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JEREMY BLACK

THE MARQUIS OF CARMARTHEN  
AND RELATIONS WITH FRANCE 1784–1787\*

*About three months after my departure an Earthquake threw down all the men and systems of which I had any knowledge and the country seems to be governed by a set of most respectable boys, who were at school half a dozen years ago*<sup>1</sup>.

One of these boys was Francis Osborne, Marquis of Carmarthen and heir to the Dukedom of Leeds. Born in 1751, the Foreign Office was his first major appointment, his previous positions being that of a Lord of the Bedchamber and that of the Lord Chamberlain of the Queen's household<sup>2</sup>. His lack of diplomatic experience was far from uncommon among eighteenth-century ministers entrusted with the conduct of foreign policy<sup>3</sup>. Carmarthen was Foreign Secretary from December 1783 until April 1791, one of the longest periods of continuous office in the administration of foreign affairs in the latter half of the century. This contrasted markedly with the preceding decades. Between 1763 and 1772 there were eight changes in the tenure of the Secretaryship of State for the Northern Department. The picture of rapid change should not be exaggerated, since some of the changes were the result of transfers to or from the Secretaryship for the Southern Department. The Earl of Halifax, General Conway, Viscount Weymouth and the Earl of Rochford served in both, and some periods in office, for example Weymouth's, were reasonably long. In addition, tenure in office lengthened during the North administration, with Viscount Stormont holding the Northern Department from October 1779 to March 1782 and the Earl of Hillsborough the Southern from November 1779 to March 1782<sup>4</sup>.

However, Carmarthen's tenure, following on from the short ones of Lord Grantham, Fox and Earl Temple, was the longest one so far in the reign. In this Carmarthen, who succeeded to the Duchy of Leeds in 1789, was not alone. Pitt was to be First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer until 1801, Lord

\* I would like to thank the Staff Travel and Research Fund of Durham University for their help in funding research in Paris, Turin and Vienna.

1 Edward Gibbon to Dorothea Gibbon, 15 July 1785, 3 May 1786 (quote), *The Letters of Edward GIBBON* edited by J. R. NORTON, 3 vols., London 1956, 3; pp. 29, 44. Lord Sheffield referred to *the young gentlemen who have taken the empire into their hands*, Sheffield to William Eden, 7 Jan. 1784, *Journal and Correspondence of William, Lord AUCKLAND*, 4 vol., London 1861–2, 1; p. 72. Eden became Lord Auckland in 1789.

2 *Dictionary of National Biography* 14 (1917) 1180–83.

3 M. A. THOMSON, *The Secretaries of State 1661–1782*, Oxford 1932, p. 18–19. Prominent Secretaries devoid of diplomatic experience included the Duke of Newcastle. During the Rockingham Administration in 1782 Carmarthen was appointed Ambassador in Paris, but he did not take up the appointment in consequence of the death of Lord Rockingham, and the consequent change of ministry.

4 M. ROBERTS, *Splendid Isolation*, Reading 1970, pp. 5–6.

Sydney Home Secretary until June 1789, the Duke of Richmond Master General of the Ordnance until 1801, Lord Thurlow Lord Chancellor until June 1792, Earl Gower, created Marquis of Stafford in 1786, Lord Privy Seal from November 1784 until 1794, and Lord Camden Lord President of the Council for the same years.

The relative stability of Pitt's administration, the support of George III and the success at the elections in 1784 lent longevity to many positions. However, Carmarthen's tenure was not free from attempts by Pitt to remove him. Schemes were considered to replace him by the Duke of Grafton, former Secretary of State for the Northern Department, or by Charles Jenkinson, a protégé of George III's. On 15 October 1784 Pitt wrote to him to ask him *to open the office you hold at present* (for Grafton's benefit) *and to accept any other becoming your station in the country*<sup>5</sup>. In July 1789, his imminent replacement by William Eden, then Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Madrid, was reported in the press. In the same month Pitt appointed his friend, Dudley Ryder, as an Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, against Carmarthen's wishes<sup>6</sup>.

In February 1786 the Sardinian Envoy Extraordinary, Nomis di Pollone, reported that Carmarthen might resign, to be replaced by Jenkinson, Lord Grantham, who had been Foreign Secretary in the Shelburne administration of 1782–3, but who had refused a Cabinet post when offered one by Pitt in December 1783, or, should he desert the Opposition (as Eden had), by Viscount Stormont, who had been Secretary of State for the Northern Department from 1779 to 1782<sup>7</sup>. Five months later François de Barthélemy, the French *Chargé d'affaires*, suggested that Stormont would replace Carmarthen, and in December 1786 he noted reports that Carmarthen would be replaced. In January 1787, Pollone noted that it had been said that Carmarthen would join the Opposition. Pollone was not sure whether Carmarthen was angry because of his slight influence in the Council or because when he had been ill in the previous month he was asked if he would accept a transfer to being Postmaster-General. Pollone concluded, *il me paroit voir evidement en lui l'homme mal satisfait, mais au même tems combattu entre le parti de se facher, ou celui de prendre patience*<sup>8</sup>.

5 LEEDS Political Memoranda, 15 Oct. 1784, British Library (hereafter BL.) Additional Manuscripts (hereafter Add.) 27918 f. 215–6; Thomas Orde, Chief Secretary in Ireland, to the Duke of Rutland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 3, 9 June 1784, Historical Manuscripts Commission (hereafter HMC.) Manuscripts of the Duke of RUTLAND III, London 1894, pp. 102, 105. Pitt to Carmarthen, Carmarthen to Pitt, 15 Oct. 1784, BL. Egerton Manuscripts (hereafter Eg.) 3498. Lord Bulkeley to Keith, 8 Mar. 1786, BL. Add. 35536 f. 130.

6 The Diary; or Woodfall's Register 8 July 1789; J. EHRMAN, *The Younger Pitt*, London 1969, p. 310. In the following month Carmarthen had his friend Sir James Bland Burges, who owed his parliamentary seat of Helston to Carmarthen, appointed first Under-Secretary.

7 Pollone to Victor Amadeus III, 21 Feb. 1786, Turin, Archivio di Stato, Lettere Ministri Inghilterra (hereafter AST. LM. Ing.) 88; Lord Edmond FITZMAURICE, *Life of William Earl of Shelburne*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., London 1912, 2, p. 291. George III was possibly ready for Stormont's return to government, though he made it clear that this depended on the latter being 'quiet', Orde to Rutland, 14 June 1786, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 309, Leeds Political Memoranda, undated, BL. Add. 27918 f. 119. On Stormont, Carlisle and Loughborough having planned to join the ministry, Lord Bulkeley to Keith, 31 Jan. 1786, BL. Add. 35536 f. 44.

8 Barthélemy to Vergennes, 11 July, 26 Dec. 1786, Paris, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique (hereafter AE. CP.) Angleterre (hereafter Ang.) 557 f. 32, 558 f. 321; Pollone to Victor Amadeus, 19 Dec. 1786, 23 Jan. 1787, AST. LM. Ing. 88; Marquis of Lothian to Rutland, 22 Jan. 1787, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 367; Horace Walpole, mem., – Jan. 1787, Horace

Press predictions of Carmarthen's replacement were frequent. For example, in the first fortnight of 1785 »The Daily Universal Register« suggested on the 1st, 4th and 8th that Grantham might replace him, and on the 8th and 13th mentioned Viscount Sackville (Lord George Germain). On the 4th, the paper reported a ›coolness‹ between Pitt and a Secretary of State, clearly Carmarthen. Similar reports appeared in 1786<sup>9</sup>.

Initially Pitt's role in the conduct of foreign policy was a minor one. In February 1786, Pollone reported that Pitt, *n'est que l'organe du Conseil, lorsqu'il se trouve peut-être quelque fois obligé de parler des affaires étrangères, et lui même avoue, qu'il n'a pas assez d'expérience pour s'en ingérer beaucoup*<sup>10</sup>. Increasingly, important initiatives were linked to the work of William Grenville who was sent in 1787 on missions to France and to the United Provinces, and who succeeded Carmarthen as Foreign Secretary in 1791. Commenting upon the Dutch crisis, Mr Boyd, a correspondent of the British envoy in Vienna, claimed that *Mr Pitt has hitherto in every act of his administration, but preeminently in this formed his own Plan, executed it . . . and taken the whole responsibility upon himself, . . .* On the other hand, another correspondent, Robert Arbuthnot, reported from Paris six days later that it was said that the Duke of Richmond ›had the principal hand in conducting all the late Measures‹<sup>11</sup>.

Pitt's role in the choice of some envoys was hardly new. Previous chief ministers, such as Sir Robert Walpole, had been able to appoint friends. Furthermore some envoys, such as William Fawkener, appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Lisbon in September 1786, were reported to be close friends of Carmarthen's<sup>12</sup>.

Envoys increasingly wrote to Pitt or Grenville<sup>13</sup>. Pitt drafted more and more despatches. For example, the despatches of 9 September 1788 to Hugh Elliot were based on a draft in Pitt's handwriting, which was copied and sent without alteration. It would be inaccurate, however, to imply that Carmarthen had no role in the drafting of despatches by the late 1780s. In September 1789, for example, he altered draft instructions to Ewart<sup>14</sup>. In 1790, Pitt was involved in a series of disagreements with Carmarthen. Carmarthen felt increasingly ignored<sup>15</sup>.

Carmarthen has been rather harshly treated by historians. J. Holland Rose and John

WALPOLE'S Correspondence with the Countess of Upper Ossory edited by W. S. LEWIS, 2, London 1965, p. 554 n. 6; Archbishop of Canterbury to Eden, 9 Mar. 1787, Anthony Storer, former Minister Plenipotentiary in Paris, to Eden, 4 Ap. 1788, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) I, pp. 406, 476.

