Lord Camden in Ireland, 1795-8:

A Study in Anglo-Irish Relations

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Gillian O'Brien.

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Contents

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Abbreviations

British Broadcasting Corporation:	BBC
British Library:	B.L.
Cambridge University Library:	C.U.L.
Centre for Kentish Studies:	C.K.S.
Historical Manuscripts Commission:	H.M.S.
Home Office:	H.O.
National Archives of Ireland:	N.A.I.
National Library of Ireland:	N.L.I.
Public Record Office:	P.R.O.
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland:	P.R.O.N.I.
Radio Téilifís Éireann:	RTÉ
Téilifís na Gaelige:	TnaG
University College Dublin:	U.C.D.
War Office:	W.O.

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Introduction

John Jeffreys Pratt, 2nd Earl Camden (1759-1840), was lord lieutenant of Ireland for more than three years between March 1795 and June 1798. Though appointed at a difficult moment and in highly controversial circumstances Camden is widely regarded as one of the lesser figures to occupy that demanding position and he features little in the historiography of the period. As lord lieutenant he was the king's representative in Ireland; the most senior figure in the Irish administration. This alone would make him worthy of consideration. The fact that his tenure of office also coincided with immense political, social, economic, and military upheaval makes his omission from the historical record all the more inexplicable.

An analysis of the existing secondary material relating to Ireland in the 1790s suggests that Camden was little more than a facilitator, shuttling messages and requests across the Irish sea. Furthermore, he is widely perceived as deferring to the unofficial Irish 'cabinet', and in particular to senior members of the Protestant ascendancy, most notably John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare, John Beresford and John Foster. On the face of it there is much to sustain this impression. Camden's term as lord lieutenant marked the zenith of a rather pedestrian political career in England. A college friend of Pitt and the son of a distinguished and well-respected former lord chancellor of England, Camden had held a number of junior positions in Pitt's ministry. At the age of 36 he was promoted to the challenging and not widely coveted position of lord lieutenant of Ireland. For a period of three years and three months he played a central role in Irish, and on occasion, British politics. A number of significant events occurred during his tenure of office including the attempted French invasion in December 1796, the dragooning of Ulster in the spring and summer of 1797, the issuing of Abercromby's general order in February 1798 and the outbreak of rebellion in May of the same year. Yet, historians have assessed these without any appraisal of Camden's role. Chapter 1 is primarily concerned with an assessment of the historiography of the 1790s and Camden's position in it.

However, consideration is also given to the wide range of primary material consulted. These primary sources reveal Camden as an energetic and enthusiastic, if inexperienced, politician who wielded considerable influence not only over the Irish 'cabinet' but also over its official counterpart in Whitehall (see chapter 1).

The circumstances surrounding Camden's appointment require some explanation. He replaced Earl Fitzwilliam whose appointment and brief tenure of office had provided the occasion for one of the most eventful viceroyalties during the whole of the eighteenth-century. Camden faced a daunting challenge: scorned by Fitzwilliam's defenders and regarded with suspicion by supporters of government who were preoccupied with ensuring their own return to power and influence. Whitehall intended Camden to restore tranquillity to a country in turmoil. How this was to be achieved provides the theme for chapter 2 of this study. Fitzwilliam had arrived in Ireland determined to implement his own policies. In so doing he disregarded the verbal advice given to him by senior British ministers and in consequence of this he was promptly recalled. Whitehall was insistent on retaining control of the Dublin administration and the home secretary, Portland, issued Camden with detailed written guidance on how best to deal with the Irish political scene. The clear intention was to ensure that Irish government policy would be directed by Whitehall and many later commentators have accepted this intention as the reality. However, as the war with France progressed and defeat appeared a possibility, British ministers devoted little time to Irish affairs and Camden began to make decisions and implement policies without guidance from Whitehall.

How and to what extent Camden established control in Ireland is of interest to an understanding both of the man and of his administration. The small but vocal opposition in the Irish houses of parliament was quite easily managed. The Catholic question was addressed; the establishment of Maynooth College ensured that throughout Camden's time in Ireland the Catholic hierarchy posed no threat to his administration. One of Camden's greatest challenges was

to nurture a good working relationship with the men who formed his unofficial Irish 'cabinet'. These men would prove to be both his greatest allies and, at times, a threat to his authority in Ireland. Patronage proved to be a contentious issue but the lord lieutenant did not concede control of patronage to his advisors. He did, on occasion, accede to their demands but this was done on his terms. Abuse of the patronage system by Pitt's English administration was bitterly resented both by Camden and the Irish political elite. On occasion, Pitt used the Irish system to reward Englishmen who had been refused elevation to the English peerage, exacerbating an already sensitive situation. Despite protestations to the contrary it was apparent that the Irish house of lords was not regarded as the equal of its English counterpart (see chapter 3).[1]

The ministry in London had been content to leave Camden to deal with internal developments while it concentrated on the war with France. However, the attempted French invasion of Ireland in December 1796 forced Ireland back onto the agenda at the British cabinet table. The French expedition has been widely written about but these studies usually consider the attempted invasion from either a United Irish or French perspective. There has been little analysis of its impact on the Irish administration. The efforts made by Camden throughout 1796 to alert the British authorities to the very real threat to Ireland from France needs to be assessed. Camden's role in the aftermath of the French descent on Bantry Bay is also notable. He was outraged that Whitehall had not simply ignored his warnings but had wilfully misled him, and that Pitt's administration had accepted, without question, the admiralty's lame explanations for failing to intercept the French fleet. This period marked a decisive change in Camden's approach to government. He began to place Irish interests, or at least

[1] In this thesis 'England' and 'English' and 'Britain' and 'British' are often used interchangeably when referring to the cabinet at Whitehall or the parliament at Westminster. From an Irish perspective the government in London was regarded as English, despite the fact that some of the ministers, including Dundas, were Scottish. While conscious of the fact that the London administration governed more than England, the use of 'England' and 'English' rather than 'Britain' and 'British' in many cases better conveys the extent to which it was English politics, culture and society that the Protestant ascendancy wished to emulate. Additionally, in the correspondence of the period 'England' and 'English' are used where the authors might, more accurately, refer to 'Britain' and 'British'.

the interests of the Protestant ascendancy, above those of Whitehall. How this impacted on Anglo-Irish relations is significant and often overlooked. In addition, a factor rarely considered is the financial impact of the invasion attempt. Ireland, in a weak financial position before the events of December 1796, was pushed to the brink of bankruptcy by the threatened French invasion. Camden's political focus may have become more insular but economically he was increasingly bound to England (see chapter 4).

The security situation in Ireland worsened throughout 1796 and 1797. A series of repressive measures was introduced between autumn 1796 and spring 1797 and while military excesses were not actively encouraged, the new legislation ensured that there would be no official criticism of them. Initially reluctant to adopt extreme military measures, Camden became an enthusiastic advocate once convinced of their necessity. The perception of Camden as a weak lord lieutenant overawed by his Irish advisors, and without control of matters military is unsustainable. Despite having no military background, Camden played a central role in formulating military strategy. This was partly because the Irish military command, at least until the appointment of Sir Ralph Abercromby in late 1797, was often inept and riven by internal rivalries. In addition to the severe security crisis facing the lord lieutenant, he had to face increasing criticism of his actions from the British houses of parliament. Allied to this the management of the Irish houses of parliament were a constant concern. Never numerous enough to obtain a majority within the house of commons, the opposition maintained a strong influence on the actions of many radicals outside parliament and Camden strove to dilute this influence by removing what political strength they had. As Ireland moved towards rebellion, military and political matters became inextricable and Camden's actions reflected this (see chapter 5).

Camden's enthusiastic response to the appointment of Sir Ralph Abercromby as commander-in-chief of the forces in Ireland can be contrasted with his complete disillusionment following the publication of Abercromby's

general order and his subsequent resignation. Abercromby's portrayal of Camden as an amiable, if powerless, viceroy completely cowed by his Irish 'cabinet' is one that has endured despite its inaccuracies. The furore which erupted in response to the general order of 26 February 1798 involved the military command and politicians in both England and Ireland. Pitt's administration concluded that direct intervention from Whitehall was necessary and Camden found control of the Irish administration being transferred to London. Despite his requests to be allowed to resign, Camden remained in Ireland as lord lieutenant during the first weeks of the Rebellion, a fact that is often forgotten. Anxious to secure a replacement who would combine the positions of commander-in-chief and lord lieutenant, Camden took little active part in directing military policy during the Rebellion. He distanced himself from internal political and military matters, though he did become involved in the events that surrounded the arrest, and later death, of Lord Edward Fitzgerald (see chapter 6).

Camden was an extremely active lord lieutenant involving himself in all political and military decisions of importance and many of lesser significance. His policies may not have been consistent, indeed they altered considerably during his period as viceroy. He arrived in Ireland fiercely loyal, politically and personally, to Pitt. Throughout the first half of his time in Ireland Camden made serious efforts to govern the country along lines that would meet with Whitehall's approval. These efforts often went unacknowledged and Camden realised that what appeared a sensible policy in London was not always appropriate or effective in Ireland. During the latter half of his viceroyalty he paid greater attention to addressing the concerns of Protestant ascendancy and taking counsel from advisors resident in Ireland. Camden was not, as is often assumed, merely a pawn manipulated both by cabinet in Whitehall and the unofficial 'cabinet' in Dublin. He was a much more consequential figure than that and a failure to acknowledge this distorts any understanding of the Anglo-Irish relationship in the years prior to the 1798 Rebellion and the legislative union of Britain and Ireland.

1

Historians and the 1790s

There are few decades in Irish history that have attracted more attention than the 1790s. Many studies have examined the development of the United Irishmen, the Defenders and the Orange Order.[2] Links between the United Irishmen and radicals abroad have also been considered in detail.[3] The deteriorating military situation of 1796 and 1797 has been the focus of study and there have been a number of works concerned with the causes and progress of the 1798 Rebellion.[4] Given the quantity of articles and books that concentrate on this short period it is surprising that so much remains that has not been the subject of any detailed study. The tense and tumultuous events of the viceroyalty of Camden is noteworthy by its omission from any serious discussion of the 1790s. Where high politics is considered, Camden's predecessor and successor, Lords Fitzwilliam and Cornwallis, feature, but during Camden's tenure of office focus is firmly on the role played by his Irish 'cabinet'. This is misleading and distorts the reality of the relationship between Dublin and London in the years prior to rebellion and union.

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[2] See for example: Thomas Bartlett, 'Select Documents xxxviii: Defenders and Defenderism in 1795', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxiii, 95, (1984), pp 373-94; Nancy J. Curtin, 'The Transformation of the United Irishmen into a Revolutionary Mass Organisation, 1792-94', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxiv, 96 (1985), pp 463-92; Marianne Elliott, 'The Origins and Transformation of Early Irish Republicanism', in *International Review of Social History,* xxiii (1978), pp 405-28.

[3] See for example: Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution. The United Irishmen and France,* (Yale, 1982); Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic,* (Kansas, 1997); David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States. Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic,* (Dublin, 1998); Paul Weber, *On the Road to Rebellion: The United Irishmen and Hamburg 1796-1803,* (Dublin, 1998).

[4] See for example: Thomas Bartlett, 'Indiscipline and Disaffection in the Armed Forces in Ireland in the 1790s' in Patrick J. Corish (ed.), *Radicals, Rebels and Establishments,* Historical Studies, xv, (Belfast, 1985), pp 114-34; Allan Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army. The Irish Yeomanry 1796-1834,* (Dublin, 1998); John A. Murphy (ed.), *The French are in the Bay: The Expedition to Bantry Bay 1796,* (Cork, 1997). There are numerous works on the 1798 Rebellion, for most recent publications see Ian McBride 'Review Article: Reclaiming the Rebellion: 1798 in 1998', *Irish Historical Studies,* xxxi, 123, (May 1999) pp 395-410; Jim Smyth, 'Interpreting the 1790s', *History Ireland,* (Summer 1998), pp 54-8; Thomas Bartlett, 'Why the history of the 1798 Rebellion has yet to be written', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland,* 15, (2000), pp 181-90.

I

No event in eighteenth-century Ireland prompted such a rush to print as the 1798 Rebellion. In 1800, George Taylor published the loyalist account *A History of the Rise, Progress, Cruelties and Suppression of the Rebellion in the County of Wexford.* A more liberal Protestant perspective was first promoted in Rev J.B. Gordon's *History of the Year 1798,* published in 1801. Better known than these were Sir Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* and Edward Hay's, *History of the Insurrection of the County of Wexford, A.D. 1798,* published in 1801 and 1803 respectively. Far from being reasoned works both were little more than apologias, each exonerating opposing sides. Musgrave, the ultra-loyalist, placed the blame for the Rebellion firmly at the door of the Catholic Church while Hay blamed the magistrates, the military and the administration for provoking loyal Catholics into rebellion. Musgrave found immediate success with his book going through three editions between 1801 and 1802. Both Musgrave and Hay were commercial successes; both authors estimated their sales at over 3,000 copies.[5] However, it was Hay's version of the Rebellion that proved to have the greater appeal and came to dominate until the more recent re-evaluation of the Rebellion in the 1980s and 1990s. After 1803 Musgrave's work was not reprinted until a new edition appeared in 1995, while after Hay's death in 1826 a further five editions of his *History* were published.[6]

Interpretations of Ireland in the late eighteenth century were significantly influenced by events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was certainly true of J.A. Froude and W.E.H. Lecky. Their accounts written in

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[5] Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, 'Making History and Defining the Nation. Nineteenth-Century interpretations of 1798' in Philip Bull, Frances Devlin-Glass and Helen Doyle (eds), *Ireland and Australia, 1798-1998. Studies in Culture, Identity and Migration.* (Sydney, 2000), p. 29. According to Dr Patrick Maume, despite there being no new edition, Musgrave's *History* was popular in Ulster in the late nineteenth century during the home rule crises. 'Society for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Ireland Annual Conference', Bath Spa University, April 1999. I am grateful to Dr Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh for this reference.

[6] There were three editions of Hay's work in the 1840s; 1842, 1847, 1848 which coincided with the height of the Young Irelanders' popularity. A further edition was published in 1873 and a fifth in 1898, the centenary of the rebellion. See Ó hÓgartaigh, 'Making History and Defining the Nation', p. 30.

the late nineteenth century came to dominate the interpretation of eighteenth century Irish history. For many years their works were unrivalled and both remain valuable sources of information for any student of the period.[7] Lecky and Froude regarded eighteenth-century Ireland from the perspective of the political elite and both identified Dublin Castle and the Irish administration as the centre of political power. Both wrote from the viewpoint of a privileged Protestant but otherwise their approach, style and emphasis were markedly different.[8] Froude was convinced that the Irish were incapable of successful self-government and therefore firm and decided government from London was required. To illustrate this point Froude used the events of the eighteenth century to highlight the deficiencies of the Irish. He chastised the British government for allowing Dublin Castle to pursue a policy of conciliation and concession in Ireland and he used the eighteenth century to show the consequences of such action. Although never a champion of the Irish, Lecky was more favourably disposed towards them and indeed the Irish administration than Froude. Lecky's history was quickly appropriated by supporters of home rule. His praise of Grattan's Parliament was seen as an endorsement of self-government, though Lecky, later a unionist, was no advocate of the measure. Both historians, Lecky, 'calm and measured', Froude full of 'high-pitched rhetoric' set the example which subsequent historians of Ireland followed.[9]

Lecky's interpretation of eighteenth-century Ireland became the accepted version. Froude was disregarded because the tale he told was considered unpalatable; if Lecky was assuredly correct in his summation then Froude was simply wrong. In spite of Lecky's subsequent unionism, his history was adopted

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[7] J.A. Froude, *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century,* 3 vols, (London, 1872-4); W.E.H. Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century,* 5 vols, (London, 1892). Lecky's work on Ireland had previously appeared as volumes in his *History of England.* Volume i was first published as volume ii of the *History of England* in 1878 while volumes iv and v were published in 1890 as volumes vii and viii of the same work. See L.M. Cullen, 'The 1798 rebellion in its eighteenth-century context', in Corish (ed.), *Radicals, Rebels and Establishments,* pp 91, 111.

[8] For a more detailed study of this see Donal McCartney, 'James Anthony Froude and Ireland: a Historiographical Controversy of the Nineteenth Century' in T.D. Williams (ed.), *Historical Studies,* viii, (Dublin, 1971) pp 171-190; idem, *W.E.H. Lecky, Historian and Politician 1838-1903,* (Dublin, 1994); Anne Wyatt, 'Froude, Lecky and "the humblest Irishman"' in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxix, 75, (March 1975), pp 261-85.

[9] Wyatt, 'Froude, Lecky', p. 271

by later nationalists. The disregard shown by Lecky for the Irish and British administrations was emphasised. Lecky's portrayal of these administrations as crowded with ruthlessly self-interested, corrupt and incompetent individuals was emphasised and exaggerated. Corruption and self-interest was rife, but many in the Irish administration were genuinely concerned with good government, as they saw it. Both Lecky and Froude retain a substantial influence over students of eighteenth-century Ireland both for the breadth and depth of their studies and the fact that they had access to records which no longer exist, having been destroyed in Four Courts fire of 1922.[10] The structure and emphasis given by both historians to the period 1795-8 has rarely been challenged.

Froude and Lecky were not alone in being influenced by contemporary politics. Historians, primarily of British history, writing at the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century gave the impression that affairs in Ireland regularly preoccupied those in Whitehall. Lords Ashbourne, Stanhope, and Roseberry all devoted chapters of their biographies of Pitt to his involvement with Ireland.[11] J. Holland Rose was particularly concerned with Pitt's engagement with Irish affairs during the 1790s concentrating principally on the relationship between Pitt and Fitzwilliam, the 1798 Rebellion and the act of union.[12] The emphasis on Ireland more accurately exemplifies the obsessions and prejudices of the authors' time than any attempt to represent the reality of the 1790s. The publication dates of these books indicate that they were written and published at a time when home rule bills were being discussed and passed, when the issue of Irish independence was on the agenda in Whitehall and Westminster. Such attempts to portray Pitt as actively involved with Ireland in the 1790s are largely misleading. For most of the decade Britain was at war with France and this war absorbed much of Whitehall's attention, leaving Ireland a very low

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[10] S.J. Connolly, 'Eighteenth-Century Ireland. Colony or *Ancien Régime*?', in D.G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The Making of Modern Irish History. Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy,* (London and New York, 1996), p. 18.

[11] Lord Roseberry, *Pitt,* (London, 1892); Edward Gibson, Lord Ashbourne, *Pitt: Some Chapters of his Life and Times,* (London, 1898); Lord Stanhope, *Life to the Right Honourable William Pitt,* 3 vols, (London, 1861-2).

[12] J. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War,* (London, 1911); *Pitt and Napoleon. Essays and Letters,* (London, 1912).

priority for Pitt and his ministers. Ireland only impinged on Whitehall's consciousness when France threatened to use Ireland as another battlefield.[13] These biographies of Pitt conferred retrospective importance on British interest in Ireland.

According to Roseberry's account, Pitt attempted to deal with the Irish situation but was constantly thwarted by the Irish administration, in particular by Fitzwilliam. Roseberry, the future Liberal prime minister, made a direct connection between Anglo-Irish relations in the 1790s and those of the late nineteenth century. The 'gaunt spectre of the Irish question' remained by Pitt's side throughout the 1790s and it had 'never passed into history, for it [had] never passed out of politics'. Roseberry held that anyone examining this period would see this link clearly because '...his fate is certain and foreseen; for the moment his foot rests on 1795 he irresistibly slips on to 1886 and rebounding from 1886, he is soon soused in 1891'.[14] Writing nearly two decades later, J. Holland Rose was in general agreement with Roseberry: Pitt and the British administration did their best for Ireland in trying times. The Irish administration was criticised, but in less vehement terms than Roseberry had chosen.[15] Lords Stanhope and Ashbourne also regarded Pitt's interest in Ireland as sincere and active. Concentrating on the Fitzwilliam episode, Ashbourne sought to explain the motives for Fitzwilliam's appointment and recall. Whatever the reasons for the failure of Fitzwilliam's administration, Ashbourne concluded that 'the failure itself cannot with any show of reason or fairness be ascribed to Pitt'.[16]

The Fitzwilliam episode, the act of union, and to a lesser extent, the 1798 Rebellion, were the prime areas of interest for these historians. Perhaps Fitzwilliam is given a greater degree of retrospective importance than he truly deserves. His appointment gave rise to expectations of great change. His

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[13] Gillian O'Brien, 'Camden and the Move Towards Union 1795-8', in Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union. The causes, contexts and consequences of the Act of Union,* (Dublin, 2001), pp 106-25.
[14] Roseberry, *Pitt,* p. 172.
[15] Holland Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon,* pp 20-36.
[16] Ashbourne, *Pitt,* p. 228.

dramatic alterations within the Irish administration were immediate but his tenure was brief. Fitzwilliam's successor, Lord Camden, swiftly removed those appointed by Fitzwilliam and re-appointed those he had dismissed. The Fitzwilliam episode is important but not as significant as was argued by Roseberry, Holland Rose, Stanhope and Ashbourne and indeed, Lecky and Froude.[17] More recent work on the period has concluded that Ireland was rarely a pressing concern in either Westminster or Whitehall. John Ehrman's exhaustive study of Pitt gives brief consideration to Pitt's Irish policy in the years 1795-8.[18] In the third and final volume of his biography, Ehrman devotes one chapter of twenty-three to Ireland from the rebellion to the act of union; a mere 39 pages of 854.[19] Ehrman makes reference to Ireland when it impinges on Pitt's consciousness but avoids the trend of the nineteenth-century historian to bring contemporary politics into a discussion of Anglo-Irish politics in the 1790s.

II

Writing in 1964 J.C. Beckett argued that there was:

> something to be said for looking again at the whole subject [the constitutional relationship between Ireland and Britain] on the basis of our existing knowledge; not simply as Irish historians are inclined to do, from the standpoint of Ireland, nor yet as if events in Ireland were a mere appendage to British history, but rather...to consider Anglo-Irish constitutional relations during the late eighteenth-century as part of the general political history of the British Isles' - an important observation but one not generally acted on.[20]

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[17] Holland Rose, *Pitt and the Great War,* chapter xvi, 'The Irish Rebellion', chapters xviii and xix, 'The Union'; Holland Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon,* 'Pitt and Earl Fitzwilliam'; Roseberry, *Pitt,* chapter xi, 'Ireland'; Ashbourne, *Pitt,* chapter vi, 'Lord Fitzwilliam', chapter viii, 'Lord Clare', chapter ix, 'The Union'.

[18] John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle,* (London, 1996). See also vols i and ii by the same author: *The Younger Pitt: The Years of Acclaim,* (London, 1969); *The Younger Pitt: The Reluctant Transition,* (London, 1983).

[19] The third volume is an examination of Pitt from 1797 until his death in 1806. The Fitzwilliam episode is considered by Ehrman in *The YoungerPitt: The Reluctant Transition,* pp 430-40.

[20] J.C. Beckett, 'Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relations in the Later Eighteenth-Century', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xiv, (1964), p. 123.

Hugh Kearney in his thought-provoking and wide-ranging publication, *The British Isles,* acknowledges that it 'would no doubt, have simplified the historian's task had England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales been distinctive, stable historical units over long periods of time'.[21] There can be no isolated, strictly national history of any of the four countries. Modern political definitions of nation largely ignore the fluid nature of state development. Kearney believes that it is 'only by adopting a 'Britannic' approach that historians can make sense of the particular segment in which they may be primarily interested, whether it be "England", "Ireland", "Scotland", "Wales", Cornwall or the Isle of Man'.[22] The breadth of Kearney's work meant that there is no specific engagement with the dilemma faced by the politicians in Ireland during the 1790s when faced with the conflicting demands of allegiance to Dublin and London.

Linda Colley in her otherwise superb book, *Britons,* makes little apology for ignoring Ireland as she tackles the complex issues of patriotism and nationalism in Britain.[23] Her justifications for leaving Ireland out may have some validity, certainly Ireland's omission allows for a greater fluidity of argument, but it also reduces the value of such an argument. Any study of identity in Britain in the late-eighteenth century necessitates some contemplation of Ireland, if only certain elements of Irish society. If the assumption of a national identity is influenced as much by what divides as what unites a people then the exclusion of Ireland is inexplicable. Indeed, as Bartlett suggests, the 1798 Rebellion embodied 'all that made British people glad to be British: popish bigotry, appalling slaughter and French subversion'.[24] At the level of high politics many closely involved in fostering ties between Ireland and Britain were aware of a dual identity; they were Irishmen and Britons. In Ireland only a minority, albeit an influential minority, aspired to this dual identity; an identity that not all thought acceptable. J.G.A. Pocock has recently asserted that:

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[21] Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations,* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 284.
[22] Kearney, *British Isles,* p. 1.
[23] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837,* (Yale, 1992), p. 8.
[24] Thomas Bartlett, 'Political Biography', *Linen Hall Review,* (Autumn 1992), pp 28-9.

> Those of the "Protestant ascendancy" considered themselves "English" and were often angry with the English for calling them "Irish" in ways that seemed to confound them with either or both the "Catholic" and "native" Irish...They came, over time, grudgingly to call themselves "Irish" and to attempt their own constructions of that term.[25]

The notion of a dual identity or, perhaps, more significantly, a dual loyalty is a critical one.[26] It is vital to an understanding of the power politics which obsessed the political elite in Dublin. Whether loyalty was to the bureaucrats in Dublin Castle or to the elected representatives in College Green was a matter of great consequence. Symbolically the Irish parliament was important, but the reality was that power rested with those in Dublin Castle and ultimately with Whitehall.

Among historians of Ireland there was a move away from high politics in 1960s. Led by Louis Cullen, historians began to focus instead on economic development.[27] Later this came to include work on agrarian issues, particularly those concerned with popular protest. Social rather than political history became increasingly influential. Monographs began to replace large narrative histories. Discussion of the Irish administration came a distant second to detailed work on the United Irishmen and the radicalisation of Irish society. However high politics did not disappear completely. R.B. McDowell, J.L. McCracken and E.M Johnston all made valuable contributions to the study of the Irish administration in Dublin.[28] Following on from Froude and Lecky these new histories for the most part were broad and sweeping in nature. In the last fifty years R.B. McDowell has undoubtedly been the most wide-ranging and, arguably, the most influential, historian working on the latter half of the eighteenth century. His *Irish Public Opinion, 1750-1800,* (1944), and *Ireland in*

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[25] J.G.A. Pocock, 'Protestant Ireland: the view from the distance', in S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Political Ideas in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,* (Dublin, 2000), p. 224.

[26] This theme is developed somewhat in Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds), *A Union of Multiple Identities. The British Isles, c.1750-c.1850,* (Manchester, 1997), pp 1-8.

[27] L.M. Cullen, 'The Value of Contemporary Printed Sources for Irish Economic History in the Eighteenth-Century', *Irish Historical Studies,* xiv, 54 (1964); *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660,* (London, 1972).

[28] R.B. McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750-1800,* (London, 1944); *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution,* (Oxford, 1979); E.M. Johnston, *Great Britain and Ireland, 1760-1800: A Study in Political Administration,* (Edinburgh, 1963); J.L. McCracken, *The Irish Parliament in the Eighteenth Century,* (Dundalk, 1971).

the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, (1979), were both ground-breaking and insightful. The *New History of Ireland,* under the auspices of T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, published the volume *Eighteenth-Century Ireland.*[29] Designed to produce a definitive work on the period, it is quite disjointed, more a collection of related essays than a unified account. How the Protestant ascendancy regarded themselves and were regarded by others has been greatly elucidated by Jacqueline Hill, James Kelly, Joep Leerson and W.J. McCormack amongst others.[30] However, these discussions rarely touched on the day-to-day workings of the Irish political elite in the 1790s. In the last quarter-century, the finest contribution to a greater understanding of how politics worked in Ireland is undoubtedly A.P.W. Malcomson's *John Foster. The Politics of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy.*[31] Of its nature the book is primarily concerned with Foster but Malcomson is also illuminating on many aspects of the Irish administration. However, high politics in the 1790s remains overshadowed by the 1798 Rebellion and the subsequent act of union

G.C. Bolton's study, *The Passing of the Act of Union,* published in 1966 was, for many years, the defining work on this subject. Recently this has been reconsidered and there have been a number of significant publications which have greatly elucidated many, hitherto, rarely considered aspects of the union. Patrick Geoghegan's *The Irish Act of Union* is a vigorously written, well

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[29] T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, (eds), *A New History of Ireland,* vi, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800,* (Oxford, 1986).

[30] See, for example, Jacqueline R. Hill, 'Popery and Protestantism, Civil and Religious Liberty: The Disputed Lessons of Irish History 1690-1812', in *Past and Present,* 118, pp 96-129; idem, 'The meaning and significance of 'Protestant ascendancy', 1787-1840', in *Ireland After the Union,* (Oxford, 1989); James Kelly, 'The Origins of the Act of Union: An Examination of Unionist Opinion in Britain and Ireland, 1650-1800', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxv, 99 (May 1987), pp 236-63; idem, 'Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: a Commentary', in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland,* v, (1990), pp 173-87; 'The Genesis of 'Protestant Ascendancy': the Rightboy Disturbances of the 1780s and their impact on Protestant Opinion', in Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Parliament, Politics and People,* (Dublin, 1989), pp 93-128; W.J. McCormack, 'Vision and Revision in the Study of Eighteenth Century Parliamentary Rhetoric', in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland,* ii, (1987), pp 7-35; idem, 'Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: Yeats and the Historians' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland,* iv, (1989), pp 159-81; idem, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History 1789-1939,* (Oxford, 1985); Leerson, Joep. *Mere Irish and Fior-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century.* (Amsterdam, 1986).

[31] A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster. The Politics of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy,* (Oxford, 1978).

researched and detailed account, primarily of the events from August 1798 to March 1801, though some consideration is given to the period prior to the autumn of 1798.[32] While acknowledging that Pitt was frequently occupied with matters other than Ireland, Geoghegan, unlike other historians of the period including Bolton and John Ehrman, concludes that 'before the outbreak of a rebellion Pitt did not studiously avoid Irish affairs'.[33] Other recent publications which have considered the act of union include a collection edited by Jim Smyth, *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union,* and one edited by Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan, *Acts of Union.* The union was also given detailed consideration in a recent volume of *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* where a section was devoted to the 'British and Irish Union of 1801'[34] These collections have sought to examine the act of union in a broad context. Articles by Louis Cullen, Nancy Curtin, Thomas Bartlett, Sean Connolly and Peter Jupp have considered the role played, in both a general and a specific sense, by the Irish and British administrations in the years prior to union.[35] Others have placed the union of Britain and Ireland in a wider, European and global, context.[36] Combined, these books have offered new perspectives on the act of union and help to integrate the union into both eighteenth and nineteenth century studies, rather than leaving it to be examined in isolation as had often been the case.

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[32] Patrick M. Geoghegan, *The Irish Act of Union. A Study in High Politics 1798-1801,* (Dublin, 1999), 1-24.
[33] Ibid, p. 5.
[34] Jim Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union. Ireland in the 1790s,* (Cambridge, 2000); Keogh and Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union; Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* (Cambridge, 2000).
[35] See for example; Louis Cullen, 'The Politics of Crisis and Rebellion, 1792-1798' in Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union,* pp 21-38; Nancy Curtin, 'The Magistracy and Counter-Revolution in Ulster, 1795-1798', in *idem,* pp 39-54; Thomas Bartlett, 'Britishness, Irishness and the Act of Union' in *Acts of Union,* pp 243-258; S.J. Connolly, 'Reconsidering the Irish Act of Union', in *Transactions,* pp 399-408; Peter Jupp, 'Britain and the Union, 1797-1801', in *idem,* pp 197-220.
[36] See, for example, James Livesay, 'Acts of union and disunion: Ireland in Atlantic and European Contexts', in *Acts of Union,* pp 95-105; William Doyle, 'The Union in a European Context' in *Transactions,* pp 167-180; C.A. Bayly, 'Ireland, India and the Empire, 1780-1914', in *idem,* pp 377-398.

III

The 1798 Rebellion that was celebrated in 1898 was the Rebellion of Hay, not Musgrave. Hay's antipathy towards the Catholic clergy was overlooked and Patrick Kavanagh's *Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798* took centre stage while nationalists fought over the right to claim 1798 as their own.[37] The rebellion that was commemorated with such ceremony in 1898 was far from the reality. 1948 saw the 150th anniversary of the Rebellion and it too was marked in similar fashion with parades commemorating both the central role of the Catholic church and the direct link between the United Irishmen and later patriots. There was no room in such interpretations for detailed comment on the role of the British government or the Irish administration. In fact little distinction was made between these two, a general assumption being that when disagreements arose the Irish administration always deferred to Whitehall.

Significant anniversaries have always occasioned an outpouring from historians. The late 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a flurry of activity as historians of Ireland prepared to commemorate a series of bicentenaries. They began with the commemoration of the French Revolution in 1989 and continued with the foundation of the United Irishmen in 1991, the establishment of the Orange Order in 1995, the attempted French invasion in 1996, the Rebellion in 1998, and the passing of the act of union in 2000. And it is not over yet, 2003 will see the bicentenary of Robert Emmet's ill-fated and short-lived rebellion.

Backed by substantial government funding the bicentenary of the 1798 rebellion was undoubtedly the most significant of all the commemorations. Numerous conferences were held to mark this occasion, the chief one being bi-

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[37] P.F. Kavanagh, *A Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798,* (Cork, 1898); Anna Kinsella, '1798 Claimed for Catholics; Father Kavanagh, Fenians and the Centenary Celebrations' in Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong, (eds), *The Mighty Wave: The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford,* (Dublin, 1996), pp 139-56; Senia Paseta, '1798 in 1898: The Politics of Commemoration', in *Irish Review,* 22, (1998), pp 46-53; Timothy J. O'Keefe, 'The 1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen: The '98 Centennial', in *Éire-Ireland,* xxiii (1988), pp 51-73; idem, '"Who Fears to Speak of '98?": The Rhetoric and Rituals of the United Irishmen Centennial, 1898', in *Éire-Ireland,* xxvii, (1992), pp 67-91.

located in the Ulster Museum and Dublin Castle in May 1998.[38] The papers delivered at this conference still await publication.[39] There were few books of note published to coincide with the bicentenary; reprints of memoirs, collections of articles and new editions of out of print books appeared. Local history was the chief beneficiary of a renewed interest in the events of 1798.[40] Additionally much work was undertaken on the influence of the United Irishmen outside of Ireland. In particular our understanding of the contribution of Irish radicals to the development of the United States was greatly enhanced by the appearance of books by Michael Durey and David A. Wilson.[41] One criticism made of the bicentenary commemorations was that military events were sidelined, another might be that high politics did not feature either.[42] The Castle administration and its relationship both with the Irish parliament and the British government is rarely alluded to, and when mentioned, it is usually in passing.[43] There needs to be an serious study of the decision makers of the time and of their advisors if there is to be a real understanding of the elements that combined to bring about the beginning of the rebellion in the spring of 1798.

At the same time the commemoration of 1798 went beyond conferences and publications. The Irish government, with some assistance from its British

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[38] '1798 Bicentenary Conference', 19-23 May 1998. Other conferences included 'The 1798 Rebellion and its Aftermath', Byrne/Perry Summer School, Gorey, 26-8 June 1998; 'Ireland's Year of Liberty', University of Luton, 24-6 July 1998; 'The Republic' Parnell Summer School, 9-16 August 1998; 'The Republican Legacy', Humbert Summer School, 19-23 August 1998.

[39] Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *The Irish Rebellion of 1798,* (Dublin, forthcoming 2002).

[40] For example: Liam Chambers, *The Rebellion in Kildare, 1790-1803,* (Dublin, 1998); Liam Kelly, *A Flame now Quenched. Rebels and Frenchmen in Leitrim: 1793-1798,* (Dublin, 1998); Peadar Bates, *The 1798 Rebellion in Fingal: Preparation, Outbreak and Aftermath,* (Dublin, 1998); Ruán O'Donnell, *The Rebellion in Wicklow,* (Dublin, 1998); Belinda Mahaffy, *The United Irishmen in East Donegal,* (Lifford, 1998); William J. Hayes, *Tipperary in the Year of Rebellion 1798,* (Roscrea, 1998).

[41] Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals*; Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States.*

[42] McBride, 'Reclaiming the Rebellion', p. 400.

[43] David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion,* (Dublin, 1993); Hugh Gough and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and the French Revolution,* (Dublin, 1990); Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union.* Although Camden remains noteworthy by his omission several of the essays deal with the role of the lord lieutenant; his relationship with the Irish parliament and administration and the relationship between the lord lieutenant and Whitehall: Ann C. Kavanaugh, 'John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare', in *The United Irishmen,* pp 115-23; Deirdre Lindsay, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode Revisted' in *The United Irishmen,* pp 197-209; Louis M. Cullen, 'The Politics of Crisis and Rebellion, 1792-1798', in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union,* pp 21-38.

counterpart, funded and supported many commemorative events. Politicians, as is their wont, made ready and simplistic comparisons between the Peace Process of 1998 and the ideals of the United Irishmen. Paraphrasing Lord Roseberry, An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, claimed that 'it is precisely because of its enduring relevance that 1798 has never truly passed out of politics and into history'.[44] In a recent article Roy Foster maintained that there was a political agenda behind the commemoration that went further than simple politics. He implied, quoting, without reference, from a document, that historians involved in the commemoration were complicit in following the government's official line.[45] This seems unlikely.

Undoubtedly the events of 1998 rescued the 1798 rebellion from the 'Faith and Fatherland' interpretation it had been subject to since Patrick Kavanagh's history first appeared in the 1870s. Whether it succeeded in heightening awareness among the general public is another issue. The *Irish Times* published a weekly '98 Diary, which was later produced as a book.[46] Two impressive exhibitions were held: *Fellowship of Freedom* in the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, and *Up in Arms* at the Ulster Museum.[47] A series of Thomas Davis lectures were broadcast on RTÉ Radio One. RTÉ, BBC Northern Ireland and Téilifís na Gaelige (now TG4) all produced and broadcast documentaries on the 1798 Rebellion. *Rebellion* and *Patriot's Fate* broadcast on BBC NI and RTÉ 1 were impressive and expensive documentaries while *1798 Agus Ó Shin* was aired on the Irish language station, TnaG. This was the only documentary that attempted to examine how the interpretation of the 1798 Rebellion had altered over time. It made interesting though not always

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[44] 'Speech by An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern T.D. at the unveiling ceremony at the Memorial Garden of the Croppies Acre in Collins Barracks', 22 November 1998. Kevin Whelan, reiterating, though not acknowledging Roseberry maintained 'the rebellion never passed into history, because it never passed out of politics'. Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty. Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830,* (Cork, 1996), p. 133.

[45] R.F. Foster, 'Remembering 1798' in *The Story of Ireland. Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland,* (London, 2001), pp 225-6.

[46] Ruán O'Donnell, *'98 Diary,* (Dublin, 1998).

[47] Elizabeth Crooke, 'Exhibiting 1798; Three Recent Exhibitions', in *History Ireland,* (Winter 1998), pp 41-45. Interestingly, though the *Up in Arms* exhibition produced an impressive, and informative catalogue, Camden merits only one reference. W.A. Maguire, (ed.), *Up in Arms: the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland, A bicentenary exhibition,* (Belfast, 1998).

accurate connections between the events of the 1790s and more recent times. For example it is questionable whether a valid comparison can be made between Lord Fitzwilliam's time in Ireland and James Callaghan's visit to Derry in 1969 or between the establishment of the militia and the B Specials, questions nevertheless worthy of debate.

In the aftermath of the bicentenary of the rebellion it is not surprising that the anniversary of the act of union passed with little notice. High politics is rarely emotive and is not popular in the general sense. No latter-day pikemen will march to commemorate the act of union. There were few public events to mark this bicentenary. A number of conferences were held including in one in Notre Dame University, Indiana in 1998 and in Queen's University, Belfast in September 1999. Another took place in the former House of Lords, College Green in June 2000, the proceedings of which will be published later this year.[48] *Acts of Union*, a recently published volume, was the result of two conferences, held in Gorey, County Wexford and Newman House, Dublin, to commemorate the bicentenary of the legislative union of Ireland and Great Britain.[49] There may have been little public attention paid to the two-hundredth anniversary of the passing of the act of union but the publication of the proceedings of many of these conferences has contributed greatly to our knowledge of this frequently overlooked period of Irish and British history.

IV

What then of the years of Camden's viceroyalty? Camden may not have been a heroic character but his contribution to Irish history merits more than brief references in histories of the 1790s. Little value is placed on his presence and there is no analysis of Camden's contribution to the government of Ireland. There is an assumption that Camden was a weak and fatuous lord lieutenant, in

[48] 'The Act of Union, Bicentennial Conference', College Green, Dublin, 22-4 June 2000.
[49] Keogh and Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union.* The conferences were the 'Byrne Perry Summer School' held in Gorey, County Wexford and the 'Keough-University of Notre Dame and the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies of the University of Aberdeen Conference' held in Newman House, Dublin.

Ireland under sufferance and completely overwhelmed by the power of his Irish 'cabinet' in the persons of John Fitzgibbon, John Foster, John Beresford and John Parnell. Camden is usually mentioned in the context of issuing orders, signing letters and, in general, acting as a factotum for those who really wielded power in Ireland.[50] The fact that Camden is so easily dismissed is noteworthy for it alters the balance of power that was in play in the years before the rebellion. Camden's role was significant and to sideline him creates the impression that he was uninterested and incompetent.

As already mentioned, Camden does not feature in Hay's account of the 1798 Rebellion. It might have been expected that Musgrave, a staunch loyalist, would defend Camden's position. However, it seems that the best he could do was to comment that Camden was 'a nobleman universally revered there [Dublin], for his good sense and firmness, the mildness of his disposition, and the amiableness of his manners' - hardly a ringing endorsement of an effective politician.[51] Kavanagh's *Insurrection of '98* published in time for the centenary of the rebellion virtually ignores Camden who in his account is, unsurprisingly, regarded as a poor replacement for Fitzwilliam, sent as he was 'charged with the detestable mission of fomenting religious discord'.[52]

Given Lecky and Froude's preoccupation with high politics it is somewhat surprising to find that neither historian devoted much attention to Camden's viceroyalty. While both stressed the important and influential roles played by Fitzwilliam and Cornwallis, they largely ignored Camden's period in office which was both longer and in many instances more noteworthy.[53]

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[50] Many of the finest books on this period make little or no reference to Camden beyond factual reference. See for example; Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen. Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin 1791-1798,* (Oxford, 1994), Elliott, *Partners;* Dáire Keogh, *The French Disease. The Catholic Church and Radicalism in Ireland 1790-1800,* (Dublin, 1993).

[51] Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland,* 4th ed. Stephen W. Myers and Delores E. Knight (eds), (Indiana, 1995) p. 118.

[52] Kavanagh, *History of the Insurrection of 1798,* p. 2.

[53] Froude devotes an entire chapter to the Fitzwilliam Crisis, (iii, pp 75-155) while Lecky gives over an entire section to the Fitzwilliam episode, (iii, 238-324). Cornwallis is the subject of a chapter in Froude (iii, pp 451-498) and most of vol v of Lecky's *History of Ireland* is devoted to Cornwallis and the 1798 Rebellion and the Act of Union.

Camden is regarded as a minor figure who happened to be in Ireland between Fitzwilliam and Cornwallis. The hostility Camden faced upon his arrival in Ireland is seen by both Lecky and Froude as the hallmark of the remainder of his time in Ireland. Lecky regarded the riots which greeted Camden's arrival in Dublin as 'an ill-omened beginning of a disastrous viceroyalty', while Froude described the same event as 'an ominous reception'.[54] Perhaps the omission of Camden from these histories accounts to some degree for subsequent historians' lack of interest in his viceroyalty. Pitt's biographers were no more enthusiastic about Camden. Stanhope found little to recommend him, remarking that his claim to public regard rested solely on the 'exalted character of his father'.[55] Roseberry did not consider Camden worthy of mention while Holland Rose was more forthcoming. He regarded Camden as weak and hesitant, but acknowledged that he was hardworking.[56] Significantly, at one point he credits Camden's actions in ordering the dragooning of Ulster with delaying the Rebellion for a year, commenting that 'this respite probably saved the British Empire'.[57] Yet, later in the book, Camden's desire to return to England is interpreted as an evasion of his duty, a weakness that Pitt never showed. Camden wanted to return to 'live as a country gentleman in Kent. Pitt had the same longing but he never wrote a line expressing a desire to leave the tiller at the height of the storm'. Camden's declaration of martial law in Ulster may have been the saving of the British Empire but it was also the reaction of a fearful man and 'thus, fear begot rage, and rage intensified fear and its offspring violence'.[58] By Holland Rose's reckoning, Camden, the saviour of the British Empire, was also the cause of the 1798 Rebellion.

Despite the recent resurgence of interest in high politics, Camden fares little better. In a recent, and valuable, essay, Louis Cullen addresses 'the politics of crisis and rebellion' in the 1790s. While he identifies several aspects of Irish politics in this period which require further study, he fails to mention the role

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[54] Lecky, *A History of Ireland,* iii, p. 325; Froude, *The English in Ireland,* iii, p. 143.
[55] Stanhope, *Life of Pitt,* ii, pp 307-8.
[56] Holland Rose, *Pitt and the Great War,* p. 342.
[57] ibid, p. 347.
[58] ibid, p. 348.

played by Camden.[59] A.P.W. Malcomson dismisses Camden as 'pliant' and completely beholden to the Irish 'cabinet'.[60] Camden's reliance on the Irish 'cabinet' is frequently raised. Kevin Whelan regarded Camden as both 'obtuse' and 'weak and ineffectual'. His pandering to his subordinates meant that these men 'were virtually untouchable and dictated policy and its implementation'.[61] According to Gerard O'Brien, Camden's dependence on the 'suffocating influence of Castle officialdom' caused him to embark 'upon a headstrong security policy which effectively transformed an elitist insurrection into one of the most violent peasant uprisings of the century'.[62] Camden's appointment 'led to the final victory of the Castle administrators and the effective end of Pitt's control over events in Ireland'.[63] Deirdre Lindsay noted that Fitzwilliam's administration was replaced by a more reactionary one headed by a 'malleable viceroy' of 'limited talents'.[64] In his study of the Irish yeomanry, Allan Blackstock depicted Camden as a vacillator, unable or unwilling to take decisive action. Commenting on the dragooning of Ulster, Blackstock maintained that 'the Castle's response was a typical Camden fudge, trying to get something done yet dodging the potential political implications of an extreme measure'.[65] Ann C. Kavanaugh, in her biography of John Fitzgibbon, is sweeping and inaccurate when she observes, 'unfortunately, the Camden administration quickly replicated the dismal pattern of its predecessors: it was headed by a well-meaning but limited young aristocrat dominated intellectually and emotionally by Fitzgibbon'.[66] In his recent study of the Irish act of union, Geoghegan describes Camden variously as 'unsuitable', 'an inappropriate viceroy', 'a liability' and 'an embarrassing reminder of the old Anglo-Irish relationship'.[67] Such claims cannot be justified and it is erroneous to suggest that Camden's contribution was

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[59] Cullen, 'Politics of Crisis and Rebellion', in *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union,* pp 21-38.
[60] Malcomson, *Foster,* p. 388.
[61] Kevin Whelan, 'Bantry Bay: the Wider Context' in Murphy (ed.), *The French are in the Bay,* p. 107; Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty,* p. 126.
[62] Gerard O'Brien, *Anglo-Irish Politics in the Age of Grattan and Pitt,* (Dublin, 1987), p. 147.
[63] ibid, pp 165-6.
[64] Lindsay, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode Revisited', in *The United Irishmen,* pp 206-8.
[65] Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army,* p. 239.
[66] Ann C. Kavanaugh, *John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare,* (Dublin, 1997), p. 316.
[67] Geoghegan, *Act of Union,* pp 13-20.

insignificant to the preservation of a strong connection between the two kingdoms.

V

Camden appears as nothing more than a peripheral figure in all secondary sources that consider Ireland and Britain in the 1790s. His absence from the historiography of the period does not accurately reflect the extent to which he features in the correspondence of many of the leading politicians of his day. There is an abundance of primary sources available from which to construct an analysis of Anglo-Irish relations in the 1790s. When examining Lord Camden's career in Ireland some are of considerably more value than others. Given the absence of a detailed account of Camden's viceroyalty it might be assumed that this would be easily explained by the lack of any extant archive. However, a substantial archive of Camden's papers are held in the Centre for Kentish Studies in Maidstone. This collection, the Pratt Papers, is composed of several thousand items and boasts a varied mix of personal and official correspondence indicating Camden's lively and broad interest in many aspects of both Irish and British government. The collections is composed primarily of letters to and from a number of significant figures including Pitt, Portland, Dundas, Pelham, Clare and Cooke. Many of these are concerned with patronage, financial and military matters. In addition to the letters there are many memorials and petitions as well as memorandums and, occasionally, printed documents referring to parliamentary or military affairs.

The Pelham Papers housed in the British Library, London are also an invaluable source. The lord lieutenant often had cause to complain that his chief secretary, Thomas Pelham, spent much of his time in London. With Pelham in London all communication with him was by letter and so a much fuller picture of the relationship between Camden and his chief secretary and that of Camden's administration and Whitehall can be gleaned from this correspondence than might have been possible had Pelham been in Ireland throughout his

appointment. In addition, copies of Pitt's papers, in the Pretyman collection at Cambridge, proved enlightening, often more for what was left unsaid than what was actually written. The papers of Lord Bridport, held in the British Library, revealed much about the thinking of the British admiralty at the time of the attempted French invasion of Ireland in December 1796.

Somewhat surprisingly the holdings of the National Archives of Ireland proved less valuable than might be assumed. The State of the Country Papers yield very few references to Camden's role in the government of Ireland. In addition the Rebellion Papers and the Official Papers, which have substantial material on the 1790s, make few references to the role played by the lord lieutenant in organising government policy. This reflects the fact that they are a collection of intelligence largely gleaned from loyalists dispersed throughout the countryside whose letters informed Dublin Castle but did not necessarily influence Camden's policies. Louis Cullen has argued that the Rebellion Papers 'tell us much about the Castle administration, and above all its objectives and methods'.[68] However, the papers reveal little about the influence of these correspondents on Camden or indeed his relationship with the Dublin Castle administration. Suspicions voiced by both Cullen and Deirdre Lindsay that many of the letters which concerned Camden and Pelham were forwarded to them by the under-secretary, Edward Cooke, without copies being made and that they then found their way to the Pratt and Pelham Papers is borne out by an examination of the letters in the Rebellion, Pratt and Pelham collections.[69]

In contrast to the information available in the National Archives of Ireland, the Home Office Papers in the Public Record Office at Kew are replete with references to Camden and his administration. These papers are concerned with all aspects of the Dublin administration from civil and military correspondence to secret and personal communications. The War Office papers,

[68] L.M. Cullen, 'Politics and Rebellion in Wicklow in the 1790s', in Ken Hannigan and William Nolan (eds), *Wicklow: History and Society,* (Dublin, 1994), p. 414.
[69] Cullen, 'Politics and Rebellion', p. 415; Deirdre Lindsay, 'The Rebellion Papers', in *History Ireland,* 6 (Summer 1998), p. 19.

despite the fact that Irish military matters are considered, make only occasional references to the lord lieutenant. This is not particularly surprising given that the Home Office papers, the main archive of Anglo-Irish documents, includes much relating to Irish military affairs.

