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THE RELATIONS OF BOLINGBROKE AND THE ENGLISH OPPOSITION WITH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT 1731-5

By H. N. FIELDHOUSE

That Bolingbroke was in close correspondence with at least one foreign government at the time of the parliamentary elections of 1734, was one of the charges brought against him by his enemies at the time, and has been a subject for controversy among his biographers ever since.¹ The purpose of this article is to indicate the scope of that correspondence and to determine, as far as possible, the motives which inspired it.

These motives can only be understood if we bear in mind not only the parliamentary situation during the years 1730-5, but also the foreign policy then being pursued by the Walpole Ministry. At home, these were the years in which the parliamentary opposition to Walpole reached its climax; abroad, they were the years of the Polish Succession crisis; and in both respects they marked a turning point in the history of Walpole's administration.

From the time of his return to England in 1725, Bolingbroke had set himself to the task of uniting all who through principle or through personal rivalry were opposed to Walpole's policy or Walpole's position, and by 1730 he had succeeded in bringing together the Jacobites who disliked Walpole's king, the Tories who disliked his interpretation of the constitution, and the malcontent Whigs who disliked his masterful monopoly of power. Discordant as were their aims in other respects, all these groups were at one in their enmity to the Minister, and the defeat of his Excise Scheme in 1733 was the first major success which the new Opposition achieved. It is true that Walpole was to rally his forces and postpone his fall for another nine years, but henceforth, in matters of home policy, he was to be almost permanently on the defensive.

In foreign policy also, the same years marked the end of the period in which Walpole could claim that his measures had been attended by success. For ten years the final aim of his policy had been to consolidate the Hanoverian dynasty and avoid foreign complications. In practice these two aims were one, because the Pretender could only threaten the reigning dynasty if he secured foreign aid, and it was certain that he would have to buy such aid at the expense of England's trade and colonial interests.² Walpole's foreign policy, then, was largely a defensive extension of his internal policy, and its chief purpose was the preservation of European peace. The main threat to that peace, between 1714 and 1730, came from the profound dissatisfaction, felt by both Spain and the Emperor, with the settlement of Utrecht, and the prime purpose of all the diplomatic groupings and shiftings of these years was to arrive at some accommodation of the rival claims of these two Courts. From this point of view, the Treaty of Vienna, of 1731 was the high water mark of Walpole's success. He had succeeded in bringing together Spain and the Emperor in an

¹ e.g. T. MacKnight. *Life of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke* (London 1863) pp. 615-19. W. Sichel. *Bolingbroke and his Times* (London 1901) Vol. 2, pp. 309-15.

² e.g. By concessions to Spain concerning Gibraltar and Minorca, to France in the matter of Dunkirk, or to the Emperor in the matter of his Ostend Company. cf. B. Williams. *The Foreign Policy of England under Walpole*. E.H.R. Vols 15 and 16.

amicable settlement of their Italian quarrels. He had saved Gibraltar, reconfirmed our colonial concessions from Spain, and killed the Emperor's Ostend Company. Moreover he had revived the old friendship between Vienna and the Maritime Powers, and had done this, just as the Anglo-French Alliance, which had persisted since 1717, was visibly cooling off, but before its complete lapse had left England under the necessity of suing for other allies. This settlement, however, was to be Walpole's last success in the field of foreign affairs, and what the failure of his Excise Scheme was to his internal policy, the Polish Succession crisis was to his foreign policy. From the time at which Fleury and Chauvelin³ had replaced the Duc de Bourbon and Morville as the leading spirits of the French Ministry (1726-7) France had been taking an increasingly independent line, and Fleury's handling of the Polish question between 1733 and 1738 definitely destroyed the Walpole's work of 1731, united France and Spain in the Bourbon Family Compact, prepared the way for the crippling of the Empire in the war of the Austrian Succession, isolated England, and clearly established the diplomatic predominance of France.

By the end of 1733, as a result of the Polish crisis, the Treaty of Vienna was already exposed to a double threat. In November, Spain had joined with France to make war on the Emperor, and it was clear that this new alliance of the Bourbon Powers would threaten not only the recently established balance in Italy, but also the overseas interests of England. Further, and as though to emphasize the fact that the initiative had already slipped from English hands, the Dutch, without in any way consulting London, had hastened in the same month to enter into a convention with France, to guarantee the neutrality of the Austrian Netherlands. This was the situation when, in November, the Emperor asked for English help under the terms of the Vienna Treaty.

Fleury was probably from the first largely indifferent to the fate of Poland. He was ready to withdraw his support of Stanislas,⁴ but hinted that in that case something must be done to satisfy French honor. France was debarred by repeated declarations from claiming any territory for herself, but Fleury clearly hoped that England would propose that France should abandon her policy in Poland, accept the Pragmatic Sanction for the Empire, and in return, receive Lorraine. In short, while Chauvelin would have used the Polish Succession crisis to rally all branches of the House of Bourbon in a final reckoning with the Hapsburgs, Fleury meant to use it to forestall a wider and graver succession crisis, that of the Empire. Indeed, Fleury had not let Chauvelin drag him into war until he had made sure that Holland's neutrality would paralyze England, and until he had decided that a profitable way out might be found, by which England would buy a French recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction by consenting to the French acquisition of Lorraine.

Walpole's aim was threefold: to preserve English neutrality and avoid being drawn into war on behalf of the Emperor;⁵ to resume the

³ Germain-Louis de Chauvelin, appointed *Garde des sceaux* in 1727, and secretary of state for foreign affairs under Fleury.

⁴ Stanislas Leczynski, father-in-law of Louis XV and French candidate for the Polish throne.