<sup>9</sup> Daily Universal Register 10, 24 July 1786.

<sup>10</sup> Pollone to Victor Amadeus, 21 Feb. 1786, AST. LM. Ing. 88.

<sup>11</sup> Boyd to Sir Robert Murray Keith, 8 Nov., Arbuthnot to Keith, 14 Nov. 1787, BL. Add. 35539.

<sup>12</sup> Barthélemy to Vergennes, 3 Oct. 1786, AE. CP. Ang. 588 f. 5. Pitt to Carmarthen 22, 31 Aug., 3, 7 Sept., Carmarthen to Pitt 4 Sept. 1784, BL. Eg. 3498.

<sup>13</sup> For examples of letters to Grenville, Eden to Grenville, 11, 13 Oct., 6 Dec., Harris to Grenville, 7, 24 Oct., 27 Dec. 1787, HMC., Manuscripts of J. B. FORTESCUE 3, London 1899, pp. 438–442.

<sup>14</sup> Leeds to Burges, 20 Sept. 1789, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Department of Western Manuscripts, Bland Burges papers (hereafter Bodl. Burges) 37 f. 9. On Pitt drafting the despatches for the Eden Treaty, Selections from the Letters and Correspondence of Sir James Bland Burges, edited by J. HUTTON, London 1885, p. 78. Lord ROSEBERRY, Pitt, London 1921; D. B. HORN, The British Diplomatic Service 1689–1789, Oxford 1961, pp. 187–8; A. G. OLSEN, The Radical Duke—the Career and Correspondence of Charles Lennox third Duke of Richmond, Oxford 1961, p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> For comparable neglect of Lord Sydney, Orde to Rutland, 14 June, 1 July 1786, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 309, 319.

Ehrman have had few kind words for him. The usual judgement is that Carmarthen was an amiable cipher, his abilities conspicuous by their absence and his attitudes less perceptive than those of Pitt. In common with the other major figures of Pitt's early years – Richmond, Thurlow, Camden and Sydney – he lacks a satisfactory biography. Ehrman argued that he was an opinionated bon viveur,

›Carmarthen was simply the heir to the Duke of Leeds. An amiable, idle, impulsive young man, fond of theatricals and light verse, he was celebrated in the early eighties for a memorable scandal – he had divorced his wife for eloping with John Byron . . . he did his duty as best as he could, prided himself on his ideas, and resigned in the end because his advice was ignored. His contribution to foreign policy over a period which embraced three major crises, was thrown into sharp relief by the fact that his successor was William Grenville.<sup>16</sup>

Condemnation has not been universal. In 1791, the Speaker praised his *manly and consistent conduct* and Baron Nagel, the Dutch Ambassador *applauded my conduct*. In his obituary in the »Gentleman's Magazine« he was described as *a man of liberal principles, amiable manners and higher talents than he was generally supposed to possess*<sup>17</sup>. He had literary interests and was able to write in a vigorous and earthy style. Examples can be found in his correspondence. His pithy crudeness was expressed for example in the comment he made on the death of Catherine the Great's lover and adviser Potemkin, in a letter he sent to his former Under-Secretary, Sir James Bland Burges, *there is one Great Man less in the world by the Russian Polypheme death. Kate will probably apply to Whitbread's stables for a successor to him*<sup>18</sup>.

It might be suggested that he was better than many of his predecessors, and some of his colleagues and that his ideas have not been considered fairly. Professor Roberts has argued of the period 1763–80 that ›the only Secretaries with any real knowledge and experience of Foreign Affairs were Rochford and Stormont«. Carmarthen's indolence was less dangerous for Britain than Suffolk's gout, Conway's indecisiveness, Weymouth's drunkenness, Halifax's lack of abilities and Grafton's inexperience. Horace Walpole's comment on Fox, when he became Foreign Secretary in 1782 was a reflection on his predecessors; *The Foreign Ministers were in admiration of him. They had found few who understood foreign affairs or who attended to them, and no man*

16 J. Holland ROSE, *A Short Life of William Pitt*, London 1925, p. 30; A. COBBAN, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents, The Diplomacy of the First Earl of Malmesbury at The Hague*, London 1954, pp. 18–19; ROSEBERRY, *Pitt* (see n. 14) p. 111; OLSEN, *Richmond* (see n. 14) p. 93; FITZMAURICE, *Shelburne* (see n. 14) 2, p. 291; ›no depth, nor character, nor steadiness«; Horace Walpole, mem., – Dec. 1783. Horace Walpole's *Correspondence with Sir Horace Mann* edited by W. S. LEWIS, IX, London 1971, p. 486 n. 10. Carmarthen was not a prominent speaker in the Lords, Daniel Pulteney, ministerial MP., to Rutland, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 376; Archbishop of Canterbury to Eden, 9 Mar. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 406; EHRMAN, *Pitt* (see n. 6) p. 131; HUTTON (ed.), *Burges* (see n. 14) pp. 78–9. P. D. BROWN, ›William Pitt the Younger«, *The Prime Ministers* edited by H. van THAL, 2 vols., London 1974, I, 216. J. EHRMAN, *The Younger Pitt*, 2 vols., London 1968, 1983, II, 185 (quote) or I, pp. 26, 182.

17 16, 23 Ap. 1791 *Political Memoranda of Francis fifth Duke of Leeds* edited by O. BROWNING, London 1884, pp. 166, 174; *Gentleman's Magazine* 69, London 1799, p. 168. For George III praising Carmarthen, George to Carmarthen, 28 Dec. 1783, *Later Correspondence of George III* edited by A. ASPINALL, I, Cambridge 1962, p. 10. Burges' description of Carmarthen is a balanced one, HUTTON (ed.), *Burges* (see n. 14) pp. 62–3.

18 Leeds to Burges, 10 Nov. 1791, Bodl. Burges, 37, f. 38.

who spoke French so well or could explain himself in so few words. Carmarthen's knowledge of French may have been limited, but so, for example, was Suffolk's<sup>19</sup>. Harris' comment, *I never yet received an instruction that was worth reading* is a comprehensive critique of ministers since 1770, and reveals more about Harris' capacity for exaggeration than about Carmarthen's failings<sup>20</sup>. It is interesting to note, in the context of Harris' claim, Barthélemy's comment on Harris, *M. Le Chev. Harris a une tres grande influence ici dans la Secretairerie d'Etat, et je ne doute pas qu'il ne dirige les instructions qu'on lui envoie*<sup>21</sup>.

Criticisms comparable to those made of Carmarthen had been made against William Stanhope, Lord Harrington, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, 1730–42, 1744–6. A former diplomat who had served with great success at Madrid, he was castigated widely for indolence and inaccessibility. Foreign envoys complained that he was difficult to see. However, there are no signs that his views on foreign policy were less informed or profound than those of his more active colleague for the Southern Department, the Duke of Newcastle. Harrington's instructions to British envoys displayed intelligence and foresight. His inaccessibility could be construed as intelligent reserve. Indeed the Saxon Envoy Extraordinary, Count Watzdorf described him as, *extremement reservé, ... d'une si grande circonspection, qu'il ne s'ouvre presque jamais sur quelque affaire qu'on puisse lui parler*. Such a stance was an intelligent one given the embarrassments the more voluble and prominent Newcastle created for himself<sup>22</sup>. Just as it is possible to defend Harrington from his detractors, so similar arguments could be used in the case of Carmarthen.

Foreign diplomats in London had, in general, a poor view of Carmarthen. The French Chargé d'affaires, François de Barthélemy, referred to *son inexpérience* which, he claimed led to the poor drafting of British diplomatic messages. He complained also of his taciturnity. In August 1786, he wrote,

*Milord Carmarthen qui ne se montre que deux fois par mois aux ministres étrangers, vit ... fort ignoré d'eux si son département ne paroît pas lui donner de grandes occupations*. Vorontsov, the Russian envoy had a low opinion of Carmarthen. In November 1786, Barthélemy noted, *si j'en juge par le langage des ministres étrangers, il ne me paroît pas qu'aucun d'eux s'aperçoive beaucoup et se plaigne, quant à l'intérêt de ses affaires, de l'absence du Secrétaire d'Etat*. The anonymous 'Copie d'une lettre de Londres' of 19 July 1787 preserved in the French Archives de la Marine described Carmarthen as *tout au plus un premier commis, qui sent sa nullité, et qui devenu un Ministre par hazard n'a qu'un seul moyen de garder sa place, celui de n'avoir d'autre volonté que celle du Roy*<sup>23</sup>.

19 ROBERTS, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 7; Sir Robert Murray Keith, Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Vienna, to Andrew Drummond, 21 May 1785, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Sir Robert Murray Keith* edited by Mrs G. SMYTH, 2 vols., London 1849, 2, pp. 172–3.

20 Sir James Harris Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at The Hague to Joseph Ewart, agent in Berlin, 15 Mar. 1785, *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury* edited by the third Earl of MALMESBURY, 4 vols., London 1844, 2, p. 113.

21 Barthélemy to Vergennes, 26 Sept. 1786, AE. CP. Ang. 557, f. 320.

22 Friedrich Karl Count Watzdorf, Saxon Envoy Extraordinary in London, to Augustus II, 23 Oct. 1731, Dresden, Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Kabinett, Gesandtschaften, 2676 II, f. 291.

