Canning wrote
a very long letter to Perceval stating that he would have
refused any invitation to him which rested on either Sid-
mouth's or Castlereagh's inclusion. He was now aware,

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131 Wellesley, Draft of Letter to Perceval and Castlereagh,

132 Castlereagh to Perceval, 4 September 1810, Walpole,
Perceval, II, 152-53; also see Wellesley to Perceval, 17
August 1810, 24 August 1810, BM, Perceval MSS, and BM, Wellesley
MSS 37295, ff. 358, 360, 364, 382, and 401.

133 Canning to Perceval, 25 September 1810, Walpole, Perceval,
II, 153-56.
however, that both had now declined, and Canning would accept
a direct offer for the Foreign office. This letter, which
Perceval acknowledged on 30 September, did confirm a major
concession by Canning: a willingness to serve under Perceval.134
But Wellesley's assurance to the cabinet that Canning was
prepared to take office never included a suggestion that he
would refuse if either Sidmouth or Castlereagh was approached
first. Canning had long been aware of the cabinet's deter-
mination not to invite him alone. Did Wellesley and he
believe that after Sidmouth or Castlereagh replied in the
negative Canning would be invited to join the cabinet,
especially when Canning to save face admitted that he would
not have entered under a plan subject to others' veto? It is
possible that Wellesley had unintentionally misconstrued
Canning's position.135 He certainly had conveyed an
inaccurate impression of Castlereagh's frame of mind.

It is difficult to escape the impression that Perceval
was quite correct in his early assessment that Wellesley
was "indisposed for any but Canningite accessions to the


135 Walpole, Perceval, II, 79; Canning to Wellesley, 23 September 1810, quoted in Bagot, Canning, I, 357-60.
cabinet."136 Perceval patiently lit up the dark corners of this exhausting and meaningless exercise in matching honour, pretension, and public service. A less efficient man would have not been able to find enough time to continue with this and handle the business of the day simultaneously. It is quite clear that Wellesley, bothered by Canning and eye ailments, was an infrequent visitor to the Foreign office. It was in his own ministry, nonetheless, away from Perceval's suffocating steadiness and interminable debates on who should hold which office, that Wellesley had his chance to render those services which would advance his family's fortunes, his own fame, and the nation's welfare.137 His efforts were to prove more advantageous to his brothers than to himself. While Wellesley in self-imposed isolation planned a strategy for the world, the nation's fortunes seemed to ride exclusively on events in Spain.

VII: At the Foreign Office: Spain in 1810

Almost all surveys of British diplomacy during the Napoleonic period suggest that the months from late 1809

136 Perceval to the King, 26 April 1810, Windsor MSS; BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 282; Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 261; cited in Roberts, Whigs, p. 344.

137 Buckingham to Grenville, 17 October 1810, Fortescue MSS, X, 55.
until the commencement of the regency were most barren of worthwhile achievements. On the continent Austria surrendered for the third time. The folly of Walcheren, compounded by leaving the troops on the Scheldt flats to die of disease, was advertised in parliament. War with America was narrowly averted. The treaty of Tilsit threatened the complete destruction of resistance to Napoleon in northern Europe.

In Spain major disasters and small triumphs alternated one with another. The late 1809 Spanish offensive, launched just after Wellesley returned to England and Wellington retreated to Portugal, ended in an early disaster. "It is most melancholy to reflect upon the mad, unthinking, vain and self-conceited folly, which has directed every operation the Spanish undertake," reported on British observer. Another attempt was made to overthrow the Junta. Wellington was further pressed, and on 29 November the Duque de Parque lost an entire army at Alba de Tormes. This meant the destruction of virtually all of Spain's regular armies, and return to guerrilla warfare alone.

138 Bartholomew Frere to Bathurst, 23 November 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 49981.

139 Roche to Wellesley, 27 November 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 78.
Wellington's anger and astonishment was complete. He urged that what remained of Spain's armies repair to defensive positions. Through the winter of 1810-11 Wellington himself was confined to trenches around Lisbon, and the following year was devoted to a series of unspectacular but necessary measures to keep the allied cause from perishing.

At the end of all this Britain was virtually bereft of all allies. The embassies in London were empty, and the commanding social events of the year included the arrival of the half-insane refugee King of Sweden and a visit from Venezuela's rebel chief Bolivar.

140 Wellington lost his temper:

. . . If they had preserved their two armies, or even one of them, the cause was safe. The French could have sent no reinforcements which could have been of any use; time would have been gained, the state of affairs would have improved daily . . . . But no! Nothing will answer excepting to fight great battles in plains, in which their defeat is as certain as is the commencement of the battle. They will not credit the accounts I have repeatedly given them of the superior numbers even of the French; they will seek them out, and they find them invariably in all parts in numbers superior to themselves. 1

1 Wellington to B. Frere, 6 December 1809, Wellington, Despatches, III, 622.

141 Wellington to B. Frere, 9 December 1809, Wellington, Despatches, III, 630.
By every standard of measurement the portents seemed ominous. Wellesley launched his career as Foreign secretary by writing copious despatches, clearing the deck, it appeared, for further action. By summer the outbound correspondence boxes were virtually empty. "A novice in diplomacy," Wellesley "soon fell into the adversary's traps, and his inexperience was not made good by assiduity." He devoted or appeared to devote most of his time to Canning and cabinet cabals, laying low during frequent bouts of illness, and dallying with mistresses at Dorking. His prescription for the salvation of the country was picked apart by his "humdrum colleagues" who seemed capable of measuring foreign policy and of evaluating grand strategy only in terms of the ledger books. He won no major battles.

142 Wellesley's instructions to his brother Henry in Spain were the most voluminous of his tenure as Foreign secretary. They are extensive and thoughtful. See Wellesley, Notes and Memoranda, 25 January 1810, Foreign Office MSS 185, f. 19; Wellesley to Villiers, 5 January 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 49985.

143 Wellesley's correspondence with the King during the first six months of 1810 comprises 6 items in January, 7 in February, 6 in March, only 2 in April, 4 in May, and none in June. Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 467-596.


with the Junta in Spain, parliament, the cabinet, or Napoleon. By the end of 1810 Wellesley was discouraged, and in his discouragement he invited the world to paint a picture of his stewardship decidedly less favourable than was warranted by subsequent developments. 146

Whatrelieves the dark picture? It is clear that Wellesley’s determination to sustain his brother’s efforts in Iberia during that dark year saved "the most important enterprise undertaken by Great Britain since 1792."

Wellesley brought to his work a considerable amount of diplomatic expertise of a special sort. He understood the fundamentals of military strategy, he was courageous, and he possessed a knowledge of the dynamics of Spanish politics. In the cabinet only Liverpool, Perceval and he recognised along with Wellington that the purpose of war was not to capture cities but to defeat armies. One cautious victory was worth a hundred heroic defeats. Perhaps alone in the cabinet, he agreed with Wellington when the general wrote that "we are thinking of our shillings and sixpences instead of opposing the enemy as the circumstances of the world enable us to oppose him." Wellesley had the expansive outlook of Pitt: Perceval perforce had to find funds and urged an economical principle. Liverpool agreed with Wellesley but obeyed

146 Ward and Gooch, eds., Foreign Policy, I, 373-74.
The expenditure of this country has become enormous, and if the war is to continue, we must look to economy. I do not believe so great a continued effort has ever been made by this country, combining the military and pecuniary aid together, as His Majesty is now making for Portugal and Spain. The respective governments of these countries, should be made sensible of the truth of this position and should feel the necessity of making extraordinary exertions for their own support.¹

¹Liverpool to Wellington, 15 December 1809, BM, Liverpool MSS 36244; and in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 441.
appropriate concessions). It could also be described as a humanitarian crusade (if Spain would prohibit the slave trade). It would reduce Napoleonic pretensions (if the imprisoned Ferdinand VII could be rescued and restored to his people). And it could be a victory for liberal principles if the Junta, Cortes, grandees and Spanish monopolists would cease their intramural fighting long enough to fashion a constitution enshrining fundamental liberties for the people of metropolitan Spain and the empire. When he first entered the ministry, Wellesley pursued all those things with an air of optimism. Later, when the atmosphere was more discouraging, he showed a dogged determination to see the cause vindicated.  

Wellesley's early optimism reflected in part his conviction that his record as envoy extraordinary to Spain had been impressive, a conviction which contrasted sharply with his melancholy murmurings on the eve of leaving Spain. He had laboured with "as much success as the profligate interestedness of the Junta would admit" and his conduct would be fully vindicated when his correspondence was laid before parliament.  


149 Dardis to Buckingham, 11 December 1809, Buckingham, Courts, II, 399.
an ambitious policy in Iberia. To his brother Arthur he urged the idea that British troops must garrison several strategic Spanish cities in order to gain leverage in the area of Latin American trade and in the conduct of the Junta's military operations. Napoleon's fall would come "with time and perseverance," by a "steady, undeviating, straightforward resistance, and not by expeditions calculated only to excite momentary eclet at home." It was not sufficient to hold Portugal and the cabinet should not be disappointed by periodic reverses, even serious ones.

150 Wellesley, memorandum of his conversation with Wellington, c. 4 November 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 323.

151 George Jackson, diary, 13 November 1809, printed in George Jackson, Diaries and Letters of Sir G. J. from the Peace of Amiens to the Battle of Talavera (ed. Lady Jackson; 2 vols.; 1873), II, 488-89.

152 Hansard XV (22 February 1810), 503-537. B. Frere reported from Spain at this time that Spain's various provinces, "abandoned to their own exertions, have increased their activity in proportion to the danger which threatens the country and although they pay outmarks of deference to the authority of the Supreme Junta, the government are very cautious of interfering in their operations." B. Frere to Wellesley, 8 January 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37291.
Wellesley planned a spectacular beginning. He had been impressed during his assignment in Spain with the serious inconvenience caused by the enforced absence of Ferdinand VII. Ferdinand was not an attractive person or a good monarch, but in a nation dedicated to the monarchical principle his presence was sorely missed. He continued to inspire loyalty in the Americas. He would, Wellesley thought, help to tame the obstreperous persons acting in his behalf and act as midwife (if carefully tutored) to the emergence of a responsible Cortes and an executive free from the internecine struggles which characterised Spain’s prosecution of the war to date.¹⁵³

In a wild plot to spirit the King out of France, Wellesley entrusted to Colonel Cockburn (later the admiral who superintended the burning of Washington) plenty of money and jewels, three ships, and letters of identification. Cockburn transferred these to one obscure Charles Leopold, Baron de Kolli, a disaffected French nobleman of uncertain origins, sometimes linked to the Irish Colleys (and thus to the Wellesley family). He was first introduced to the Marquess by Charles Arbuthnot. The Baron conceived a

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plan to sail to Quiberon Bay on the coast of Brittany, be
put ashore, proceed to Paris, establish contacts with
royalist sympathisers, and there to complete his plans. Kolli's accomplisés, disguised as priests, would then make
their way to Valencay where Ferdinand was held captive,
free him, and return to the waiting ship.

Wellesley accepted the plan. On 29 January 1810 he
asked that the H. M. S. Implacable be placed at the dis-
posal of the Foreign office. Mulgrave responded
affirmatively and Wellesley explained the mission to
Cockburn. Cockburn transported Kolli to the French coast
without incident, and Kolli made his way to Paris, supplied
with £7000 in jewelry and cash.

Kolli's luck ran out in Paris. He proved indiscreet
in handling his funds, and the suspicion of French officials
were excited at once. Napoleon preserved Kolli's life,
however, because he wished to use him in subsequent negotia-

154 Arbuthnot to Wellesley, 12 December 1809, BM,
Wellesley MSS 37291.

155 "Plans of Baron Kolli for the Escape of Ferdinand

156 Wellesley to Henry Phipps, Baron Mulgrave, Secretary to
the Admiralty, 29 January 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37291.

157 Wellesley to Captain George Cockburn, 1 March 1810,
BM, Wellesley MSS 37291.
The French even contrived to invite Ferdinand to escape by proceeding with the Cockburn-Kolli plan. Ferdinand was probably warned of the trap, for he refused to see the kingnappers. France held up his refusal as a sign that Ferdinand preferred incarceration in France to ruling in Spain. 159

News of the failure of the mission gradually filtered back to London. 160 There was little public or private reaction to reports which Napoleon had inserted in the official Moniteur, probably because the British discounted almost everything in such French publications. It made only a small ripple in the country and almost none in Spain. 161

Wellesley was thus frustrated in his efforts to restore Spain's legitimate if somewhat inadequate sovereign. It meant among other things that until he was released Wellesley


160 Cockburn to Wellesley, 25 May 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292.

161 "People hardly know what to think of the Baron de Kolli's business. It does not appear to have created much sensation here." Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 12 June 1810, PRO, Foreign Office, Cowley MSS 519, f. 36.
had to contend with a long list of candidates for the post of regent. One of the most formidable was the Princess of Brazil, whose claims were difficult to ignore if the Cortes (when it reassembled) found its way clear to confirm that the Salic law barring succession in the female line had been abrogated in 1789. Britain objected to a union of the Portuguese and Spanish thrones, a situation likely to weaken Britain's diplomatic position. 162

Another and even more formidable candidate soon appeared in the person of Philip, the French Bourbon Duke of Orleans, son-in-law of the King of the Two Sicilies and at a later date King of France. The Duke had long intrigued to become commander-in-chief of Spanish military forces and Regent as well. The British were aware of the Duke's machinations as early as the summer of 1809. 163 Orleans enjoyed a degree of support within the Junta and contracted the services of agents instructed to promote his claims. In Britain's eyes, Orleans' candidacy posed many problems. He was French, which would make him unpopular with many elements in Spain. He might well prove incapable

162 B. Frere to Wellesley, 6 January 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 92.

163 Canning to Wellesley, 20 July 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37286.
as a leader, and he might also turn out to be reluctant to relinquish his post when Ferdinand was eventually freed. When in late 1809 Wellesley received news that Orleans was making preparations to come to Spain Wellesley ordered the Mediterranean fleet to offer no assistance.

Assistance granted or not, Orleans left Palermo in the spring of 1810 after complicating British foreign policy in Italy. The Spanish received the Duke with royal honours in June. He offered himself as Regent. Although the Duke demonstrated skill and obviously sought the post, the British chose to ignore his claims. Wellesley urged Henry to give priority to efforts to remove Orleans from Spain. The Junta chose to take the position that it was not responsible for his presence in Spain and refused to expel him. Henry was distressed to hear that many Spaniards believed Britain responsible for inviting Orleans to Spain, presumably as a way to get him out of Sicily. At length Wellesley authorised Henry to issue a


165 Wellesley to Admiral Purvis, 10 November 1809, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 78.

166 Henry Wellesley to Wellington, 26 June 1810, Supplementary, VI, 548-49.

167 Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 6 October 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, f. 119.
public denial of British complicity. He also visited Orleans and asked him to leave Spain forthwith. The Duke was evasive; indeed, as Henry discovered, he was more active than ever in his efforts to secure a Spanish command.

Fortunately for the British, the Duke eventually alienated the Spanish by levelling some perfectly valid criticism against their inadequate military system. The Regency thereupon ordered Orleans out of Spain, and after a desperate and fruitless appeal the Duke sailed for Palermo in early October 1810. The order expelling the Duke was extracted by a friend and neighbor of Henry Wellesley. Henry's official assertion that he had nothing to do with it was perhaps correct. But he admitted that he had made certain that his government's position was perfectly clear to the proper authorities.


169 Ibid., 1 August 1810, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 566.

170 Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 23 August 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, ff. 80-81.

171 Ibid., 6 October 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, f. 119; The Council of Regency was reluctant to order Orleans expelled, lest they expose their own complicity in bringing him to Spain. But at length they agreed to issue the order,
Valencia of Ferdinand VII, the empire was rebellious. The
Juntas of Spanish provinces who cared about nothing for the
empire but of survivors who coveted its wealth through
their absolutist was hardly designed to inspire loyalty.
Indeed, the empire was breaking up, and the Junta of
Deza and finally sought to arrest the disintegration
by pursuing strict mercantile policies.

Allusions to theoretically repressive economic
policies which the Junta could not enforce limited elements
of the law so a basic sufficient to understand what remained
of the empire's cohesion. Meanwhile touched on the trade
issues during his earlier years in Spain. The Junta was
achieved. Britain fears the prospect that
the mineral continentally might lose the new world
opportunity for most of more enlightened commercial
relationships. At the same time Britain found a situation
British capital today represented by Spanish expenditure.
Mexico, for the capital amounted to only
$12.7 million, two fourths of the average provincial total.
Instead, on the other hand, continued to defy British
sailors who, by buying rights to sell at the ports,
with much of the thousand African slavery, British merchants
and little alteration to but on create an informal and highly
illegal system of substantial contracts for the survivors. This
talents of Ferdinand VII, the empire was rudderless. The Junta of Spanish grandees who cared almost nothing for the empire and of merchants who coveted its wealth through their monopolies was hardly designed to inspire loyalty abroad. The empire was breaking up, and the merchants of Cadiz and Seville sought to arrest the disintegration by maintaining strict mercantilist policies.

Adherence to theoretically repressive economic policies which the Junta could not enforce invited defiance of the law on a scale sufficient to undermine what remained of the empire's cohesion. Wellesley touched on the trade issue during his quarter year in Spain. The Junta was obdurate. Britain faced the prospect that its principal continental ally might lose the new world territories for want of more enlightened commercial arrangements. At the same time Britain faced a drain on British specie holdings represented by Spanish expenditures. In 1809 customs receipts for the empire amounted on only £11.5 million, one fourth of the average peacetime total. The Junta, on the other hand, continued to deny British merchants direct trading rights in most of the empire. With much of continental Europe closed, British merchants had little alternative but to create an informal and highly illegal system of commercial contacts in the Americas. This
was not difficult; they enjoyed the active cooperation of the colonies themselves, which resented the artificially increased profits awarded to Spanish merchants through the system of monopolies. It fell to Wellesley to begin the process of reshaping the entire economic basis of Spanish America to fit the requirements of Britain's longterm demand for new markets for its industrial exports. And by raising Bolivar's visit to London almost to the status of an ambassadorial mission Wellesley set in motion Britain's role as midwife to independence for the Latin American colonies.

By early 1810 Canning's January 1809 treaty with the Junta barring British ships from direct trade with Spain's colonies had been almost completely overtaken by events. Spain no longer possessed shipping sufficient to transport colonial goods to Europe, and the colonies themselves had never possessed much tonnage. The colonies required finished goods such as Britain could offer, and smuggling was inevitable in the absence of appropriate treaties. British expenses in Spain drained its bullion, which could be restored through direct trade with the colonies. Because Spain was dependent on British military assistance, Britain believed that it deserved special treatment in the new world trade. This, the British position as put forth
succinctly by Perceval to Wellesley in March 1810, appeared utterly reasonable to British leaders of all political persuasions, so much so that it was difficult to believe that Spanish authorities were actuated by any but the narrowest, most self-defeating motives. \(^{172}\)

Perhaps because of his first-hand exposure to conditions in Spain, Wellesley's position differed in many respects from that of Perceval and Perceval's colleagues. Wellesley saw the need for a new economic treaty when he entered office, and immediately issued instructions to Henry to that effect. Wellesley deplored the fact that Britain carried on a more profitable trade with the colonies when she was at war with Spain than when she was an ally. \(^{173}\) Restrictions imposed by Spain were "deeply injurious to the prosperity of the British navy and inconsistent with the spirit of the alliance." \(^{174}\) But unlike his colleagues Wellesley was not willing to coerce Spain by threatening to dissolve the alliance; this would hurt Britain more than Spain. Henry agreed with him, and set about to cultivate

\(^{172}\) Perceval to Wellesley, 4 March 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 240-41.