The collection of General Gerard Lake's Papers, the Kilmainham Papers and copies of the Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence held in the National Library of Ireland proved extremely informative. The Lake and Kilmainham collections are particularly revealing with regard to Camden's relationship with the military commanders. The Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence is primarily concerned with the relationship between Camden and Pitt with many of the communications relating to military matters. Of great interest also were collections of correspondence, such as the DeVesci Letters, the Percy Papers and various Fitzgerald manuscripts, which colourfully depicted the lifestyle adopted by many of the Protestant ascendancy.

Personal relations between men of influence in England and Ireland often had an impact on political decisions. Because of this an examination of the correspondence between these men proved valuable. In the British Library the Grenville, Dropmore and Auckland papers were of particular interest. In addition, collections held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland such as the Sneyd, Shannon, Portland and McPeake papers were invaluable in piecing together a composite picture of the relationships between influential individuals. The correspondence and speeches of many of the leading political figures of the late eighteenth century are available in edited collections. Many of these, including the correspondence of Lord Charlemont, Auckland and Grenville were published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission. These, allied to other printed primary sources such as the correspondence of John Beresford, Edmund Burke, Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh and George III, the writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the speeches of Henry Grattan and the letters between William Drennan and Martha McTier amongst many others facilitated an

understanding of the interests and motivations of those concerned with political developments in Britain and Ireland in the 1790s.

Parliamentary records were consulted but revealed little in terms of enhancing an understanding of Camden's viceroyalty. His addresses to the parliament in Dublin and his speeches in the British house of lords were infrequent and rarely revealed any new thoughts on the government of Ireland. However, the debates in the house of commons provide some illumination on the, often hostile, relationship between the opposition and the Dublin administration. With regard to pamphlets and newspaper comment Camden was rarely the focus of either their vilification or their praise. Newspapers, in general, ignored Camden, though they regularly applauded or castigated his policies.

Combined, the various primary collections, be they published or held in depositories around England and Ireland, reveal much about the individuals and occurrences that occupied Camden's time in Ireland. On occasion they offer a intimate glimpse into the private life of public figures. This can perhaps best be illustrated with a peripheral, but revealing, example. Letters, both official and personal, from Edward Cooke in the spring and early summer of 1796 were uncharacteristically taciturn and brusque. There appeared no apparent reason for his change of tone until two letters were chanced upon in two separate collections. Cooke's disgruntlement was the result of marital difficulties, as he explained to Auckland:

> I have not had the spirits to write to my friends. I have been harassed...by Mrs Cooke's conduct which is now leading to a separation. I shall then be at ease again. It is disturbing to have all prospects of domestic comfort vanished at an age when one began to be tired with the disruption of the world and wanted the satisfaction of family retirement. I shall however soon reconcile myself and resume my natural spirits.[70]

[70] Cooke to Auckland, 4 May 1796, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/390.

Evidently he did resume his 'natural spirits' as the following month he confided in Pelham; I have got rid of the burthen [sic] which long oppressed me and weighed down my spirits and shall now be more at my ease'.[71]

Camden was a very active lord lieutenant. The various sources reveal that despite the many demands on his time he involved himself in almost every aspect of the Irish administration. Camden took an interest in hosting grand balls and extravagant dinners, dealing with matters of patronage and directing military policy. As the security situation deteriorated he frequently found himself devoting more and more of his time to directing military policy. He was also regularly involved with efforts to appease the disgruntled gentry. On other occasions he was occupied with managing the Irish parliament and ensuring that neither his Irish 'cabinet' nor the Whitehall cabinet had excessive influence in directing the Irish administration. Camden took a personal interest in the many varied duties of a viceroy. Fully conscious of the danger of extrapolating too wildly from the information gleaned from the archives, and aware that there is much truth in Finola Kennedy's observation that 'archives yield only what archives hold' it is possible to conclude that an examination of the sources associated with Anglo-Irish relations in the 1790s provides a comprehensive picture of Camden's lord lieutenancy.[72]

VI

An assessment of Camden's viceroyalty is long overdue. Placed in time between Lords Fitzwilliam and Cornwallis, both imposing viceroys, Camden's period in Ireland has been overlooked by historians. Fitzwilliam's dramatic and

[71] Cooke to Pelham, 4 June 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/27.
[72] Finola Kennedy, 'Two Priests, the Family and the Irish Constitution', in *Studies*, 87, (1998), p. 354.

turbulent lord lieutenancy has been the subject of extensive studies.[73] Cornwallis, Camden's successor, was deemed responsible for quashing the 1798 Rebellion and facilitating the union between Britain and Ireland. Dismissed by historians as ineffectual; merely a conduit for Pitt and his London advisors to exert their influence in Dublin, the primary sources reveal a different story. Camden's career was neither sensational nor glorious; he was not an innovator, nor was he the most decisive individual. Yet, he was never subservient to his Irish 'cabinet' nor did he meekly accept directives from Whitehall when they went against his better judgement. Camden's uneasy relationship with the men who formed his government in Ireland and with those wielding power in Whitehall greatly influenced the Anglo-Irish relationship during his viceroyalty and played no small part in the years prior to union.

[73] See for example Ashbourne, *Pitt:* pp 180-229; Holland Rose, 'Pitt and Earl Fitzwilliam' in *Pitt and Napoleon,* pp 20-36; R.B. McDowell, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode', *Irish Historical Studies,* vol. xvi, no. 59, (September 1966), pp 115-30; E.A. Smith, *Whig principles and party politics. Earl Fitzwilliam and the Whig party 1748-1833,* (Manchester, 1975); McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution* pp 445-61; Lindsay, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode Revisited', in *The United Irishmen,* pp 197-208; David Wilkinson, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode, 1795: a reinterpretation of the role of the Duke of Portland, *Irish Historical Studies,* xxxiv, no. 115, (May 1995), pp 315-39.

2

'...to moderate, to soothe, conciliate and reconcile'[74]

From Fitzwilliam to Camden, January-March 1795

Lord Camden, the recently appointed lord lieutenant, arrived in Ireland on 30 March 1795. He faced a daunting task, sent as he was 'to moderate, to soothe, conciliate and reconcile' those alienated by Earl Fitzwilliam's lord lieutenancy.[75] Camden's appearance in Dublin was officially greeted with the usual pomp and ceremony associated with such occasions but other events in the city that day proved to be harbingers of the difficulties Camden and his associates would face in the coming years.

I

Thomas Pelham, Camden's chief secretary, arrived in Dublin on 24 March anxious to meet with the departing lord lieutenant. His attempts to meet Lord Milton, Fitzwilliam's chief secretary, in Holyhead had been rebuffed. Once in Dublin, Pelham sent word to Dublin Castle requesting an audience with Fitzwilliam.[76] In response Pelham received a curt note written at 11.00 a.m. suggesting a meeting at 12.45 p.m. that same day. Pelham was to be afforded a mere fifteen minutes with the outgoing lord lieutenant as Fitzwilliam had a meeting with the chancellor, John Fitzgibbon, the speaker, John Foster, and the lord primate, Agar, at one o'clock.[77] Almost a week later, around five o'clock in the evening of 30 March, the Dorset Yacht carrying Camden and most of his entourage landed at Dublin. The following day he travelled from the viceroy's

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[74] Portland, (Whitehall) to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers,U840 0142A/3.
[75] ibid.
[76] Froude, *The English in Ireland,* iii, p. 141.
[77] Fitzwilliam, (Dublin Castle) to Pelham, 11.00am, 24 March [1795], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/161. Froude claimed that Fitzwilliam declined all communication with Pelham (Froude, *The English in Ireland,* iii, p.141). While there is no account of Fitzwilliam and Pelham's meeting it is likely to have taken place.

summer residence at Blackrock, a small village on the coast just south of the city, to Dublin Castle. Infantry from the city's garrison lined the streets and he was escorted by a squadron of dragoon guards. This procession made slow progress through the streets arriving finally at the Castle at seven o'clock, where, amidst the splendour of Saint Patrick's Hall, he was officially sworn in by the lords justices as lord lieutenant of Ireland. A gun salute in the grounds of the viceroy's official residence in the nearby Phoenix Park marked the occasion.

On the streets there was little support for the new lord lieutenant. Many lining the route as he left the Castle 'scoffed and hissed' at the entourage, more as a protest against Fitzwilliam's recall than at Camden himself. Some of the protestors displayed green cockades with mottoes of 'Liberty! Equality! and No Lord Lieutenant!'[78] Francis Higgins, the unscrupulous editor of the *Freeman's Journal* and an enthusiastic and prolific informant for Dublin Castle, was aggrieved that he had not been consulted about Camden's arrival, claiming that he could have organised 'a flattering reception'.[79] He maintained that the protest was not carefully orchestrated, rather those involved were a motley collection of individuals who were given 'porter and liquor gratis' in return for holding a placard protesting against the new lord lieutenant.[80] Many of the protesters were not content with throwing verbal assaults at the new administration and violence erupted. Edward Cooke, unlike Higgins, was keen to suggest that the riots had been well planned. He stressed the fact that only individuals and buildings associated with those credited with orchestrating Fitzwilliam's recall were targeted.[81] 'J.W.', the pseudonym used by Leonard MacNally, a barrister for the United Irishman and regular Castle informer, agreed with Cooke, claiming that as those outside Dublin Castle prepared to riot a second crowd formed in North King Street in order to draw security away from Dublin Castle, while John Lees,

[78] *Gentleman's Magazine,* April 1795, 65, pp. 342-3.
[79] H[iggins], (Dublin) to [Sackville Hamilton], 29 March 1795, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers 620/18/14.
[80] H[iggins], (Dublin) to Sackville Hamilton, 10 April 1795, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers 620/18/14.
[81] Cooke to William Eden, Lord Auckland, 6 April 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/7.

secretary to the Irish post office, stated that 'it was evidently a hired mob'.[82] Buildings around the city were attacked; the police station in William Street, the speaker's house, the chancellor's residence in Ely Place and the Custom House were some of the high profile targets of the mob. The coach carrying the Archbishop of Armagh was assaulted but the rioters, on learning that it was the Archbishop's coach, desisted and apologised.[83]

The riots were a physical manifestation of the disgust and abandonment felt at the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam. Regarded as the chief conspirator behind the removal of Fitzwilliam, John Fitzgibbon was singled out for particular abuse. As Fitzgibbon travelled from Dublin Castle to Ely Place his coach was assailed. The crowd gathered outside Dublin Castle pursued Fitzgibbon's carriage to College Green where they divided, one group bustling up Trinity Street and out into Grafton Street where they awaited the arrival of the chancellor.[84] Paving stones were prised from the street and hurled at the coach, one glancing the chancellor on the forehead.[85] Though not seriously injured, Fitzgibbon made the most of the assault claiming that if the stone had been bigger, if it had been thrown with more force and if the shot had been more accurate, he would have been seriously injured.[86] Indeed, for some time after he was to be seen with a black patch ostentatiously covering one eye, causing Lord Charlemont to caustically comment that it appeared to be worn as 'a badge of honour at court'.[87] Camden issued a proclamation on 1 April offering a reward of £500 for the capture of those who had attacked the lord chancellor and the primate.[88] John Beresford, the former chief revenue commissioner, was another blamed for Fitzwilliam's recall. His official apartments in the west end of the Custom House were attacked; an attempt to burn the building resulted in seven injured.

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[82] [MacNally] to [Downshire], Friday, [early April] 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/323; Lees to [Townshend], 1 April 1795, N.L.I. Townshend Ms, 394/170/18.
[83] *Freeman's Journal*, 9 April 1795.
[84] [MacNally] to [Downshire], Friday, [early April] 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/323.
[85] Camillus [Sir Richard Musgrave], *To the Magistrates, the Military and the Yeomanry of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1798); Kavanaugh, *Fitzgibbon*, p. 313.
[86] Fitzgibbon to Beresford, 18 April 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence*, pp 103-5.
[87] Lord Charlemont to Haliday, 2 April 1795, in H.M.C. *Charlemont Correspondence, 1784-99*, vol. ii, 13th Report, Appendix vii, (London, 1894).
[88] *Dublin Evening Post*, 2, 7 April 1795.

Windows in the building were smashed. Shots fired in retaliation killed one man. John Beresford's son, John Claudius, fired the fatal shot but no action was taken against him; the coroner's report recording that the victim had been '...killed in a riot'.[89] Many reports claimed that the army had been over zealous in their efforts to disperse the crowds that had assembled around the city, many of them not having been engaged in violent incidents.[90]

II

The transition of power from Fitzwilliam to Camden was uneasy. Popular opinion resented Fitzwilliam's recall. So too did many prominent Irishmen, who had expected to be favoured by the Fitzwilliam administration, such as William and George Ponsonby, Henry Grattan, John Curran, Thomas Conolly and James Fitzgerald, Duke of Leinster. An understanding of the complex relationships, personal, familial and official, that existed between those responsible for the government of Ireland in the mid 1790s is vital in order to comprehend why Fitzwilliam was recalled, why Camden was appointed and why difficulties frequently occurred in the relationships between Dublin Castle and the Irish 'cabinet', between Dublin Castle and Whitehall and between Whitehall and the Irish 'cabinet'.

Fitzwilliam was dispatched to Ireland in January 1795 as part of an uneasy coalition between Pitt and the Portland whigs. The whig party had split over differing perceptions of the French Revolution. Charles James Fox, the leader of the whigs, regarded internal events in France as part of a greater effort to reform the country constitutionally while others, most notably Edmund Burke, saw the French Revolution as a threat to civilisation. The result of this debate

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[89] Cooke, (Dublin) to Auckland, 6 April 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/7; Downshire to ___, April 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/317; [MacNally] to [Downshire], Friday, [early April] 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/323; B[eresford], (Bath) to Auckland, 5 April 1795, B.L. Auckland Papers Add Ms 34453/228.

[90] For detail on Camden's arrival in Dublin see *Freeman's Journal,* 9 April 1795; *Walker's Hibernian Magazine,* April 1795; *Northern Star,* 6 April 1795; *Dublin Evening Post,* 4 April 1795.

was a split in the whig party which became more apparent with the outbreak of war between France and Britain on 1 February 1793. Fox and his followers believed war could have been avoided while the other whigs, led by the Duke of Portland, sided with Pitt. Portland finally split from the Foxite whigs at the end of January 1794, entering into negotiations with Pitt which ultimately led to the Portland whigs entering cabinet in July 1794.[91] It was obvious that Portland would be made a secretary of state. Given his previous experience in Ireland - he had been lord lieutenant in 1782 - it was fitting that he should become home secretary, a position giving him responsibility for all policy decisions regarding Ireland. Indeed, it has been argued that Portland insisted on the position of home secretary specifically because it dealt with Irish matters.[92] Among other appointments it had been agreed that the Irish lord lieutenant, Westmorland, would be replaced by a whig. William Wentworth, Earl of Fitzwilliam was nominated. To some extent he was an obvious choice. As the nephew and heir to Lord Rockingham he had impeccable whig credentials. Allied to these he had a genuine interest in Irish affairs being both a large estate owner and married to a cousin of William and George Ponsonby. However his political mettle was unknown. Aged forty-six he had never held political office. Fitzwilliam was a deeply principled man, an admirable quality no doubt, but one sorely tested when dealing with the complexities of Ireland within the context of Britain's relationship with the country. Fitzwilliam had firm ideas about what should happen in Ireland and was determined to pursue these. He did not take into account Whitehall's instructions, the internal political situation in Ireland, nor the fact that Britain was at war with France and that this war absorbed much of Whitehall's attention. The political and religious issues in Ireland which preoccupied Fitzwilliam were of little concern to the prime minister, William Pitt, and his ministers.[93] But with firm briefings and strict instructions not to antagonise powerful elements in Irish political life nor to discuss the Catholic

[91] Wilkinson, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode, 1795', pp 320-1.
[92] Smith, *Whig principles,* p. 179.
[93] There was no official position of 'prime minister' at this time. However, the term was in common currency at this time and Pitt was regularly referred to as such. See Geoghegan, *Act of Union,* p. 2n.

question, it was hoped that Fitzwilliam's tenure of office would herald an era of peace in Ireland.

However, Fitzwilliam's appointment antagonised many in Ireland who felt that their privileged positions were endangered. Some in England were also unhappy. A former chief secretary, William Eden, Lord Auckland, was unenthusiastic about the new viceroy. However he was convinced that Fitzwilliam could not remove anyone from office without compensating them adequately and under the terms of the pension act, Auckland argued that this was not strictly possible. Yet, he acknowledged that 'logic is one thing and the spirit of party is another'. He recommended that Beresford and Fitzgibbon should do nothing but sit tight and assess the situation as it developed.[94] None was more enraged by Fitzwilliam's appointment than the Marquis of Buckingham who had been lord lieutenant between 1782 and 1783 and again between 1787 and 1789. He was horrified by the notion of a whig as lord lieutenant, regarding it as the effective handing over of authority in Ireland to the whigs, embodied in Ireland by William and George Ponsonby. Buckingham was not inclined to forgive the Ponsonbys and their allies for the slight he had felt, when at the height of the regency crisis, the Irish house of commons had voted an address to the Prince of Wales proposing he assume the powers of regent in Ireland. Ironically it was Buckingham's younger brother, Thomas Grenville, who was Fitzwilliam's first preference for chief secretary. Grenville was a politically astute choice; a cousin of the prime minister and a member of a very well connected family, he appeared ideal for the position. Grenville initially accepted the offer but felt obliged to refuse it after consulting his brother. Fitzwilliam then turned his attention to a friend from his schooldays at Eton, George Damer, Lord Milton. Milton was loyal, eager, but hopelessly inexperienced, a factor which would compound Fitzwilliam's difficulties.

In Ireland, liberal whigs such as the elderly Lord Charlemont were enthusiastic about the arrival of the new lord lieutenant. It was expected that

[94] Auckland to Beresford, 27 Nov 1794, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, p. 47.

Fitzwilliam would look favourably towards the Ponsonbys. His wife, Charlotte, was a daughter of William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough, an uncle to William and George Ponsonby. The Ponsonbys were also related to Portland by marriage, his wife Dorothy being their cousin.[95] The Ponsonby family was wealthy and commanded much influence in Ireland but they lacked official sanction since Portland had vacated the office of lord lieutenant in 1783. They had been replaced, to a large extent, by the notoriously anti-Catholic Beresford family who according to popular reports were the most influential family in Ireland. The behaviour of William Ponsonby in the weeks prior to Fitzwilliam's appointment leant credence to the rumours. Ponsonby made it clear that Fitzwilliam's appointment would herald a new era of Ponsonby power.[96]

The formal confirmation that Fitzwilliam was to be lord lieutenant of Ireland did not take place until December 1794 though Fitzwilliam, among others, heralded his appointment much earlier. Pitt had written to Portland in early July suggesting Fitzwilliam as lord lieutenant of Ireland and by the middle of that month the radical *Northern Star* newspaper was aware of a proposed change of personnel in Ireland.[97] In September 1794 the newspaper received information from Dublin that Fitzwilliam was about to be 'invested with the CHIEF GOVERNORSHIP of Ireland'; the paper enthusiastically reported that his first action would be to ensure the 'ENTIRE emancipation of Catholics' and that 'Messrs GRATTAN and PONSONBY, and probably CURRAN, come into power'.[98] Fitzwilliam wrote to Henry Grattan during August informing him that he was soon to be lord lieutenant and he made little secret of his anxiety to depart for Ireland as soon as possible.[99] Fitzwilliam was not alone in actively

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[95] Wilkinson, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode', p. 322n.
[96] John Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 24 March [1795] P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7.
[97] William Pitt, (Downing Street) to Portland, private, 2 July 1794, P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/15/9; *Northern Star,* 7 July 1794.
[98] *Northern Star,* 8 September 1794.
[99] Fitzwilliam to Grattan, 23 Aug 1794 in McDowell, 'The age of the United Irishmen: revolution and the union, 1794-1800' in Moody and Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland,* iv, p. 341. For examples of Fitzwilliam's desire to get to Ireland as soon as possible see Fitzwilliam to Portland, 10 August 1794; Fitzwilliam to Portland, 15 August 1794; Fitzwilliam to Portland, 8 September 1794; Fitzwilliam to Portland, 8 October 1794; Fitzwilliam to Portland, 14 October 1794, P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/15/11, /13, /15, /17, /19.

spreading the news of his imminent appointment. Portland was being equally indiscreet, alerting Grattan and William and George Ponsonby to the proposed change and inviting them to London to discuss future plans for Ireland.[100] By October Lord Charlemont was bemoaning the uncertainty that surrounded the nomination of Fitzwilliam while John Beresford requested confirmation of rumours surrounding Fitzwilliam's proposed appointment. He feared that the selection of Fitzwilliam would cause 'many to run to the Ponsonby standard, and the country will fall in to the hands of the Duke of Portland, and Government in England will not be able to take it out of them again'.[101]

Fitzwilliam's appointment was delayed initially as efforts were made to find a suitable post for Westmorland; delay also resulted because of Pitt's firm belief that few changes should take place in the Irish administration if those already there agreed to support the new viceroy. If wide-ranging changes were to take place within the Irish administration it would imply a dissatisfaction with previous Irish governments. Pitt was furious with both Fitzwilliam and Portland for publicising Fitzwilliam's appointment before it became official. Portland objected to Pitt's interference in what he regarded as his portfolio and Fitzwilliam threatened to refuse to accept the position if he were not allowed a free hand in appointments and dismissals. However as Lecky has argued 'the right of appointment to offices naturally belonged to the lord lieutenant and secretary of state for the Home Department, and it was fully within their province to pension off a Secretary or even a Chancellor'.[102] Without this power, the positions of lord lieutenant and home secretary were reduced to those of administrators and not policy makers. The dispute focused on Fitzwilliam's desire to remove the Irish lord chancellor, John Fitzgibbon. He was regarded by the whigs as the embodiment of all that was wrong with the Protestant ascendancy. Grattan went so far as to remark that he would only enter Fitzwilliam's cabinet on condition that 'while he entered at one door, Fitzgibbon

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[100] Wilkinson, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode', pp 321-2; Smith, *Whig principles,* p. 179.
[101] John Beresford to Auckland, 15 Nov 1794, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, p. 45; Charlemont, (Dublin) to Haliday, 18 October 1794, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* p. 250.
[102] Lecky, *History of Ireland,* vol. iii, p. 253.

should go out the other'.[103] This trenchant position was destined to cause difficulties as Pitt attested himself determined not to give way 'to Lord Fitzgibbon's removal on any terms'.[104] Pitt was resolved to stick by the Irish lord chancellor as a mark of gratitude for Fitzgibbon's support during the regency crisis of 1788-9. Burke and Grattan worked hard to ensure that Fitzwilliam's appointment went ahead, Grattan eventually conceding that Fitzgibbon's removal was no longer a prerequisite for his support of the new Irish administration.

A meeting designed to resolve contentious issues surrounding Fitzwilliam's appointment was held in Downing Street on 15 November and attended by Pitt, Portland, Grenville, foreign secretary, Spencer, lord privy seal, Windham, secretary-at-war and Fitzwilliam. John Hely Hutchinson had died in September 1794 and his death left two important positions to be filled; that of Provost of Trinity College Dublin and that of secretary of state. Fitzwilliam's nominee Richard Murray, a fellow of the college, was accepted as Provost. Fitzwilliam wanted William Ponsonby to be created secretary of state but agreed to appoint him as keeper of the signet. If John Toler, then solicitor general, was agreeable to being placed on the judicial bench then George Ponsonby could assume Toler's position. Fitzwilliam initially desired his immediate promotion to the office of attorney general but Pitt had reservations about this and requested that Ponsonby be promoted gradually.[105] It was further agreed that Arthur Wolfe, the attorney general, would not be removed. Contrary to Fitzwilliam's request, the number of revenue commissioners was not to be reduced unless Fitzwilliam, after investigating the position fully, could justify this. Finally, it was agreed that the Catholic question would not be raised. Interestingly, in light of events which followed, the question of John Beresford's retention of his position as chief revenue commissioner did not arise. No formal record of this meeting was taken and Fitzwilliam went to Ireland with vague outlines of the policy to be pursued but confident in his own mind that if he took

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[103] Smith, *Whig principles,* p. 182.
[104] Pitt, 14 October 1794, in *The Later Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 263n.
[105] Pitt to Westmorland, 19 Nov 1794, in *Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 269; Auckland, (Eden Farm), to Beresford, 14 Dec 1794; Fitzwilliam, (Dublin Castle) to Carlisle, 6 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 48, 81.

sufficient advice from those around him and reported back regularly to London, he was free to pursue his own agenda.

No written account of what was transacted at the November meeting existed until March 1795 when all of those in attendance, apart from Fitzwilliam, agreed to a memorandum which was then published. In this account it appears that Fitzwilliam blatantly disregarded specific instructions, yet it must be borne in mind that this minute of the meeting was written after the shambles of Fitzwilliam's viceroyalty.[106] Questions had been raised and answered at this meeting but all was not well. To translate the abstract decisions made in London by men with little direct knowledge of Ireland into actions in Dublin proved a task beyond Fitzwilliam. The Catholic question was certain to be raised and Fitzwilliam, away from the pressures of London and surrounded by pro-Catholic advisors, was persuaded to give indications, if not absolute guarantees, that further Catholic relief would be forthcoming. Indeed Catholics felt assured of Fitzwilliam's willingness to support their demands. As early as October 1792 Richard Burke, in his capacity as agent to the Catholic Committee, had suggested Fitzwilliam as an ideal viceroy for Ireland.[107]

Depending on political affiliations Fitzwilliam's arrival in Ireland was greeted with a mixture of expectation, anticipation, grudging acceptance and hostility. Many believed that Pitt had relinquished control of Ireland to ensure his own political survival; with Fitzwilliam's appointment it was thought that 'Pitt had abandoned Ireland to their [whigs] will and pleasure'.[108] The new viceroy recognised that it would be impossible to keep the disparate groups satisfied yet he made little effort to attempt a smooth transition of power. On arrival in Dublin, Fitzwilliam was immediately under pressure to transform promises into realities and he set about this task with gusto. There were many

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[106] Memorandum, March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers,U840 0142A/4; Windham to Fitzwilliam, 5 March 1795, B.L. Windham Papers, Add Ms 37875/5; Portland to Pelham, 28 March 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/165.
[107] Smith, *Whig principles*, p. 178.
[108] Cooke to Pitt, 16 November 1794, in A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III*, ii, Feb 1793-Dec 1797, (Cambridge, 1963), p. 267.

who approved of this enthusiasm, none more so than his private secretary Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, a Catholic who had converted and become a Protestant clergyman holding the lucrative position of Bishop of Ossory. O'Beirne barraged the new lord lieutenant with letters highlighting the importance of securing his position by removing those whose support was suspect and by dispensing patronage only to those who guaranteed wholehearted backing to the new administration.

Fitzwilliam landed at the small fishing village of Balbriggan in north county Dublin on Sunday 4 January 1795. He travelled that evening to Dublin, recovered from his journey the following day and on Tuesday he acquainted himself with the situation in Ireland. By Wednesday he felt himself sufficiently prepared to embark upon a decisive course of action that would result in sweeping changes amongst the personnel of the Castle. It had been expected that Fitzwilliam's arrival would be turbulent, but none had envisaged change to be so immediate and far-reaching. No time was wasted in implementing Fitzwilliam's wishes. Intimations of the changes to come were apparent at all levels. At the formal dinners every new lord lieutenant was obliged to host, William Ponsonby acted as Fitzwilliam's right-hand man and reportedly informed all those who cared to listen that Fitzwilliam had arrived in Ireland with the sole purpose of giving effective control of the country to the Ponsonbys and their supporters.[109] To give credence to Ponsonby's extravagant claims, within weeks of his arrival in Dublin Fitzwilliam instituted widespread changes of personnel in the Dublin administration. Having considered the political situation in Ireland for less than two days Fitzwilliam dispatched Denis Bowes Daly an M.P. for King's County to call on John Beresford. Daly conveyed the lord lieutenant's instructions that Beresford was to be 'put out of office'. Beresford was to be granted £2,000 per annum, the equivalent of his salary, in compensation. Beresford claimed that Daly justified his dismissal by alleging that:

[109] John Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 24 March [1795], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7.

> ...no Lord-Lieutenant could exist with my [John Beresford's] power; that I had made a Lord Chancellor, a Chief Justice of the King's Bench, an Attorney-General, nearly a Primate, and certainly a Commander-in-Chief; that I was at the head of the Revenue, and had the Law, the Army, the Revenue, and a great deal of the Church in my possession; and he said expressly, that I was considered the King of Ireland.[110]

Beresford, never a modest man, was undoubtedly guilty of exaggeration but there was certainly a basis for his statement. As chief commissioner of the revenue Beresford was not the most prominent Irish politician. However, he had carefully secured many positions for family members which created an impressive network of political contacts. Using these contacts wisely, Beresford had become a significant influence on government policy in Ireland.[111]

Having summarily dispensed with Beresford's service, Fitzwilliam requested the resignation of Arthur Wolfe, the attorney general, and John Toler, the solicitor general. Sackville Hamilton and Edward Cooke, the under-secretaries in the civil and military departments, were also asked to quit their posts. These sacked members of the Irish administration were offered compensation, though Cooke was convinced that this would be far from 'honourably adequate to my loss'.[112] It was proposed that Wolfe would be granted the position of chief justice and his wife was to be created Baroness Kilwarden while Toler would be given the next seat on the judicial bench. Wolfe and Toler were removed for political purposes, Sackville Hamilton and Cooke because Fitzwilliam maintained that he had little confidence in them. He considered them self-important and in a letter to a former lord lieutenant, Carlisle, commented 'in your days, they were clerks - in mine, I found them ministers'.[113]

Beresford refused to accept his dismissal without adequate explanation. Fitzwilliam defended his action claiming that Beresford controlled too much

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[110] Beresford to Auckland, 9 Jan 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 49-52.
[111] Lecky, *A History of Ireland,* iii, p. 272.
[112] Cooke, (Dublin Castle) to Pitt, 15 Jan 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/147.
[113] Fitzwilliam, (Dublin Castle) to Carlisle, 6 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 78-84.

power and patronage; if he remained then Fitzwilliam felt his own position would be untenable. Fitzwilliam also maintained that he had discussed Beresford's removal with the prime minister and no objection had been raised. Beresford however rejected all Fitzwilliam's explanations. He was informed by Auckland that when Pitt was appraised of Beresford's removal he was incensed claiming that this action 'would be an open breach of a most solemn promise'.[114] Beresford left for London on 23 January to appeal to Pitt directly, determined to fight his case, unless the prime minister recommended his resignation. Beresford was not alone in appealing across the Irish Sea for assistance. Sackville Hamilton wrote to Grenville while Cooke contacted Evan Neapan, a prominent civil servant employed at the home office. Fitzwilliam was unsurprisingly aggrieved at the behaviour of the men he had dismissed. Fitzwilliam's actions lacked subtlety. That he had thought such sweeping change possible within such a short space of time was testament to his inexperience and naivety. Beresford recognised that Fitzwilliam could not survive with influential enemies but he was prepared to wait:

> I see already that their career is short; it would be easy to overturn the Government, but God forbid that I was the author; I shall wait patiently, but never can consent to be subject to the tyranny of these people for the short-lived emoluments which would ensue.[115]

Beresford's policy of wait and see was not merely an astute political judgement. His wife was dying and Beresford took her to Bath in the vain hope of improving her health and so he remained out of Ireland for much of Fitzwilliam's viceroyalty.[116]

Fitzwilliam did not attempt to engineer the resignation of the Irish lord chancellor, John Fitzgibbon, but their relationship was strained. Fitzwilliam had desired the immediate removal of Fitzgibbon on his arrival in Ireland but this was categorically forbidden by Pitt. Fitzgibbon maintained that his relationship with Fitzwilliam was characterised by 'marked personal civility and attention in

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[114] Auckland to Beresford, 15 Jan 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, p. 54.
[115] Beresford to Auckland, 9 Jan 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 49-52.
[116] Beresford (Bath) to Auckland, 29 March 1795; Beresford (Bath) to Auckland, 1 April 1795, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms, 34453/208; 210.

private, and in the article of personal civility...I have always taken care not to be outdone by him'.[117] But beyond this polite veneer the two men barely tolerated each other. Fitzgibbon believed that Fitzwilliam was formulating policy based on conviction but not backed up with adequate information about the situation in Ireland. According to Fitzgibbon, he was consulted only once regarding Fitzwilliam's 'parliamentary projects'. This meeting took place early in February where Fitzwilliam outlined his desire to remove all obstacles to Catholics fully participating in Irish life. Fitzgibbon found him ill-informed both on the Catholic question and in relation to how he could effect these changes. Fitzgibbon considered Fitzwilliam 'beyond all comparison the weakest man I have ever met with'.[118]

Fitzwilliam's transformation of Irish government did not end with the removal of prominent men from office. Contrary to advice from Whitehall he allowed the issue of Catholic emancipation back on the political agenda and in so doing ushered in hope for the despondent Irish radicals. Fitzwilliam entertained an audience with members of the Catholic Committee and about 500 of their supporters. At this meeting he reportedly said that he could see no reason why discrimination against Catholics still existed. The Catholic question spilled over into military matters. In order to defend Ireland against invasion by France, he wanted to increase the size of the militia. He suggested the establishment of yeomanry along English lines. This would be a local force of volunteers commanded by country gentry. In order to establish such a force it would be necessary to arm and train Catholics. Obviously it was not advisable to arm and train a group who had no incentive to be loyal to the government and so Fitzwilliam reasoned that concessions should be granted to the Catholics to ensure their loyalty. Far from considering Catholic emancipation and the training and arming of Catholics as a potential problem for Whitehall, Fitzwilliam regarded it as patriotic. Ireland would be able to defend herself and also supply up to three million loyal Catholic soldiers to fight against the French.

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[117] Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 24 March [1795], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7.
[118] Ibid.

Within three weeks of Fitzwilliam's arrival in Ireland parliament met. It was immediately obvious that Fitzwilliam and his allies proposed to push through a radical programme of reforms. The lord lieutenant did petition Whitehall for advice on how to deal with the Catholic question. George III felt compelled to write to Pitt detailing his strenuous objection to any consideration of the Catholic question.[119] In Dublin this could not be avoided as on 12 February Grattan introduced a Catholic relief bill. Fitzwilliam was of the opinion that while he could not overtly support such a bill, if the bill were to get strong backing then he would not oppose it. This notion was quickly dismissed. Dispatches arrived from Portland warning Fitzwilliam not to proceed with any matter regarding the Catholic question, but it was too late, the bill had already been presented to parliament and Catholic hopes had been raised only to be dashed again. Fitzwilliam's letter to Whitehall had been received with dismay and the king was not alone in registering his fury that the lord lieutenant had allowed the Catholic question to generate such tension in the Irish parliament.[120] Whitehall recognised that Fitzwilliam's actions had escalated from the personal insult felt by several prominent Irish politicians to potential political disaster for many. While Whitehall might have tolerated the speed and extent of the personnel changes Fitzwilliam was instigating in Dublin, the lord lieutenant's blatant disregard of government policy regarding the Catholic question ensured his dismissal.[121]

Fitzwilliam's rash decision to allow the presentation of the Catholic bill without hearing from London was sufficient for Portland, once his staunch defender and friend, to remove his support. Portland had been irritated by Fitzwilliam's tardiness in applying to Whitehall for advice and concluded that he could no longer justify his defence of so foolhardy and headstrong a lord lieutenant. While many others were considering dismissal, it was Portland who

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[119] George III to Pitt, 6 Feb 1795 in A. Aspinall and E. Anthony Smith (eds), *English Historical Documents 1783-1832,* (London, 1959), pp 158-9.
[120] George III to Portland, 21 February 1795, in *Later Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 305.
[121] Portland to Camden, 26 March 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.

ultimately stated that Fitzwilliam had to be recalled. The home secretary wrote to inform Fitzwilliam declaring that it:

> was the most painful task I ever undertook...and I call it mine, because I chose to be the first to give it, and I was, I believe, the only member of the Cabinet who gave it decidedly, that the true interest of government...requires that you should not continue to administer that of Ireland.[122]

This decision was taken by London just in time according to supporters of British interest in Ireland who maintained that 'if Lord Fitzwilliam and his Ministers had not been checked at the instant, the mischief would have been without remedy'.[123] Pitt concurred with such sentiments but sensitive to his tenuous grip on power, suggested that Fitzwilliam might be allowed to remain in cabinet primarily because he was anxious that Portland, who had been a supporter of Fitzwilliam, would not come too badly out of the debacle.[124]

Fitzwilliam's recall proved so controversial that it was vital a new viceroy be sent to Dublin as soon as possible. In the space of six weeks the old guard had been changed, new liberal appointments made, peerages pledged and the promise of a favourable hearing of Catholic grievances given. Whitehall's control of Dublin Castle was retained but it had been severely weakened and strong leadership was necessary. Pitt could not afford to use the position of lord lieutenant of Ireland as part of a deal with his political allies again. What had seemed a sensible and pragmatic solution during 1794 was no longer an option. Loyalty was the dominant attribute required for the next lord lieutenant. Pitt characteristically looked to an old friend to take on this task and his attention focused on John Jeffreys Pratt, 2nd Earl Camden, who had been at Cambridge with the prime minister and was a junior cabinet colleague.[125]

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[122] Portland to Fitzwilliam, 18 Feb 1795, in *Correspondence of George III,* ii, pp 304-5n; Portland to Camden, 20 Feb 1795 in Smith, *Whig principles*, p. 199.
[123] Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 24 March [1795], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7.
[124] Pitt, (Downing Street) to George III, 22 Feb 1795; George III to Pitt, 22 Feb 1795; Lord Spencer to Fitzwilliam, 23 Feb 1795; Portland to George III, 4 March 1795; George III to Portland, 5 March 1795 in *Later Correspondence of George III,* ii, pp 307-8n, 310-1.
[125] Camden had been M.P. for Bath between 1780-94. He was a lord of the admiralty between July 1782 and April 1783 and again between December 1783 and August 1789. He was appointed as a lord of the treasury between August 1789 and May 1794.

Camden had been M.P. for Bath from 1780-94, when, in April 1794, on the death of his father, he inherited the title, Earl Camden. Despite the fact that he had, from 1782, held a number of minor cabinet positions, he had made little political impression. His maiden speech, in 1781, was not very well received; one commentator observing, 'Lord Camden's son acquitted himself but very ill'.[126] Camden was never a star performer in either the house of commons or lords and he contributed little to parliamentary discourse. His elevation to political office owed much to his friendship with Pitt and the esteem in which his father, a former lord chancellor, was held. Camden may have been an infrequent contributor to parliamentary debates, but he enthusiastically embraced the social aspect of the life of a young M.P.. His father noted, with some dismay, that Camden and his friends:

> go to bed about 3 in the morning: rise at eleven, breakfast, ride to the park till it is time to dress - then dinner, and the evening of course dedicated to amusement...They talk a little politics at their clubs...but with respect to the real state of the country they neither know nor care about it.[127]

Such a decadent lifestyle was undoubtedly curtailed somewhat by his marriage, in 1785 to Frances Molesworth, and the birth of their first daughter, Frances Anne, in 1787. While not a key figure in Pitt's administration, he maintained very friendly terms with the prime minister, a factor which was undoubtedly significant, in his being considered for the post of lord lieutenant of Ireland. Camden had little personal knowledge of Ireland; he owned no property in the country and his sole link to Ireland was through his sister, Sarah, who was the second wife of Lord Londonderry and step-mother of Robert Stewart, later Lord Castlereagh. In addition, neither his position as a lord of the admiralty nor as a lord of the treasury prepared him for the challenges, both political and military, he would encounter in Ireland. Camden, himself, acknowledged that he was 'inexperienced in difficult situations' and feared that he might not be able to adequately fulfil the demanding job of lord lieutenant.[128]

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[126] George Selwyn to Carlisle, 13 June [1781], in *Carlisle Correspondence,* p. 497.
[127] Charles Pratt, 1st Earl of Camden, 7 February 1781, in Lewis Namier and John Brooke, *The History of Parliament. The House of Commons 1754-1790,* vol. iii, (London, 1985), p. 324.
[128] Camden to Pitt, 7 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/1.

To compensate, at least partially, for his lack of political experience and knowledge of Ireland Camden was forced to rely on good-will towards him when he arrived in Ireland. He was generally regarded as a genial character. George Canning, who would later have a serious falling out with Camden, first met him in 1793 and observed then that he was 'an intimate friend of Pitt...very pleasing and gentlemanly in his manners, and very much liked and spoken of'.[129] The pleasant nature of Camden's character was often remarked on and he was often received cordially by political opponents because of the high regard in which his father had been held. Henry Grattan maintained he had 'rather a respect for him [Camden], in consequence of the exalted character of his father' while Lord Charlemont rather pointedly observed that Camden was not the intellectual equal of his late father nor of his sister, Lady Londonderry, though he generously conceded that 'he does not seem in any way deficient'.[130] The *English Chronicle,* in 1781, accurately assessed Camden's strengths and weaknesses:

> As his abilities are rather solid than splendid, an early display of them, or an ostentatious display of them is not to be expected. Modesty, reserve and diffidence, are the leading peculiarities of his disposition, and all conspire with the natural turn of his endowments to make him an interesting companion in private life than a conspicuous figure in the senate.[131]

It was these solid qualities that made Camden an ideal candidate to replace Fitzwilliam. Camden's loyalty to Pitt was unquestioned and he was recognised as a capable, if unimaginative, administrator. He was also firmly attached to the notion that Ireland should be dependent on England; writing in 1785 he declared:

> Ireland, more especially the Protestant part of it, will come at last to understand that free and independent as she is, she can never hope to enjoy that freedom or independence

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[129] *Journal of George Canning,* 22 November 1793, in Peter Jupp (ed.), *The Letter Journal of George Canning, 1793-5,* (London, 1991), p. 29.
[130] 13 April 1795, in *Parliamentary Register,* xv, p. 162; Charlemont to Haliday, 26 July 1795, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, pp 264-5.
[131] *The House of Commons 1754-1790,* vol. iii, p. 324.

without the protection of England unless she shall chose to ask it upon her knees from France.[132]

Indeed, this was not the first time Camden's name had been mooted in connection with the position of lord lieutenant of Ireland. He had been considered for the post in June 1794 during Westmorland's lord lieutenancy. Camden was not appointed at this time but consoled himself with the knowledge that he had not given 'way to any other man but to a great coalition' and he had 'by no means given up on the idea of an active employment'.[133]

III

Pitt informed Camden that his name had been put forward to fill the vacancy in a note received on Thursday 5 March 1795. At a meeting the following morning Camden was officially offered the position. This proposal met with an unenthusiastic response. Camden had many reservations. He claimed that he could not satisfy his 'conscience in accepting a situation in which I might risque [sic] the safety of that country or the peace of this by an error of judgement, a want of resolution or a hasty decision'. Camden feared that the urgency of the appointment coupled with 'the real state of Ireland not being known, and the sentiments of the English Cabinet not being completely decided, as to the future measures to be pursued' rendered the new lord lieutenant at a disadvantage. Characteristically, Camden was apprehensive not only for the state of British interest in Ireland but also worried about his own reputation commenting, 'I risque my own credit and character, as well as those who sent me by plunging myself into a government without knowing my support'. He concluded 'I think it is impossible my decision can be other than to decline the proposal'.[134] However Camden failed to maintain this position for long and on 7 March he relented and indicated to the prime minister that 'if no other person

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[132] Camden to Robert Stewart, 25 Aug 1785, quoted in Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation. The Catholic Question 1690-1830,* (Dublin, 1992), p. 119.
[133] Camden to Robert Stewart, 28 June 1794, in Charles Vane, Marquis of Londonderry (ed.), *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh,* i, *The Irish Rebellion,* (London, 1848), pp 159-60; Auckland to Beresford, 27 July 1794, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 37-8.
[134] Camden to Pitt, 7 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers,U840 0142A/1

could be found, I would not refuse the situation'.[135] Pitt agreed to look for an alternative candidate but made no effort to do so. Instead he decided to appeal to Camden's sense of public duty. This allied to the invoking of their friendship and extravagant appeals to Camden's vanity succeeded and on Sunday evening 8 March 1795 Camden, still feigning reluctance but undoubtedly delighted to be regarded as a vital member of Pitt's government, agreed to accept the lord lieutenancy of Ireland.[136] The following day Pitt informed the king of Camden's acceptance.[137] For Camden this was an opportunity to realise his own personal ambition. It offered an escape from the rather obscure reaches of junior ministry. In this new role Camden could prove his loyalty and could make Ireland an asset rather than a tiresome, expensive, liability. For Pitt and his cabinet Camden was regarded as a safe, uninspirational but reliable and secure successor to Fitzwilliam. He was to be Whitehall's representative in Ireland and it was fully anticipated that he would do as he was bid and act in accordance with British interests at all times.[138]

Meanwhile, in Dublin, Fitzwilliam was preparing to return to England. Around the country the news that Fitzwilliam had been recalled was spreading. In the house of commons it was 'unanimously resolved, that his Excellency had by his conduct...merited the thanks of the house and the confidence of the people'.[139] Outside parliament news of Fitzwilliam's imminent departure was greeted with dismay by those who believed that his tenure of office had heralded the beginning of a new liberal regime in Ireland. Fitzwilliam took some solace from the reaction of large numbers of the Irish, commenting to Burke 'however ill I am thought of in England; I have the vanity to say and the pride to think I at

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[135] Note by Camden regarding his appointment as lord lieutenant, March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers,U840 0142A/1

[136] Note by Camden regarding his appointment as lord lieutenant, March 1795; Pitt to Camden, 8 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 014A/1.

[137] Pitt, (Downing Street) to George III, 9 March 1795, in *Later Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 316.

[138] See for example his correspondence with Portland, especially Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.

[139] William James McNeven, *Pieces of Irish History,* (New York, 1807), p. 92.

least have the good wishes of the people of Ireland, almost universally'.[140] Many in Dublin were incensed; 'the consternation that reigns in this metropolis in consequence of Earl Fitzwilliam's intention of leaving is scarcely credible – and the most serious effects are dreaded'.[141] Catholics and Protestants registered their outrage in numerous public addresses. Edward Hay would later maintain, in his usual modest manner, that '...I was so successful as to procure, in the space of one week, twenty-two thousand two hundred and fifty one signatures to the petition'.[142] This petition was duly presented to King George III on 22 April 1795 but, as with all the petitions pleading for Fitzwilliam's retention, it was ignored. The Catholics of Dublin sent a letter to the king professing their loyalty but also expressing 'the most poignant regret at the well-grounded report of his [Fitzwilliam's] removal'. Catholics were worried 'lest the system of proscription, persecution and oppression, which had already occasioned so much distrust and uneasiness in the public mind should be recommenced...and the rising spirit of harmony and union suppressed by the strong hand of power'.[143] An assembly of the citizens, freemen and freeholders of Cork city echoed the feelings of many when it was resolved:

> that it is with the deepest regret and general despondence we hear of the sudden and premature recall of Earl Fitzwilliam from the Government of this country, whose administration we contemplate as singularly wise, virtuous and patriotic, tending to unite all his Majesty's subjects in this kingdom, so as to render it invulnerable to the attack of its enemies, to [prevent] peculation, plunder and a prostitution of the public revenues and to ensure the full confidence of the whole people by an equal attention to the interests of all.

The assembly requested a portrait of Fitzwilliam which they wished to hang in the council chamber as a reminder of the champion of Irish interests.[144] To those outside the charmed circle of patronage, sinecures and influence, Fitzwilliam's

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[140] Fitzwilliam to Burke, 20 March 1795, in R.B. McDowell (ed.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* viii, (Cambridge, 1969), p. 210.
[141] Thomas Hume Bowles, (100 Grafton Street, Dublin) to Pitt, 1 March 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/325/122.
[142] Edward Hay, *History of the Irish Insurrection of 1798,* p. xv; Ó hÓgartaigh, 'Making History and Defining the Nation', p. 26.
[143] Catholics of the City of Dublin to King George III, [March 1795], P.R.O. H.O.100/56/401-44.
[144] 'Resolutions of an assembly of the citizens, freemen and freeholders of the city of Corke, convened at the Tholsel, Corke, 24 March 1795, sent to Fitzwilliam, Portland, Corke Papers, *Dublin Evening Post* and *London Star*', P.R.O. H.O.100/56/407-9.

arrival had brought with it the possibility of change; if Catholic emancipation was still too much to hope for, it was at least certain that Catholic grievances would be heard. Fitzwilliam's recall dashed such optimism.

