

Statecraft and Strategy—Britain's Experience

Article III.—By the Military Correspondent of The London Times



THE manner in which Mr. Secretary Pitt conducted war from the seat of government is a subject which deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. When Pitt resumed office in June, 1757, he demanded for himself the conduct of the entire correspondence with naval and military commanders. Since the control of Ambassadors and Colonial Governors was already vested in him by virtue of his office, the claim was nothing less than one for the exclusive direction of the war. For this great task, which proved so eminently suited to his genius, he was far from ill-prepared. Sir Robert Walpole's "terrible cornet of horse" had been four years in the Army, and had read every military book that he could lay his hands on. He had never followed any other profession but that of arms. If his genius was for great affairs of State, it was for those of war above all others. He had held office as paymaster, first nominally in Ireland and then in England, and though often undisciplined to the point of rebellion had not been dismissed till November, 1755. His office, though subordinate, had brought him into contact with realities and had given him unusual opportunities for learning and mastering details of military administration, opportunities of which he had very fully availed himself.

The practice of the Cabinet up to June, 1757, had been for the First Lord of the Admiralty to take his orders from the Cabinet and then to transmit them to executive agents with such explanations and detailed instructions as might be necessary. Experience, however, had shown that with the Duke of Newcastle in the Cabinet this practice led to absence of unity of control and consequent dissemination of effort. This fatal consequence Pitt was prepared at all hazards to prevent, even at the cost of a fresh crisis in the Government. He was firmly determined, while nominally acting with a Secret Council of War, to concentrate in his own hands all powers relating to the conduct of the war, to deprive both War Department and Admiralty of all strategic initiative, and to confine them strictly to the sphere of administration.

This claim was resisted by Newcastle, and Pitt appealed to the King. Dr. von Ruville declares that a compromise was effected whereby Pitt, after writing his instructions, was bound to secure the signature of three members of the Admiralty Board. That this formality was not carried out in practice can, however, be shown by reference to documents belonging to any one of the expeditions of the time. For example, the secret instructions which were given to Hawke and Mordaunt before the expedition to Rochefort in 1757 were initiated by the King, and the compromise, if there ever was one, was thus very easily circumvented. It was Pitt, and no one else, who signed the covered letters forwarding these instructions, as well as the copies of them sent under seal to four subordinates, two of each service, to be opened only in the event of the command devolving upon one or other of the four. It was Pitt to whom Mordaunt wrote to complain when he found on his arrival in the Isle of Wight that the transports had not appeared, and it was Pitt who replied. It was he again who wrote a sharp letter on September 5 to hasten the sailing of the expedition, and it was to him that Hawke and Mordaunt reported every one of their proceedings from the day of sailing to that of their return. The proceedings of the Councils of War were addressed to Pitt, and both commanders corresponded with him privately. When the expedition returned, Mordaunt received detailed instructions signed by Pitt for the disposal of every battalion of the command. From first to last every outgoing dispatch relating to the proceedings of the expedition was signed by Pitt, and by no one else, every incoming despatch addressed to him and to no one else. It was Eclipse first and the rest nowhere. Even in the wrangle about the proper proportion of tonnage per man, every letter sent either by or to the Admiralty was enclosed in a despatch either to or from Mr. Secretary Pitt. All that was left to the departments was to fashion the tools for their master's use. Strategic initiative they had none.

Pitt, no doubt, had good advisers in Ligonier and Anson, two men of great experience and sagacity, but the responsibility and control were his own. Consequently there soon became apparent that uniform and vigorous guidance of the war upon which Dr. von Ruville lays such stress, declaring that it gave England a serious advantage over her rivals and was the cause of her final success. The German biographer is certainly correct. Holding in his hands all the threads of the war, Pitt manipulated them as he pleased. Not an Ambassador abroad, not a Governor in the Colonies, not a department at home nor a commander on sea or land, but felt and knew from experience that Pitt's eyes were upon him, and drew from this knowledge some of the fire, the spirit, and the vigor of their doughty chief. Every one of these agents became a willing instrument in the master's hand, and the activities of all were directed to the achievement of a single end. A large part of the rich store of Chatham manuscripts at the Record Office remains, if not unexplored, at least unused. If that part of his correspondence which has been published, and those biographies of which Francis Thackeray's was the first and Dr. von Ruville's is the last and most exhaustive, serve to convey some idea of the vast sum of labor which Pitt devoted to his work, it is also cer-

tain that much remains behind, and that the whole, if published, would show Pitt to be even greater than his reputation.