\(^{173}\) Wellesley to Henry Wellesley, 4 January 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 49979.

\(^{174}\) Ibid., 27 January 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 49979.
the good will of the city of Cadiz, which was "more connected with South America than all the rest of Spain put together." 175 In terms of diplomatic strategy, it meant that Wellesley was determined to keep trade and subsidy matters separate.

The remainder of the cabinet took issue with this approach. When in April the Spanish government rather suddenly realised that it was out of money, Perceval pressed Wellesley to make any future loan contingent on a new trade agreement. 176 Wellesley refused to relay instructions to this effect to Cadiz, and lines were drawn between Wellesley and the remainder of the cabinet. Differences over Spain and its commercial policies in particular would intensify during the next two years.

Perceval's temptation to handle Spain with minimum ceremony was certainly intensified by the unending string of calamities which each pouch produced for the enlightenment of Britain. Henry Wellesley arrived in Spain during the winter of 1810 to find that Seville had fallen, that the discredited Junta had been replaced by the council of

175 Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 2 April 1810, PRO, Foreign Office, Cowley MSS 519, f. 34.

176 Perceval to Wellesley, 29 April 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.
Regency, and that French forces were besieging Cadiz. Such was the panic that the good citizens of Cadiz requested British troops to garrison the city, which they did at the end of January. 177 Amid the panic the French failed to move on Cadiz with sufficient speed, and additional Spanish forces arrived there one day before the French. 178 Gradually Cadiz became more secure from French attack, so that when Henry arrived on 28 February a measure of calm had returned. In England, however, despair seemed universal, and the demise of Spain was predicted by many.

These calamities failed to break Spain's resolve to preserve the empire for the benefit of the Cadiz merchants. The council of Regency, like the Junta which it replaced, held that Britain was simply using Spain's momentary weakness to demand concessions no less demeaning and rapacious than those of the French. Spain claimed that Britain's assistance to Spain was dedicated to Britain's own survival, and that Spain's men and resources were being pledged to Britain's war. Britain, therefore, should not attempt to

177 B. Frere to Wellesley, 29 January 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS, f. 92.
178 Ibid., 11 February 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 49981.
command the wealth of the colonies when in fact it already
held hostage the energies of Spain. It was as difficult
to convince the Regents that Britain's complaints were valid
as it was to defend Spain's case in London. Spanish leaders
and Spain's long suffering people alike agreed, for once,
that Britain must not annex the empire by destroying the
mercantile system which for centuries had constituted the
empire's primary justification.

With positions and perceptions so far apart a compro-
mise was most unlikely. None was forthcoming. In April
1810 Wellesley instructed his brother Henry to press hard
for a commercial treaty which would permit British ships to
trade directly with Spanish colonial ports. As Perceval
noted, the trade was already active and substantial; it
was only illegitimate. Spanish authorities in Cadiz
very hesitantly suggested that a treaty giving Britain some
access to the Spanish American commerce in return for a
guaranteed British subsidy to Spain might be possible.
The council refused, however, to contemplate the idea
of an "unequal" treaty such as that concluded by Strangford
with the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro. Britain
would not, therefore, be granted direct access. Perceval
flatly rejected the idea of a subsidy, with or without
He did concede that assistance to Spain in the neighborhood of £2 million was possible if Britain could export the full amount from Latin America as bullion. Wellesley instructed Henry to relay this to the appropriate officials. He relayed Britain’s counter-proposals as instructed. He reported back that so unacceptable were they that the regency might be overthrown by an incensed middle class if Britain pressed too hard. Henry also observed, and the Marquess agreed, that British efforts to obtain legitimate direct access to colonial ports were not only impossible to achieve but were destructive as well; "petty British objects of commerce" were delaying the formation of an effective combination to meet the challenge posted by Napoleon. Perceval and the cabinet of course strongly disagreed. Henry reported from Cadiz that

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179 Perceval to Wellesley, 29 April 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 274-78.


183 On 4 March Perceval told Wellesley that without
neither the Cortes nor the Council of Regents would concede British economic demands under threat of British recognition of colonies' autonomy. Spain needed money and would negotiate its own treaties with Mexico if this was required to gain bullion.

Either option would have suited Britain. Wellesley discussed bilateral relations between Britain and Venezuela when Bolivar came to visit. This was soon known to Spain.  

Henry suggested sagely that Britain content itself with whatever minor concessions the Council of Regency and the Cortes would offer, and proceed to trade as if was doing anyway.  

Such pragmatism appealed to Earl Bathurst as president of the board of trade, but the cabinet as a whole did not act.  

Wellesley's opinion was not liberal trading privileges in the Spanish empire, Britain could not long continue to support any armed forces overseas. He was also increasingly uncertain that Spain was the proper place for Britain to exploit the nationalist reaction to Napoleon. Perceval to Wellesley, 4 March 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.

184 Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 20 August 1810, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 582-83.

185 Ibid., 23 August 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, ff. 78-79; Henry Wellesley to Wellington, 16 August 1810, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 574.

186 Bathurst to Wellesley, 14 July 1810, August 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37310, ff. 13, 15-16.
recorded. After a few further efforts Wellesley was content to say that the Spanish colonies' desire to trade with Britain had merit, and that natural economic forces would prevail. 187

The larger question, as Wellesley was quick to see, was the viability of the Spanish empire. While Wellesley was in Spain the Spanish envoy to London had met with Canning to propose a mutual guarantee of empires. Canning was amused at the thought of this reciprocity. He was astonished as well that the Junta would seriously consider asking Britain to defend Spanish possessions while refusing to admit British merchants to a share of its commerce and while failing to support Arthur Wellesley's beleaguered forces in the wake of Talavera. 188 In Spanish America itself increasing momentum towards independence posed new problems and spectacular new opportunities for Britain. Led by the city of Caracas, Venezuela declared its independence on 19 April 1810, after receiving news of the fall of Seville. Caracas continued to profess allegiance to Ferdinand, but in every practical respect the colony intended to be independent. The revolutionary Junta


applied for military and naval support to the British military governor in Curacao. In return Venezuela promised to open its ports to British commerce and to wage war against Napoleon. General Layard, the governor, responded affirmatively and enthusiastically.

Wellesley was not surprised when this news reached London, although he considered Layard's enthusiasm inappropriate. For years the Venezuelan revolutionary, Francisco de Miranda, had used London as a base of operations, and he had featured in Arthur Wellesley's aborted campaign to Latin America in 1808. As Spain's ally, however, after 1808 Britain could not deal with the Venezuelan insurgents. Layard was therefore sharply reprimanded and Cadiz was assured of the rectitude of Britain's conduct.

These assurances were somewhat specious, because Britain could not afford to permit Venezuela to apply to France for assistance. Thus Simon Bolivar was treated with considerable ceremony and deference when he paid a visit to London in July. Wellesley received him at Apsley house, while the secretary for War, Lord Liverpool, announced

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189 Joseph de las Llamosas to General Layard, 4 May 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 185, f. 18.

190 Layard to the Junta of Caracas, 14 May 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 185, f. 18.
publicly and denied privately that Britain should discourage
the revolt in Venezuela. In their first meeting, Wellesley
exacted pledges of support from Bolivar to his legitimate
sovereign Ferdinand VII. He promised maritime protection
against France so that Venezuela could defend the captured
monarch's rights. Wellesley urged Venezuela to seek a
reconciliation with the provisional government in Cadiz,
and offered his own services as mediator.191 In a second
meeting Wellesley moved more forthrightly. He agreed to
permit (that is, not to interdict) direct trade between
the British Antilles and Venezuela. He confessed that
Britain would not take umbrage if Bolivar and his compatriots
failed to recognise the pretensions of the Junta in Cadiz.
In addition to providing the British maritime protection
promised during the first meeting. Wellesley was prepared
to supply arms which could be used if necessary against
the Junta. All of this constituted a virtual concession
of Venezuelan independence.192

191W. S. Robertson, "The Beginnings of Spanish American
Diplomacy," in Essays in American History Dedicated to
Frederick Jackson Turner (ed. Guy Stanton Ford; New York:
H. Holt, 1910), pp. 240-47; William W. Kaufmann, British
Policy and the Independence of Latin America (New Haven:
Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 48-49.

192Emil Ludwig, Bolivar: The Life of an Idealist
(New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1942), p. 76;
T. Masur, Simon Bolivar (Albuquerque: University of New
If the game was played with care, Britain stood to gain that objective of commercial access to the empire which its merchant interest considered to be the primary purpose for British intervention in Spain. As long as the British military situation was precarious, Wellesley had to avoid alienating his allies in Spain. But cavalier treatment of colonists' aspirations might mean not merely the loss of trade privileges in the area but the spread of French or American influence: "deference must be paid to the prejudices of the mother country," Wellesley observed in a lapidary phrase, "and sympathy accorded to the grievances of her offspring." Wellesley was dedicated to the idea of self government within the Spanish empire; he had to invoke this principle when Bolivar begged Britain to establish a protectorate over Venezuela. The Cortes, however, was frightened at the prospect of an empire composed of autonomous parts; this was hardly less horrifying than the prospect of Britain extending naval protection to every part of the empire prepared to demand independence. Indeed, news of Venezuela's revolt excited less alarm in Cadiz than might have been anticipated. The Regency expected that the despatch of a few ships to block the colony's ports

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193Kaufmann, British, pp. 51-52.
would suffice, and if not, then troops would be despatched from Cuba.\textsuperscript{194}

In Venezuela and other colonies, allegiance to Spain, or at least to the Spanish crown, was not wholly unattractive to the budding South American patriots. Old ties were strong, and fears of a Spanish reconquest survived every evidence of the mother country's enfeebled condition. Wellesley assumed, as he had to, that political autonomy implied self-determination in economic affairs as well. If what Wellesley hoped for in Spanish America was also inevitable, then his policy was unassailable, whatever the tenderness of the consciences of his conservative colleagues on the issue of the spread of democratic institutions.

There was, nonetheless, a wide gap between the inevitability of a separation of some sort and the pace at which it would occur. Wellesley shared the conviction that gradually increased doses of self-government would suit the requirements of Spanish America. An increase in the tempo of British trade would act as midwife to the dissemination of those ideas which made self-government viable. Unfortunately, the American embargo upon trade with Britain, followed by the war of 1812, substantially reduced established outlets for

\textsuperscript{194}Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 11 July 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 96.
British goods. Napoleon's blockades also made their impression. More intensive searches for trade in Latin America were inevitably the result.

This accelerated pressure coincided with and contributed to a stiffening of Spain's resolve to deny Britain the trade privileges required. The council of Regents and the Cortes were not without their friends in the empire. Revolutionary leaders were uncertain of the degree of independence they desired until after 1814. Independence sentiment was widespread, but Spanish arms produced a long string of victories against the insurgents throughout Wellesley's tenure as Foreign secretary and even beyond. If Spanish power was never quite sufficient for Spanish purposes, it was almost so, and Spain set its sights high. Conflict spread and trade was disrupted. A peaceful if illegitimate commerce gave way to sporadic trade opportunities intermixed with costly confiscations. General Apodaca, Spanish envoy in London, called on Wellesley in October 1810 to insist that it was in the British interest "to reestablish in Caracas the ancient order of things."

If not done, Britain must expect a similar fate to befall its own colonies. These were bold words from the

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representative of the embattled council of Regents. They did not dispute Wellesley's claims that autonomy in the Spanish empire was perhaps inevitable, but they undermined hopes that the process would be a peaceful one.

Apodaca's declaration had an effect, although not the one he wanted. During the summer of 1810 Wellesley had come into contact, apparently for the first time, with some of London's most prominent London merchants and financiers. They knew Wellesley by reputation as an advocate of liberalised trade; Wellesley had incurred the wrath of the East Indian monopolists on this score as well as others. They proceeded to humor Wellesley by condemning Perceval. They complained that Perceval's stringent economics undermined the military effort in Spain and Britain's foreign policy initiatives elsewhere. The new trade war with the United States, added to restrictions posed by the Continental system, had reduced them to virtual penury. It was no longer sufficient, they observed, simply to plead to the Spanish authorities for a settlement of the Spanish family quarrel. Britain must demand a settlement.

The appeal had its effect. In reply to Apodaca Wellesley not only reaffirmed Britain's refusal to aid in the suppression of Latin American revolts, but went on to warn that Spain was in imminent danger of losing colonies Wellesley pointed to the growth of American pressure on the Floridas as one instance.197 From Buenos Aires came word that the Spanish viceroy had surrendered his powers to a Junta, which in turn opened the Argentine trade to British shipping in the name of Ferdinand VII.198 The time for humoring the Regents was over; thereafter Spain would be forced to play the role of supplicant. Wellesley in effect publicly condoned the illegal trade and the efforts of the Spanish colonies to regularise their own relations with Britain. The final months of 1810, then, marked a shift in British policy from a commitment to preserve a Spanish empire composed of autonomous but respectfully submissive parts to toleration of and unofficial support for independence movements as they appeared.

In Spain itself one Wellesley brother wrestled with

197. Wellesley to Apodaca, 27 September 1810, cited in J. Fred Rippy, Rivalry of the United States and Great Britain over Latin America, 1808-1830 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1929), p. 34.

matters political while another coped with the possibility of a military collapse. In London the Marquess represented interests and viewpoints of both sides to a generally unsympathetic but paralysed cabinet. Until late spring 1810 Henry could discern no effort to improve the state of the army. He spent the next three months countering the Duke of Orleans' efforts to take command of part of Spain's forces or to be installed as Regent.\footnote{Crawley, "French," pp. 176-206.} After Philip removed himself from the scene Henry opposed efforts to nominate as Regent the sister of the late Charles IV and the imprisoned Ferdinand VII. Britain feared that she, as the wife of the Portuguese King John VI, might attempt to substitute Spanish for British influence in Lisbon.\footnote{Henry Wellesley, \textit{Diary}, pp. 57-59.} At length Henry succeeded in blocking her candidacy. At the end of the year he was also able to report that British officials had raised the efficiency of the Spanish garrison enough to prompt hopes that Cadiz might survive a French siege.

Less progress could be discerned on the trade front. Civic leaders in Cadiz in effect held the council of Regency hostage on the issue of trade concessions to Great
Britain. In July 1810 Henry Wellesley tried to secure some modest concessions. The Spanish insisted that these concessions be tied to a British subsidy. Wellesley resisted. He instructed Henry to impress upon the Regents the imminent loss of the empire unless Britain gained trading privileges. Again Spain replied that there was no cause for alarm about the security of the empire. Henry modified his proposals; he had to admit that what Britain sought were unilateral concessions on Spain's part.

In London Spain's obstinancy surpassed all understanding. "When . . . they are in no possibility of supplying South America they will not allow us to do so but upon terms utterly inadmissible," George Rose noted, "one would almost be tempted to say, founded in idiocy or madness. . . . Mules as they are, it hardly seems credible that they cannot be made sensible of the perverse folly of their conduct." Rose's opinions counted for little, but those of Perceval did:

What can be a greater absurdity than the idea of the Spanish Regency determining not to relax the law of the colonial trade under these circumstances, but to preserve the old monopoly not only to Spain generally, but to the privileged parts in Spain. If they persevere in that connection with her colonies, and if we join them and countenance them in so doing we shall lose it too. 201

201 Rose to Bathurst, August 1810, Bathurst MSS 57, ff. 83; Perceval to Wellesley, 6 August 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.
Henry nonetheless saw some virtue in Spain's position; the trade issue was the only bargaining counter left to Spain in its present circumstanced situation, and if Spain agreed to some more moderate concessions British merchants should accept them and hope for better things later on. He confided to Wellington that "thus are petty British objects of commerce suffered to interfere with the great and interesting work of releasing this country from the yoke of France... It will be the ruin of the whole cause." Henry forgot that Britain had other burdens to bear, and at the base of everything was the continued fortitude of the British people.

Wellington for his part finally managed to break out of Lisbon's trenches and fortifications. He had reached Talavera in the summer of 1809; in 1810 his forces were largely on the defensive, although he inflicted a heavy loss on General Soult in the north. The Marquess therefore found himself defending Wellington's frequent battlefield retreats from the taunts of the opposition. He devoted an equal amount of time to a struggle with Perceval and the

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203 Henry Wellesley to Wellington, 31 August 1810, PRO, Foreign Office, Cowley MSS 519, f. 35.
cabinet for more funds. He maintained a vigorous correspondence with Henry in Cadiz and Britain's minister in Lisbon, John Villiers. The general impression is that Wellesley was far from inattentive to his work during the first year, at least, and that he was extraordinarily busy during the first eight months.

Wellesley's battles with parliament and the cabinet do not make pleasant reading. The first quarter of 1810 was devoted largely to defending the thesis that victory in Spain was possible. In addition, there was the somewhat delicate question of the government's decision to award Arthur Wellesley a peerage for his victory at Talavera. Following the victory, as the Marquess knew first hand from his mission to Spain the previous summer, Wellesley had been forced to retreat into Portugal, and eventually into the environs of Lisbon itself. There was gloom in London, and the ministry was at a loss how to respond in parliament. Wellesley urged his colleagues to take the offensive by publishing the Spanish correspondence, and this was eventually done. Wellesley also turned the tables by declaring that the Whigs did not understand events in Spain well enough to be able to

204 Hansard XV (26 January 1810), 145-54.
criticise the ministry. This momentarily blunted the Whigs' attack.

On 30 March Grenville rose to object to publication of the Wellesley-Wellington Spanish correspondence. Grenville hazarded that too much had already been made public (a strange complaint from the opposition benches). He contended that the papers had embarrassed the Spanish government and assorted individuals. Wellesley in reply noted that the Junta was on the verge of being extinguished by the new council of Regents, that the individuals criticised deserved the blame, and that full disclosure was always the best policy. Wellesley's prating tone prompted Lord Grey to object to "the loud and triumphant sound" of Wellesley's voice lending itself to "the impropriety and unfeeling want of humanity" in chastising General Cuesta. Wellesley realised that Grey's position was quietly shared by some members of the cabinet itself, and he delivered a lecture on the virtues of candor which must have come as something of a surprise to the East India company:

The moment is now arrived. . . . We must satisfy both Spain and England that our conduct has been right, and

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206 Annual Register, LII, 30.
207 Hansard XVI (30 March 1810), 379-88.
that the causes of past misfortunes are not irremediable, because those causes are to be traced to errors and faults, which may be corrected, and which we are resolved to correct by the utmost efforts of our influence. If the Spanish and Portuguese papers are to be suppressed, I confess that it appears to me, that we shall deprive ourselves of our main advantage in the conflict with the opposition. They will not be able to withstand the intrinsic and honest strength of our cause as founded on that information. But we shall be subject to every kind of prejudice, misrepresentation, and calumny if we refuse to produce evidence, of what we must assert. 208

No doubt Wellesley smiled at the thought of Grey defending the poor incompetent General Cuesta. The House of Lords defeated Grey and his sensitivity for Cuesta by a wide margin. It was one of Wellesley's sweetest minor triumphs.