⁵ His colleagues, Newcastle and Harrington, would have supported George II in his wish to go to the Emperor's assistance. cf. Hervey. *Memoirs of the Reign of George II* (London 1848) Vol. 1, pp. 257 and 371-8, and Coxe. *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole* (London 1798) Vol. 2, pp. 348-9. Even the Queen, usually Walpole's supporter, shared the prevailing warlike views of the Court. cf. Hervey. I. pp. 373-88.

former close understanding with Holland;⁶ and if possible, to bring about a renewal of the conditions of 1731, by arranging a separate pacification between Spain and the Emperor. In consequence, Fleury's main concern with England was firstly, to know to what extent her neutrality could be reckoned upon as permanent, and secondly, to prevent the Walpoles from detaching Spain and arranging a separate Austro-Spanish peace. In this work he was helped by the belief entertained by the Walpole brothers, that Fleury was still their friend, and that the difficulties which English diplomacy was now encountering at Paris were entirely the work of Chauvelin. This illusion, which died hard in the minds of the Walpoles, enabled Fleury to amuse Horace with secret negotiations carried on in the name of their former friendship, while keeping English diplomacy paralyzed by the fear of weakening Fleury, as against Chauvelin, whom the Walpoles regarded as the Cardinal's evil genius. For two years after 1733, therefore, while France matured her policy on the continent, England stood inactive but not finally neutral, between the Emperor, claiming her help in war, and France, protesting that the Walpoles would not definitely promise peace⁷ and it is in terms of this situation at home and abroad, that Bolingbroke's correspondence with agents of the French Government must be understood.⁸

The idea of entering into relations with the English Opposition seems to have been considered by the French Ministry more than a year before the parliamentary elections. On May 22nd 1733 Chavigny⁹ sent home a long despatch in which the possibility of making use of the Opposition in the interests of French policy is freely discussed.¹⁰ He has, he reports, already consulted Windham and Bolingbroke on whose concerted efforts all their plans must depend. Bolingbroke's talents he thinks absolutely necessary to the cause, since the reconciliation of the Whig and Tory opponents of Walpole is entirely his work. Windham, he describes as a man of the highest ability, integrity, and reputation.¹¹ In politics, he reposes him a concealed Jacobite who would welcome the Stuarts provided they would accept the conditions of parliamentary monarchy. He adds, however, that Windham is cautious and has a strong distrust of the Pretender, a distrust which Chavigny attributes to the influence of Bolingbroke, who, he claims, has done more than any man alive to damage the reputation of James Edward.¹²

⁶ For the arguments of Hervey and of Horace Walpole that the Dutch would not go to war, and that England could not move without them. Cf. Hervey I, p. 387 and Coxe III, pp. 181-3.

⁷ Cf. Coxe. *Memoirs of Horatio, Lord Walpole*. (London 1802), p. 173.

⁸ The relations of Fleury and Chauvelin are fully discussed in P. Vaucher. *Robert Walpole et la Politique de Fleury*. (Paris 1924.) There is no overt evidence that Fleury was a party to Chauvelin's dealings with Bolingbroke.

⁹ *Chauvelin's agent, and French Minister Plenipotentiary in London 1731-6*. His despatches are almost all of inordinate length. Horace Walpole calls him "a man of mischief but not of business". Coxe III, p. 308.

¹⁰ *Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique*. Angleterre t. 380, f. 189-225.

¹¹ Sir William Windham, Tory leader and Bolingbroke's friend and mouthpiece. Hervey says of him that "Lord Bolingbroke's closet was the school to which he owed all his knowledge of foreign affairs—and—of many facts that—got him reputation in Parliament". *Memoirs I*, pp. 27-8.

¹² In a shorter despatch under the same date, Chavigny reports that Bolingbroke's anti-ministerial writings are having a widespread effect, and suggests means of obliging him and Lady Bolingbroke in matters touching the latter's family interests in France. A. E. corr. Angl. t. 380. f. 227.

The first sign that Bolingbroke was prepared to become a party to a French negotiation is to be found in a letter written to his life-long friend Matignon on June 30th.¹³ He begins with a reproach to France for her long neglect of her true friends in England.¹⁴ That, however, is a matter of the past. For the future, his own inclinations are towards that retirement "à laquelle l'approche de la vieillesse et la longue contrariété de la fortune ne convient que trop". If he consents to serve it is because he discerns emerging from the effort of the last 8 years a national union which will transcend the quarrels of faction,¹⁵ and because in this new and national Opposition, a rehabilitated Tory party is ready to play its part.¹⁶ As for the supporters of Walpole, whether Ministerial Whigs or renegade Tories, they are nothing more than "des troupes mercenaires que le ministre a achetés". Such men may form a third or even a majority of both Houses of Parliament, but they have no support in the nation which is being firmly united by the corruption and usurpation of the Ministry.¹⁷ In the face of this danger, all distinctions of party have disappeared, and it would be impossible to find "une opposition parlementaire plus déterminée, secondée d'une approbation plus Générale". In these circumstances, wisdom should incline the Crown to give up its Ministers rather than forfeit the affection of its people.¹⁸ Unfortunately, George II confounds the interest of the Throne with that of his Ministers, and by taking upon himself the odium of the policy which they dictate, has produced a situation in which king and ministers stand upon the one side, while the nation as a whole is ranged upon the other.

From this general review the writer passes to an analysis of the Opposition. Both as to the capacity of the Jacobites and as to the motives of the discontented Whigs, he has no illusions. The Jacobites, he writes, are few in number and have no definite plans.¹⁹ His Whig allies, though more numerous, aim at removing Walpole only in order to occupy

¹³ *Ibid.* t. 380. f. 318-34. The Marquis de Matignon had been one of Bolingbroke's circle in his first exile at Marceilly in 1716.