23 Barthélemy to Vergennes, 1 Jan., 18 July, 22 Aug., 12 Sept., 14 Nov. 1786, AE. CP. Ang. 555, f. 7, 557, f. 44, 198, 281, 558, f. 136; J. W. MARCUM, *Semen R. Vorontsov: Minister to the Court of St. James's for*

In addition, Carmarthen was scarcely the least distinguished member of the Cabinet. Lord Sydney (the Home Secretary) was a weakling. With the exception of Pitt, the Ministry had a rather poor press from contemporaries<sup>24</sup>. Carmarthen was criticised for a lack in application. Lord Bulkeley wrote to Sir Robert Murray Keith that *Our neglect of Foreign Ministers at home, and of our own abroad is scandalous, unwise, and impolitic and it seems to me to be worse and worse every year*. Lord Stormont alleged that *every barber and porter at the Hague knew of its (Franco-Dutch alliance) existence before we took the least notice of it. How this could be explained, unless by the absence of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, he was at a loss to determine*. Eden wrote to Grenville on 6 December 1787 to complain, *I am utterly without information or instructions*. In 1791, the first despatch of the year to Whitworth at St. Petersburg was not sent until 27 March<sup>25</sup>.

However, the importance of personal attention can be exaggerated. Delays in the British Foreign Office were scarcely novel. Robert Ainslie, appointed Ambassador at Constantinople, in September 1775, arrived in October 1776. His instructions were consistently unhelpful. In 1778, he asked for fresh instructions, but received no guidance beyond the exhortation not to commit himself in the Russo-Turkish quarrel. He received no instructions on the Crimean question until September 1783, and in October, he had to tell the Porte that his earlier lack of precise instructions had arisen from an ignorance at London of the views of other European powers over the Crimean question.

Many delays were due to the small size of the Foreign Office, and the pressure of business. The office was a small one, much smaller than either the French or the Russian equivalent. In 1782 there were in the office, one First Clerk, two Senior Clerks and five Clerks. When the establishment of the office was regulated by an Order in Council in 1795, there were twelve Clerks, a Private Secretary, a precis Writer, two Office Keepers and a Housekeeper. This was scarcely sufficient for a department which Carmarthen justifiably referred to as *an office of so much business*<sup>26</sup>. In May 1784, the Comte d'Adhémar, the French envoy in London, wrote to the French Foreign Minister, Vergennes, that Carmarthen was amiable, but possessed none of the qualities of a hard-working minister. He doubted that he would keep his office. It is true that Carmarthen could not emulate the French foreign minister

Catherine II, 1785–1796 (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1970) p. 64. Horace Walpole noted the ignorance of the new Secretaries and the preference shown by foreign diplomats for Carmarthen's predecessor, Fox, Walpole to Mann, British Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at Florence, LEWIS (ed.), *Walpole-Mann Correspondence* (see n. 16) 9, p. 486; Copie d'une lettre de Londres, 19 July 1787, Paris, Archives Nationales, Archives de la Marine, Pays Etrangers (hereafter AN. AM. B<sup>7</sup>) 453.

24 *Daily Universal Register* 9 Jan. 1786; Orde to Shelburne, 20 Dec. 1783, FITZMAURICE, Shelburne (see n. 7) 2, p. 280–1, 283; Rutland to Orde, – July 1786, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 321; HUTTON (ed.), Burges (see n. 14) pp. 66–7; OLSON, Richmond (see n. 14) p. 78. Shelburne was created Marquis of Lansdowne in 1784.

25 Bulkeley to Keith, 13 Mar. 1787, BL. Add. 35358; Stormont, 24 Jan. 1786, Lords' Debate on the Address of Thanks, *The Parliamentary History of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803* edited by W. COBBETT 25, London 1815, p. 993; Eden to Grenville, 6 Dec. 1787, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 3, p. 440; Lord Dalrymple, British envoy in Berlin, to Harris, 2 Sept. 1786, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 225.

26 Carmarthen to Pitt, 15 Oct. 1784, BL. Eg. 3498.

Vergennes' application to business. Maurepas recorded of him in 1774 that he worked like a machine, Hennin in 1784, that he worked an eleven hour day and Vergennes himself simply noted: *I contracted the habit of working and it has become for me a sort of necessary nourishment*<sup>27</sup>.

However, Carmarthen was not a complacent spectator of indolence. Notwithstanding the fact that the Duke of Dorset, Ambassador at Paris, was an *old friend* with whom he stayed at Knole, and many of whose attitudes and habits he shared, he wrote to Daniel Hailes, the Secretary to the Embassy: *My dear Sir, for heaven's sake have pity upon the Department, and either prevail upon our friend the Duke to write something worth our Master's perusal or else suppose your principal absent, and let your own zeal and abilities have fair play*<sup>28</sup>.

Carmarthen's lack of application, and what has been seen as a casual attitude have been used to condemn him without a serious consideration of his ideas. Carmarthen viewed the challenge posed by French power and activities as the principal threat facing Britain and one that necessitated action. This theme was present from the beginning. On 28 September 1784, writing to Pitt, he referred to *that restless power... dangerous projects of the House of Bourbon...* and the possibility of creating *at least a Triple Alliance* (Britain, Denmark, Russia) *...preventing a war for some time longer, and providing against one at a future period, at all event, preventing her exertions being directed solely at Great Britain*<sup>29</sup>.

Carmarthen's marked anti-French stance also led him to send at least one set of instructions which are distinctly dubious. In December 1786 he sent an ambiguous instruction to Sir Robert Ainslie, urging him to embitter Russo-Turkish relations, hoping thereby to engender Balkan hostilities that would pose a major difficulty for French diplomacy. Ainslie was instructed to oppose at all times French interests unless he was explicitly instructed to the contrary. The instruction was totally at variance with the ministry's contemporaneous defence of the Anglo-French commercial treaty and with Fitzherbert's attempts to improve Anglo-Russian relations. It is unclear how widely the instruction was discussed<sup>30</sup>. To Carmarthen the principal challenge facing Britain was that of France, and he made this clear in his instructions to envoys. Hugh Elliot at Copenhagen was told to *find out how far Denmark and Russia are disposed, either together or separately to enter into any negotiation for the formation of a system which may essentially protect the north, at least, from any ambitious views of the House of Bourbon*<sup>31</sup>.

On 31 January 1786, Carmarthen wrote to Liston that: *the Family Compact must be annulled before England can ever treat with Spain in the light of a friendly or at least an*

27 A. COBBAN, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents* (see n. 16) p. 18; O. T. MURPHY, »Charles Gravier de Vergennes: Profile of an »Old Regime Diplomat«, in: *Political Science Quarterly* 83 (1968) pp. 412–3. Burges noted of the British foreign ministry, »the organization of the office was extremely defective«, HUTTON (ed.), *Burges* (see n. 14) p. 131. EHRMAN, *Pitt* (see n. 6) p. 514.

28 Carmarthen to Hailes, 22 Oct. 1784, HMC., *Manuscripts of the Duke of Leeds*, London 1888, p. 54. For Dorset complaining about Carmarthen undermining the British diplomatic position, Dorset to Eden, 19 July 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 519.

29 Carmarthen to Pitt, 28 Sept. 1784, BL. Eg. 3498.

30 Carmarthen to Ainslie, 19 Dec. 1786, PRO. FO. 78/7, f. 362–3.

31 Carmarthen to Elliot, 25 June 1784, *British Diplomatic Instructions 1689–1789, Denmark* edited by J. F. CHANCE, London 1926, p. 210.



*independent power*<sup>32</sup>. Carmarthen's aggressive anti-French stance was clear, and it was to be a stance mirrored in his attitude to Russia in 1790–1. Indeed Paul Webb has referred to his well-known fondness for sabre-rattling<sup>33</sup>. It is necessary, however, to discriminate between his reputation for sabre-rattling (not incidentally always a recipe for disaster) and the more cautious tone of his instructions. For example, in 1789–90, he was disinclined to follow the policy of the leading Prussian minister, Count Hertzberg and turn the Anglo-Prussian alliance, formalised by the Treaty of Berlin of 13 August 1788, into a pact designed to recast, through hostilities, or the threat of them, the eastern European system in an anti-Russian mould. In January 1790, he sent a coded letter to Sir Robert Murray Keith, Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Vienna: ... *in all our communications with Berlin, we have been particularly careful to state to His Prussian Majesty that we consider our alliance and the system on which it is founded, as purely defensive, and however desirous of attending every possible degree of assistance and protection to our Allies, in case of their being attacked, it is very far, indeed, from our Inclination, and indeed would be totally repugnant to our interests, to encourage them to commence hostilities, merely for the purpose of aggrandizement or ambition. Our object is ... tranquility, from which this country has already derived so much advantage...*<sup>34</sup>.

In 1784–7, Carmarthen viewed opposition to France as a necessary policy, an attitude to France shared by many. Lord Stormont argued that both with *the establishment of a fund for the payment of the National Debt as well as with respect to the marine, the French, our natural enemies, had gotten the better of us in the race. Mr Fox contended that France was the natural foe of Great Britain, and that she wished by entering into a commercial treaty with us to tie our hands, and prevent us from engaging in any alliances with other Powers.* The opinion of these two former Secretaries of State was shared by Portland, the nominal leader of the Opposition, by the Duke of Richmond, the head of the Ordnance, by Lord Howe, the head of the Admiralty, and by many British diplomats, including Sir James Harris, Hailes, Ewart and Fitzherbert. Ewart wrote of *the usual game of duplicity which France is attempting to play at different courts*<sup>35</sup>. Harris wrote to Pitt on 22 December 1786 that France was *an ambitious and restless rival power, on whose good faith we never can rely, whose friendship never can be deemed sincere, and of whose enmity we have the most to apprehend.* Seven months earlier he had written to Keith, *I can only say, from everything I hear and observe, there is not the least doubt that France is working hard at the formation of a League, the object of which, is the Destruction of England.*

32 Carmarthen to Liston, 31 Jan. 1786, S. CONN, Gibraltar in British Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century, New Haven 1942, p. 247. Carmarthen to Dalrymple 22 Sept. 1786, PRO. FO. 64/10.