Throughout the spring Wellesley eloquently and ably defended in the House of Lords the government's military policy. The ministry proved weak in the Commons, where Walcheren consumed more time and where the commitment to the Wellesley family strategy against Napoleon proved much weaker. 209 For Wellesley, however, intelligence of every new disaster in Spain seemed to deepen his commitment to save the nation. On 8 June the Marquess of Lansdowne presented a carefully phrased case against the Spanish

208 Wellesley to Perceval, 12 February 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.

209 Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 169-71; 1 Hansard VII (8 June 1810), 472-84.
commitment; a defence of Portugal, he ventured, should be considered an ambitious enough venture in Iberia. To this end he introduced two resolutions, one holding that the safety of the army "as imprudently and uselessly risked," and that the ministers had neglected to inform themselves adequately as to the state of affairs in Spain. Landsdowne was careful not to single out Wellesley; indeed, he reserved some words of praise for him. But Wellesley rushed in with a detailed defence of Talavera and the ministry's wider strategy in the peninsula. Conceding that Talavera had not met all expectations, Wellesley nevertheless maintained that the victory had given Portugal a much needed breathing spell. Southern Spain would have been safe in its wake had the Junta not ordered ill-advised autumn 1809 offensives. He maintained eloquently that Spain and Portugal offered the best forum for carrying on the war against France. There were numerous obstacles to success, but he saw in the case of Spain that "apparent systems of dissolution presage new life and renovated vigor." Such oratory shed little light on the dilemma of Wellington in his trenches near

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210 Hansard, SVII (8 June 1810), 472-84.

Lisbon, but the Lords was easily convinced that somehow Wellington would erupt from Portugal and vanquish Napoleon. Perhaps Wellesley's fine oratory was enlivened by a serene confidence that he was right.

The cabinet presented a more somber picture.

Wellesley could demand that Westmoreland remove his dirty boots from the conference table, but he could not persuade Perceval that penny-pinching in Iberia was false economy. Here again, nonetheless, a case can be made that Wellesley did his best. The cabinet found it difficult to believe that Wellington might well be defeated if he did not receive more supplies; no one knew in 1810 that in 1812 Napoleon would

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1. *Hansard* XVII (8 June 1810), 484–97.

\[213\]

Wellesley adverted to the connection between politics and policy-making in March 1810:

My opinion has long been decided that no strong or permanent government can be formed on the present basis unless it shall comprehend all or at least a very large portion of the parties now denominated Canning's, Lord Castlereagh's and Lord Sidmouth's. I am aware of the difficulties of bringing these persons to act together, ... but unless a sacrifice can be made of some portion of the personal animosities and prejudices of the hour by those who concur in general political principles, the administration must not only pass into the hands of the opposite party, but must remain there. ¹

¹Wellesley, memorandum, 13 March 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.
march on Moscow rather than on Lisbon. Wellington's reports to Wellesley through Wellesley Pole were uniformly gloomy, and Wellesley told the cabinet. He lost popularity as a result; it was politically unwise to place one's reputation on the line in defence of the Spanish strategy and to concede in the next breath that Wellington might be conquered.

During the Walcheren inquiry, the nation learned first-hand of the immense expense of these expeditions. After the inquiry Perceval examined accounts and found the government's financial condition to be so bad that he thought for a moment that Spain must be abandoned forthwith. Wellesley at first despaired of reversing Perceval's pessimistic inclinations on this point. He determined to support Wellington's position by every device possible, even in defiance of the Prime minister. After April 1810 the collapse of the third coalition increased pressure on the Spanish forces. Wellesley ordered Henry to release funds so as to finance improved armaments for Spain's indigenous forces. Henry did so, but Wellington was forced to remain in Portugal and the French advanced to the very walls of Cadiz. The cabinet followed Perceval in betraying a despondent tone. They pointed out that Wellington had not asked for more troops. Wellesley countered with the argument that Wellington always tried to work with what he had. When Wellesley did produce evidence that Wellington needed more
troops the cabinet replied that generals always wanted more men. 214

But the cabinet also suffered pangs of guilt about deserting Wellington. Perceval was more sensitive than most. He wanted desperately to see British forces remain in Spain. His extensive correspondence in search of a way to obtain bullion from Spanish America through trade preferences for British merchants was animated by this principle. 215 He was unhappy however to see that Wellesley had on his own authority instructed Henry to release funds for assisting the Spanish army. 216 Wellesley passed the blame on to Henry in a letter replete with mock horror.

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214 Wellington was indeed upset over the cabinet's failure to support him more handsomely: "If there was any gov't or public sentiment in England, if we thought of anything excepting the saving of our shillings and six pences, if I could expect anything but the gallows for making an exertion in which five lives should be lost, and which should not be followed by an immediate evacuation of the peninsula by the French, I should say that we should yet make Boney repent his invasion of Spain. But alas! What can be done for such a gov't. and such a people?" Wellington to ?, 4 June 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37415.

215 Walpole, Perceval, II, 133.

216 Perceval to Wellesley, 14 July 1810; Wellesley to Perceval, 22 July 1810, quoted in Walpole, Perceval, II, 124-25. Perceval was wise enough not to insist that the unexpended funds be recovered, and indeed he grudgingly admitted that the initiative showed by Wellesley here was vindicated. Nonetheless it cannot have contributed to an improvement in Perceval's relations with his Foreign secretary.
The expenditure came in time to help save Cadiz, and by the end of the year the insurgents and the Regency's troops were back on the offensive. But Perceval at length felt compelled to lecture Wellington directly on matters of finance, inasmuch as the Marquess never heeded polite admonitions. "If you have thought that this country can make, and continue any greater exertions than it is now making," he declared, "it is material that you should be undeceived."\(^{217}\) In fact, however, Britain did discover that its exertions could be increased substantially. From 1809 onwards war-related expenditures doubled each succeeding year until 1814. When military successes began to outweigh failures in 1811, the sacrifice seemed a bit easier. By 1811 there was, indeed, less difficulty in procuring bullion, for at last the resources of the Spanish empire were being tapped. There was also the encouraging example of Portugal.

In Portugal British policy in 1810 was an almost unqualified success. Even the Whigs concluded that it was politically unwise to criticise expenditures in Portugal. Early in the year Wellesley was fearful that they would. Creevey wrote that Grey had told him that Wellesley was so anxious on the point that he pleaded with Grenville to delay any attack on Portugal's problems until his health had

\(^{217}\)Perceval to Wellington, 5 July 1810, Walpole, Perceval, II, 133.
improved. Creevey alleged that Wellesley even went so far as to submit his doctor's testimony as proof.

Wellesley need not have been frightened so. In March the government's plan to train and equip ten thousand Portuguese troops was approved over Grenville's objection that the failure of Portuguese arms was inevitable. Indeed, there were dire messages from Villiers, Britain's envoy in Lisbon, that without an early and liberal grant Wellington might be trapped and defeated by the French. On the other hand, Villiers thought an investment early on would be well worth it; Portuguese troops were already in fighting form and needed only materiel. This was true. Henry reported that their demeanor contrasted favourably with that of Spanish troops, so much so that the council of Regents was shamed into greater exertions in Cadiz. By summer 1810 Perceval was using favourable reports from Portugal to argue against further aid to Spain; the contrast

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218. Hansard XV (March 1810), 506-37.


221. Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 55.
with Portugal was too invidious. In 1811 there was no difficulty at all in securing additional aid for Portugal. A grateful parliament even allocated £100,000 for the country's distressed citizenry.

On balance Wellesley's first year as Foreign secretary must be judged a success. During this period he worked closely with his two brothers in Spain. Both were conscious of their dependence on the Marquess. Spain was an unpopular cause at this time and Wellesley's confidence that Napoleon could be challenged in the peninsula was not shared by any other member of the cabinet except Liverpool. But Perceval favoured a persistent, steady pressure on the French, and Wellesley succeeded in convincing him that Spain was the appropriate place to be persistent. In the process of convincing Perceval, however, Wellesley's overbearing personality alienated others. His "long-sighted courage and sound strategy" was reinforced by "a certain Hispanic narrowness of view."

The Austrian lobby in London was certainly deeply offended. Wellesley's relations with the Austrian ambassador Friedrick von Gentz during

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222 Perceval to Wellesley, 23 July 1810, Walpole, Perceval, II, 127.

223 Hansard, XIX (1810), 448-52.

224 Buckland, Metternich, p. 67.
1810 were definitely soured by his conviction that Austria was next to useless as a coalition partner against Napoleon. For Wellesley Spain was paramount, and by insisting on this during the bleak year of 1810 he molded British strategy towards France's challenge for the remainder of the war. The cost to his own political fortunes, however, was great. His struggles against Perceval's campaign for economy in the prosecution of the war undoubtedly proved to be a decisive factor in his eventual and complete alienation from the Prime minister in early 1812. The depth of this alienation became known when the Prince Regent replaced his father as constitutional monarch.

VIII: Cabinet and Country 1810-1811

Lewis Namier observed that a monarchical system tends to supply sovereigns of less than average intelligence. This can be challenged, and in the case of the Prince of Wales, later George IV, historians have disagreed sharply where he fits. No wonder his closest friends never knew exactly where they stood in terms of this sometimes bright, sometimes apparently

225 Buckland, Gentz, pp. 7, 12.

226 Malleson, Wellesley, p. 168; Addington put it succinctly on one occasion during the summer of 1810, after a meeting with Perceval: "Perceval came and passed two hours here, but I cannot say that our meeting was satisfactory: Lord Wellesley's
obtuse, often frivolous, easily impressed by shallow brilliance and so readily unnerved by the slightest snub. Brighton Pavilion stands as his monument: one of a kind; empty and rather useless for anyone else; extravagant, gaudy and intriguing all at once. Not even the Marquess Wellesley could measure the man. The Regent succumbed to Wellesley's flattery but not to his policies. With the Marquess he drew and redrew the map of the Europe they hoped to see emerge after the defeat of Napoleon. But the Prince Regent in his wisdom entrusted that reconstruction to Wellesley's political opponents. James Paull and the Prince were the two men in Wellesley's public life whom he completely misjudged, and both returned the compliment by doing their considerable share to insure that Wellesley would never become Prime minister.

By early autumn 1810 Wellesley had tired of his post at the Foreign office, or at least he alleged that he had. In public he declared that his disenchantment stemmed from Perceval's penchant for approving measures related to Spain that were always just short of what was needed. Perhaps more important was Wellesley's isolation within the cabinet, stemming in part from his position on the Spanish policy, and

difficulties were the beginning, middle and end of what he had to say." Sidmouth to Bathurst, 17 July 1810, Pellew, Sidmouth, III, 27.
in part from his unattractive personal qualities. Wellesley made no effort to hide the fact that he thought himself to be more capable than Perceval in the task of guiding the nation's destinies. By early October 1810 the last hope had faded for forcing Canning on the cabinet. Wellesley thereupon concluded that Perceval's refusal to admit Canning without the adherence of Castlereagh was meant to injure him. The remainder of the cabinet conspired to support Perceval because, in Wellesley's mind, they too were incompetent. If they cabinet would not admit Canning to office, Wellesley concluded, either he must be given virtually exclusive control over the conduct of the war or he must resign. Such pretensions bore hard on the secretary for War, Lord Liverpool, although he suffered Wellesley patiently and even supported him when Wellesley's case proved convincing. But it was tempting to compare Canning's ultimatum to Portland in late August 1809 with Wellesley's demands a year later.

If Wellesley refused to "continue any longer the imperfect instrument of an imperfect system," then it followed that he must resign or reform the system. Canning had underestimated Perceval's stamina; Wellesley did the same. Canning had neglected to measure the strength of an unsympathetic monarch;

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227 Wellesley MSS, 1-10 October 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 401, 410, 413, and 415.

228 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 15 October 1810, BM Add. MSS 41853, ff. 189-90.

229, p. 424.
Wellesley committed the same error. After parliament was prorogued in the summer of 1810, therefore, Wellesley retired to his tent in much the same manner as Canning had done the year before. Unlike Canning he gradually concluded that he must retire rather than fight. Except for Canning he had no allies. The Whigs and Grenville had been bruised by Wellesley's aspersions on their faintheartedness during debates on Spain. Wellesley lacked Canning's leverage as the most impressive speaker in the house of Commons. The Pittites still connected him to Canning's drive to oust Castlereagh. The nation's condition was desperate, someone observed, but not serious; the war was proceeding badly but Ireland seemed safe and the home isles were relatively free from the threat of invasion.

Canning had been chastened: he urged Wellesley to retreat and regroup rather than to charge forward. At his summer refuge, away from his calamitous household, Wellesley determined to come up to London and surrender his seals. He would declare to Perceval that he had joined the cabinet pledged to prosecute the war vigorously. It had not been so prosecuted despite all his efforts, because Perceval's economies took precedence. Therefore he must resign.

\[230\text{Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 265.}\]
\[231\text{Ibid., p. 264.}\]
Wellesley was at Ramsgate in September when the aging King suffered his first attack in the series which would end in permanent insanity. He went up to London on other business, ostensibly to compliment the King on Wellington's victory at the battle of Busaro, and, we may assume, to make himself available to be complimented in turn. Although half-inclined to take advantage of the journey to resign from the ministry, Wellesley impressed others with his good health after a series of attacks during the summer, and with his vitality and activity. His good humor was soon undermined. Wellesley thought that the King behaved rather odd, but not as odd as the Prince of Wales, who saw fit to "condole with Wellesley most heartily" because the French commander Massena had "quite outgeneralled . . . poor Arthur." This put Wellesley in a sour mood, and his disposition was not improved by Perceval's failure to make any reference to the King's condition, rumors about which were circulating freely in London. Not until two weeks later, when the King had a relapse after a period of slow recovery, did Wellesley first

232 Ibid., p. 266.
233 Ryder to Harrowby, 20 September 1810, Harrowby MSS, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 635; Wellesley to Perceval, 9 October 1810, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 415.
234 Torrens, Marquess, p. 420.
235 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington,
become aware that the King was unwell. By this time he had also resolved to resign at the next appropriate moment.

On 18 October Perceval summoned Wellesley to London along with other leading cabinet members. Wellesley was apparently ill once more and did not comply. He was summoned again three days later. At length he comprehended the gravity of the situation. He abandoned plans to quit office, concluding that resignation would suggest that he wished to ingratiate himself with the Prince. He recommended his own doctor William Knighton to the King, and on 21 November joined Camden, Lord President of the council, in examining the monarch. They concluded that the King's insanity would endure at least three months but saw bright hopes for an eventual recovery.

The King's plight deeply impressed Wellesley. On his first visit he found the King sitting naked on the side of the bed. Even before entering the room he heard a dreadful wailing which Wellesley remembered vividly for the remainder of his life. But politicians cannot linger too long on

Supplementary, VI, 266.

236 Thomas Sydenham to Wellesley, 1 November 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 422-23.


such thoughts, and the immediate need was for an orderly transition to the leadership of the Prince of Wales. The crisis had come at a most inconvenient time; indeed the King's insanity may have been precipitated by a heightened awareness of the calamity at Walcheren, by the scandal of the sale of commissions in the military by the Duke of York's mistress and by the death of his favourite daughter Amelia. It was not impossible that the Prince would spurn the new government and that he would move to undermine it. For Wellesley there was the chance of a shift of power in his favour. The Prince might also invite the Whigs to take office. Few at any rate thought that he would hold onto Perceval a moment longer than necessary. On balance, the King's illness heightened Wellesley's chances for gaining complete command of the war.

Or were his chances improved? The collected wisdom of the town's political wits could not measure the Prince. Nor could they fathom Wellesley's plans. The first order of business was to establish a regency. Parliament met on 1 November because the King in his incapacity could not postpone it. Adjournment interrupted the great debate on the devolution of executive power for successive two week periods until parliament finally confronted the insanity question on 13 December. Wellesley fully supported the Tory faction in the cabinet in
holding that in the event of the King's incapacity the powers of the executive devolved upon the two houses of parliament rather than, as the Whigs chose to believe, on the Prince Regent as if the King had died. Wellesley's position was consistent with his role in the crisis of 1789. Grenville, the only prominent member of the opposition who also played an important role in the dress rehearsal, could not claim as much. Because he combined experience and consistency on this issue, Wellesley inevitably exerted himself to take a leading role in fashioning the terms of the regency bill. He advised Perceval to carry the bill's fundamental principle - devolution of powers on parliament - "to the highest possible pitch." Having established the precedent, however, he recommended that the Regent be placed under the fewest possible restrictions.

In general Wellesley's strategy was reflected in the bill offered in parliament on 17 December. It was already clear that the Prince of Wales was angered by Perceval's determination to place restrictions on his powers for a year, and only a strong presentation by the Prime minister in the Commons and by Wellesley in the Lords was thought likely to insure

239 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 172.
240 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 267.
continuation of the Perceval ministry under so unhappy a
sovereign. 241

The house of Lords debated the bill 17 December. Wellesley
prepared a long speech and invited the sadly decayed former
King of Sweden to witness the performance. 242 Wellesley there-
upon astounded friends and foes alike by saying nothing.
"You entered the house the most expected man in England;
you leave it undone." 243 This was Canning's observation
immediately after the event. It may be too harsh a verdict, but
there is merit to the opinion that Wellesley's irresolution
on this occasion did irreparable damage to his public career.
An effective speech promised to put the cabinet in debt to
him, for it trembled for its own existence. The regent was
aware that Wellesley had secured the remission of many restrictions
incorporated into earlier draft versions of the bill under
consideration. There were bright prospects for the formation
of a new political alliance comprehending the Whigs, the
Canningites, Wellesley and his friends, and the more liberal
Pittites, all pledged to serve the Regent during the extended

241 Richmond to Wellesley Pole, 3 December 1810, quoted in
Aspinall, Wales, VII, 90.

242 Henry Brougham to Grey, 30 December 1810, printed in
Henry Brougham, Life and Times (3 vols.; Edinburgh and London:
Blackwood and Sons, 1871), I, 517.

243 Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 175-77.
crisis. Almost surely Wellesley's behaviour stemmed from a temporary loss of nerve; he tended, as Eldon once observed, to speak in the manner of Tacitus. Silence proved disastrous and not merely inconvenient. 244

Simple explanations rarely satisfy the public, and almost never stifle rumor. Wellesley's silence was immediately construed by friends and foes alike as desertion of the ministry in order to please the unhappy perspective Regent. Many believed that the Marquess had reached an agreement with the Prince to form a new government as soon as the Regency was free of Perceval's restrictions. 245 Canning was also implicated. Wellesley could not explain his reticence, and the Prince compounded Wellesley's embarrassment by snubbing him at Carlton house. 246 This disoriented all those who thought that Wellesley had ratted to the prince, and perhaps it helped to restore some of Wellesley's credibility within the cabinet. Until January the Whigs waited in almost daily expectation of an invitation from the Prince to form a government. They had, however, neither the popular support required, nor, as it developed, the support of the Regent. The Regent apparently

244 Ibid.
246 Canning to Bagot, 9 January 1811, printed in Bagot, Canning, I, 368.
entertained thoughts of bringing in the Whigs, Grenvillites, and Canning. Canning, who was miffed by Wellesley's loss of nerve in the house of Lords, was attracted to the idea of an alliance with the Whigs. Wellesley, however, would not abide the surrender of his Spanish policy to meet Grey's sensibilities, and there was at any rate probably too much bad blood between the Whigs and his party. This may have dampened Canning's enthusiasm; perhaps it was never taken seriously by anyone but the Regent.