¹⁴ "L'expérience de 20 ans passés démontre que ceux auxquels vous étiez liés alors que vous avez tant négligé depuis et à la ruine desquels il n'a pas tenu à vous que la dernière main ne fut mise, sont les seuls dont les principes les vœux et les intérêts puissent y répondre de leur fidélité à garder les engagements qu'ils prennent avec la France". Chavigny also reports that the Tories contrast the French desertion of their cause after 1713 with the help given to the Whigs by the Dutch. *Ibid.* t. 380. f. 221.

¹⁵ "L'avantage que nous avons tiré de cette réunion des Whigs et des Tories qui s'est ménagée il y a huit ans. . . ne consiste pas tous dans l'augmentation du nombre de ceux qui s'opposent de concert dans les deux chambres aux mesures de la cour, que dans l'établissement d'un principe d'opposition capable de réunir tous les partis, qui les a réunis en effet et qui en devenu au pied de la lettre l'esprit de la nation".

¹⁶ "Les Torys n'ont plus le désavantage d'être regardés et de pouvoir être traités impunément comme une cabale qui ne vise qu'à la destruction d'un établissement fait par les lois du Royaume. Ils reprennent leur rang, leur crédit et leur conséquence dans l'Etat. Ceux qui étaient les plus zélés partisans de la maison d'hannover. . . ce joignent à eux et font cause commune avec eux".

¹⁷ He describes "l'insolence du ministre, son administration quelque fois puerile, toujours inique, et cette rapine universelle qu'il autorise par son exemple et qu'il protège par son pouvoir", and says that there is a universal belief that "les mesures que les Ministres prennent sous prétexte de soutenir ce Gouvernement qui est la creature du peuple et qui n'a été établi que pour assurer ses libertés, tendent à détruire ces memes libertés par des voies plus lentes et moins directes, mais en meme tems plus seures que toutes celles qui ont été suivies par d'autres Ministres dans le siècle passé".

¹⁸ "Les plus grands de nos rois dans des cas moins forts que celui-cy ont eru qu'il étoit de la bonne politique de céder au torrent et de ne pas perdre leur peuple pour conserver leurs Ministres".

¹⁹ For the most part they are "jacobites. . . par l'habitude, car je n'en connois presque pas qui le soient par principes. Ils n'ont ni plan General ni projet détaillé." They merely await "que quelque accident favorable les menera à leur but".

his place themselves.²⁰ Greater than either of these groups, however, is the mass of those who are for a fundamental change of measures, those "qui veut forcer la Cour a changer de Ministre afin de s'assurer qu'elle changera de conduite", and important though the Jacobites and Malcontents may be, they must of necessity, he thinks, throw in their lot with this wider and more "national" opposition.²¹ What will happen on the morrow of their common triumph he admits that he cannot say, but he reminds his French correspondent that, whatever its outcome, the concert which is to be established between the Opposition and France will so hamper the Government as to prevent it from acting effectively abroad.²²

This was in fact the advantage which Chauvelin most probably proposed to himself when he allowed Chavigny to open the negotiation. An overthrow of the Walpole Ministry, & still more a Stuart restoration, were remoter possibilities which it might or might not prove practicable or desirable for France to help to bring about, but an Opposition so seriously embarrassing the English Government as to prevent it from intervening effectively on the Continent until such time as French policy in Poland & Lorraine had achieved its aims, was an immediate advantage which the Garde des Sceaux could fully appreciate. In the words of Chavigny, France should seek not to cure the confusion reigning in England but to perpetuate it.²³

If, however, Chauvelin was concerned mainly to embarrass a Government upon whose continued neutrality all his Continental combinations depended, Chavigny was at least toying with the idea of a Stuart restoration. On July 1, 1733,²⁴ he reports that he has been cultivating William Pulteney but fears to make any premature revelation of his plans because of the Englishman's instability & lack of discretion. Windham, he thinks, is the only one with whom he can go forward without risk of being unduly compromised. Windham, however, though eager for a change of Government remains inflexible against the Old Pretender, not, according to Chavigny, because of any personal aversion, but because the Tories' alliance with the malcontent Whigs makes it more than ever necessary to give no ground for a charge of Jacobitism. In any case, both Windham & Bolingbroke are inclined to look not to the Old Pretender but to one of his children, as being more likely to accept a restoration upon the principles of 1688.²⁵ The truth seems to be that the negotiation was on the way to tread once more the familiar ground of 1714. A French agent was looking to a Jacobite descent either as a coup to supervene upon the internal discord between an unpopular Government and a national Opposition, or as a weapon in the hands of France if England should eventually depart from her neutrality. But the English parties to the plan were insistent that the

²⁰ Their aim is "de profiter d'une revolution de Ministère. et pourveu que la Cour change de mains—ils ne soucient guerre quelle change des mesures.

²¹ "Se cacher pour ainsy dire dans la foule de ceux qui s'opposent a la Cour.

²² Such a concert "empeschera cette cour de s'opposer a vos mesures et a vos vues sur le continent avec aucun effet considerable".

²³ The French aim "n'est pas tant de guerir le mal que de l'entretenir Les anglois ne cesseront de nous nuire, que lors qu'ils seront hors d'etat de nous nuire. Il me semble que nous ne pouvons les souhaiter dans une situation plus favorable par rapport a nous, que celle qui existe". *Ibid* t. 381. f. 35-6.

²⁴ *Ibid*. t. 381. f. 28.

²⁵ *Ibid*. t. 281. f. 30. "Il n'est donc pas surprenant qui si luy et Md. Boolimbrock aperçoivent l'esperence ou la necessite d'un changemens, ils recherchent les enfants parcequ'ils sont plus propres que le pere a se mettre en etat d'etre appellés ou d'etre recues sur les principes de la revolution".