As news of the viceroy's recall began to spread around the capital Fitzwilliam left to spend some time at his Wicklow estate. He returned to Dublin on 20 March. After leaving his house near Shilelagh, county Wicklow, Fitzwilliam called to visit General Robert Cuninghame, the aged commander-in-chief, who had a residence close to the village of Newtownmountkennedy. Leaving Cuninghame's home, Fitzwilliam travelled to the seaside town of Bray, county Wicklow, where he was met by supporters who unhitched his horses and insisted on pulling his coach themselves for several miles.[145] Such was the adverse reaction to Fitzwilliam's recall that security of the country appeared threatened. In order to maintain order, the disgraced lord lieutenant recognised that, contrary to his own wishes, he ought to remain in Ireland until the arrival of his replacement.[146] Fitzwilliam had been eager to leave and swiftly complied with instructions to prepare the Dorset Yacht for Camden who would sail on it from Holyhead to Dublin. Fitzwilliam informed Fitzgibbon that he wished to leave Ireland as soon as he could organise the passage of the money and mutiny bills through both houses of parliament but the chancellor insisted that Fitzwilliam should 'hold the reins of government...till His Majesty should send a chief-governor to Ireland'.[147] The disgraced lord lieutenant was not prepared to do so. The money bill arrived in London on 14 March and so, with his business in Ireland brought to a close, Fitzwilliam decided not to remain in Dublin for the humiliating hand-over. Fitzwilliam had earlier agreed that he would 'apprise Lord Camden on his arrival of all such matters and circumstances as in my judgement shall appertain to the good government of Ireland'.[148] This he failed to do, leaving Ireland before his successor arrived. This went against precedent;

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[145] *Freeman's Journal,* 21 March 1795.
[146] Fitzwilliam, (Dublin Castle) to Portland, 15 March 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/56/419.
[147] Fitzgibbon to Beresford, 25 Feb 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 73-4; Pitt to George III, 14 March 1795 in *Later Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 320; Fitzgibbon to Fitzwilliam, 7 March 1795 in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* viii, p. 209n.
[148] Fitzwilliam, (Dublin Castle) to Portland, 17 March 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/56/423.

it was usual for the incoming lord lieutenant to be sworn in by his predecessor in Dublin Castle. However Fitzwilliam, determined not to prolong his stay in Ireland, handed over responsibility for government to the lords justices and sailed for England on 25 March 1795. His successor, Lord Camden, did not arrive for another five days.[149]

It had been hoped by some that Fitzwilliam would take his leave of Ireland in a quiet and unobtrusive manner but he was determined to fulfil all official functions. On Monday 23 March the news of Fitzwilliam's imminent departure was made public. Sir Boyle Roche was despatched to the offices of the *Dublin Gazette* to place a notice in the following day's paper indicating that Fitzwilliam would take his leave of Dublin on Wednesday 25 March. The news of Boyle Roche's errand was greeted with dismay by many including some of the viceroy's supporters. His private secretary, Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, contended that the publication of the notice would give license to riot. Fitzwilliam took counsel from Grattan and the Duke of Leinster and decided to ignore the clergyman and have the notice published. Finally at half-past three Milton was called on to intervene in the dispute and he ordered the notice to be cancelled. By that time it was too late and it appeared in the following day's paper. Later in the afternoon of the 23 March Fitzwilliam summoned Fitzgibbon to the Castle and informed him that he was to sail for England in two days time leaving the government in the hands of the lord chancellor and the primate. Fitzwilliam had no intention of adjourning parliament but was forced to relent at a meeting held on 24 March where he came under extreme pressure from Fitzgibbon, John Foster the speaker of the house of commons, and the primate. Parliament was adjourned until 13 April.[150]

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[149] Lecky, *History of Ireland,* iii, pp 321, 325.

[150] Fitzgibbon, (Dublin) to Auckland, 24 March 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7; Marcus Beresford , (Merrion Square) to Beresford 23 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 84-88; Fitzwilliam to Pelham, 24 March [1795], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/161.

Fitzwilliam's departure from Ireland contrasted sharply with Camden's arrival. The former was marked by scenes of dignified mourning both in Belfast and Dublin, one newspaper reporting;

> this day was observed as a day of National Mourning by the inhabitants of this town [Belfast], on account of Lord Fitzwilliam's departure. There was not a shop or counting house open during the whole day; - all was one scene of sullen indignation.[151]

On the morning of his departure he held a reception at Dublin Castle attended by various dignitaries, including the chancellor Fitzgibbon and many of the lords and bishops. At one o'clock the reception drew to a close and Fitzwilliam, his wife and their son, Lord Malton, departed Dublin Castle. Their carriage left the courtyard, passing under the figure of justice, and out onto Dame Street. Fitzwilliam's departure had been well-publicised; handbills had been circulated around the city which invited 'the friends of Ireland to meet at the Royal Exchange and accompany Fitzwilliam to the waterside'. A large crowd had been expected though the *Northern Star*, the newspaper of the United Irishmen, was undoubtedly guilty of some exaggeration when it claimed that, in a city with a population of less than 200,000 people, almost 100,000 of these gathered to bid the viceroy farewell. The carriage travelled only five hundred metres before it was halted at College Green, in front of both the houses of parliament and Trinity College. The carriage was drawn, by men, from there the remaining three miles to the Pigeon House. These were not the tenant farmers who had met Fitzwilliam in Bray some days earlier, rather some of the wealthiest gentlemen of the city were among those pulling the carriage. At the King's wharf Fitzwilliam was met by Sir Alexander Schomberg who was to command the Dorset Yacht that would take Fitzwilliam to England and his successor to Ireland. As he boarded the barge that would take him to the yacht, Fitzwilliam, in an emotional gesture, repeatedly doffed his hat to the thousands gathered at the dockside. The crowds slowly dispersed from the waterside and a crowd of men drew the coach carrying Henry Grattan and Thomas Conolly back to the city centre.[152]

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[151] *Northern Star*, 28 March 1795.

[152] For information, see *Freeman's Journal*, 17, 21, 31 March 1795; *Dublin Evening Post*, 26, 28 March 1795; *Northern Star*, 26 March 1795.

IV

Prior to leaving for Ireland Camden had been carefully briefed on the intended nature of his lord lieutenancy. His communications with the Duke of Portland gave Camden the clearest outline of his purpose. Most importantly, Camden was to be the voice of the British government in Ireland and was to consolidate the position of lord lieutenant. Portland had assured Camden that it would never be necessary that 'a Lord Lieut[enant] should commit himself for the responsibility of any measure which must undergo Parliamentary discussion'.[153] While this may have been of some comfort to Camden it also made it patently clear that Whitehall not Dublin Castle intended directing Irish policy. Camden was to use his 'own discretion and judgement' on matters which 'relate only to the better ordering and government of that country, but for 'all matters which may appear to you directly or indirectly to affect the policy, the revenue or the more immediate or more remote internals of this country or of the empire at large' the lord lieutenant was to take no action until he had 'received the signification of his majesty's pleasure'.[154]

The Catholic question loomed large as a potential stumbling block for the new Dublin administration. Portland was determined to ensure that no confusion existed between London and Dublin regarding the handling of the Catholic question. He was at pains to point out that:

> Lord Fitzwilliam was to exert his endeavours to prevent its [the Catholic question] being agitated at all, that if those endeavours should fail...he was to use his utmost diligence in collecting the opinions and sentiments of all descriptions of persons respecting the measure, and to transmit them for the information of His Majesty's ministers, for the result of whose opinions he was to wait before any proceeding was had upon it. This was the conduct which it was hoped would have been observed by Lord Fitzwilliam and...the outline which I have to mark out for your Lordship's conduct. [155]

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[153] Portland to Camden, (Whitehall), 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers,U840 0142A/3.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

Fitzwilliam's actions had encouraged optimism among Catholics. They may have been well intentioned but they did nothing but serve to ensure that Irish Catholics would find it almost impossible to have their case heard at a high level throughout Camden's lord lieutenancy. Representatives of the Catholic Committee were quick to recognise that Fitzwilliam's recall boded ill for their cause and on 2 March 1795 John Keogh, Edward Byrne and Baron Hussey travelled to London to present a Catholic petition to George III. They met with little success as the Irish lord chancellor, John Fitzgibbon, had warned the British government that they should refrain from 'receiving Irish ambassadors upon the subject of Irish grievances'.[156] The King agreed to meet the delegates but they were told that he had nothing of substance to relate to them and all future communications should take place through the lord lieutenant.[157] George III was no longer willing to consider further concessions to Irish Catholics. He had been persuaded by Fitzgibbon among others that to do so would be a violation of his coronation oath. Fitzgibbon went so far as to claim that the granting of Catholic emancipation would infringe the acts of supremacy and uniformity, the test act and the bill of rights.[158] The Catholic Committee delegation returned to Ireland 'discontented, disappointed and disgusted'. They were aggrieved that George III had refused to meet them privately and that in their presence he had 'continued in conversation with Lord Westmorland in subjects which they supposed related to them and which repeatedly created laughter in the circle around him'. To add to their humiliation Portland refused to provide them with the assurances they requested, merely informing them that in future their dealings would be with Camden and Dublin Castle and all communications with London would go through this channel. Leonard MacNally feared that such cavalier treatment of the Catholics endangered peace in Ireland as it was regarded as 'a slight upon the nation, an insult on the feelings of four millions of people' but he was confident that 'nothing like tumult will appear previous to the fate of the [Catholic relief] bill, unless the mob should

[156] Fitzgibbon to Westmorland, 7 March 1795, in Bartlett, *Irish Nation,* p. 203.
[157] Portland to the Catholic delegates, post 7 March 1795, in ibid.
[158] Fitzgibbon to Beresford, 14 Feb 1795; Fitzgibbon to Beresford 2 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 72-3, 75-77; Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 25 March [1795], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7.

show a disapprobation, in their own way by hissing the new viceroy on landing'.[159]

Camden was not an advocate of Catholic emancipation and this may have been a factor in his appointment. He made his opposition to emancipation clear when commenting on the proposed Catholic relief bill in 1793. He argued that 'upon no account [should Catholics] be suffered to sit in the house of commons'.[160] However, he was not adverse to granting Catholics some concessions and during his time in Ireland he would oversee the establishment of the first Catholic seminary in the country. Camden had stated his opposition to emancipation but he was no expert on the Catholic question. Prior to his appointment as lord lieutenant the issue had rarely given him cause for concern. Camden recognised that should he accept the position of viceroy his opinion of the Catholic question would carry much more influence than hitherto and he cited his ignorance on the Catholic question as one reason why he should not be sent to Ireland. He informed Pitt: 'I cannot venture to place myself in a situation which might call upon me to have so much weight in the decision of [the Catholic] question, which...I have not the opportunity to make necessary inquiries to form a judgement upon'.[161] Camden was assured that he would be advised from London on how to deal with all issues relating to Catholic relief.[162]

Aware that his recall had heightened tensions in Ireland, Fitzwilliam chose not to make any effort to temper the outrage felt by his supporters inside and outside parliament. Rather, determined to vindicate his own good name, he acted in a manner which added considerably to the disquiet of the country. Before he left Dublin Fitzwilliam wrote two letters to his school friend and former Irish lord lieutenant, Carlisle. Many considered that these letters were written with the assistance of several of the disgraced lord lieutenant's

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[159] [MacNally] to Downshire, 30 March 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/319.
[160] Bayham [Camden] to Stewart, 4 February 1793, in *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i, p. 157.
[161] Camden to Pitt, 7 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/1.
[162] Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.

supporters, including Grattan.[163] These letters offered a defence for Fitzwilliam's actions and were obviously intended to be made public. He argued that 'these two letters together will set my defence to the public upon the ground I wish it to stand'.[164] Fitzwilliam justified his decision to remove many of the Irish administration from office. Dismissals had been necessary in order to ensure that the government and patronage of Ireland were firmly in the hands of Fitzwilliam and his chief secretary, Milton. According to Fitzwilliam both Pitt and Portland were aware that he did not intend confiding in the incumbents of various offices in Ireland; he posed the question 'Was I then to have two sets of men, one possessing confidence without office, the other office without confidence?' Fitzwilliam devoted much of these letters to attacking John Beresford. Fitzwilliam asserted that he had mentioned his intention to remove Beresford at a meeting with Pitt and that the prime minister had indicated nothing to make Fitzwilliam think that he disapproved of such an action.[165] The sales of Fitzwilliam's letters were 'extraordinary', with cheap editions widely available and a thousand copies sent to London.[166] The letters were also reproduced in newspapers.[167] Some were content to dismiss them as being 'conceived in anger and printed by folly' and the Marquis of Downshire concluded that 'Lord F[itzwilliam]'s silly letters are laughed at by everybody and are held as conclusive evidence that a popular Magistrate must ever be a bad minister'.[168] Others regarded the letters more seriously; Leonard MacNally surmised that 'these letters have increased considerably the hatred of the people to the Beresfords, who are openly spoken of as enemies to their country'.[169] Indeed, Fitzgibbon was sufficiently outraged by the accusations made against his brother-in-law, Beresford, that he advised him to take a case against Fitzwilliam for defamation. Fitzgibbon returned to his frequently-stated argument that

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[163] [MacNally] to Downshire, 30 March 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/319.
[164] Fitzwilliam to Burke, 20 March 1795, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, viii, p. 209.
[165] Fitzwilliam, (Dublin Castle) to Carlisle, 6 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 78-84.
[166] [MacNally] to Downshire, 30 March 1795; [MacNally] to [Downshire?] Friday [early April?] 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/321; /323.
[167] *The Oracle,* 7 April 1795; *The True Briton,* 10 April 1795.
[168] Downshire to ___, April 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/317.
[169] [MacNally] to [Downshire?] Friday [early April?] 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/327/323.

Fitzwilliam knew nothing of Ireland when he made his sweeping changes, remarking:

> One circumstance...must forever damn him.... He landed in Ireland on Sunday evening. The next day he was confined to his bed. On Wednesday he sent Mr Bowes Daly to Beresford with a message of dismissal. So that his enquiries into the acts of malversation with which he charges Beresford so boldly, and which he advances in his justification for removing him, must all have been made in this short interval, during which it is notorious he did not see any one man who was enabled to give him information upon the subject.[170]

Beresford angered by these swiftly formed and, as he saw it, unfounded allegations, and having received little satisfaction from Fitzwilliam through correspondence, challenged Fitzwilliam to a duel. The two men met on 28 June 1795 in London. Word of this had reached Mr Ford, a police magistrate, who forbade the meeting but Fitzwilliam evaded detection on the morning of the duel by leaving his house by the back door before seven a.m.. Beresford and Fitzwilliam met at a field near Paddington, the distance between the two men was carefully measured, Beresford took his position, readied his pistol while Fitzwilliam walked to his appointed spot. As he was within two yards of it a magistrate intervened, arrested him and removed his pistol. While being escorted from the field Fitzwilliam turned to Beresford and apologised for the offending letters he had written to Carlisle. Fitzwilliam agreed to state that 'the letter was not intended for publication and that it was a private letter on a public subject'.[171] Beresford accepted the apology and the two men shook hands with

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[170] Fitzgibbon, (Dublin) to Auckland, [28 (?) March 1795], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/8; see also Fitzgibbon, (Dublin) to Beresford, 26 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence*, ii, pp 88-90, 103-5.

[171] Portland, (London) Sunday 28 June 1795 to Pelham, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/189. It seems somewhat disingenuous of Fitzwilliam to declare that his letters to Carlisle were intended simply a private communications. There is ample evidence to suggest that these letters were designed to have a public readership. For example, Fitzwilliam wrote to Edmund Burke stating that he would reply to Carlisle's letter 'in the nature of a manifesto, and I shall send you a copy'. Marcus Beresford informed his father that 'Lord Fitzwilliam has directed fourty-four copies to be made of his second letter to Lord Carlisle, in order to have it generally circulated'. The letters were published and widely advertised in Irish newspapers throughout April and May 1795. Fitzwilliam to Burke, 4 March 1795; Fitzwilliam to Burke, 9 March 1795; Fitzwilliam to Burke, 20 March 1795, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, pp 169-72, 180-2, 209-10; Marcus Beresford to John Beresford, 23 March 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence*, ii, pp 85-6; *Dublin Evening Post*, 2 April 1795; [Anon.] *Observations on the Letters of Lord Fitzw___m to Lord Carlisle*, (2nd ed. Dublin, 1795).

Fitzwilliam commenting 'Now, thank God, there is a complete end to my Irish administration'.[172]

V

Fitzwilliam's open letters and his subsequent dealings with Beresford served to heighten the British government's desire to see all actions taken during his short viceroyalty overturned. The new lord lieutenant had been instructed to 'hold a firm and decided language from the first moment of your landing in Ireland'.[173] Determined not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor, Camden immediately re-appointed those removed from office by Fitzwilliam, made efforts to appease those embittered by his removal and endeavoured to take the Catholic question firmly off the political agenda. Camden quickly set about implementing policy as advised by Portland; unlike Fitzwilliam he was not a visionary and was content, at least outwardly, to adhere to guidance relating to the composition of his government. He established friendly relations with men who were firm supporters of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland; men such as John Fitzgibbon, John Foster, Sir John Parnell, the chancellor of the exchequer, along with influential peers, most notably Lords Downshire, Ely, Shannon and Waterford. He earned their appreciation by his immediate removal of the Ponsonbys and their supporters from positions of power and he impressed them further when he assured them that Catholic emancipation would not be granted as it would undoubtedly lead to the 'overthrow of the Protestant establishment in this kingdom'.[174] To this select audience Camden's statement of intent was gratifying, he was echoing beliefs and articulating opinions long held by them. Camden would not find his sentiments greeted so favourably in other less rarefied circles. Cooke had been correct when he anticipated that the reinstatement of John Beresford as chief revenue commissioner would provoke outrage from many Catholics and their supporters. He envisaged dissenting

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[172] Beresford to Buckingham, 6 July 1795; Beresford to Marcus Beresford, 28 June 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 114-9, 119-20.
[173] Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.
[174] Camden to Portland, 30 April 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/57/227-8.

voices in the house of commons and recommended that Beresford attend the commons and make a statement refuting all the allegations made against him.[175] Pelham was willing to sacrifice Beresford if there was sufficient outcry against his reinstatement. He was:

> inclined to think from what I observe...that the cry will be more in favour of Lord Fitzwilliam and against the Beresfords.... If it should take that turn and that any sacrifices are necessary...Pitt must submit to Beresford's removal.[176]

This was not required but Pelham remained uneasy about Beresford's role in the Irish administration.

The new lord lieutenant's efforts to reassure the Protestant ascendancy were not confined to those he knew to be loyal to Pitt. He made attempts to court liberal elements within the Irish peerage and parliamentary body. Rather than targeting those guaranteed to be hostile towards him, such as the Ponsonbys, Grattan and Curran, Camden approached Lord Charlemont. Charlemont, former commander-in-chief of the volunteers, was unenthusiastic about the new lord lieutenant and declined to meet with him. Camden, however, in a break with standard protocol, called to see Charlemont at his home. His efforts to impress were unsuccessful. Charlemont regarded him as 'a plain, unaffected, good-humoured man of pleasing conversation and conciliatory address'. Charlemont held Camden's late father and his sister in high regard but whatever affection he had for Camden's family he refused to allow himself be overtly friendly to the lord lieutenant who, he regarded as nothing more than a lackey of Pitt's.[177] Lord Wycombe, another friend of Lady Londonderry, agreed that Camden had the 'knowledge of the world' that she had ascribed to him but he did 'not suppose him much in the habit of thinking for himself'.[178]

Camden had been warned that the Irish 'cabinet' could cause him difficulties and this became apparent in the early stages of his administration. Individuals had become too influential in Ireland and while Fitzwilliam's actions

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[175] Cooke, (Dublin) to Auckland, 6 April 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/7.
[176] Pelham to Portland, 22 March 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/1.
[177] Charlemont, (Marino) to Haliday, 26 July 1795, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, pp 264-5.
[178] Wycombe to Lady Londonderry, 11 September 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 C563/3.

were disapproved of in Whitehall they served to highlight this problem. Efforts were to be made during Camden's viceroyalty to curb the power of the individual. He was to attempt to remove the so-called Irish 'cabinet' of Beresford, Foster and Fitzgibbon. This 'cabinet' was thought unconstitutional and 'subversive of English Government and of the unity of the British Empire'. Unlike their British counterpart, the men who composed the Irish 'cabinet' did not necessarily meet with the approval of the king, or his representative, in this case, Camden. They were frequently men who commanded much power and patronage and the lord lieutenant was rarely in a position to ignore them. The four men, Fitzgibbon, Foster, Beresford and Parnell, who made up the core group of the Irish 'cabinet' did not form a united group. In many respects they merely looked after their own interests frequently dividing into two opposing pairs, Fitzgibbon and Beresford and Foster and Parnell. As Malcomson has noted 'these people remained the 'ins' for a variety of reasons, of which a sense of collective identity was not one'.[179] Of the Irish 'cabinet', Foster and Fitzgibbon were the men Camden relied most heavily on during his viceroyalty. He came to regard Foster as an expert on all matters of Irish commerce and revenue while he considered 'no man can so readily give a well founded opinion on points in which legal knowledge is required' as Fitzgibbon.[180]

It would take a strong decisive personality to counteract the power and influence of men such as Fitzgibbon and Foster and Camden, 'not a most decided character in public or private matters' struggled to fulfil that role.[181] Although anxious to avoid excessive dependence on this 'cabinet', he recognised that it was necessary to remove the Ponsonbys and reinstate those isolated by Fitzwilliam. In order to restore some stability to the country it appeared inevitable that, initially at least, Camden would be forced to rely on men such as Fitzgibbon, Foster and Beresford. Fitzgibbon had maintained that 'with a little temper, and unshaken firmness, on the part of the new government, I have no

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[179] Malcomson, *Foster*, p. 394.
[180] Camden to Pitt, c. 16 June 1798, in Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon*, pp 335-6.
[181] Essex to Lowther, 10 March 1806, in *Manuscripts of the Earl of Lonsdale*, H.M.C., 13th Report, vii, (London, 1893), p. 174.

doubt that the ferment raised by Lord Fitzwilliam and his friends will subside. But anything like temporising or half measures will undo us'.[182]

The period between December 1794 and March 1795 was marked by contrasting styles of government in Ireland. Political opinions became polarised. Fitzwilliam's appointment was seen by those who regarded themselves as defenders of the Protestant interest in Ireland as an act of betrayal by Pitt. Pitt had sacrificed Ireland for his own advantage. He had allowed Portland and his whig colleagues control of the country in return for their support for Pitt's government. In the circumstances, with British troops engaged in a war with France, this appeared a reasonable compromise, but the Protestant ascendancy were not willing to accept this apparent change of policy without argument. Fitzwilliam had swiftly manoeuvred himself into an untenable position, unable even to garner the support of his sponsor, Portland. Pitt recognised that he could not allow the whigs to use Ireland as their playground again; a loyal and hopefully subservient ally was required and Camden was chosen. The unease and alienation felt by the Protestant ruling class ensured that with the appointment of Camden the government of Ireland would become both more defensive and offensive; Protestant interest would be fiercely defended while all threats to this domination would be severely repressed. Supporters of the establishment in Ireland had regarded Fitzwilliam and his ministers as 'not Government but the governors of Government' while liberal politicians dismissed his successor, Lord Camden, commenting 'instead of a viceroy, [he] is in effect no more than a vice-Pitt'.[183] For more than three years Camden struggled to refute this perception. Faced with a myriad of problems he met with limited success. The consolidation of British control in Ireland proved to be Camden's most arduous task - sent as a ventriloquist's dummy for Pitt, Camden soon found himself with two masters, one in Whitehall, the other in Dublin Castle. Camden was forced to concede some control to the powerful Irish

[182] Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 24 March [1795], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/7.
[183] Beresford to Auckland, 15 Jan 1795, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, p. 55; Charlemont, (Marino) to Haliday, 26 July 1795, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, p. 265.

'cabinet' while his official masters in times of crisis ignored his requests and gave little practical guidance.

3

'Lord Fitzwilliam's successor will live in a hornet's nest.'[184]

Camden in Ireland, March - December 1795

Lord Carnavon's prediction proved an accurate one. Controversy surrounded the circumstances of Fitzwilliam's return to England. Had he resigned or been recalled? What had led to his departure? Such questions needed but failed to be addressed, and turmoil prevailed. Private and public letters were dispatched by all the main protagonists, challenges to duels issued, Fitzwilliam's grievances were aired and much comment printed in newspapers in Ireland and England.[185] Camden had anticipated a tough introduction to Irish political life and, before accepting the post, had voiced his concerns to the prime minister. Many of his fears were allayed by the knowledge that whatever might go wrong in the future he, unlike Fitzwilliam, had a written communication from Whitehall outlining the cabinet's expectations.

I

The Duke of Portland, as home secretary, was Camden's chief point of contact in London. During his time in Ireland, Camden regularly corresponded with both Portland and Pitt, but it was more usually from Portland that he received direction from the king or the British administration. As lord lieutenant, Camden was be required to deal with the day-to-day administration, the management of the Irish parliament and act as a social convenor, hosting

[184] Carnavon to Pitt, 5 March 1795, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/1670.

[185] Fitzwilliam wrote many letters defending himself for example Fitzwilliam, (Malton), Wicklow to Grenville, 13 March 1795, B.L. Grenville Papers, Add Ms 41844/56; Fitzwilliam to [George III], 22 April 1795, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/1708 and most famously Fitzwilliam to Carlisle, 6 March 1795; 23 March 1795; 19 April 1795, in *Carlisle Mss*, pp 704-11, 713-21, 727; Fitzwilliam's letters to Carlisle were printed in newspapers in both England and Ireland for example *The Oracle,* Tuesday 7 April 1795; *The True Briton,* Friday 10 April 1795; Beresford challenged Fitzwilliam to a duel in order to defend his honour (see Chapter 2).

extravagant balls and dinners as the king's representative. Given the controversy surrounding Camden's appointment Portland decided a clear outline of Whitehall's expectations should be given to the new lord lieutenant. To this end, the home secretary composed a carefully worded twelve-page letter which was dispatched to Camden before he left for Ireland. This letter provided Camden with a blueprint for his administration. Portland's communication detailed what had gone wrong, at least from Whitehall's perspective, with Fitzwilliam's viceroyalty. It was believed in Whitehall that Fitzwilliam had failed to adhere to instructions regarding the governance of Ireland and most importantly he had made decisions, taken action and proposed legislation without first consulting London. Camden was not to make this mistake and Portland repeatedly warned him that he was to keep in close communication with his majesty's ministers. Portland then gave serious consideration to the Catholic question insisting that Catholic emancipation would not be granted. However, some concessions were advised: parochial clergy were to be given monetary aid and the notion of a Catholic college was enthusiastically promoted.[186]

George III was concerned that Camden should 'reinstate all those who have been removed by his predecessor and to support the Old English interest as well as the Protestant religion'.[187] Portland made this clear in his letter to the new lord lieutenant. Camden's chief concern was to restore Ireland to a position of political stability and to return the countryside to a tranquil state. This was to be done by returning all those dismissed by Fitzwilliam to the positions they held, but this was to be accomplished without any appearance of celebration. In the aftermath of the Fitzwilliam episode Irish Protestants required support and reassurance. This could be delivered if Camden arrived using 'firm and decided language' and promptly established his loyalist credentials. It was relatively simple to deal with the issues which concerned the privileged elite who had suffered during Fitzwilliam's tenure – they were easy to satisfy as many of their grievances were readily remedied. Other groups would not be so swiftly

[186] The Catholic question is discussed below, section II.
[187] George III to [Pitt], 10 March 1795, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/1674.

placated because their demands would not be satisfied. Camden was to make efforts to conciliate those who had been supporters of Fitzwilliam. While those who had been promoted would lose their positions of influence, the new lord lieutenant was to avoid deliberate alienation of these men and attempt to win their acceptance, if not their approbation. Finally, and perhaps most suprisingly, Camden was warned to be sensitive when dealing with the question of the Irish 'cabinet'.[188] Portland feared that these men, including Beresford, Foster and Fitzgibbon, would attempt to overwhelm the new lord lieutenant and he warned that to give undue influence to this group:

> ...would annihilate in the Lord Lieutenant that responsibility which is the greater pledge for his administration of government, and transfer it into hands which...would destroy the essence of Government...and more effectively and immediately tend to the separation of the two countries and the introduction of anarchy into Ireland than any other means that would be desired.[189]

Portland also offered Camden's chief secretary, Thomas Pelham, advice on how best to deal with the Irish situation commenting 'it is necessary to be equally careful to avoid popularity as much as the giving of offence. The passions of the people are neither to be flattered nor irritated'.[190] There was a slightly hysterical tone to Portland's caution but it was not a misplaced worry. Camden's uneasy relationships with the men who formed his government in Ireland greatly influenced the effectiveness and direction of his administration.

Armed with verbal and written support from the British government and monarch, Camden found himself nonetheless isolated and regarded with suspicion in the weeks immediately after his arrival in Ireland. He could not sit back and indulge in self-congratulation, nor could he participate nonchalantly in the hectic round of dinners and balls that formed an integral part of a lord lieutenant's duties. There was to be no honeymoon period for the new viceroy.

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[188] As noted in Chapter 2 in Ireland, as in Britain, there was no official cabinet. Rather there was an group of influential individuals who informally advised the lord lieutenant and on some occasions referred to themselves as the 'cabinet'. In Camden's time the most influential were John Fitzgibbon, Lord Clare, the lord chancellor; John Foster, speaker of the house of commons, John Beresford, chief revenue commissioner and in some matters John Parnell, the chancellor of the exchequer.

[189] Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.

[190] Portland to Pelham, 20 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/177.

The many discordant voices on the streets of Dublin and the vocal minority in the houses of parliament voicing strenuous objections to Fitzwilliam's recall kept the lord lieutenant under constant pressure. However, buoyed up by assurances of Whitehall's solid support, Camden expected to receive the active endorsement of many of the key political figures in Ireland. This co-operation was offered, with some reservation, by many, including Beresford, Fitzgibbon, Foster and Parnell. These men were reticent about declaring too soon or too favourably for Camden, who, while the son of a respected and well-regarded man, was himself relatively inexperienced politically. Doubts aside, Camden's appointment was regarded as a vindication of themselves; they had objected to Fitzwilliam and he had been recalled. The new lord lieutenant was seen as a facilitator for their own ends and, as that, they approved him. Even his most fervent advocates guaranteed their support only if Camden accepted the role they had designated for him – that of a figurehead, signing documents, relaying messages between Dublin and London and hosting lavish banquets. It would be misleading to imply that between them Beresford, Foster and Fitzgibbon controlled the country; Fitzwilliam's alleged assertion that Beresford was regarded as the king of Ireland was more than a little hyperbolic. They did control a vast amount of the wealth of Ireland and, perhaps more importantly, much of the patronage, but ultimately their positions of power and influence relied on the good opinion of the lord lieutenant and the ministers in London to whom they were answerable. Camden proved to be a far feistier character than his supporters had envisaged; their elevated positions were secured but Camden refused to allow them the luxury of acquiescing to their every proposal.

Camden's early courting of Beresford, Foster and Fitzgibbon proved fruitful and his chief secretary, Pelham, concluded that Camden was very favourably received in Dublin's loftiest social circles. He maintained that all who had met with Camden personally were 'very well satisfied'. However, the wooing of Fitzwilliam's supporters proved much more difficult. The Ponsonbys and their allies boycotted Camden and Pelham and all efforts to contact them were rebuffed. Pelham considered this a carefully planned move, commenting:

'I understand there was a meeting as soon as it was known that I was arrived and a resolution taken that none of the party should see me alone; if that was done in concert with Lord Fitzwilliam which I rather suspect, it accounts for the reserve and studied silence.'[191] It was impossible for Camden to reach any accommodation with the Ponsonbys as they 'have put themselves out of the reach of all communication', but he was hopeful that the more moderate might be persuaded, if not to support, then at least to tolerate the new government.[192] Grattan's inevitable opposition to Camden's government was another source of concern. He had confidently asserted upon hearing of Camden's appointment 'they [Camden and Pelham] will have the parliament but they have lost the nation'.[193] William Windham hoped that some gesture could be made to recognise Grattan's 'fairness and real regard for the public welfare' which might lessen his impact in opposition.[194] However, such a gesture would be fruitless and it was not long before Grattan was making his opposition widely known. On 21 April, in the house of commons, he demanded that a committee be set up to examine the state of the nation and it was noted that 'his speech was in great measure taken from Lord Fitzwilliam's first letter' - hardly surprising as he was frequently, if unofficially, credited with composing Fitzwilliam's letters.[195]

Before settling down to governing Ireland, Camden had to reorganise the Dublin Castle administration. John Beresford was immediately reinstated as chief revenue commissioner. The under-secretaries, Sackville Hamilton and Edward Cooke, and the solicitor general John Toler were also returned to their posts. Conscious that his motives for re-appointing these men might be viewed with suspicion, Camden insisted on secrecy until he had time to persuade wavering supporters of his administration, such as the Duke of Leinster, that these men were 'the proper and efficient [candidates] for these offices'.

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[191] [Pelham], (Dublin Castle) to Portland, 6 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/16.
[192] Camden to Pitt, 21 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/16.
[193] Grattan to Burke, 14 March 1795, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* xvii, p. 197.
[194] Windham to Pelham, 21 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/179.
[195] Camden to Pitt, 22 April 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/6; [Pelham], (Dublin Castle) to Portland, 30 March 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/9; For Grattan's speech see Henry Grattan jr (ed.), *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan,* iii, (London, 1822), pp 175-185. Grattan's motion was firmly rejected by 158 votes to 48.

Hamilton's reinstatement provided continuity, but it was primarily a conciliatory gesture. Hamilton had been deeply offended by his dismissal and, despite his advanced years, in recognition of his forty-eight years' service and of his obvious knowledge of the Irish system of government, Camden returned him to his position. A condition of his reinstatement was that he would retire within a year and a half.[196] In May 1796 Hamilton was succeeded by Cooke whose position in the military office was filled by, a Scot, William Elliot. The appointment of Elliot marked an effort by Camden to have in his administration men 'unconnected with any party in Ireland'.[197] Elliot rapidly proved himself a favourite of the lord lieutenant. Cooke was regarded as 'a most efficient man' and Camden maintained that 'no one understands Ireland better than Mr Cooke', but real praise was reserved for the 'universally liked' Elliot, with Camden seeking out his company on both formal and informal occasions.[198]

Thomas Pelham's appointment as chief secretary had been greeted with enthusiasm by many on both sides of the Irish sea. Pelham had previous experience of the Irish administration, having served under Lord Temple during 1782-3, and was regarded as a stabilising influence. Fitzgibbon enthusiastically welcomed news of Pelham's appointment, urging him to dismiss the newspaper accounts of the state of the country, and optimistically proclaimed that 'firmness and moderation on the part of the English Government will very soon re-establish tranquillity in Ireland, and I do not know a man who could come over here, that would be so likely to succeed in composing the country as you'.[199] This sentiment was echoed by many of Fitzgibbon's political allies, while Portland confessed he could think of none more suited to the position than Pelham.

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[196] Hamilton was returned to the civil office and Cooke to the military office. Camden to Pitt, 21 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/16.
[197] Cooke to Auckland, 4 May 1796, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34453/490; [Pelham], (Phoenix Park) to Windham, 17 May 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/31.
[198] Camden to Pelham, 1 June 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/23; Camden to Pitt, c.16 June 1798, in Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon,* p. 336; Camden to Pelham [June 1796], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/37.
[199] Fitzgibbon to Pelham, 12 March 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/157.

Indeed Pelham proved a formidable ally to Camden. He was an experienced and effective administrator, but his chief advantage to Camden was his popularity among the disparate groups that combined to make up the Irish and British political community. Pelham understood the Irish political system which proved vital as Camden had little experience of Ireland prior to his appointment. By late summer 1795 Camden reported to Portland that he and his chief secretary were in agreement on every question that had arisen.[200] However, Pelham was dogged by ill-health and desired to return to England. As early as August 1795, a mere six months after his appointment, Pelham was in correspondence with Portland and Camden about leaving Ireland.[201] Camden was anxious to retain his services, judging him 'peculiarly adapted to the situation'.[202] Pelham had left Ireland at the end of August and by early January 1796 had not yet returned. There was confusion regarding his intentions, but Camden was still hopeful that he could be persuaded to return as 'there is no person so agreeable to me and whose services will be so advantageous to the public'.[203] Pelham finally yielded to Portland's pleadings to stay and he agreed to return to Ireland, at least for the following parliamentary session.[204] The months between August 1795 and January 1796 were those in which Camden had to establish his authority in Ireland without the full support of his chief secretary and moreover without the ability to appoint a successor. In March 1796 Pelham again considered retirement. Throughout the following year Camden made repeated pleas to Pelham to remain resident in Ireland rather than spending much of the year in London.[205] Camden considered Pelham as 'peculiarly calculated for the office he...holds' and feared his departure as 'it will be a great loss to me, not only on account of his individual merit but from the very great confidence with which he is considered by the Duke of Portland, he is

[200] Camden to Portland, [late summer 1795], P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/18/1.
[201] Thomas Grenville to Portland, 31 August 1795; Pelham to Portland, 26 October 1795; Pelham to Portland, 20 December 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/4/44; /17/4; /17/6.
[202] Camden to Pitt, 26 September 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/42; Camden to Pelham, 26 September 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/290.
[203] Camden to Pitt, 18 November 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/48.
[204] Pelham to Portland, c.6 January 1796. P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/17/10.
[205] Camden to Pelham, [August 1797], B.L. Pelham Papers, 33105/59.

a particularly desirable secretary'.[206] Pelham was persuaded to remain in his position, even if not always in Ireland, and finally resigned in November 1798.[207] Notwithstanding Pelham's vacillation, which did not aid the creation of a stable government in Ireland, his contribution to Camden's administration, especially in its infancy, was invaluable.

II

With the personnel in Dublin Castle appointed, Camden turned his attention to the Catholic question. The beginning of the 1790s had been marked by gestures of conciliation towards Irish Catholics, with the passage of relief acts in 1792 and 1793, culminating in the appointment of the liberal Earl Fitzwilliam in 1795. Members of the Catholic Committee were understandably unenthusiastic about the change in the Irish administration. Fitzwilliam had been regarded as the saviour of Irish Catholics and his recall was interpreted as boding ill for them. The Committee members were also disillusioned by their recent fruitless trip to London where they had been treated with disdain. They returned home in the knowledge that whatever influence they had possessed was now dissipated, and that they had been relegated to the status of a minor irritant. Camden was keen to follow Portland's advice and keep the Catholic question far removed from political life. If this proved impossible then the lord lieutenant was to refrain from making any commitments and refer all matters to London.[208] Camden was informed that 'the opinions which are to be formed here [Whitehall] upon the Catholic Question must in great measure depend upon the reports which the English Government in Ireland are enabled to send', and he made serious efforts to send detailed and regular accounts.[209]

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[206] Camden to Pitt, 13 August 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/198.
[207] See Chapter 6. Also, Portland to Pelham, 5 January 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/376; Camden to Thomas Steele, 13 March 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0194/1; Camden to Pitt, 15 December 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/232.
[208] Portland to Camden, 26 April 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/56/455-6.
[209] Camden to Pitt, 7 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/1.

The handling of the contentious Catholic question required great delicacy, and conscious of its disruptive potential, Camden was anxious to minimise its possibility of creating difficulties for his new Dublin government. He determined that no further Catholic relief bills would be passed, but it was necessary at the same time to make some conciliatory gesture towards the Catholics. Camden set about implementing British government policy convinced, as Portland was, that 'the Catholics should be satisfied of the liberal and conciliatory disposition entertained towards them'.[210] Financial assistance to some parochial clergy and the education of the lower orders of Catholics were suggested as indicators of the administration's good intentions towards the Catholics.

The establishment of the Catholic seminary at Maynooth, county Kildare, in June 1795 was the most concrete gesture made by the Camden administration towards the Irish Catholics. John Troy, archbishop of Dublin, had, on behalf of the prelates of the Catholic church in Ireland, petitioned Westmorland in 1794 arguing for the establishment of seminaries and schools to cater for young priests. Trinity College was deemed unacceptable to Catholics as:

> ...although the mode of education practised in the University of Dublin may be well adapted to form men for the various departments of public business, yet it is not alike applicable to the Ecclesiastics of a very ritual religion, and by no means calculated to impress upon the mind those habits of austere discipline, so indispensable in the character of a Roman Catholic Clergyman that without them he might become a very dangerous member of society.[211]

Troy's request was refused on the simple basis that it 'cannot legally be complied with'.[212] Fitzwilliam, with the support of the Duke of Portland, had been anxious to establish the seminary, but had proved unwilling to allow the Catholic hierarchy the complete control they expected. Compromise was not entertained, because Fitzwilliam was regarded as pro-Catholic and it was assumed that with a little pressure and some delay he would accede to their demands. Camden, too,

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[210] Portland to Camden, Whitehall, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.
[211] Troy to Westmorland, 14 January 1794, in John Healy, *Maynooth College. Its Centenary History,* (Dublin, 1895), pp 657-9.
[212] T. Hamilton to Troy, January 1794 (published as January 1795 but this is unlikely), in Healy, *Maynooth College,* pp 657-9.

refused to allow the Catholic church autonomy within the seminary. Nevertheless with the offer of a seminary coming in the wake of Fitzwilliam's recall and amid a mood of general despondency among Catholics, Camden's offer was eagerly accepted by the hierarchy. The college was to be governed by a board of twenty-one trustees including the staunchly anti-Catholic lord chancellor, Fitzgibbon, recently Lord Clare.[213] The board of trustees consisted of four chief justices, Clare, Lord Carlton, Viscount Clonmell, and Barry Yelverton, chief baron of the exchequer. There were seventeen Catholic trustees. Six were laymen; Lords Fingall, Gormanston, Kenmare, Sir Edward Bellew, Sir Thomas French and Richard Strange. Ten were bishops and the final member was the first president of the college, Dr Thomas Hussey.[214]

On 25 April 1795 Pelham introduced a bill in the Irish house of commons establishing a Royal College at Maynooth. This bill was officially passed on 5 June.[215] Initially there was to be no grant of government money to the new college. However, a grant of £8,000 was swiftly obtained to assist in the purchase of land and buildings for the college.[216] The house of John Stoyte, a steward to the Duke of Leinster, was obtained along with a lease on 60 acres.[217] A motivating factor behind the establishment of Maynooth College was Camden's belief that this would certainly reduce, if not remove, the Catholic hierarchy's objection to his government. In this he was not mistaken; throughout his lord lieutenancy the senior members of the Catholic church in Ireland made little protest at the harsh measures employed by men ultimately under the command of Lord Camden. Indeed Tom Bartlett has argued that the establishment of a seminary in Maynooth was regarded by both Whitehall and Dublin Castle as 'an acceptable substitute for Emancipation and as a full answer to those who claimed the Camden government was anti-Catholic'.[218]

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[213] Keogh, *The French Disease,* pp 82-4.
[214] Patrick J. Corish, *Maynooth College 1795-1995,* (Dublin, 1995), p. 12.
[215] *An Act for the better education of persons profession the Popish or Roman Catholic Religion,* in Healy, *History of Maynooth,* pp 666-8.
[216] *Parliamentary History,* 15, p. 185; Lecky, *History of Ireland,* iii, pp 360-1.
[217] Corish, *Maynooth,* p. 13.
[218] Bartlett, *Irish Nation,* p. 209.

There were occasional and slight vestiges of discontent apparent within Maynooth. Just a year after the establishment of the college, Camden received a request to grant it a charter. The reasons given for this were:

> To sue and to be sued. At present they [the college trustees] apprehend that they cannot prosecute persons for stealing their property. [Secondly] to confer Degrees. The Degrees of the Catholic Clergymen have been conferred hitherto by the Colleges abroad to which they.[219]

Camden was wary of acceding to this request. It had been mooted before, in April 1795, by Dr Thomas Hussey but had been rejected at that point.[220] The real but undisclosed reason for the refusal was that if a charter was granted it would give the college more independence than Dublin Castle wished and 'put [the college] more out of the power of the parliament'.[221] The Irish administration had been successful in their efforts to control the Irish parliament, but they were not so confident that they would be able to exert such control over Maynooth College should is succeed in operating without the necessity of parliamentary sanction.

A Catholic seminary had been established, but much work remained to be done to resolve the Catholic question to Camden's satisfaction. Unrest was noted among the liberal elements of the Irish houses of parliament. Camden had been presented with a unanimous address of congratulation on his appointment as lord lieutenant, but this was a matter of form and hid the discontent that lingered after Fitzwilliam's recall.[222] Grattan swiftly put forward a bill for further Catholic relief. To secure Camden's tenuous authority it was imperative that this bill be defeated. How Camden was to accomplish this was left to him, but Portland advised that:

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[219] Robert Marshall, (Dublin Castle) to Camden, 15 June 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/42.
[220] Corish, *Maynooth*, p. 13. Also on the establishment of Maynooth College see Healy, *Maynooth College*. Maynooth was not the first ecclesiastical college in Ireland, rather that was St Patrick's College, Carlow which was established in 1793. This college was intended to educate laymen only whereas Maynooth was intended to educate men for the priesthood. Healy, *Maynooth College*, p. 97; Lecky, *History of Ireland*, iii, p. 360.
[221] Camden to Pelham, [June 1796], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/37.
[222] [J.P.?], (Dublin Castle) to John King, 13 April 1795, N.A.I. Official Papers 30/5/2.

> ...the most desirable means by which it [the bill] can be stopped are those which will be most likely to convince the better and more reasonable part of the inhabitants of Ireland, that...this measure only gives them the choice of evils,...either the concessions to be made to the Catholics are such...as must necessarily create in them a power and influence which would soon place them above all control; and that if, as the friends of the measure intend it should prove to be incapable of affecting the present civil and ecclesiastical establishment, it must in reality be so insignificant and unimportant as to leave the Catholics in the state which makes the groundwork of their present complaints and which they assign as the principal and almost sole cause of their discontents.[223]

The Catholics would gain too much control and destroy the Protestant ascendancy or the bill would be so watered down so as to frustrate the Catholics by granting so little. In either case the passing of the bill was deemed undesirable. It was decided to 'rally the Friends of the Protestant Interest' and to shore up 'the divisions which have happened among themselves and the opinion which cannot but have prevailed too generally of the favourable disposition of Government to Catholic pretensions'.[224]

A meeting was held in Dublin Castle on 20 April to discuss how to ensure the defeat of the bill. Those in attendance that day included Camden, Pelham, Clare, Archbishop Agar, Wolfe and Toler. It was agreed that the bill must be rejected, but this had to be achieved without Protestant triumphalism.[225] Grattan's proposed bill finally came before the commons on 4 May when it was rejected by 155 to 84 votes.[226] An apparently easy victory for Camden, but the margin highlighted the substantial minority dissatisfied with the new regime. In the immediate aftermath of the victory the size of the minority was dismissed and reports reached Auckland that the 'rejection of the Catholic Bill has had no ill effect even on the Papists: and it had restored the confidence to the true friends of the constitution and connection'.[227] Local politics played its part and Fitzgibbon argued that so many had voted for Grattan's bill not out of conviction

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[223] Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Bartlett, *Irish Nation,* p. 210.
[226] 4 May 1795, *Parliamentary Register,* xv, pp 208-361; J.P., (Dublin Castle) to John King, 5 May 1795, N.A.I. Official Papers 30/5/5.
[227] Cooke to Auckland, 3 June 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 34453/268.

but 'to court the Popish influence in their counties'.[228] Pelham professed himself satisfied with the debate on the Catholic question and was confident that 'if it is ever to be brought forward again it should originate with government and be a measure of the British Cabinet formed upon some general principles to be adopted in both countries'.[229] The Catholic question had been taken off the political agenda and the Catholic hierarchy had been silenced by the foundation of Maynooth College. Camden seemed satisfied that the Catholic question had been dealt with, commenting to Henry Dundas that 'the [Catholic question] is as much forgotten here as in the more enlarged scale of London'.[230] Yet, many Catholics remained dissatisfied; one correspondent assessed the situation in Ireland several months after Camden's arrival in the country:

> On the whole the disposition of the country seems to be this. The Rom [sic] Catholics of all descriptions indifferent about and inattentive to what is doing by their brethren in Dublin. The *sans culottes* of them looking anxiously to French...and willing to do mischief if they had encouragement and a prospect of success...and the Protestants ready to resist the Catholics in case of disturbance which they know can arise from them alone.[231]

The Catholic question had been taken out of parliament and removed from the agenda of the Catholic hierarchy but while the question had been addressed it had not been answered definitively. It was discussed again in parliament in October 1796 when Grattan's relief bill was overwhelmingly defeated by 143 votes to 19.[232] In March 1797 Lords Kenmare and Fingall broached the subject again but Camden dismissed them, commenting that: 'I considered this as a great constitutional question upon which parliament had decided in 1795 and as I saw no difference in the question, I would not give encouragement to its being again agitated'.[233]

Camden, in the first two months of his administration had adhered closely to Portland's advice. He had carefully rehabilitated those removed from

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[228] Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 18 May 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers T.3229/1/9.
[229] [Pelham], (Phoenix Park) to Windham, 17 May 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/31.
[230] Camden to Henry Dundas, 9 June 1795 in McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* p. 462.
[231] William Richardson to General Knox, 3 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/12/2.
[232] See Chapter 5.
[233] Camden to Portland, 21 March 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/167.

their jobs by Fitzwilliam, he had made efforts to appease Fitzwilliam's political supporters, concessions had been offered to Catholics and a firm line taken when the Catholic bill finally reached parliament. Nevertheless during the late spring and summer of 1795 issues not tackled by Portland proved the most testing for the new lord lieutenant. Subversive clubs throughout the country, military insubordination and lack of military leadership all combined to create difficulties for Camden.

III

News of the defeat of Grattan's bill travelled fast and, outside the houses of parliament, there was discontent. And it was outside parliament that Camden's real challenge lay. Within parliament those who disagreed with his policies were largely content to vocalise their dissatisfaction, but those outside were not guaranteed to be so restrained. Theobald Wolfe Tone was rumoured to have drawn up a Catholic relief bill 'wherein every disqualification to the highest offices of state was done away with'.[234] The discontent generated by the government's handling of the Catholic question heightened sectarian tensions and created a substantial internal threat. Portland had warned of the 'danger from abroad as well as at home' and now Camden received reports claiming that with the defeat of Grattan's bill 'they [the Catholics] must now look to France as their deliverers', while oaths sworn by the Defenders included a promise to 'be true to the French and join them whenever they land in Ireland'.[235] Information received by Dublin Castle in late April 1795 indicated 'that every idea of effecting anything without the assistance of the French is abandoned'.[236] Both Dublin Castle and Whitehall feared a reciprocal interest might result in an attempted invasion. These fears were far from groundless. Connections between revolutionary France and Ireland were not new; the evidence divulged

[234] J. Sheridan to John Crawford, 22 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0143/9.
[235] Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3; J. Sheridan to John Crawford, 24 April 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0143/10; Examination of Thomas Mulheran by Henry Major, (Ballyshannon), 27 July 1795. Enclosed in a letter from Major to Thomas Pelham, 29 July 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0149/16/2.
[236] J. Sheridan to John Crawford, (Dublin), 24 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0143/10.

at the trial of the French agent William Jackson in April 1795 had proved beyond doubt that the French were contemplating an invasion of Ireland.[237] During 1795 the United Irishmen were actively forging strong links with revolutionary France; in June of that year, soon after the famous gathering at McArt's fort on Cave Hill, Wolfe Tone left Belfast bound for America, but his final destination was to be France where he would seek and secure French military aid.

Subversive organisations proved extremely troublesome during 1795 and the convention act, passed in 1793, made surveillance of these difficult. This act made it illegal for groups maintaining that they represented the Irish people to assemble publicly with the aim 'of procuring an alteration of matters established by the law in church or state'.[238] Charles James Fox speaking in the British house of commons in 1797, accurately commented that with the passing of the convention act the United Irishmen were forced into 'clandestine and secret meetings by midnight...correspondence with the foreign enemy...and terrifying and alarming plots'. Fox deplored an act that rendered public debate criminal. He held that 'as opinions are open, they are innocent and harmless. Opinions become dangerous...only when persecution makes it necessary...to communicate...ideas under the bond of secrecy'.[239] The Society of United Irishmen forced underground reconstituted itself as a secret, oath-bound, revolutionary organisation.