The Perceval ministry thus continued in office, more for lack of realistic alternatives than anything else. Liverpool, an astute observer of politicians' ambitions and royal foibles, observed that the Regent would much enjoy being able to displace his Prime minister and bring in his Whig friends. But he feared the prospect of his father recovering and demanding an accounting of his stewardship. Perhaps, too, the Queen encouraged the Regent to stay with George II's last


\[248\] Buckingham, Regency, I, 45; Roberts, Whig, p. 345.

\[249\] Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 269.

ministry. At any rate Wellesley and other ministers unexpectedly found themselves remaining in office. In anticipation of fundamental changes they had momentarily stopped their internal feuding. Now these battles resumed. Canning eased away from "his unmistakable leaning towards opposition" and mended his fences with Wellesley. Wellesley for his part resumed agitation to put Canning in the cabinet. In early February the Whigs, heavy with disappointment at Perceval's stamina, risked all on a bold stroke. They drew up a letter demanding that the Prince Regent choose between Perceval and them. The letter was never sent, for on 3 February 1811 the Regent confirmed that he would not change horses at that time. He dared not, for during that very week the Queen wrote to report that the King was on the mend, and that he was well enough to hear from Perceval the state of parliamentary affairs.

The very real possibility that the King would recover injured Wellesley's prospects more than any other single

251 Torrens, Marquess, p. 457.
252 Buckingham, Regency, I, 45.
253 Roberts, Whig, p. 345.
255 Ibid., pp. 368-69.
factor. He rebounded remarkably quickly from his "Tacitus" speech in December. He was willing to brave the Regent's snubs in order to cultivate him "for all he was worth." He convinced Canning that he would be Perceval's successor. In the cabinet his advice to Perceval regarding the regency received favourable notice. He even induced the Regent to pursue the idea of a coalition of Pittites and old Foxite friends. Outside the two main camps, Professor Michael Roberts has observed, Wellesley was "the only man of sufficient weight to hold a ministry together." The Regent was determined to end the old Pittite-Foxite feud. Wellington quoted him as asking "in God's name, is it not time to leave at rest the ashes of the two great men now no more, who are quoted at every stop?" The arrangement, however, was not only disciplined by Grey's intractability, but by that horrifying prospect of the King's anticipated recovery. He might continue to make sentimental gestures towards the Whigs, but until the Regency restrictions expired he was unlikely to proceed further in attempting a Pittite-Foxite reconciliation.

256 Hinde, Canning, p. 244.
257 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 268.
258 Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 269.
By the time parliament opened 12 February Wellesley seems to have determined on a course designed to challenge Perceval for supremacy in the ministry. It was perhaps unfortunate for him that the only issue the Whigs could find to challenge in the throne speech was the conduct of the war. Wellesley chose to underplay the problems this issue posed by reviving efforts to construct a government on the principle of vigorous prosecution of the war. The alternative, not a viable one, was to court the Grenvilles, keep the allegiance of the Canningites, and induce the Regent to recruit some of his more moderate Whig friends and apolitical clients. Earl Temple was taken aback to find himself the object of Wellesley's attentions. After a coolness extending back almost to the July 1807 impeachment fiasco, Wellesley approached Temple to ask him to arrange a meeting with Grenville. Wellesley subsequently appears to have impressed upon Grenville his determination to unseat Perceval, and assured him that Canning was firmly committed to the same principle. There is no record of any reference having been made to the Spanish policy. And Wellesley could not persuade Grenville that he should be friendly to Canning.

Perceval endured all these maneuvers stoically. When

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259 Temple to Buckingham, February 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 103.

260 Ibid., I, 104.
Prince Regent's allowances, Perceval reminded him that additional commitments here meant less money for Iberia. If Perceval felt embarrassed that Wellesley should register his dissent to this economy, he did not much show it. By March 1811 Wellesley had cast himself in the role of spokesman for the Regent's interests. It was no easy task, for the Regent's primary concern so often revolved around his debts, and his frivolous expenditures were much criticised by a nation trying to find resources sufficient to continue the war.

Even Wellington saw fit to oppose his brother and advised the government through intermediaries to get on with the task of finding real additional strength, even such elements as those which Sidmouth could supply. And Perceval himself did much to neutralise Wellesley's fulminations by pressing ahead with support for Wellington. Wellesley was never satisfied that Perceval was doing enough for the Spanish cause, but parliament thought so, and the ministry's position actually strengthened considerably as spring advanced.

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261 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 1286.
262 Annual Register, LIII (1811), 36.
264 Liverpool to Wellesley, 11 April 1811, BM, Liverpool
Wellesley's problem, quite simply, was that he could not find a viable issue on which to oppose Perceval, and he could not join the opposition. His only friend was Canning, and Canning shared Wellesley's dilemma. Canning adamantly resisted joining the opposition, even if this meant propping up Perceval, whose "treacherous, hypocritical, mean and jealous spirit" had induced him to "betray" Canning. Canning very much needed Wellesley. Fewer options were open to him; Wellesley, at least, was on amicable terms with the Grenvillites even if there was no communication with the Whigs. Canning was unable to repair relations with Grenville, though he very much wanted to; in 1812 he would be the strongest supporter of the idea to include them in the late May coalition effort. Canning also laboured under a new disadvantage brought on by the fact that the Regent's current mistress, Lady Hertford, was related by marriage to Castlereagh.

MSS 38246, f. 107.

265 Canning to Huskisson, 5 July 1811, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, f. 92.

266 Buckingham, Regency, I, 103-108.

267 Canning to Huskisson, 29 June 1811, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, f. 107.
needed him, for only through the Marquess could the Hertford interest be challenged. Ganning hoped (as indeed he had to hope) that Wellesley's influence with the Regent was gradually increasing, and that at some point it would be decisive. Meanwhile he urged his friends to take any office Perceval might see fit to give them, and to hope for an event which would weaken Perceval at the same time.

Wellesley remained convinced that Europe's increasing subservience to Napoleon was attributable to weakness in British policy, and that this weakness was the product of Perceval's timidity. He thought Wellington's please for assistance confirmed that with a bit more financial support and psychological assistance the French tide could be turned in Spain. The Iberian summer was passing without the much-hoped-for liberation of Madrid. In London Wellesley's newly acquired friends in the mercantile section confirmed Wellesley's prejudices that the nation's resources had only been tapped, not mobilised. At Apsley house, now quieter by virtue of Hyacinthe's departure, Wellesley's


270 Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 125-26.
lieutenants listened to his speeches and urged him to break with Perceval. Instead he prepared ingenious schemes for equipping a Spanish army in Gallicia, where hardy peasants with a pugnacious bent were already terrifying the French. If they were properly equipped, might not they clear all of northwest Spain, allow Wellington to advance on Madrid, and in alliance with the British push the French to the Pyrenees? Wellesley thought so; Perceval was appalled at the £3 million price tag.  

It was not encouraging to see that Perceval's hold on the cabinet, and the cabinet's command of parliament, increased with every passing month. Perceval's strong position was underscored in an exchange of correspondence with Wellesley as parliament prepared to end its session. On 16 July 1811 Perceval asked Wellesley to supply "emendatory criticism" on the draft of the speech of the Lords commissioners at the close of the session. The speech was delivered by the Lord Chancellor but by tradition summarised the work of the cabinet during the preceding session. Wellesley read the draft in haste, but not quickly enough to forego telling

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271 Ibid.

272 Wellesley to Perceval, 17 July 1811, BM, Perceval MSS, printed in Aspinall, Wales, VII, 51.
Perceval that he found it to be "totally inadequate to the occasion." The "great feature" of the session, in Wellesley's eyes, had been the effort in the peninsula, and must be given predominant place. Perceval thereupon asked Wellesley to prepare an entirely new draft, which Wellesley proceeded to do. The cabinet inspected both drafts and preferred Perceval's.

For a moment Wellesley saw an early escape from Perceval: about 20 July the King fell gravely ill. His early demise was considered inevitable. Death would release the Regent from the nightmare of his father possibly recovering lucidity and passing judgement on the Regent's stewardship. With time on his hands, like other Canningites, Huskisson committed to paper his thoughts as to what might happen. The new King would first invite Grey, but not Grenville, to join an administration of his own friends. Grey would decline. Encouraged by Wellesley, the Regent would then call upon Canning. Lady Hertford would violently and successfully oppose this. The same government, with the addition of such notables as the Duke of Norfolk, would

273 Wellesley to Perceval, 17 July 1811, BM, Perceval MSS, printed in Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 51.

274 Huskisson to Canning, draft answer to Canning's letter of 25 July 1811, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 102-103.
continue in office, unless Wellesley proved strong enough to serve as an umbrella for Canningites, Grenvillites, the Regent's friends, and some Whigs, a government such as the Regent dearly wanted.

Those were Huskisson's considered views. From Spain Wellington wrote doubting that Perceval could survive the King's demise, and told his brother in confidence that "no honest man" should want him to. ²⁷⁵ The cabinet rumor held that Perceval, Eldon (Lord Chancellor) and Wellesley would be invited to remain, and that Canning and Grey would join them. The cabinet could hope, reasonably enough, that Grey would never consent to this hybrid arrangement. ²⁷⁶ The Regent, finally, was reported to have assured Wellesley that in any event Eldon and he were safe, and that if his hands were untied by events he could be counted on to carry on the war vigorously. ²⁷⁷

Wellesley's influence with the Regent was not put to the test. On 20 July Wellesley urgently requested an interview with the Prince "before matters shall come to the

²⁷⁵ Wellington to Wellesley Pole, 2 July 1811, Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 175.
²⁷⁶ Ryder to Bathurst, 30 July 1811, Bathurst, p. 158.
²⁷⁷ Dardis to Buckingham, 22 July 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 114.
last extremity at Westminster. Wellesley did not disclose his reasons for seeking a meeting, and no record of the conversation has been found. Clearly Wellesley wanted the Regent to abandon Perceval in the election which would automatically follow the King's death. The Regent apparently refused to commit himself, but he did raise Wellesley's hopes by drafting him as messenger to Perceval. The Regent used this channel to urge Perceval not to prorogue parliament during the crisis. Wellesley saw in this an indication that he rather than Perceval held the Regent's confidence. Wellesley was also pleased to see that during August the Regent invited the Whig magnates Holland and Bedford to work with him. They hesitated, but the Dukes Norfolk, Northumberland and Devonshire, conservatives but not inclined to Perceval, did express their support. Wellesley and Canning as well were invited to pledge themselves to stand by the Regent in any eventuality. Grey and Grenville were not invited because of their opposition to the peninsular war.

Wellesley could not have orchestrated these trans-

278 Wellesley to Thomas Tyrwhitt, 20 July 1811, Windsor MSS, quoted in Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 50.

279 Wellesley to Perceval, 28 July 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 480.

actions himself to produce an effect more favourable to his ambitions. He felt pleased enough to enter into one of those little demonstrations of disloyalty to cabinet unity which Canning and Wellesley found useful from time to time. In August, when Perceval defeated Wellesley on the issue of the size of the Spanish military subsidy to be proposed for the coming year, Wellesley warned the Prince Regent that he could not long remain in office under the incompetent Perceval. The Regent returned the favour with tidbits of his own. Wellesley also convinced him that the French general Massena's retreat was due entirely to Britain's grand Spanish strategy. The Regent confessed that his Hanoverian relations wanted him to reproduce this brilliant feat on the Rhine. Should Wellington and his troops be moved to a new theatre? Wellesley and Canning urged him not to and convinced him that the Regent's own military talents had supplied the decisive reasons against it. Well might the Grenvillite interest say that "reports increase daily of Lord Wellesley's favour, and of intrigues with him and Canning jointly." Canning convinced himself that "of the

281 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 21 August 1811, Fortescue MSS, X, 164-65.

282 Dardis to Buckingham, c. 30 August 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 198.

283 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 4 August 1811, Fortescue MSS, X, 161.
ministers, Wellesley is the one in whom he has the greatest confidence - perhaps the only one in whom upon general politics - or home politics - he has any confidence." 284 Perceval might lead the cabinet, but by early autumn Wellesley out hope that he soon would lead the nation.

By this time Wellesley had also installed at the Regent's side one William Knighton, whose rapidly increasing influence over the Prince promised to assist Wellesley immensely. The rise of Knighton constitutes a famous story of palace politics and intrigue. Apparently Knighton met Wellesley through Poll Raffles, one of Wellesley's mistresses. Knighton was her doctor and enjoyed a comfortable practice in Plymouth. Wellesley wanted very much to take Poll to Spain on his mission to the Junta, and contracted Knighton's services for the exhorbitant sum of £5000 to camouflage Poll Raffles' excursion. Bu Hyacinthe's intervention aborted Wellesley's plans for his mistress. Knighton went along, however. 285 Wellesley proved unable to pay the sum agreed upon, and Knighton settled for £3000 on condition that Wellesley find him an office. 286 Knighton became comptroller of the

284 Canning to Bagot, 29 August 1811, Bagot, Canning, I, 373.
285 Henry Hobhouse, Diary, 26 September 1821, Hadspen House MSS, cited in Aspinall, George IV, III, 478.
accounts of army hospitals but this office was soon abolished. 287

Wellesley then recommended him to the Prince, who complained at the moment of a lameness in his hand. 288 On 5 January 1812 Knighton became the Regent's personal physician; from early 1811, moreover, he was an influential figure at court. 289 He was to influence the remainder of Wellesley's public career, not always to Wellesley's benefit.

In 1811 the greater imponderable was of course the Prince Regent himself. By September Wellesley's star was acknowledged in all quarters to be in the ascendant. Canning told his colleague Bagot that the Regent had requested from Wellesley the plan of an administration of which Canning and he were to form the basis. 290 According to local gossip Wellesley and he spent evenings plotting the final act in Napoleon's downfall, moving armies and countries like chess pieces on a board.

Much more concrete was the evidence that Wellesley was in a "state of warfare" with every member of the cabinet, threatening to resign on issues great and trivial

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287 Henry John Temple, Third Viscount Palmerston, to Arbuthnot, 10 January 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, f. 327.


289 Buckingham, Regency, I, 174.

290 Canning to Bagot, 16 September 1811, Bagot, Canning, I, 376.
and confident of the Regent's support whatever he chose to do. Perceval had cause to worry, and apparently did so. Early in September he attempted to heal the violent breach with Wellesley by offering his son Richard a seat at the Admiralty board. This was refused. One at the Treasury was also rejected, with the caveat that Wellesley would instruct Richard to accept it if the Regent advised him to do so. Richard took the seat; was in fact the Regent's advice solicited on so small a matter? If so, did it not underscore their new intimacy? Canning thought so, but, with more wisdom than he had often shown in the past, he doubted that the union would last. All depended on the Regent, that most undependable of men.

Canning urged Wellesley to press the Regent while the iron was hot. Canning sought to see Wellesley take advantage of his friendship with the Prince to insist that Perceval be removed immediately. The advice was timely, if indeed Perceval was prepared to urge an early termination of the

291 Canning to Bagot, 4 September 1811, Bagot, Canning, I, 375; Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 126.

292 Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 126.

293 Canning to Huskisson, 18 September 1811, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 154-55.
restrictions on the Regent so as to recover the initiative. Wellesley seemed to heed the warning. He told the Prince that his sole desire was to see the war prosecuted vigorously; if the Regent would grant him wide powers, he would ease agitation on any other issue until this was accomplished. The one-issue idea appealed to the Regent, but it was difficult to determine which one he favoured most. In August it was the grand strategy of the war. In September the Regent pressed for the termination of his restrictions. In October, ominously, it was the Catholic question. The traffic in and out of the Regent's quarters varied according to the crusade of the moment.

Wellesley dominated the Regent's circle from the middle of July to the middle of September. But Perceval refused to surrender and began to reassert his authority after this date. More ominous yet was the rise of Eldon in the Prince's estimate after September, bringing to the Regent's circle his high church ideas and stalwart opposition to Catholics' claims. In November it was the hardheaded,  

294Canning to Bagot, 19 September 1811, Bagot, Canning, I, 379.  
295Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 126-29.  
296Canning to Bagot, 29 September 1811, Bagot, Canning, I, 381.
dullwitted Duke of Cumberland, who opposed any type of change. "There is no guessing what the Prince means to do," the poet Thomas Moore observed. "One can as little anticipate his measures as those of Bonaparte, but for a very different reason. I am sure the powder in His Royal Highness's hair is much more settled than anything in his head." This was no less true for being so cruel.

By the time parliament was prepared to meet again in December 1811, Wellesley's mastery of the Prince was once more in doubt.

Could it be restored? Wellesley thought so. In November the Prince Regent's burning question was his innumerable debts and the financial settlement to be made for the households of the King and Queen, and for his own. At Perceval's request, Liverpool drafted a household bill at the end of November. It was designed to settle all financial and jurisdictional questions regarding the royal family during the remaining life of the demented King.

There were four principal points of contention. Provision had to be made for the King. The Queen's income had to be fixed. It was important to determine whether the Prince

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297 Walpole, Perceval, II, 226.

298 Ibid., Ibid., II, 226.
should receive as Regent the same civil list his father had enjoyed as King. Finally, the Prince was heavily in debt and the cabinet had to decide whether to request parliament to grant funds sufficient to cancel his obligations. Liverpool's draft conceded to the Regent the King's full civil list and control over the household offices. It provided that the King and Queen should share an income equal to that of the Prince as Regent. Upon seeing Liverpool's formula Perceval recommended that the Regent's allowance be reduced and that of the King increased. The Regent naturally took strong exception to this, and also wanted a provision inserted to permit payment of his debts through a claim to the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall, which he maintained had been denied him without cause.

The Regent summoned Wellesley from Dorking. He insisted that Wellesley press Perceval to adjust the allocation of household funds in his favour. He insisted upon cancellation of more than £700,000 of his debts. He also recommended that that King's allowance be reduced and that the Queen be given a separate allowance out of the remainder.

299 Ibid., p. 227
Wellesley opposed the plan to justify cancellation of debts, as the Regent proposed, by referring to the revenues accumulated in the Duchy of Cornwall during the Regent's minority. He told the Prince that they had been appropriated "in spirit" when parliament cancelled the Regent's previous round of debts. Wellesley conceded, however, that these items apart, Perceval's plan was inferior to that of the Prince. He told this to Perceval. Perceval met with the Prince but was not converted to the Prince's point of view. But Perceval believed that he would have the Queen's support, and saw her soon after.

The Regent meanwhile proceeded to put his plan to paper. Wellesley opposed the Cornwall clause but not the remainder. On 21 December the Queen surprised most politicians by expressing her support for the Regent's proposal to provide her a separate allowance. She claimed, with some justice, that otherwise it would be alleged that she was contriving to starve the King. Wellesley was upset that Perceval had implied that the Queen was on his side. This stiffened Wellesley's resolve to help the Prince.

301 Shawe, memorandum, July 1814, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 272.
By this time Perceval's reaction to Wellesley's involvement had waxed thoroughly negative. He held that any reduction in the revenue granted to the King, and the establishment of a revenue separate from it for the Queen, would lower the King's dignity. Perceval had every incentive to avoid alienating the Regent on this point.

At first he enlisted the aid of Wellesley to persuade the Regent to moderate his demands. Perceval had to worry, as Wellesley did not, about the impact on the backbenchers of an extravagant grant to the Regent. It is far from clear that Wellesley made any attempt to carry out Perceval's request, but he reported back to Perceval that the Regent would not give way. 302 Wellesley and Perceval proceeded to debate the size of the Regent's household allowance. 303 Wellesley's single conciliatory move was to suggest that in lieu of the £700,000 at which the Regent valued the Duchy of Cornwall revenues, parliament assume £500,000 of his debts. 304 This, however, was not to Perceval so much a compromise as it was a concession

302 Wellesley to Perceval, 27 November 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 50.


304 Walpole, Perceval, II, 229.
to most of the Regent's demands.

A series of cabinet meetings followed. At one of these, by demonstrating that he enjoyed the support of the remainder of the cabinet, Perceval at length extracted from Wellesley a pledge to accept a much lower figure as appropriate for the Regent's household. It is not clear whether Perceval thought that he had obtained Wellesley's promise to accept other provisions of the bill. Subsequently Perceval came to the conclusion that Wellesley had prepared a letter for the Prince reaffirming his opposition, and Perceval treated this act as a violation of his word. Perceval was in error. In the first place the letter was never sent. Secondly, as is clear from Wellesley's papers, the letter was intended not for the Prince but for Perceval himself. Perceval's interpretation circulated, to Wellesley's injury; other members of the cabinet objected to Wellesley's "most shabby proceeding."