Restoration should be carried out within the Protestant & Parliamentary framework of the Revolution Settlement, & from the first Chavigny doubted the possibility of this condition being fulfilled. "Je doute" he writes to Chauvelin on July 17th, "qu'on amene le Chevalier aux conditions que l'on estime absolues pour le retablir sur les principes de la revolution".²⁶ Accordingly he is careful to distinguish between the more immediate possibility of a "reformation" of the Government & the altogether remoter possibility of a Stuart restoration. If any hint of the latter leaks out, he writes, Bolingbroke's coalition will be extinguished & with it all hope of the former will be destroyed. The French Court should therefore enter into no commitments with the Pretender, but pursue its negotiations with the Opposition, reserving a Jacobite attempt until such time as the opportunity & the interests of France should dictate. Meanwhile he reports, "nous nous introduirons sous ce motif (i.e. l'objet de la reformation) dans la confiance du parti: nous nous mettrons par degrès en liaison avec luy et luy avec nous. C'est ce que Md. Bolimbroke espere, et dont je ne desespere pas."

That he had succeeded in "introducing" himself appears from his report of July 1st. An arrangement has been made, he writes, through Matignon, by which Bolingbroke is to receive £3,000 per annum,²⁷ & in Chavigny's view, his Government should not grudge the price.²⁸ The same despatch reveals the fact that there had been hesitations upon the English side. Chavigny reports that Bolingbroke asks to be consulted before France makes any public declaration of policy on the continent.²⁹ He reports also, that both Windham and Bolingbroke are nervous about French intentions in the Pays-Bas and that he has been at pains to reassure them.³⁰ It seems certain, indeed, that Bolingbroke did not regard the acceptance of an election subsidy as a surrender of his policies to French keeping. He was, in effect, paid to be of his own opinion. "M. le Marquis de Matignon" writes Chavigny, "qui le connoit mieux que moy garantira que son default n'est point d'etre interessé, qu'il est plutot capable d'agir par sentiment."

By July 20th 1733, Chavelin had so far lent an ear to the plans of his agent in London as to write to Bolingbroke himself.³¹ The following day, however,³² he wrote to Chavigny warning him that he found his plans to be either too vague or concerned with objects too remote, and although he

²⁶ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 107 et seq.

²⁷ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 34-6.

²⁸ "Vous gagnez a peu de frais un acteur qui est la lumière de son parti, est qui peut selon les occurrences diriger les arcboutants a ce qui nous conviendra. Il estime qu'une depense plus grande que celle que je vous propose seroit inutile pour le present, mais qu'il peut survenir tel cas ou l'on ne devoit pas craindre de l'augmenter pour frapper un grand coup."

²⁹ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 40-1. "M. de Bollingbrook prevoyant que vous ne pouvez prendre aucun parti qui ne soit precedé d'une declaration pour annoncer a toute l'Europe le plan de votre conduite, il voudroit estre consulter avant de mettre au jour une pareille declaration. Un mot de plus ou moins n'est pas indifferent selon luy pour rendre notre conduite aux yeux des anglais plus ou moins populaires". The Bolingbroke whose proclamations of 1715 had been mutilated by the Pretender had reason to understand the importance of "un mot plus ou moins".

³⁰ He told them that if the Opposition allowed England to enter the war, it would provide the harassed Walpoles with a welcome diversion, and that even if France were compelled to take action, she could seek a decision more speedily and certainly elsewhere than in the Pays-Bas.

³¹ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 81-3. Chauvelin's despatches are in a very illegible hand, and disfigured by frequent deletions and alterations.

³² *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 84-5.

adds that the Opposition can reckon upon French support³³ it is clear that he was more concerned to have them harass Walpole than to support them in any movement to restore the Pretender. For the former service he was ready to pay, and on August 14th he repeated his satisfaction with Bolingbroke and expressed his readiness to contribute to the election funds of the Opposition.³⁴ His decision was not made too soon, for on August 5th, Chavigny had reported that Bolingbroke was still afraid that France would not lend him the requisite support.³⁵ In Chavigny's view, Bolingbroke had explained himself with candour in his Memorial, had promised only what he could perform, and was now asking whether or not France would adopt his proposal. In his despatch of August 28th, Chavigny, insists that such an opportunity of gaining a footing in English affairs should not be missed,³⁶ and repeats his argument that by using the present situation to hold the balance between the parties which divide the English nation, France may keep the English Government fully occupied at home.³⁷

While, however, it was always this immediate French interest which he urged upon his superior in Paris, Chavigny was still continuing to flirt with the idea of a Jacobite coup. On July 1st, 1733, he had reported that Lord Gower was ready for a Stuart Revolution but despaired of the Old Pretender.³⁸ By the 17th, he had been brought to think that Gower might be their best instrument,³⁹ and on August 28th he suggested that if the Pretender applied to Paris, the French Government might prepare him to receive suitable counsels without, however, raising premature hopes.⁴⁰

Chavigny's own private estimate of the possibility of a Stuart restoration is revealed in his despatch of February 9th, 1734.⁴¹ Pulteney has

³³ "Nous ne leur manquerons pas au besoin et ils peuvent compter sur nous."

³⁴ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 163. "Nous sommes prêts à l'aider: ainsi vous aures soin de scaavoir par luy de quelle somme il auroit besoin actuellement. . . . Nous sentons de quelle importance il est que les elections soient favorables au parti opposé. . . ."

³⁵ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 167 et seq.

³⁶ Nous acquerons a peu de fraix un interet principal dans sa Cour. Nous assisterons un homme qui en est la lumière. Le moindre service qu'il puisse nous rendre est d'imprimer dans ses alliés des principes qui puissent nous convenir pour tout ce qui peut arriver dans le continent. Je serois bien fâché que nous echapassions une occasion si heureux et que nous romprons un concert qui peut etre si utile. . . .