The United Irishmen were only one of many discontented groups in Ireland by the summer of 1795. A complex and sophisticated network of informers attempted to keep Dublin Castle appraised of the activities of the disgruntled. These men usually reported to the under-secretary Edward Cooke,

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[237] For more on the French threat see Chapter 4.
[238] McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* p. 436.
[239] Charles James Fox, 19 May 1797, debate in the house of commons on Mr Fox' motion for repeal of the Treason and Sedition Bills, *Parliamentary History of England,* xxxiii, 1797-1798, pp 613-39.

though on occasion they corresponded directly with the lord lieutenant.[240] The Castle spies and informers ranged from enthusiastic amateurs to officially sanctioned and salaried spies. Many were irregular correspondents writing only when they felt the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that as loyal subjects they had no other option. Others like Francis Higgins, 'The Sham Squire', and Leonard MacNally, 'J.W.', were prolific contributors. Using such information the Irish administration was able to build up a reasonably accurate picture of the activities of the United Irishmen, the Defenders and other smaller and equally dissatisfied organisations. There were many interest groups, some who felt alienated from the new administration, others who felt that any administration controlled by Britain and the Protestant ascendancy did not have their interests at heart and so determined to take matters into their own hands.

As 1795 progressed a steady flow of letters to Dublin Castle indicated increased Defender and United Irish activity. The worst affected areas were in the north and west of the country, specifically counties Down, Tyrone, Roscommon, Leitrim, Longford, Sligo, Galway, Cavan, Meath, and Westmeath.[241] One correspondent contemptuously referred to the United Irishmen as 'dangerous Banditti' and desired that the society be quashed; otherwise he feared it 'may burst like a thunder storm over our heads'.[242] William Lindsey, writing from Fort Edward near Aughnacloy, county Tyrone, maintained that 'to a man persons of any property or good character are against them [the United Irishmen]' and he suggested, well in advance of their formation, the establishment of 'something like the English armed yeomanry' that, while offending many Catholics who would not be entitled to join, would

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[240] See for example, Camden to Pelham, 30 July 1796; Camden to Pelham, 27 December 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33102/81; 33105/311; Bird/Smith to Camden, 3 February 1798; Edward John Newell to Camden, 21 February 1798; C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0197/2; /3.

[241] See for example; 'A.M.', (Downpatrick) to John Patricks, 5 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/3/1; Robert Cuninghame, (Royal Hospital), 27 April 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/54/92; Sir Thomas Fetherston, 30 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/5; Charles Blake, High Sheriff of County Galway, 3 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/3; Camden to Pitt, 4 May 1795, P.R.O., Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/12; O'Hara, (County Sligo), 16 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/17; Robert Clements, (Carrickfergus Post Office) to Robert Johnston, 2 June 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/24/3.

[242] 'A.M.', (Downpatrick) to John Patricks, 5 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/3/1.

act as a strong deterrent to those tempted to join the United Irishmen.[243] By June 1795 the Castle administration had compiled a list of men they considered as leading republicans. This list included such men as Samuel Neilson and Robert and William Simms, all founder members of the Belfast Society of United Irishmen and proprietors of the United Irish newspaper, the *Northern Star*.[244]

Yet, it was the Defenders rather than the United Irishmen that proved the real cause for concern during the summer months of 1795.[245] The Defenders had first come to attention in county Armagh in the mid 1780s. Their primary concern had been to protect Catholics against Protestant attack but by 1795 the Defenders had spread far beyond the borders of county Armagh and their objectives had become increasingly radical and diverse. Two occurrences have been identified as crucial to this change. Firstly, the hostility surrounding the establishment of the Irish militia and the subsequent dispersal of militiamen throughout the country assisted the spread of Defenderism. Secondly, the increase in sectarianism in Armagh contributed to the radicalisation of the Defenders.[246] The Defenders did not espouse the universal values and non-sectarian beliefs of their future allies, the United Irishmen; their focus was more insular with local grievances at the core of most Defender activity. The aims of the Defenders were often confused but were usually bound up with sectarian issues and the uneasy relationship between Catholics and their Protestant landlords was at the heart of much Defender activity. The Defenders were not a homogenous group. Charles O'Hara writing from Co. Sligo claimed that:

> those bordering on the Co Mayo...differ very much from the Defenders in the counties of Roscommon and Leitrim and the parts adjoining them in this county and to be much more dangerous. They do not tender oaths indiscriminately, but rather to persons who appear fit for their purpose; to no Protestant, nor to any person connected with a Protestant. So far as I can collect they talk of respectable friends at Dundalk, and have

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[243] W.P. Lindsey, (Fort Edward) to Robert Lindsey, 6 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/4.
[244] List of Principal Republicans, 7 June 1795 [?], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0147/4/2.
[245] See David W. Miller, *Peep O'Day Boys and Defenders. Selected Documents on the County Armagh Disturbances 1784-96,* (Belfast, 1990); Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism'; Marianne Elliott, 'The Defenders in Ulster', pp 222-23; Jim Smyth, *The Men of No Property. Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth-Century,* (London, 1992) chapter 5.
[246] Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism', p. 375.

> been taught to expect a foreigner for their leader. Their secrecy is astonishing... This association has been going on for a long time, but is much extended of late, and seems particularly to menace Protestants. [247]

It has also been claimed that not only were the Defenders anti-Protestant they were also anti-English.[248]

Like many outlawed groups, the Defenders were a secret oath-bound organisation. Michael Philips, a Friar of the Order of St Dominick, observed that the secret signs used by the Defenders in Roscommon were 'perfectly understood in Dublin and at every other place'. He estimated that there were at least 600 Defenders in the parish around Thomas Street in Dublin.[249] By August Camden was concerned about the numbers of Defenders in the capital, complaining that all the 'Journeymen of a distillery in the Liberties were sworn Defenders'.[250] On at least one occasion the lord lieutenant indicated that the behaviour of landlords was at least partially responsible for the increase in violent incidents; he commented 'there is a very unpleasant spirit of discontent in Roscommon owing first to the oppression of the Landlords in that county and next to their being intimidated into a compliance with the demands of those insurgents'.[251] Criticism of the gentry and landlords was to resurface in a more dramatic fashion in early 1798; Sir Ralph Abercromby, then commander-in-chief, held them largely responsible for the deteriorating security situation. But by then, Camden had closely allied himself with the gentry and Abercromby's criticism was sharply censured.[252] Coercion was rife; throughout the country reports proliferated of the Defenders arming with pikes and punishing 'any poor man who refuses to swear to be true to them' by making certain to have 'his turf or hay destroy'd'.[253] Repeatedly the government received advice, generally from local gentry, that the only way of curtailing such behaviour was to station troops

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[247] Charles O'Hara to ___, 16 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/17.
[248] Bartlett, *Irish Nation,* pp 210-2.
[249] Information received from Michael Philips, Friar of the Order of St Dominick, 4 Feb 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0150/3.
[250] Camden, (Black Rock) to Pelham, 19 August 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/215.
[251] Camden to Pitt, 21 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/16.
[252] See Chapter 6.
[253] William French to ___, 11 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/6.

around the countryside.[254] These reports, allied to an increase in raids on garrisons and assaults on people and property, finally prompted Camden to take action since the clandestine efforts his administration had made to infiltrate the 'nightly societies sworn to secrecy and to fidelity to each other' had met with very limited success.[255]

The gentry were frequently under the impression that the army and government were not doing enough to ensure their safety. Charles Blake, the high sheriff of county Galway, echoed the thoughts of many when he stated that '...the Defenders are become so troublesome in this county that a larger military force is thought by the Gentlemen and inhabitants of the county necessary to quell them'.[256] According to Sir Thomas Fetherston, the garrison in Longford town did little to prevent the 'constant robberies and riots' occurring in the county; he estimated that within twelve miles of Ardagh, county Longford, there had been 138 robberies in the previous year.[257] Others objected to the withdrawal of the troops stationed in their area. The Bishop of Elphin wrote to complain about the removal of the regiment which had been quartered at Elphin, county Roscommon. The bishop maintained that the area was in a disturbed state with some gentlemen being marked out 'as victims to popular fury, many magistrates have been threatened and all intimidated' and he requested immediate assistance.[258] Tensions were heightened when, in the early summer, during a robbery, Caleb Herman, a county M.P. for Longford was killed.[259] Throughout the country loyal gentlemen were actively arming themselves and their trusted employees. In Loughrea, county Galway, a notice was published declaring:

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[254] ibid; W.P. Lindsay to Robert Lindsay, 6 April 1795; Bishop of Elphin to [Pelham], 14 April 1795; C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/4; /11; [Pelham] to York, 18 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/22.

[255] 'AM', (Carrickfergus) to John Patricks, 21 March 1795. For examples of reports of an increase in violent Defender activity see General Charles Crosbie, (Carrick-on-Shannon), to Thomas Pelham, 4 May 1795; ___ to Charles Cashel, 27 July 1795; Arthur Wolfe to Sackville Hamilton, 26 July 1796; Marquis of Downshire to Camden, 27 October 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/1; 0145/14/1; 0149/17/1; 0149/9; 0160/5.

[256] Charles Blake, (Roscrea) to ___, 3 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0

[257] Sir Thomas Fetherston, (County Longford) to ___, [n.d. April/May 1795?], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/5.

[258] J Elphin, Bishop of Elphin to ___, 14 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/11.

[259] McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution*, p. 463.

> We the undersigned Magistrates have heard with Indignation, that the Peace of our Country has lately been violated, by a Set of evil-designing Miscreants, AND we do hereby pledge ourselves, that both in our private and public Capacities, we will support the Laws; AND we do earnestly, recommend to all Gentlemen to arm themselves and their Servants (as they have done in the Town and Neighbourhood of Loughrea), to co-operate with the Civil Magistrates and the Military when called upon. AND in order to give their Wishes, for the above object, the best Effect, and to accomplish them with the most ease to themselves - WE further recommend the Gentlemen of this County, to form Associations in their respective Neighbourhoods, so that upon any appearance of Disturbance, they may be ready to Act with the Civil and Military Powers in their respective Districts.[260]

With or without the aid of the army, the Defenders would be opposed; reports from Carrick-on-Shannon claimed that '...tranquillity prevails owing...to great force'.[261] Amid clamours for assistance and conscious that Protestant landowners, especially those in the west of the country, required reassurance of the government's support, Camden decided to send troops west.[262] No amount of platitudes would suffice, action needed to be taken.

Reports detailing increased agitation throughout the country flooded into Dublin Castle, but some accounts which indicated good relations between landlord and tenant, Protestant and Catholic, were also in evidence, albeit on a much smaller scale. A letter from a retired county Wexford magistrate, Shapland Swiny, received by Pelham in May 1795, detailed the provision made for the poor during recent bad weather. In response to this gesture Pelham's correspondent had received a letter expressing gratitude for his help. The letter was unsigned, but it was thought to be by 'some benefacted mind rising superior to the rancour of its religion'.[263] At the trial for high treason of Laurence O'Connor, a Defender accused of administering unlawful oaths, Judge Finucane interrupted the emotional defence of the accused to declare that he himself 'had always let his land to cottagers, and not to men who relet them to rack

[260] Printed Handbill, (Loughrea), 4 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/18/2.
[261] Charles Crosbie to Cuninghame, 7 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/21/2.
[262] Camden to Pitt, 4 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/12.
[263] Shapland Swiny, (Enniscorthy) to Pelham, 16 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/19/1.

renters'.[264] Finucane, a landowner in county Clare, was one of a number of principled landlords. Some of these were senior members of the Protestant ascendancy. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these were two of the wealthiest men in Ireland, James Fitzgerald, the duke of Leinster and his brother-in-law, Thomas Conolly. It was partly because of Leinster's enthusiastic approval of the foundation of an ecclesiastical college for Catholics that it was established at Maynooth, an estate town belonging to the Duke.[265] The Lennox sisters, Emily, Duchess of Leinster and Louisa, wife of Thomas Conolly, were enthusiastic patrons of various schemes designed to improve the health, welfare and education of their tenants and they established education programmes at their estates of Carton, Castletown and Frescati.[266]

The occasional positive report from the countryside could not hide the fact that discontent and violence were on the increase. Any attempt to keep local violence in check necessitated the division of troops into small units and their dispersal throughout the country. Compromising the security of the coast, Camden ordered General Simon Luttrell, Lord Carhampton, to march with troops to Connaught and quash disturbances there.[267] Carhampton was an enthusiastic commander and set off for Connaught determined to 'show no mercy'.[268] Hundreds of suspects were arrested and dispatched without trial to serve in the navy.[269] This harsh example was mirrored by magistrates in other areas severely hit by Defender activity.[270] Some Defenders were engaged in combat, one report claiming that dragoons had 'killed or drowned thirty [Defenders], wounded a great number, took three prisoners and routed the whole party of about 400'.[271] Camden appeared sanguine when reports of excesses

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[264] Quoted in Lecky, *History of Ireland,* iii, p. 592.
[265] Corish, *Maynooth,* p. 13.
[266] Finola O'Kane, *'Mixing Trees with the Natives': Irish Demense Landscape in the Eighteenth-Century,* Unpublished PhD Thesis, (UCD, 1999), p. 127.
[267] Camden to Pitt, 4 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/12.
[268] Garhampton to John ___, (Ballymore), 12 May [1795], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/14.
[269] Arthur Wolfe, (Roscommon) to Sackville Hamilton, 26 July 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0149/9.
[270] McNeven, *Pieces of Irish History,* p. 112; McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* p. 550.
[271] Lieutenant R. Kelly, (Roscommon) to Richard Hancock, 8 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/4.

carried out by these troops reached Dublin Castle. He acknowledged in a letter to Portland that the actions of the soldiers might 'in some instances be carried on with a warmth which might better have been suppressed' yet no effort was made to punish transgressions of acceptable military behaviour.[272]

The aggressive military attempt to curtail Defender activity had however little impact. In many cases what had been impersonal assaults turned into personal vendettas as revenge was exacted against those deemed responsible for the harsh and frequently unjust action taken against Defenders, their supporters and many innocents. Dublin Castle recognised the at least partial failure of Carhampton's efforts, Cooke remarking: '...Defenderism puzzles me more and more...it certainly grows more alarming daily, as the effect of executions seem to be at an end: and there is an enthusiasm defying punishment'.[273] By September 1795 Camden acknowledged that '...the progress of the Defenders is really becoming alarming'. He did not think them capable of bringing the entire country into a state of insurrection, but felt that the effort to curtail them 'requires all the exertion of the force we have [and] gives an impression of the want of energy in a government where these outrages appear'.[274] Camden had arrived in Ireland with limited administrative experience and no military background. He was thrown into a situation which required careful diplomacy and active military intervention. William Drennan had conceded that Camden's physical appearance might be 'sufficiently military' but he questioned 'whether his mind be so'.[275] The lord lieutenant would be provided with plenty of opportunities to test his military capabilities. Despite his lack of expertise he eagerly involved himself in decisions concerning the military, as evidenced by his interest in Carhampton's activities in Connaught. The military activity in Connaught in the summer of 1795 was Camden's first foray into military strategy and administration. These were aspects of governing Ireland that he was to become increasingly familiar with between 1796 and 1798.

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[272] Camden to Portland, 30 May 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/345-50.
[273] Cooke to [Pelham], 12 Sept 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/272.
[274] Camden to Pitt, 14 June 1795; Camden to Pitt, 26 Sept 1795. P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/26; /42.
[275] Drennan to Martha McTier, [end May 1797], *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 316.

Alongside the Defenders and the United Irishmen, other secret associations came to the attention of Dublin Castle during 1795. These never posed any great threat to the security of Ireland, but their very existence highlighted an undercurrent of unrest. Clubs such as the Strugglers' Club based in Dublin regularly came in for comment. The club was believed to have links with the United Irishmen but it was not regarded as a real danger. It was always more an irritant than a serious menace; one of their more outrageous plans being 'to take the heads of the statue of King William, College Green, King George II, Stephens Green and of George III, Royal Exchange'.[276] Many other radical underground organisations existed throughout Ireland, intermittently coming to the attention of the authorities.

However, all was not doom and gloom and some reports did reach the authorities which maintained, for example, that 'no man remembered his own spot in a state of more peace or so much prosperity'. It was further claimed that county Tyrone had not been 'in a state so little likely to produce insurrection' for many years. Yet, even positive accounts frequently sounded a note of foreboding, the countryside might appear peaceful but 'the times are treacherous and our Neighbours may set us on fire'.[277] Nowhere was more likely to see neighbours set each other on fire than county Armagh during 1795. There was a marked increase in sectarianism in the county which culminated in the Battle of the Diamond, near Loughgall, in late September and the subsequent formation of the Orange Order. The military and civil authorities were united in their eagerness to suppress the Defenders and the United Irishmen. Such unity did not exist when the Orange Order was discussed. Some argued that as the Orange Order professed loyalty to the crown a blind eye should be turned to their activities; others maintained that they should be given some level of official sanction while a small minority felt they should be treated as any other illegal organisation. With the establishment of the yeomanry in October 1796 an

[276] John Sheridan to John Crawford, 21 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0143/8.
[277] William Richardson to General Knox, 3 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/12/2.

unofficial, but widely recognised, link between the Orange Order and the military force was observed.[278]

IV

Military policy was a cause of concern for Camden from the moment of his arrival in Ireland. How to prevent local violence and at the same time adequately protect the Irish coastline from external attack were problems that occupied much of the new lord lieutenant's time. His decision to send Carhampton to Connaught marked a decisive point. Rather than collect the military in several key locations and ensure the coastline was well protected, Camden, responding to pressure from panic-stricken loyalists, chose to disperse the troops in small numbers throughout the country. Conflicting advice, both solicited and unsolicited, was received from many but there was one consistent theme: a powerful military presence was necessary if Ireland was to be secured from internal and external attack.[279] Camden was in agreement. He recognised that it was not sufficient to rely on the assumed loyalty of the Protestants in Ireland. This, he emphasised in a letter to the home secretary, Portland, concluding that while 'the quiet of the country depends upon the exertion of the friends of the established government' their exertion needed to be 'backed by a strong military force'.[280] This was a theme Camden would return to again and again.

During the period of Camden's viceroyalty the military in Ireland fell into several distinct groups. The number of regular troops was constantly decreasing

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[278] See Chapter 5.

[279] The Duke of York was particularly adamant that Camden have a strong military force at his disposal, see for example York to Pelham, 4 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/173; York to Pelham, 30 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/181. Also see for example General Robert Cuninghame, (Royal Hospital) to ___, 27 April 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/54/92; Sir Thomas Fetherston to ___ [n.d. April/May 1795?], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0145/5; William French to ___, 11 April 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0144/6.

[280] Camden to Portland, 7 April 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/57/95.

as these soldiers were required for service in the revolutionary war. What remained of the regular army was boosted by a number of different armed associations. The militia, whose establishment in 1793 had provoked widespread rioting, was primarily composed of Catholics. It was a full-time force intended for service only in Ireland. Initially recruited by compulsory ballot this had, by 1795, been largely replaced by voluntary recruitment. A militia regiment was established in each county or county borough and these regiments were forbidden to serve in their local area. The fencibles were a military force raised for service within the British Isles. Those that arrived in Ireland from 1795 were mainly Scottish and were in many instances stationed in the north of the country. The yeomanry were a part-time, volunteer corps, established at the end of 1796. These were centrally controlled but raised by local gentry. Unlike the militia, the yeomanry served in their own locality. In December 1797 it was estimated that of a total force of 76,791, 35,000 were members of the yeomanry, 21,590 were in the militia while the remaining 20,161 were composed of both regular troops and fencibles.[281]

In 1795, 41,000 troops were allocated to Ireland consisting of 3,390 cavalry and 37,710 infantry. Of the cavalry 590 were to be stationed in the Dublin area, with 700 dispersed around the southern part of Ireland from Bandon and Cork to Tipperary, Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel. 500 of the cavalry were to be dispatched to the North: 150 in Enniskillen and Belturbet, the remaining 200 men were to be stationed at Lisburn, Hillsborough, Augher, and Monaghan. Limerick, Birr and Nenagh were to receive 250 men between them while a reserve force of 1,050 would be stationed in the midlands, in towns such as Athlone, Tullamore, Athy, Carlow and Kilkenny. 12,000 troops were allocated to encampments in Dublin and the southern and northern region. 10,500 troops were to be divided among the garrisons; the largest number, 1,500, were to be stationed in Cork, with 1,000 to be sent to Limerick, Charles Fort, Kinsale, New Geneva, Duncannon Fort, Galway, and Derry, with lesser numbers going to Cork Harbour, Waterford, Clarecastle, Ennis, Athlone, Banagher, Belfast and

[281] J.F. Maurice (ed.), *Diary of Sir John Moore,* i, (London, 1904), p. 270.

Carrickfergus. A total of 4,910 infantry and 300 cavalry were to be placed around the country to act as a police force. The remaining 10,000 men were to be stationed in areas identified by the military command as potentially troublesome.[282]

Pursuance of this military policy meant that adequate defence of the coastline was nearly impossible.[283] Carhampton, a future commander-in-chief, disagreed with the proposed military policy. Of the 41,000 troops voted for Ireland, Carhampton claimed, it was unrealistic to expect more than 35,200 to be fit for service. The future commander-in-chief believed that Camden's plan for dispersing troops around the country in small units was misguided. While it might provide 'a police sufficient for the purpose of protecting you against yourselves', in the event of an external attack, the troops 'would be little better than an armed mob, undisciplined for the purpose of military manoeuvres, total strangers to each other and incapable of being ranged for defensive or offence purposes'.[284] A French invasion was feared and Dublin was, in his opinion, most exposed to the threat of military attack. If the French were to send 3,000 troops they would without difficulty take the capital. Carhampton wanted to increase the troops around Dublin from about 2,000 men to 11,600, claiming:

> There is no part of the King's dominions so much exposed to the attempts of the Enemy in the War, as Ireland; and of all Ireland, the part most exposed is, its Capital. It is high time to understand its situation, to take measures for its safety, and no longer to delay, because its infatuated Inhabitants seem lulled into a fatal security... In the space of 24 hours, a million of money at least might be raised in contribution, the City handed over to a municipality, formed of the dregs of the people, who arm'd with Pikes & Whiskey would probably plunder and burn the town and the whole Kingdom then be undone for a Century to come. I do assert, that an attempt of this nature could not fail of success at this very hour...[285]

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[282] Proposed disposition of the force voted by parliament for the service of Ireland, 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/53/35-6.
[283] See Tom Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland 1793-1803' in Bartlett and Jeffrey (eds), *A Military History of Ireland,* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 261-5.
[284] Carhampton to York, March 1795 in John T. Gilbert (ed.), *Documents relating to Ireland, 1795-1804,* (Dublin, 1893), pp 90-9. Carhampton's letter was written before he acquiesced to taking on the job of quelling disturbances in Connaught.
[285] Carhampton to [York?], March 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33118/257.

Camden's military policy did however reflect the desires of the landed gentry who, with some reason, felt under threat. In the absence of the volunteer force they had depended on in the early 1780s they were reliant on the good-will of the lord lieutenant to ensure that they were adequately protected. Camden, despite his frequent criticism of the gentry, almost invariably directed policy towards appeasing them.

Carhampton was not alone in having misgivings about the lord lieutenant's suggestions for the organisation of the military in Ireland. His correspondent, the Duke of York, was not entirely supportive of Camden's plan either, as.:

> it appears that the Lord Lieutenant has formed his plan of defence upon the whole force voted by Parliament without having in view what may be necessary to be made use of for the common Defence of the Empire, and which is of course a point that will be determined by His Majesty's ministers.

However, he did concede that the general distribution of troops especially those around Dublin and in the north were 'well calculated for the purpose of resisting the Enemy as well as for the preservation of order in the Capital, and quiet in the interior of the Country'.[286] Camden's chief secretary, Pelham, was vocal in his superior's defence:

> I am confident that the disposition of the Irish is diametrically opposite to that of the English, and that the landing of a few men with arms to deliver out to the Inhabitants, would produce an immediate insurrection, and no attempt at resistance but from the army and militia. How it has happened that we should be now at the eve of a third campaign without any single measure of preparation for the defence of this country I know not, but the fact is so, and imperfect as Lord Camden's plan may be, it has at least the merit of making an attempt to put the country into some state of defence.'[287]

Despite Pelham's support, Camden took heed both of Carhampton's and the Duke of York's warnings and made amendments to the military plans. An increased force of 10,000 were to be stationed near Dublin, 5,000 men were to be sent to the north of Ireland, close to Belfast to secure the area from foreign or domestic attack, while 9,500 were to be provided for the south of Ireland. The

[286] Frederick [York] to Portland, 28 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/183.
[287] [Pelham], to York, 18 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/22.

lord lieutenant also hoped that the defence of the coast would be sufficiently strengthened to repel any attack by the French. This redistribution of troops left the interior of the country endangered should the French arrive and to that end Camden suggested Clonmel, county Tipperary, as a suitable place to billet troops who, when needed, could reinforce Waterford, Cork or Limerick. However this modified military policy was not acceptable to all the commanders in Ireland and an uneasy Camden sought Portland's advice about Irish military strategy.[288] This willingness to compromise and efforts made to please everyone highlighted Camden's inexperience in military matters and was an example of his excessive exertions to achieve compromise in situations when firm, solid leadership was required.

The Irish military command did not always present a united front. The position of commander-in-chief was frequently a cause for concern. Consistency was lacking in the leadership of the Irish army; in the three and a half years of Camden's viceroyalty there were four commanders-in-chief. The incumbent at the time of Camden's appointment was the elderly and uninspiring figure of General Robert Cuninghame. Cuninghame was anxious to resign the command claiming, '...his sight is so much impaired, it is with difficulty he can get through the business of the day. His limbs are so weak, he is not fitted for active service'.[289] Camden was reluctant to remove Cuninghame arguing that though 'his age and his habits might render him unfit for a command that called for much personal activity', his knowledge of the military in Ireland and his loyalty to the administration made him an extremely valuable asset.[290] Cuninghame remained an unenthusiastic and disgruntled commander-in-chief until October 1796 when he was finally replaced by General Carhampton.[291] The appointment of officers in the army also caused some anxiety. Camden disliked a system that allowed some officer positions in the army to be purchased and while he stated that he did not believe that unsuitable men held

[288] Camden to Portland, 17 April 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/54/92.
[289] Cuninghame to Camden, 9 May 1795, enclosed in a letter from Camden to Portland, 9 May 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/54/110.
[290] Camden to Portland, 9 May 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/54/108.
[291] Camden to Portland, 20 August 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/61/27.

the position of officer he considered that 'this [system] certainly exposes them to the possibility of being held by officers unfit for these duties'.[292]

A further difficulty encountered by the military in Ireland was the tardiness shown by the English military command when it came to informing the Irish administration of changes in troop numbers. The British military command was in a position to make changes to regiments of regular troops stationed in Ireland without first informing the Irish administration. On occasion, entire regiments were ordered abroad with little notice given. There was little Camden could do to prevent this, apart from making representations to the military authorities. Neither he, nor the commander-in-chief of the forces in Ireland, could over-ride the military decisions taken by the commander of the British armed forces. The one solace they could take from this is that power to control the militia and, later, the yeomanry, remained in Ireland. The Duke of York promised to improve communication between the Irish and British military commands, writing to Pelham in April 1795:

> I am thoroughly sensible of the propriety and necessity of giving the Lord Lieutenant and you the earliest intelligence of any proposed change or alteration in the Troops in Ireland, and will take care that you shall be regularly informed in future.[293]

This lack of interest shown by Whitehall and the British military command is not surprising given their understandable preoccupation with the war in continental Europe. From about the time of Camden's appointment Britain was in constant danger of suffering a catastrophic defeat at the hands of the French and the cabinet's attention was firmly focused on developments across St George's Channel rather than across the Irish Sea.

The difficulties with security which beset the Camden administration were complicated by the fact that some who officially served the crown were also active members of subversive organisations. Defenders and United Irishmen certainly infiltrated the ranks of the armed forces to a greater or lesser extent throughout the country. In county Roscommon, the scene of some of the

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[292] Camden to Portland, 12 June 1795, P.R.O. H.O.100/54/220.
[293] York to Pelham, 18 April 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/175.

worst disturbances during 1795, it was estimated that two thirds of the militia had taken the Defender oath.[294] William Elliot was not surprised that the militia were consorting with the Defenders 'considering the sort of system (or rather no system whatever) which pervades the officers of every Regiment of Militia...it is astonishing the men are as well as they are. So total a neglect of Parades, of Barrack regulation, such irregularity of Guards and Centries [sic] etc etc'.[295] When William Parsons was discovered attempting to infiltrate the Defenders he was warned that they would not be terrified by any Protestant for 'besides 150 friends in Trim and Newtown, he [the Defender] could have the help of almost all the Horse and Foot in Town'.[296] On 23 August 1795 Dublin witnessed riots when members of the 111th Regiment rebelled.[297] This regiment, known to be 'troublesome and mutinous', gained the support of an 'immense crowd' as they marauded through the streets.[298] It was feared that they would be joined by the equally disreputable 104th Regiment. Such was the disturbance that Camden was called from his summer residence at Blackrock to assess the situation. Additional troops were sent in and calm was restored to the streets and the barracks. The incident proved minor and was over within a day when the soldiers returned to their 'sober senses' but Sackville Hamilton confessed 'that there was one very anxious hour while it remained in a certain degree of doubt whether the Castle Guard would or would not join the mob'.[299] Discipline was lax in many regiments and Elliot suggested this might be remedied:

> if orders were sent to all the Regiments quartered in the disturbed Counties (that it might not appear particularly to apply to these people) enforcing the necessity of frequent Rollcallings, visiting Barracks twice in the night, going Rounds etc etc and preventing...the soldiers from attending clubs and other meetings...at suspected houses and improper hours.[300]

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[294] Information received from Michael Philips, Friar of the Order of St Dominick, 4 February 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0150/3.
[295] William Elliot, (Trim) to ___, 4 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/16.
[296] ibid. 'Horse and Foot' were assumed to refer to the Dragoons and Militia.
[297] Froude, *The English in Ireland*, iii, pp 163-4.
[298] Camden, (Dublin Castle) to Pelham, 24 Aug 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/224.
[299] S[ackville] Hamilton, (Dublin Castle) to ___, 25 Aug 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/226.
[300] William Elliot, (Trim) to ___, 4 May 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/16.

Intermittently efforts were made to enforce discipline on the military with some success, but it was not a concerted effort and success depended more on individual officers than on any initiative emanating from army headquarters at the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham.[301]

V

Parliament did not pose the challenge to the new administration that might have been expected given that the controversial change of viceroy occurred in the middle a of parliamentary session. The Catholic bill which caused the new administration much worry was defeated and while there were many individuals unhappy with the new regime, parliamentary business continued. In an attempt to placate a restless and bitter opposition several bills were passed that met with their approbation; a responsibility bill, a Catholic education bill and a Dublin police bill.[302] The opposition remained dissatisfied and there was some dissent in Parliament. In addition to demanding a committee to examine the state of the nation, Grattan insisted on speaking against the address of congratulation proposed for the new viceroy.[303] However, apart from those M.P.s expected to oppose Camden, there were few serious problems and Pelham congratulated the new administration on concluding an effective parliamentary session commenting:

> Unpleasant as many of the circumstances attending Lord Fitzwilliam's recall have been, I can venture to say, that for the public it was the most fortunate event that ever happened: the notion of forming a popular administration had given such encouragement to democracy and so unhinged all the common machinery of government that I really believe the business of parliament would have stopped, for not one of their most favourite measures were digested into form when I arrived. The Catholic Bill was not completed, the Education Bill not begun, the Treasury Bill not perfect and the Police Bill so confused and unintelligible that it could not have passed.[304]

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[301] See Chapter 5 for more detail on government efforts to counteract United Irish and Defender infiltration of the military.
[302] New History of Ireland, p. 345. James Kelly, *Henry Grattan,* (Dundalk, 1993), p. 33.
[303] Lecky, *Ireland in the Eighteenth-Century,* iii, p. 334.
[304] [Pelham], (Phoenix Park) to Windham, 17 May 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/31.

Financial and economic matters came to dominate the Camden administration during 1797, but they featured very little during 1795. During 1795 such matters were ignored; Camden even decided it was not advisable to take trade between the two countries 'into consideration at all this year in the Irish Parliament'.[305]

The careful distribution of patronage was an important factor in ensuring the stability of Camden's administration. There was considerable scope for patronage in Ireland. Irish government departments employed about 5,000 people and many of these were appointed by the lord lieutenant. Patronage was not limited to the lord lieutenant but, in general, he had control of the most valuable and the most prestigious positions.[306] The new viceroy found himself inundated with requests for promotion from many asserting their loyalty to the government and from others who maintained that a promotion would guarantee fidelity to the administration. However, the allotment of promotions and peerages was a far from simple matter. Camden was not given free rein to promote those he regarded as loyal or competent. Many factors had first to be considered. On occasion, decisions regarding patronage were made far from Dublin Castle. Pitt and his advisors were in the habit of offering Irish peerages to minor English figures. This had several negative effects. Firstly, such actions removed valuable patronage from Dublin Castle's control and gave positions of potential influence to men who frequently knew little and cared less about Ireland. Secondly, and most importantly, this practice highlighted the fact that the Irish peerage was held in less regard than its English counterpart. Within months of his appointment Pelham complained:

> ...I must fairly own that there is no situation, however distinguished or profitable, that I feel the least desire of attaining, and at the same time there is none, however laborious, that I would not undertake rather than engage in that miserable, ungentlemanlike traffic of patronage which falls to the lot of an Irish secretary, and now must be his sole occupation or at least become the principal source of all his troubles.[307]

In a further letter Pelham succinctly assessed the damage done by Pitt's abuse of Irish patronage:

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[305] Camden to Pitt, 4 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/12.
[306] Malcomson, *Foster*, p. 263; McDowell, 'Ireland in 1800', pp 697-703.
[307] Pelham to Portland, 5 December 1795, P.RO.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/17/5.

> When it is considered politically I think it deserves more consideration: the fashion of the day is to cry down Parliament and represent it under the corrupt influence of another country, and the Irish as a nation are more susceptible of any impression affecting their pride than any thing in which their interest is more deeply concerned; can any thing be more offensive to their National Pride than the wanton creation of Irish Peerages in the persons of men who are not considered worthy of that honour in their own country? I confess that I feel it so strongly that if the country was more settled I would resign my situation rather than bear any shame in a thing which I think so wrong in a political light and (allow me to say what I feel most forcibly) so unfair to Lord Camden and myself.[308]

Camden couched his letters of complaint in more delicate terms, politely informing Grenville that it was 'very often inconvenient to the king's government [in Ireland] to be assailed by English application'.[309] Grenville did not attempt to use Irish patronage to his own advantage. When petitioned by his cousin, Lord Mountnorris, for preferment he refused to make any promises and immediately contacted Camden for advice.[310]

In addition to the problem of interference from England, Camden was often bound by promises made by previous lord lieutenants. He was obliged to complete the promotions Westmorland had promised.[311] Fitzwilliam's wishes were not disregarded; Camden noted that the chief baron, Yelverton, and the Archbishop of Cashel were to have been made peers if Fitzwilliam had remained in Ireland.[312] By early May he had decided to press for the promotion of these men. This was less a sop to Fitzwilliam's supporters and more because Portland, a close friend of the chief baron, advocated it. Camden also regarded Yelverton as an asset to the house of lords, commenting that 'Lord Clonmell is no lawyer and Lord Carlton is so often ill that he cannot be [relied] upon'.[313]

Perhaps the group that impinged most on Camden's control of Irish patronage were those Portland had referred to as the Irish 'cabinet'. Upon

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[308] [Pelham] to Portland, 1 August 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/97.
[309] Camden to Grenville, 18 April 1797, B.L. Grenville Papers, Add Ms 59254A/19.
[310] Grenville to Camden, 11 April 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 58935/176.
[311] Pitt to Westmorland, 26 March 1795, private, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/325/74A; Camden to Pitt, 3 July 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/32.
[312] Camden to Pitt, 20 April [1795], P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/4.
[313] Camden to Pitt, 4 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/12.

learning of Camden's appointment, Grattan was convinced that the members of the 'cabinet' would control all patronage, he noted that 'Irish jobbers and Irish jobs are sacred'.[314] John Magee, editor of the *Dublin Evening Post* and a firm supporter of the whigs used much newsprint excoriating the members of this elite group:

> There is in Ireland a tribe, well known by the name of the Family, who have been so long in the habit of living in splendour and opulence at the expense of the public, that they at length begin to think their places an inheritance. Displace them and you strip them naked, deprive them of power and you expose their crimes - they are too proud, too lazy, and too profligate to betake themselves to honest industry for a livelihood therefore "they will extinguish Ireland or Ireland must remove them."[315]

Beresford, Fitzgibbon and Foster, among others were members of this 'Family' who were willing to use their status to urge the promotion of their friends and relatives. John Foster used his position when he petitioned the lord lieutenant for favourable treatment for his brother, the Bishop of Kilmore. Foster requested that he be appointed Bishop of Clogher, a more lucrative post. When Camden refused to accede to this entreaty, Foster responded by threatening to remove himself from Camden's 'cabinet'. [316] Unwilling to disrupt the delicate balance of power, Camden reluctantly agreed to Foster's request though he made his disapproval known to Pelham, commenting:

> I am certain, under all the circumstances, that the Speaker's importance in the country deserves this consideration...; and if ever there was a recommendation sent over from the pure principle of being useful to the government of Ireland, it is the one I have now sent, for my private wishes all lean the other way.[317]

The abuse of the patronage system by Camden's Dublin advisors was one of the reasons cited by Pelham when he wished to tender his resignation in December 1795. He commented to Camden that he would 'rather work at the plough all the rest of my days than engage in that dirty traffic of patronage, which must in [Ireland] always remain upon a shabby footing while men like the Speaker act in the manner they do'.[318]

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[314] Grattan to Burke, 14 March 1795, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* viii, pp 196-7.
[315] *Dublin Evening Post,* 25 March 1795.
[316] Malcomson, *John Foster,* p. 71.
[317] Camden to Pelham, 19 November 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/354.
[318] Pelham to Camden, 1 December 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 C122/6.

Fitzgibbon's elevation to the position of Earl of Clare clearly illustrates Camden's disposition to pander on occasion to the members of the Irish 'cabinet'. Portland, and Pitt, despite his personal regard for Fitzgibbon, had been reluctant to actively pursue Fitzgibbon's claim, realising that this advancement would not only antagonise many Catholics but also it would further alienate those removed from the positions granted during Fitzwilliam's short tenure of office.[319] Camden did not concur and recommended the promotion for several reasons. He considered the lord chancellor 'the best friend to England in this country' and desired his promotion 'principally on account of his political opinion...for the Chief Baron's predilection upon the Catholic Question being known, it appears really necessary, that a mark of the king's favour should be shown at the same time to a person who has taken so decided a line on the other side'.[320] The assault Fitzgibbon had suffered on his return from Camden's investiture was also cited as a reason to confer an earldom on the lord chancellor. Undoubtedly such arguments by the viceroy were coloured by Fitzgibbon's ill-concealed desire for promotion. Camden had been warned that men:

> who fancied they were about to be sacrificed [might] assume airs of exultation and triumph little united to conciliate those who have been unexpectedly stopped in the career which they had just entered and that the disappointment which the latter feel, may be productive of great ill humour and some violence.[321]

Despite this warning and the objections of Pitt and Portland the viceroy decided that the lord chancellor's promotion would reassure loyal Protestants of the new administration's dedication to them. Fitzgibbon was duly created Earl of Clare in June 1795.[322] Camden did not always defer to the demands of his advisors. Despite persistent requests he refused to promote John Beresford's son, George, to a Bishopric.[323] Beresford felt aggrieved that his candidates for various offices

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[319] Pitt, (Downing Street), to Westmorland, 26 March 1795, private, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/325/74A.
[320] Camden to Pitt, 4 May 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/12.
[321] Portland to Camden, (Whitehall), 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers,U840 0142A/3.
[322] Kavanaugh, *Fitzgibbon*, p. 316.
[323] Beresford to Auckland, 14 December 1795, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34453/439; Beresford to Pelham, 22 June 1796; Camden to Pelham, 13 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/44; 64.

were not given preferment and he was convinced that he was 'neglected by that government because they think themselves sure of my service. Hard usage'.[324]

Attempts to assert Camden's authority over the Irish 'cabinet' were undermined by Whitehall's seeming indifference to the predicament of its Irish lord lieutenant. Camden had arrived in Ireland encouraged by declarations of active support from Pitt's government, though he later admitted, in a letter to the prime minister, that from the outset 'you candidly acknowledged to me...that Ireland occupies little of your thoughts'.[325] Camden adhered to Portland's desire for close communication and letters, memoranda, bulletins and messengers were regularly dispatched from Dublin. The return post was not so substantial and Camden felt compelled to write to the prime minister:

> I wish to remind you of not only your engagement but that of all your colleagues that intelligence should be sent to the L[or]d L[ieutenan]t of Ireland regularly whenever it arrived. I did not request this in order to satisfy my own curiosity but I then considered it as a respect done to the Office to have such communication made to it. I am now convinced of its propriety and indeed necessity.[326]

In a further letter to Pitt, in January 1796, a despondent Camden noted that 'it really hurts me every week to be obliged to write to you in the language of complaint'.[327] There was much private correspondence between Dublin and London, but Camden never received the official communications he craved. Pitt and Portland rarely advised Camden on policy decisions. During Camden's first six months in Ireland the elevation of Fitzgibbon to Earl of Clare provoked more correspondence than any other incident. It proved to be one of the few occasions where Camden successfully overrode advice from Whitehall. If, during his three years in Ireland, it appeared that Camden often acted independently of the London government, this was largely because London had little interest in Ireland and not because Camden chose to take action without official sanction.

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[324] Beresford to Auckland, 1 February 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/7.
[325] Camden to Pitt, 7 May 1796, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/1955.
[326] Camden to Pitt, 13 July 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/34.
[327] Camden to Pitt, 30 January 1796, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/60.

After several months in the 'hornet's nest' that was Ireland in 1795 Camden had settled down to governing. The question of defence had been addressed and the internal threat posed by the Defenders and others dissipated, at least temporarily. Tussles for control within the Irish administration had usually ended with Camden the victor – the positions of Foster, Fitzgibbon and Beresford remained powerful but not unassailable. Yet, without sufficient military resources and with an uninterested government in London, volubly expressing support but in reality offering little, it was proving difficult to get Ireland fully under control. Portland did offer some suggestions for the better government of the country:

> were the country gentlemen...or rather the great landed proprietors – an event impossible to take place – to reside on their estates, were the parochial clergy more numerous or generally more resident, were the gentlemen more active, the provincial magistracy better filled, the duties of it discharged with impartiality, and the police establishment made general through Ireland; were the wages of the labourers better regulated and paid in specie; were the lands so occupied as to give the landlords and influence over the farmer, and the farmer an interest in the goodwill of the proprietor of the estate, then much might be done for the improvement of the kingdom and the happiness of its inhabitants.[328]

There is little doubt but that the home secretary's vision, had it been possible to fulfil, would have created a very different Ireland, but all Portland had to offer Camden was a vision without any suggestion as to how this might be carried out – a letter indicative of the goodwill, backed by nothing concrete, felt by many in the English establishment towards the Irish administration. 1796 approached with Camden in an isolated position. Virtually abandoned by Whitehall, despised by Fitzwilliam's supporters, given only qualified support by many of the Protestant ascendancy and defended by a troubled and disjointed military command, Camden surrounded himself with a few close advisors, and prepared to fulfil his promise to Pitt and make a success of his lord lieutenancy.[329]

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[328] Portland to Camden, 13 October 1795, in Froude, *The English in Ireland,* iii, pp 165-6.
[329] Camden to Pitt, [March 1795], C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/1693.

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'Like Mariners after a storm we should lose no time in examining our vessel, stopping all leaks and...putting in some new timbers'.[330]

Invasion and Insolvency, 1795-1797

A year before Camden was appointed viceroy both the London and Dublin administrations had conclusive proof that the United Irishmen had gone beyond simply seeking inspiration from the French and had actively sought their support.[331] Little was done to counteract the potential French threat apart from arresting the suspected French agent, William Jackson. Far from deterring the United Irishmen from pursuing links with France the arrest and subsequent trial of Jackson only served to encourage them. Camden spent much of 1795 and 1796 reassuring the Protestant ascendancy that their position was secure and that the military in Ireland was more than adequate for the task of defending the country from external and internal threats. Privately, Camden was not convinced of this and he devoted much of his energy to persuading Whitehall that a French invasion was not only possible but probable. By the close of 1796 the Irish economy was close to collapse. The attempted French invasion of December 1796 exacerbated a military, political and financial crisis and Camden, disillusioned with Whitehall, found himself seeking advice closer to home in Dublin Castle and College Green. The storm had been weathered but the vessel that was the Irish administration had been badly damaged. The 'new timbers' that Pelham deemed necessary to ensure the continued survival of the boat would be sourced in Ireland rather than across the Irish sea, in Britain.

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[330] [Pelham] to York, 4 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/76.
[331] Elliott, *Partners*, pp 64-5.

I

Reverend William Jackson, an Irishman who had spent much of his life in England, was arrested in Dublin on 28 April 1794. A suspected French spy, he had first come to the attention of Dublin Castle on his arrival in Ireland at the beginning of April. Jackson's mission had been plagued with difficulties from the outset. His journey from France through England and on to Ireland had been monitored closely by the authorities. Nicholas Madgett, a Kerryman based in Paris, was one of the chief organisers of Jackson's trip. During 1793 Madgett had become the principal channel of communication between radicals in Ireland and Britain and the French government. Madgett, in early 1794, had suggested sending a French envoy to Ireland and Britain to assess the likelihood of a successful rebellion. The object of this mission was to ascertain whether or not the French should consider an invasion of England or Ireland. Jackson was to meet with opposition politicians and radicals. An associate of both Jackson and Madgett, John Stone, an English radical, recommended that Jackson meet with his brother, William, while in London. William was not a radical and he promptly informed the English authorities of Jackson's assignment. The prospect of concluding a successful mission was further undermined when Jackson met up with an old acquaintance, John Cockayne. Cockayne, a solicitor, lost no time in informing the prime minister of Jackson's impending trip to Ireland and he was urged to accompany Jackson to Dublin.

Jackson and Cockayne arrived in Dublin on 3 April and for three weeks they were permitted to move freely around the capital. There was a muted welcome for Jackson; many of the United Irish leaders dismissed him as either unimportant or worse, an informer. However, he did meet and discuss tentative plans with Archibald Hamilton Rowan and Theobald Wolfe Tone, amongst others. Tone, at Rowan's behest, prepared a memorial detailing the state of Ireland and outlining the advantages of French involvement with Ireland. Cockayne, upon learning of this memorial, immediately alerted the authorities. A copy of the memorial, intended for France, was intercepted and Jackson was

arrested. This arrest in April 1794 generated little interest. What newspaper coverage there was concentrated on Hamilton Rowan's escape from Newgate prison. Aware that he would be implicated in the plot, Hamilton Rowan fled to France and from there to America. However Jackson's trial, a year later, in April 1795 attracted much attention from a wide variety of sources.[332]

The timing of Jackson's trial ensured that it attracted a huge amount of publicity. This was to some extent deliberate policy; the Irish authorities believed, initially at least, that by highlighting Jackson's case it would serve to dissuade other Irish radicals from pursuing links with the French. The opposite proved to be the case. Jackson's trial was the first high profile case held in the aftermath of Fitzwilliam's contentious recall from Dublin. Camden in his first few weeks in office had done little to appease the bitterness felt by Irish radicals and they took advantage of Jackson's trial to highlight their position. The trial worked as a rallying point for beleaguered radicals and far from discouraging them from seeking French aid, the trial encouraged United Irishmen to actively pursue such assistance. Rather than content themselves with agitating for minor reform through political channels, which now that Fitzwilliam had been recalled was unlikely to be granted, Jackson's trial opened up the possibility of another way: physical force assisted by foreign aid. The trial began on 23 April 1795. Cockayne as the chief witness unwillingly gave evidence.[333] On the basis of this evidence Jackson was found guilty of treason. On 30 April, the day of sentencing, Jackson 'was seized with violent emotions, viz the drawing up of his shoulders and frothing at the mouth and shortly afterwards dropped down and expired' – the result of a poison he had administered himself.[334]

The real significance of Jackson's mission was not in its success or failure but rather that it occurred at all. It gave irrefutable proof to the

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[332] *Northern Star*, 28 April 1795; *Freeman's Journal*, 2 June 1795; *Dublin Evening Post*, 3 June, 1 July 1795; Elliott, *Partners*, pp 61-5; idem, *Wolfe Tone*, pp 237-45.

[333] Cockayne had been in the pay of the authorities both in Ireland and England. John Cockayne to [Evan Nepean], 26 October 1794, P.R.O.N.I. McPeake Papers, T.3048/A/7.

[334] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1795; Lees to [Townshend], 30 April 1795, N.L.I. Townshend Papers, 394/170/21; Drennan to Sam McTier, 30 April 1795, in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, pp 148-9; McNeven, *Pieces of Irish History*, pp 97-9.

authorities and radicals alike that the French were interested in Ireland. William Jackson was not the first man dispatched by the French to Ireland. Connections between Dublin and Paris at official levels may have been non-existent but there was a steady stream of Irish radicals arriving in France ready to advocate French involvement in their struggle for Irish independence. The most prominent of these was Lord Edward Fitzgerald who had arrived in France in October 1792. He spent time in Paris cultivating the friendship of those he thought capable of persuading the Committee of Public Safety to give assistance to an Irish revolution. He befriended Thomas Paine and Paine succeeded in persuading Lebrun, the French foreign minister, to dispatch a representative to Ireland to discover if the support Fitzgerald claimed to be in Ireland for a revolution truly existed. An American, Lieutenant Colonel Eleazor Oswald, was chosen. He arrived in Ireland in early May 1793 where he met with despondent and dejected members of the United Irishmen. Dublin Castle had made inroads in their campaign against radical organisations; action had been taken to suppress the Defenders, many leaders of the United Irishmen had been imprisoned and the Volunteers had been disarmed. Against this background Oswald saw no possibility of a successful revolution and his report to the French authorities was less than encouraging.[335]

On Oswald's return to France he found the administration in a state of turmoil. Paine, amongst others, had fallen from favour and this, coupled with Oswald's discouraging report, removed any likelihood of French assistance for an Irish rebellion. Paine was replaced as the expert on British affairs by Nicholas Madgett. During 1793 Madgett set about persuading the Committee of Public Safety to sanction another mission to Ireland. In the aftermath of the bloody civil war in the Vendée such a venture became popular. Britain was blamed for inciting the disturbances in the west of France and this increased hatred of the British caused the Committee of Public Safety and senior French generals to consider Ireland as a suitable base from which to attack Britain. The result of this lobbying was William Jackson's mission. This had ended in

[335] Elliott, *Partners*, pp 59-71.

failure, but one event brought about by Jackson's time in Ireland came to have more serious consequences than could have been anticipated. Wolfe Tone, as a result of the memorial he had written, had been implicated in the case against Jackson, but lack of evidence and the intervention of Marcus Beresford and Tone's neighbour in Kildare, Arthur Wolfe prevented a trial. Tone, at this time, was not regarded as a serious conspirator against the government and rather than face prosecution he was given the opportunity to leave Ireland.[336] After delaying his departure for as long as possible he finally departed from Belfast in June 1795. He reached America, accompanied by his wife and children in August but he stayed only briefly before leaving for France where he immediately set about organising a fleet to take men and arms to Ireland. Within weeks of his arrival in France in February 1796 he had met with Lazare Carnot, the member of the directory charged with overseeing military matters. Carnot was amenable to the idea of a French assisted rebellion in Ireland and Tone was introduced to General Lazare Hoche, the dashing young French general credited with quashing the rebellion in the Vendée. Hoche had previously voiced his enthusiasm for a French invasion of Ireland, commenting in October 1793, 'It is there [Ireland] you must fight the English...a landing in England itself can never be anything but a chimera'.[337] There was an immediate sympathy between the two men and between them they actively promoted the idea of an invasion of Ireland.