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305 Wellesley to Perceval, 18 September 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, ff. 105-106.

306 Walpole, Perceval, II, 231.
Wellesley claimed with some justice that his intentions had been completely misunderstood. Perceval called a cabinet meeting on 22 December to discuss the issue. As so often happened, Wellesley missed the meeting. Afterwards he sent a long message to Perceval recommending once more the acceptance of the Regent's plan, minus the Duchy of Cornwall section. Otherwise, he warned, there would be a violent quarrel with the Regent. Wellesley's presentation, apart from its motives, was inherently quite convincing. Perceval in return thanked Wellesley and expressed his determination to continue with his own plan.

On 23 December the full cabinet, including Wellesley this time, met to examine the plan again. Later Perceval informed the Regent that Liverpool's formula had met with unanimous approval. The Regent summoned Wellesley and upbraided him for accommodating Perceval after having pledging himself to seek the changes proposed by the Regent. At yet another cabinet meeting, this one on the 24th, Wellesley raised the household issue again and went on record opposing it. He offered amendments; they were rejected. After the meeting Wellesley wrote Perceval confirming his opposition.

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By this time the tempers of all parties were short. Perceval was convinced that Wellesley's position reflected a desire to see the Regent oust the Prime minister. In the cabinet Philip Yorke openly rebuked Wellesley and had to be restrained from making even sharper attacks. Even Wellesley's brother William wrote to Perceval condemning the defects of the Marquess as a cabinet colleague. This was certainly reinforced by Wellesley's failure to speak in parliament in support of the ministry's household bill. Wellesley's "dissent" of 24 December, which he insisted Perceval bring to the Regent's attention, was interpreted by the cabinet as a highly irregular proceeding. Later Perceval a bit unfairly based his insistence that there were no fundamental differences of opinion between Wellesley and the cabinet on the premise that there had been only one such dissent!

The incident ended chances for an amicable adjustment of Wellesley's differences with Perceval. Wellesley's behaviour lends credence to the suggestion that he wished to force a break. But it was a weak issue on which to challenge the ministry of which he was a senior member.

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309 Wellesley Pole to Perceval, 31 December 1811, Walpole, Perceval, II, 259-60.
Perceval had no difficulty convincing parliament that his economies in this area were justified. Wellesley's own argument that more effort should be devoted to Spain and less to other objectives was directly undercut when he advocated an increase in the Regent's allowance. Wellesley's position was easily interpreted by many as a direct effort to win the Regent's confidence and affection. The cabinet concluded that Wellesley was "absolutely mad with vanity" and convinced themselves that he would soon be called on to head the government. It had borne patiently Wellesley's indiscreet contacts outside the cabinet in order to retain his services while the Regency was being fashioned. Now his value was suspect.

In sacrificing his remaining support in the cabinet, Wellesley failed to secure the Regent's gratitude. The Regent had already concluded privately that Perceval was likely to be more useful to him during the first stages of the unrestricted regency than was Wellesley. Wellesley's own extravagance would vitiate efforts to secure the larger household allowance he wanted, and Wellesley's unpopularity would reinforce the Regent's remaining embarrassments.


311 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 463.
Rumors of Wellesley's imminent acceptance of the office of Prime minister proved very wide of the mark. The Prince was beginning to realize that his cause would suffer under the management of a man whose deficiencies so closely matched his own. Perhaps steady Perceval was the perfect foil.

After the beginning of December Perceval's fortunes improved steadily. Wellesley's access to the Prince Regent, it is true, increased while the Prince tended to a swollen ankle at the country house of the Duke of York. But the Regent alone could not determine the composition of a government, and Wellesley's opponents continued to multiply in numbers. Even the Regent grew leery of having Wellesley so close to him. Memories of his father's opposition to Catholics' claims now burdened his own conscience. He saw more clearly the wisdom of leaving the direction of the nation's affairs to his incumbent government. The Prince worried, as he might well have, about his debts, and in his moments of depression he talked of turning over the entire system of royal prerogatives. On any given

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312 Walpole, Perceval, II, 226.
313 Duke of Northumberland to the Prince of Wales, 14 December 1811, printed in Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 273.
day Wellesley's prospects to succeed Perceval might brighten, but the tide had changed. Wellesley's lieutenants Culling Smith and others laboured to secure "unbounded influence" over the Duke of York, and briefly satisfied themselves that they had done so. But York's influence over his elder brother no longer matched that of Cumberland.

Circumstances worked to diminish Wellesley's prospects in other ways. By this time he had drawn so far away from the cabinet that he could not easily return. He rarely attended a cabinet meeting during the latter half of 1811, even when Perceval appealed directly for his attendance. Wellesley's own family could not understand what distressed their leader so. They realised, like the others, that there was no firm plan for Wellesley to take command of the government when the regency restrictions expired. Only in Wellesley's imagination was such a scheme settled. Even his family feared the prospect. Wellesley Pole wrote from Dublin expressing horror at the thought that Wellesley might come to power and extend precipitously the franchise to

315 Dardis to Buckingham, 2 December 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 157.
316 Ibid.
317 Perceval to Wellesley, 3 December 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 51.
318 Grey to Grenville, 2 December 1811, Fortescue MSS, X, 183.
Wellesley's opponents became more bold. At one point Wellesley inquired what measures the cabinet might suggest to increase the efficiency of the bureaucracy of the Foreign office. The cabinet agreed in private that Wellesley's resignation might constitute the most important improvement. There was talk that Wellesley wanted to return to India to save himself from bankruptcy, or at least to flee his creditors, and the cabinet did not discourage the circulation of such rumors. Wellesley heard many of these reports, but he chose to discount them as the panicky murmurings of his enemies at the prospect of seeing Wellesley become Prime minister. Far too late he was to realize that by sacrificing other reservoirs of support in order to ally himself with the Regent he had made himself completely dependent upon him. When the Regent failed, there would be no alternative but to resign his office.

321 Northumberland to Strangford, 27 December 1811, printed in Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 281.
322 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, Supplementary, VI, 274.
doing he would close his career as a member of the cabinet.

A survey of Wellesley's contributions to the resolution of domestic problems during the year 1811 is not impressive. He was almost totally preoccupied with the admission of Canning into the cabinet or placing himself in Perceval's office. Perceval succeeded in isolating Wellesley in large part because Wellesley proved to be his own worst enemy.

If indeed Wellesley's resignation was delayed for more than a year by the King's decline into insanity, then the King's sad fate also contributed to Wellesley's reduced esteem in the eyes of his contemporaries. For the entire year he effectively concealed his substantial contributions to the conduct of the war by his frivolous antics in the cabinet. There is no doubt that many of his objectives were laudable: he grasped the nature of the struggle against Napoleon exceptionally clearly. But because he so thoroughly isolated himself from Perceval and the cabinet he was forced to plow his own furrow on the international scene. While the Foreign office bureaucracy moved from confusion to chaos Wellesley fashioned in foreign policy in almost complete isolation. Occasionally Perceval would inquire gently what indeed was his policy. For the most part he was left alone to shape relations with the new world and to revive opposition to Napoleon in the old.
The strongest feature of Wellesley's foreign policy strategy was the interdependence of its many parts; this, at least, was Wellesley's conviction. He had that talent for handling great ideas more easily than he could manage small points. The sweep of events produced in his mind a set of priorities which gave an intellectual cohesion to his strategy even when the Foreign office itself, judged by the mismanagement of its administrative machinery, suggested to many that Great Britain possessed no foreign policy at all. His isolation from the cabinet and the total want within the cabinet of other ministers with some competence in this area led Wellesley to cultivate odd adventurers and to dedicate himself to some remarkable and exotic projects. The rescue of King Ferdinand, the sub rosa negotiations with Napoleon, the long conversations with that other Corsican adventurer, Pozzo di Borgo, the afternoons spent shuffling maps with the Prince Regent, and his grand orations to a select coterie of flatterers were all part of the Marquess' style. Much of this effort was ridiculous and patently useless. But the mind was at work, and perhaps Wellesley was correct in his judgements about international affairs more often than either Canning before him or Castlereagh who followed. If this talent had been
married to adequate control over the bureaucracy in his own jurisdiction, and to some regular habits of business, Wellesley might be held in higher esteem today.

What were his objectives. The primary purpose of his membership in the cabinet was to coordinate Britain's effort to challenge Napoleon for control of the continent. To Wellesley the most important device available for challenging Napoleon was British naval superiority on the high seas in every quarter of the globe. In Europe itself naval power could be used to augment British land forces in a few key areas where geography permitted it and where Napoleon's power was already being challenged by an indigenous opposition. Spain was the most appropriate forum for the great confrontation, and of course it consumed most of Wellesley's time. Walcheren, Wellesley never tired of repeating, confirmed that Britain would always be simply an auxiliary in the north of Europe and therefore could not control the course of events. Spain must be paramount,

323 In May 1811 Wellesley prepared a draft on the state of Europe and posed to Wellington a series of questions which reveal the line of development in Wellesley's strategy. He asked his brother to prepare position papers on the feasibility of military operations at any point in northern Europe, along the coasts of France, in the Mediterranean, with special emphasis on the use of Sicily as a launching place, and Minorca. He was also concerned about the prospect of war with the United States. "Notes on the General State of Europe," 15 May 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37293, f. 5.
and all else must be secondary. In Europe this meant
discouraging the powers of northern Europe from resuming
war against Napoleon until that had restored their energies
and had concerted their military policies. Russia was to
be encouraged to bring its wars with Persia and Turkey to
an early close and to prepare to fight France. In the
Mediterranean Wellesley's priorities meant the continuation
of the traditional policy of appropriating small defensible
islands for naval purposes. It Italy the objective was
the revival of Howick's policy under Grenville of detaching
Sicily from Napoleon's mainland satelites, giving at the
same time as much support for liberalism in Sicily and
nationalism in the peninsula as these areas could safely
absorb under current conditions.

Outside Europe Wellesley ceased to promote that
rapid expansion of the colonial empire which had been som
important to him in India. There was a good reason
for this: the French no longer represented a serious menace
overseas. Indeed, with the annexation of Senegal, Martinique,
Cayenne, Guadeloupe, Amboyna, Mauritius and Java virtually

324 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 259.

all the tropics was under British control. Towards the United States he urged a conciliatory policy. He displayed little affection towards that nation, but he had a healthy respect for its capacity to make mischief. In Latin America he urged a settlement which would preserve the symbolic unity of the empire, foster local autonomy, and guarantee free trade. But these objectives, both in Europe and without, were to be considered subservient to the objectives established in Spain.

How innovative in conceptual terms was Wellesley's prescription for the defeat of Napoleon? Almost all that Wellesley strove for was based on solid British precedents. The acquisition of Mediterranean bases had begun early in the seventeenth century under Cromwell, and with the peace of Utrecht in 1714 had become a permanent fixture of British policy. Pursuit of free trade with Latin America might be traced as far back as Drake. A policy of conciliation towards the United States was promulgated in 1783 but this had proven difficult to implement. Wellesley's primary contribution was the strict adherence to priority. Spain he thought must have first access to British bases

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ordinates as well, or simply kept from them the documents required for their work. He also saw fit to grant pensions as if rewarding service in India, and after doing so announced his decisions to the Prime minister "in a most magnificent style, like some of his exordiums at our cabinets," according to Bathurst. In fact, however, his colleagues were remarkably ill-informed about international affairs and Wellesley was the last person likely to devote some of his time to educating them in the wisdom of his policies. He assumed that their opposition to him betrayed their ignorance, and indeed their invincible ignorance, and not any defect in his planning or analysis. For the whole of the restricted regency he therefore proceeded in splendid isolation. His colleagues laboured to secure the survival of the Perceval ministry, and this was of no concern to the Marquess. They were, in addition, all concerned about the survival of Britain, but here only Wellesley conducted himself with that air of confidence suggesting that he had discovered the magic formula. Was his confidence based on a true mastery of the meaning of events as they unfolded month after month, as he maintained, or on invincible ignorance and insufferable vanity?

For an example of Wellesley's style, see Wellesley to Perceval, c. 4 November 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, ff. 7-33.
In northern Europe Wellesley's blueprint proved far from exciting, but on balance it must be judged to have been an appropriate one. Wellesley displayed an impressive ability to construct a policy of implied threats and gentle suasion to keep the Scandinavian region from falling irretrievably into the Napoleonic emperium. Even before entering the cabinet Wellesley had made an impact here. He had urged the seizure of the Danish fleet in late 1807 and entered the house of Lords at last in order to defend the government's ultimatum at Copenhagen. Unfairly perhaps, he took most of the credit for the expedition, but in doing so he demonstrated that he was not opposed to vigorous tactics; this reputation would be useful when he issued warnings in his capacity as Foreign secretary.330

When he entered office in late 1809 Sweden was in much the same predicament which had prompted Britain to capture Denmark's fleet two years earlier. The aging Gustavus IV was about to abdicate in favour of his son Charles XIII. Charles was sympathetic to Britain but he found himself trapped into membership in the continental system. This technically put Sweden in a state of war with

330 Lord Henry Petty to Creevey, 2 November 1807, Maxwell, Creevey, I, 85.
Britain, but the British admiral Saumarez in this case was admonished not to provoke a confrontation.\textsuperscript{331} A year of friendly war followed. Sweden began to show every indication of dissatisfaction with the continental system, and Wellesley for his part urged a reconciliation which would provide at least one outlet in Europe for British products.

By mid-1811 the time was ripe for some serious negotiations with the Swedish government. The reason was Russia’s manifest disillusionment with Napoleon and increasing sense of shame for having signed the treaty of Tilsit in 1807. That treaty had of course induced Canning to recommend the assault on Copenhagen, and Napoleon had followed suit as expected by making Denmark another client state. But Russia had failed at the critical moment to take up arms against Britain. The continental system proved especially onerous for a nation long accustomed to look to British manufactures for its domestic requirements. Markets for Russia’s raw materials decreased. As long as war with Turkey continued, however, Russia could not contemplate defying France.

Wellesley’s sources of information concerning Russia

\textsuperscript{331}Rose, "Contest," p. 374.
were remarkably good. In February 1810 Wellesley put out feelers to Russia suggesting that he would like to help Russia make peace with Turkey. He proclaimed that an enemy of France (if Russia could be induced to become one) would prove to be a friend of Britain. These sentiments were repeated in early 1811. By May 1811 Wellesley was convinced that Russia was prepared to rupture with France, and feared that Turkey, equipped with similar knowledge, would increase its demands at the conference table. It was therefore important to urge Turkey to treat with Russia quickly and gently, so that Russia could prepare for a confrontation with Napoleon. Meanwhile Russia must be urged not to precipitate a rupture with France if it could not be certain of defeating Napoleon on the battlefield. With Russia in turn prepared for war, relations with Sweden might be normalised, for Stockholm would have less reason to fear French retaliation.

By mid-1811, then, Wellesley was actively engaged in arranging peace between Turkey and Russia and in forging new relationships between Russia, Sweden, and his own country.

332 Wellesley, Despatch to St. Petersburg, 16 August 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37293, ff. 80-91; Earl of Aberdeen to Wellesley, 19 February 1810, Wellesley, Wellesley, I, 310-12.

Turkey's security in turn depended upon the validity of British assurances to protect its Mediterranean possessions against the French. Here the British occupation of Sicily and the stimulus provided for Italian resistance to its French sovereigns were important. The protection of Sicily demanded that Spain be made secure. There was a unity to the policy; Wellesley believed this should be obvious to the cabinet, so obvious that it need not be explained. Convinced that they were incompetent, he proceeded alone; Sweden, Russia, Turkey, Sicily, and Spain constituted one organic whole in the project to defeat Napoleon.

XII: Liberalism and Nationalism: The Case of Italy

In Sicily British policy had been fashioned by the ministry of all the talents in 1806-7. Wellesley was no friend of Earl Grey, but he was never alienated from a man's policies because another man had invented the principle. Grey had planned to remove the French-Neapolitan faction from Sicily and place control of the Sicilian half of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Naples, the other half, had succumbed to Napoleon and the Murat monarchy) in the hands of responsible citizens, under benevolent British protection. Howick considered Sicily to be
a useful experiment in the application of British liberalism, especially as defined by the Whigs, to a land long burdened with the worst form of reactionary rule. Sicily would also be useful as a British trade entrepot when peace came. Canning, however, was not enchanted by Howick's dreams and thought the idea of a British protectorate over Sicily perfectly impractical. During his tenure as Foreign secretary from 1807 to 1809, Sicily was subjected once more to heavyhanded Bourbon despotism. 334

Under Canning the British and French faced each other across the straits of Messina. Murat wanted to capture Sicily and commanded a large army in Naples. Napoleon restrained him for fear that the British navy would trap an army on Sicily. The British in turn felt obliged to maintain a force in Sicily sufficient to repel Murat should he cross the straits. Unfortunately, affairs of state were directed by that termagant daughter of Maria Theresa, Maria Carolina, a thoroughly reactionary, ambitious, and unlovable woman. 335 British defence of the island inevitably included defence of the Queen. In an alliance concluded in March 1808 there was added to this an annual subsidy in

334 William Pitt, Earl Amherst to Wellesley, 28 July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, f. 52.

return for trade privileges. At home the opposition periodically pressed the government to justify a policy of protection and subsidies for Sicily, while its government was one of the most reactionary in Europe. In July 1810 the current British envoy, William Pitt, Earl Amherst, recommended to Wellesley that the British abandon their policy of neutrality and intervene on the side of the Sicilian nobles. These nobles, hard pressed by the Queen for heavier taxes, convinced Amherst of their sincere desire for the establishment of a constitution along British lines. They were prepared to reduce the Queen's influence, take control of the army, and place the island's administration in Sicilians' hands. Amherst added that most Sicilians would even accept annexation to Britain.

Amherst was not alone in imploring Wellesley to do something about the Queen, and Wellesley was sympathetic. Perceval reacted with extreme caution, and directed Wellesley only to tell the Sicilian government that if they squandered

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337 Amherst to Wellesley, 28 July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, ff. 52-57.
338 Sir John Stuart to Liverpool, 1 May 1810, and Joseph Mellish to Wellesley, 14 May 1810, cited in Acton, Bourbons, p. 575.
their resources they might forfeit Britain's subsidy.\footnote{339}{Wellesley, "Memorandum for Despatch to Ld. Amherst," July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, f. 59.}

At first Wellesley was reluctant to pledge to Sicily British resources which were needed in Spain, and to this degree he was willing enough to press indirectly for reforms.\footnote{340}{Perceval to Wellesley, 3 July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 320-21.}

In the summer of 1810, however, both the British minister Amherst and the commander in chief of British forces, Lt. General James Stuart, resigned their positions after a dispute with each other and with the Sicilian government.\footnote{341}{Acton, Bourbons, p. 580.}

Wellesley determined that conditions called for more vigorous action. He obtained cabinet approval to combine the civil and military offices of Britain's representation in Sicily. He nominated a man whom he judged to be suited to the demanding task, and articulated a policy which restored the priorities established by Howick in 1806.