33 P. WEBB, The Navy and British Diplomacy, 1783–93 (unpublished M. Litt. dissertation, Cambridge 1971) p. 370; Leeds to Burges, 27 June 1790, Bodl. Burges 37, f. 23.

34 Leeds to Keith, 12 Jan. 1790, BL. Add. 35542.

35 Stormont, 24 Jan. 1786, Fox, 12 Feb. 1787, Commons' Debate on the Treaty of Commerce with France, COBBETT (ed.), Parliamentary History (see n. 25) 25, p. 992, 26 (1816) p. 398; Harris to Keith, 9 Feb. 1787, BL. Add. 35538; The Austrian Chancellor, Count Kaunitz, informed the French Ambassador in Vienna *que la haine invétérée du Cabinet de St. James pour celui de Versailles étoit plus vive que jamais*, Noailles to Vergennes, 17 Aug. 1785, AE. CP. Autriche 350, f. 102. On 2 Jan. 1784 George III wrote to Carmarthen, *I have so much reason always to suspect every transaction that the active genius of French politicks creates*, ASPINALL (ed.), Later Correspondence... George III (see n. 17) 1, pp. 18, 40. Ewart to Keith, 24 May 1786, BL. Add. 35536, f. 298.

D. B. Horn's description of Harris as 'francophobe' does not do justice to the vigour of his animosity<sup>36</sup>.

Carmarthen received continual reports of French hostility. Some were masterpieces of prejudice. On 1 September 1785, Hailes wrote that *in general ... every Frenchman of any condition that goes to England is more or less a spy, and brings back all the intelligence he can to ingratiate himself with the Minister*<sup>37</sup>.

Many accusations aimed against France were more specific. In June 1785, Hailes wrote about a scheme for rebellion in Quebec, in July of a scheme for instigating rebellion in India, in September of French money already circulating in India, and of a scheme to send artillery there. It was widely believed that France would follow up her successful detachment of America from British rule, by seeking to undermine the British position in Canada, Ireland and India<sup>38</sup>. The British were most sensitive about the French threat to India and feared that this threat would be taken closer to reality should the French gain control of the Dutch navy and the Dutch empire, with its important bases in the East Indies and Ceylon and at Cape Town. Harris wrote of *France, whose object is to form a mass of maritime power against us*<sup>39</sup>. A draft memorandum prepared for the new French Ambassador in The Hague in May 1788 wrote of the *but que le Roi s'est propose en s'alliant avec les hollandais: l'intention de sa Majesté étoit, en cas de guerre avec l'Angleterre, d'avoir à sa disposition les forces et les places de la Republique dans les Indes Orientales*. The Dutch base of Trincomalee in Ceylon was described as *la clef de l'Indes...*<sup>40</sup>.

36 Harris to Pitt, 22 Dec. 1786, BL. Add. 28068, f. 194; D. B. HORN, *Great Britain and Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1967, p. 66; Harris to Fox, 25 Aug. 1783, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 54; Harris to Grenville, 18 Aug. 1787, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 3, p. 415–16; 'Account of my conference with the Prince of Wales', 27 Ap. 1785, MALMESBURY 2, p. 124. Harris to Keith, 24 Jan., 26 May (quote) 1786 BL. Add. 35536, f. 32, 310.

37 Hailes to Carmarthen, 1 Sept. 1785, BL. Eg. 3499.

38 Carmarthen to Dorset, 13 Feb., 9, 27 July 1784, *British Diplomatic Instructions 1689–1789, France, 1745–1789* edited by L. G. Wickham LEGG, London 1934, pp. 249, 251; Horatio Walpole to Mann, 30 Mar., 15 Ap. 1784, LEWIS (ed.), *Walpole-Mann Correspondence* 9, pp. 485, 491; Rutland to Sydney, 29 May, Aug. 1784, 6 Dec. 1785, William Miles to Sir Edward Newenham, 16 June 1784, Sydney to Rutland, 2 July, 6 Aug. 1784, Daniel Pulteney to Rutland, 27 July 1784, Orde to Rutland, 25 Nov. 1785, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, pp. 99, 132, 265, 108, 117, 130, 128, 262; Earl of Mornington to William Grenville, 2 Sept. 1784, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 1, p. 234; 'Heads of what the King of Prussia said to Lord Cornwallis', 17 Sept. 1785, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis* edited by C. Ross, 2nd ed., 3 vols., London 1859, 1, p. 210. Carmarthen to Pitt, 28 Sept. 1784, BL. Eg. 3498.

39 Carmarthen to George III, 22 June 1784, 25 Jan. 1788 ASPINALL (ed.), *Later Correspondence ... George III* (see n. 17) 1, p. 52, 361; Carmarthen to Dorset, 17 Feb. 1786, LEGG (ed.), *Dip. Instr. France* (see n. 38) p. 261; *Daily Universal Register* 10, 13 Jan. 1785, 14 Sept. 1786; Pollone to Victor Amadeus III, 21, 28 Mar. 1786, Le Duc, Sardinian agent in London, to Hauteville, 23 Oct. 1787, AST. LM. Ing. 88; Hailes to Carmarthen, 22 June 1786, *Despatches from Paris 1784–90*, edited by Oscar BROWNING, 2 vols., London 1909–10, 1, p. 116; Grenville to Henry Dundas, 26 Aug., Pitt to Cornwallis, 2 Aug., Dorset to Cornwallis, 10 Nov. 1787, Dundas to Cornwallis, 31 Mar. 1788, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 1, p. 281, 334, 337, 349, 369. The French and the Dutch signed a treaty of defensive alliance at Fontainebleau on 8 Nov. 1785. Memorandum approved by French Conseil d'Etat, 6 Sept. 1787, AE. CP. Hollande 574, f. 304–7, Harris to Carmarthen, 7 Mar. 1786, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 189–90. Harris to Keith 28 Feb. 1786, BL. Add. 35536, f. 106–7.

40 *Mémoire pour servir d'instructions au Sieur Comte de Sr. Priest allant au Hollande*, 14 May 1788, AN. AM. B<sup>7</sup> 454.

In his instructions to D'Adhémar, Vergennes wrote, *La Cour de Londres, accountumée depuis près d'un siècle à abuser de sa fortune, aura de la peine à se familiariser avec sa situation actuelle*. French naval activities agitated George III, the Duke of Dorset and Admiral Howe<sup>41</sup>. Barthélemy noted that Louis XVI's visit to Cherbourg in 1786 *a fait une vive sensation en Angleterre*. Eden predicted accurately that *John Bull will rub his eyes*. The Cherbourg project was seen as aimed specifically at Britain. It was noted that the harbour was designed to hold over seventy ships of the line and it was concluded that France hoped to use the new harbour to attain strategic mastery over the Channel<sup>42</sup>.

Carmarthen's attitude has been condemned as sabre-rattling, but his opposition to France can be viewed as a more sensible response than Pitt's. D. B. Horn favoured Pitt as against Carmarthen. He wrote that, 'Pitt thought the loss of the Netherlands to the French a lesser evil than the immediate revival of war with France. He steadfastly resisted Carmarthen's suggestions that now or never the domination of France in the Low Countries must be checked'<sup>43</sup>. This analysis is less than fair to Carmarthen, who did not seek war with France. Rather, Carmarthen's policy was to seek to obtain Britain's interests by means of a tougher stance. In one sense this represented a return to the policy of brinkmanship analyzed ably by Nicholas Tracy in his work on British foreign policy in the 1760s<sup>44</sup>. However, Carmarthen did not favour the unilateral gunboat diplomacy, or politics of naval bombardment advocated by various British diplomats during the century<sup>45</sup>. Rather he sought to combine a firm stance with the very traditional policy of utilising a continental alliance system to further British aims. In a discussion in May 1784, Carmarthen and Pitt had both expressed a *desire to form some system on the continent in order to counterbalance the House of Bourbon, though at the same time the strongest conviction of the necessity of avoiding, if possible, the entering into any engagements likely to embroil us in a new war*<sup>46</sup>. Carmarthen retained this plan during subsequent years, both in his negotiations with Austria, Prussia and Russia<sup>47</sup>, and in his attempts to resist French schemes. It was a plan

41 Mémoire pour servir d'instruction au Sieur Comte d'Adhémar, 25 Ap. 1783, Recueil des Instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France depuis les traités de Westphalie jusqu'à la révolution française, Angleterre 3, edited by P. VAUCHER, Paris 1965, pp. 514–5; Daily Universal Register 3. Jan. 1785, 27 July, 25 Aug. 1785.

42 Barthélemy to Vergennes, 18 July 1786, AE. CP. Ang. 557, f. 45; Copie d'une lettre de Londres, 19 July 1787, AN. B<sup>7</sup> 453; Daily Universal Register, 27 Sept. 1786; Eden to Pitt, June 1786, Storer to Eden, 11 May 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 125, 421.

43 HORN, Great Britain and Europe (see n. 36) p. 66.

44 N. TRACY, The Royal Navy as an instrument in British foreign relations, 1763–75 (unpublished Ph. D., Southampton 1972); N. TRACY, 'Grenville's Gunboat Diplomacy 1764–5' in: Historical Journal 17 (1974) pp. 711–731.