Jackson's mission and Tone's arrival in France opened up the prospect of a mutually beneficial relationship for Irish radicals and French revolutionaries. While Jackson and Oswald, had promised unsolicited aid, the United Irishmen had been in no position to effect a rebellion in Ireland. By mid 1795 this was no longer the case. Much had changed; the suppression of the United Irishmen in 1794 and its reconstitution as a secret oath bound society allied to the publicity surrounding Jackson's trial prompted serious contemplation of rebellion with French assistance. At a political level the trial had repercussions. London had hoped to persuade Jackson to turn King's evidence and appeared to have little consideration for the impact this would have on domestic politics in Ireland.

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[336] idem, *Tone,* p. 243.
[337] Quoted in Elliott, *Partners,* p. 63.

The Irish authorities needed a conviction to assert their authority in the country by quelling the fears of the establishment and providing an example to the United Irishmen that the government might be challenged but it would be the victor. Jackson refused to provide the information the London government desired and the Irish administration got both its trial and conviction. However the tension between the two governments did not dissipate and indeed was considerably heightened by the developments at Bantry Bay during December 1796.

II

The Dublin Castle administration had been aware of links between Irish radicals and their French counterparts following the outbreak of war between Britain and France in February 1793. However, until mid-1796, apart from occasional reports and incidents, the most significant being Jackson's mission, there was little evidence to suggest that the French were seriously considering launching an invasion attempt on Ireland. Throughout 1795 military policy was dictated by concerns about the internal security of Ireland, but as 1796 progressed the Dublin Castle administration became increasingly concerned about the French threat to Ireland. A report, circulated in Dublin during 1796 argued:

> There [England]...there is no real danger of Invasion, here [Ireland] it may be expected every hour, there the mass of the people wish to uphold the government and have not any idea of insurrection, here the majority of them wish to pull it down and think of nothing else'.[338]

By June, Camden had received substantial amounts of reliable information regarding French interest in Ireland and he decided that it was his 'duty to call the attention of the King's ministers to the situation of this country'. There would be little difficulty in quelling an internal insurrection but, if the French arrived, Camden claimed 'a very formidable...body of ill-disposed and disaffected subjects would be found to assist and to encourage them'.[339]

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[338] G. Shee, 'On the Defence of Ireland', [n.d. 1796?], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33119/102.
[339] Camden to Pelham, 28 June 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/34/139.

The Irish administration was certain that France's interest in Ireland stemmed from a desire to use the island as part of a greater scheme designed to weaken and ultimately defeat Britain. Camden urged Whitehall to provide support to defend Ireland's vulnerable coastline, arguing that Ireland's security was vital to winning the war against France. Camden hoped that Pitt and his ministers would be able to conclusively dismiss all rumours indicating that the French intended invading Ireland. As he remarked to Pelham, '...the greatest relief to my mind will to be informed that I have indulged idle speculations'.[340] The King's ministers had little interest in Camden's missives. Internal security issues were within the lord lieutenant's remit and Whitehall refused to acknowledge the French threat to Ireland as any thing other than an internal matter.[341] Auckland noted in August 1796 that 'Irish affairs have been for some time under the consideration of the cabinet' but he added 'the salvation of the country depends infinitely more on the exertions of all of you who are on the spot than upon anything that can be done or suggested from hence'.[342] The Dublin Castle administration accepted responsibility for retaining command of the internal security of the country but the Irish government was adamant that a French invasion was outside their sphere of influence and expected, should the French decide to attack Ireland, that Britain should assume responsibility for Ireland's defence.

Camden's fears were dismissed with a series of blandly reassuring letters. Yet, while the anxieties in Dublin were being placated, the English government was in receipt of an ever growing mountain of intelligence indicating that an attack on England or Ireland was increasingly likely. A report, compiled by Dundas, on the possibility of an invasion of England or Ireland concluded 'there never was a time when the enemy had a prospect of attempting the invasion of Britain with a force so considerable as at present'.[343] In July 1796 William Wickham, at that time British Minister to the Swiss Cantons,

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[340] ibid.
[341] Elliott, *Partners*, pp 119-20.
[342] Auckland to Beresford, 28 August 1796, in *Beresford Correspondence*, ii, pp 125-6.
[343] Dundas, 'Notes on a possible invasion', 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0172.

wrote to Grenville informing him that it was immediately expected that an invasion attempt would be launched on England or Ireland from the ports of Holland and Flanders.[344] This was unwelcome news. Britain was in a vulnerable position. By the summer of 1796, the first coalition was in tatters; the Prussians had agreed a peace treaty with the French in April 1795, they were followed by the Dutch in May and the Spaniards in July leaving only Austria and Britain in the fight against revolutionary France. Bonaparte had begun his campaign in Italy and the French were confident of victory. Against this background it is not surprising that Pitt's peace overtures were not taken very seriously, nor is it surprising that the French were contemplating an assault on Britain and Ireland. In October Wickham was in a position to report that that 15,000 men commanded by Lazare Hoche were gathering at Brest and preparing for a descent on Ireland or England. He anticipated that they would sail within a week.[345] This information was not forwarded to Dublin.

Despite reassurances from London, by August 1796 the Irish military command had drawn up defence plans in case of an invasion and it became increasingly apparent that Camden had good reason for indulging his 'idle speculations'; a variety of informants had persuaded him that a French invasion fleet would arrive during the autumn. One McDermott of Skerries in north County Dublin, went so far as to claim that a French fleet was ready to leave Cherbourg and other ports destined for Ireland.[346] Cooke noted the 'increasing activity of the disaffected...for joining the United Irishmen and Defenders' and he anticipated an insurrection aided by a French invasion 'after harvest'.[347] Additional troops were immediately requested.[348] Such assistance was not forthcoming. Relations between Dublin Castle and Whitehall were strained as Camden repeatedly warned London of the probability of invasion. At home, Camden sought to allay the fears of those alarmed at the prospect of a French

[344] Wickham to Grenville, 3 July 1796; 30 July 1796, in William Wickham jnr. (ed.), *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable William Wickham*, i, (London, 1870) pp 405-10; 436-7.
[345] Wickham to Grenville, 5 October 1796, in ibid, i, pp 458-62.
[346] H[iggins] to 'Dear Sir' [Cooke], 15 August 1796, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14.
[347] Cooke to Pelham, 27 July 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, 33102/74.
[348] Camden to Pitt, 6 August 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/2.

invasion.[349] Writing to Viscount Dillon, Camden assured him that Dublin Castle had 'received no intelligence...to suppose an invasion of this country may probably take place – I believe the King's ministers in England do not entertain that apprehension'.[350] Yet the feeling of unease among the Irish elite grew. Camden's assertion that the French were not expected became increasingly implausible against growing evidence to the contrary. The Protestant ascendancy was terrified; the safe, secure, comfortable lifestyle they cherished and sought to protect was under threat and it seemed they could do little about it. The prospect of the French landing caused consternation among the 'upper class', bringing about a dramatic fall in market prices. It was widely believed that if the French arrived then the 'lower class would join with them and 'recover their property and their liberty and take...revenge on their oppressors'.[351]

Finally, in September, the British administration conceded that Camden's fears had been justified. Reports from England advised Camden that the war between Britain and France would not end without a French attempt on either Britain or Ireland.[352] Efforts were made to keep this information confidential while tentative preparations were made to secure the country should the French arrive. There were those who remained certain that the French had no invasion planned. Dr Alexander Haliday in Belfast wrote to Charlemont commenting 'I feel not the least apprehension of invasion'.[353] However, as Charlemont correctly observed, if invasion was thought likely 'you would most certainly be the last man to whom your wise ones would communicate their secrets'.[354] Others, more closely associated with Camden's administration were, by the autumn and early winter of 1796, persuaded that an invasion was imminent and

[349] See for example: Camden to Pitt, 6 August 1796; Camden to Pitt, 10 January 1797; Cunninghame to Elliot, 16 August 1796; Camden to Downshire 28 August 1796; C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/2; /7; /0160/2.
[350] Camden to Viscount Dillon, 15 August 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0181/4.
[351] Dillon to Camden, 22 August 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0181/5.
[352] Camden to Shannon, 1 September 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0175/5.
[353] Haliday to Charlemont, 12 September 1796, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, p. 285.
[354] Charlemont to Halliday, 7 October 1796, in ibid, ii, pp 285-6.

reports were rife that 'the expedition is to be gigantesque'.[355] Indeed, in his speech to both houses of parliament on 13 October, Camden made it clear that 'the ambitious projects of our enemies have threatened to interrupt the happiness and prosperity of his [majesty's] people by making a descent on this kingdom and Great Britain'.[356]

The invasion that Dublin Castle feared had been decided upon in June 1796. By April 1796 Carnot was amenable to the idea of launching an invasion attempt on England. On 19 June 1796, following a series of significant victories for the French, the French Directory concluded that an invasion of Ireland would hasten the defeat of Britain. This plan initially was to take the form of an invasion of both England and Ireland and included a naval expedition to India. Galway Bay was to be the destination of 5,000 French troops in August 1796 and a similar number were to land in Yorkshire. Hoche was appointed commander of this expedition on 20 July 1796. This plan did not come to fruition; the August deadline proved impossible to meet and Hoche was unable to reach Brest until late September. The plan to send a force to India was not ruled out until the middle of October.[357] During the autumn this plan was expanded to include two additional missions. French troops were to attack north-east England, one group were to land on the Welsh coast, the other to sail up the Bristol Channel.[358] Ultimately these plans were abandoned and Ireland was to be the sole destination of the fleet. Many difficulties, including a lack of experienced sailors and the poor state of many of the ships, surrounded the French expedition long before it left Brest.[359] Finally in exasperation the Directory issued orders cancelling the plan on 17 December 1796 but by that time it was too late as the fleet had sailed on 15 December.[360]

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[355] Beresford to Auckland, 4 September 1796, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, p. 130; Cooke to [Auckland], 26 November 1796, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/10.
[356] 13 October 1796, *Parliamentary Register,* xvii, p. 1.
[357] Hugh Gough, 'Anatomy of a Failure', p. 14.
[358] E.H. Stuart Jones, *An Invasion that Failed. The French expedition to Ireland, 1796.* (Oxford, 1950), pp 27-8.
[359] Elliott, *Partners,* pp 109-11.
[360] Gough, 'Anatomy of a Failure', p. 15; Elliott, *Tone,* p. 322; Jones, *An Invasion that Failed,* pp 27-8.

III

Camden's justifiable fears were disregarded by Whitehall for over three months; such behaviour epitomises the relationship between the Irish administration and the British Government throughout Camden's viceroyalty; Pitt and his ministers, absorbed by the war with France, were confident that the forces stationed in Ireland could successfully defeat any internal threat and had absolute faith in the famed strength of the great British navy to deter any potential invading force.

Dundas, though certain that the French would attempt an invasion of either England or Ireland, was convinced that:

> our present great superiority at sea should make any enemy hesitate and give us reasonable hopes that we may frustrate any attempt he shall make... Our stationary squadrons at Yarmouth, the Downs, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Cork, with their intermediate cruisers form an advanced line which promises much security.[361]

Such faith in the British navy was not evident in Ireland and preparations began to repulse any attack by the French. Camden summoned all the members of the Irish 'cabinet' and other influential parliamentary figures to Dublin in early September to discuss the French threat.[362] Troops were moved from the interior of the country out towards the coasts and Robert Cuninghame, commander-in-chief, provided detailed plans for the defence of Ireland's coasts.[363] General Dalrymple prepared a report which identified Bantry Bay as the most likely target of the French and he recommended the establishment of a camp between Cork and Bantry to 'check the impetuosity of their march'.[364] The yeomanry was established at the end of October 1796 and by December there were almost

[361] Dundas, 'Notes on a possible invasion', 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0172.
[362] Camden to Shannon, 7 September 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0175/7.
[363] Cuninghame to Elliot, 16 August 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0160/2.
[364] Dalrymple to Camden, [n.d. late 1796?], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0163/6/3.

20,000 men enrolled in over 300 corps.[365] Early December saw Dublin prepare for an attack and 20,000 troops were made available to repulse any attempted invasion. These arrangements were made even though it was still officially held that a French invasion was 'not practicable in the present situation' and the Irish government ostensibly placed their faith in Vice-Admiral Colpoys and his 23 ships that were to defend the Irish coast.[366] Camden was dissatisfied with the military arrangements complaining that:

> this country is so unused to vigorous preparation, the mode of life is so unsuited to it you cannot conceive the difficulty I have found to put the country into the state in which it is, and it is by no means in the state of preparation I could wish it.[367]

Under the constitution of 1782 Ireland was free to establish its own navy. Possible in theory, it was never practicable; instead the Irish government contributed towards the maintenance of the British navy.[368] For this contribution Ireland received scant protection in the 1790s. The Irish viceroy had no control over the actions of navy. As lord lieutenant he was 'commander and captain general of the army' but he had no such role with regard to the navy. The ships dispatched to ensure Ireland's security reported to the admiralty office and ultimately to the first lord of the admiralty, Lord Spencer and he, if he wished, would then contact the lord lieutenant. Such a circuitous method of communication would cause problems in 1796 and early 1797.

The Channel fleet was responsible for securing the Irish coastline. At the close of 1796 this fleet was divided into three parts. The most significant section of the fleet patrolled off the west coast of France, under the command of Admiral Colpoys. Lieutenant Edward Pellew, with a small force of frigates,

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[365] Bartlett, 'Defence, Counter-Insurgency and Rebellion' in *A Military History of Ireland,* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 266-7. The yeomanry were established in large part to provide additional troops for use in Ireland, given that many of the regular army had been dispatched to fight on continental Europe. Camden was initially reluctant to approve such a force fearing that they might pose the same problems as the volunteers had done in the 1780s. However he was persuaded by his Irish advisors that the yeomanry was necessary and the force was established under strict governmental control in late October 1796. See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of the yeomanry.

[366] George Knox to DeVesci, about 5 December 1796, N.L.I. DeVesci letters, P6799.

[367] Camden to Bathurst, 3 December 1796, in *Bathurst Correspondence,* p. 21.

[368] Malcomson, *John Foster,* p. 394.

closely observed approaches to Brest. A small squadron, commanded by Vice-Admiral Kingsmill was based at Cork. This squadron consisted of one ship of the line, *Polyphemus*, and five frigates.[369] The squadron was intended primarily to ensure the security of trading ships as they passed through Irish water. It appears that it fulfilled this function adequately; indeed Sergeant Adair, stationed in Cork, praised Kingsmill, commenting:

> He [Kingsmill] is a man of great worth and honour, and I have the satisfaction of finding that the merchants both of Dublin and this place [Cork] are extremely satisfied with his conduct as Naval Commander upon this station, the trade of Ireland having at no period in any war been better protected than by the squadron that have from time to time been under his command.[370]

Kingsmill's ships may have been successful at protecting trading ships but his squadron was poorly equipped to defend Ireland from any attack by the French.

An invasion attempt was anticipated but the atrocious weather during December 1796 led many to conclude that although a French fleet had been seen leaving Brest on 16 December there was no possibility that it could be headed for Ireland. Indeed, one communication with the admiralty maintained that 'no ship on the 21 [December] 30 leagues west of Scilly could have reached any part of Ireland with the violent gales we encountered'.[371] Many in the British navy concluded that it was almost impossible 'that any attempt could be made upon either England or Ireland with an army so small and a fleet equal to only one of our detachments'.[372] The presence of a French fleet off Bantry, however, illustrated the folly of such complacency.[373] (see Figure 1)

The first sighting of a fleet of ships outside Bantry Bay was on the morning of 21 December. Decisive action was vital but failed to materialise.

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[369] Bradley, *Ireland in the Days of Napoleon and Wolfe Tone,* p. 57.
[370] Adair to Portland, 29 August 1795, in *Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 530n.
[371] Henry Warne, (*Adamant* at Sea), to Nepean, [December] 1796, B.L. Bridport Papers, Add Ms 36197/32.
[372] Pellew to Nepean, 20 December 1796, in Jones, *An Invasion that Failed,* p. 183n.
[373] Between 21 and 30 December the civil and military authorities received a number of reports detailing sightings of the French fleet. These varied in accuracy. The number of French ships ranged from 16 to 73, while the estimated number of French soldiers on board varied from 12,000 to 80,000. For more detail on this see Figure 1.

Accurate information was slow to filter through; as late as 23 December Richard White, captain of the Bantry yeomanry and owner of one of the largest estates in the district, writing to Kingsmill, commented that he had 'not learnt what fleet they are, whether friends or enemies'.[374] The following day, Lord Carhampton, commander-in-chief since the end of September, was still '...by no means certain that the Fleet reported to be off Bantry is that of the Enemy' and was loath to create an alarm that might not be well founded.[375] Information arriving from the Admiralty Office maintained that they could not 'conceive that the enemy has any intention of visiting Ireland at this season of the year'.[376] Ironically the information from the Admiralty was sent after the French had already arrived at Bantry Bay. By 28 December, a full week after the French fleet had reached Bantry Bay, Dublin Castle and the military command were finally convinced that the fleet off Bantry Bay was indeed hostile. Those in London were even slower to reach this conclusion. It was not until New Year's Day that George III felt confident enough to write to Spencer observing 'The intelligence I have now before me...plainly shows that Ireland is the object of the French expedition'.[377]

The army in Ireland was ill-prepared to deal with an invasion. The yeomanry had only recently been established and although up to 20,000 had volunteered to join only about 9,000 were armed and available for action by December.[378] Much of the north of Ireland was in a disturbed state and though some troops were immediately ordered to march south, it was necessary to leave behind 'one or two general officers to keep in awe with an Iron Hand such of the ill disposed inhabitants of the North who may presume to take advantage of the Enemy's attack in the south'.[379] General Dalrymple saw little prospect of

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[374] Richard Wright to Kingsmill, 23 December 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/65/201; Major John Brown, Cork to Camden, 23 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/2.
[375] Carhampton, (Royal Hospital) to [General Lake/Brig Gen Knox?], 24 December 1796, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, Ms 56/3.
[376] Nepean, (Admiralty Office) to Pelham, 21 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0189/12/1.
[377] George III to Spencer, 1 January 1797, in *Correspondence of George III*, ii, p. 530.
[378] Portland to George III, 1 January 1797, in ibid, ii, p. 531.
[379] Carhampton, (Royal Hospital) to [General Lake/Brig Gen Knox?], 24 December 1796, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, Ms 56/3.

success asserting that 'our numbers will probably fall so short of those of the enemy, that a diversion is all to be expected.'[380] Clare agreed that the Cork area was poorly defended estimating that there was not more than six pieces of artillery in the region and that there was 'no depot of artillery, stores or camp equipage nearer than Dublin'. [381] General Nugent claimed there were only 1,800 men at Bandon prepared to defend Cork. Other information maintained that there was only 400 infantry and one or two cavalry at Bantry by 31 December.[382] Others were not so pessimistic, though these tended to be men not directly connected with the military campaign. John Lees claimed that the troops from the Cork area numbered upwards of 4,000 and within days Lees anticipated 20,000 troops in the area.[383] It was reckoned by Dublin Castle that there were over 9,000 troops in the neighbourhood of Cork on 26 December and within three or four days it was hoped to increase this number to 12-14,000.[384]

By 27 December the troops which had been instructed to proceed to Cork were ordered to halt their march. It was now thought that the French might not land at Bantry, instead they might attempt to use the river Shannon as a gateway to the interior of the country. The dreadful weather was a decisive factor in the decision to halt the troops. There were severe snow falls and the troops were obliged, in many instances, to cut their way through heavy snowdrifts as they made slow progress towards Cork. Dalrymple claimed that he had never known 'so severe weather in Europe' while the *Times* of 28 December 1796 recorded temperatures in England on Christmas Day were 35° below freezing.[385] This change of military strategy meant that General Crosbie was to remain with his

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[380] Dalrymple to Pelham, 23 December 1796, in Bradley, *Ireland in the Days of Napoleon and Wolfe Tone*, p. 61; Stuart Jones, *An Invasion that Failed*, p. 165; Lecky, *Hiistory of Ireland*, iii, p. 531.
[381] Clare to Auckland, 14 January [1797], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/12.
[382] Jones, *An Invasion that Failed*, p. 168.
[383] L[ees], to [Auckland], 26 December 1796, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/12.
[384] Portland to George III, 1 January 1797, in *Correspondence of George III*, ii, pp 531-2.
[385] Dalrymple to Camden, 28 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0163/2; Bryant, *Years of Endurance*, p. 189n.

troops at Kilkenny, General Eustace was to march to Cashel and General Dundas to Roscrea.[386]

Obviously the Irish administration was anxious to ensure that the French would not land. If this proved impossible, then to prevent them securing Dublin was Camden's priority. While Cork was obviously of strategic importance it appeared that Camden and his military advisors were willing to sacrifice that city if it meant that Dublin was protected. After the crisis had passed rumours abounded claiming that the generals had planned to abandon Cork. Cooke noted that 'there is much serious discontent at Cork in finding that it had been determined to abandon that city to its fate and to make a great stand at Kilworth [north county Cork]'.[387] In a further letter Cooke commented on the many difficulties that faced the Irish military command; '...I hear there are great discontents about the idea of abandoning Cork'.[388] Carhampton was refused permission to join the troops marching south as Camden maintained that:

> his Lordship's presence [is]...absolutely necessary at the seat of Government – the state of the rest of the Kingdom were the French to make a diversion, or were the ill disposed to cause an insurrection are subjects upon which the advice of the Commander-in-Chief to the King's representative and minister are absolutely necessary...Dublin must remain the seat of Government. It must be the Head Quarters of the army, the Commander in Chief and the staff of that army should be on the spot for the purpose of advising the Lord Lieutenant in military matters – the garrison should remain strong, as all the confidence which is inspired throughout the Country will be depressed or otherwise by intelligence of the state of the Capital'.[389]

Pelham reported that though news of the French fleet at Bantry had reached Dublin 'this city is perfectly quiet and very loyal, being holiday time the streets are filled with idle people who have shown no disposition to riot'.[390] This calm was not apparent in the Christmas post of 1796. Letters did not include the usual festive greetings, instead they conveyed feelings of despair and a degree of panic; Lady Staples described everyone as 'most dreadfully frightened' and

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[386] Carhampton to Lieutenant Generals Dalrymple, Smith, Eustace, Dundas, 27 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0162/5.
[387] Cooke to [Pelham], 28 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/99.
[388] Cooke to [Pelham], 3 February 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/130.
[389] Camden to Carhampton, 26 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0162/4.
[390] [Pelham] to York, 26 December 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/71.

begged God to 'send better times' while Mrs Brownrigg of Dawson Street, Dublin was 'shocked to death all day by the wicked Irish papers'.[391] Not content to sit idly the gentlewomen of Dublin, including Lady Camden, were busily 'employed stitching flannel jackets for the troops sent down to the south.[392] For the first time the Irish ascendancy were less preoccupied with maintaining their positions within the ruling elite and more focussed on destroying any external threat.

The incompetence of the Irish military command was frequently commented upon. Carhampton, the commander-in-chief, was unpopular provoking many complaints about his behaviour and attitude. With Carhampton commanding the troops, Camden alleged that he had 'experienced...a want of precision and detail in business which is much wanted in this country and...the country feels it also'.[393] More seriously, Edward Cooke observed 'it is unfortunate, but true, that Lord Carhampton had different opinions about the defence of Ireland and the conduct of war from every other officer in the whole army'.[394]

Criticism of the army command was not confined to the commander-in-chief. In January 1797 Camden felt it necessary to report to Portland that 'the gentlemen of the Kingdom now look with an anxious eye to every military preparation and that they are not perfectly satisfied with our present military staff'.[395] The conduct of many of the senior generals provoked exasperated outbursts. Clare wrote to Lord Auckland, exclaiming 'we have an exotic plant at Limerick...Lt-General Edward Smith, a mad Methodist.... We have some other military exotics...Major-General Fawcett, Major-General Eustace (the wits call him useless) and Major-General Amherst'.[396] Edward Cooke dismissed the senior commanders of the Irish army; 'Lord Carhampton, quick, but flighty,

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[391] [Lady Staples] to Lady DeVesci, 29 December 1796, N.L.I. De Vesci letters, P6799; Mrs Brownrigg to Mrs Walker, 27 December 1796, ibid.
[392] L[ees] to [Auckland], 26 December 1796, P.R.O.N.I., Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/12.
[393] Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35.
[394] Cooke to [Pelham], 3 February 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/130.
[395] Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35.
[396] Clare to Auckland, 14 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/12.

unexperienced, unsystematic.... Dalrymple...unwieldy,...incapable of great exertion. Smith, busy, confused, wild, mad'.[397] The Duke of York was also unimpressed by the calibre of the Irish generals. He praised the loyalty of those living in the southern part of Ireland but was 'sorry to hear so bad an account of some of the Generals upon your staff who marched with the troops from Dublin, and I think the L[or]d L[ieutenan]t ought not to spare them. As for General Smith...he is both a fool and a madman'.[398] Camden was certainly in agreement with York about the conduct of Smith; he appealed to Pitt to find Smith another appointment: 'he [Smith] is so flighty that he alarms the country and harasses the troops dreadfully and it is impossible to do business with him – he is going to England by his own desire and I hope he will be kept there'.[399]

There was great divergence of opinion about the conduct and ability of the generals. Clare, in a letter chastising the behaviour of the army, reserved his most bitter invective for the generals but he singled out Dalrymple and Coote for praise.[400] Lord Longueville, who owned an estate near Bandon, did not concur with Clare's assessment, commenting 'A shipload of your generals here are not worth a rap halfpenny. Dalrymple had a fit at Dunmanway, and fell off his chair, the people under his command were sorry he recovered'.[401] Whatever their military ability, it appears that the generals knew how to look after themselves. While the ordinary troops marched in freezing conditions towards Cork the commanders suffered no such deprivation. Edmund Burke writing to William Windham soon after the French expedition to Bantry commented 'No depot of force in any central point, no preconcerted arrangement. Agamemnon [Dalrymple] General in the south with cooks for his aid[e] de camps; and so corpulent, that I am told he cannot go on horseback'.[402] Burke was one of many who commented on Dalrymple's obsession with food. His preparation for meeting the French was carefully noted;

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[397] Cooke to [Auckland], 9 February 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/22.
[398] York to Pelham, 9 January 1797, in Bradley, *Ireland in the Days of Napoleon and Wolfe Tone*, p. 69.
[399] Camden to Pitt, 10 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/7.
[400] Clare to Auckland, 14 January [1797], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/12.
[401] Longueville to Dublin Castle, [January 1797?], in Jones, *An Invasion that Failed*, p. 168.
[402] Burke to Windham, 5 January 1797, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ix, p. 222.

> ...so peculiarly delicate was the general's palate that gentlemen who served under him in the yeomanry ranks, were sometimes obliged to ride express for ten to fifteen miles to procure cayenne pepper for his soup and capers for his favourite sauce... And thus prepared the unwieldy Dalrymple faced to the south to meet the invincible Hoche, the victor of La Vendée, followed by the bravest troops the republic of France could boast'.[403]

Dalrymple was not alone in considering his diet of comparable importance to repulsing the enemy. Many of the military commanders stayed at Seafield Park, Bantry, home of Richard White. One of those stationed there was General Eyre Coote who commanded the camp based at Bandon. Soon after the crisis had passed he wrote to White thanking him for 'all your kindness – venison, hares, woodcocks, scallops, oysters and what not'.[404]

Chaos, disorder and confusion were the hallmarks of the Irish response to the French threat.[405] Communication between the army and Dublin Castle was poor, but that between the admiralty and Dublin Castle was almost non-existent. Indecision marked the military response to the French at Bantry Bay. A factor in this was the lack of co-operation between the military and naval commands. Decisions regarding the movement of troops around Ireland were made largely in ignorance of naval developments. Several reasons contributed to this situation. The relationship between Kingsmill and Dublin Castle was poor; Kingsmill, answerable only to the admiralty, did not report his movements to Dublin. Camden resented this and felt that both as a courtesy and for strategic reasons Kingsmill should keep in contact with the Irish administration. This he neglected to do. When the vice-admiral failed to contact Dublin after the French fleet had been spotted off the Irish coast, an irate Camden wrote to Earl Spencer, then first lord of the admiralty, expressing his irritation with 'that silence which

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[403] Charles Teeling, [January 1797] in Jones, *An Invasion that Failed*, p. 175.
[404] Coote to White, 12 January 1797, in ibid, p. 167.
[405] For example by Christmas Day 1796 according to Camden the army 'was in motion towards the South'. However in letters from Carhampton to Lieutenant Generals Dalrymple and Smith written on Christmas Eve the troops were ordered to halt their progress south and on 27 December after receiving news that the French had not landed Carhampton wrote to Camden requesting the army's march south be halted. Camden to Pitt, 25 December 1796; Carhampton to Lieutenant Generals Dalrymple and Smith, 24 December 1796; Carhampton to Camden, 27 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/3; 0162/5.

Admiral Kingsmill has adopted since the report of the French Fleet being off Bantry Bay – not a single communication from him to Government having taken place'.[406] Camden also wrote reprimanding Kingsmill stating 'it would not only be satisfactory but it is material that we should have the opinion of professional men of high rank upon so important and interesting an occasion'.[407] Under duress Kingsmill did contact Camden and he promised to keep Dublin Castle informed of developments at Bantry.[408]

However, all was not bleak. The yeomanry corps, a force whose very formation Camden had initially opposed, turned out and proved effective and loyal.[409] Beresford spoke highly of the other Irish troops claiming it was 'impossible to do justice to the zeal and spirit shown by the soldiers of the line and militia'. Clare sharply criticised the officers of the militia but found cause to praise the loyalty of the troops.[410] Despite this praise, the behaviour of the military as they marched south towards Cork did elicit complaints. One report maintained that the 'regiments on their march went into every huxter, baker's and victualler's place, public house etc and carried away bacon, butter, bread, drink etc and beat and abused the owners of such if they complained'.[411] Camden was forced to write to Carhampton mentioning 'the names of those generals who had quitted their columns with a desire that they should be particularly acquainted with his Excellency's displeasure'.[412]

There was much praise for the loyalty of those in the area around Bantry Bay. Many commented on the locals' willingness to assist the army in whatever

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[406] Camden to Spencer, 27 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/14; Camden to Portland, private, 16 December 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/62/362.
[407] Camden to Kingsmill, 26 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/13.
[408] Kingsmill, (Cobh) to Camden, 28 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/15.
[409] Pelham to Grenville, 29 December 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/65/225. Camden took great pains to ensure that the yeomanry would not become, in effect, the private army of wealthy and influential men in Ireland. The administration was to keep firm control the yeomanry, appointing officers, distributing guns and ensuring that each local corps was overseen by an army general. Such controls meant that by January 1797 Camden, despite his reservations, felt that 'the great force of the yeomanry is fully competent'. Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35.
[410] Clare to Auckland, 14 January [1797], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/12.
[411] H[iggins] to [Cooke], 4 January 1797, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14.
[412] [Pelham] to York, 4 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/76.

way was possible. Prior to the arrival of the French, Camden believed that '...the country is very generally disaffected to English government and if they see an opportunity of weakening or destroying it, would most readily adopt it'.[413] Yet, contrary to expectations the residents of the Cork area had not risen in rebellion. Lieutenant Pulling praised the locals near Bantry commenting that 'the country people in every part I have travelled...appear to me to be willing to follow the neighbouring gentlemen who will lead them to assist the general cause'.[414] John Wolfe informed Lady DeVesci that 'throughout the south the people appear uniformly loyal or positively hostile to the French'[415] while Camden recognised their display of loyalty as 'more than I should have expected even in England'.[416]

The gentry of the country rallied around Dublin Castle at this time of threat. Lord Charlemont, one of the most vocal opponents of Pitt's government, was prepared to do all he could to prevent the French from a successful invasion of Ireland arguing; 'Would I refuse to bear a hand in stopping a leak in the sinking vessel because I hated the Commander?'[417] As a reaction to the threatened invasion a committee of thirty-two of the leading men in Cork was set up. Membership of the committee included Sir Patrick O'Connor, Sir Samuel Rowland and Dr Moylan, the Catholic Bishop of Cork. They were pleased with the reaction in Cork to the likely invasion:

> It appeared that one soul actuated all, and every arm united in the common cause. Thus this country availed itself of a great occasion to display the fidelity of its disposition and the magnanimity of its principles.[418]

The gentlemen of Cork were not alone in making public declarations of loyalty. In Dublin, the lord mayor and the council issued an address which applauded the 'wise, firm and salutary measures adopted by your Excellency on the late awful

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[413] Camden to Pitt, 6 August 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/2.
[414] Lieutenant George Pulling, (Seafield House) to Kingsmill, 25 December 1796, in Jones, *An Invasion that Failed,* pp 170-1.
[415] J. Wolfe to Lady DeVesci, 29 December 1796, N.L.I. DeVesci letters, P6799
[416] Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35.
[417] Charlemont to Haliday, 12 September 1796, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, p. 283.
[418] 'Report of the City of Cork Committee', 2 February 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/329/79.

crisis of mediated invasion'. Not content with praising Camden the address continued:

> Whether we view the vigilance of government, the spirit and exertions of our standing army...the distinguished loyalty of the people at that alarming period, we feel ourselves equally called upon to congratulate our country and express our warmest sentiments of respect and admiration.[419]

Sermons were read in many churches, both Catholic and Protestant, praising the loyalty of the Irish and 16 February was appointed for 'a solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God for having mercifully preserved the kingdom of Ireland from the late impending horrors of a French invasion'.[420] In the house of commons Pelham, as was usual, delivered a message from Camden in which he strongly praised the regulars, militia and yeomanry, in return the M.P.s applauded Camden for the 'vigilance, activity and firmness of [his] conduct during the recent attempt to invade this kingdom'.[421]

The 'recent attempt to invade this kingdom' had failed; no French troops had landed in Ireland. Of the 45 ships that left France only 16 managed to enter Bantry Bay. Poor leadership and bad weather conspired to ensure that the invasion attempted was unsuccessful. The *Fraternité,* with Hoche, commander of the invasion force, and Morard de Galles, commander of the fleet, on board, became detached from the rest of the fleet and did not sight the south-west coast of Ireland until 30 December, by which time many of the battered ships of the French fleet had already begun to limp home. Despite the fact that the British navy had failed to intercept the fleet they did not return to French ports as they had departed. Damaged ships and disillusioned sailors and soldiers finally

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[419] 'Address to Camden from the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs and citizens of the City of Dublin on Common Council', 20 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 072.

[420] See for example; *A Pastoral Address to the* Roman *Catholics of the Arch diocese of Dublin, delivered by the Rev* John Thomas Troy *R.C.A.D. in the Chapel of* Francis-Street, *Dublin, on 16 February 1797,* (Dublin 1797); *A Sermon on the Deliverance of the Kingdom of Ireland from the Invasion lately attempted by the French;* preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on January 1, 1797 and in St Peter's on January 3, and preached in the same church January 15, at the request of the Parishioners in Vestry Assembled, and published by their Desire. By the Rev Richard Graves B.D. M.R.I.A., junior Fellow of Trinity College, (Dublin, 1797); A Pastoral Letter to the Catholic Clergy of the United Dioceses of Waterford and Lismore. By the Right Reverend Dr Hussey, (Dublin, 1797).

[421] *Parliamentary Register,* xvi, p. 27; *Dublin Gazette,* 24 January 1797.

straggled home but a number of ships and men did not return. The *Séduisante* was lost as the fleet left Brest. The *Surveillante* was scuttled off Bantry Bay, the *Scévola* and the *Impatiente* were sunk while the *Tortue, Atlante, Ville de l'Orient, Suffrien, Justive, Mutine* and *Allègre* were all captured. The *Droits de l'Homme,* pursued by Edward Pellew, ran aground off the coast of Brittany. Over 1,500 French sailors and soldiers were drowned while a further 2,000 were captured.[422] The French invasion attempt proved humiliating for both sides. For the French, they had met little opposition during their voyage yet they had failed to land a single soldier and had lost a number of ships and men. For the British, the navy they so desperately relied on had been made to look incompetent. Perhaps Camden and his advisors were the only group to take some comfort from the failed French expedition. The external defences of Ireland had been threatened, but not breached, and, internally, the feared rebellion had not materialised.

In Ireland, Camden was gratified by the numerous displays of loyalty but he was not foolish enough to think that these could be relied on. In the north disaffection was widespread; east Down, northern Armagh and the towns of Newry, Armagh and Dungannon had recently been proclaimed under the new insurrection act and thousands of troops were obliged to remain in Ulster while the rest of the army marched south.[423] Had the French landed, the inadequacies of the Irish defence plans would have been quickly exposed. Limerick and Cork were poorly defended and likely to be easily captured; thousands of Irish radicals would have joined with the French and Dublin Castle's control of the island would have been seriously threatened. Some locals were not convinced of the loyalty of those in the Bantry area. Richard Hull, near Crookhaven, begged Richard White to lend him 'arms of any kind...as the inhabitants of the country are the enemies I fear most'.[424] Kingsmill too felt that the locals could not be relied on if another French fleet arrived. He wrote:

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[422] Ships taken, lost or destroyed belonging to the French Fleet', in Edward Morgan, *A Journal of the Movements of the French Fleet in Bantry Bay,* (Cork, 1797); Elliott, *Partners,* pp 113-5; Gough, 'Anatomy of a Failure', pp 16-20.
[423] See also Chapter 5. Camden to Portland, 8 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/7-9.
[424] R.E. Hull, (Leamcon) to White, 23 December 1796, in Jones, *An Invasion that Failed,* p. 174.

> should it happen that the French armament is not met with and totally destroyed by Lord Bridport, it is not improbable that the enemy will take the opportunity to return as notwithstanding the alacrity which was manifested by many people of this country to oppose the threatened invasion – suspicions are entertained that...some of them might have changed sides had the enemy landed in force...[425]

Francis Higgins reported that the Catholic Committee laughed 'at the idea of the administration being so credulous as to believe that the people of the south were attached, asserting that if a landing of the French had taken place...they would have thousands of the peasantry to join!'.[426] Though the loyalty of the south of Ireland was much alluded to it would be naïve to think there was not an element of propaganda in this. The reports detailing the loyal spirit of the south were undoubtedly designed for several purposes. They reassured the terrified Irish Protestant ascendancy and it was hoped that such reports would disillusion the growing number of extreme radicals. The Irish administration were not as complacent as they might have outwardly appeared. When the distribution of troops came up for discussion it was proposed to station 22.5% of the Irish armed force in counties Cork and Kerry, an initiative undoubtedly designed to maintain peace in the countryside as much as it was to deter any future French invasion attempt. (see Figure 3)

IV

In Ireland there was almost complete ignorance regarding the intentions of the admiralty. Initially it was assumed that the Channel fleet would arrive in time to prevent a French landing. General Nugent was convinced that Kingsmill and Lord Bridport were off Bantry and that Admiral Colpoys was 'expected there every hour'.[427] Such expectations were not to be met and on 29 December Beresford complained 'we are dreadfully impatient for Bridport or Colpoys... What can have become of Colpoys?'[428]

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[425] Kingsmill, *Polyphemus*, Cork Harbour to Nepean, 16 January 1797, in ibid, p. 174.
[426] H[iggins] to [Cooke], 18 January 1797, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14.
[427] Nugent, (Hillsborough) to Bentinck, 28 December 1796, P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/21/29.
[428] Beresford to Auckland, 29 December 1796, in *Beresford Correspondence*, ii, p. 145.

The naval response was pathetic. The French remained, unharrassed, in Bantry Bay, except by the weather, for almost a fortnight. Dalrymple complained on 4 January that 'no accounts as yet are received of any British squadron being on the coast'.[429] The French fleet had successfully evaded detection as it crossed from Brest to Bantry. The British naval command had believed that Portugal was the destination of the French Fleet and Colpoys and his blockade squadron were not ordered to pursue the French. Admiral Bridport, in dock at Spithead, took ten days to prepare for departure to Ireland. When he finally sailed, on 3 January, the French had already abandoned all efforts to land.[430] Tone commented in his journal 'I am utterly astonished that we did not see a single English ship of war, going nor coming back'.[431]

What did the Admiralty do? How well informed were they and what was their plan when the fleet they knew for months to be preparing in Brest finally sailed? The small group of frigates positioned just outside the port of Brest, carefully observed French preparations to weigh anchor. It was intended that Pellew would inform Colpoys immediately the French fleet left port. Pellew did witness the French fleet leaving Brest and he did attempt to make contact with Colpoys. Pellew assumed that the French ships were headed for Portugal and he failed to consider Ireland a viable option. Hoche, determined to keep the destination of the French fleet a secret, had confided in very few and had made deliberate efforts to mislead the British fleet by posting proclamations in Portuguese around Brest.[432] Writing from his ship the *Indefatigable* on 17 December, Pellew noted that 41 or 43 ships had left Brest on 16 December and

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[429] Dalrymple to ___, 4 January 1797, in Bradley, *Ireland in the Days of Napoleon and Wolfe Tone*, p. 68.
[430] Edward Pellew, *Indefatigable*, to Evan Nepean, 17 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0189/13/2; Nepean, (Admiralty Office) to Kingsmill, 21 December 1796, C.K.S.Pratt Papers, U840 0189/12/2; 'Narrative of the Proceedings of the Squadron under the respective commands of Vice-Admiral Colpoys and Admiral Lord Bridport', [Admiralty Office?], 12 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/18; Thomas Bartlett, 'The Invasion that Never Was', in Murphy (ed.), *The French are in the Bay*, pp 48-63.
[431] Tone, 1 January 1797, in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone. Memoirs, journals and political writings, compiled and arranged by William T.W. Tone, 1826*, (Dublin, 1998), p. 672.
[432] Elliott, *Partners*, pp 114, 120.

he supposed Lisbon to be the most likely destination of the fleet.[433] Efforts to communicate this information to Colpoys were thwarted by a 'thick and long continued fog'.[434] Colpoys learnt nothing of the French departure until 24 December. By this time the French had been at sea for nine days and although Colpoys had been instructed to inform Kingsmill if the French left Brest and proceeded northward, by 24 December it was impossible to tell which direction the French fleet had taken. Like Pellew, Colpoys concluded that Portugal was the more likely option and so he dispatched a frigate to alert the commanding British officer there. Colpoys decided to remain where he was cruising off the coast of France. The first indication Kingsmill had that an invasion was imminent was the appearance of the French fleet off the south-west coast of Ireland on 21 December. After aimlessly patrolling the seas off France for several days, on New Year's Eve, Colpoys arrived at Spithead with only six of his fleet. The remainder had been scattered by the bad weather and arrived over several days into a number of ports.

Colpoys had not alerted Kingsmill to the fact that a French fleet had left Brest. However, on 21 December Evan Nepean, at the Admiralty, informed Kingsmill that enemy ships had left France and that their destination was unknown. There had been no indication in the information he had received from Pellew that Ireland might be the destination of the fleet, nonetheless he warned Kingsmill to 'be upon your guard in case the enemy should meditate any attempt upon the coast of Ireland'.[435] By the time Kingsmill received Nepean's warning the French were already firmly ensconced in Bantry Bay.

Colpoys and his fleet had been at sea since October. Provisions were low by December, though not as desperate as some reports indicated. It was intended to relieve Colpoys' fleet with one commanded by Admiral Bridport and

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[433] Edward Pellew, *Indefatigable*, to Evan Nepean, 17 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0189/13/2.
[434] 'Narrative of the proceedings of the squadron under the respective commands of Vice Admiral Colpoys and Admiral Lord Bridport', 12 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/18.
[435] Nepean, (Admiralty Office) to Kingsmill, 21 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0189/12/2.

this second squadron had been ordered to prepare itself at Spithead prior to the news of the French leaving Brest. On 22 December this fleet was ordered to leave for Ireland as soon as possible. Bridport's ships were ready to sail on Christmas day and the squadron weighed anchor at 1.00pm.[436] However, two ships, the *Sans Pareil* and the *Prince George* collided causing damage to both. Bridport and the remaining ships were forced to anchor at St Helen's and wait for the damaged vessels to be repaired.[437] By 29 December the squadron was complete but Bridport was still unable to sail, because 'tho' I have gained the ships I have lost the wind'.[438] On 2 January orders were issued to ships at Plymouth that they were to join with Bridport's squadron as it passed by the port and to take their orders from him.[439] A combination of factors, delays in repairing the boats, bad weather and a changing wind meant that Bridport's squadron did not sail until 3 January 1797, although positive information had arrived at the Admiralty on 31 December stating that the French were at Bantry Bay.[440]

Kingsmill did what he could with an inadequate squadron to provide some defence against a French attack. However he was forced to admit that the elements were the most effective defence against a French invasion. Information sent from Cobh on Christmas day indicated that there was little Kingsmill could do but observe and hope that the inclement weather continued to prevent the French fleet from landing. It was reckoned that twenty French ships had anchored far out in Bantry Bay with the rest of the fleet outside the bay and the memorandum ended with a hope that the strong wind would make it impossible for their anchors to hold. The following day Kingsmill wrote to Pelham commenting 'it blew so hard last night that I think there can be scarce a

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[436] [Bridport], *Royal George*, Spithead to Nepean, 24 December 1796, B.L. Bridport Papers, Add Ms 36196/48.
[437] [Bridport], *Royal George*, St Helen's to Nepean, 25 December 1796, B.L. Bridport Papers, Add Ms 36197/50.
[438] [Bridport], *Royal George*, St Helen's to Nepean, 29 December 1796, B.L. Bridport Papers, Add Ms 36017/58.
[439] 'Commissioners for securing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland', 2 January 1797, B.L. Bridport Papers, Add Ms 36197/65.
[440] 'Narrative of the Proceedings of the Squadron under the respective commands of Vice Admiral Colpoys and Admiral Lord Bridport', 12 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/19.

doubt of those ships being driven to sea or perhaps some of them on shore'. He added that the situation had improved slightly because 'Vice-Admiral Sir George Keith Elphinstone is arrived in the *Monarch* with the *Daphne* Frigate'.[441] Hopelessly outnumbered Kingsmill's squadron could do little but monitor the situation and report as accurately as possible the movements of the French ships.

V

The French had not landed, no rebellion had taken place, the yeomanry proved loyal – it appeared that the crisis had passed and that Dublin Castle and the Irish parliament could return to the day-to-day running of the country. This did not happen. Camden knew it was only good fortune that had saved the country from the ravages of war and rebellion. The events of December 1796 highlighted the precariousness of Camden's position. He was becoming increasingly isolated. Appointed to act for the British government in Ireland his efforts to do so had been continually thwarted by Whitehall's lack of support. There was little jubilation in Ireland when it became apparent that the French had been forced to return to France, rather there was disillusionment with the manner in which the Irish government had been ignored by the admiralty, disregarded by the British army and treated with disdain by Whitehall. Francis Higgins wrote to Cooke vividly articulating the disillusionment and despondency felt by Irish loyalists:

> You...have never heard anything equal to the outcry made against the English government for want of the protection of a fleet;...the enemy on the shores; no assistance given, though...the country might be overrun by the French. The citizens who are strongly attached to the government speak of the neglect in this way "that Ireland is to look to itself, the hour of danger has come and neither assistance nor relief from an English fleet have been received".[442]

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[441] Note, (Cove [sic]), 25 December [1796]; Kingsmill to Pelham, (Cove [sic]), 26 December 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers Add Ms 33102/426; /438.
[442] H[iggins] to 'Dear Sir' [Cooke], 8 January 1797, N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14.

Camden too resented the relaxed attitude of the British, their absolute confidence in a fleet that was incapable of preventing the French arriving at Ireland.[443] The lord lieutenant was incensed by the fact that only a 'Protestant wind' had saved Ireland from the devastation of a French invasion; Portland, in a letter to the king, referred to the 'peculiar protection of the Divine Providence which still continues to guard that land from the spoiling hand of the invader'.[444]

Many in Ireland demanded an explanation for the failure of the admiralty to respond adequately to the recent crisis. Cooke commented 'I should hope the Admiralty have a good statement for us to make to our friends and foes. At present we are nonplussed by both. The French now a month from Brest, and no British ship near them'.[445] Around Dublin it was reported that 'there is a murmur against the Admiralty for suffering a French fleet to ride in the Irish ports unmolested for three weeks'.[446] There was some dissent in the Irish house of commons. George Ponsonby moved to censure ministers for failing to ensure the safety of the country when it was threatened by the French fleet. He argued that though the administration had known for three months that 'a descent was projected by the enemy they had neither provided troops, magazines nor artillery'.[447] Grattan spoke in support of Ponsonby. He praised the efforts of the military in Ireland, but severely castigated the British administration for 'their shameful and criminal neglect of the defence of Ireland which left the safety of this, the best limb of the British Empire to the accident of the wind or the hazard of the storm'.[448]

The chancellor, Clare, did not hesitate to lay the blame for the appalling military situation in Ireland firmly at Whitehall's feet. While he acknowledged the loyalty of the yeomanry and certain individuals, he argued that that same

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[443] 'Narrative of the Proceedings of the Squadron under the respective commands of Vice-Admiral Colpoys and Admiral Lord Bridport', [Admiralty Office?], 12 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/18.
[444] Portland to George III, 7 January 1797, in *Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 533.
[445] Cooke to [Auckland], 7 January [1797], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/17.
[446] Cooke to [Auckland], 10 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/19.
[447] George Ponsonby, 27 February 1797, in *Speeches of Henry Grattan,* p. 289.
[448] 17 January 1797, *Parliamentary Register,* xvi, p. 160.

could not be said for the north of Ireland where the people 'betray the strongest symptoms of insurrection'. He pleaded for adequate support from Britain arguing:

> when Holland was invaded, you sent her immediate assistance; when Portugal was threatened, you sent her assistance. Surely, therefore, we have some right to expect not to be forgotten when we raised twenty thousand troops of the line for our own defence.[449]

Clare's argument was reiterated at Westminster where the Marquis of Lansdowne noted:

> In Ireland it had been a prejudice to represent the government of this country as careless of the sister kingdom. At present a new discontent had arisen; and they who had formerly taken the part of the government, were now forced to acknowledge that Ireland had been neglected. Applications had been made from thence for protection; and it must be confessed that that country had been abandoned by England. Ministers had pledged themselves to keep a great land force in Ireland which they had withdrawn.[450]

The increasing power of the Irish 'cabinet' was apparent from the tone of Camden's letters. He felt obliged to furnish its members with evidence from the British government that Britain was doing her best to prevent Ireland from invasion:

> I am sorry to say that a great degree of discontent prevails here and an impression even among the best friends of England that the country has not had all the attention of the fleet which was to be expected... I require some documents to show the principle persons of this country why it was not expected in England at the time it happened.[451]

Pitt was not worried by Dublin's anxiety, curtly observing that 'the explanation of Colpoys being obliged to return when he did, and of Lord Bridport's being unable to sail sooner, is quite satisfactory'.[452] The Admiralty Office published a report soon after the French arrived at Bantry Bay excusing their mistakes. Camden was not convinced commenting to Spencer:

> I am yet to learn what induced the minister to think the expedition was designed for Portugal, for I confess myself not to have received any information which seems to give

[449] Clare to Auckland, 2 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I., Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/11.
[450] 16 March 1797, *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii.
[451] Camden to Pitt, private, 10 January 1797, C.K.S.U840 0156A/7.
[452] Pitt to [Auckland], 8 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/18.