The nominee was Lord William Bentinck, second son of the Duke of Portland. Here was a man of the Wellesley mold, "a brilliant and unbalanced egotist, all the more dangerous because he was also imbued with a species of idealism."\footnote{342}{John Rosselli, Lord William Bentinck and the British Occupation of Sicily, 1811-1814 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 18.}

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\footnote{339}{Wellesley, "Memorandum for Despatch to Ld. Amherst," July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, f. 59.}
\footnote{340}{Perceval to Wellesley, 3 July 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, ff. 320-21.}
\footnote{341}{Acton, Bourbons, p. 580.}
\footnote{342}{John Rosselli, Lord William Bentinck and the British Occupation of Sicily, 1811-1814 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 18.}
He was only thirty-six. As has been seen, he had served as governor of Madras under Wellesley from 1803. His rule had ended in bitter controversy with the East India company, which no doubt endeared him to the Foreign secretary. He had held a command under General Moore in Spain. He was energetic and forthright, and he would ruin himself by an overweening ambition. Fifteen years younger than Wellesley, in some respects he followed Wellesley's path in public life.344

Wellesley was not as eager as Howick had been to introduce liberal institutions into Sicily. He wanted the kingdom secured for the British navy, preserved as a bulwark against new French incursions into the eastern Mediterranean, and open as a point of contact with the Ottoman empire. He drew from the simultaneous resignations of Amherst and Stuart the conclusion that Sicily was exposed by the Queen's policies to invasion from Naples. Wellesley was not interested, apparently, in commercial advantages. In the tradition of his Indian years he invited Bentinck, who knew nothing of the island but could learn, to submit a program of instructions to cover his Sicilian viceroyalty, as the Queen unkindly described it. Bentinck returned a recommendation for uniting the military command, assuming control over the subsidy, replacing the Neapolitans with native Sicilians, establishing

343 Ibid.
liberal institutions and reducing abuses. Bribes to nobles
would be used if necessary. 

Should the court reject these
Demands, he would withdraw and side with the Sicilians against
the Queen. Never had a plan of interference more blatant than
this been proposed by a member of the cabinet.

Wellesley liked most of it. Perceval heard of it
and was horrified. He instructed Wellesley to soften the
instructions or deny Bentinck permission to go. The in-
structions were softened, but not as much as Perceval assumed.

Bentinck went off in the early summer to deliver an ultimatum
to the Sicilian court that if the reforms Britain necessary
were not soon effected, Britain would exercise its right to
reduce its attempts to defend the island. Bentinck reached
Sicily 24 July, delivered the ultimatum, and was told by the
Queen that he was nothing more than a "boorish corporal."
Bentinck thereupon quit Sicily on 28 August. He returned to London 27 September to obtain "fresh instructions."  

Perceval claimed to be satisfied by Bentinck's mission, or at least relieved that the British had not entered into an arrangement with Sicilian discontents to overthrow the government. What Perceval did not know was that prior to Bentinck's departure Wellesley gave him private instructions ("vague authorisation") to examine the possibility of assisting a liberal uprising on the mainland under the direction of the Archduke Francis D'Este, then residing in Sardinia. Bentinck met the Archduke and returned to England convinced that discontent on the Italian peninsula gave a well-officered revolt every chance of success. This encouragement, reinforced unwittingly by the hostility of the Queen, induced Bentinck to urge on Wellesley a project for the strongest possible support of nationalism in Italy.  

Prior to setting out once more for Sicily, Bentinck received from Wellesley £100,000 to finance the mainland enterprise, and Wellesley instructed Bentinck to concert his plans with Wellington and with British agents in the Mediterranean. Wellesley also

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349 Wellesley to the Prince of Wales, 27 September 1811, printed in Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 150.

350 Bentinck to Wellesley, 25 September 1811 and 1 October 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37293, ff. 119-20, 128-29.
gave Bentinck permission to consider additional options in regard to Sicily and Italy; he was now allowed to cooperate with liberal elements in Sicily if he could produce evidence that perhaps the Queen was in contact with Napoleon, as was rumored. Bentinck was quick to follow the Wellesley pattern in hinting that he would carry out "the same enlarged and enlightened system of policy which had already saved another empire." Wellesley must have been pleased.

Quite clearly Perceval had no idea of the tenor of these new instructions. Indeed, Wellesley apparently drew them up and discussed them with Bentinck in the safer environment of Dorking rather than London. In October Wellesley made some effort to secure through Perceval a more liberal set of guidelines, liberal enough to match the instructions he had already conceded to Bentinck. Perceval refused; he saw no need to treat the Queen of Naples like the Nawab of Arcot had been treated in India. Wellesley did succeed in extracting from the unsuspecting cabinet a certain latitude of

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351 Rosselli, Bentinck, p. 25; Copy of Despatch by Bentinck, 21 October 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37293, ff. 153-58.

352 Rosselli, Bentinck, p. 25.

353 Wellesley to the Prince Regent, 16 September 1811, Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 134.

354 Pozzo di Borgo's "Opinion on Sicily," 8 October 1811,
language in the instructions, but certainly nothing which would permit subversion of the Sicilian crown. The most important concession appears to have been authorisation for Bentinck to suspend the subsidy under certain circumstances. But Wellesley was much more influenced by his current advisor in London, Pozzo di Gorgo, who convinced Wellesley that Sicily was well worth fighting for. Wellesley's grand strategy called for control of Sicily, and if the cabinet could not be persuaded of the justice of this cause, then it must be permitted to proceed as Wellesley's child alone.

Bentinck reached Sicily for the second time in December 1811. He immediately demanded command of all Sicilian forces, the enforced exile of Neapolitan ministers unacceptable to the British, and admission of Sicilian barons to the government. The Queen refused, as expected, and probably as Bentinck hoped. He thereupon suspended the British subsidy. Threats and counter-threats followed. Bentinck withdrew the British garrison from western Sicily. The Queen threatened harm to British residents in the island and in turn Bentinck hinted that he would force the Queen and her sympathisers into exile. The court thereupon surrendered, leaving in charge of

BM, Wellesley MSS 37292, ff. 139-40; Auckland to Grenville, 16 October 1811, Fortescue MSS, X, 178; W. H. Freemantle to Buckingham, 25 October 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 134.

355 Pozzo di Borgo's "Opinion on Sicily," 8 October 1811,
of the government the Queen's son, the same Duke of Orleans who had recently been removed from Spain.

News of the coup in Sicily reached London just in time to be included in the charges and counter-charges which enlivened Wellesley's final weeks as Foreign secretary. Perceval roundly condemned Wellesley for pursuing a policy which the cabinet could never have brought itself to condone. For his part Wellesley was all too glad to take responsibility for the event. As late as 1814 he boasted that the changes in Sicily were his measures; "he spoke of them with vanity." Perceval, nonetheless, condemned him for his failure to grasp "the difference between a friendly interference . . . for a salutary object [such as Wellesley advocated in Spain] and the secret intrigues or open violence of the French." Wellesley had stooped to the techniques of the enemy in his efforts to defeat Napoleon, or so Perceval implied.

Wellesley was unlikely to have found in this anything but a compliment to his own resourcefulness, imagination, and skill in choosing as his amanuensis Lord William Bentinck. He also had the satisfaction subsequently of hearing

BM, Wellesley MSS 37293, ff. 139-40.


357 Shawe, memorandum, January 1614, printed in Wellington,
from Amherst and others that his was the correct policy for Sicily. By resigning, Amherst observed, Wellesley had sacrificed a program which would eventually have benefitted Sicily enormously. Bentinck agreed with Amherst.

Just prior to his exit from office, therefore, Wellesley could assure his country that Sicily was safe in British hands. Bentinck's work in stimulating liberal policies in Italy later entered into the mythology of the Italian reform movement. The British constitution became an ideal in Italian political experimentation. For the remainder of the war Sicily served as a British base against French forces in Italy, and as a key to the command of the Mediterranean. But for Wellesley it remained subordinate to the larger strategy of defeating Napoleon. It was for him an intermediate base between Spain at the west end of the Mediterranean and Turkey at the east.

XIII: Cultivating Friends in Europe

British occupation of Sicily reduced the danger posed by Napoleon's schemes to partition to Ottoman empire. By the

Supplementary, VII, 265-66.

358 Rosselli, Bentinck, p. 25; Acton, Bourbons, pp. 583-88; Amherst to Bentinck, 15 March 1812, Rosselli, Bentinck, p. 182.

359 Bentinck to Wellesley, 7 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37293, f. 238.
time Wellesley entered office in 1809 Britain had restored friendly relations with the Porte. It was, at this time, the only European nation still not involved in the great war, and thus one of the few substantial markets for British goods to be found on the continent. Many British products seeped into central Europe and even into France via Constantinople. The Porte was, however, at war with Russia. In the immediate aftermath of the treaty of Tilsit Russian conquest of Constantinople seemed feasible, even likely. The French promised assistance to Russia. British control of Sicily interposed a serious obstacle to Napoleon's efforts to assist Russia, and with its empire made relatively secure on other fronts the Turks steadied in resisting Russian advances. As Russia became increasingly disillusioned with Napoleon prospects for peace on the Dardanelles improved. As early as 1808 the British envoy in Constantinople attempted to arrange a settlement of the Russo-Turkish war. The British even contemplated ceding to Turkey a West Indian island. Nothing resulted except that Turkey seemed to appreciate Britain's demonstration of good will.

In 1808 Canning despatched his young cousin Stratford Canning to Constantinople to assist the incumbent minister plenipotentiary Adair. Adair succumbed to illness in 1810.

360 Rose, "Contest," pp. 380-381.
and young Canning, now twenty-four, assumed control. Wellesley's neglect, the Porte's remoteness, and the young minister's resourcefulness soon contributed mightily to the fame of the man and the mission at the Sublime Porte. Wellesley's apparent inattention to Canning's efforts complicated efforts to bring Levantine, Russian and Austrian policies into sharper focus. 361 But Wellesley was so satisfied with his work that later he took pride in the policy conducted towards the Sultan during this period. 362

At the end of his tenure Wellesley did decide to send a special envoy to Constantinople to help in settling Russia's problems with the Porte. The gentleman selected for the mission was Robert Wilson, and Wellesley granted him broad authority to negotiate an armistice and alliance in a commission dated December 1811. Perceval heard of the mission and read the very vague written instructions just before Wilson was scheduled to depart. Wilson's mission became a casualty of the January 1812 crisis, and Wellesley's cavalier treatment of his colleagues on this occasion contributed its share to the cabinet's unhappiness with Wellesley.

Later on others would carry out Wilson's mission as


362 Lady Stanhope to Wellesley, 29 August 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 77.
fashioned by Wellesley, and the instructions, vague as they
indeed were, proved significant. They capped Wellesley's
intensive interest in Russia and in the Mediterranean, an
interest which was especially obvious during the summer and
autumn of 1811. They reflected as well the infectious
enthusiasm and considerable skill of that Pozzo di Borgo,
reputed to be "the cleverest man in Europe."363 Among
Wellesley's final efforts as Foreign secretary was a plan for
undermining in dramatic fashion the Franco-Russian alliance.
This led directly to Napoleon's march on Moscow.

Wellesley's correspondence reveals only a limited
interest in Russia prior to 1811. There was little news
from Britain's informal representatives in St. Petersburg,
and Wellesley was even more neglectful than usual in reading
what they sent. After Tilsit formal diplomatic relations
were severed for some four years. But Wellesley's "notes
on the General State of Europe," written in May 1811, betray
a high level of interest in and knowledge of Russia. He
predicted that Russia was already moving to resist Napoleon
and talked in some detail about Russo-Turkish relations. He
invited Wellington to prepare a contingency plan to aid

363 Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, Buckingham,
Regency, I, 125; Wellesley, Minute of Conversation with
Edward Thornton, 14 September 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37293,
f. 107.
He was also eager to prevent Russia from going to war prematurely.

In September Wellesley told a special British envoy to Sweden that he enjoyed a "perfect reliance" on the accuracy of information he was receiving from Russia which pointed to a rupture with Napoleon. This prediction of course soon proved correct. What were his sources? One was the ever-present Pozzo di Borgo, who had been in Russia at the moment Tilsit was signed. His information may have been somewhat dated, however, unless Wellesley continued to receive information from agents within the empire. More useful perhaps was one Barclay de Tolly, a Prussian and considered "one of the most able men in Europe." In 1811 he was engaged in preparing Russian armies to meet an expected Napoleonic onslaught. In September of that year the Grenville correspondence quotes one of Wellesley's followers as insisting that de Tolly had been appointed informal intermediary between St. Petersburg and London. This probably referred to a single mission, for his movements inevitably attracted French attention and gave


366Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, Buckingham, Regency, I, 123.
France an excuse to accuse Russia with violations of the Tilsit agreement. Later the Tsar's "accredited agent" in London seems to have been a frequent visitor to court and sometime companion to Wellesley.

The great drama in the east was about to unfold when Wellesley left office. In those last weeks he persuaded Perceval to send military supplies to Russia. Perhaps inevitably Perceval insisted that these supplies be shipped in British bottoms to reduce costs. As Wellesley predicted, the Russians felt obliged to return the ships because the bottoms represented a violation of the continental system at a moment when Russia was not yet prepared for war. This was perhaps the final clash between Wellesley and the Prime minister before he left office.

Connected to Russia's fortunes of course was the fate of both Prussia and Austria. They featured relatively infrequently in Wellesley's plans for Europe, for neither fit comfortably into his strategy of attacking Napoleon at the extremities of his power. Nor was naval power of much use. Wellesley seems to have entertained a generally low opinion of Austrian military competence and the timing of its several attempts to re-enter the war against France. Austria's

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367 Buckingham, Regency, I, 196-98.
representative in London, Fredrick von Gentz, was no admirer of the incumbent Foreign secretary. He complained of Wellesley's imperious attitude, which was compounded by the alleged incompetence of Charles Culling Smith, who was "hardly endowed with an eagle eye for continental politics."\(^{368}\) With a certain meanness which suggests an intense animosity, Wellesley at one point refused to honour Gentz's applications for funds to meet his London expenses. Wellesley applied the same principle on a larger scale: he thought at one point that Austria should be written off as an ally.\(^{369}\) Gentz warmed up to Wellesley momentarily when Wellesley refused to think of peace with France after Austria was knocked out of the war for the third time in early 1810. But Gentz was not unhappy to see Wellesley resign his office.

Part of the reason for Gentz's ill-humor may have been Wellesley's preference for the Hanoverian counts Munster and Hardenberg. Hardenberg was familiar with the Austrian scene and provided Wellesley with accurate information on Viennese affairs. Much was trivial, but it was through Hardenberg, for instance, that Wellesley determined to his satisfaction that the marriage of Marie Louise of Austria to Napoleon only increased Austrian hatred of the

\(^{368}\) Buckland, Gentz, p. 7.

\(^{369}\) Ibid., p. 12.
French. He was also advised that Austria would remain neutral in the event of war between Russia and France, but would fight France if Russia could contain Napoleon.  

In 1810 Wellesley also selected his own emissary in an attempt to establish direct contact with Metternich. The unofficial envoy, John Harcourt King, was the sixth son of an Irish peer, Earl Kingston. He had lived in Austria since 1801. "Young and not necessarily placid," he knew the Austrian scene and his long residence was thought to provide the cover necessary for undertaking the delicate assignment of courier of secret information. He was burdened with a long set of instructions, the gist of which added up to an effort to restore the connection sundered as the result of the Franco-Austrian treaty of Amiens the preceding spring. King did not reach Vienna until August 1811, travelling via Constantinople after stopping in Cadiz to discuss a project for employing Austrian officers now out of work. King was not particularly able; perhaps the ability of his constitution to withstand a two-month sojourn in the wilds of Bosnia for

370 Count Munster to Wellesley, 13 January 1810, 24 March 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37290, ff. 77, 280.
372 Buckland, Metternich, pp. 261-334.
appearances' sake was important. At any rate he was scarcely in place when Wellesley resigned, so that except through the discreet and reliable Hardenberg there was no communication between Metternich and Wellesley for virtually the entire duration of Wellesley's tenure of office. For Wellesley Austria was not of sufficient account even to appear in his periodic private memoranda on the state of Europe.

Prussia did earn honourable mention in Wellesley's estimate. Hardenberg's knowledge of Prussian affairs was even more comprehensive than his familiarity with Austria. This was especially true in 1811, when his cousin Karl August Hardenberg became the Prussian Foreign secretary. The information relayed from Prussia must have been extraordinarily accurate. Wellesley knew in some detail of Napoleon's pressure on Prussia to enter an alliance with France in 1811, of Prussia's apparent willingness to do so, and of its secret resolve to continue preparing for war. For his part Wellesley was eager not to push Prussia into a premature rupture with Napoleon. So accurate was his information, moreover, that Wellesley was able to maintain with some confidence that France eventually would face the

373 Ibid.
374 Buckland, Metternich, pp. 266-75.
prospect of war with Prussia. In February 1812 the break between Prussia and France materialised; in Wellesley's reports Prussia had recovered from her "deplorable condition" of early 1811 and was prepared thenceforth to play her part in defeating Napoleon.

By focusing on those nations which might constitute an armed alliance against France and its satelites Wellesley closed his period of service having had some satisfaction in seeing the frailest part of the strategy of encirclement, the northern tier, considerably strengthened. In August 1811 Wellesley was able to persuade Perceval to support a move to induce Sweden to sign preliminaries of peace and thus end the state of war with Britain forced on Sweden by France. Negotiations were conducted with such secrecy that Wellesley failed to keep the cabinet apprised of them, and he enlightened Perceval almost as an afterthought. With Britain and Russia still technically at war, Wellesley's natural inclination to secrecy could be justified to some degree. A Swedish


377 Perceval to Wellesley, 9 August 1811, Perceval MSS, quoted in Aspinall and Smith, English, p. 98.

378 Gray, Perceval, p. 275.
agent disguised as a commercial negotiator reached London in August. He brought news that Sweden would request British assistance in the event of a rupture with France. Wellesley pledged ships but no money. He asked Rehausen, the agent, how Sweden would respond to a break in relations between Russia and France or Prussia and France. Rehausen said that Sweden would at least remain neutral, and Wellesley appeared quite satisfied. He warned Rehausen that events were likely to move at a faster pace during the following months, and said that Edward Thornton with a fleet would soon be sent into the Baltic to reestablish Britain's presence there. His more general advice, which he shared with Rehausen, was that the northern powers should prepare for but not precipitate war with France. It would serve the British effort in Spain to see French armies drawn north but if Sweden were unprepared, the debacle would intensify Britain's problems.