His times were not those of our present hand-to-mouth strategy, when statesmen controlling arms scarce look beyond the hours of a single day. The uncertainty, infrequency, and slowness of all means of communication required that the central authority should look far ahead. It was indispensable that instructions destined for commanders should be drafted many months before the date fixed for the opening of the intended operations. The instructions framed by Pitt for the attack upon Martinique bear date ten months before the period fixed for their execution. Those for the

another occasion, not considered too trivial for mention. Every Governor of a colony received his parallel orders for co-operation, strictly in harmony with those issued to commanders, with urgent solicitations to spur his province into active exertion. Compulsion there was none, but, while the Crown undertook to supply provisions and stores for the provincial forces, the raising of these forces, their pay, arms and clothing, remained a colonial charge.

With all this mastery of detail, most of which now devolves upon army and navy staffs, the latitude left to the commanders on the spot was very wide. "The King," wrote Pitt on one occasion, "judges it highly prejudicial to the good of his service to give particu-

lar orders and directions with regard to possible contingencies that may arise." Pitt stated with the utmost lucidity the object to be attained, and left the manner of attaining it to the discretion of the commanders. If, occasionally, according to the capacity of the man he was addressing, he suggested a course of action, he never imposed it, nor attempted the invidious and hopeless task of atoning at a distance for the incapacity of the commander on the spot. If Durell, owing to the extreme importance of his special mission in 1759, was ordered to repair to the St. Lawrence as soon as the navigation of the gulf and river was practicable, and to establish his cruise as high up the river as the Isle de Bic, he was also left

free to station his ships "in such a manner as may effectually prevent any succors whatever from passing up that river to Quebec." Durell's only other orders were to remain on his appointed cruising ground until he received further directions from Admiral Saunders. Amherst, whom Pitt had learnt to trust completely, was given a very free hand: "It is his Majesty's pleasure," wrote Pitt, "that you do attempt an invasion of Canada, by way of Crown Point or La Galette, or both, according as you shall judge practicable, and proceed, if practicable, to attack Montreal or Quebec, or both of the said places successively with such of the forces as shall remain under your own immediate direction, in one body, or by a divi-

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were usually despatched in duplicate, especially when sent by light ships liable to molestation by those French privateers and fast craft which always grew in numbers and audacity as the fortunes of the French Royal Navy waned. But, if Pitt appeared exacting, he was also appreciative of work well done, and no one could word a laudatory despatch in more flattering terms. If his tools failed him he did not complain of them, knowing human nature well enough to understand that encouragement is a better stimulant than reprimand. Pitt understood that punishment meted out to errors of judgment—if they were that and nothing more—were more likely to perpetuate such errors than to prevent them. If sluggish Maryland received an occasional reminder of her sloth, the passages conveying admonition to individuals are of rare occurrence, even at those moments when Pitt's restless and dominating spirit must have been racked by the tortures of disappointed hopes. After the costly repulse at Ticonderoga, Pitt wrote to General James Abercromby that "his Majesty has seen, with much concern, that an enterprise of the greatest importance has unhappily miscarried; he applauds the spirit of the troops which gives the King just room for hope for future successes." That is all, and far from chastising a blundering general, Pitt proceeds to commend him for his care and diligence in making provision for the wounded. Such Ministers are well served.