45 J. M. BLACK, British Foreign Policy, 1727–31 (unpublished Ph. D., Durham 1982) pp. 67–8.

46 Leeds Political Memoranda, May 1784, BL. Add. 27918, f. 122.

47 George III to Carmarthen, 10 May 1785, Carmarthen to Harris, 24 July 1786, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 126, 211–12; F. ZARTZ, The Pole-Carew Memorandum in the context of British Policy towards Russia in the 1780s, in: Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia Newsletter 10 (1982) pp. 12–17; Carmarthen to Cornwallis, 2 Sept. 1785, Frederick Duke of York to Cornwallis, 7 Oct. 1786, ROSS (ed.), Cornwallis Correspondence (see n. 38) 1, p. 202–4, 267; EHRMAN, Pitt (see n. 6) pp. 467–477; Carmarthen to Ewart, 14, 15 May 1785, PRO. FO. 64/7; Carmarthen to Cornwallis, 2 Sept. 1785, PRO. FO. 64/8; Harris to Keith, 24 Jan, 26 May 1786, BL. Add. 35536 f. 32, 310; Dalrymple to Keith 24 May 1786, BL. Add. 35536 f. 294; Carmarthen to Pitt, 28 Sept., 15 Oct. 1784, BL. Eg. 3498.

endorsed by Carmarthen's supporters such as his close friend Harris. Within a week of becoming Foreign Secretary Carmarthen took steps to try to improve Anglo-Russian relations, following in this a policy actively advocated by his predecessor Fox. Ainslie was instructed to press the Turks to avoid hostilities with Russia, Alleyne Fitzherbert was ordered to inform the Russians of George III's continued *sincere desire to cultivate the strictest friendship and good understanding with Russia*. By so doing Carmarthen rejected French approaches for concerted action against *the ambitious views of Russia*, particularly in the Balkans<sup>48</sup>.

In seeking to create a continental alliance system, Carmarthen and Harris followed a traditional pattern, and encountered the usual problem of alliance politics, namely the need to ensure that Britain was not committed excessively to the interests of the other power. This problem had harmed greatly attempts to create an Anglo-Russian alliance, Russia expecting assistance in her disputes with Turkey or, as in 1741, Sweden. The Anglo-Prussian alliance of August 1788 that stemmed from the cooperation of the two powers in the Dutch crisis of the previous year led to an excessive British commitment to the schemes of Frederick William II's chief minister, Baron Hertzberg in eastern Europe and, ultimately to the Oczakov crisis of 1791<sup>49</sup>. However, it would be a mistake to blame the over-commitment of 1788–91 on Carmarthen and Harris' schemes of 1784–7. Carmarthen and Harris were determined to use Prussian power to serve British ends, and the Prussian invasion of the United Provinces in September 1787, an invasion made without any British commitments to Prussian interests in eastern Europe, represented a success for their policy. The over-commitment of 1788–91 cannot be ascribed to the Anglo-Prussian negotiations of 1787, but rather to those of subsequent years, and in particular to the confusion and inattention that afflicted British foreign policy during the Regency Crisis of 1788–9.

Carmarthen's stance in 1786–7 was not a warlike one. It is true that on 7 January 1787, he wrote to George III, *Lord Carmarthen thinks it his indispensable Duty to submit to your Majesty his most serious and confirmed opinion that your Majesty's service necessarily calls for some decisive measure with respect to Holland with the smallest delay circumstances may admit of*, but in the same letter he made it clear that he did not want war,

*Lord Carmarthen wishes by no means to hazard in the smallest degree the continuance of the public tranquillity, but cannot help thinking that the surest method of contributing to the continuance of so invaluable a Blessing is by preventing France (whatever her inclinations may be) finding herself in such a situation as to make it her interest to disturb it*<sup>50</sup>.

Carmarthen, Harris, and other commentators feared in 1787 that Pitt was abandoning Britain's national interests in order to concentrate on commercial objectives, and they felt that such a policy could not succeed. Joseph Ewart wrote to Keith on 1 February 1787 concerning *the backwardness shewn by our Court* and Harris referred to *a system*

48 Carmarthen to Ainslie, 19 Dec. 1783, Carmarthen to Fitzherbert, 23, 29 Dec. 1783, PRO. FO. 78/8, f. 234, 65/11.

49 F. K. WITTICHEN, *Preussen und England in der Europäischen Politik 1785–88*, Heidelberg 1902. R. LODGE, *Great Britain and Prussia in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1923, pp. 176–203; A. CUNNINGHAM, *The Oczakov Debate*, in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 1 (1964) pp. 209–237.

50 Carmarthen to George III, 7 Jan. 1787, BROWNING (ed.) (see n. 39) Leeds... Memoranda, p. 117–18.

of pounds, shillings and pences. On 12 December 1786, Carmarthen wrote to Harris, *we must not suffer Holland to be sacrificed either to Lawn or Cambric*<sup>51</sup>. It is interesting to note that at the height of the Dutch crisis of 1787 Monsr. Le Duc, Sardinian agent in London, referred to Pitt *conservant toujours au milieu des armements actuels le projet de remplir ses plans de oeconomie et de reforme*<sup>52</sup>.

Carmarthen made his attitude to the commercial negotiations fairly clear in a letter he sent Eden in April 1786, in which he found it difficult to remain civil.

*If France can ever be sincere, I have no doubt of your abilities bringing the great object of your mission to a favourable as well as speedy conclusion. Allowing, however, our neighbours some degree of fair dealing in this business, the very just remark you make of their having perhaps some latent object in comtemplation, from which our attention is to be diverted by commercial discussions, ought by no means to be lost sight of*<sup>53</sup>.

Eden's view was completely the contrary. In June 1786, he suggested to Carmarthen that Britain might take advantage of *the apparent disposition of this Court to concur in any further measures for adding stability to the pacific system which at present prevails in the world adding there are strong appearances here of a disposition to believe that Great Britain and France ought to unite in some solid plan of permanent peace, ...*<sup>54</sup>.

Pitt was not as optimistic as Eden, and in private correspondence he did not mirror the stance he adopted in the parliamentary debates on the Commercial Treaty. In June 1786, for example, he wrote to Eden, *though in the commercial business I think there are reasons for believing the French may be sincere, I cannot listen without suspicion to their professions of political friendship*<sup>55</sup>. He had no time for Eden's suggestion of a joint Anglo-French guaranty of their possessions in the western hemisphere<sup>56</sup>.

The Commercial Treaty provided the Opposition with a good political issue. Economic interests in Britain were affected by the proposed legislation and a lengthy and sustained public debate arose over it. The complex issues involved in the Fürstenbund – the German league negotiated by George III as Elector of Hanover – had made it difficult for the Opposition to exploit it as an issue in the session of 1786. In contrast the Commercial Treaty was easier to use as a political issue and it was possible to base on it a sustained attack upon governmental policy. In the debates over the Commercial Treaty, the Opposition MP Philip Francis argued that *the polemic laurels of the father were yielding to the pacific myrtles which shadow the forehead of the son* and warned that *there may be a strict union between the two crowns though never between the two nations...* The Opposition Member of Parliament Henry

51 Ewart to Keith, 1 Feb., Harris to Keith, 9 Feb. 1787, BL. Add. 35538; Carmarthen to Harris, 12 Dec. 1786, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 258.

52 Le Duc to Hauteville, 23 Oct. 1787, AST. LM. Ing. 88.

53 Carmarthen to Eden, 25 Ap. 1786, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 112–13.

54 Eden to Carmarthen, 6 June, Eden to Pitt, 17 June 1786, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, pp. 123, 131; Daily Universal Register 21 Oct. 1786. Eden returned to the idea in 1787, Eden to Pitt, 10 Oct. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 220.

55 Pitt to Eden, 10 June 1786, AUCKLAND (see n. 1), p. 127.

56 Pitt to Eden, 10 June 1786, AUCKLAND (see n. 1), p. 127.

Flood concluded that *the idea of rendering peace durable by entering into a Commercial Treaty with France was, as experience proved, a false suggestion*<sup>57</sup>.

However, Grenville said in the Commons in the debates over the Commercial Treaty that *he could not agree that this country ought to stand forth ready on all occasions to assist others in attacking France, but thought that every measure which could be adopted that was likely to ensure the duration of peace ought to be adopted by her*<sup>58</sup>.

There was a major difference between the attitude of Pitt and that of most of the Cabinet. Richmond, Howe and Sydney all feared French schemes, and Thurlow was highly critical of France<sup>59</sup>. Lord Sheffield summarised the opinions of many about Pitt's defence of Anglo-French rapprochement, *Pitt going on very extravagantly and very absurdly*<sup>60</sup>.

In the summer of 1787 Pitt's attitude altered. This was in accord with a hardening of the British attitude towards France, and an almost obsessive concentration on the struggle between British and French protégés in the United Provinces to the detriment of other aspects of Anglo-French relations. This was largely due to Harris' success in May in forcing the issue to the forefront of ministerial attention. Vergennes' successor Montmorin noted in June, *Nous sommes certains que M. Harris a réussi à fixer sérieusement l'attention du Ministère Anglois sur les affaires de Hollande*. Pollone reported that the crucial ministerial deliberations were secret, *tout s'étant passé entre le Chev. Harris, SM. en personne, et Mr Pitt et Milord Carmarthen dans le Cabinet privé du Roi*<sup>61</sup>.

The normally well-informed »London Chronicle« claimed on 14 July *The Cabinet ... are warmly and earnestly divided upon the subject of Dutch affairs. Mr Pitt and the Marquis of Stafford are stated to be against interfering with the present disputes in Holland, and every other Member of the Cabinet is stated to have declared himself in support of the Prince of Orange*. On 2 August the French envoy in the United Provinces suggested that Pitt *qui ne doit être l'ami de M. Harris* had links of his own in the Orangist party. There is no evidence to support this suggestion. Five days later the »London Chronicle« attributed Pitt, *who had hitherto been much averse to war, determining to support bold, vigorous, and decisive moves, to the unsatisfactory and contemptuous stance adopted by the French in response to British diplomatic approaches over the Dutch crisis*. Pitt's supposed attitude created difficulties for British diplomacy. Reports in the Dutch press and a despatch from the francophile Prussian envoy at The Hague, Thulmeyer, led Prussia to doubt Britain's readiness to

57 Commons' Debate on the Treaty of Commerce with France, 12, 15 Feb. 1787, COBBETT (ed.), Parliamentary History (see n. 25) 26, pp. 422, 432.