³⁷ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 223 et seq. "Notre affaire est de faire la guerre à l'œil, de profiter de tout, pour l'Angleterre soit si occupée au dedans qu'il ne luy soit pas loisible de nous nuire au dehors". Chavigny asked that the banker Guillaume should be allowed to draw a sum not exceeding forty thousand livres from M. de Montmartel (the first instalment to be 11,000) in such a way that the banker should think that the money was intended for Chavigny. This was apparently done, for on Sept. 28th, Chavigny reports "J'attendes avec impatience le retour de Fabricius (Bolingbroke). Je tiens a sa disposition les fonds que je fais tirer successivement sur M. de Marmontel". *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 354.

³⁸ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 51-3. Gower had been "si bien illuminée et si bien rassuré" by Bolingbroke that he had pressed for an interview with Chavigny. Bolingbroke had replied that the Frenchman was too wise to base his reports to Paris on the word of one man, whereupon Gower had retorted that he could speak for the party, which was ready to receive the Old Pretender at the hands of France provided that the principles of 1688 were accepted and followed. An amusing touch is provided by Chavigny's report that "Md. Gower pour exciter M. Bollingbrook Luy promet qu'on luy elevera des statues dans tous les coins du royaume s'il peut porter le ministere de france a adopter et a pour suivre l'affaire sur ces pieds.

³⁹ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 107. et seq. When Bolingbroke first approached Gower with some account of what was afoot, Gower at first feared that France might restore the Stuarts by force, or might find it to her interest to create civil war in England and then abandon the game. Once reassured, he proposed the sending of someone to explain the situation to the Pretender but Bolingbroke suggested that it would be better for them to treat with Chavigny and let the Pretender treat with the Court of France.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 223 et seq. He had suggested earlier, as a result of Gower's objections to the Old Pretender, that the latter should abdicate his rights in favour of his children and entrust their case to France. *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 51-3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* t. 383. f. 251 et seq.

said that if the Pretender could contrive to appear in a time of confusion, he, Pulteney, would be the first to declare for him, and Chavigny comments that it would be hard to reconcile this "grand mot" with Pulteney's great love for the Constitution were it not that the Opposition "ne scavent point tous tant qu'ils sont ou ils vont, et qu'ils iront d'eux mems plus loin qu'ils ne veulent aller." Accordingly he advises that "le mieux pour les captiver est de carresser leur confiance a mesure que l'on s'y establit; ne paroître vouloir que ce qu'ils veulent, ou ce qui leur convient, leur laisser le choix des objets et des moyens, s'offrir de bonne grace et de bonne foy selon les occasions qu'ils nous offriront." His hope apparently, was that the King, by obstinate adherence to the unpopular Walpoles would change a Ministerial defeat into a revolution, & if this should happen and war should break out, France, he saw, should follow the example of William of Orange, i.e. "ne paroître avoir d'autre objet, ny d'autre motif, en general que de proteger la liberté, meme la constitution telle que ceux qui en sont le plus jaloux l'entendent et voudront l'entendre." This cautious approach, he writes, was his original impression on reaching England & further experience has only confirmed it, for although the Malcontents may raise the nation against the King & Parliament, & turn for help to France, "il faut qu'ils soient plus enragés qu'ils ne le sont."⁴²

On March 26th however, he submitted a long despatch which shows that a Jacobite restoration was never a serious possibility, by admitting that there was no basic principle of union in the Opposition.⁴³ Agreed on the need to destroy Walpole, they were agreed upon nothing else,⁴⁴ & Chavigny realised that while this could be made to serve the interests of France,⁴⁵ it spelled failure not only to the Jacobites, but also to that "national" system which Bolingbroke had undertaken to found.

Nor was this Chavigny's only difficulty. As early as July 25th, 1733, Chauvelin had warned him "que le ministère (i.e. the Walpoles) commence a prendre une sorte d'inquietude de vos liasons avec les mecontents"⁴⁶ and on October 30th, he had found it necessary to reply at length to complaints as to his relations with Bolingbroke.⁴⁷ In April 1734, he writes

⁴² In the same report he writes that under cover of opposing the Government's electoral list for Scotland, there has been regular co-operation between the English and Scottish Malcontents under the brother of the late Marr, and adds "Fabricius y a plus cooperé que personne parcequ'il en a mieux senti les consequences, si les choses viennent a un certain point de maturité. In the previous August he had reported that the Opposition leaders were met to report progress with regard to the forthcoming elections and had noted that "Fabricius y disposera les esprits et les matières par rapport aux affaires politiques".

⁴³ *Ibid.* t. 384. f. 227 et seq.

⁴⁴ "Ce n'est point tant faute de courage que de confiance et d'union entre eux. Ils s'accordent sur la destruction du Ministère, mais il n'en est pas de meme aussitot qu'il est question de le remplacer. Il faut quelque motif ou quelque objet plus grand pour les reunir". In the previous July he had reported that Carteret, who seemed most likely to replace Walpole, would probably be content to substitute one whig faction for another, but that he would have to reckon with the Tories and with "l'austerité des principes de Chevalier Wyndham."

⁴⁵ "Il est moralement impossible que tant de nuages qui se forment et qui s'assemblent n'excitent pas icy une tempete; en attendant, l'opposition qui n'est qu'un moyen pour ceux qui la conduisent est un fin pour nous."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* t. 381. f. 102.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* t. 382. f. 84. "Mes liasons avec Md. Bolimbrock quoique menagées, sont celles qui desplaisent le plus. Si l'on étoit plus équitable on ne trouveroit pas au dire que je luy rende, et surtout a Mme. Bolimbrock, tous les soins que je recoive de leur amitié. Après tout, comme l'a dit si bien Md. Chesterfieldt, il y a plus d'un an, la maison d'un Ministre de France doit être ouverte a tous les honetes gens, et l'on ne peut qu'estimer sa discretion dans l'usage qu'il fait de leur commerce et de leur société".