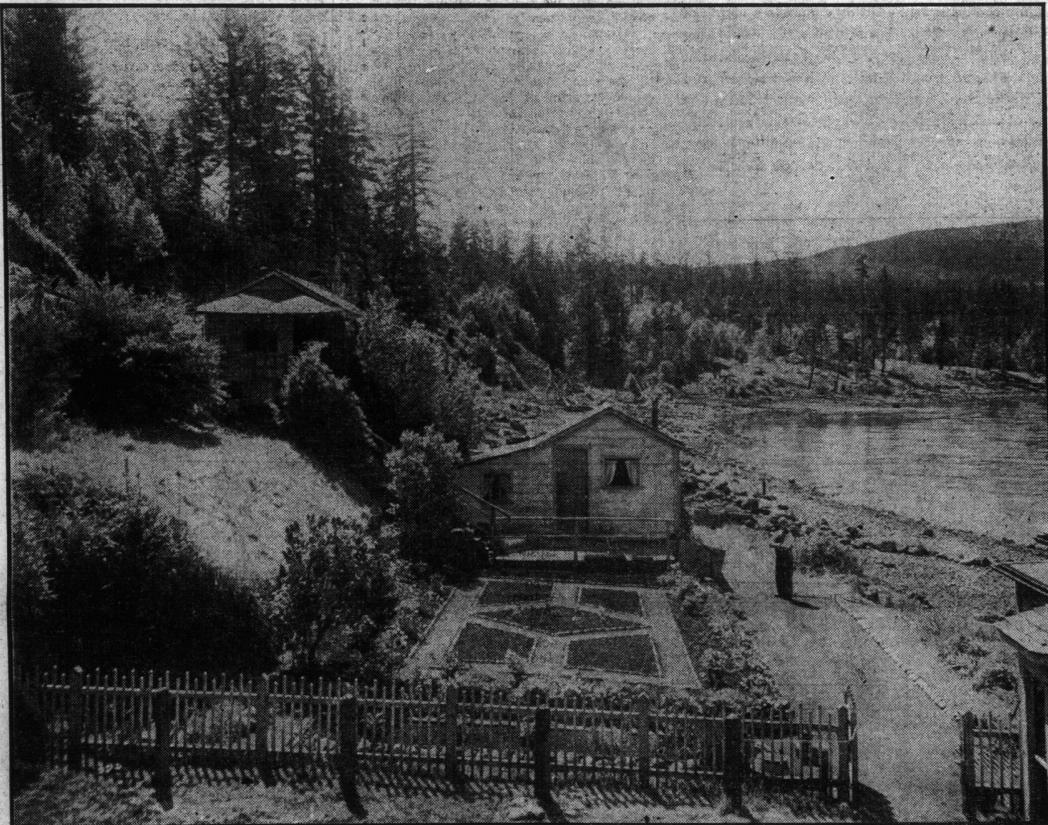
Pitt discovered the need for distinguishing between Direktiven and Befehle long before the Prussian Staff laboriously conceived and elaborated the difference. His part was to fix the great objects of the war as a whole, and of each part of it separately, both on sea and land; to hold to these objects steadily, savagely if opposed, though Horace Walpole and his like might gird at his presumptuous impracticability; to combine diplomacy and arms to secure these objects; to co-ordinate the activities of forces on land and sea; to ensure by prudent and far-seeing measures an adequate support for operations designed; but to leave commanders to the untrammelled execution of their orders in such manner as seemed to them best.

His ruling maxim was Frederick's melius prevenire quam preveniri, a text which should be hung up in the council room of the Committee of Defence. When war with Spain came within sight and should have been forestalled, Pitt fell, unable to convince the Cabinet of the new King that "we ought, from prudence as well as from spirit, to secure to ourselves the first blow." There spoke the man himself. Distinguished though he was by noble speech, which dealt, as Grattan said, with "great subjects, great Empires, great characters, and effulgent ideas," the distinction was accorded less to the person of the speaker and his burning words than to the promise and the potency of action which the words conveyed.

The Army and the Navy were the agents of Pitt's statecraft, and he used them separately or together, according to circumstances, to gain his object, namely, a favorable peace. Ambassadors, Governors, and departments were similarly his agents, and every one of them Pitt bent to his purpose, and all to a single purpose. There was dogma in Pitt's day as there is in ours, but he brushed it all contemptuously aside. To suppose that Pitt ever regarded the Army as a sword in the hand of the Fleet is to misinterpret his strategy in a ludicrous manner. In Pitt's day it was the statesman, not the admiral, who ruled. For Pitt neither the amphibious nor the Continental school had any gospel worth the telling. He preached the first in Opposition, and practised both the first and the second in power. He used the Army alone and the navy alone, and he combined the two when the occasion required it. What he regarded was not the theories of Nonconformist schoolmasters, but facts. He pursued the aggrandisement of his country and the destruction of the enemy, and for these ends he used the tools at his hand as the conditions and circumstances of the time dictated. If there still remains unwritten the history of those ten years when he was silently absorbing the knowledge which was the secret of his ultimate power, it is indisputable that, unlike the little politicians of today who confine his attention to the tiny circle of Westminster and party politics, he devoted unstinted effort to the comprehension of the grave military problems which confronted the England of his day, and that he was fully acquainted with them when he rose to the highest place in the councils of his country.