58 Grenville, 12 Feb. 1787, COBBETT (ed.), Parliamentary History (see n. 25) 26, p. 408.

59 MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 303; Sydney to Rutland, 23 Oct. 1784, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, pp. 144–5; Duke of York to Cornwallis, 7 Oct. 1786, Ross (ed.), Cornwallis Correspondence (see n. 38) 1, p. 267; Copie d'une lettre de Londres, 19 July 1787, AN. AM. B<sup>7</sup> 453. Dorset referred to Hawkesbury as one of »those who are always preaching up the doctrine of mistrust in French professions of friendship«, Dorset to Eden, 8 Sept. 1786, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 391.

60 Sheffield to Eden, 27 Feb. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 404.

61 Montmorin to Marquis de Vêrac, French envoy in The Hague, 23 June 1787, AE. CP. Hollande 573, f. 215; Pollone to Victor Amadeus III, 22 May, 5 June (quote) 1787, AST. LM. Ing. 88.

support her intervention in the United Provinces, Ewart reporting on 7 July that three days earlier the Prussians had been definitely informed of the British determination *not to interfere at all in Dutch Affairs, in consequence of Representations made by Mr Pitt against it*<sup>62</sup>. It is interesting to note that diplomatic despatches were circulated to members of the Cabinet<sup>63</sup>.

Horn's claim that the relations between Pitt and his foreign minister, Carmarthen, in the 'eighties probably show the high-water mark of direct control of foreign policy by a prime minister is not substantiated by the events of 1787, and Horn was also in error in claiming that Pitt took the initiative in resolving the crisis of 1787<sup>64</sup>. It is possible that Pitt's change of mind in 1787, his new found commitment to an active anti-French policy in the Netherlands, was forced on him. His position in the ministry was not as invincible as has sometimes been thought. Sir Gilbert Elliot, for example, wrote to his wife on 8 March 1787: *the ministry are certainly far from cordial, and the King is certainly no longer in love with his virtuous young friend, and would be very happy to play him just such another trick as he did to the Duke of Portland – that is, to throw him out by a secret interior intrigue, while he seems to be carrying the House of Commons very quietly and securely along with him... (Grenville) it is thought, might not be deemed an unfit instrument of this manoeuvre... there have been various loose conversations and conjectures this session of the possibility of Pitt's going out, and Lord Lansdowne coming in with the Grenvilles-Boguesy (Grenville) to be Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Lansdowne first Lord of the Treasury...*<sup>65</sup>. In fact Lansdowne stood little chance.

However, if Lansdowne's chances were minimal, Pitt's position was far from secure. His parliamentary following was sparse<sup>66</sup>, his personal popularity meagre, and his position dependent on the favour and support of George. Other ministers were jockeying for position. In particular, the ambition of Lord Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor, was notorious. Diplomats noted frequently reports of hostility between

62 Vêrac to Montmorin, 2 Aug. 1787, AE. CP. Hollande 574, f. 13. On Pitt's opposition to war, Barthélemy to Montmorin, 7 Aug. 1787, AE. CP. Ang. 561, f. 22; General Cunninghame to Eden, 28 Aug., Archbishop of Canterbury to Eden, 21 Sept. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 437, 441. Grenville wrote, *unanimity... appears to me to be the one thing most wanted*, Grenville to Marquis of Buckingham, 18 Sept. 1787, Duke of BUCKINGHAM, *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George the Third*, 2 vols., London 1853, 1, p. 325. Carmarthen to Ewart, 26 June, 17 July, Ewart to Carmarthen, 7 July 1787, PRO. FO. 64/11, f. 100, 128, 112–13.

63 Pitt to Stafford, Lord Privy Seal, 27 Aug. 1786, *The Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. George Rose*, edited by L. V. HARCOURT, 2 vols., London 1860, I, 63; Stafford to Pitt, 17 Sept. 1787, San Marino, California, Huntington Library, Hastings MSS. 26018.

64 HORN, *Great Britain and Europe* (see n. 36) pp. 15, 66.

65 Sir Gilbert to Lady Elliot, 27 Mar. 1787, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot* edited by Contess of MINTO, 3 vols., London 1874, I, 140. In July 1786 it was reported that Lansdowne had been offered Carmarthen's post, *Daily Universal Register* 10 July 1786. For the suggestion that Pitt's stance in 1787 was influenced by continued contact between George III and Lansdowne, Cunninghame to Eden, 28 Aug. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 437.

66 Pulteney to Rutland, 28 Feb, Orde to Rutland, 20 May 1786, HMC., RUTLAND, 3, p. 285, 301–2; Horace Walpole to Mann, 5 Mar. 1786, LEWIS (ed.), *Walpole-Mann Correspondence* (see n. 16) 9, p. 565.

George III and Pitt<sup>67</sup>, and of ministerial rivalry<sup>68</sup>. A particular source of tension was Pitt's resistance to George III's efforts to promote Hawkesbury. In 1786, there was a serious dispute over whether the latter should be made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for life. Pitt resisted this strongly, and it was claimed that he threatened to resign over the issue. Newspaper claims must be taken cautiously, but it is important to note that diplomatic sources corroborated the reports of tension<sup>69</sup>. When combined with the difficulties George III had created in 1785 when, as Elector of Hanover, he joined, without consulting his British ministers, the anti-Austrian League of Princes (Fürstenbund) whilst his British ministers were attempting to create an Anglo-Austrian alliance<sup>70</sup>, it could be suggested that relations between George III and the ministry were worse than is usually accepted. In 1785, George's refusal to consult his British ministers over the Fürstenbund had created much embarrassment for the ministry, and had led Catherine II to suggest that George was directing British policy without consulting his ministers, and that Pitt was a cipher<sup>71</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the Cabinet held on 23 May 1787 to decide Britain's Dutch policy was held at the Lord Chancellor's and Harris recorded that Thurlow took the lead. The »London Chronicle« noted, in its issue of 21 July, *Mr Pitt and the Lord Chancellor have been represented as differing materially on the subject of Dutch politics; ...* The anonymous »copie d'une lettre de Londres« of 19 July claimed that Thurlow *a de l'ascendant dans le Cabinet*, and that Pitt had been pressed by a majority of councillors in favour of aiding William V of Orange, *a laquelle M. Pitt a fini par se réunir malgré l'envie qu'il auroit eue de développer les plans qui lui faisaient désirer un ministere pacifique*. On 23 August, Eden wrote to Pitt, *the Dutch business: – I have had a very long and able letter from the Chancellor upon the subject: I do not quite agree as to all his notions*.

67 Barthélemy to Vergennes, 18 July, 22 Aug., 5 Sept., 26 Dec. 1787, AE. CP. Ang. 557, f. 45, 47, 197, 262, 558, f. 321. Rutland wrote in 1786, *I have always supposed that the King's predilection is to Lord Thurlow, and if he could do without Pitt perhaps he would not scruple to sacrifice him*, Rutland to Orde, – July 1786, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 321.

68 Barthélemy to Vergennes, 11 July, 5, 26 Dec. 1786, AE. CP. Ang. 557, f. 31–2, 558, f. 232, 321; Pollone to Victor Amadeus III, 30 Jan. 1787, AST. LM. Ing. 88; Orde to Rutland, 30 Nov. 1784, Pulteney to Rutland, 31 Mar. 1787, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, pp. 152, 380; Daily Universal Register 3, 12 July 1786.

69 Orde to Rutland, 13 May, 1, 29 July 1786, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, pp. 299, 319, 327; Sir Gilbert to Lady Elliot, 21 June 1786, MINTO (ed.), Letters ... Elliot (see n. 65) I, 106; Lansdowne to Francis Baring, 5 Aug. 1786, FITZMAURICE, Shelburne (see n. 7) 2, p. 294; Daily Universal Register 2 Sept. 1786. In 1785 Pitt denied press reports of ministerial disunity, Pitt to Rutland, 8 Aug. 1785, Miscellanies edited by Earl STANHOPE, London 1863, p. 6. Rutland urged a cautious response to *political rumours*, Rutland to the Duchess of Rutland, 29 July 1787, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 401.

70 T. C. W. BLANNING, »That Horrid Electorate« or »Ma Patrie Germanique«? George III, Hanover, and the Fürstenbund of 1785«, in: Historical Journal 20 (1977) pp. 311–344. On the parliamentary dangers presented by Hanover's accession to the Fürstenbund, Pulteney to Rutland, 28 Jan. 1786, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 278. Lansdowne was worried about the consequences of the Hanoverian accession, Orde to Rutland, 19 Oct. 1785, HMC., RUTLAND, 3, p. 250. For a claim that the Fürstenbund could serve British diplomatic interests. Carmarthen to Ewart, 17 June 1785, PRO. FO. 64/7.

71 J. W. MARCUM, »Vorontsov and Pitt: The Russian Assessment of a British statesman, 1785–1792«, in: Rocky Mountain Scientific Journal 10 (1973) pp. 49–51; I de MADARIAGA, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, London 1981, p. 395. Lord Bulkeley to Keith, 8 Mar. 1786, BL. Add. 35536, f. 130.



Thurlow was sent diplomatic despatches, and the mastery of the complicated Dutch situation he revealed in his letter to Eden indicates that he read them carefully<sup>72</sup>.

The whole tenor of government policy in 1787 directly contradicted Pitt's public stance in 1786 and this disparity was exploited by Fox. In the Debate in the Commons on the Address of Thanks, on 27 November 1787: *Mr. Fox reminded the House, how repeatedly he had urged the perfidy and treacherousness of France in the exertion of her influence in foreign states and that when the Commercial Treaty was under discussion last session, and he, among others had expressed his dislike of that treaty, and his conviction, that it would not prove the bond of amity, and secure to us the continuance of the blessings of peace, how much was said of the pacific intentions of France and of the sincerity of her professions of regard and friendship towards this country*<sup>73</sup>.