that Horace Walpole has complained to a third person that the French have little confidence in the stability of his brother's Government and that in this respect their intelligence must be derived through Chavigny from Bolingbroke.⁴⁸ In July Horace again returned to the charge, this time approaching Chavigny directly to express his fear lest Lady Bolingbroke and Matignon, who were both at that time in France, should misrepresent the situation to Chauvelin.⁴⁹

The effect of these two factors, Chavigny's perception of the disunion in the Opposition, and Chauvelin's need to observe a correct attitude with regard to the Government, can be seen in their correspondence during the autumn of 1734. On October 8th, Chauvelin had written to Chavigny expressing his interest in the opening of Parliament and advising that the Opposition should either attack the Government, or, by affecting to support its policy of neutrality, prevent it from moving to support the Emperor. Of these alternatives, the second would be the more suited to the interests of France and he was ready to support the Opposition in carrying it out.⁵⁰ Chavigny's reply of November 1st, shows a marked change of tone.⁵¹ He wishes, rather than hopes, that the Opposition leaders will come to sufficient agreement among themselves & with him, to permit of France dictating their conduct in Parliament, & advises his superior "tenir d'une main la porte ouverte au ministere pendant que vous auriez l'autre dans l'opposition." Nor has he his former confidence in Bolingbroke. He admits that the latter's good faith & that of his wife, are beyond question,⁵² but adds that Bolingbroke's influence is declining rapidly & that he is on ill terms with his former allies.⁵³ He reports that he is no longer giving Bolingbroke any information, & warns his Court to let no hint of this reach Lady Bolingbroke, since she conceals nothing from her husband which is for his interest or safety.

In these circumstances the hope of a Jacobite rising became more chimerical than ever & French traffic with the Opposition was henceforth limited to the more practicable purpose of penetrating the real intentions of the Walpoles in the matter of the Polish Succession. In this matter Chavigny was still glad to have Bolingbroke's advice, for as he wrote "quoyque l'on estime moins son caractere que ses lumieres, elles sont si grandes qu'ils seront trop heureux d'y recourir et d'en user." On November 5th, he reported Bolingbroke's reasoned conviction that neither the English Government nor the Dutch meant war & that it would not be difficult for France to come to terms with the latter.⁵⁴ Six days later Chauvelin replied discounting Bolingbroke's optimism in this last matter,

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* t. 385 f. 34.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* t. 387. f. 28. As a matter of fact, in announcing Lady Bolingbroke's approaching visit, on June 10th, Chavigny had suggested to Chauvelin that she was in a position to give much useful information, and that any courtesy shown to her would be well repaid. *Ibid.* t. 386. f. 362.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* t. 388. f. 178. "Ceux cy en sont convenus, et Fabricieus a demandé a faire passer par votre canal les choses dont il pourroit estre necessaire que nous fussions instruits. Ainsy c'est sur le meme principe que vous devez vous expliquer avec luy quand vous aurez occasion de le faire".

⁵¹ *Ibid.* t. 389. f. 14.

⁵² "Fabricius est sans doute de bonne foy avec vous; le dame que vous savez ne demande qu'a faire et a bien faire".

⁵³ *Ibid.* t. 389. f. 19. et seq. "Son crédit est dechu depuis quelques mois, bien des choses. . . l'on dégouté de ses amis, et il n'a pas pris garde qu'en le dégoutant d'eux, il les a dégouté de luy. Ils se sont plaints amerement a moy de son humeur et de son oisiveté; j'ay senti avec eux qu'il deviendroit aussi inutile a luy mesme qu'a son parti.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* t. 389. f. 65.

& while urging Chavigny to keep Bolingbroke & his friends properly instructed, warned him to be cautious lest the Opposition should decide to gamble upon the possibility of a declaration of war upsetting the Government, & in consequence, declare for it.⁵⁵ Accordingly, on Nov. 19th, Chavigny replied that he had thoroughly explained Chauvelin's views to Bolingbroke who, however, still clung to his opinion that Walpole did not intend war.⁵⁶ In this view, Chavigny concurs, although he agrees with Chauvelin that the Government will try to bring Holland into their measures. With regard to Chauvelin's "point de delicatesses," the fear that the Opposition may find its interest in pushing the Ministry into war, he adds, "c'est le cas ou Fabritius nous est et nous sera bien necessaire pour preparer et diriger les debats de la Chambre basse a une bonne fin" The whole tone of the correspondence, indeed, at this time, makes it clear that Chavigny & Chauvelin were leaning heavily on Bolingbroke's advice,⁵⁷ & equally clear that they had no intention of keeping faith with him. For example, when in January 1735 Bolingbroke asks that Paris shall supply Chavigny with all papers & memoirs which may go to establish the weakness & irregularity of the Government's handling of the Polish question,⁵⁸ Chavigny's advice to Chauvelin is that he should hesitate to place this weapon in the hands of the Opposition for use against a Ministry whose present weakness consents so excellently with French purposes.⁵⁹ The present situation, he thinks, in which the Government does not want war, & in which the Opposition is not sufficiently strong or united to force it into war, is one which France should be in no hurry to see changed.⁶⁰ In these circumstances, it is not surprising that on January 14th Chavigny reports that he finds Bolingbroke's temporary absence "not inconvenient" while he, Chavigny, concert's plans with Windham.⁶¹

In truth Bolingbroke's hopes of the past ten years were already disappointed. Chavigny himself faithfully recorded the fact on February 28th.⁶² As we have seen, the Opposition and their French allies were far from being united in purpose. Chauvelin was concerned with the parliamentary position in England only in so far as he could exploit it to distract the Government from affairs abroad, and if Chavigny sometimes seemed to be letting himself be drawn into the party struggle, he was always mindful of the immediate interests of his own Court and never allowed his commitments to the English Opposition to obscure those interests. Similarly, there was never any real union between Bolingbroke, who aimed at a return

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* t. 389. f. 79 et seq.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* t. 389. f. 125.