> ground to dispute the detailed and constant intelligence which had been communicated to me of the preparations being meant for Ireland.[453]

Camden's irritation with the British government was shared by some in England. The events of December 1796 provoked Edmund Burke to complain that 'while the Jacobin fleet was at anchor in Bantry Bay, Lord Bridport was at Portsmouth, and Colpoys, after going God knows where, returns himself into harbour. The French leave Bantry on the 27th of December, and Lord Bridport sails from Portsmouth to look for them on the 3rd of this month... So much for intelligence, foresight and precaution'.[454] William Windham, secretary at war, responded privately to Burke's letter commenting:

> I perfectly agree with you in every sentiment respecting the danger, to which Ireland has been exposed, and the total want of judgement and foresight, in providing anything like an adequate defence...my own firm persuasion is, that if the weather had not been such as to disperse their fleet, and prevent their landing, there was no force in that quarter...that would have prevented General Hoche...from getting to Cork.[455]

Windham did not concede these points when he addressed one of the several parliamentary debates that occurred in the aftermath of the attempted French invasion. In the British house of commons Whitbread referred to the incompetence of the Admiralty, claiming that only God prevented the French from successfully invading Ireland. Dundas refuted such an argument commenting:

> [it has been] stated that we were obliged to the elements for the dispersion of the enemy's fleet upon the Irish coast. It is so far true that we were obliged to the elements, but on the other hand to the elements and to the elements only, the French have been indebted for every part of that expedition.[456]

Grey was unimpressed with Dundas' speech remarking '[Dundas] seems to think the French expedition a fortunate one, as it had proved the loyalty of that part of Ireland'.[457] Charles James Fox also rose to speak acerbically, observing:

> The North he [Windham] says wants nothing and is disloyal. The South wants everything and is still loyal. Here I suppose the gentleman means to put this paradox,

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[453] Camden to Spencer, [early 1797], in Stuart Jones, *An Invasion that Failed,* p. 125.
[454] Burke to Windham, 5 January 1797, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* ix, p. 223.
[455] Windham to Burke, 6 January 1797, in ibid, ix, p. 224.
[456] 3 March 1797, *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii.
[457] Ibid.

> and say, that we had better place all Ireland and England in the same state in which the Catholics in the South of Ireland are and that then we may expect universal loyalty.[458]

The issue was also raised in the British house of lords. Lord Albemarle wanted to know why, when ministers must have known that Ireland was a target for the French, there was no fleet stationed off the Irish coast. Spencer rose to defend the admiralty claiming that though they had secret service intelligence which indicated that Ireland might be the focus of a French invasion, it was not always possible to believe all the information obtained with the use of secret service money. The Earl of Carlisle refuted this arguing that 'the enemy's design of invasion was known before October: it was announced in the speech from the throne; and it was publicly said by ministers that the attempt was pointed against Ireland'. He claimed that the inaction of the admiralty cost them dearly. Had decisive action been taken 'then we should not have seen that which had made every man in the country hang his head and which had raised that distrust which had gone abroad of the conduct of our naval affairs'. Spencer took offence at the criticism of the admiralty and claimed that:

> ever since he had been in office, he had made the utmost exertions he should unremittingly contrive: but he pretended only to mortal powers and whenever any man should feel himself confident enough to undertake to contend against winds and waves to govern the elements, and command the tides and seasons he certainly would not have the arrogance to hold his situation one moment longer.[459]

Criticism was levelled at the admiralty but little action was taken to penalise those responsible for mistakes. Indeed Bridport wrote to Spencer in February 1797 requesting promotions for men who had been involved in the attempt to catch the retreating French fleet.[460] There was much tension evident in the private exchanges between Dublin Castle and Whitehall after the Bantry Bay debacle. However, this was not given a public airing. The *London Gazette* published a letter which offered a more positive impression and certainly

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[458] Ibid.
[459] 16 March 1797, *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii.
[460] Bridport to Spencer, 3 February 1797, B.L. Bridport Papers, Add Ms 36197/68.

implied that all was well between London and Dublin. In this letter Camden wrote to Pitt:

> I have the satisfaction to reflect that the best spirit was exhibited by His Majesty's regular and military forces; and I have every reason to believe that, if a landing had taken place, they would have displayed the utmost fidelity... At the time the army was ordered to march, the weather was extremely severe...the roads which in parts had been rendered impassable by the snow were cleared by the peasantry...[461]

Publicly the relationship between the administrations in London and Dublin had not been damaged by the events of the previous months. George III declared himself 'pleased to express the entire satisfaction he feels in the conduct of those to whom His Majesty has entrusted the government of Ireland'.[462] Government sponsored newspapers carried reports and published letters which endorsed the impression that all was well between the administrations.[463] Privately the relationship was strained. Camden had been left to deal with a potentially disastrous situation without adequate money or manpower. He had sought assistance and it had been refused, he had warned Whitehall of the likelihood of invasion and had been ignored. In the aftermath of the attempted invasion, the home secretary, Portland, believed that the French failure to land and their return to France was an end to the crisis. He attached little significance to the fact that the French fleet had evaded detection and that military preparations for an invasion were inadequate in Ireland.[464] Camden had, up until the winter of 1796, relied heavily on direction from Whitehall. From 1797 his good relationship with his advisors in London was tempered by mistrust and suspicion and he began to look more closely to individuals within Ireland when seeking advice and reassurance.

How then did the appearance of a French fleet outside Bantry Bay affect the relationship between the Irish administration and the British government? The crisis marked a significant turning point in Anglo-Irish relations. The

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[461] Bradley, *Ireland in the Days of Napoleon and Wolfe Tone*, pp 78-9; Camden to Pitt, 10 January 1797, in *London Gazette*, 17 January 1797.
[462] Pitt to Lord Keith, 18 February 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2076.
[463] See, for example, *London Gazette*, 3, 10 January 1797; *Dublin Gazette*, 10, 14, 19, 24 January 1797.
[464] Portland to George III, 1 January 1797, in *Correspondence of George III*, ii, p. 532.

arrival of the French ships proved beyond doubt that the French navy could rival the British. It also demonstrated that the French were serious about invading Ireland and the inadequate military response in Ireland confirmed fears that the security of Ireland could not be guaranteed should an invading force land. The presence of a French fleet off the Irish coast forced a re-evaluation of Ireland's importance to Britain. The Prince of Wales was certain that 'the value and importance of Ireland cannot be adequately estimated or sufficiently prized, and its loss or separation would be the most mortal blow that this kingdom could receive' and he claimed that:

> the French by an enterprise unequalled in their history, have gained advantages that would more than compensate the loss of the whole expedition.... They have destroyed the security we enjoyed from our insular position; they have proved by an experiment that our coasts may be attempted with impunity by an inferior fleet and have destroyed a prepossession that had grown venerable by age...that they could not attempt invasion without having beat our own fleet and being masters at sea.[465]

Many agreed. The French expedition to Bantry Bay highlighted the inadequacies of both the British navy and the army in Ireland. Opprobrium was heaped on the heads of the generals and admirals alike but while this was an obvious result of the attempted French descent it was far from the most serious.

VI

While the political and military repercussions of the events of December 1796 have frequently been discussed, the financial impact of Bantry Bay and its influence on the Anglo-Irish relationship are more important.[466] The appearance of the French off Bantry Bay caused an immediate and severe financial crisis. Dundas had warned of this possibility in late 1796. In his 'Notes on a Possible Invasion' he had considered 'its [a French invasion] accomplishment is certainly the short road to their favourite object, the annihilation of the commerce, the

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[465] The Prince of Wales to Pitt, 8 February 1796, in *Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales,* iii, p. 313.

[466] See, for example, Froude, *The English in Ireland* iii, pp 156-219; Lecky, *History of Ireland,* iii, pp 519-48; Bradley, *Ireland in the Days of Napoleon and Wolfe Tone*; Stuart Jones, *An Invasion that Failed*; Elliott, *Partners in Revolution,* Chapter 4; idem, *Wolfe Tone,* Chapters 22-4; Murphy (ed.) *The French are in the Bay.*

navy, the power of Great Britain'[467] The threatened invasion certainly struck at commerce both in Ireland and in Britain. Throughout 1796 the Irish exchequer experienced financial difficulties but it had not been necessary to seek substantial loans from Britain The Irish exchequer had a surplus of £460,000 at the end of 1795 but this was steadily drained as 1796 progressed. Loans were raised within Ireland but subscribers to the loans regularly found themselves unable to pay.[468] There had been a vote of credit in February 1796 for £300,000 and another in October 1796 for £500,000 yet this was insufficient.[469] By the close of December 1796 the Bank of Ireland declared it had less than £20,000 at its disposal and on Christmas eve Camden demanded £50,000 as an immediate loan.[470] The appearance of the French off Bantry exacerbated the problems of the troubled Irish treasury. Cooke summed up the financial crisis succinctly when he wrote:

> Our treasury is in much distress from the deficiency of specie in the Bank. The Bank had undertaken the money operations of the year, being at the beginning of it high in cash – the Irish loans payable in England being at a lower price than similar funds payable here drained near 1,000,000 of our money. The North took away 400,000 guineas, and the terror of invasion set the misers and old women of both sexes to make up their purses. At a moment of great demand the Bank let out the secret that they were drained. Great embarrassment has followed and continues.[471]

Pitt believed naïvely that a small loan combined with the failure of the French to land would alleviate any 'fears of a run on the bank'.[472] This proved to be ill-founded. Indeed, David La Touche, one of the governors of the Bank of Ireland, had warned Camden that there was every 'probability of a run on the bank when the holidays were over'.[473] One businessman echoed the feelings of many when he stated that the threatened French invasion had caused 'the stoppage of the banks, the annihilation of all credit, trade and commerce, in short

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[467] Dundas, 'Notes on a Possible Invasion', 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers U840 0172.
[468] Memo approved by Mr Dick, 14 December 1796, N.A.I. Official Papers 21/1.
[469] Note by Pelham on votes of credit, N.A.I. Official Papers 21/4.
[470] Camden to Pitt, 30 December 1796; Camden to Pitt, 24 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/6; /3.
[471] Cooke to Lord ___, 26 January 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2049.
[472] Pitt to Camden, 2 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0153/11.
[473] Camden to Pitt, 27 December 1796, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/110.

I might call it a general bankruptcy'.[474] Camden, anxious to prevent a complete collapse of the economy, petitioned the prime minister 'to pay such a sum to the Bank as shall enable them to enliven Trade, that it may not appear to the French that their appearance off the coast has had so serious an effect as it really has produced'.[475]

Within days of the appearance of the French off the Irish coast, the chancellor of the exchequer, John Parnell, travelled to London in the hope of securing a loan of one million pounds.[476] Camden also hoped that bills drawn by the Irish government for £57,000 would be paid in specie by the paymaster general of England.[477] Parnell met with little positive response; of the one million requested Pitt agreed to send a paltry £50,000.[478] This money, though promised, took almost two months to arrive. Pitt blamed the Bank of England both for the small amount and the delay in dispatching the money to Ireland claiming 'it was necessary to consult with the bank about every advance of money as they were extremely jealous about specie going out of the country'.[479]

Parnell's trip to London had resulted in a minor loan being secured by the Irish administration, but this was far from sufficient and on 10 January Camden indicated that a further loan of two million pounds was required by the Irish treasury and Parnell was again dispatched to London.[480] Pelham was in London at this time and Foster, with little faith in Parnell's ability to secure a loan, commented, 'Our expectation of relief therefore rests solely on your [Pelham's] exertions in England'[481] Camden considered Foster had a 'very extensive and correct knowledge' regarding matters that concerned Irish commerce and revenue and he concurred with Foster's assessment of Parnell's

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[474] John Colclough, (Tintern) to Caeser Colclough, Neufchatel, 1 May 1797, P.R.O.N.I. McPeake Papers, T.3048/C/18.
[475] Camden to Pitt, 31 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/8.
[476] Camden to Pitt, 29 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/5.
[477] Camden to Pitt, 6 January 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/118.
[478] Portland to George III, 1 January 1797, in *Correspondence of George III,* ii, p. 532; Pitt to Camden, 2 January, ibid, p. 532n.
[479] Pelham to Camden, 30 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/107.
[480] Camden to Pitt, 10 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers. U840 0156A/7.
[481] Foster to Pelham, 1 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers. U840 0190/2.

abilities, observing, 'it is useless to observe upon the little skill or foresight of the chancellor of the exchequer.'[482] Camden wrote wearily to Pitt at the end of February 1797 telling him that £630,000 was required by 25 March in order to pay the troops. Otherwise the consequences would be dire; 'the salvation of this country...completely turns upon this money being sent'.[483] By the second week of March there was still no reply. In dismay Camden wrote insisting upon the 'very urgent necessity' of financial assistance from Britain.[484] On 13 March Camden sent his trusted under-secretary, Edward Cooke, to London to plead the case of Ireland.[485] Cooke met with Pitt who promised to do his best to 'accelerate a loan'.[486] Pitt hoped a loan would be granted within three weeks but did not think it would be provided in cash.[487] The loan promised was not forthcoming until May. Unless this money arrived promptly Camden feared that 'a mutiny [would] probably be the consequence'.[488] For the most part Pitt offered Camden little more than words of comfort; beset by his own difficulties, Ireland, once again, was not a priority for the prime minister.[489]

The financial situation continued to degenerate and by April 1797 the Bank of Ireland's reserves had dwindled to £8,000; with this news all hope of Ireland recovering from this crisis without significant British assistance evaporated.[490] On 27 April the king noted that two further loans of £1,500,000 were to be made to Ireland.[491] By 2 May the prime minister was in a position to confirm to Camden that a loan of £1,500,000 had been agreed on the understanding that an act be proposed in the Irish parliament pledging the punctual repayment of the loan.[492] Despite these injections of capital, by June the Irish finances had once again reached crisis point. Finally, £100,000 was to

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[482] Camden to Pitt, [17?] June 1798, in Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon,* pp 335-8.
[483] Camden to Pitt, 23 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers. U840 0156A/11.
[484] Camden to Pitt, private, 9 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/12.
[485] Camden to Pitt, 13 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/13.
[486] Cooke to Camden, 20 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers. U840 0153/16.
[487] Cooke to Camden, 22 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0153/17.
[488] Camden to Pitt, 6 May 1797, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence 886/185.
[489] Pitt to Camden, 23 March 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers. 30/8/325/1.
[490] Camden to Pitt, 25 April 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2141.
[491] GR [George III], Queens House, 27 April 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2144.
[492] Pitt to Camden, 2 May 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2149.

be sent to Dublin which would alleviate though not solve the financial problems. Less than three weeks later, in July, Camden was hoping for another £500,000 to be sent to Ireland.[493] Between January and July 1797 Camden had requested over £4,230,000 to be dispatched to Ireland in order to avoid the complete collapse of the economy and ensure the continued pay of the military. By July, he had been promised just over £1,500,000, of which only a small proportion of that had arrived in Dublin. This was hardly surprising given the difficulties Britain was facing in the war against France. The first coalition had collapsed and Britain's last remaining ally, Austria, was close to signing a peace treaty with the French. The British cabinet had split over pursing peace negotiations with France but in July, John Harris, Lord Malmesbury, went to Lille to begin preliminary peace negotiations with the French.[494]

When money did arrive in Ireland there were further difficulties to surmount. In general, loans from Britain were given in the form of Bank of England notes. On receipt of British loans the these notes were lodged with the Bank of Ireland and the bank issued Irish bank notes. This created difficulties, especially after Britain came off the gold standard in the spring of 1797, as English bank notes became unacceptable to the Bank of Ireland. The most serious consequence of this would be an inability to pay the army. Parnell's suggested remedy for this was to persuade the British government 'to pay a proportion of gold along with English notes to induce them to give credit for the joint sums'.[495] Camden wrote to Pitt complaining about the 'very distressed situation with respect to money in which we are involved and the disgrace to which this Gov[ernmen]t will be subject' unless gold was dispatched from

[493] Camden to Pitt, 19 May 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/175.
[494] Norman Hampson, *Perfidy of Albion*, (London, 1998), pp 160-1. Malmesbury had been the envoy of the British government at the failed peace negotiations which took place in Paris in the autumn and winter of 1796. Jupp, *Grenville*, pp 198-9.
[495] Parnell to Camden, 4 July 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2185.

Britain.[496] Irish demands for specie were regularly refused as the Bank of England was unwilling to part with its depleted cash reserves.[497]

Camden used the need to maintain payments to the army as justification for his constant requests for substantial loans. He argued that without Ireland safeguarded from attack, then the safety of Britain would be compromised:

> I must beg you not to consider me as infected with Irish prejudice when I say that as Ireland is now the advanced post thro' which England is to be attacked, it is both becoming and politic in England to enable her to make such exertions as can alone render her situation tolerably secure.[498]

Camden's reference to being 'infected with Irish prejudice' indicated a considerable alteration in his political views. Referring to Irish politics in 1793 Camden had considered himself 'a very prejudiced Englishman.'[499] By 1797 it seemed that his priorities had altered. Pitt appeared unwilling to consider the Irish situation and Camden was reduced to sending regular missives to London detailing the detrimental impact the financial crisis had on the military.[500] He reiterated his claim that Ireland was targeted by the French in order to use her as a base for further attacks on Britain and therefore it was up to Britain to provide naval support and armed support on the coast and believed it 'our joint duty to contribute as much as possible to its defence'.[501] Camden was clear in his letters to Pitt that the attempted French invasion had brought on the financial crisis in Ireland. This suited his ends, it allowed Camden to focus on the necessity of having enough money to pay the troops. By playing on the fear of a second invasion attempt Camden obtained more money than might otherwise have been

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[496] Camden to Pitt, 5 July 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2185.
[497] See for example: Pelham to Camden, 30 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/107; Cooke to Camden, 17 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0153/13; Cooke to Pelham, 20 March 1797, C.K.S.U840 0153/15; Dalrymple, (Cork) to Pelham, 30 March 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/305; Parnell to Camden, 5 July 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2185; George Rose, (Old Palace Yard) to Pelham, 8 July 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 3314/349; George Rose to Pelham, 12 July [1797], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/360.
[498] Camden to Pitt, private, 31 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/8.
[499] Camden to Castlereagh, 4 February 1793, in *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, i, p. 157.
[500] See for example Camden to Pitt, 9 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/9; Camden to Pitt, 10 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/10; Camden to Pitt, 23 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/11.
[501] Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35.

the case. The appearance of a French fleet off Bantry certainly exacerbated the financial difficulties of the Irish exchequer but there is undoubtedly much truth in John Foster's analysis:

> If you ask me, whence our difficulties arise, I have no hesitation in saying, from the last three year's practice of borrowing without providing sufficient taxes and from repealing those restrictions in the law establishing the Bank of Ireland, which prohibited it from lending money to government except on funds.[502]

Securing a loan from Britain was one problem, obtaining the money in specie was another. Christmas cheer was far from Pelham's mind when he wrote to Pitt on 25 December informing him that as the army had been ordered to march south 'a command of cash' was absolutely necessary.[503] On 29 December Pelham informed Dalrymple that '5,000 g[uineas] were sent to...Cork...for the use of the army; 5,000 g[uineas] will be sent tonight for the same purpose... It is necessary that I should recommend it to you in the strongest manner to use notes and bills whenever it shall appear that the people of the country do not object to it'.[504] A further 3,000 guineas were dispatched to Dalrymple on 3 January accompanied by a plea from Pelham that Dalrymple would use the specie as economically as possible.[505] Despite such appeals it proved impossible to keep sufficient specie in circulation:

> ...the frequent demands for money have drained [the] purse... The Cork bankers remain in the same state of insolvency as before; and either there is no specie or the credit of all paper is so sunk that nothing can be done on the smallest scale here at present.[506]

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[502] Foster to Pelham, 1 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190/2. The act establishing the Bank of Ireland had stated that the Bank should not lend money to the Crown without the consent of parliament. If this was done the sanction provided for was fixed at three times the sum involved. However, an act passed in 1793 removed this penalty and the administration borrowed increasing amounts of money from the bank which contributed to the severe financial crisis of the late 1790s. F. G. Hall, *The Bank of Ireland 1783-1946,* (Dublin and Oxford, 1949), p. 36.

[503] Pelham to Pitt, 25 December 1796, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/108.

[504] Pelham to Dalrymple, 29 December 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/452.

[505] Pelham to Dalrymple, 31 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/21. Pelham does not state overtly what form the guineas sent to Cork took. However, it seems apparent from reading the letters that the 13,000 guineas mentioned above were sent in coin. All other monies dispatched appear to have been in the from of notes or bills of credit.

[506] Dalrymple to Pelham, 18 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/77.

Apart from ensuring that the troops received their pay, other efforts were made to ease the hardship suffered by an army on the move in atrocious weather. Dalrymple informed Pelham that 'the troops are well fed, plenty of good beef and potatoes daily...; some places they receive...a glass of spirits'.[507]

It appears that in most cases the army coped with the reduced amount of specie in circulation. Pelham offered advice on how this could be best dealt with. He recommended, '...If an agreement should be made with any particular butcher or baker to supply a regiment...with provisions, they might be paid in paper and the specie necessary for paying the soldiers...would be very trifling'.[508] It seems that this worked well and in most case bank notes were deemed acceptable currency but there were problems with large denominations. Coote reported to Pelham;

> I have made enquiry into the facility of passing national bank notes... Their validity is never questioned but the poor people in the markets, from whom our people buy meat, potatoes and oats in small quantities have not the balance to give between the amount of the note and the commodity purchased. They would also prefer Cork bank notes to national...[509]

The geographic isolation of some regiments also made it difficult to dispose of bank notes and in such instances it was necessary to pay the troops in scarce specie, thus putting more pressure on the Bank of Ireland's reserves. Those in Cork city had '...not found any difficulty in passing the bank notes', while Colonel French of the Galway militia encountered some problems '...as the Galway regiment is scattered in remote quarters where bank notes are with the greatest difficulty negotiated'.[510]

Why did it take so long for Pitt to respond positively to Camden's pleas? He did not simply dismiss Camden's requests for money. Throughout the period when Camden was bombarding Westminster with information about a possible

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[507] Dalrymple, (Head quarters, Bandon) to Pelham, 2 January 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/6.
[508] Pelham to Dalrymple, 6 April 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/340.
[509] Brigadier-General Coote to [Pelham?], 30 March 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/309.
[510] W. Jones, (Cork) to ___, 8 April 1797; Colonel French, (Macroom) to [Pelham?], 1 April 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33103/344; 324.

French invasion and entreaties for troops and money, Pitt was fighting a war on continental Europe, a war largely financed by vast loans supplied by the British government to her allies, and a war in which France, for the duration of Camden's viceroyalty, had the upper hand. At the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and France, Britain had remained firmly attached to the gold standard, and Edmund Burke had sharply criticised the French policy of printing money as need dictated. However, February 1797 saw a change to British banking practice. The arrival, close to Fishguard, of a paltry group of French soldiers, many of them ex-prisoners who had been recruited in jail, under the command of the 70-year old William Tate was sufficient to cause a run on the Bank of England. The raid was a disaster; the French troops were rounded up by local men within hours of their disembarking. The significance of the expedition lay in the fact that once again the British navy had been exposed. Twice in three months French ships had evaded not only capture but even detection by the supposedly invincible British navy. The panic instigated by the French landing forced Britain off the gold standard with the Bank of England obliged to suspend cash payments to those with deposits, thus ensuring that whatever intentions Pitt and his government had of sending substantial quantities of cash to Ireland it was now almost impossible to do so.[511]

VII

The French had not landed and no rebellion had taken place. However the Dublin administration was far from sanguine; a second attack was expected as 'Buonaparte's success must give new spirits'. Cooke was despondent fearing that this second attack might be successful. He complained to Auckland:

> We have a good but inexperienced army of near 40,000, officers included, and 30,000 yeomanry, in drill – a force nearly sufficient if well conducted, well disposed, well officered, well generalled. But here we fail...there is certainly no genius, no effort, in the military departments of either country...now all is at stake and if there is any ability,

[511] John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt,* iii, pp 5-16.

> genius, vigour, it ought to be called forth. But we have the laziness of an old and perishing system about us. [512]

Ireland's future security rested on a well trained, disciplined army and this could not be achieved without substantial military and financial support from Britain.

York urged Dublin Castle to allow no relaxation of security measures. The Irish administration had no intentions of doing so.[513] The discovery, in early January, of a plan for a French invasion of Ireland, written by Carnot of the Executive Directory of France, heightened fears of a second invasion attempt. In light of this information, Camden reminded Carhampton that a 'general system of defence in every part of the kingdom should engage your Lordship's attention and I am desirous of receiving such a report as your Lordship's knowledge and experience enables you to give upon the military consideration and upon a comprehensive scale'.[514] In late January 1797, Sir Edward Newenham received information from Captain Wilkinson of the *Dolphin*, an American vessel that had been captured by the French. Wilkinson had left Brest on 19 January where there were men preparing to launch another expedition to Ireland and that the men 'were quite elated at the idea of coming to Ireland'.[515]

Camden remained lord lieutenant despite his requests to be replaced by someone who could combine the roles of commander-in-chief and lord lieutenant but his position had been weakened by the attempted French invasion.[516] Dublin Castle under his leadership lacked the guidance, direction and support that had been expected from Whitehall. Now completely dependent on financial aid from Britain to support a weakened economy and to pay for

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[512] Cooke to [Auckland], 9 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/22.
[513] See, for example, York to Pelham, 22 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190/1; Dalrymple to Pelham, 1 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0163/5; Carhampton to Camden, 18 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/45; Cooke to [Auckland], 9 February 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/22.
[514] Camden to Carhampton, 12 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0162/8/2. Despite reference to an enclosure Carnot's plan was not found with these papers.
[515] Information given by Captain Wilkinson of the *Dolphin*, American Vessel to Sir Edward Newenham, [n.d. end January 1797?], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/17.
[516] See for example Camden to Cornwallis, 23 May 1797; Camden to Pitt, 1 June 1797; Camden to Pitt, 7 April 1798; Camden to Pitt, 6 June 1798; Camden to Pitt, 15 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0179/3; 0156A/19; /30; /39; /43.

military protection, the vaunted independence the Irish Protestant ascendancy once possessed had now vanished. The Irish houses of parliament believed that the British government interfered too frequently in Irish internal affairs and made a mockery of the legislative independence that had been hard-won in 1782. There was much resentment of the Catholic relief acts passed in 1792 and 1793. The political elite believed they had been duped into agreeing to the 'false and mistaken policy of Great Britain in 1793'.[517] Such concessions to Catholics eroded confidence in the British government and by 1797 the conservative Protestant ascendancy was frightened and isolated. They were forced to look to themselves for protection even more then they had done in the past. The United Irishmen had failed to rise in rebellion, but the arrival of the French in such numbers and the subsequent incompetence displayed by the administration and the army proved a vital propaganda victory for the radicals; it convinced many that the French would return and this time contribute to a successful United Irish rebellion. Cooke sounded an ominous warning when he commented 'Count not on our loyalty. We follow the strongest. The principle is fully as much in favour of France as of England in the South, and in the North entirely French'.[518]

[517] Fitzgibbon to Auckland, 18 May 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/9.
[518] Cooke to [Auckland], 9 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/22.

5

'The Scabbard is thrown away'[519]

Camden and Internal Security, 1796-7

By 1796 it was almost impossible to have any involvement in Irish political life without also being concerned with military affairs. Despite having no military background, Camden, for a number of reasons, was actively involved in all major decisions pertaining to the armed forces in Ireland. Military matters frequently took precedence over all other areas of government; as the security situation deteriorated more attention and more money were required to be paid to the troops and their commanders. As Ireland's financial state became ever more perilous, the issue of army pay became increasingly important. In Ireland military and political matters were intricately linked and it would prove impossible to separate the two. In addition, Camden's active interest in military affairs stemmed from the fact that he felt that he could not trust the judgement of his senior military commanders. As he remarked to Pelham, 'we have often agreed that there is not much dependence to be placed on our Generals'.[520] He was also confident that his lack of formal training would not hamper his ability to deal competently with military matters; he argued that 'in many parts of that [military] profession a man not bred to it can judge as well as one who has been so educated'.[521] Camden spent much of his time in Ireland trying to prove that this was the case.

A series of repressive measures were introduced to the Irish parliament during the summer and autumn of 1796. These bills passed through parliament with the opposition incapable of preventing the passage of any bills. However, the opposition were far from passive and fierce debate often raged within the

[519] Memorial of the magistrates in the counties of Down and Armagh to General Lake, [Autumn, 1797?], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/249.
[520] Camden to Pelham, 30 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/81.
[521] Camden to Pelham, October 1797, in McAnally, *Irish Militia*, p. 87.

chamber. The acts passed cleared the way for the military to act beyond the limits of strict legality when confronted with disaffection in the country. In addition, Camden authorised the establishment of an additional armed force, the yeomanry. Designed to police the interior of the country, it was intended that the yeomanry would be under the control of the Irish administration. Possible in theory, the reality was rather different. The force, commanded for the most part by local gentry, became, in many cases, a Protestant defence force, thus heightening sectarian tensions in vulnerable areas. Throughout 1796 and 1797 the lord lieutenant was an enthusiastic advocate of making examples of individuals convicted of enrolling others in membership of the United Irishmen. Such brutal examples would, it was hoped, act as a deterrent. This policy also saw an increase in the use of propaganda by both the Irish administration and the United Irishmen, each using the same incidents to promote their own agenda. In some senses Camden's actions during 1796 and 1797 were reactionary, in others they were pre-emptive. The United Irishmen were increasing in strength and by December 1796 the amorphous French threat had become a reality, albeit an offshore reality. The harsh measures adopted by the Irish government were in part designed to crush the disaffection already apparent and also to prevent any future move towards open rebellion.

I

The loyalty shown by the inhabitants of the south of Ireland while the French were anchored in Bantry Bay was frequently remarked on by contemporaries.[522] This was partly because such behaviour contrasted so strongly with that of the north of the country.[523] The increasing strength of both the Defenders and the United Irishmen, allied to the establishment of the Orange Order in 1795, and the 'Armagh Outrages' of 1795-6, heightened tensions and made government control of the north tenuous. Cooke regarded the 'situation of

[522] See, for example, Pitt to [Auckland], 1 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/15; Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, H.O. 100/67/35; Brownlow to Earl of ___, 30 December 1796, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/223; City of Cork Committee to [Camden?], 2 January 1797 P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/329/79.
[523] Brownlow to Earl of ___, 29 December 1796, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/222.

the north as the most formidable, being the most closely organised and the inhabitants being of an independent sprit'.[524] The north was in such a disturbed state that when the armed forces were ordered to march south towards Bantry in December 1796 the majority of those stationed in the north were not mobilised. Camden acknowledged that the troops based in the north remained there because of the 'very alarming' security situation and in early February 1797 he wrote to Pitt announcing that 'the state of the North is worse than it has been before'.[525]

Anxious to alleviate the increasing tension in the country in general and in the north in particular, Camden had introduced legislation which was designed to bring peace to disturbed areas. In particular Camden was increasingly anxious to placate the gentry. Perhaps more than any other group the gentry influenced Camden's lord lieutenancy. Often reluctant to take advice from his 'cabinet', unwilling to listen to his military commanders and ignored by Whitehall, Camden became increasingly quiescent when dealing with matters which concerned the gentry. In the aftermath of the attempted French invasion, the administration and the military command had concluded that that external security of the country would be improved by stationing troops in a number of large camps rather than leaving them scattered around the countryside. This new policy was to centre troops 'in as considerable bodies as possible' thus leaving many of the gentry largely defenceless.[526] Recognising this, the administration decided to introduce a series of repressive bills in parliament designed to placate the fears of the gentry and guarantee peace in the countryside.

The indemnity and insurrection acts passed in the spring session of parliament were followed by the suspension of habeas corpus in cases of high treason in October 1796. These measures were intended to increase the powers of the magistrates.[527] The indemnity act was designed to prevent the prosecution of those who, since January 1795, had gone beyond the law in their efforts to

[524] Cooke to Auckland, 3 September 1796, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/59.
[525] Camden to Portland, 8 January 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/7; Camden to Pitt, 10 February 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/10.
[526] Carhampton to Camden, 18 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/45.
[527] Camden to Portland, 15 October 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0154/3.

prevent insurrection. The insurrection act threatened members of illegal organisations with harsh punishment. Anyone found guilty of administering an unlawful oath risked the death penalty while anyone convicted of taking an unlawful oath risked transportation. It was illegal to possess arms without notifying the local justice of the peace. A key element of the insurrection act was that magistrates were entitled to meet at a special session and request the lord lieutenant to proclaim districts. In proclaimed areas martial law was enforced; curfews were introduced, properties were searched without warrant and summary arrests made.[528] Portland was not convinced that such measures were required but Pelham assured him that 'the accounts which have been transmitted from the country of the machinations and designs of the United Irishmen, the Catholic committee, the Defenders, Peep of Day Boys and other disturbers of the public peace' made the insurrection act necessary. He further stated '...if this bill...does not restore peace...we must have recourse to the sword'.[529] Camden, too, entertained some doubts and was not a vociferous advocate of these measures, but they assuaged, at least in part, the fears of that wealthy and influential group; the gentry. For Camden the insurrection act was motivated more by pragmatism than conviction. He was willing to pander to the gentry, whose fears were genuine especially in light of the new military policy which left them more isolated than heretofore.

It is perhaps some indication of the level of disruption in the Irish countryside that Grattan and the whigs did not completely oppose the passage of the indemnity and insurrection acts. They did, however, propose amendments to both acts. These were rejected on the basis that in a country where serious disturbances were commonplace any consideration of amendments would delay the passage of the bills.[530] From January 1796 the opposition was virtually powerless to resist the administration's plans, rarely securing more than twenty votes whenever the house divided. They were vocal but virtually powerless, as Grattan acknowledged at the close of the parliamentary session in April:

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[528] Curtin, *United Irishmen,* pp 71-1; McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* pp 552-3.
[529] [Pelham] to Portland, 31 March 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/41.
[530] 22, 29 February 1796, *Parliamentary Register,* xvi, p. 51.

> On the whole, I do not remember a time less promising to this country. There are now two constitutions in Ireland, one for the rich and another for the poor...The war is begun in Ireland between property and poverty - it is commenced by the former on the privileges of the latter. Should a discontent take place, it would be retaliated by the numbers of the latter on the property and on the persons of the former. The majorities of our house have gotten the spirit of planters not of country gentlemen. They hate the Papist and they hate the people.[531]

Camden was reluctant to implement the insurrection act and this generated some criticism from the gentlemen of the north and some of the military commanders.[532] None was more vocal than Brigadier-General John Knox, then stationed at Dungannon, while Clare complained that 'Lord Camden's good nature is such that he can scarcely be brought to give orders to a military force'.[533] Lord Downshire wanted the insurrection act enforced, at least partially, in counties Armagh, Antrim and Down.[534] Camden was reluctant to do so 'not from a disinclination to appeal to strong measures...but from there not being any overt act to warrant its being recommended'.[535] Yet, under sustained pressure from Downshire, he conceded that enforcement was advisable and by 12 November Camden agreed that parts of County Down should be proclaimed.[536] However, Camden's unwillingness to proclaim districts was mirrored by some magistrates who were reluctant to proclaim their own areas; to do so admitted failure on their part to maintain control. In addition there was risk attached to proclaiming districts; extreme measures often provoked an extreme reaction. Yet, once decided, Camden wanted the act used to its full extent.[537] Between November 1796 and May 1797 east Down, the towns of Newry and Armagh, Dungannon district, central and west Derry, east Donegal and north-west Tyrone were all proclaimed.[538] Despite the introduction of martial law there is evidence to suggest that its impact in the countryside was

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[531] Quoted in Kelly, *Henry Grattan,* p. 34.
[532] Curtin, *Magistracy in Ulster,* p. 52.
[533] Clare to Auckland, 12 May 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/13.
[534] Downshire to Camden, 27 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0160/1.
[535] Camden to Downshire, 29 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0160/6.
[536] Camden to Downshire, 2 November 1797; Camden to Downshire, 12 November 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0160/7; /12.
[537] Camden to Downshire, 12 November 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0160/12.
[538] Curtin, *United Irishmen,* p. 71.

slight. It has been argued that rebel numbers in counties Derry, Donegal and Tyrone peaked soon after districts in these counties had been proclaimed.[539] By August Camden felt that introduction of the indemnity and insurrection acts had not 'put an end to the secret spirit of insurrection and outrage' and he proposed to call parliament 'with a view to suspending the habeas corpus act'.[540] The whigs, including George and William Ponsonby, Curran and Grattan vigorously objected to this but failed to garner sufficient support to prevent the suspension of the act.[541]

During the autumn of 1796 the Irish administration pursued the arrests of those suspected of membership of proscribed organisations with renewed vigour. Having twice failed to convict the proprietors of the *Northern Star*, all leading members of the United Irishmen, the administration was determined to obtain their incarceration if not their conviction.[542] Samuel Neilson, Thomas Russell, Henry Haslett, Rowley Osbourne, Samuel Kennedy and Neilson's clerk, Thomas Kane, along with other prominent members of the United Irishmen and those associated with the *Northern Star* were arrested on 16 September 1796. The subsequent suspension of habeas corpus enabled the authorities to detain the prisoners without the necessity of a trial and conviction. Indeed, none of those taken into custody on 16 September was ever brought to trial. Some served long periods in prison; Neilson spent seventeen months in Kilmainham Gaol. The case against him rested largely on the evidence of Smith, alias Bird, but he, along with other informers, was persuaded by William Sampson and Lord Moira to refuse to testify. Another man, Kerr, a United Irishman, had been willing to

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[539] Breandán MacSuibhne, 'Up not Out: Why did North-West Ulster not rise in 1798?', in *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798*, p. 86.
[540] Camden to Portland, 6 August 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/62/153.
[541] The motion was defeated by 137 to 7 votes.
[542] [William Sampson] *A faithful report of the Trial of the Proprietors of the* Northern Star *at the Bar of the Court of King's-Bench on the 28 May 1794 on an information filed ex-officio by the Attorney General: for the insertion of a publication of The Irish Jacobins of Belfast on 15 December 1792*, (Belfast, 1794); [idem], *A faithful report of the Trial of the Proprietors of the* Northern Star *at the Bar of the Court of King's-Bench on 17November 1794 on an information filed ex-officio by the Attorney General: for the insertion of the United Irishmen's address to the Volunteers of Ireland on the 19 December 1794*, (Belfast, 1794).

testify against Neilson until he was paid a visit by Charles Teeling posing as a clergyman threatening eternal damnation.[543]

Much outrage and vitriol appeared in the columns of the *Northern Star* regarding the arrest of leading United Irishmen.[544] There was considerable support, practical and moral, for those arrested on the grounds that they were United Irishmen. As a peaceful, but potentially threatening, gesture, large numbers of United Irishmen and their supporters gathered the harvest of arrested men. Potatoes were dug, corn and wheat reaped on behalf of those in custody.[545] Reports appeared in the *Northern Star* detailing the numbers of people helping with the harvest.[546] Poems were published in praise of those who assisted in the process:

> The yellow harvest o'er the plain
> Was ripe both corn and wheat,
> When Patriots assembled were
> The abundant crops to reap.
>
> Then a shearing we will go
> Then a shearing we will go
> To cut the grain of each brave man,
> Who to jail for truth did go.[547]

It was reported that on 20 October 1796 a crowd of 1,500 people assembled in a large field belonging to Neilson and in seven minutes had dug the entire field of potatoes.[548] In early December the authorities outlawed the harvesting of crops of imprisoned men.[549] Mass meetings of the disaffected were not confined to harvest-time. It was also believed that funerals and holy-days provided additional opportunities for men to meet 'for the purposes of creating tumult and confusion'.[550]

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[543] Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals*, p. 123.
[544] *Northern Star*, 10 October 1796.
[545] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, iii, pp 475-6; Bartlett, *Fall and Rise*, pp 214-5.
[546] For detail see *Northern Star*, 3 October - 2 December 1796.
[547] *Northern Star*, 14 October 1796.
[548] *Northern Star*, 21 October 1796.
[549] *Northern Star*, 2 December 1796.
[550] Carhampton to Craig, [May 1797?], N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/62; H[iggins] to [Cooke], 26 February 1798, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14.

II

The insurrection act and the suspension of habeas corpus were useful tools in the attempt to restore peace to the north but Camden's most effective action was the introduction of the yeomanry. As part of a rather haphazard security plan, Camden hesitantly agreed to the establishment of a yeomanry force. Camden's reluctance was based on a realistic fear that this force would become as politicised and as powerful as the volunteers of the 1780s. It never achieved the political strength or influence of the volunteers but the yeomanry certainly became heavily politicised. The yeomanry force was portrayed by loyalists as the embodiment of loyalty and by the United Irishmen as an example of government promotion of sectarian division.

In October 1795 Camden had forbidden the formation of a new force which was intended to be organised along volunteer lines. Lords Carhampton and Mountjoy had gone so far as to make preliminary arrangements to establish a volunteer force in Dublin without consultation with the lord lieutenant. Camden, upon his inadvertent discovery of the plans, immediately forbade the establishment of this private military organisation.[551] By August 1796 Camden's personal opinion had not altered but he recognised that his options were limited as he confided to Pelham:

> I do not like to resort to yeomanry cavalry or infantry or armed associations if I can help it - but I see no other resource in the present time. The army must be withdrawn from many of its quarters and must be drawn together to act in larger bodies than it has lately done.[552]

The new military policy of stationing troops in larger numbers but fewer locations around the country meant many areas were left exposed. Camden had regularly requested additional troops to keep the peace in the north. But, by the autumn of 1796 Camden recognised that the hoped-for military reinforcements would not be forthcoming. In addition, it was becoming apparent that the United Irishmen were rapidly increasing their membership. Figures for the province of

[551] Camden to Pelham, 3 October 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/306.
[552] Camden to Pelham, 28 August 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/115.

Ulster indicate a membership of 38,567 in October 1796 which had risen to 117,917 by May 1797.[553] These factors, allied to a combination of pressure from the gentry, advice from his 'cabinet' in Dublin and cautious approval from Whitehall, persuaded Camden that the establishment of a yeomanry force was necessary.

The gentry were keen supporters of any defence force that would protect them, while among Camden's advisors, Clare, Foster, Beresford, Parnell, Carhampton, Wolfe and Lord Dillon encouraged the establishment of the yeomanry.[554] Camden hoped for direction from Whitehall but, as was often the case, received little. Portland was reluctant to actively encourage the establishment of the yeomanry yet he did not discourage it, conscious that the establishment of a new force would, at least for a time, remove the pressure for additional troops to be sent to Ireland. The home secretary was initially unwilling to offer advice, commenting that he would 'entirely submit to your superior knowledge and better judgement'.[555] Camden pressed Portland for further guidance and received guarded approval; 'the words...yeomanry are not to be found in my letter, though I am of opinion that it may be fairly inferred that they are intended to be comprehended. I distinctly express my consent to your adopting...these measures...which shall appear to you to be necessary.[556] Privately Camden acted against his better judgement but, with the Irish military command, the gentry and the 'cabinet' ranged against him, he was in no position to resist these domestic pressures.

While comparisons may be made between the yeomanry force and the volunteers of the 1770s and 1780s, Camden was determined that there would be some very distinct differences. Control of the yeomanry would remain in the

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[553] Curtin, *United Irishmen*, p. 69. These figures include Defenders who had by 1797 joined with the United Irishmen.
[554] Cooke to Pelham, 30 July 1796; Camden to Pelham, 14 August 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Mss 33102/68; /81; Camden to Portland, 6 August 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/62/153.
[555] Portland to Camden, 23 August 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/62/186.
[556] Camden to Portland, 26 August 1796; Portland to Camden, 29 August 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/62/190; 200; Portland to Camden, 28 August 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/113.

hands of the Irish administration.[557] The officers would be appointed by the lord lieutenant, Dublin Castle would issue arms and uniforms, and the general in each district would oversee the yeomanry corps.[558] With such ties to the administration, Camden and his officials would be able to monitor links between extreme loyalists and the new military force. Camden's insistence on the high-level of government intervention in the yeomanry meant that they added to the drain on scarce resources. According to William Elliot the yeomanry had the potential to prove themselves 'a very serviceable institution but they certainly cannot be called a cheap defence of nation'.[559]

The yeomanry bill received royal assent on 27 October 1796 and the first commissions were issued on 31 October.[560] Those who had been enthusiastic advocates duly became enthusiastic participants and by January 1797 Camden was in receipt of 656 offers to establish yeomanry corps; 440 of these had been accepted, 125 declined and 91 awaited a decision. Figures suggest that in 1797 there was a potential yeomanry force of 36,854 which rose to 43,228 in 1798.[561] In contrast to the predominantly Catholic militia, the yeomanry was an overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, Protestant force.

The yeomanry added a new dimension to a very delicately balanced military situation. The connection, real or assumed, between the yeomanry and the Orange Order was problematic for the administration and recognised as such from the outset. The yeomanry was not established as a covert means to arm the Orangemen but many regarded the new force as a legitimate and state-sponsored wing of the Orange Order. In the north of the country this perception was widespread and in many cases encouraged by local commanders and landowners as the security situation worsened. Atrocities carried out by Orangemen were frequently attributed to yeomanry corps. In some cases the terms 'orangemen'

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[557] Allan Blackstock, '"A dangerous species of ally": Orangeism and the Irish Yeomanry', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, 119, (May 1997), p. 398.
[558] Camden to Portland, 22 September 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/61/106.
[559] Elliot to Knox, 10 April 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/154.
[560] Blackstock, *Ascendancy Army*, pp 73-4.
[561] ibid. pp 117-8.

and 'yeomen' became interchangeable.[562] This association was encouraged by some, but it irritated and worried Camden. To counter this he encouraged liberal figures such as Lord Charlemont and prominent Catholics such as Lords Kenmare and Fingall and Sir Edward Bellew to establish yeomanry corps.[563] Camden was particularly gratified that Charlemont had agreed to become the captain of the Armagh corps of yeomanry.[564] Writing to Portland he commented: 'the advantage of a person of his [Charlemont's] name and character taking an early and active part in this levy must, I am sure, strike your grace as being extremely desirable'.[565] Henry Grattan, despite his frequent diatribes against the government in the house of commons, consented to join the yeomanry, becoming a member of the Powerscourt corps.[566]

Beyond Ulster there was little connection between the Orange Order and the yeomanry. Allan Blackstock has argued that Orangemen, certainly in the years before the rebellion, did not infiltrate the yeomanry in huge numbers. One of the chief reasons for this was the fact that the yeomanry, certainly in 1796 and 1797, consisted of small units spread across the country whereas Orangeism was concentrated in certain areas of Ulster. This meant that only in parts of Ulster was the yeomanry made up predominantly of Orangemen.[567] Allowing for this, it must also be noted that there were more yeomen recruited in Ulster than in any other province. In 1797 Ulster yeomen made up 39% of the total and in 1798 36%.[568] It is no surprise that a civilian defence force, as the yeomanry were, was most popular in Ulster, the most disturbed province and consequently the place where loyalists felt most insecure.

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[562] See for example McTier to Drennan, 17 March 1797, in *Drennan-McTier Letters,* ii, p. 303.
[563] McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* p. 559; Blackstock, *Ascendancy Army,* p. 69. For a list of those who established yeomanry corps see *Dublin Gazette,* 15, 18 October 1796.
[564] Charlemont to Camden, 9 September 1796; Camden to Charlemont, 20 September 1796, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, pp 282, 284.
[565] Camden to Portland, 22 September 1796, P.R.O. H.O./100/61/106.
[566] *Freeman's Journal,* 14 December 1796.
[567] Blackstock, 'Orangeism and the Irish Yeomanry', pp 399-401.
[568] Percentages worked out on the basis of figures provided by Blackstock, *Ascendancy Army,* pp 117-8.