During the autumn Wellesley worked diligently on the Swedish issue. Restoring normal relations with that nation became an important objective of his final months' work. His assistants swore that Wellesley surrendered the prospect of holidays in order to see these negotiations completed, and his own despatches confirm this impression. On

17 September he prepared lengthy instructions for Thornton. He urged Thornton to reject a Swedish attempt to obtain an agreement with Britain which would permit Sweden to retain Norway. Wellesley in addition was far from certain that the adopted Crown Prince Bernadotte was as free of Napoleon's influence as he claimed, although he conceded that this posture might help Bernadotte increase his popularity in Sweden. He did not want Norwegian ports falling into Napoleon's hands if Bernadotte in the final analysis proved to harbour enduring French sympathies. 380

A month was spent preparing the fleet. Wellesley produced even more intricate instructions for Thornton's edification. He was again urged to negotiate an immediate cessation to the war, but to avoid promising subsidies or sanctifying Sweden's territorial ambitions. Britain was, Wellesley promised, prepared to defray the costs incurred by British ships seeking winter haven in Swedish waters and Sweden's expenses if its navy was deployed to patrol the Pomeranian coast. 381 Wellesley was reluctant to go further; he did not authorise Thornton to give Sweden assurances of protection if it chose to fight France. In the event,

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Britain's reluctance here sufficed to convince Sweden not to move precipitously. Wellesley turned the delay to good account; it guaranteed, he maintained, that Sweden would in fact be fully prepared for war when it at length determined to challenge France. 382

Spain, Sicily, Turkey, Russia and Sweden: these were the principle elements of Wellesley's European policy to contain Napoleonic Europe. They commanded most of his energies as Foreign secretary, and each was accorded a place in his list of priorities. The larger impression is one of confidence, foresight, and command of the intricacies of European politics. We are assured that when despatches related to these countries reached his desk he wasted no time in reading them. 383 By this measurement the boxes of unread files which drew the loud complaints from anyone who visited the Foreign office must have concerned events in places of lesser importance. It is more likely that Wellesley neglected some important material as well. But his analyses of the European scene during his period of office shows a consistently high level of familiarity with major developments and an uncanny

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ability to predict future trends. As a result he left office on the edge of the most exciting adventure in British foreign policy since that of William Pitt the Elder in the early 1760s. In some respects Castlereagh reaped what Wellesley had sown; the encirclement of Napoleonic Europe came to pass as Wellesley predicted.

XIV: Aborted Negotiations

Wellesley also attempted on several occasions to treat with Napoleon directly. There was no grand strategy here, only a series of attempts to establish communication with Napoleon, to read his mind if possible, and to determine if conditions were propitious for negotiations. These affairs have played a disproportionate role in historians' estimates of Wellesley's term as Foreign secretary. They tend to cast Wellesley in the role of madcap adventurer eager to find a spectacular solution which would ensure fame. In fact they constituted a small enough portion of his efforts. They did, however, reveal a willingness to depart from conventional practices to achieve unconventional results. They excited much mirth and some consternation among his colleagues. They were, nonetheless, Britain's only direct contacts with the emperor during what was the high tide of Napoleonic France.

Wellesley had been Foreign secretary for only a month
when there appeared before him one François Fagan, formerly an officer in the French army. Fagan's background has been the subject of considerable speculation, with theories ranging from one which sees him as Hyacinthe's brother to others which hold that he was one of Wellesley's cousins. At any rate it seems clear that Fagan's relatives had served under Wellesley in India. Joseph Fouché, Duc d'Otrante, Napoleon's colourful and enigmatic minister of Police, sent Fagan to London in early January 1810 and he had no difficulty in securing an interview with Wellesley at the end of the month. The offer he purported to bring from Napoleon included a willingness to negotiate with Britain on the general principle of conceding primary control of the continent to Napoleon, seizing the United States for Britain, and removing the incarcerated King Ferdinand to South America. Wellesley was certain that the new ministry of which he was a member would insist that any negotiations be based on the principle of independence for Spain and the Netherlands. The latter at the moment was threatened with an invasion, for its Napoleonic

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384 Butler, Eldest, p. 443.
386 Kaufmann, British, p. 47.
sovereign, Louis, had been called to Paris to explain Dutch efforts to defy the continental system. Louis was told that short of a virtual surrender of all pretence to sovereignty it would be necessary to invade and annex the country.

Fagan returned to France in March with Wellesley's assurances that his government would entertain any proposals the French chose to put forward. Meanwhile, Fouche sent to London on an independent mission a prominent Dutch banker Pierre Céler Labouchère. Labouchère was married to a daughter of William Baring, a member of the court of directors of the East India company and one of Wellesley's creditors. Labouchère reached London 6 February, met Baring on 7 February, and produced letters authorising him to represent the Dutch council of ministers. The documents seemed to verify what Wellesley had already suspected: that the initiative came not from Napoleon Bonaparte but from his brother Louis. Labouchère met with Wellesley the same day. Wellesley observed that Labouchère's proposals were more threatening because the plan to subjugate the Netherlands to France was clearer. He repeated to Labouchère what he had said to Fagan: Britain was willing to negotiate. He added that Britain could not be coerced into surrendering its bargaining advantages because of the threat against the
Fagan returned to London at the end of March, again apparently quite independently of Labouchere. Labouchere himself was given revised instructions 6 April. Napoleon instructed Labouchere, according to Fouche, to concede to the British paramountcy in Malta, Sicily, Naples, the Ionian provinces, the Hanseatic towns, Holland, Portugal, and most Spanish colonies. France would respect British economic influence in the United States, and Ferdinand would preside as King over Spanish American territories from his capital in Mexico. Britain in turn was to recognise the Napoleonic dynasty in Spain, rescind its orders in council, and recognise French preeminence along the Rhine.

Meanwhile Napoleon proceeded to make explicit his threats to annex the Netherlands, recall Louis, and authorise permanent military occupation of Dutch cities. When he was informed of the failure of the first round of Labouchere's negotiations he ordered preparations made for annexation of lands as far north as the Rhine, but delayed implementation until March. By the time Labouchere reached London the

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387 Cole, Fouche, p. 194.
second time the occupation of the Netherlands had taken place. Baring wrote from the continent that he had been assured that Napoleon's desire to negotiate and to hear of British counter-proposals continued unabated. If the orders in council were withdrawn French troops would immediately quit Holland and perhaps the Hanseatic towns as well. Labouchere sugared the demands by observing that Napoleon was now prepared "to replace the system of conquests by a system of consolidation of power." He added, on the basis of some unauthorised comments volunteered by Fouché, that Napoleon's waxing generosity was motivated by his desire to celebrate his marriage to the Austrian Princess Louise. Baring immediately passed the letter to Wellesley, who replied on 8 May to Baring that he saw "no advantage" in receiving an emissary who had not apparently been in direct contact with Napoleon, and whose terms were based on the fait accompli in Holland. However, if Napoleon would send a representative empowered with clear authority to negotiate he would not be turned away. 390

The concessions which Labouchere assured Baring that Napoleon was willing to make were substantial enough to excite suspicion. They differed so sharply in tenor from Fagan's proposals for Napoleon to have a free hand on the

390 Coquelle, Napoleon, p. 208.
continent that Wellesley at length sought Canning's advice. He did not, however, see fit to lay them before the cabinet. At first Canning agreed with Wellesley that Labouchère's proposals appeared to be genuine; but in the middle of May both Wellesley and Canning began to suspect a hoax. They were rescued from the need to prove this by Napoleon's own intervention. The inspiration for all of Labouchère's proposals, Napoleon learned to his great distress, was none other than Fouche, who incorporated into Labouchère's instructions what he considered to be Napoleon's priorities and into Fagan's messages what he was sure would satisfy Louis Napoleon and save his throne. Fouche has apparently also convinced Louis that he was authorised to negotiate on his master's behalf. Not until May, when Napoleon went to Breda in the Netherlands and there resolved to negotiate with Britain did he realise that two series of missions had already been despatched in his name.  

In London Wellesley was quietly ridiculed for having been deceived by the craftly French minister of Police.  

As a result, further French overtures of a more genuine nature were treated in London as simply so many tricks.

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391 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 100.  
393 Rose, "Contest," p. 375.
Only one project, based on Napoleon's offer to exchange an equal number of English and French prisoners and to ransom another 30,000 then in British hands, was treated seriously. Even here, Wellesley felt obliged to stiffen the terms and Napoleon thereupon lost interest.\textsuperscript{394}

No further major negotiating efforts took place during Wellesley's period in office. He had been criticised for having treated the missives of the adventurer Fagan and the banker Labouchere with such apparent gravity. In fact, his conduct seems to have been appropriate. There was no persuasive evidence until May that one or both of the negotiators were not representing Napoleon. The improbability of someone as high-ranking as Fouché acting on his own initiative still provides grist for writers of historical mystery stories. Wellesley had little to lose by treating the proposals as worthy of further examination, and he was careful enough to demand on Labouchere's second trip that he produce incontestable evidence of Napoleon's support before negotiations proceed further. It is perhaps unfortunate that Wellesley chose to seek Canning's counsel rather than that of the cabinet. The cabinet would not have been more likely to see the fraudulent nature of the proposals than was

\textsuperscript{394}Coquelle, \textit{Napoleon}, pp. 237-64.
either Canning or Wellesley, but it would have removed any opportunity for them to make merry in Wellesley's predicament. This type of assault on Wellesley's tender pretensions insured that he would be more cautious subsequently; perhaps he was too circumspect on some occasions, such as the prisoner exchange proposal.

XV: The United States

One point which Britain did gain from the Fouche-Labouchere initiatives was some indication that British retaliation for Napoleon's establishment of the continental system to exclude British trade had hurt the French economy. The primary third party affected by British and French efforts to deny each other access to neutral nations' markets was the United States. Wellesley's policy towards the new republic has been almost completely misjudged by students of diplomatic history. Wellesley was unsympathetic to the American political system; but he was strongly impressed by the American economic achievement, and he was slower than many of his colleagues to suggest that the United States would either fail utterly to make its way in the world or even disintegrate entirely. By temperament he was disinclined to support those schemes for American territorial dismemberment which many of his predecessors had found so fas-
cinating. He was angered during his service in India to discover that American bottoms carried more of India's trade than did the British, and this observation was his primary motivation for attempts to destroy the monopoly exercised by the East India company over British shipping.

Wellesley's library reflected no interest at all in American domestic affairs, but while Foreign secretary he demonstrated a better command of what motivated the leaders of the young republic than any of his colleagues. His alienation from the cabinet was particularly unfortunate on this score. He came into office burdened with a series of British regulations restricting the flow of European trade, most of them designed to challenge directly American efforts to engage as neutrals in commerce as they saw fit. The United States in turn had established its own retaliatory restrictions. For Wellesley, therefore, it was not a question of implementing a new policy, as in Sicily, or pursuing an agreeable one already in place, as in Spain. In order to dismantle the system of restrictions in force he must first obtain the approval of the cabinet, and this he proved unable to do.

Wellesley inherited the shambles of an American policy which included the explosive impressment issue. This led to the boarding of American ships under the questionable logic that
international law permitted a belligerent to recover its own goods (that is, British-born seamen).395 More complicated yet was the issue of maritime rights. In 1793 Britain revived its rule of 1756, which it considered to be nothing more than the civilised expression of the law of war on the subject. This formula held that neutrals could not carry belligerents' goods from colonies to the mother country and back. A treaty with the United States in 1795 secured for American shipping some relaxation of the rule, but in British eyes this was based on comity rather than right. By 1800 the principle that "free ships make free goods" had aroused Americans to anger against the British, who were best equipped to challenge the idea. By 1806 Jefferson considered the United States strong enough to vindicate the principle. He suggested that in return for enjoying the privilege of exporting its manufacturers to and importing raw materials from the United States Britain concede to France the right to use American ships to transport its goods on the high seas. Neither France nor Britain saw much advantage in this. By the time an American delegation reached London in April 1806 with instructions to negotiate an amicable settlement, the two combatants were rapidly

395 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 104.
escalating their economic war. Britain declared that the entire coast from the Elbe to Brest was barred by blockade to neutral trade. In November Napoleon imposed a similar interdict on all British possessions (the Berlin decrees). Britain thereupon announced a blockade of the entire French empire and of France's allies. In December 1807 by the Milan decrees Napoleon proclaimed all Europe off limits to any trade which stopped first at British ports. Britain in turn banned even trade in non-belligerent goods in neutral bottoms unless ships first touched at British ports and paid British customs duties. Meanwhile the United States attempted to punish France and Britain alike by passing a non-intercourse act.

For American negotiators Wellesley was a welcome change from Canning. Canning's tone as reflected in his correspondence, conceded little to American sensibilities. He believed that the United States would respond to force. His decision to overturn a trade treaty drafted in Washington by the British minister Erskine added insult to injury. Charles Pinckney, American ambassador at the court of St. James, half-believed Wellesley's blandishments, and indeed Wellesley opposed British maritime restrictions against the

United States. But Wellesley was in no mood to bow to French wishes that Britain concede its real maritime advantages, and there the possibility of settlement ended. Wellesley hoped, as did the Americans, that Napoleon could be induced to dismantle his continental blockade; a resumption of active trade would help Britain obtain revenues needed to finance the war against Napoleon. War against the United States, on the other hand, would further dilute resources available for the Iberian peninsula. In all this Wellesley was well out in front of his cabinet colleagues, to whom the hoary principles of belligerents' privileges in war were far more important than the somewhat hypothetical rights reserved to neutrals.

A new effort to meet American grievances began, however, as soon as Wellesley entered office. In January 1810 the King's speech, which Wellesley helped to write, adopted a conciliatory approach. Wellesley also agreed to a request from Pinckney that the British minister Francis James Jackson be recalled. Jackson had behaved in extraordinary fashion, travelling through the American states and Canada advertising the perfidy of Americans. Wellesley did not actually send the orders to Jackson recalling him until April, and Jackson did not depart until September. Americans interpreted this delay, which was probably bureaucratic rather than malicious,
as a sign of bad faith. 397

Wellesley meanwhile pressed the cabinet to change its policy towards the Erskine agreement and to concede the Whigs' demand for an inspection of the relevant papers. 398 In this he succeeded. 399 He also instructed Jackson's successor in Washington to permit fifty American ships to supply grain to Spain and Portugal. 400 Pinckney concluded that it might be possible to work with Wellesley towards an amicable settlement of grievances.

During April and May Pinckney and Wellesley worked in harness to prepare for more formal and comprehensive negotiations on Anglo-American grievances. Pinckney was happy to be able to tell Wellesley that his government had dropped its demand that Admiral Berkeley be punished for having authorised the boarding of the American frigate


398 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 103-205.

399 1 Hansard XV (1 February 1810), 266.

400 Wellesley to Morier, 18 February 1811, PRO, Foreign
Chesapeake in 1807. On 14 May Napoleon published a decree from Rambouillet declaring that all American vessels which had entered France's area of control after 23 March were subject to confiscation. This led to the seizure of some ten million dollars' worth of American shipping in May alone. On the face of it this would seem to have provided more than enough incentive for Pinckney and Wellesley to proceed with negotiations in London, and there has long been speculation why so little happened. The principal problem was almost certainly the refusal of the cabinet to countenance any easing of orders in council without simultaneous concessions by the French. Some correspondence in the Grenville papers dated late April 1810 suggests that Wellesley initially was hopeful that American concessions on the Chesapeake issue would predispose the cabinet to be more conciliatory in turn. On 30 April Pinckney asked Wellesley for a clarification of British maritime regulations in the wake of a French pledge to revoke the

Office MSS 115, f. 23; see W. Freeman Galpin, "The American Grain Trade to the Spanish Peninsula, 1810-1814," American Historical Review, XXVIII (October 1922), 24-44.


402 Ibid.

403 Dardis to Buckingham, 25 April 1810, Buckingham, Courts, II, 439.
decree if earlier British orders in council were also sus-
pended. 404 Wellesley refused to give any immediate answer, but it is clear that he worked through the summer in an effort to persuade the cabinet that France's pledge should be tested. 405 Wellesley may also have wanted to combine the new policy with satisfaction of Pinckney's request that Britain nominate a new minister "of rank" for Washing-
ton. 406 He implied in his conversations with Pinckney that his nominee was before the cabinet. His identity is not known, but it may have been someone on record as sympathetic to the American position. Nothing, however emanated from the cabinet.

In September Pinckney's patience gave way to reproaches. In a sharply-worded letter addressed to Wellesley on 21 September he pointed out that his repeated requests for a clarification of British intentions concerning the blockade had been ignored. Until Britain tested French promises by revoking the Brest to Elbe blockade and associated orders in

404 Pinckney to Wellesley, 30 April 1810, quoted in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 115.
405 Wellesley to Morier, 3 July 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 115, f. 20.
406 Pinckney to Smith, 14 August 1810; Wellesley to Pinckney, 22 July 1810; Pinckney to Smith, 29 August 1810, printed in United States, National Archives, Department of State, State and Public Documents of the United States, VIII, 440-43.
council there was no possibility that the United States would exempt Great Britain from the restrictions imposed in the non-intercourse act. 407

Napoleon, meanwhile, was demonstrating considerable skill in outfoxing the American ambassador in Paris. In August France announced that restrictions on American trade to the continent had been lifted. Wellesley replied to the announcement by noting that the French revocation was conditional on British reciprocity by November, and that this was therefore a prospective and not an immediate revocation. 408

Wellesley was correct. The French proceeded to lay a tariff on imports which effectively curtailed most trade to the continent. Nevertheless, on 2 November Madison announced officially in Washington that the French blockade had ended. Only a day later Pinckney finally answered Wellesley's late August letter taking issue with the prospective French promise to revoke the blockade. He provided evidence that France had proceeded to end the blockade and asserted that the British could no longer justify maintaining their own restrictions. He added that American ships were enroute to Europe and


408 Wellesley to Pinckney, 31 August 1810, Department of State, State, VII, 445.
that only an immediate British decision would avert confusion and disaster. 409

November and December proved to be particularly painful for Wellesley on the issue of Anglo-American relations. To Pinckney he was forced to take the high line that "after the most accurate inquiry" he could find no "authentic intelligence of the actual repeal of the French decrees." 410 Pinckney supplied what satisfied him was "authentic intelligence" on 10 December and noted that as a "practical observation American ships which had escaped the British blockade were being welcomed in French ports. 411 Wellesley then claimed to be sorry that Pinckney had found it necessary to interrupt "the conciliatory spirit" of Anglo-American relations by his testy letter of 10 December. 412 On 4 January 1811 Pinckney notified Wellesley of his intention to return to America because no progress had been made on the several issues outstanding. 413

409 Pinckney to Wellesley, 3 November 1810, Department of State, State, VIII, 9-10; also see PRO, Foreign Office MSS 95, f. 378, and Pearce, Memoirs, III, 108-205.

410 Wellesley to Pinckney, 4 December 1810, quoted in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 129.

411 Pinckney to Wellesley, 10 December 1810, quoted in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 130-45.

412 Wellesley to Pinckney, 29 December 1810, quoted in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 149-50.

413 Pinckney to Wellesley, 14 January 1811, Department of State, State, VIII, 148.
Wellesley made a last-ditch effort to purchase further time by promising immediate action on outstanding issues, but Pinckney would not be dissuaded. Pinckney took an "inamicable" leave of the Prince Regent on 28 February 1811.

The face Wellesley presented to Pinckney was far different from that which he showed to the cabinet. In December Wellesley prepared a memorandum which carefully and comprehensively outlined his attitude on the question of maritime rights. It reveals that his argument with Pinckney was made inevitable by the stand taken by the cabinet, and in opposition to his own recommendations. Wellesley observed in his paper that maritime power and the peninsular campaign constituted Britain's two most effective weapons against Napoleon. The orders in council, he held, were "legal," but the policy they reflected rested on expediency and not on natural right.

The principal question was whether the policy hurt French economic interests enough to balance Britain's trade losses and the danger of war with America. Wellesley did not think so. The continental system, moreover, was no more a violation of nations' rights than were Britain's maritime policies; Britain had no right to prevent freedom of maritime commerce.