⁵⁷ On Feb. 2nd, 1735, Chavigny does Bolingbroke the justice to report that the latter "a mis les choses et les esprits dans le mouvement où vous les voyés, et que personne ne pourroit mieux que luy suggerer les conseils et les moyens qui peuvent y estres plus utiles." *Ibid.* t. 390. f. 121.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* t. 390. f. 21. On Dec. 1734 Chauvelin had sent what he calls his "plan que l'on peut suggerer aux opposants". *Ibid.* t. 389. f. 156.

⁵⁹ "Il y a bien a deliberer s'il nous convient de jeter si vite ce poids sur un Ministere dont la faiblesse nous est si commode pour le present, et dont la durée peut être si avantageuse pour l'avenir".

⁶⁰ "Tant que cette position dure nous sommes bien, et souvent le mieux est le plus grand ennemi du bien".

⁶¹ *Ibid.* t. 390. f. 58. It appears that by this time the Malcontent Whigs were pressing for war in order to unmask the Ministry & that Chavigny was working upon Windham to prevent this. *Ibid.* t. 390. f. 77 et seq.

⁶² *Ibid.* t. 390. f. 265.

to a literal interpretation of the constitution as it stood in 1688, and his Whig allies, who were more concerned with places than with programmes.⁶³ He himself, as we have seen, had no illusions on this score. As he was to write to Lyttleton in 1741: "The principle of each side is vicious. He, (Walpole) means to maintain his power and they (Walpole's rivals) to wrest it into their own hands; and these two interests have been and will be substituted constantly by them to the interests of the nation."⁶⁴ At the time of Walpole's fall in 1742, he wrote to Marchmont: "Long before I left Britain, it was plain, that some persons meant that the opposition should serve as their scaffolding, nothing else; and whenever they had a glimpse of hope, that they might rise to power without it, they showed the greatest readiness to demolish it."⁶⁵

Unless we are to regard this disillusioned view of his Whig allies as wisdom after the event, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Bolingbroke was engaged in a labor of which he never expected to reap the fruits. What then were his motives in engaging in it? That he ever seriously thought of a Stuart restoration seems incredible. Quite apart from his public professions,⁶⁶ all his private correspondence after 1716 reveals his contempt for Jacobite aims and methods. We have seen Chavigny's statement that Bolingbroke had done more than any man alive to discredit James Edward, and we know from the Stuart Papers that the dislike was mutual.⁶⁷ One obvious explanation of his conduct would be to attribute it to a wish for revenge upon Walpole, and it is true that by 1735 the conflict between the two had become a private vendetta. It seems probable, however, that motives of personal resentment were not unmixed in Bolingbroke's mind with reasons of public policy. Between 1710 and 1714 he had tried, while accepting the Revolution, to restore the Tory party to that supremacy which it had enjoyed in 1688. Between 1726 and 1735, he was trying by way of coalition to re-introduce the Tory party to the public stage, and in so doing he was rendering a public service. For ever since 1715, the new system of government by party had suffered from the weakness of one of its elements. The Tories' one real bond of union, their dislike of Dissenters and their attachment to the Anglican tradition of the previous century, was paralysed by their Protestant fear of the return of a Catholic king, and until in George III they found a Protestant ruler with Tory sympathies, they never escaped from this dilemma. From the accession of George I, therefore, until the restoration of Toryism as a parliamentary party by the younger Pitt, the real two-party cleavage of English parliamentary life was virtually in abeyance, and the evils of the Walpolean age which Bolingbroke denounced, were the results of that abeyance.⁶⁸ Under the first two Georges, England was in effect governed by one party with no sufficient check upon its appetite, and the Whigs

⁶³ For Hervey's description of the jealousies between the opposition leaders, cf. *Memoirs* I, p. 299. Of Pulteney, Hervey writes "He never liked the people with whom he acted in his public character, nor loved those with whom he passed his idle hours." *Memoirs* I pp. 9-10.

⁶⁴ M. Wyndham. *Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century* pp. 89-92.

⁶⁵ *Papers of the Earls of Marchmont* (London 1831) II, p. 273.

⁶⁶ *A Letter to Sir William Windham*. 1717.

⁶⁷ *Hist. Mss. Comm. Calendar of Stuart Papers belonging to H.M. The King*. Vols. 2-6. In all the correspondence of Jacobite agents 1716-18 no epithet is too bad to be applied to Bolingbroke.

⁶⁸ G. M. Trevelyan. *The Two-Party System in English Political History*. (Oxford 1926)

were able to destroy the power of the Crown while posing as its sole defenders against the alleged Jacobite leanings of the Tories. In this situation, the two traditional parties lost their *raison d'être*. The old Tory party, traditionally the party of obedience, was baffled by the displeasure of Hanoverian kings and by the taint of Jacobitism. The old Whig party, traditionally the party of resistance, was corrupted by too much basking in the royal favor and a too lengthy monopoly of office and power.⁶⁹ It is a legitimate criticism of Walpole that he perpetuated and artificially fostered this morbid condition. When he came to power in 1721, the bulk of the English Tories desired nothing better than to be reconciled to the House of Hanover. We have the admission of his creature, Hervey, that in England, if not in Scotland, Jacobitism was already dead as a political force.⁷⁰ In these circumstances a true friend of the new dynasty would have worked to reconcile it with a great historic party, by ending as soon as possible the period of Whig monopoly and vindictiveness. As it was, Walpole worked for twenty years to keep the Tories in permanent exclusion and alienation by affecting to confound their principles with those of the Pretender, and in so doing he did a major disservice to the dynasty which he upheld, and prolonged an artificial condition. It is not surprising that with this situation before his eyes, Bolingbroke came to treat as the fruits of the party system, evils which really sprang from the too jealous monopoly of power by one party.⁷¹ That very natural motives of personal revenge sharpened his perception of what was unhealthy in Walpole's administration need not be denied, but it is equally true that his opposition at this period made clear two undeniable truths: that in the period since 1714 the labels of Whig and Tory, in terms of their original association and significance, had become practically meaningless, and that Walpole was maintaining a proscriptive of the Tories upon grounds which had no basis in fact or in justice.⁷²