In the mid 1790s the Orange movement was still in its infancy, even so, by October 1796 the excesses of the Orangemen were the subject of complaint both from the victims of their attacks and from local landowners, magistrates and military commanders who feared retaliation from the United Irishmen. Camden did not underestimate the threat the Orangemen posed to the security of the country, commenting in July 1796 that 'the Orangemen in the North...are only kept down by the force which is stationed there'.[569] With the heightening of sectarian tensions, particularly in south Ulster, there was an increase in reported attacks by Orangemen. Those entrusted with the task of delivering the *Northern Star* were increasingly subject to assault.[570] This was particularly prevalent in county Armagh and the towns west of Armagh, a part of the country particularly rent by sectarianism. Those carrying the paper in that district were regularly attacked by Orangemen and threatened 'with instant death if they should return'.[571] It was firmly believed by the United Irishmen that the authorities largely turned a blind-eye to the excesses of the Orangemen and the *Northern Star* furiously objected to the Irish administration's obvious double-standards:

> The striking contrast between the conduct of United Irishmen, who were the subjects of ministerial vengeance and the Orangemen, who are protected and encouraged by the supporters of Administration, cannot fail of making a powerful impression upon unprejudiced minds. The former reap and thresh the crop of the unfortunate Patriot. The latter rack and burn houses, drive innumerable families from their habitations and barbarously destroy many of their fellow creatures. Yet the former are imprisoned, the latter are to be armed and enrolled. [572]

There was much evidence of Orange goading of Catholics and Dalrymple, then commander of the troops in the north, complained to Pelham about the behaviour of the Orangemen in Dungannon on 12 July 1796 and demanded that their outrages not be tolerated.[573] Cooke noted during the summer of 1796 that the magistrates were not 'sufficiently active' in their dealings with Orange transgressions leaving the Catholics seeking 'revenge'. He

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[569] Camden to Pelham, 30 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33012/81.
[570] *Northern Star*, 5 December 1796.
[571] *Northern Star*, 5 September 1796.
[572] *Northern Star*, 10 October 1796.
[573] Dalrymple to Pelham, 13 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/200.

cited the example of a fracas between Orangemen and members of the Queen's County Militia. Cooke feared that the 'militia will be tainted from this religious quarrel'.[574] Action was taken by the authorities when, in July 1797, dragoons in Stewartstown, county Tyrone, under the command of Lord Blaney, attacked the North Kerry Militia, killing three men. Such was the scandal caused by this that Camden appointed a court of inquiry which removed Blayney, a county Monaghan landlord, from his command, though Camden and Clare privately believed that it was 'by no means clear he did not receive the provocation'.[575] Incidents such as those at Dungannon and Stewartstown frequently worked to the advantage of the United Irishmen and assisted them in 'seducing many of the militia'.[576]

Yet, there was some support for the arming and drilling of Orangemen; Lord Gosford allowed 1,500, armed but sober, Orangemen to march through his estate on 12 July 1796.[577] In Belfast during July 1797 there was a display of the 'whole force the "Orange boys", "Orange" wenches, and "Orange" children could muster...; it was supposed there might have been 3,000 of the motley crew, including the various corps of yeomen'.[578] More significantly, the *Belfast News-Letter* noted that Generals Lake and Knox formally reviewed 15,000 Orangemen at Lisburn and Lurgan, implying military, if not political, approval of the growth of orangeism.[579]

While the *Northern Star* continued to protest about the behaviour of Orangemen complaints about them from loyalists dropped dramatically after the establishment of the yeomanry. For many the yeomanry provided both

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[574] Cooke to Pelham, 14 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/68.
[575] Camden to Pelham, 11 September 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/79; Camden to Pitt, 3 November 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2257; Blayney to Carhampton, 16 August 1797; Blayney to Camden, 13 January 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0169/1; McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* pp 571-2.
[576] Cooke to Pelham, 27 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/96.
[577] Gosford to Camden, 13 July 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0173/4.
[578] Haliday to Charlemont, 13 July 1797, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, p. 303.
[579] *Belfast News-Letter,* 14 July 1796. It is more likely that the actual numbers were considerably smaller. Hereward Senior has estimated that between 3 and 5,000 men were reviewed. Hereward Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain, 1795-1836,* (London, 1966), p. 77.

legitimacy and some discipline to the Orangemen. General John Knox commented that supplementary yeomen could be obtained without pay if the government would consent to purchase their arms. Adding weight to his argument he noted 'they would consist of staunch Orange men - the only description of men in the North of Ireland that can be relied on'.[580] In a letter to the chief secretary he argued for tacit acceptance by the government of the Orangemen:

> In respect to the Orange Men, they were originally a bigoted set of men, who were ready to destroy the Roman Catholics. They now form a political party and are the only barrier we have against the United Irishmen. I do not by any means wish the Government should give them an avow'd protection as it might do mischief in the South, but that protection may be given silently by permission to enrol themselves on the district corps and by having it generally understood that their meetings...shall not be disturbed, as long as the Orange Men refrain from outrages etc.[581]

Dublin Castle actively, though advisedly, encouraged the use of the Orangemen if it produced the right result. Knox maintained that he could use Orangemen to put down the United Irishmen in counties Armagh, Monaghan, Cavan and part of Tyrone.[582] Pelham agreed that the 'object was desirable' and felt that 'one could hardly object to any means for gaining it' but he urged caution.[583] Dublin Castle never formally approved the Orangemen yet there was implicit sanction of their activities and the commanders of the armed forces were willing to lend their approval.

Camden was adamant that there could be no explicit connection between the military and the Orangemen as 'the situation of the country is unfavourable to the discussion of any question of that sort in parliament'.[584] The lord lieutenant acknowledged that the support of the Orangemen was potentially very useful, but he refused to allow official encouragement because 'it increases the jealousy of the Catholics', yet there was no effort made to suppress them.[585] Camden's

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[580] Knox to Pelham, 19 April 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/379.
[581] Knox to Pelham, 28 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/139.
[582] Knox to Pelham, 21 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers Add Ms 33104/91.
[583] Pelham to Knox, 23 May 1797, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/78.
[584] Pelham to Knox, 26 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33014/123.
[585] Camden to Portland, 23 March 1798, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/40/6.

chief concern was that the association between the yeomanry and the Orangemen might lead to an increase in the number of United Irishmen among the militia regiments. He feared that the Irish military force, never truly united, might divide along sectarian lines.[586] But by the spring of 1798 it was clear, certainly in Ulster, that the yeomanry and the Orange Order had become inextricably linked. The connection, albeit unofficial, of the yeomanry and the Oranger Order made it increasingly difficult to keep control of the more maverick elements of the Orange Order as they felt they now had official sanction. Despite the wishes of the lord lieutenant, the distinction between the Orange Order and the yeomanry became more blurred as the political and military tension increased. Cooke commented to Pelham in July 1796 that 'the irritating conduct of the Orange men in keeping up persecution against the Catholics does infinite mischief'.[587] Yet, by June 1798 Cooke was referring in correspondence to the 'Orange Yeomanry'.[588] The informal alliance of Orangemen and yeomen forced with some liberals to withdraw their support of the yeomanry; Charlemont, who had commanded the Armagh corps from late 1796, resigned the command of his corps in November 1797.[589]

Despite Camden's reservations about the establishment of the yeomanry, by January 1797 he was confident enough to comment to Portland, 'I am now of the opinion that the great force of the yeomanry is fully competent'.[590] Pelham, too, was pleased with the effectiveness of the new force.[591] The reaction of the newly formed yeomanry to the French threat was much praised; the Lord Mayor of Dublin enthusiastically recording the 'unexampled and illustrious heroism of our yeomanry corps' while in a sermon Rev Hamilton Cuffe extolled the virtues

[586] Camden to Portland, 11 June 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/77/132; Blackstock, 'Orangeism and the Irish Yeomanry', p. 403.
[587] Cooke to Pelham, 27 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33102/74.
[588] Cooke to Wickham, 2 June 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/77/21.
[589] Charlemont to Johnston, [n.d.], in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, pp 377-8; James Kelly, 'A 'genuine' whig and patriot: Lord Charlemont's political career', in Michael McCarthy (ed.), *Lord Charlemont and His Circle,* (Dublin, 2001), pp 34-5.
[590] Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35.
[591] Pelham to Knox, 9 January 1797, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/18.

of that 'host of brave and faithful sons - the Yeomanry'.[592] But it might be noted the praise was usually confined to yeomanry corps in the southern part of Ireland. Undoubtedly the majority of the yeomanry corps were loyal but there were occasional reports indicating that 'a great proportion of several corps of yeomanry in this neighbourhood [Armagh] have become United Irishmen'.[593] Lord Cavan had difficulties with the yeomanry stationed in his district and remarked that 'with a few exceptions' he desired to disarm the corps under his command.[594]

The introduction of the insurrection act, the suspension of habeas corpus, the arrest of prominent United Irishmen and the establishment of the yeomanry all occurred prior to the attempted French landing at Bantry Bay in December 1796. Camden had hoped that the efficient use of these new powers would effectively restore peace to the countryside but by the spring of 1797 it was apparent that these measures were not enough in themselves. Stronger more decisive military action was necessary if the government was to maintain control of the country. Repressive government policies had propelled some towards the United Irishmen while others became more hard-line loyalists. There was little room for any criticism of the government's severe military policies and moderates found themselves obliged to declare themselves for the government or risk alienation. In a letter to Grenville, Camden summarised the factors which led to the adoption of severe measures:

> the ill success of our allies, the difficulty of procuring money, the prospect of invasion, the speculation...of a changing government and you know enough of the world and of the Irish world particularly, to be aware of the difficulties we have to encounter.[595]

It was decided that these difficulties could only be surmounted by the use of force.

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[592] See for example Lord Mayor of Dublin to Camden, 20 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 072; Rev Hamilton Cuffe, *A sermon preached in the Church of Kells on 16 February 1797;* Cooke to [Auckland], 10 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers T.3229/2/19; Brown to Camden, 23 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/2.
[593] Knox to Pelham, 17 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/77.
[594] Cavan to [Knox?], 14 February 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/138.
[595] Camden to Grenville, 18 April 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 59254A/19.

III

By early 1797 there existed a detailed military plan for ensuring the security of the north of the country. Over 11,000 troops were dispersed throughout Ulster and arrangements made for the swift movement of regiments across the province should violence erupt. (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2) General Gerard Lake was the commanding officer of the Northern district from the end of 1796. Lake was not a man given to compromise. The introduction of the insurrection act had failed to pacify the north and it was with relief that Lake received instruction from Pelham to disarm all suspected traitors. Thus began the dragooning of Ulster. Legal methods of doing this were encouraged but Camden intended 'to give [Lake's] discretion the greatest latitude' and he was 'not to suffer the cause of justice to be frustrated by the delicacy which might possibly have actuated the magistracy'.[596] In March, Camden exhorted Lake to take severe action as he was 'convinced that the disaffected are only to be kept in order by showing that the partizans [sic] of Regular Government are the strongest'.[597] Portland approved of such decisive action, he assured Camden 'of the entire approbation which the measures have met with, which you have directed to be pursued by General Lake for restoring tranquillity to the north'.[598] On 13 March 1797 Lake ordered the surrender of all arms held in the northern district. Lake oversaw the collection of arms and arrest of suspects in the area around Belfast while General Nugent commanded the troops in Down and Antrim, Lord Cavan was in charge of Derry, Donegal, South Armagh and Tyrone while General Knox patrolled Monaghan, Cavan and Fermanagh.[599] Knox felt that 'Ulster will never be in safety 'till the people are disarmed' and he noted with satisfaction that the insurrection act gave the commanding officer:

> the power of life and death with or without courts martial. He may give his soldiers free quarters - he may lay waste districts and take such measure of coercion as he may

[596] Pelham to Lake, 3 March 1797, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/32.
[597] Camden to Lake, 3 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0165/1.
[598] Portland to Camden, 15 March 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/152.
[599] Knox to Pelham, 2 April 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0164/1.

> think proper...nothing less than this authority, with a powerful British force, will ever disarm and subdue the north of Ireland.[600]

The publication of Lake's order caused consternation amongst the opposition members in the house of commons. Grattan demanded an explanation from the lord lieutenant. Camden sent word with Pelham to the commons confirming that he had 'ordered the general commanding in that province to dispose of and employ those troops under his command, with the assistance and co-operation of the yeomanry to suppress these outrages,...by seizing all arms and ammunition' to restore peace to the north.[601] Grattan was furious, arguing that this policy would have the opposite effect:

> The stronger you grow in the statute-book, the weaker you grow in the country; the more devoted your majorities, the more averse your people;...the more liberties you destroyed, the more power you lost; the more you hang, and the more you transport, the more you inflame, disturb and disaffect; the more you ruin the constitution, the more you undermine the government; and now, having completed your system, which is nothing less than a statute war, waged against the people, the minister comes to parliament and honestly owns, that his system of coercive law will not do; that law in any possible form will not do; and that military execution, in place of law, is now the only thing on their principles, to secure the peace and happiness of Ireland.[602]

However, there was little support for Grattan and his motion was dismissed by 127 votes to 16.

Lake's efforts were not immediately successful and Camden began to fear that that 'Mr Grattan's charges of cruelty and violence will be converted into those of want of energy and inactivity'.[603] By May, Knox was threatening to resign his command unless Camden sanctioned the more extreme measures necessary to crush 'the jacobins of the north'. Pelham, on behalf of the lord lieutenant, appealed to the general to remain in his position both 'for your own

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[600] Knox to Pelham, 2 April 1797; 19 April 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0164/1; B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/381.
[601] Message from Camden, delivered to the house of commons, 18 March 1797, *Parliamentary Registar*, xvii, p. 127.
[602] Grattan, 20 March 1797, ibid, p. 131.
[603] Camden to Grenville, 18 April 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 59524A/19.

sake and that of the Public'.[604] Knox did retain his command and throughout June 1797 he was engaged in offering advice to Camden as to how best to disarm the North. It is indicative of the troubled relations in the Irish military command that Knox frequently corresponded with the chief secretary and the lord lieutenant rather than his commanding officer, Lake. Knox thought that the most appropriate method of obtaining disarmament was the issuing of a proclamation requiring all arms and ammunition to be delivered up to the officers commanding the various districts by a certain date. However, he cautioned against allowing magistrates to be involved, claiming that:

> the people, who are so deeply involved in the treason of United Irishmen, will not scruple to take the Oath of Allegiance. They will flock to such magistrates as will receive their oaths...without requiring their renunciation of the treasonable society, to which they were bound or the surrender of their arms.[605]

It was decided that only 'severe military execution' would 'recover the arms from the hands of the rebels'.[606] This was to be the method adopted. Army discipline was sacrificed as Lake and his commanders arrested and tortured many. House burnings became common. The methods used to obtain these guns in some instances increased disaffection amongst already hostile inhabitants and encouraged it in those previously loyal. There appeared to be a chasm between officially reported activity and the reality. Lake revealed to Knox that he believed the prejudices of the yeomanry would lead them 'to improper acts' while he informed the Dublin administration that he knew of 'no excesses committed by the military' and the 'behaviour of the army has been uncommonly chaste'.[607] In material terms Lake's campaign can be regarded as a limited success; by July 1797 11,600 weapons had been collected.[608] However,

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[604] Knox to [Cronsdaile?], 12 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/39; Pelham to Brownrigg, 12 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/40; Pelham to Knox, 12 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/42.
[605] Knox to Camden, 3 June 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0164/3.
[606] Knox to Abercorn, 21 March 1797, P.R.O.N.I. T.2452/1B3/6/10; Bartlett, 'Defence, Counter-insurgency and Rebellion', p. 270.
[607] Lake to Knox, March 1797, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/127; Lake to Pelham, 17 March 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33103/241; Lake to Camden, 25 March 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0165/5.
[608] McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* p. 575.

Lake's 'vigorous measure of disarming the inhabitants' succeeded in many cases in disarming only the 'well-affected, the others hiding their arms'.[609]

Beresford was guilty of some exaggeration when he claimed 'the United men are tumbled to dust'.[610] But the dragooning of Ulster achieved some of its aims. The United Irishmen had been subdued, at least outwardly, many weapons had been confiscated and law and order appeared to have been reinstated. There were critics of Lake's methods; many of these had been disillusioned prior to the dragooning while many country gentlemen, hitherto sceptical of Camden's assurances, were now satisfied that their safety was a priority for the Dublin government. By October 1797 Camden had reason to feel reasonably content; the military command seemed satisfied with the lord lieutenant, the Irish 'cabinet' believed that Camden had acted according to their will and the gentry felt part of the political decision-making process. The relative political tranquillity would not last. A controversy, begun in London, over the methods sanctioned by Camden and employed by his military commanders would soon transfer to Ireland and make Camden's final months in office very difficult.

Camden's attitude to the excesses of the military changed dramatically in the aftermath of the attempted French invasion of Ireland in December 1796. Hitherto, Camden had been reluctant to stray beyond the letter of the law. During the dragooning of Ulster it was apparent that he had he altered his position and determined to defend the Irish armed forces against any detractors, inside or outside parliament. Camden's willingness to acquiesce in the protection of an officer became clear when Sergeant Kerkes of the Dublin Militia was accused of killing Thomas Birch, a prisoner in his care. The escort was attacked near Armagh and Birch was killed while the militia tried to prevent his escape.[611] The sergeant surrendered himself and the evidence against him was strong, the central plank of the prosecution being that he wounded 'Birch

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[609] Memorial of the magistrates in the counties of Down and Armagh to General Lake, [Autumn, 1797?], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/249; McTier to Drennan, 17 March 1797, in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 303.
[610] Beresford to Auckland, 19 June 1797, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/120.
[611] Walter Synnott to ___, 15 March 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/239.

cruelly by giving him repeated wounds on the same part of his head which broke his skull in a dreadful manner, and at the time the prisoner's hands were tied'.[612] A trial was required to give the appearance of justice being done but there was no likelihood of a conviction; indeed Lake was anxious to promote the sergeant even before the case came to trial. Pelham, while he did not entertain the possibility that a guilty verdict be returned, cautioned against showing 'any mark of particular favour' prior to the trial assuring Lake that Camden would be 'glad to bestow some distinguishing mark of favour upon him' after his acquittal.[613] Camden justified his lack of sanctions against those who committed atrocities by stating that these were not policy decisions, rather soldiers acting 'under inferior officers' and that these abuses 'should be separated from the system itself'.[614] Individuals were misguided, the Irish military were exonerated. Lake wrote to Camden in October, fearful that the lord lieutenant disapproved of his actions in the north. Camden assured Lake that he believed his conduct to be both 'spirited and judicious' and tellingly remarked 'even did I think otherwise, you will always find me the last person who will cease to protect an officer who is acting with me in these difficult times'.[615] Between the spring of 1797 and Camden's return to England in June 1798, he rarely took action against or publicly criticised the military in Ireland or its commanders, however often he might do so in private.

IV

The increased military activity of the spring and summer of 1797 highlighted serious problems within the rank and file of the Irish armed forces. The army command and the Dublin administration had long been aware that the United Irishmen were targeting trained soldiers - particularly those in the militia. In the north, baited by the Orangemen, there was an increased likelihood of

[612] Walter Synnott, (Ballymoyer Lodge) to [General Nugent?], 23 March 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/281.
[613] Pelham to Lake, 29 March 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33013/298.
[614] Camden to ___, [May 1797], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0158/1.
[615] Lake to Camden, 18 October 1797; Camden to Lake, 20 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0165/6; /7.

militia men joining the United Irishmen. Prior to April 1797 members of the military forces who were also United Irishmen were usually discharged, or dispatched abroad to serve in the army or navy. Sanctions became much more severe when news spread of the Nore and Spithead naval mutinies in April and May 1797. Not only were these mutinies an attack on the British military and naval commands, but there was evidence of United Irish involvement.[616]

During the spring of 1797 it was decided that examples should be made of military men convicted of membership of illegal organisations. With the consent and active support of Camden and the Dublin Castle administration, the Monaghan Militia was singled out. Infiltration of the militia was not confined to the north but it was there that it had greatest potential for disruption. General Knox's imaginative solution to this problem was that militia regiments should not be employed in the north. He argued:

> if they are troops to be depended upon they are as good elsewhere as in the North - if on the contrary they are not to be depended upon, the danger arising from them is a thousand times greater by keeping them in the North than it would be were they employed in any other part of the kingdom.[617]

His suggestion was not adopted. The Monaghan Militia were based at Blaris camp situated close to Lisburn, about ten miles outside Belfast. Blaris was one of the largest military camps. Loughlinstown, just outside Dublin, and the camp at the Naul each accommodated about 4,000 men while the camp at Ardfinnan near Carlow held about 7,000 men. Blaris with close to 8,000 was the largest.[618] The Monaghan Militia had been stationed there since July 1796. There was a history of difficulties with discipline within the camp. Information had reached Dublin Castle by July 1796 that 'great way has been made in seducing the camp at Blaris'.[619] In August 1796 members of the Westmeath Militia had been caught attempting to plant a tree of liberty, while in September General Nugent wrote to

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[616] Elliott, *Partners*, pp 137-9.
[617] J Knox to Pelham, 19 April 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/381.
[618] McAnally, *Irish Militia*, p. 8.
[619] Cooke to Pelham, 27 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/96.

Pelham detailing his concern over the 'general dissatisfaction [among] the Catholic part of the soldiers' in Blaris camp.[620]

Towards the close of April 1797 Colonel Charles Leslie of the Monaghan Militia decided to take action against suspected members of the United Irishmen. On the information of the informer, Edward John Newell, John Reel, a corporal in the Monaghan Militia, was arrested.[621] Leslie promised Reel a pardon if he divulged the names of militamen who were also United Irishmen. Based on his information seven men from the Monaghan regiment were seized. Leslie intended apprehending the 'principle ringleader in each company' in order to 'strike terror amongst the entire regiment'. He concluded that Daniel Gillon, Owen McKenna, William McKenna and Peter McCarran, all privates, were 'most guilty' and he thought it 'highly necessary for the good of the militia service and most particularly the Monaghan regiment that they should suffer the severest punishment their crime will admit of'.[622] Leslie was not working alone. He was in constant communication with Lake and the military men liased closely with Camden and Pelham.

In the case of the Monaghan Militia, Camden and his chief secretary were convinced that the only way to put a halt to the increasing numbers of United Irishmen was by making a severe example of the guilty. Pelham encouraged the establishment of a court martial to try the accused, 'being satisfied that a military execution will do more good than fifty civil prosecutions: and I am convinced that if such a measure had been adopted last year the mischief would not have extended itself in the manner it has done'.[623]

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[620] Nugent, (Blaris Camp) to [Pelham?], 30 September 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/209; Camden to Portland, 6 August 1796, P.R.O. H.O./100/62/153.
[621] Confession of Edward John Newell, 13 April 1797; Camden to Portland, 28 April 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/202; /245; R.R. Madden, *The United Irishmen, their lives and times,* 1st Ser. 2nd ed., (Dublin, 1858), p. 549.
[622] Colonel Charles Leslie, (Monaghan Militia, Belfast) to [Pelham?], 25 April 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/397.
[623] Pelham to Lake, 27 April 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/401.

Camden concurred with his chief secretary; he informed Portland that he hoped the accused would 'be convicted capitally'.[624]

Every effort was made to attract as much attention as possible to the trial of the four accused. Their guilt was assumed; indeed Pelham entertained no doubt about this in his letters regarding the court martial. The Monaghan Militia was brought together where Leslie outlined the heinous nature of the crime. He informed the four accused that clemency was impossible unless they admitted their guilt. If they confessed Leslie promised to apply to the lord lieutenant for a pardon for the seventy men of the regiment who had come forward, confessed their guilt and begged for mercy. Camden magnanimously granted 'this pardon on consideration of the former good character of the Regiment [and] as a mark of his Ex[cellenc]y's esteem for Colonel Leslie and approbation of his spirited exertion on this occasion'. There was to be no pardon for the four ringleaders and Camden desired that no time be lost 'in bringing those who have been most guilty and are now in confinement to a General Court Martial'.[625]

Surrounded by publicity the court martial took place on 8 May and, as anticipated, a guilty verdict was returned.[626] On 12 May Pelham sent Lake the warrant for carrying the sentence of the court martial into execution. Despite the obvious official hard-line approach in this case, the four condemned men petitioned both Lake and the lord lieutenant to commute their sentences. In their petition they did not plead innocence; rather they claimed to have 'been innocently led into the horrid knowledge of United Irishmen'. They blamed 'drunkenness and bad advice' for their involvement with the United Irishmen and as 'young, able and willing' men offered to serve the king in any corps should they be pardoned.[627] Camden decided that despite his own wish to 'save one or two of these men...they are all so equally and so notoriously guilty – the

[624] Camden to Portland, 28 April 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/245.
[625] Pelham to Lake, 3 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/14; Camden to Portland, 6 May 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/268.
[626] *Proceeding of a General Court Martial held at the town of Belfast on Monday 8 May 1797.* (Belfast, 1797).
[627] Petition of William and Owen McKenna, Daniel Gillon and Peter McCarren to Lake and Camden, May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/57.

crime is so dangerous that he cannot think himself justified in relaxing from the determination he had taken before'. Both military and political authorities wanted to glean the maximum dramatic effect from the executions. Pelham advised Lake to adhere to Carhampton's instructions on 'making the ceremony as awful as possible'. He recommended that it was 'not only desirable but essential that the four men should suffer at the same instant if it can be so managed'. Pelham later suggested that 'it would be right to require those men who have confessed and received their pardon to take the oath of allegiance which might be very properly done after the execution is over and before the army quits the spot'.[628] The guilt or innocence of the men had long ceased to be the issue; that had been replaced by the desire to get the greatest dramatic effect.

The execution of the four men was carefully stage-managed. At one in the afternoon on 16 May at Blaris camp they were executed. It had been intended to have them executed by Scottish soldiers but they refused stating, 'let Irish kill Irish'.[629] They were shot simultaneously, beside their coffins, in front of all those stationed at Blaris; 'a detachment of the 22nd Light Dragoons, a detachment of the Royal Artillery, 64th Regiment, a battalion of Light Infantry, the Monaghan and Carlow Militia and the Argyle Fencibles'. To end the grim ceremony the troops were ordered to march past the bodies. After the march past, the men of the Monaghan Militia took an oath of allegiance. Lake was satisfied that 'every thing was carried on with great solemnity and the example appeared to have had the desired effect'.[630] It was agreed that there was little likelihood of any of the Monaghan Militia associating with the United Irishmen again.[631] Timed to coincide with the executions, Camden issued a proclamation offering a pardon to all those who voluntarily came forward to admit membership of an illegal organisation.[632] The execution of the privates at Blaris

[628] Pelham to Lake, 12 May 1797; Pelham to Lake, 14 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/44; /53.
[629] Drennan to McTier, [May 1797], *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 316.
[630] Lake, (Blaris, 3.00pm) to Pelham, 16 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/71.
[631] Lake to Pelham, 17 May 1797; Pelham to Lake, 20 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/75; /85.
[632] Curtin, *United Irishmen*, p. 78.

camp was commemorated in a number of ballads and poems including one by William Drennan:

> '...And by Irish hands, let the Irish bleed
> In the spirit of Cain, let them murder each ither [sic]
> And the United fall - by his United brither,' [sic]
> So spoke the indignant and high-minded Scot
> As a soldier he'd serve, as a hangman would not
> But the Irish went first, and the Irish went last
> And guarded by Irish the prisoners pass'd
> On their coffins knelt down - took a silent farewell
> The United then fir'd and the United fell![633]

The fate of the four Monaghan Militiamen was a permanent reminder of what would await those who failed to come forward of their own volition.

It appeared that the severe example set at Blaris camp had succeeded in suppressing at least any outward sign of collusion between militia regiments and the United Irishmen. The Duke of York praised the handling of the Monaghan Militia incident claiming that he 'never had a doubt that with firmness and prudence every thing must come right...and the well timed execution of the men of the Monaghan Militia has had the best effect'.[634] Pelham wrote to Major-General Loftus commenting that the 'example of the Monaghan Militiamen has had the best effects in the North and I hope that you will experience the same in the South'. However Pelham also noted that there were some regiments, most notably the Meath Militia, who were 'very active in administering [Defender] oaths to the country people wherever they happen to be quartered'. It was suggested that action be taken against these regiments.[635] General Nugent discovered a number of United Irishmen in the Light Company of the Royal Dublin Militia and he intended to 'make some examples' of the guilty.[636]

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[633] Drennan to McTier, [end May 1797], in *Drennan-McTier Letters,* ii, p. 320. 'Blaris Moor' ascribed to James Garland was a popular ballad in Belfast in 1797, G.D. Zimmerman, *Songs of Irish Rebellion. Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs, 1780-1900,* (Dublin, 1967), pp 129-32.
[634] York to Pelham, 9 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/207.
[635] Pelham to Loftus, 27 May 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/128.
[636] Nugent to Pelham, 25 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/271.

In Cork, General Coote was moved to take severe steps in the wake of the Monaghan Militia executions. There was 'a bad spirit in the troops' under Coote's command but rather gentler methods of dissuasion had been used than at Blaris. Men suspected of membership of the United Irishmen were closely observed and it was hoped that 'the benefits bestowed upon them, the changes in circumstances, as well as in place might operate favourably on them'. Such efforts met with little success and Coote decided, in light of the events at Blaris, to 'consider the offenders in two points of view: those who are subject by their crime to capital punishment and those who are less guilty as subject to corporal conviction, and to make immediate and severe examples of them'.[637] As a result of Coote's new policy, within three days, 145 soldiers submitted themselves to Coote and took an oath of allegiance. From the information given by these men an additional thirty soldiers and twenty-four other individuals were arrested.[638] As these had not come forward voluntarily they were to be tried by a general court martial. Pelham suggested that if any of those to be tried by a general court martial should provide useful information then their sentence might be remitted; if they came forward before their trial then he suggested that they be allowed to serve the Crown abroad, rather than have a huge number of executions.[639] Summary justice worked both ways. Those discovered to have been providing information about the movements of the United Irishmen were often harshly dealt with. One private in the Limerick Militia who had given information to the authorities was 'made drunk in Belfast, thrown over the bridge and drowned'.[640]

Pelham's suggestion to Coote that he send many of his soldiers to serve abroad was reflective of military and political policy. It was usual to dispatch known, or indeed potential, troublemakers to serve abroad in the British army. This served a number of purposes: the authorities had no need to furnish evidence of guilt as no trial was necessary, calm was restored to disaffected

[637] Dalrymple to Pelham, 25 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/278.
[638] Coote to [Pelham], 26 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/302.
[639] Pelham to Coote, 13 July 1797; Coote to Pelham, 9 July 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/362; /351.
[640] Memorandum from Cooke, [July/August 1797?], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33102/76.

areas and the British army, at the time engaged in an onerous and bloody war with revolutionary France, had its ranks bolstered. Carhampton, during the summer of 1795, had dispatched upwards of 1,300 men from Connaught to serve abroad.[641] With the introduction of the insurrection act the order of two magistrates was sufficient to send non-convicted suspects, often deemed the 'idle and disorderly', into the navy and the army. Fox raised objections to this in the English house of commons stating:

> Those against whom it was thought convictions could be procured were taken up; and those whom it would have been impossible to convict were transported in great numbers without the ceremony of a trial. To enable the government to pursue these violent measures the insurrection act was passed. Those who delight in violent measures, rejoiced in the effect of their application.[642]

The policy of sending troublesome Irishmen to serve in the army and navy would later create difficulties when additional troops were required to serve in Ireland. When Camden requested additional troops for Ireland in the spring of 1797, George III commented that 'the sending of any regular regiments of infantry would be highly imprudent as they are chiefly composed of Irish'.[643]

Given the enormity and serious nature of the issues which occupied Camden's time it is remarkable that the lord lieutenant had either the time or the inclination to become actively engaged in what might be seen as relatively small-scale localised disciplinary matters. Camden's involvement with the Monaghan Militia was not his first intervention in such issues. In August 1795 he had become personally involved in restoring order when the 111th Regiment briefly revolted in Dublin. This proved to be a minor incident but it highlighted Camden's eagerness to engage in military matters at all levels.[644] The following month Camden intervened in the case of Laurence O'Connor, a Defender, found guilty and sentenced to death for administering unlawful oaths to members of

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[641] See, for example, Carhampton to John Lloyd, 12 May [1795]; Governor of Cork to [Camden?], 25 June 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0146/14; 147/15; McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* pp 550-1; Lecky, *History of Ireland,* iii, p. 419.
[642] Fox in the house of commons, 23 March 1797, in *Speeches of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox,* 3rd ed., London, 1853, p. 636.
[643] George III to York, 22 April 1797, N.L.I. Ms 22326.
[644] Camden to Pelham, 24 August 1795; Sackville Hamilton to Pelham, 25 August 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/224; /226.

the North Mayo Militia. Camden insisted that O'Connor's head be placed on a spike above the entrance to Naas Gaol as an example should others be tempted to follow his example.[645]

Camden also became closely involved in the trial and execution of William Orr, a Presbyterian, who was found guilty of administering a United Irish oath and was sentenced to death. Two members of the Fifeshire Fencibles, Wheatly and Lindsay, were the chief witness for the prosecution. On the strength of their evidence, the jury returned a guilty verdict. However they accompanied this with a recommendation of mercy. The decision rested with Yelverton, now Lord Avonmore. He was unwilling to show clemency and appealed to Camden and Pelham for advice.[646] Pelham agreed that an 'example might be necessary'; it had worked in the case of the Monaghan Militia and might also work in this instance.[647] But Orr's conviction was not straightforward. Public opinion was divided and Orr had high-profile supporters including Lady Londonderry, Camden's sister.[648] In addition, the evidence against Orr was suspect. Reports had it that the jury had been plied with drink before returning their verdict and that those who were reluctant to find Orr guilty had been threatened with a prosecution for treason.[649] The day before Orr was due to be executed, Dr Macartney, the magistrate responsible for his arrest, disclosed information which cast doubt on the veracity of Wheatly's evidence.[650] Wheatly had confessed to Rev James Elder that 'in Scotland he had been guilty of seducing women which much distracted his mind; in Londonderry he had shot two innocent men and ran another through with his bayonet'.[651] Memorials were

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[645] McNeven, *Pieces of Irish History*, pp 111-2; John Brady, 'Laurance O'Connor, a Meath Schoolmaster', in *Irish Ecclesiastical Studies*, xlix, (1937), pp 281-7; idem, 'A Rebel Schoolmaster', in *Irish Book Lover*, xxvi (1938-9); Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism', pp 376-8.

[646] Yelverton to Pelham, 19 September 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/1.

[647] Pelham to Yelverton, 20 September 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/2.

[648] Haliday to Charlemont, 6 October 1797, in *Charlemont Correspondence*, ii, pp 306-7.

[649] W.J. Fitzpatrick, *The Life, Times and Contemporaries of Lord Cloncurry*, (Dublin, 1855), p. 123.

[650] McTier to Drennan, 9 October 1797, in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 340. Macartney became actively involved in petitioning to have Orr's sentence commuted, see C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/11; /7.

[651] 'Examination of Reverend James Elder, Dissenting Minister' 3 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/5.

sent to both Yelverton and Camden desiring that mercy be shown to Orr arguing that his release would have a 'more salutary effect than by making an example at the expense of his miserable life'.[652] Colonel Lucius Barber, head of military intelligence at Belfast, warned 'if Orr is pardoned you'll find no jury to convict again'.[653]

Despite the doubt surrounding his conviction and the lack of public support, Camden believed Orr's execution would serve as an example to those tempted to join the United Irishmen and he was executed in Belfast on 14 October 1797. Lord Moira, frequently publicly critical of government policy in Ireland, commented, 'his [Orr's] execution bears the stamp of political violence.... I cannot conceive how Lord Camden could do so impolitic an act'.[654] Camden, in an address to parliament in August 1797 had stated 'it will be my duty to temper the necessary acts of severity and rigour by conciliatory offers of clemency and pardon'.[655] This was one occasion where he might, sensibly, have acted with restraint. He had misread public opinion and instead of serving as a warning his execution rallied support to the United Irishmen. Copies of Orr's 'dying declaration' were widely distributed. In it, Orr eloquently proclaimed his innocence of the charges against him claiming:

> if to have loved my Country, to have known its wrongs, to have felt the injuries of the persecuted Catholic, and to have united with them and all other religious persuasions in the most orderly and least sanguinary means of procuring redress: - if those be felons, I am a felon, but not otherwise.[656]

Badges bearing the legend 'Remember Orr' were worn, toasts to Orr's memory drunk and poems eulogising the Antrim farmer were written and circulated. William Drennan's poem 'The Wake of William Orr' is perhaps the best known. Drennan succeeded in linking Orr's death with Christ's and placing his death in

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[652] 'Memorial sent to Yelverton and Camden', [early October 1797], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/6. See also ___ to ___, 10 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/9/2, /3; ___ to Lord ___, 12 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/10.
[653] Barber to Cooke, 10 October 1797, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/32/160.
[654] Moira to Colonel J. McMahon, 15 October 1797, in *Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, iii, p. 372.
[655] 3 July 1797, *Parliamentary Register*, xv, p. 3 July 1797.
[656] 'Dying Declaration of William Orr of Ferranshane, in the County of Antrim', Carrickfergus Gaol, 5 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0131/12A.

the context of six hundred years of struggle - fitting for an obscure young Presbyterian who would take his place, albeit temporarily, among the pantheon of Irish republican martyrs:

> ...Why cut off in palmy youth?
> Truth he spoke, and acted truth -
> Countrymen, 'Unite!' he cried,
> And died - for what his Saviour died.
> God of Peace and God of Love,
> Let it not thy vengeance move!
> Let it not thy lightenings draw -
> A Nation guillotin'd by law!
> Hapless nation! rent and torn,
> Thou were early taught to mourn,
> Warfare of six hundred years -
> Epoch marked with blood and tears!...[657]

The administration came down heavily on those who supported Orr. Peter Finerty, printer of *The Press* newspaper, published a piece referring to 'William Orr convicted at the last assizes...for administering an unlawful oath...had been convicted by the perjury of witnesses bribed by the government and that he had been murdered'. He was brought to trial, found guilty of libel and sentenced to two years imprisonment.[658] Edward John Newell informed Camden that Orr's execution had had a dramatic effect:

> The people execrate you...they look upon you as the most sanguinary of men...they behold you as the executioner of Orr, their friend and brother, his death is a call to battle and stirs them up to courage and revenge. They say...Blood must have Blood.[659]

The motivation behind the executions of the Monaghan Militiamen and William Orr may have been the same but the results were dramatically different. One succeeded in flushing out half-hearted members of the United Irishmen, the other provided a martyr and hardened the resolve of those already determined against the administration.

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[657] William Drennan, 'The Wake of William Orr', in Andrew Carpenter, *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, (Cork, 1998), pp 535-6.
[658] *Gentlemen's Magazine*, January 1798.
[659] Newell to Camden, 21 February 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0197/3.

V

The Monaghan Militia were anxious to prove their freshly sworn allegiance to the government. They were not long waiting for such an opportunity and their target was the *Northern Star* newspaper. The final destruction of the paper took place on 19 May 1797 when the Militia gained access to the offices of the *Northern Star*, ransacked the building and smashed the printing presses. The perpetrators of this attack went unpunished. The raid on the newspaper's offices was not sanctioned by the authorities. On 16 April Lake had requested permission from Pelham to 'be allowed to seize and burn the whole apparatus' but this had not been granted.[660] However, it was well known that Dublin Castle was anxious to silence the newspaper. Despite two trials of the proprietors in 1794 for the publication of seditious material, the detention of the owners in September 1796 and an attack on the newspaper office in February 1797, the paper had continued to publish.[661] Lord Moira was convinced that the actions of the Monaghan Militia were not decided upon by the soldiers themselves. He firmly believed that the destruction of the *Northern Star* offices took place by 'the secret direction of government'.[662] It was certainly true that there was little that could have pleased both the military and civil authorities better than to prevent the *Northern Star* being printed but there is no evidence that Camden, or his advisors, knew of the attack in advance. Pleased that the paper had been silenced Camden conceded that the behaviour of the soldiers was ill-advised. He informed Portland that:

> its publications have been uniformly of the most dangerous and seditious nature and it has been industriously and cheaply circulated...throughout the north. No engine of disaffection has been so prevalent and successful. However, the conduct of the soldiery in demolishing the presses is unwarrantable, yet the suppression of this paper is so material at present that I have not ordered an investigation of the subject but have approved the measure of not permitting a renewal of its publication. It is impossible to foresee that the nature of the measures which the situation of the country has rendered

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[660] Lake to Pelham, 16 April 1797, in McAnally, *Irish Militia,* p. 115.
[661] *A Trial of the Proprietors of the* Northern Star, *28 May 1794; A Trial of the Proprietors of the* Northern Star, *17 November 1794;* Colonel Lucius Barber to Cooke, 3 February 1797, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/28/199; *Northern Star,* 1 February 1797.
[662] Moria to Lake, 2 February 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence 56/136.

> necessary may in some instances be carried on with a warmth which might better have been suppressed and that some irregularities may be committed.[663]

The controversy regarding the destruction of the *Northern Star* offices raged until November and Camden felt obliged to write to the prime minister justifying the fact that the soldiers who destroyed the presses of the *Northern Star* went unpunished. He commented:

> I will fairly own that I was not willing to pursue with much vigour this outrage. It did much good at the time, and to have severely punished the soldiers when they are required to act with spirit would have been very dangerous. There was no military punishment.[664]

Perhaps Camden recognised the truth in Sir George F. Hill's comment that 'If the *Northern Star* had continued you never would have broken thro' the ranks of the rebels; they have nothing now to cheer them, and if it again is suffered to appear, on your heads be the consequences'.[665] The Monaghan Militia were not satisfied with one dramatic display of their new-found loyalty and in June 1797 Pelham wrote to Lake:

> I have had a report that many of the public houses at Belfast have been wrecked...if that should be...I think it would be better in future to repress the ardour of our friends the Monaghan in that particular as I am convinced that such acts however natural and under circumstances to a degree excusable must in the end subvert all discipline.[666]

Lord Moira, a peer in both the Irish and British house of lords, regularly voiced concerns over the manner in which the Irish government operated. Moira was an experienced soldier who maintained an active and critical interest in the military affairs of Ireland. Respected for his military expertise, he was often criticised for his liberal political views. Moira presided over a meeting of 700 men held at Ballynahinch in October 1796 where it was resolved that '...we...regard with utter abhorrence all persecution of religious opinion'.[667] During 1792 and 1793 Moira had harboured ambitions to be lord lieutenant of

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[663] Camden to Portland, 30 May 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/345.
[664] Camden to Pitt, 3 November 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2257.
[665] Hill to Cooke, [June?] 1797, N.A.I. Rebellion Papers, 620/31/182.
[666] Pelham to Lake, 6 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/185.
[667] *Gentleman's Magazine,* February 1797.

Ireland but was to be disappointed.[668] He had a close friendship with Lady Londonderry and, like Lord Charlemont, he found Camden's sister to be most convivial company. By July 1797 Moira had taken such a stand against the Irish government that he felt that '...propriety, my dear Lady Londonderry demands that you should relinquish me'.[669] He complained that Camden was appeared incapable of making decisions and was 'not only advised but much influenced by the speaker'.[670] Moira had spent much of the summer of 1797 collecting detailed lists of alleged atrocities carried out in the area around Ballynahinch and he wrote to Camden requesting the lord lieutenant to put a halt to the military excesses.[671] Moira's wife was also known for her radical views and Dromore noted that 'green here is the disaffected colour and Lady M[oira] carries it so far that she wears green stockings and takes care to lift up her petticoats to show them as she gets in and out of her carriage'.[672]

In March 1797, in the British house of lords, Moira moved that the king intervene to 'remedy the discontents which unhappily prevailed in Ireland'. This motion was easily defeated but Moira continued to agitate for reform.[673] By November 1797 Moira was regularly providing accounts of the cruel methods used by the troops in the north. He alleged that such measures were not 'solitary and insulated...but what is adopted as the system of government; [not] a casual system but one deliberately determined upon and regularly persevered in'.[674] General Lake considered that much of Moira's criticisms were directed towards him and he reacted with fury. He claimed that Moira made reference to 'instances of cruelty I declare to God I have never heard of before'. He demanded the right to clear his character from 'diabolical and vile

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[668] A.P.W. Malcomson, 'A Lost Natural Leader: John James Hamilton, First Marquess of Abercorn', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy,* 88c, (1988), pp 62, 78n.
[669] Moira to Lady Londonderry, 16 July 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 C564/4.
[670] Moira to Lady Londonderry, 14 January 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 C564/3
[671] See for example, Moira to ___, 20 July 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 C564/5; Moira to Camden, 7 August 1797; Camden to Moira, 6 September 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0192/3; /4.
[672] Dromore to Mrs Percy, 5 May 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/11.
[673] March 1797, *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii, p. 435.
[674] November 1797, *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii, p 768.

insinuations'.[675] Others, including Robert Steel, commander of Dragoons stationed in Derry, were quick to refute Moira's allegations of the ill-treatment of civilians.[676] Lake demanded an apology from Moira in November 1797 but did not hear from him until January 1798. Moira claimed that he intended to make no allusion to Lake in his speech, maintaining that the newspapers printed misleading accounts of the speech. He further claimed that he had made no attack on the military itself, that his attack was not on 'casual excesses but of system'.[677] Moira complained that many of the passages were 'completely perverted from any meaning of mine'. He also acknowledged that the version printed in the pamphlet appeared to refer to Lake's conduct but Moira insisted that this was never his intention.[678] Lake's brother also wrote to assure Lake of his good standing both with Moira and York.[679] Lake seemed satisfied with Moira's explanations and took pains to inform his officers that Moira had not intended blame to fall on them.[680] Others were not so convinced. Lord Cavan believed Moira's letters to be 'studied and guarded' and felt that, despite his words to the contrary, Lake was held responsible by Moira for the excessive violence that had occurred.[681]

Moira's criticisms of the dragooning of Ulster had attracted much attention in London. Not only did newspapers comment on them but his speech in the house of lords was printed in pamphlet form and sold for three pennies. In light of such attention questions were raised in the British parliament and Camden was requested to give an account of government military policy during 1797 and to defend himself against criticism levelled at him in England. Camden accepted that men suspected of membership of the United Irishmen were threatened with having their houses destroyed but he maintained that while many houses 'have been consumed by fire, but scarcely any in which arms have not been found'. Camden argued strongly that the executions at Blaris camp

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[675] Lake to Pelham, 30 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/253.
[676] R.W. Steel to ___, 5 December 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 59254A/49.
[677] Moira to Lake, 26 January 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/134.
[678] Moria to Lake, 2 February 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/136.
[679] Warwick Lake to [Lake], 27 January 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/135.
[680] Lake to Moira, 5 February 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/137.
[681] Cavan to Gen ___, 14 February 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/138.

were justified for they restored the militia to their loyalty. Camden acknowledged that 'the Government meant to strike terror' but felt that this terror was justified.[682] He did not deny that violence was being used to keep the north subdued but he maintained that no 'other line of conduct could ensure quiet and give satisfaction'.[683] Pelham in his communications with Grenville acknowledged that 'it cannot be denied that some things have been done which are to be regretted. At the same time I believe no army ever behaved better under similar circumstances'.[684] Camden resented the fact that Moira had raised these contentious issues in the British house of lords and he argued that Irish matters should be dealt with in the Irish house of lords. Moira, as a key figure in the alliance between the Irish and English whigs, understood that greater damage could be done to Pitt's administration if he raised objections to the security policy being pursued in Ireland in the English house of lords rather than in its Irish equivalent.[685] If Moira's charges had been raised in the Irish house of lords they would have generated little discussion, been promptly contradicted and then dismissed.[686]

Lord Moira had succeeded where Camden had failed. He had forced Whitehall to pay attention to Irish affairs. But by now the attention was unwelcome and the London parliament and government appeared ready to criticise rather than support. Camden had repeatedly alerted Whitehall to the deteriorating security situation in Ireland but had failed to generate active interest in Irish affairs. He did not receive either the military or financial subsidies he desired. There were doubts in London as to the efficacy or the necessity of the dragooning of Ulster. This indicated to Camden that Whitehall was far removed from the realities in Ireland and left without guidance he succumbed to pressures from the Irish military command, the gentry and the 'cabinet' and instituted a system of severe military repression. A key change in

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[682] Camden to Pitt, 3 November 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2257.
[683] Camden to Grenville, 21 November 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 59254A/5.
[684] Pelham to Grenville, 2 November 1797, in *Dropmore Manuscripts*, iii, p. 385; B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/188.
[685] Cullen, 'Crisis and Rebellion', in *Revolution, Counter Revolution and Reform*, p. 23.
[686] Camden to Grenville, 21 November 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 59254A/5.

Camden's attitude was his new-found tendency to excuse almost any excess. The atrocities committed by government forces during the dragooning of Ulster are almost invariably blamed on General Lake. Lake certainly sanctioned these actions but Camden must also bear some of the blame. He intervened in many cases and insisted on harsh punishment being meted out to those deemed guilty. Camden's policies had facilitated the military excesses; between the autumn of 1796 and the spring of 1797 he had introduced the insurrection act, suspended habeas corpus, established the yeomanry and overseen the dragooning of Ulster.

In many respects it was a reluctant march towards the severe military repression of spring 1797. It had been hoped that the parliamentary measures, if successful, would have restored law and order to the countryside. Castlereagh had stated that the insurrection act was necessary because 'at present, trial and conviction by a jury is scarcely practicable in a country where such disturbances exist'.[687] On its own the insurrection act did not greatly improve the number of convictions secured in jury trials.[688] However, as one element of a programme that became increasingly repressive it achieved some success. Nancy Curtin, in a recent article has argued that:

> The revived efficiency of the courts by the autumn of 1797 in punishing the seditious and disorderly was achieved only after the introduction of strong military repression, the suspension of habeas corpus, and the resort to martial law. Indeed the primary reason for the adoption of such draconian measures of counter-revolution was the failure to arrest republican mobilisation through the normal judicial process.[689]

The series of measures, approved by parliament and implemented, for the most part, by the military were intended to halt the rapid expansion of the United Irish movement. In this they were, largely, unsuccessful.

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[687] Castlereagh, in debate on the insurrection bill, February 1796, in *Speeches of Henry Grattan*, pp 209-225.
[688] For details on 'Trials and Convictions in Ulster, 1796-8' see Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, pp 83-5.
[689] Curtin, 'Magistracy in Ulster', p. 41.

VI

It would be inaccurate to conclude that Camden was concerned exclusively with military matters. He also had to contend with both the British and Irish parliaments. In order to pass the legislation required, Camden had to ensure that these bills had safe passage through parliament. There were rarely difficulties in getting government sponsored bills ratified. The opposition, vocally strong, was numerically weak. It has been seen that the insurrection and indemnity acts and the suspension of the habeas corpus act were passed, with few problems, by parliament. Camden and Pelham, who acted as Camden's representative in the house of commons, did not dismiss the Irish parliament but they were certainly conscious of the fact that, as A.P.W. Malcomson puts it they:

> had been appointed by the British government to which alone they were responsible, and so ultimately to the British, certainly not to the Irish parliament. If the Irish administration was defeated in the Irish house of commons, the result was - not a change of Irish administration and Irish cabinet - but deadlock, until the Irish administration succeeded in re-establishing its majority.[690]

Camden's responsibility to the British parliament had been made very clear when in March 1797 the British house of commons met to debate the State of Ireland. In response to a powerful and scathing attack on the British government by Charles James Fox, Pitt justified British involvement in Irish affairs:

> but may there not be circumstances which justify the interference of the executive government with Ireland? ...Can it not interfere in and control the conduct of the Lord Lieutenant...? As to the Lord Lieutenant and his ministers, the power remains in this country to control them and advice may be offered to the executive government on that point.[691]

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[690] Malcomson, *Foster*, p. 388.

[691] *Report of Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland in Session 1796-7...to which are annexed debates in the British Parliament upon Mr Fox's motion, touching the State of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1797), p. 226.