The concentration of all strategic initiative in his hands lowered the departments of War and Admiralty to that subordinate position which they must unavoidably occupy if war is to remain an act of government and is to be firmly grasped and controlled by a Minister of the Crown. Each department was given its work and each commander allotted his task in conformity with the general plan. The duty of the department was not to dabble in the higher strategy and to wage war on its own account, but to second each commander with all the resources at its disposal; while to the commander himself the widest latitude was accorded within the limits of his clearly defined mission.

Such was Pitt's method, and such the means whereby he created the modern British Empire, unalterably fixed the destinies of half mankind, and raised his fame to a height attained only by a few grand figures in English history.



Site of the Terminus of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway at New Alberni

campaign of 1759 in North America were written in the December of the previous year. These latter, addressed to Amherst, Durell, and Saunders, are a good example of Pitt's manner. There is scarcely a single preparation, precaution, or provision, no matter how minute, which escapes the Secretary's remark. The tonnage of transport and where it is to be found. The schooners and whaleboats to be built locally by a given date. The tally of the troops and the special dispositions for the attack on Quebec. The provisions, the stores, and the battering train. Nothing that forethought can provide is omitted. Even cordage, lead, and hooks for angling during the passage, and molasses for making spruce beer, are, upon

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Island of Jamaica After the Earthquake

THE Archbishop of the West Indies, presiding at a meeting in the Hoare Memorial hall of the Church House, gave an account of Jamaica's recovery from the earthquake, according to an English exchange.

Naming the churches which had been restored or were in process of restoration, and those on which nothing had been done, the Archbishop mentioned cases in which he had refused help until the people helped themselves. All the buildings were insured against fire, but he had not yet received any clear and feasible plan of insurance against earthquake losses. Pressure was being brought on local church people to secure that all the new country churches should be built of wood, as such buildings had been found to resist earthquakes exceedingly well. In the towns the best information from earthquake districts all over the world had led to the adoption of reinforced concrete. As to the restoration of houses a very great deal had been done in the upper part of Kingston, and in the suburbs, partly with help from the Mansion House fund and the Imperial grant. Curious stories had been spread about the Assistance committee, and it might have made mistakes, but he could testify that the greatest care had been taken to carry out the donors' objects. The commercial part of Kingston practically remained as it was left

by the earthquake, only a building here and there having been restored. If the Privy Council did not confirm the Jamaica Supreme Court's decisions against insurance companies for losses by the fire in connection with the earthquake, as far as he could see, the larger proportion of the merchants would have to go into liquidation. The Church and the other denominations would not get a sixpence from the Imperial grant or the Mansion House fund. A year ago he had said that the damage caused to the buildings of his own Church amounted to £38,000, and could be made good if £30,000 came from outside; but only £15,000 had been received. Some buildings, including Bishop's lodge, would therefore have to wait. As to the future of the island, if a farmer had four good years he could afford to make nothing the fifth year. The trouble about the banana tree was that, while it matured quickly, it was easily blown down. In parts of England there were four or five storms in a single winter which would level a banana field. His hope lay in the steady growth of other industries. A better method of getting some of the island's products to the English market was much needed. He had been constantly pressing the Government to let Jamaica have a commercial agent in London. Last year 2,000,000 of the finest oranges in the world had rotted on the trees. The island's population was now

830,000, and would soon reach a million, in spite of continual emigration to other West Indian islands and to Central America. About half the people were connected with churches, and sent their children to school, and these were progressing in other ways, too. The other half, if we did not take care, would fall back. The churches had to win these people as well as to build up their own, who were already being emancipated from the old Obeah superstition, and many of whom had risen wonderfully above the defects of their race. Multitudes, in fact, were daily coming nearer to the true Christian standard; and his was the only missionary diocese where, apart from special enterprises and emergencies, the Church was supported by its own people.

Dr. Josecelyne, Coadjutor Bishop of Jamaica, also addressed the meeting.

The five-year-old daughter of a Brooklyn man has had such a large experience of dolls that she feels herself to be something of a connoisseur in children.

Recently there came a real live baby into the house.

When it was put into her arms the five-year-old surveyed it with a critical eye.

"Isn't it a nice baby," asked the nurse. "Yes, it's nice," answered the youngster, hesitatingly. "It's nice, but it's head's loose."