On 19 October 1784, Carmarthen had sent a despatch to the British Ambassador at Paris, a despatch that might be held to conform to Pitt's aspirations, *Nothing could be more agreeable to His Majesty than the very friendly proof of the sincere disposition of the Court of Versailles to cultivate and perpetuate the present happy state of harmony between the two courts evinced by the sentiments contained in Mr Vergennes note on the subject of the naval force to be respectively maintained by the two powers in India ... a real confidential communication of each other's wishes and intentions seems to be the only circumstance which can at any period be wanting to render to the two powers that degree of weight and consideration in the general system which would entitle them so justly to appear the arbiters of Europe ... narrow and illiberal prejudice will soon lose its effect.*

The subsequent despatch of 6 November was a savage indictment of Pitt's views: *... My letter of the 19th en clair meant to be opened ... The sentiments may indeed be perfectly good in theory but can never with any degree of safety be reduced to practice*<sup>74</sup>. 'Safety' was a factor Carmarthen cared greatly about. He was very conscious of the French naval build-up, their simultaneous construction of naval bases at Cherbourg and Dunkirk and of a fine new fleet, and of the political consequences of these developments. On 21 July 1786, he wrote to Daniel Hailes, the Secretary of the Legation at Paris, that it was, *Still extremely necessary to be attentive to the political conduct of that Court, whether considered as directly affecting the interests of England, or in a more remote though probably not less effectual manner directed in the first instance towards some other powers*<sup>75</sup>.

To Carmarthen, Pitt seemed to be insufficiently concerned with both contingencies. He felt that Pitt ignored the decisive importance of the United Provinces. His attitude was opposed to that of Eden who wrote to George Rose, joint Secretary of the

72 MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 261; Thurlow to Eden, 10 Aug., Pitt to Eden, 8 Oct. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 5) 1, p. 177-84, 217; Pitt to Grenville, 7 Aug., 23 Sept. 1787, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 3, pp. 415, 428. In 1785 Thurlow informed Vorontsov that because of the nature of his office he knew nothing of foreign affairs, Thurlow to Carmarthen, 5 Aug. 1785, BL. Eg. 3498. Burges referred to Pitt and Thurlow as the leaders of the party, HUTTON (ed.), Correspondence-Burges (see n. 14) p. 64; Storer made the same point, Storer to Auckland, 28 Nov. 1790, AUCKLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 378. Pitt was clearly unhappy about the cabinet decision of 23 May, Pitt to George III, 23 May 1787, ASPINALL (ed.), Later Correspondence ... George III (see n. 17) p. 297; Eden to Pitt, 23 Aug. 1787, BL. Add. 34426, f. 9.

73 Fox, 27 Nov. 1787, COBBETT (ed.), Parliamentary History (see n. 25), 26, 1245.

74 Carmarthen to Dorset, 19 Oct., 6 Nov. 1784, LEGG (ed.), Dip. Instr. France (see n. 38) p. 253.

75 Carmarthen to Hailes, 21 July 1786, Dip. Instr. France (see n. 38) p. 262.

Treasury, on 1 November 1787: *I do not know any foreign object, not even the recovery of the Dutch Provinces from France, which, in my opinion, would compensate to England the probable calamities of a war, before she is recovered from the effects of the last war...*<sup>76</sup>. Eden was a keen supporter of better Anglo-French relations. The Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786 is often named appropriately the Eden Treaty. In 1790, he wrote, *my speculations being naturally of the favourable side of every question, ...*<sup>77</sup>. Carmarthen detested Eden, and made no secret of his views. In the eyes of Harris and Carmarthen, Eden's principal failure was his tendency to exonerate French policy<sup>78</sup>. In Eden's defence it could be argued that Eden's analysis of French policy was correct for the period when Vergennes was foreign minister and that the subsequent breakdown in Anglo-French relations during the Dutch crisis was unpredictable and reflected partly a French inability to control their Dutch protégés and partly the impossibility of preventing the Dutch disorders from involving other powers in the swiftly deteriorating situation of July–August 1787<sup>79</sup>. For example, on 23 August, he informed Pitt from Paris, *I have little doubt that it will gradually revert to good order; for the force of this government is of a kind which is not easily shaken even with bad management; ...*<sup>80</sup>.

Eden's assurances were not only inaccurate – for it was widely accepted at the time by both French and non-French commentators that the French response to the Dutch crisis was affected greatly by domestic difficulties<sup>81</sup> – but known to be such by the British ministry. Pitt was fully briefed on the parlous French fiscal situation by Calonne who had taken refuge in England after being replaced as *Contrôleur-Général*. Barthélemy reported that an awareness of the French internal situation was having a major effect on British policy. On 19 August, he dined at Hawkesbury's house. Hawkesbury questioned Barthélemy before dinner on French internal affairs, and at the dinner itself the other guests – Pitt, the Duke of Dorset, British Ambassador in Paris, and William Grenville – devoted a lot of attention to the same topic, and, in particular, to French fiscal difficulties and the constitutional dispute between the French government and the Parlement of Paris. Dorset certainly doubted Eden's analysis of the French situation. He wrote to Eden concerning the French internal troubles on 31 August from Knole, where Carmarthen was staying with him and concluded, *I can conceive nothing more distressing than the situation of many of my*

76 Eden to Rose, 1 Nov. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 5) 1, p. 263.

77 Auckland to Burges, 16 July 1790, Bodl. Burges 30, f.41.

78 Carmarthen to Pitt, 18 Aug. 1784, HMC., LEEDS (see n. 5) p. 53; Barthélemy to Vergennes, 1 Jan. 1786, AE. CP. Ang. 555, f. 6; HUTTON (ed.), Correspondence ... Burges (see n. 14) p. 77. Grenville distrusted Eden, writing in 1787 of *the strong bent of his mind to admit the assertions of the French Government, however unfounded, and to soften our communications, in order to keep back a rupture which he has so great a personal interest to prevent*, Grenville to Buckingham, 19 Sept. 1787, BUCKINGHAM, Court and Cabinets (see n. 62) 1, p. 327.

79 D. MCKAY and H. M. SCOTT, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648–1815*, London 1983, pp. 267–8.

80 Eden to Pitt, 23 Aug. 1787, BL. Add. 34426, f. 11.

81 Mirabeau to Calonne, – July 1786, F. SALLES, *Mirabeau en Prusse (1786)*. *Diplomatie Parallèle ou Agent Secret?*, in: *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* (1977) p. 347; Barthélemy to Montmorin, 14 Aug. 1787, AE. CP. Ang. 561, f. 55; Charles Frederic Willibald, Baron de Groschlag, French Envoy Extraordinary in Berlin, to Montmorin, 6 Sept. 1787, AE. CP. Prusse 207, f. 103; Montmorin to Le Chevalier De La Luzerne, French Abassador in London, 7 Jan. 1788, VAUCHER (ed.), *Recueil ... Angleterre* (see n. 41) 3, p. 544.

friends at Versailles<sup>82</sup>. On the same day, Harris wrote to Eden from The Hague contradicting the latter's defence of French policy,

*The conduct of France here is in direct contradiction to the language held to you by Mons. de Montmorin and the emissaries both avowed and secret of that court never were so violent as at the moment when that minister was in his professions all peace and moderation*<sup>83</sup>.

Carmarthen was convinced that French internal difficulties improved the chances of a successful British intervention in Dutch affairs. In his letter to George III of 3 January 1787, he wrote, *The present situation of France, which implies an extraordinary Convocation des Notables as necessary to be convened in the course of the present month at Versailles, renders a proper degree of exertion on the part of England in respect to the affairs of Holland less liable to any objection than at another period a prudent and apprehensive degree of caution might have thought it liable to*<sup>84</sup>. Pitt felt that French policy was influenced by their domestic situation. In April 1786, he wrote to Eden, *their embarrassment must ... secure at least for a time a sincere disposition to peace*<sup>85</sup>.

Given the success in 1787 of the policy advocated by Carmarthen and Harris it was not surprising that Eden, who had made few friends by his defection from the Opposition<sup>86</sup>, saw his reputation plummet in 1787. In the spring of 1788, he was sent to Madrid as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, an appointment he had envisaged the previous summer as a distant exile<sup>87</sup>.

The parliamentary debates in November 1787 reveal that the attitude Eden expressed in his letter to Rose was not generally held, and that Parliament rejected the policy of 1786 when, as Viscount Stormont argued, the following year, *The highest strains of poetical imagination were employed to depict the serene, unclouded atmosphere which we were in future to enjoy – a state of blissful indulgence, which nothing could cast a shade on but the unfounded jealousies and visionary suspicions of those, who, like himself, were distrustful of Gallic friendship and Gallic faith*<sup>88</sup>. Pitt had

82 Grenville to Buckingham, 8 Jan. 1787, BUCKINGHAM, Courts and Cabinets (see n. 62) 1, p. 321; Barthélemy to Montmorin, 20 Aug. 1787, AE. CP. Ang. 561, f. 72–3; Dorset to Eden, 31 Aug. 1787 BL. Add. 34426, f. 69; Storer to Eden, 5 Oct. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) I, 442–3; *Heads of what the King of Prussia said...*, 17 Sept. 1785, Pitt to Cornwallis, 2, 28 Aug., Dorset to Cornwallis, 10 Nov. 1787, Major General Grenville to Cornwallis, 20 Dec. 1787, Cornwallis to Pitt, 6 Mar. 1788, ROSE (ed.), Cornwallis Correspondence (see n. 59) 1, p. 210, 334, 340, 349–50, 361, 341; Rutland to Sydney, 3 July 1787, HMC., RUTLAND (see n. 5) 3, p. 396. On the danger of a general revolt in France, London Chronicle 25 Aug. 1787.