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414 Wellesley to Pinckney, 29 December 1810, quoted in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 151; Ibid., 11 February 1811, Department of State, State, VIII, 149-50.
merely because of French legislation affecting areas under its control. Nor could the British complain if the United States wanted to trade with the French under those conditions. The French decision to follow a course of action repealing the Berlin decrees, albeit provisionally, required Britain to examine the merits of its own policy. If the orders in council were to continue, they must be based on some fundamental principle such as self-preservation. Britain could no longer contend that French policy prompted the British response. If self-preservation was involved, Britain should be prepared to go to war. Rather than defy American efforts to trade with the French, Wellesley continued, Britain should suspend the orders in council and replace them with new regulations less sweeping and more responsive to constant adjustments by France in its treatment of the United States. Unless this was done, Wellesley concluded, war with the United States was inevitable. 415

Although evidence is scanty, it is fair to assume that this was the case Wellesley presented on several occasions to the cabinet during this period. A letter from Bathurst to Wellesley written in September 1810 suggests however that the cabinet was strongly prejudiced against the American

democracy and dubious that the United States would resort to war whatever the provocation. The cabinet also seemed to believe that the Americans expected Britain to concede more than they could extract from the French. France's contingent revocation required Britain to renounce not only the coastal blockade but also its right to interdict belligerent cargoes in neutral bottoms. As mistress of the sea Britain stood to lose its principal lever against Napoleon. The pragmatic experimental approach advocated by Wellesley simply did not address itself to a generation of British statesmen bred to reverence of maritime supremacy. Wellesley, it must be assumed, was simply unable to convince the cabinet of the wisdom of a policy which would satisfy Pinckney on this point. In retrospect, no period in the decade of Anglo-American relations which preceded the declaration of war in 1812 offered as much promise as this one for some resolution of the vexatious question of maritime rights. Thereafter, Wellesley was fortunate to postpone the start of the conflict long enough so that the period of heaviest strain on British resources had begun to pass.

After 1810 Wellesley was pulled by events towards a

416 Bathurst to Wellesley, 13 September 1810, 3 January 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 21; 37295, f. 448.

417 Torrens, Marquess, p. 455.
more bellicose posture towards the United States. His correspondence reveals a gradual weakening of his moderating influence on the issue of the orders in council. After the departure of Pinckney, whom he seems to have been fond of, Wellesley's principal contact was Pinckney's lower-ranking replacement, Augustus Foster. Wellesley debated with him the minutest details of rights and law which underlay this controversy. Wellesley perhaps underestimated the danger of war and failed therefore to communicate the seriousness of the situation to the cabinet. For its part the cabinet seems to have paid almost no attention to the American issue while Wellesley remained in office. In September 1811 he thought he had devised a plan which would permit Britain to abandon the orders in council but obtain the same control over maritime commerce. For the rest, however, it was a year of tiresome formal correspondence, burdened by disputes over ships and cargoes and interrupted on occasion by protestations of a desire for peace.

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418 Wellesley to Augustus Foster, 10 April 1811, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 75, ff. 1-21.

419 Pinckney to Wellesley, 17 February 1811, quoted in Pearce, Memoirs, III, 158-59.

XVI: Spain in 1811

For Wellesley the success of the military effort in the peninsula held the key to any future ascendency over the cabinet. Arthur and Henry both continued to labour there, and the Spanish enterprise became ever more closely identified with the Wellesley family. Spain came to exert on Wellesley a pernicious influence; he became a "single issue" man. This reinforced his alienation from the Whigs and the Grenvillites. Unknown to him Wellington advanced his fortunes independently. As the Spanish policy slowly but inexorably became the vital forum for challenging Napoleon it began to attract other champions. Wellesley with his foibles and numerous enemies became something of an encumbrance. Had he remained in office throughout 1812 and into 1813 he would have been able to bask in the victories which British armies and Spain's own improved forces produced in the peninsula. But he did not. He resigned when the Spanish strategy had become too important to be his own preserve any longer, but when it was not yet sufficiently successful to sustain him when he needed support most.

By the end of 1810 new hopes and new failures could be added to the drama of the main threat to Napoleon's bid for European hegemony. The Junta had succumbed when Seville was surrendered, and the five member council of Regents had
soon adopted most of the Junta's policies and many of its defects. And finally, on 24 September 1810, the Spanish Cortes assembled for the first time in more than twenty years. Three days later Wellington defeated General Massena at Bussaro, the first allied victory since Talavera fourteen months earlier. The triumph was far from decisive, but it demonstrated that the Portuguese could fight, even if the Spanish could not.  

Wellington celebrated his victory by retreating behind the formidable lines of Torres Vedras for the winter.

Bussaro revived lagging enthusiasm for the war, but only temporarily. Wellesley was elated. "I entertain great confidence respecting Portugal," he exulted in a message to Perceval, "and if we should succeed, according to our real merits, in that quarter, a new and great scene may be expected to open in Europe." 422 The key was nationalism; beyond the wisdom of liberating Spain and Portugal themselves the peninsular campaign could be relied on to incite uprisings in the remainder of Europe. "The wisdom of maintaining the war in Spain and Portugal," he wrote after Bussaco, "has

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422 Wellesley to Perceval, 9 October 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295.
been fully proved by the shade it has cast on the military and political character of Bonaparte."\textsuperscript{423}

Wellesley's enthusiasm was communicated to his cabinet colleagues. In the days after Bussaco generous shipments of military stores made their way to Spain. In Spain the early proceedings of the Cortes impressed Henry Wellesley. Nonetheless, old feelings of despair and disenchantment soon reasserted themselves. Wellington's retreat after Bussaco revived sad memories of Talavera. Spain continued to press for more aid. The Cortes in the long run proved no more accommodating on the issue of colonial trade than had the Regency or Junta, and Wellesley was forced to make it clear that Britain would not assist Spain in efforts to bring the colonies to heel.

Wellesley's second winter as Foreign secretary was the darkest of the war. Despite his public protestations that through Spain lay the path to victory, in private he betrayed doubts. "If any statesman can point out to me the means of inducing either [Portugal or Spain] to attend reason, truth, or justice," he lamented to Canning's friend George Rose, "I shall be much obliged to him."\textsuperscript{424} For Wellington in Lisbon

\textsuperscript{423}Wellesley to Henry Wellesley, 8 December 1810, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 185, f. 18.

\textsuperscript{424}Rose, Diaries, II, 400.
the deprivations of the winter of 1810-1811 brought him perilously close to complete disenchantment. He complained of the cabinet, which did not appear to have "the power, or the inclination, or the nerves to do all that ought to be done to carry on the contest as it might be."\(^{425}\) Perceval's penchant for economy, leading him even to demand that Wellington return to England the boxes which were used to transport supplies to the peninsula, vexed Wellesley. "Unless the government will act upon a more vigorous system, and raise and realise a revenue from the country, which I am convinced they may do, the cause is gone." The people of Iberia intrigued the Marquess with their fierce hatred of the French and an equally pervasive indolence. "Can such a people be saved?" he asked, and, "are they worth saving?"\(^{426}\) Through the winter of 1811 it was far from clear that they could be salvaged, or should be.\(^{427}\)

In London Wellesley returned to the ancient theme of battling with the cabinet over questions of economy, and he vented his frustrations on his brothers in the peninsula.

\(^{425}\) *DNB*, XX, 1092.


\(^{427}\) Severn, "Wellesley," p. 391.
In January 1811 Henry innocently informed the Marquess that with £8 to £10 million and with Wellington confirmed as head of all allied armies in Spain the French could be defeated in a single campaign. Until Wellington moved out of his winter quarters near Lisbon, however, Perceval was indisposed to grant any amount approximating Henry's request. Wellesley informed Henry, therefore, that Spain must come to terms with its own deficiencies and do something about them. Knowing that this advice would produce nothing but gratuitous insults in return, Wellesley also instructed Henry, and without cabinet approval, that the Regency should be pressed to concede control of Spanish provinces near the Portuguese frontier to Wellington.

Suddenly in February and March 1811 the landscape of the war was brightened by virtue of Wellington's successful effort to dislodge Massena from Portugal. On 16 May 1811 allied forces defeated a French corps commanded by Marshall Soult. Although unable to maneuver, Spanish troops stood and fought for perhaps the first time. The victory was a costly one, but Spanish morale rose sharply, perhaps too much so. The British were gratified to see that the Spanish would

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429 Wellesley to Henry Wellesley, 18 April 1811, BM, Additional MSS 49980, ff. 9-10.
fight, even if they were unhappy at Spanish attempts to take full credit for the victory.

In parliament Earl Grey, long Wellington's bitterest opponent, threw off the influence of his advisor of long-standing, Robert Wilson, and on 11 May praised Wellington for his success in emancipating Portugal. Wellesley meanwhile "forced upon the cabinet a pretty decisive measure" in support of Portugal, including an increase in revenues of more than £1 million. The calibre of Spanish forces remained sadly deficient, but where in the past it would


431 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 7 March 1811, Fortescue MSS, X, 125. As Wellesley saw it, this was the time to augment British efforts dramatically:

With respect to the ultimate result of the proposed system, the advantages which it holds forth to England, if successful, are equally manifest and important. It will rescue the peninsula and its colonies from the dominion of France; it will place the Peninsula and its colonies, from a natural union of interest, under the influence of Great Britain; it will relieve the extensive country, full of resource military, naval and commercial, possessing the richest and most extensive colonies in the world, from an oppressive government, and establish in its room a government of well-tempered liberty, formed upon the model of our own constitution; it will secure to us a great and efficient ally on the very border of France, and will enable us to impose a stronger restraint upon France than was ever before in our power. Such are the probable results of the system, if it be admitted that it be carried into effect.

1 Wellesley, notes on the state of Europe, 15 May 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 37292.
have acted to discourage further British military investment, it now underscored Wellington's contention that he could do much with further funds for financing British training of Spanish troops.

By the end of May Wellington was at last receiving supplies in the scope and quality he had long asked for. Perceval's new financial liberalism also released more money to Spain itself. Some of it went to the Cortes as simple bribes to secure approval for British officers to assume training responsibilities in the Spanish army. Another amount was applied, unsuccessfully, to secure a favourable trade treaty. But most went to supply those provincial units which had already demonstrated a capacity to fight.432

In homage to his India days Wellesley kept the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro happy with presents and kind words to balance the prospect that now that Portugal was permanently free from French troops the British might be equally difficult to dislodge.433 Wellington would have preferred that more attention instead had been devoted to his own commissariat


433 Torrens, Marquis, pp. 454-55.
in Lisbon, but suddenly there was enough money to finance a multitude of projects and even to suffer Iberian inefficiency.\textsuperscript{434}

Wellesley made substantial progress of his own in terms of Britain's relationship to Spain's increasingly rebellious colonies. In 1810 he had impressed upon Spain the dangers she faced by failing to meet the legitimate claims of the colonies, both in terms of political autonomy and economic freedom. As Wellington's successes reduced British dependence on Spanish assistance, Wellesley felt more inclined to negotiate directly with the colonies. More and more of Spain's possessions were going their own ways. Chile and New Granada (Colombia) proceeded to declare their independence. Mexico was in a state of turmoil, and only the decisive policies of its resourceful governor kept it loyal to Spain.\textsuperscript{435} The colonies intensified their appeals for money, arms, naval support and public recognition. On 4 May 1811, therefore, Wellesley proclaimed that Britain's earlier resolution not to intervene to suppress indigenous nationalist movements in Venezuela was now applicable to all Spanish colonies.\textsuperscript{436}

\textsuperscript{434}Col. Gordon to Huskisson, 4 July 1811, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 83-84.

\textsuperscript{435}Wellesley to Henry Wellesley, 12 May 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 49980.

\textsuperscript{436}Robertson, "Beginnings," p. 248.
It was necessary to keep the colonies out of French hands; Spain must be willing to make timely and substantial concessions.

On 11 May Wellesley offered direct British mediation and a British guarantee for any final settlement of the colonial problem.437 His plan called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, including blockades, a general amnesty, confirmation by the cortes of full, fair and free colonial representation, free trade with some restrictions, colonial allegiance to the crown confirmed; colonial aid to Spain during the war; colonies' recognition of the supremacy of the Cortes in empire-wide matters; and British participation as guarantor of good behaviour.438 The Pope approved of the plan, and the Regency reluctantly approved it as well. The Cortes did not. The Cortes offered certain concessions to the colonists and freedom for the British to trade in the empire's ports while talks were in progress. Henry Wellesley rejected these terms on 1 July.

In September events took an even more unnerving turn. Commercial interests in Cadiz offered to finance an ex-


438 Wellesley to Henry Wellesley, 12 May 1811, BM, Wellesley MSS 49980, and PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 108.
petition of 4,000 men to Mexico, 2,000 to Caracas, and 2,000 to Buenos Aires. Henry initially did not take the offer very seriously, but on 19 September he learned that the Regents indeed planned to despatch the troops. Henry protested that such an expedition contravened British mediation efforts; the Regency replied blandly that no mediation effort was yet underway and that Spain could not continue the war without the full support of the colonies. More galling yet, it soon transpired that the ships and troops selected for the expedition had recently been outfitted and trained at British expense.

In London Wellesley determined to take the initiative to block the expedition. On 1 October he appointed three commissioners of mediation. He resigned, however, before further measures were called for. By the end of the year Britain could take some comfort in the knowledge that it had secured much of what the nation wanted in terms of trade privileges from the colonies.

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439 Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 28 October 1811, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 114.

440 Wellington to Henry Wellesley, 30 September 1811, printed in Wellington, Despatches, V, 345.

skills in navigating the difficult course of defending metropolitan Spain while directly facilitating the independence of the colonies were tested as soon as he entered office.

Wellington did not disappoint expectations at home that Britain could destroy Napoleon through the effort in Spain. With becoming modesty Wellesley claimed that Spanish operations alone would not destroy France but that pressure applied at that point would permit Russia and Prussia to rearm and to rejoin the war. Eventually even Austria was to be able to contribute its share. Wellesley's friends reported to Buckingham that every communication from Russia and Prussia agreed that British efforts in Spain "had been the salvation of Europe for these last two years." Perceval continued to raise problems in the cabinet. Wellesley exaggerated them in order to support his application to the Regent for the right to form a new government. He told the Prince Regent's intimates that while "more than enough has been done for the defence of Portugal" not enough had been done to enable Wellington "to act offensively and


444 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 21 August 1811, 25 August 1811; Grey to Grenville, 1 September 1811, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 164-68.
with vigor in Spain - enough to make a languid defensive war, unpopular at home, and ruinous to our finances," but not enough to make it popular and to justify the cost.  

He blamed the cabinet.

But as winter approached in 1811 Wellington broke with his pattern of autumn retreats. He offered Britain several victories. Wellesley was elated: "it was his sanguine belief that the face of Europe was about to undergo the most material change for the better, and all brought about by his counsels."  

But the immediate result of this little prosperity was to produce a Wellesley more famous than the Marquess. Wellington was created earl in February 1812 for his brilliant victory at Ciudad Rodrigo, and became a marquess with the sum of £100,000 as endowment the following summer.  

The very basis for Wellesley's application to the Regent for assistance in overthrowing Perceval and his cautious friends was dimmed at the moment the end of the restricted Regency approached and when the Regent was expected to make

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445 As reported by Canning to Bagot, 18 September 1811, printed in Bagot, Canning, I, 377-78. Henry was even more insistent: ". . . If the war . . . is shortened by one campaign only, it will repay the whole sum. . . .": Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 15 June 1811, PRO, Foreign Office MSS 72, f. 111.

446 Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, printed in Torrens, Marquess, pp. 458-59.

bold changes for the good of the country and the benefit of his friends.

XVIII: Assessment

Wellesley's contributions as Foreign secretary have been accorded a brief and unfavourable treatment in most quarters. Nestled between Canning and Castlereagh, and painted in the correspondence of his cabinet colleagues as a most unattractive fellow, this is perhaps inevitable. His failure as manager of the Foreign office bureaucracy has already been noted; perhaps it has been overstressed in some quarters. 448 His fruitless efforts to put Canning in the cabinet testify to his misplaced energies, insensitivity to his colleagues, and a general unfortunate air of superiority. In few respects can it be said that Wellesley fulfilled the high expectations which the world attached to the great ruler of British India. He has been called a cypher. The reason is obvious: under his direction the war against Napoleon was neither lost nor won. There was little spectacular movement in diplomacy or on the field of battle. He was his worst enemy in negotiations, for he formed and continued to hold a low opinion of almost everyone he

448 Hardenberg to Munster, 6 August 1812, quoted in Buckland, Metternich, p. 70.
But a case has been made in one or two quarters that Wellesley's lassitude was due in good part to frustration at the ineptitude or lack of imagination on the part of his colleagues, and to a lack of maneuverability in foreign affairs because of events over which he had no control. Wellesley was, according to this thesis, "less out of place" than he would have been in times of "more potentialities and hope." Indolence may have on occasion been far the wisest procedure. He permitted British representatives abroad the widest element of discretion, and failure to despatch detailed instructions may reflect his approval of their performance. He refused to prod Sweden, Russia, or Austria into an early return to the battlefield, with all the momentary glory this might have produced for him and all the attendant misery for these nations if they failed. He could, indeed, discipline himself to sustained

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449 Wilberforce to Wellesley, 18 April 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 5; Perceval to Wellesley, 24 May 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37295, f. 296.

450 Buckland, Metternich, pp. 39-71.

451 Ibid.

displays of energy, as he did in the final months of office when he could see the grand coalition against Napoleon taking shape. He exerted himself in the cabinet on behalf of his brother Arthur to insure that Perceval and the cabinet did not yield to popular clamor and abandon the peninsula to its own insufficient devices.

What does the record show to be Wellesley's primary accomplishments, if any? In his policies towards Sweden, Russia and Prussia Wellesley was accurate in his timing, his advice, and his conception of a strategy necessary for containing Napoleon. His policy in Sicily, while rather brutal and perhaps too close to his pattern of political behaviour in India to suit the European scene, also produced results. In relation to the United States Wellesley was

453 Dardis to Buckingham, 17 September 1811, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 125. The Morning Chronicle, previously among Wellesley's most strident critics, claimed that Wellesley rather than the remainder of the cabinet was the animating principle at the end of 1811: "The Marquess Wellesley only, in whose department the business upon which they met is, being left to make up the despatches agreeable to the determination of the cabinet, and he has been indefatigably employed in doing this ever since. It is believed that the noble Marquess has at length succeeded in persuading his colleagues to pursue a more decisive system than has heretofore been attempted. - And surely it is time!" (11 October 1811).

454 Henry lamented his brother's absence after Wellesley resigned and believed that under Castlereagh Spain was not given proper attention: Henry Wellesley to Arbuthnot, 20 September 1812, printed in Charles Arbuthnot, Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot (London, 1941), p. 65.
less successful, although one wonders what might have been the course of events if he had been allowed to implement his memorandum of December 1810. In dealing with Spain's ramshackle empire Wellesley struck the proper note, neither forcing premature independence nor stifling the gradual movement towards alienation of these regions from a distracted and misguided mother country. Castlereagh and Canning would follow Wellesley's guidelines here quite closely. 455

And of course Wellesley's record in Spain itself is highly creditable. It was obscured by Wellesley's efforts to promote the fortunes of his brothers. On balance Wellesley may have contributed more to the great enterprise of the war than he substracted by his inept cabinet machinations. In the case of Spain his work was perhaps indispensable; elsewhere he was often useful for insisting on a strict hierarchy of effort. His understanding of the dynamic and potential of nationalism was almost unique in him time. 456 Perhaps Wellesley deserves to be remembered as much for his professional successes as he has always been for his human failures.

455 Wellesley, memorandum, August 1840, BM, Wellesley MSS 37317, f. 80.