Bolingbroke's withdrawal to France in June 1735 has always been a subject for speculation. We have seen from Horace Walpole's complaints to Chavigny, that something of Bolingbroke's relations with France was known to the Government. To the Swedish Minister in Paris, Horace wrote that, at the time of the Excise Scheme, Chavigny was acting in strict confidence with the Opposition and especially with Bolingbroke and his particular intimates. He complained that Chavigny "lives, eats and drinks with the enemys of the king's government", and called him "the crea-

⁶⁹ Hervey. *Memoirs* 1, p. 4.

⁷⁰ *Memoirs* 1, p. 5. where he says that the Jacobite party consisted only of a few veterans by principle and some others who made it "a point of honor not to quit the name though their attachment to the person of the Pretender was—entirely dissolved—and their hopes of his success quite worn out."

⁷¹ The considerations which led Bolingbroke to attack the party system can be seen in his letter to Marchmont on July 22nd 1739. There he clearly points to the abnormal situation created by the events which had given one party a prolonged monopoly of power and kept the other under permanent suspicion of disloyalty to the establishment, and argues that while this situation continues, so also will the paradox by which the establishment is supported by methods destructive of the constitution. *Marchmont Papers* II, pp. 186-8.

⁷² Cf. *A Dissertation on Parties* (1733-4) Letters 5 to 8; and the *Craftsman*. Nos. 17, 40, 59, 66, 92, and 103.

ture of Lord Bolingbroke, his devoted admirer and disciple."⁷³ It may be true, therefore, as Coxe believed, that Bolingbroke's withdrawal only forestalled an exposure of his cabals by the Government. He himself said that he withdrew because he could no longer be of service either to himself or to his friends. He always insisted that he had been happy in his first exile, that only the hopes held out by George I of a complete restoration, had drawn him out of his retirement, and that since that king's death had defeated these hopes, he had remained in England only so long as his co-operation was useful to his friends and allies. Now that they despaired of success he felt free to withdraw.⁷⁴

In either case, defeat and the desertion of his allies would suffice to explain his retirement. Throughout the struggle he had labored under one capital handicap, his exclusion from parliament. In the "Craftsman," he supplied the Opposition with a literary organ which none of the writers on the Government side could ever rival, but his pamphleteering could never be a decisive force. Such force could only be exercised at St. James', or at Westminster, and Bolingbroke was excluded from access to either. He could supply the Opposition with an embarrassing wealth of political ideas, but he was debarred from supplying the vital quality of personal leadership. As he himself saw, there was no essential gulf of ideas between Tory and Opposition Whig, but only a sour inheritance of suspicion and social difference, such as the animating touch of common leadership might dispel. That touch he was forbidden to supply. He could bring the leaders together outside the Commons but he had no lever whereby to win their followers within. Had he been free to appear in parliament, he might have been able, by the present use of his abilities before their eyes, to dispel the suspicions which all parties still entertained of him. At it was, the Opposition was always hampered by the ever present suggestion of a malfeasant genius controlling its policies from outside,⁷⁵ and once the great attack of 1734 had failed, his allies began to let it be seen that Bolingbroke's name was a handicap rather than a help to their cause.

His disgust with his English allies is reflected in the letters written by his wife after their withdrawal to France. "J'ai peu d'opinion de la vigueur et encore moins de la suite de nos amis d'outre mer—; je ne doute pas de leur pique personnelles contre les freres, mais quand on ne met que de la pique dans les affaires en ne fait pas grand'chose". Of Pultenay, with an unconscious echo of the judgment of Chavigny, she writes "Pultenay dit qu'il n'ira que peu ou point au parlement, mais scait-il ce qu'il fera ou voudra faire d'un d'heure a l'autre. De pareils chefs

⁷³ Coxe III, pp. 138-41. Horace says that in concert with Bolingbroke, Chavigny "has undertaken to foment a convulsion in the government, and a war in Europe". As we have seen, he was nearer the mark when he wrote that Chavigny boasted that provided no immediate English interest was threatened, the Walpoles would be glad to remain neutral. See also, Coxe III, p. 156, where Horace complains to Waldegrave, in February 1734, that Chavigny "daily instructs" the Opposition.

⁷⁴ See the letters to Windham, to Essex, and to his brother-in-law Knight, in Coxe II, pp. 336, 339-40, and 342-4, and in Sichel II, app. pp. 333-4, 549 and 555.

⁷⁵ Typical of the many pamphlets which insist on seeing the concealed hand of Bolingbroke in every act of Opposition is "Plain Matter Of Fact; or Whiggism the Bulwark of these Kingdoms" (London 1742) in which he appears as "Satan driven from his Power, varying through every Shape in order to seduce and betray others into the same gulph of Perdition with himself". See also Walpole's address at the Cockpit in Hervey. *Memoirs* I, pp. 215-21.

de party ne sont propre qu'a les ruiner—c'est un chose etrange que des gens qui ont bien de l'esprit et des talens ne puissent soutenir ni le loiser ni lo suite et l'aplication qu'il faut donner aux occupations."⁷⁶ By the spring of 1737 she could record of the members of the late coalition, "chacun paroist ne songer plus qu'a tirer son epingle du jeu et a abandonner la partie dans le tems ou elle paroissoit preste a estre gaynee," and could add with as much of truth as of resignation:—"The exile (Bolingbroke) is tranquil in his country house; I think that things will remain there".⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Hist. Mss. Comm. Denbigh Mss. p. 119.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 122.