83 Harris to Eden, 31 Aug. 1787, BL. Add. 34426, f. 72.

84 Carmarthen to George III, 7 Jan. 1787, BROWNING (ed.), Political Memoranda (see n. 17) p. 117. Carmarthen to Ewart, 21 Sept. 1787, PRO. FO. 64/12, f. 40.

85 Pitt to Eden, 19 Ap. 1786, AUCKLAND (ed.), Later Correspondence ... George III (see n. 17) I, 297; Pitt to General Sir Archibald Campbell, Governor of Madras, 28 Aug. 1787, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 3, p. 417.

86 He had played a major role in 1785 in the opposition to the ministry's proposals for a new commercial relationship with Ireland, EHRMAN, Pitt (see n. 6) pp. 207–8. Lord Bulkeley to Keith, 31 Jan. 1786, BL. Add. 35536, f. 44.

87 Eden to Pitt, 23 Aug. 1787, BL. Add. 34426, f. 8; Eden to Lord Loughborough, 8 Nov. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 446.

88 Stormont, 27 Nov. 1787, Lords' Debate on Address of Thanks, COBBETT (ed.), Parliamentary History (see n. 25) 26, 1235.

been at best unrealistic, at worst foolish. His arguments in November 1787 were, as Fox and Stormont pointed out, hypocritical. It was Carmarthen, not Pitt, who could declare truthfully in Parliament that *he had invariably asserted, that, though it was a desirable object for us to live upon good terms with France as long as she would suffer us, yet still we ought to watch all her motions with a jealous eye. Our late success, so far from lulling us into security, would only tend to increase our vigilance*<sup>89</sup>.

The crisis of 1787 had vindicated Carmarthen's stance rather than Pitt's. Diplomatic attempts to settle the disputes in the United Provinces between the Orangists – protégés of the British – and the Patriots – protégés of the French, having failed, the United Provinces had drifted into civil disorder. The situation was resolved in September by a Prussian military intervention, instigated by British diplomatic action and supported by a British naval armament. French attempts to forestall this intervention by means of military preparations failed. As Eden noted in retrospect, *we imposed our conditions on the great rival power to whom we owed some extreme mortification and we at the same time recovered the United Provinces*<sup>90</sup>.

An assessment of the validity of Carmarthen's analysis of Anglo-French relations, as opposed to Pitt's depends partly upon an evaluation of French intentions. In 1788, after the Dutch crisis of the previous year, it was possible to claim that, *La Grande Bretagne est l'ennemi naturel de la France, et le Roi, dans ses rapports actuels, ne peut avoir de guerre que contre cette puissance*<sup>91</sup>. The position in 1784–7 was less clear. France dominated western Europe, but it is unclear that this dominance threatened Britain to the extent that some contemporaries suggested. There was no sign that vital British interests were affected. The Austro-Dutch dispute over the navigation of the Scheldt and the major tension over the Bavarian Exchange scheme – the Austrian proposal for a territorial exchange of Bavaria and the Austrian Netherlands – did not involve, directly, any vital British interests<sup>92</sup>. French policy in 1784–5 threatened rather the traditional British perception of the respective British and French role in European affairs.

It was the growing importance of Dutch internal struggles and the increase in diplomatic attention devoted to them that altered this situation. For the Dutch crisis – with its potential importance in naval and colonial issues – engrossed British attention to an extent that previous issues had failed to do<sup>93</sup>. Furthermore, it was easy to relate to the British perception of a French threat to the British naval and colonial position. As attention focused increasingly on the United Provinces, and as the situation there deteriorated markedly, good Anglo-French relations became progressively more difficult. Neither government acted purposefully to restrain their envoys' – Vêrac and Harris – ardent endorsement of the respective Dutch factions, the Patriots and the Orangists<sup>94</sup>. As so often with great power intervention in the complicated affairs of a

89 Carmarthen, 27 Nov. 1787, COBBETT (ed.), *Parliamentary History* (see n. 25) 26, 1236.

90 Auckland to Burges, 11 Aug. 1790, Bodl. Burges 30, f. 47.

91 *Memoire pour ...* Priest, 14 May 1788, AN. AM. B<sup>7</sup> 454.

92 Harris' claim that *the honour, the welfare, nay, the very existence of England as a great Power, appears to be deeply concerned in the upshot of the present crisis* was excessive, Harris to Carmarthen, 1 Feb. 1785, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 100.

93 *Daily Universal Register* 16 Aug., 2, 20 Oct. 1786.

94 Eden to Pitt, 23 Aug., Elliot to Eden, 16 July 1787, Dorset to Eden, 19 July 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 184, 433, 520; Catherine II claimed that Harris had prepared a plan for a rising in The Hague, Count

smaller state, the policies of the great powers were influenced greatly by their local protégés.

Once the Dutch situation had come to the forefront of British policy, then good relations with France became more difficult. The British were acutely sensitive to signs of French intervention in Dutch politics, and French policy, handicapped by internal tensions and by the natural difficulty of a change in the Secretaryship of State, was sufficiently interventionalist to increase British fears. Had Montmorin been more in control of French policy, it is possible that French policy, as Eden suggested, would have been perceived as less aggressive. However, Montmorin's decision to replace Vêrac was made too late – possibly because Montmorin was more concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Balkans, where Turkey declared war on Russia in August 1787.

In September 1787, Anglo-French tension over the United Provinces reached a high point with France threatening war. However, it is not clear that the tension of this period is the clearest guide to French intentions in 1784–6. There are no signs that France sought war with Britain, and, to that extent, Carmarthen's fears of French policy were unjustified. However, it is equally true that the French view of the status quo was one that left little room for British action<sup>95</sup>. Excluded from influence in European affairs, Britain was expected to accept an active and aggressive French policy of gaining control of European trade. In May 1785 William Fraser, Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, wrote of the Austro-French plan of extending their views and interests by every possible means. Carmarthen wrote of the *bold and ambitious* projects of France and Austria, and of the consequent need for Anglo-Prussian cooperation<sup>96</sup>. Furthermore, the implications of French policy in the United Provinces were extremely serious for British policy. The War of American Independence had revealed the crucial importance of seapower and colonial strength. Thus, Carmarthen and his supporters were justified in viewing the French position with grave suspicion, even though their interpretation of French policy was exaggerated and based on a misunderstanding of the extent of French interest in weakening Britain. Furthermore, Carmarthen and Harris were not only correct in regarding the Dutch situation as serious; they were also correct in feeling that it might be possible to confront France successfully over this issue<sup>97</sup>.

An analysis of British foreign policy in the period 1784–7 suggests that the degree to which Pitt controlled his ministry has been exaggerated. Clearly he could intervene, with great effect, in many spheres of government, including that of foreign policy, but

Séguir, French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to Montmorin, 5 Oct. 1787, AE. CP. Russie 122, f. 133. For George III's dissatisfaction with Harris, George III to Pitt, 6 Aug. 1787, ASPINALL (ed.), *Later Correspondence ... George III* (see n. 17) 1, p. 314.

95 Harris to Ewart, 19 Ap. 1785, MALMESBURY (see n. 20) 2, p. 121; This was Fox's argument, Fox to Richard Fitzpatrick, – Nov. 1785, *Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox* edited by Lord John RUSSELL, 2, London 1853, p. 273.

96 J. L. VAN REGEMORTER, *Commerce et Politique: Préparation et Négociation du Traité Franco-Russe de 1787*, in: *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 4 (1963) pp. 230–257; Fraser to Ewart, 13 May, Carmarthen to Ewart, 14 May 1785, PRO. FO. 64/7.

97 Harris to Grenville, 4 Sept. 1787, HMC., FORTESCUE (see n. 13) 3, pp. 422–3; Lord Sheffield to Eden, 2 Nov. 1787, AUCKLAND (see n. 1) 1, p. 444.

he lacked the time for the sustained involvement necessary to give control over so many spheres. Furthermore, powerful figures, particularly Thurlow and Hawkesbury, had significant independent links with a monarch who was willing and able to adopt an independent course of action. It also throws into grave doubt Pitt's defence of the Eden Treaty of 1786, and makes it clear why so many politicians could doubt Pitt's wisdom and ability. In addition, it is clear that the position of George III deserves more attention. Work on the monarchy in the first half of the eighteenth-century has stressed the importance in British politics of the monarch<sup>98</sup>. This reevaluation of the role of the monarch in eighteenth-century Britain needs to be extended to the reign of George III. Blanning's important article is a significant indication of the work that can be done. Renewed attention to this topic might lead to more substance being lent to Opposition allegations of George III's sinister intentions.

An examination of the period also suggests that the Marquis of Carmarthen has been underrated. He was clearly arrogant and indolent at times, but these judgements of his personality can be no substitute for a considered analysis of his policy and his views. A preliminary survey reveals that he was more flexible and perceptive than has been accepted hitherto. His foreign secretaryship clearly merits further study.

98 R. M. HATTON, *George I*, London 1978; E. GREGG, *Queen Anne*, London 1980; J. B. OWEN, *George II Reconsidered*, in: *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants*, edited by A. WHITEMAN, J. S. BROMLEY and P. DICKSON, Oxford 1973, pp. 113–134; J. M. BLACK, *George II Reconsidered. A consideration of George's influence in the conduct of Foreign Policy in the first years of his reign*, in: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 35 (1982) pp. 35–56. On George III altering despatches, George III to Carmarthen, 17 July 1787, BL. Eg. 3498. On Anglo-Hanoverian relations in the late 1780s, T. C. W. BLANNING and C. HAASE, *Kurhannover, der Kaiser und die »Regency Crisis« von 1788–9*, in: *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 113 (1977) pp. 432–49.