There was to be no uncertainty; Pitt, his ministers and the king had overall control over the lord lieutenant of Ireland and his 'cabinet'. In the lords a similar sentiment was apparent in a speech by Lansdowne:

> The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, as a minister was accountable to the British as well as the Irish parliament; and therefore they had a right to watch over the measures of his administration, and to censure or advise him as they might deem proper.[692]

In the Irish house of commons, George Ponsonby justified the actions of Fox and Moira in raising the issue of Ireland in the English houses of parliament. He argued that only by raising the issue there would any attention be paid to the difficulties associated with the Irish administration. He stated:

> If a viceroy misconducted himself in the administration of this country, everybody knew he was liable to animadversion and censure in the British parliament; what, therefore, could there be illegal in the interference of that parliament to prevent that misconduct?[693]

Grattan also complained that little could be achieved in the Irish parliament because:

> the viceroy's function was only to obey orders, and to be the English agent in the kingdom of Ireland, that...it established a monarchy of clerks - a government to be carried on by post and under the dominion of spies, who were less than gentlemen, and more than ministers.[694]

Camden conceded that the fact that he was not responsible to the Irish parliament in some ways reduced the value of parliamentary debate, but he was adamant that any change in the system would weaken the connection between Britain and Ireland, and he was unwilling, and indeed unable, to sanction that. He acknowledged that:

> There are certainly objections to the present constitution of Ireland. It is a subject of complaint that individuals have so much influence in the decisions of parliament: but as long as Ireland remains under circumstances to be useful to England, my opinion is that she must be governed by an English party.[695]

Yet, this should not imply that Camden felt he could completely ignore the parliamentary opposition. During 1795 several bills were passed which met

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[692] 21 March 1797, *Parliamentary History*, xxxiii.
[693] 20 March 1797, *Parliamentary Register*, xvii, p. 155.
[694] 21 April 1795, *Parliamentary Register*, xv, pp 189-90.
[695] Camden to Portland, 3 April 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/176.

with opposition approbation.[696] Achieved, in the aftermath of Fitzwilliam's recall these success were bitter-sweet. The Catholic bill, championed by the whigs, had been defeated, but not as decisively as Camden might have wished.

In January 1796 Camden anticipated a quiet parliamentary session, commenting 'As far as I am enabled to judge from the line which was taken by the opposition...I trust I am not too sanguine in holding out...the prospect of a session neither turbulent nor long'.[697] It was noted in the same month that 'our Irish opposition has dwindled into nothing'.[698] There were no concessions to the opposition in the parliamentary sessions of 1796. As the security situation deteriorated the opposition were to be kept as ineffectual as possible for fear they would incite movements for reform outside parliament, indeed one of the motives behind Camden's proclamation of 17 May 1797 was to put a halt to the increasing number of whig inspired public meetings that called for radical reform.[699] This proclamation allowed the military to disperse assemblies without first receiving permission from a civil magistrate.[700] Throughout the parliamentary sessions of 1796 and 1797 the opposition failed to muster more than 30 votes in support of any of their motions.[701]

Grattan, without any anticipation of success, proposed a Catholic bill in October 1796. At this time the British war effort was in crisis. Peace was looking increasingly unlikely and Spain, a former ally of Britain, had recently re-entered the conflict on the side of the French. Grattan justified the admission of Catholics to parliament by noting that the British had no qualms about accepting Catholic allies in their European war: 'It seems Catholic foreigners may have the command of regiments and Catholic natives must not sit in parliament; or rather it seems it is not Popery which excites the jealousy of ministers, but the people, the Irish people'. He noted that Britain found herself in

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[696] *New History of Ireland*, vi, p. 345. Kelly, *Henry Grattan*, p. 33.
[697] Camden to Portland, 22 January 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/52/15.
[698] Haliday to Charlemont, 28 January 1797, in *Charlemont Correspondence*, ii, p. 293.
[699] Cullen, 'Alliances and Misalliances', p. 229.
[700] See Chapter 6 for a more detailed examination of this proclamation.
[701] *Parliamentary Register*, xv-xvii.

crisis with little support on continental Europe. He argued that the poor state of the first coalition made it imperative that loyal Catholic subjects in Ireland be well treated:

> where is she [Britain] in Europe? Where is her confederacy? Where are the Dutch - will they join her fleet? No; they have joined the fleets of France already: they hate England because she preferred the power of a family and of a party to that of a people. The Spaniard, will he join her fleet? No; he is in treaty offensive and defensive with France, and at war with England, and has joined the French already. The king of Prussia, will he fight for her? No; he took your money indeed, but he is at peace with France; prudent prince! and will scarcely harbour the British envoy! The Sardinian, he is at peace with France. Where is the Duke of Parma, the princes of Germany, the Prince of Hesse, and the Elector of Hanover? Such has been the end of her great confederacy; fear, flight and evaporation.[702]

It was hardly surprising that Grattan's argument that allowing Catholics into parliament would assist the British war effort fell on deaf ears. His motion was defeated by 143 votes to 19.

Despite the fact that the opposition could muster very few votes, efforts were made to prevent the progress of any requests for parliamentary reform. Aware that parliamentary reform was regularly demanded by radical groups outside parliament, in December 1796 Camden urged Viscount O'Neill to prevent the magistrates of Antrim from making resolutions to reform the Irish parliament. He argued that 'a reform of parliament has been the cloak under which the United Irishmen have been enabled to carry on all their secret and treasonable associations'.[703] O'Neill assured the lord lieutenant that the gentlemen of Antrim would relinquish the idea of proposing parliamentary reform.[704]

During the 1797 spring session of parliament a number of whig sponsored motions were dismissed, including one, in March, to repeal the insurrection act. This series of setbacks culminated in May with the failure of

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[702] October 1796, *Parliamentary Register,* xvii, pp 72-126.
[703] Camden to O'Neill, 13 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0188/1.
[704] O'Neill to Camden, 15 December 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0188/2.

William Ponsonby's wide ranging resolutions on reform. With this defeat Grattan and number of opposition members seceded from parliament. Grattan, with his usual rhetorical flourish stating:

> we have offered you our measure, you will reject it; we deprecate yours; you will persevere; having no hopes left to persuade or dissuade, and having discharged our duty, we shall trouble you no more, and after this day shall not attend the house of commons![705]

Lord Waterford thought little of the opposition secession commenting '...here the opposition are violent as in England but their leaders are few in number and except Grattan and the Ponsonbys are poor in property and poor in character. Courage is not possessed by many of them'.[706] The secession of the whigs was something of a relief to the government who had feared the loss of some seats in the forthcoming general election. Haliday wrote to Charlemont:

> I am told that our good parliament no longer exists. This excites no sensation; and I believe we are on the eve of beholding the most peaceful and drowsy election which I, at least, ever witnessed... They [the electorate] are become quite indifferent to a nominal house of commons, ever ready to pass unconstitutional acts, while they are bowed to the dust by proclamations eking out these and by military force and violence.[707]

His prediction proved accurate and the parliament that was returned following the general election was overwhelmingly in favour of the incumbent Irish administration.

The whig secession from parliament left the way clear for the government to contest the 1797 general election without fear of a resurgent opposition. Indeed, some of those, including Grattan and Lord Henry Fitzgerald, who seceded in May did not even contest the election. Despite the lack of serious opposition the advent of an election was an opportunity for some to curry favour with the lord lieutenant. The Archbishop of Dublin was quick to inform Camden that he believed he was the 'only man in this kingdom whose conduct on the Regency though constantly applauded has be constantly overlooked'

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[705] Grattan, speaking on the reform bill. May 1797, in *Speeches of Henry Grattan,* pp 332-343.
[706] Waterford to ___, 29 May 1797, B.L. Windham Papers, Add Ms 37877/68.
[707] Haliday to Charlemont, 13 July 1797, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, p. 303

before requesting Camden's advice on what candidates he should support in the county and city of Dublin and counties Meath, Wicklow and Kildare'.[708]

The opposition made little impact in the 1798 parliament. The one issue which for a brief period re-ignited strong parliamentary debate was that of absentee tax. Absentees were the source of regular complaints from resident landlords, politicians and military commanders. Nancy Curtin has convincingly argued that the absence of many landlords from their estates, particularly in the north of Ireland, weakened the magistracy and, in so doing, weakened governmental control in that area.[709] General Dalrymple had complained in October 1795 that:

> The distant parts of France before the revolution were not more abandoned by the landlords than are the counties near this place, with a very few exceptions their houses are falling into decay and the wretched peasant delivered over to some sharping nefarious attorney who pleases his lord for a while by partial, ill-timed exactions. This being the case, can good humour or tranquillity be perpetual?[710]

The loss of control in parts of the country was often attributed to the lack of resident gentry and their absence accounted, in part, for the introduction of the insurrection act. In September 1796 Edward Cooke detailed the difficulties associated with ensuring quiet in the countryside without the presence of resident landowners:

> You know the north is populous in the extreme & there are no resident gentry – Ld Hardford will tell you his Irish property is the finest in the world, his rents the best paid, his estates the most thriving, his tenantry the most rich, comfortable & independent – He will then tell you also that last year he set his Demesne, that he has no representation of his Family upon it, that he cannot command the votes of his Tenants... How is this to be mended? I know not, for I know that the absentees will not attend to their estates so long as they receive the rents of them, & that they had rather spend the receipts in England. But they will do well in the present crisis to step forward, for I can assure you, the want of their influence is generally complained of & if any accident happens

[708] Archbishop of Dublin to Camden, 8 July 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0201/6; [Pelham] to Portland, 1 August 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/97.
[709] Curtin, 'Magistracy in Ulster', pp 39-54.
[710] Dalrymple to Pelham, 9 October 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33101/316.

> much, no not the whole mischief, will be attributed to their non residence and a formidable attack may be made on them.[711]

Cooke saw little reason to revise his opinion by January 1797 when he again complained to Auckland that the absentee landlords 'are the cause of all the disaffection which has happened'.[712]

Private mutterings against absentees became a parliamentary issue on 28 February 1798. This was not the first time it had been raised; such a tax had been debated and narrowly defeated in October 1773.[713] Pitt was not in favour of such a tax; he hoped 'that a tax on absentees will be relinquished and a general land tax to which I cannot imagine a real objection substituted in its room'.[714] Camden thought such a tax would not be carried 'for the interests of proprietors of land weigh so much more with them than any other consideration that they will not consent to this tax'.[715] Camden's assessment proved correct but there was substantially more support for this measure than he might have expected. Those in favour of the imposition of the tax argued that:

> the absence of landlords was the cause of the disturbances that had taken place in the country for half a century; had checked its growth and disgraced its character. By their absence, the country was deprived of their authority as magistrates, as landlords, as masters, who would reward the industrious, repress the disorderly, and thus remove the spirit of discontent.

It was estimated that there were 83 absentee landlords and the proposed tax of two shillings in the pound would bring in, a much needed, £150,000 per annum. The tax was opposed for a number of reasons, one member, Henry Cavendish, argued that the measure was 'unjust, unconstitutional and impolitic. Unjust, as being a partial tax; unconstitutional, as restraining natural liberty, and impolitic, as going to deter strangers from vesting their property in this country'.[716]

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[711] Cooke to Auckland, 3 September 1796, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/59.
[712] Cooke to Auckland, 10 January 1797, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/19.
[713] Johnson, *Britain and Ireland,* Appendix E, pp 402-8; McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* pp 234-8.
[714] Pitt to Camden, 8 February 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/217
[715] Camden to Pitt, 12 February 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/229.
[716] 28 February 1798, *Parliamentary Register,* pp 378-402.

The proposed tax was defeated by a vote of 122 to 49.[717] An easy victory for the government but this should not hide the fact that this was one of the largest minorities the opposition had been able to gather together throughout Camden's time in Ireland. There was much support for such a tax from many who were usually government supporters and the administration had to work hard to ensure that these parliamentary representatives did not vote for the motion. Beresford confessed that his personal sentiments were inclined to it but 'I could not assist in lowering the authority of government and therefore we all voted against it'.[718] Some M.P.s, including all those beholden to Lord Shannon, abstained on the matter. Lord Buckingham was relieved, if somewhat surprised, to hear that the motion had been defeated but he believed that the issue had only been taken off the agenda temporarily.[719]

VII

Camden's policies, both inside and outside parliament, provoked criticism and praise. Without the benefit of foresight Cooke, during October 1796, wrote, rather smugly, to Auckland that 'the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act...the rejection of two questions in favour of the Catholics...an unanimous bill for arming the counties and an unanimous vote of credit of £500,000, make altogether a brilliant week'.[720] Grattan, commenting on the same period, by contrast, listed the many policies of Camden's government which he argued had exacerbated an already volatile situation:

> The convention bill, the gunpowder bill, the indemnity bill, the second indemnity bill, the insurrection bill, the suspension of habeas corpus, General Lake's proclamation by order of the government; the order to the military to act without waiting for the civil power, the imprisonment of the middle orders without law; the detaining them in prison without bringing them to trial, the transporting them without law; burning their houses;

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[717] Ibid.
[718] Beresford to Auckland, 7 March 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers T.3229/2/23.
[719] Buckingham to Camden, 11 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0198/1.
[720] Cooke to Auckland, 20 October 1796, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers T.3229/2/9.

> burning their villages; murdering them; crimes, many of which are public, and many committed which are concealed by the suppression of a free press by military force...[721]

Far from having pacified the north these developments, it was argued, antagonised many who resented the government's repressive measures. As Beresford observed 'Rebellion sleeps, but it is not dead'.[722] The magistrates of Down and Armagh noted that 'they [United Irishmen] now openly recruit, wear the ensigns of Civil War and say "the scabbard is thrown away"'.[723] During 1798 Camden would reap the bloody harvest of his repressive policies.

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[721] 'Grattan's Address to His Fellow Citizens', Dublin 1797, in Madden, *United Irishmen,* p. 298. Both the convention and gunpowder bills had been passed in 1793, while Westmorland was lord lieutenant. The gunpowder act made it necessary to have a license in order to import or transport any arms or munitions, while the convention act made illegal all assemblies claiming to represent the people with the aim of 'procuring an alteration of matters established by law in church or state'. McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* pp 436-7.

[722] Beresford to Westmorland, 20 June 1797, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 145-7.

[723] Memorial of the magistrates in the counties of Down and Armagh to General Lake, [autumn 1797?], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33103/249.

6

'What dreadful times we live in'[724]

Resignations and Rebellion, December 1797 - June 1798

For Camden, late 1797 and early 1798, were indeed 'dreadful times'. Pitt, writing from the relative calm of London, remarked 'I feel our time is passed in holidays in comparison with yours'.[725] The first six months of 1798 saw Camden, while dealing with increasing turmoil in Ireland, become preoccupied with effecting his return to the serenity of his 'two...places in the country and...a house in London'.[726] Camden had left for Ireland in March 1795 determined to govern Ireland according to the directions he received from London. The Irish 'cabinet' was to be humoured but not relied on; ministers in Whitehall were to be Camden's chief advisors. This remained the case until late 1796. However, London's refusal to take Camden's fear of invasion seriously and the subsequent lack of sufficient monetary or military aid forced Camden to look inside Ireland for the support he required to govern the country. Throughout 1797 Camden had become increasingly reliant on both the Irish 'cabinet' and the gentry. His focus was more insular and while he continually requested the allocation of more money and more troops from Whitehall he was primarily concerned with the workings of internal government. As the previous chapter has argued political and military matters were always closely connected in Ireland and became increasingly so during 1797, so that by the time Sir Ralph Abercromby was appointed commander-in-chief of the forces in Ireland there was, in reality, no distinction between the two.

The final months of Camden's viceroyalty were beset by difficulties. The eagerness with which Camden embraced Abercromby's appointment was

[724] Louisa Conolly to Duchess of Leinster, 14 March 1798, B.L. Letters to the Duchess of Leinster, Add Ms 30990/12.
[725] Pitt to Camden, 31 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/4.
[726] Camden to Pitt, 10 February 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/221.

quickly replaced by despair. The ill-advised behaviour of his commander-in-chief provoked much bad feeling within the Irish military and generated much criticism from both politicians and the gentry in England and Ireland. Ultimately Abercromby resigned but did so as Ireland was poised on the edge of rebellion. Exhausted and anxious to return to England, Camden distanced himself from the business of government and set about persuading Whitehall of the necessity of appointing one individual to combine the roles of lord lieutenant and commander-in-chief.

I

Abercromby arrived in Dublin in early December 1797. A distinguished general, he had recently returned from a tour of duty in the West Indies. His acceptance, albeit reluctant, of the position was greeted enthusiastically by Camden.[727] Abercromby was one of the few leading generals with personal experience of Ireland; he had served there before and during the American Revolution. Of the four commanders-in-chief, Cuninghame, Carhampton, Abercromby and Lake, who worked with Camden, Abercromby was the only one to meet with his unqualified approval. Camden had first suggested Abercromby for the position in August 1796, as Cuninghame's replacement. Both Abercromby and General David Dundas were regarded by Camden as 'peculiarly proper men for the command'.[728] But, command of the military in Ireland was not an attractive posting in late 1796 and neither man was appointed. When approached in the autumn of 1797, Abercromby accepted the position because he felt duty-bound. Colonel Robert Brownrigg, secretary to the Duke of York, wrote to Camden explaining that Abercromby 'does not wish for the situation of commander-in-chief in Ireland but if ordered he will undertake the task with cheerfulness'.[729] Abercromby's reluctance to taken on the position of commander-in-chief was widely known. Portland warned Camden; 'I have reason to think that there is not any other situation which he would not prefer to

[727] Camden to Pitt, 24 September 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2226.
[728] Camden to Pelham, 17 August 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/103.
[729] Robert Brownrigg, (Horse Guards) to Pelham, 22 September 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/91.

that which you are so desirous that he should [accept]'.[730] By early October Abercromby had agreed to move to Ireland but insisted on going first to Scotland to recuperate as his health had been badly affected by his recent the tour of duty. Camden, increasingly frustrated with Carhampton, was anxious that the change in command should take place as promptly as possible.

Camden had never been satisfied with Carhampton who himself had not wanted the position preferring that of master general of the ordnance.[731] Carhampton was regarded by Camden as stubborn and prone to jealousies. By August 1797 Camden lamented that 'Lord Carhampton is so difficult to restrain upon his own schemes and so unwilling...to attend to the suggestions of others'.[732] In a private letter to Pelham, Camden noted, 'I am one of those persons who shall always give Lord Carhampton infinite credit for his zeal and many excellent qualities he possesses, but he is not fit for the command of this army'. He further remarked that Carhampton refused to accept advice, dismissing all suggestions unless he had come up with them himself.[733] Distaste for Carhampton crossed the political divide and Edmund Burke found him 'a man universally odious without any pretence of greater military capacity, knowledge, skill or experience, but only known in every stage of his life for a desperate defiance of public opinion and the good will of mankind'.[734] Carhampton's difficult personality meant that generals frequently put forward their plans for local defence to Camden and Pelham rather than to their commander. Pelham refused to be used as a conduit, commenting to General Knox in November 1797; '...knowing how jealous Lord Carhampton is about any suggestions from me I did not communicate your plan to him'.[735] Relations between the various generals were often tense, particularly among those stationed in the north. Knox and Lake maintained cordial relations 'without any impression of jealousy' despite the fact that Knox frequently reported directly to

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[730] Portland to Camden, 5 October 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/70/150.
[731] [Pelham] to [York], 22 September 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/47.
[732] Camden to Pelham, 21 August 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/40.
[733] Camden to Pelham, 2 October 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/118.
[734] Burke to Fitzwilliam, 20 November 1797, in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* ix, pp 120-4.
[735] Pelham to Knox, 11 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/212.

Dublin Castle, but Lord Cavan strongly objected when it was suggested that another commander might be sent to defend Lough Swilly. Knox noted that 'it appears a very touchy subject - he talks of resigning etc should a major general be sent to command there, over him - how much more would he be mortified to be superseded by an officer of the same rank as himself.[736]

Camden received formal confirmation of Abercromby's acceptance of the position on 4 October. There were to be several changes made following his appointment; some generals would be required to leave including Dalrymple, Hamilton and Crosbie, though as York commented 'between ourselves I don't think they will be any loss to you'.[737] In mid-October Camden informed Carhampton that he was to be replaced. Carhampton was not unduly perturbed by this news but requested that he be made an English peer on his retirement. His desire to leave the country was prompted by the discovery of a plot to assassinate him.[738] A number of men, including Carhampton's farrier, James Dunn and one of his farm labourers, Patrick Carty, had planned to waylay and kill Carhampton while he was on his way to his country residence at Luttrelstown, county Dublin. Both men were arrested, brought to trial and found guilty.[739] Camden believed that Carhampton's life would be in danger if he remained in Ireland for, as commander-in-chief, he had 'acted with so much vigour against the desperate villains...'.[740] Additionally, he endorsed Carhampton's request as he believed 'if it can be granted he will consider himself as retiring from his office with credit and with honour'.[741]

Camden eagerly anticipated the addition of Abercromby to his staff, believing that he would be 'a very important acquisition' for his

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[736] Knox to Pelham, 14 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33015/220; Knox to Pelham, 29 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33015/247.
[737] York to Pelham, 4 October 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/159.
[738] Camden to Portland, 30 May 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/345.
[739] *Report of the Trials of James Dunn and Patrick Carty for conspiring to murder the Earl of Carhampton,* (Dublin, 1797). The men were arrested in May and their trials took place on 23 and 25 October 1797.
[740] Camden to Pitt, 22 May 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2160.
[741] Camden to Pitt, 13 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/23.

administration.[742] Abercromby, on the other hand, intended to remain aloof from Irish political life dealing exclusively, and without interference from the lord lieutenant, with military matters. These two widely-differing perspectives of the one appointment would prove problematic. Abercromby had agreed to serve in Ireland but was in no hurry to do so. Carhampton was to vacate the military headquarters in the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham on 15 November and Camden hoped that the new commander-in-chief would be in Dublin by that date.[743] He was to be disappointed. On 7 November Camden learned that Abercromby had left Scotland but had decided to spend some weeks in London before continuing his journey to Ireland.[744] Abercromby proposed to arrive in Dublin by 1 December some two weeks after Camden had requested his presence there.[745]

Abercromby's reluctance in accepting the command combined with his tardiness in arriving to Ireland indicated that he might not be as pliant a commander as Camden had wished. For the first time Camden was to work with an experienced and highly-regarded military figure. Had this occurred in 1795, or indeed in the early months of 1796 this might not have been a difficulty. However, Abercromby arrived in Ireland at a time when Camden was taking an active part in all military matters. Abercromby's relationship with Camden, whom he regarded as a politician meddling in military matters of which he was largely ignorant, quickly became very tense. He was reluctant from the outset to take direction from the lord lieutenant although he was to all intents and purposes his commander.

One of Abercromby's greatest strengths proved also to be his greatest weakness. Unlike other commanders, Brownrigg did not think of Abercromby as 'possessing that national prejudice that some disappointed people may

[742] Camden to Dundas, [December 1797], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0202/11.
[743] Camden to Abercromby, 30 October 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/1.
[744] Brownrigg to Pelham, 7 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/198.
[745] Abercromby to Camden, 5 November 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/2.

attribute to him. He has indiscriminately employed persons of all countries about him, and his only guide appears to have been [to employ] solid men of merit whenever he could find them'.[746] This he may have done, but in Ireland he was rarely sensitive to local sensibilities. There were other indications that Abercromby's appointment might not be as straightforward as initially supposed by Camden. Many of the senior military men had served with him at other posts and he was widely acknowledged to be brilliant but difficult. John Knox offered to meet Abercromby on his arrival in Ireland 'but', he added, 'I know him so well - unless the proposal to send for me came from himself, I would not be well received'.[747] Lake and Abercromby had served together on the continent but their relationship was 'very far from being cordial' and Knox suggested that some deference to Lake's opinions might be necessary.[748] Among the senior military commanders there was little warmth for the new commander-in-chief but there was respect, which, however, would soon disappear. Within weeks Lake wrote to Dublin Castle complaining that Abercromby was 'not disposed to attend to [his] opinions'. Pelham tried to defuse a potentially awkward situation:

> I cannot help thinking that you have either been misinformed or that you have misunderstood him for I can assure you that in every conversation with him either alone or in Lord Camden's presence he has spoken of you in the most flattering terms and as the person he had the most reliance on.[749]

Initially Abercromby appeared at least willing to listen to advice from Camden regarding the treatment of troublesome regiments.[750] This did not last long. Abercromby had little time for politics or politicians. He had been elected unopposed to the British parliament for the constituency of Clackmannan in Scotland but had resigned in favour of his brother as his interest lay in military matters.[751] Abercromby wanted strict division of authority; he was to command the military while Camden was to stick to matters political. However, as

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[746] Brownrigg to Pelham, 22 September 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/91.
[747] Knox to Pelham, 14 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/220.
[748] Knox to Pelham, 29 November 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/247.
[749] Pelham to Lake, 31 January 1798, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/340.
[750] Abercromby to Camden, 24 December 1797; Abercromby to Elliot, 25 December 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/4; /6.
[751] Johnston, *Great Britain and Ireland*, pp 56-7.

previously noted, in Ireland military policy frequently was political policy. Abercromby's failure to understand this proved a fatal weakness. He observed that 'the situation of the commander-in-chief in Ireland is subservient to the lord lieutenant to whom every application, even of the most trifling kind, must be made, and by him directed'.[752] On 26 December, commander-in-chief and lord lieutenant met to discuss the extent of the military commander's authority. Abercromby criticised the state of the army and complained about the interference of the ordnance and barrack boards. These boards were two of five civil departments associated with the armed forces but were under the direct control of the lord lieutenant and not the commander-in-chief.[753] Abercromby requested that Camden transfer his authority on these boards to him. He argued that the commander-in-chief 'cannot answer for the safety of the country' without control of the boards. The lord lieutenant was not prepared to relinquish his influence over these boards but assured Abercromby of his support.[754] Camden had asserted his position and remained hopeful of a fruitful relationship with his moody commander-in-chief commenting several days after their tense meeting that 'Sir Ralph is in very good humour again and I trust we shall go on better than I had apprehended'.[755]

Abercromby was anxious to reorganise the armed forces in Ireland. The plan to gather the army in large bodies at a small number of locations was not new; it had been intended from the end of 1796. However, it had never been fully implemented. The gentry had objected so strenuously to this that, despite the formation of the yeomanry, the armed forces remained quite dispersed. Abercromby found himself in command of upwards of 77,000 troops and was incensed to discover that there were no arrangements in place for their

[752] *Diary of Sir John Moore*, i, p. 271.
[753] R.B. McDowell, 'Ireland in 1800', in *New History of Ireland*, iv, pp 695-6.
[754] Camden to Pelham, 26 December 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/299.
[755] Camden to Pelham, 30 December 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/315.

subsistence should they be called into active service.[756] He thought the organisation of food stocks, tents and general supplies was appalling and he wrote to England seeking advice on how troops were supplied when on duty there and desired that a similar system could be implemented in Ireland.[757]

In January 1798 Abercromby set out on a tour of the island intending to acquaint himself with the state of the army throughout the country. He found much of the country 'in a state of tranquillity'.[758] He felt that reports reaching Dublin were often exaggerated accounts sent by the gentry in order to retain the troops stationed in their locality. While he acknowledged there were serious difficulties in the army and in the country in general Abercromby saved his real ire for the gentlemen noting:

> I observe the greatest want of confidence and an almost general despondency amongst the gentlemen nothing like energy or exertion, and no dependence on themselves. They are ready to proclaim districts without just cause, and to commence hostilities, which they leave to the troops to carry on.[759]

In further letters Abercromby arrogantly detailed his solution to the internal security problems and indicated his contempt for the Irish gentry class:

> ...there exists among the gentlemen the greatest despondency, they believe or affect to believe, that there is a plot in every family and a conspiracy in every parish and they would abandon the country unless the troops were dispersed over the face of it for their protection. I believe the lower ranks heartily hate the gentlemen because they oppress

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[756] There were approximately 77,589 men in the Irish armed force in January 1798 - this included regular soldiers, fencibles, militia and yeomanry. Figure given in Bartlett, 'Defence, Counter-Insurgency and Rebellion', p. 249. A detailed account of the military force, dated 8 December 1797, is provided in Sir John Moore's diary. These figures suggest a total force of 76,791 of which 56,590 were militia and yeomanry, the remaining 20,161 being regulars and fencibles. It was estimated that between 18-20,000 of the 76,791 were cavalry. *Diary of Sir John Moore,* i, p. 270. According to Hayes McCoy at the outbreak of the Rebellion in May 1798 there was in the region of 77-79,000 troops in Ireland about 35,000 of these were yeomanry while the remainder regulars, fencibles and militia amounted to was 57,343. This was the paper total but in reality those fit for active service was more likely to be around 44,000. G.A. Hayes McCoy, 'The Government Forces which opposed the Irish insurgents of 1798' in *The Irish Sword,* iv, (1959), p. 16. Figures provided by the military command in April 1798 suggests an available force of 33,090 but this does not include the yeomanry force, 'Notes on Defence of Ireland', 28 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0157/75.

[757] Abercromby to 'Dear Sir', Chelmsford, [Essex], 11 December 1797, P.R.O.N.I. McPeake Papers, T.3048/A/15.

[758] Abercromby, (Cork) to Camden, 23 January 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/10.

[759] Abercromby, (Bandon) to Camden, 26 January 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/11.

them and the gentlemen hate the peasants because they know they deserve to be hated.[760]

He argued that the armed forces suffered 'exceedingly from their dispersed state' and it would be advantageous if the large numbers of troops could be gathered in a few locations 'without alarming the gentlemen'. Objections from the gentry were anticipated but Abercromby caustically remarked 'if...withdrawing the troops was to induce the gentlemen to abandon the country, it is hard to say, which were the greatest evil'.[761] He did concede that if an invasion took place the gentlemen might have cause for their concern but added that it was the gentry's reliance on a dispersed military that made defence of the coastline almost impossible.[762] Camden, throughout 1797, had pandered to the gentry's demands to be protected by troops stationed in their local area. Abercromby wanted to alter the focus somewhat and have the gentry run the internal defence of the country. Despite his criticism, he believed that the harnessing of the support and energies of the gentlemen 'ought to be the great object of this government'.[763]

Abercromby had 'often heard of disaffection amongst the militia'; he accepted '...it may perhaps exist among a few individuals but it cannot exist to any considerable extent'.[764] The yeomanry were singled out for particular praise; '...the yeomanry appear to advantage, they are well clothed, and...expressed great willingness and zeal'. However, to use them to their fullest potential Abercromby concluded that he was 'convinced that to bring them together, and to appoint officers to command them, must not be attempted; they must be left at home, and appropriated for the defence of the interior'.[765] In a letter to York, Abercromby summarised the state of the troops in Ireland:

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[760] Abercromby, (Bantry Bay) to [Camden], 28 January 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/197-8.
[761] Abercromby, (Cork) to Camden, 23 January 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/10.
[762] Abercromby, (Bantry Bay) to [Camden], 28 January 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/197-8.
[763] Abercromby to York , 17 February 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/121.
[764] Abercromby to [Camden], 28 January 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/197.
[765] Abercromby, (Cork) to Camden, 23 January 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/10.

> The Militia are not equal in size to the English Regiments of the same description, their discipline is lax, and the subaltern officers ill composed... The Fencibles are low in size but serviceable - their discipline is superior to that of the Militia - some few good officers amongst them - the bulk of them indifferent. The Cavalry of the Line which I have seen is badly mounted, their discipline is very relaxed and on the whole much inferior to what I had suspected. The want of money has been the great impediment to the recruiting of the regular regiments and Fencibles, that cause will soon be removed - recruiting parties will be sent out and the cavalry remounted.[766]

By 21 February Abercromby had worked out his proposed defence plan for the country. His prime concern was to protect Ireland from any attempt by the French to land troops. This would be achieved by assembling the regular army and the militia at a number of key positions around the country. The internal security of the country would have to rely on 'the yeomanry and on the exertions of the gentlemen, and on the well disposed inhabitants of the country'.[767] Loyal Protestants and a recently formed and poorly trained yeomanry were to be the bulwark of the administration's defence against the increasing strength of the United Irishmen.

II

Abercromby then set about implementing his plans for re-structuring the military in Ireland. Given the tense political and military situation in Ireland at the time his military strategy appeared eminently sensible. However, his general order, issued on 26 February ensured that he would not be in a position to effect such changes as he desired. The immediate cause of the general order was the rape of a murder witness by two lieutenants which highlighted the discipline problems that beset the Irish armed forces. This general order was a scathing attack on the state of the military in Ireland. Abercromby criticised the 'disgraceful frequency' of court-martials and the poor discipline of the army which, in his memorable phrase, 'must render it formidable to every one but the enemy'.[768] (see Appendix for full text of the general order) In addition, the fact

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[766] Abercromby to York , 17 February 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/121.
[767] Abercromby to [Pelham], 21 February 1798, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/345.
[768] [Abercromby], 'General Order', 26 February 1798, in McAnally, *Irish Militia,* p. 323. Also see Appendix for full text of the 'General Order'.

that Abercromby's order were directed at all of the armed forces in Ireland and not just those with difficulties of discipline incensed many. Military commanders in Ireland were furious but could do little to censure their own commander-in-chief. It was not only the military that were angered, Lord Cavan noted that Abercromby's general order had 'given much offence to many in high situations in Dublin'.[769] Undoubtedly irritated, Camden's initial reaction was muted, possibly hoping that, by ignoring it, the storm would pass with little impact. Neither he, nor Abercromby, had factored in the English interest. Camden had become used to making decisions and acting on them without counsel from London and the level of interest and concern provoked by Abercromby's general order came as some surprise.

Camden was particularly angered by the fact that the general order had blatantly disregarded a proclamation issued by the lord lieutenant on 17 May 1797. Abercromby's order stated that troops were forbidden to act without the 'presence and authority' of a civil magistrate.[770] This directly contradicted the proclamation of the previous year which had commanded 'the military to act without waiting for direction from the civil magistrate in dispersing a tumultuous or unlawful assemblies of persons threatening the peace of the realm and the safety of the lives and property of his majesty's loyal servants wheresoever collected'.[771] Camden attempted to excuse the actions of the commander-in-chief arguing, rather feebly that 'he did not consider the proclamation of 17th May as in force', but this did not prevent those opposed to Abercromby citing his disregard for the viceroy's proclamation as a justification for his dismissal.[772]

For several weeks it appeared that Abercromby and Camden might weather the storm. In Ireland, all was relatively peaceful within the army ranks and Abercromby continued in his position as before. By the middle of March Camden faced a barrage of letters from London demanding explanations for

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[769] Cavan to Gen ___, 8 March 1796, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/146.
[770] 'General Order', 26 February 1798.
[771] *Diary of Sir John Moore*, i, p. 285.
[772] Camden to Abercorn, 17 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0186/7.

Abercromby's imprudent order. This interest in a military order was in part provoked by Lord Moira. As noted in the previous chapter Moira had throughout 1797 generated interest in the military affairs of Ireland by asserting that many atrocities were perpetrated by the military and sanctioned by the lord lieutenant and his commander-in-chief. By the spring of 1798 authorities in both London and Dublin believed that they had successfully discredited Moira's claims. The general order issued by Abercromby gave renewed credence to the allegations made in Moira's speeches.[773]

Prompted by the reaction to Abercromby's order, Pitt, in an increasingly rare letter to Camden, expressed his anxiety about the potential ill-effects of the general order. Britain, engaged in a war with France, was militarily in an extremely vulnerable position and the issue of such an order did nothing but sap the morale of the troops and encourage the enemy, be they in France or in Ireland. As Pitt argued, at the very least the order 'must produce great embarrassment, both to you and to us'. The prime minister was furious with the behaviour of the commander-in-chief:

> Even supposing the irregularities to have been ever so great, yet such a public, indiscriminate and unqualified censure on the whole army could hardly be necessary to correct them; and it seems more likely either to break their spirits or to alienate their affections. One sentence really describes them in a measure which almost amounts to an invitation to a foreign enemy.

Pitt also feared that the order would give 'colour and credit to those attacks from Lord Moira which were beginning to be thought of as I believe they deserve'.[774]

Camden provided Pitt with a detailed explanation for his conduct in the aftermath of Abercromby's general order. Regarding it as a 'most injudicious and almost criminal order', Camden was tempted to immediately publicly state that the order had his 'decided disapprobation' but agreed with Pitt in thinking that this would only 'give greater triumph to Lord Moira and his adherents'. Instead, Camden issued a statement to the effect that:

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[773] *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii, pp 435-9, 674-80.
[774] Pitt to Camden, 13 March 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/249.

> it was a mere military command and that Sir Ralph being accustomed to command armies in foreign countries where the expressions used to enforce discipline need not be weighed very accurately... [He] incautiously used some words in this order which were meant only to have that effect, tho' they bore very hard upon a very gallant set of men, who from the nature of their formation required strict discipline.

Camden, acknowledging that the explanation was 'lame', claimed it had 'the effect the appeasing the clamour raised in this country...and if it is not renewed by what passes in England it will subside'.[775]

Camden received letters from incensed correspondents. Buckingham described the order as 'criminal to the highest degree' while Westmorland regarded it as 'an insult upon the Lord Lieutenant, Parliament and Council and a libel on the army.'[776] Lord Abercorn highlighted the consternation the order had caused in London, writing:

> I am not sorry that the lateness of the hour...prevented my obeying the impulse of the moment and that the necessary intervention of a day, has enabled me to give as sober and earnest (though I cannot yet call it cool) consideration...to the subject itself, to the enormous impression, which it has made on every one whom I have talked with... Whether an act of the Commander in Chief of Ireland which is directly in the teeth of a proclamation of the Government of Ireland! – which bitterly and indiscriminately censures an Army that I think (with few exceptions indeed if any) have deserved every thing of their country; and by that censure sanctions the base calumnies that have been utter'd against them on both sides of the water! – which absolutely enjoins an alteration of that system which I think essential to the salvation of the country.[777]

Much anger was caused by the fact that Abercromby had overlooked Camden's proclamation of May 1797.[778] It was seen, at least in London, that Abercromby was overriding the authority of the king's minister in Ireland, albeit a minister frequently ignored by Whitehall. Yet, when the insult came from another source, they were quick to take umbrage on Camden's behalf. In response to Abercorn's letter, Camden swiftly assured him that the Irish government had

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[775] Camden to Pitt, 17 March 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/253.
[776] Buckingham to Camden, 11 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0198/1; Westmorland to Beresford, 15 March 1798, in *Beresford Correspondence*, ii, pp 152-3.
[777] Abercorn to Camden, 12 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0186/6.
[778] *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1797.

nothing to do with Abercromby's order. While he did not excuse them, Camden attempted to explain Abercromby's actions:

> Sir R[alph Abercromby] meant this as a mere military order - he had seen a very relaxed discipline in many regiments and he thought a strong order necessary - in giving it out he prefaced it unwisely and he made it general which was not called for. To oblige him to explain an order must lower him in that army, who, tho' they are hurt at his insinuation, respect his military character, and under all the painful and difficult circumstances of the present times, all the friends of Irish government agree in thinking it the wisest measure not to agitate this question at present.[779]

Dissatisfied with Camden's explanation, Abercorn was outraged that the lord lieutenant would defend his commander-in-chief and not submit him to the humiliation of having to explain his order. Abercorn had ambitions to become lord lieutenant of Ireland and he took this opportunity to criticise Camden's handling of the heightening political and military crisis.[780] He felt that Camden had sacrificed his own reputation 'to the fear of 'lowering' the pride of...a public culprit, whose just desserts were immediate arrest and impeachment'.[781] As a protest against Abercromby's order, Abercorn resigned his position as commander of the Tyrone Militia.[782]

Others were more circumspect in their reaction, though few were as keen as the Duchess of Devonshire who forcefully advocated the retention of Abercromby in Ireland.[783] Lord Bathurst wished to know how he should react to the news from Ireland. He gave a clear account of the impact of Abercromby's behaviour in England:

> [They] have made a great impression here, altho' I understand you have not adverted to them in your official letters...which seems as if the orders had not the same effect on your side of the water. This is probably owing to the real state of your country being of course more known by you, than by any here. We had certainly flatter'd ourselves that the orders which your Government have been obliged to issue had been executed by the

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[779] Camden to Abercorn, 17 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0186/7.
[780] For Abercorn's ambition to be appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland see Malcomson, 'The Marquess of Abercorn', pp 73-9.
[781] Abercorn to Camden, 24 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0186/8.
[782] Follwing Abercomby's resignation Abercorn consented to resume his position as commander of the Tyrone Militia. Camden to Abercorn, 23 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0186/9.
[783] Duchess of Devonshire to Dundas, [March/April 1798], N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/83A. For her thoughts on the Rebellion in Ireland see Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, (London, 1998), pp 311-16.

> military with as little irregularity as could be expected. This has in consequence been confidently asserted by the friends of administration, and at length generally believed. The manner in which the paper is worded is certainly very injudicious however proper the Orders themselves may be.[784]

Bathurst, too, noted that the issues raised by Lord Moira had been given a higher profile and many, previously sceptical, began to attach some legitimacy to Moira's assertions. Beresford was 'persuaded that he [Abercromby] came here [Ireland] fully possessed of Lord Moira's sentiments'.[785] Camden, very conscious of the connections being made between Moira and Abercromby, explained his actions in light of the furore that was developing in London:

> I must either recall it [the general order] or require such an explanation as would have caused Sir R Abercromby's resignation and thereby not only deprive the country of an able general which when the kingdom is infected with internal commotions and threatened with foreign invasion would have been most unfortunate, but I should have given infinite assistance to Lord Moira's statement by throwing into that argument the weight of Sir R Abercromby's character if he has quitted Ireland upon this ground.

Camden maintained that this opinion was shared by all those he consulted in Ireland and he felt his response was justified as they:

> appeased the feelings of military gentlemen here and as not one word was uttered upon this subject in the H[ouse] of Commons of Ireland except by Dr Brown very slightly and Mr Pelham's explanation having satisfied the House – the sensation at first occasioned by this order has subsided in this kingdom.[786]

The relative calm in Ireland was to be short-lived.

Officially, in Ireland, Abercromby's general order had been downplayed in the hope that there could be some return to normality within the military. But many of the men of influence in Ireland wrote privately to friends and family in England detailing their personal opinions regarding Abercromby's behaviour. Clare was furious with Abercromby's blatant disregard for Camden's authority. He wrote to Auckland:

> I feel the peevish indiscretion of Sir Ralph Abercromby's order as strongly as you feel it, and it is provoking that the critical situation in which we stand, made it ineligible to

[784] Bathurst to Camden, 13 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0198/2.
[785] Beresford to Westmorland, 20 March 1798, in *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 153-5.
[786] Camden to Abercorn, 17 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0186/7.

resent his interference as it merited. The order was spread without communication or notice of any kind to Lord Camden.[787]

Cooke acknowledged that Abercromby's order was irresponsible, but he noted that the affair might have been easily dealt with had the English newspapers and politicians not become involved. He was irritated by the interference from England almost as much as he was by the general order:

> When I heard of it [the general order], I disbelieved; when I read, I still disbelieved. It struck me in the moment as a fatal blow to the government. By the good-natured disposition of men here to the government, by their conviction that it was issued without the knowledge of government, by their belief that it was not intended to convey the meaning which it was obviously calculated to impress, the affair was slurred over. What may be the consequence of the [blaze] in the English prints, I know not; but if opposition be as mischievous as I believe them, such an opportunity cannot be missed.[788]

The opportunity was not missed. The opposition, denuded after the 1797 election, were aided in their efforts to discredit the Irish administration by Abercromby's behaviour after the publication of his order. In a sense Abercromby's reaction to criticism mirrored that of Fitzwilliam's three years previously. Fitzwilliam had attempted to exonerate himself from all blame with his letters to Carlisle. Abercromby behaved in similar fashion and his actions, those of a man in 'high dudgeon', contributed considerably to the escalating crisis.[789] He let it be publicly known that his position in Ireland was untenable, not because of the poor state of the armed forces but because of the opposition of the Irish 'cabinet' to his attempts at reform. He complained that 'in the management of the country there appears to have been a great want of probity and talent'.[790] Abercromby's depiction of Camden as an essentially decent man but one completely beholden to his advisors would become accepted as an accurate assessment of Camden's viceroyalty.

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[787] Clare to Auckland, 23 March 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/185.
[788] Cooke to [Auckland], 12 March [1798], P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/28.
[789] Shannon to Boyle, 7 April [1798], P.R.O.N.I. Shannon Papers, D.2707/A3/3/51.
[790] *Diary of Sir John Moore,* i, p. 273.

On 14 March Camden requested a meeting with Abercromby in order to discuss the impact of his general order.[791] The discussion was direct but unsatisfactory. Camden did 'all that temper, judgement and zeal could suggest' in an effort to give his commander-in-chief '...the fairest opportunity to correct the error into which he has been led' but he was certain that Abercromby had 'determined [to resign] from the first moment of that indiscreet order having been made public'.[792] Militarily this was not good news but 'the political ill-effect [was] almost more mischievous'.[793] Camden continued to negotiate with Abercromby hoping to persuade him to withdraw his resignation. Recognising that the situation in Ireland required the attention of a military man of experience and skill, Camden was anxious to retain Abercromby's services. He correctly surmised that there was no one of his calibre available as a replacement. But by the end of March Camden confided to Pitt, 'there is so much prejudice against him that I feel it will be impossible to reconcile the feelings of the country in such a manner to enable him to act with any effect'.[794]

In the lacuna between the general order and Abercromby's resignation, the security situation continued to deteriorate and Camden, despite his personal feelings, was obliged to request Abercromby to take action to try to restore calm to the country. In an effort to prevent the outbreaks of violence that were occurring in King's County, Queen's County and county Kildare, the weakened commander-in-chief outlined the measures to be pursued for disarming those counties. Strict instructions were given to ensure that the troops were well disciplined. Any arms and ammunition found were to be immediately destroyed.[795] These orders provoked further criticism. Charles Agar, the Archbishop of Cashel complained that 'some persons think his orders not quite as strong as the proclamation and that he has been too liberal in allowing the rebels ten days for restoring the arms which they have taken from his Majesty's

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[791] Camden to Abercromby, 14 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/15.
[792] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1796, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/261.
[793] Pitt to Camden, 31 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/4; Camden to Pitt, 23 March 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/257.
[794] Camden to Pitt, 30 March 1798, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/282.
[795] G Hewitt, Adjutant Generals Office to Dundas, 16 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0167/1; Abercromby to Dundas, 12 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/26.

loyal subjects by violence'.[796] Lord Shannon agreed with these 'persons' commenting, 'It's thought that half of ten days would have done better, and it's observed that he calls by the mild name insubordination what the proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant and Council have called insurrection and rebellion'.[797] Camden suggested that seven days notice to hand in weapons would be sufficient. He also advised his troubled commander-in-chief that he ought to give several days notice before arriving in a town in order to obtain the co-operation of the gentlemen of the country.[798] Notwithstanding these criticisms, Abercromby's methods were successful and government control was quickly restored. Dr. William Bentinck wrote in Abercromby's defence; 'he has been incessantly employed since his arrival in visiting the country in a real inspection of every individual regiment and in endeavouring to create discipline'.[799] Camden, too, was publicly full of praise for Abercromby's 'spirit and patriotism' in undertaking the disarming of disturbed counties.[800] If he thought this praise would soften Abercromby's attitude he was to be mistaken.

Abercromby had found it difficult to defer to Camden's authority but he found it impossible to tolerate any interference in military matters from the Irish 'cabinet'. This unofficial cabinet had been consulted by the lord lieutenant when deciding upon a course of action. Camden reported that both Clare and Foster had been persuaded that Abercromby should be encouraged to remain in his position as:

> ...he is a very sensible man and excellent officer and that the army require strict discipline not that it is true they have committed the irregularities charged upon them, but from the idleness and inefficiency of many of their officers and the temptations to which the men are exposed it is necessary they should be closely looked after.[801]

However, Abercromby was determined that his proposed resignation be accepted. Efforts had been made to persuade him to reconsider, but to no avail,

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[796] Cashel to Auckland, 5 April 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/204.
[797] Shannon to Boyle, 5 April [1798], P.R.O.N.I. Shannon Letters, D.2707/A3/3/49.
[798] Camden to Abercromby, 5 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/19.
[799] Dr William Bentinck to Windham, 6 April 1798, B.L. Windham Papers, Add Ms 37877/291.
[800] Camden to Dundas, 31 March 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/130.
[801] Camden to Pitt, 17 March 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/253.

and the commander-in-chief persisted 'in his determination to resign the command'. Camden suspected that Abercromby had:

> ...determined from the first moment of that indiscreet order having been made public, neither to bend himself to the state of the country or to the well being of the government but to have persisted in a line which would in the end enable him to withdraw himself from a scene, which he contemplated with some dismay. He has done it in a manner to give the most severe wound which could have been inflicted on government in Ireland.[802]

By April Camden was convinced that Abercromby would leave Ireland and, moreover, that he would not do so quietly.

As Abercromby's continued presence in Ireland became increasingly unsustainable he proceeded to place the blame for this on the Irish 'cabinet'. He claimed that though he had always enjoyed good personal relations with the viceroy he regarded Camden as excessively influenced by his Irish 'cabinet'. He spoke of 'Lord Camden as one of the best men in the world but one of the weakest, and completely guided by a set of violent, hot-headed men'.[803] Abercromby maintained that such a breach existed between himself and the 'cabinet' that there could 'no longer [be] any mutual confidence'.[804] Apart from Foster's ill-advised speech at the bar of the house of lords where he made clear his disapproval of Abercromby's conduct, those who made up Camden's unofficial Irish cabinet publicly endorsed Camden's efforts to persuade Abercromby to stay.[805] Privately they were incensed. Abercromby maintained that the 'cabinet' 'have lost their confidence, if they ever had any in me' and that they had deliberately turned opinion against him both in Ireland and in England.[806] In England this argument gathered currency and it was noted that 'Abercorn now swears by the Chancellor; and imagines that these Orders are written in consequence of some quarrel between him and General Abercrombie [sic]'.[807] At the April assizes in Maryborough it was reported that Abercromby

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[802] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/29.
[803] *Diary of Sir John Moore*, p. 286. See also, for example, Abercromby to ___, 22 March 1798; Portland to ___, 29 March 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/124; /129.
[804] Abercromby to [York?], 22 March 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/124.
[805] Cooke to [Auckland], 24 March 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/32.
[806] Abercromby to ___, 24 March 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/125.
[807] Bathurst to Camden, 13 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0198/2.

refused to speak with any of the gentlemen gathered there, including the chancellor of the exchequer, Parnell.[808]

Abercromby had little concrete evidence to support his claims against the members of the Irish 'cabinet'. Undoubtedly they were, in some cases, critical of him, but they recognised the value of having a military commander of Abercromby's stature in Ireland especially as the country edged towards rebellion. Abercromby made no specific charges against any one of Camden's advisors, rather he alluded generally to their negative attitude towards him. Conscious of the suspicion with which the Irish 'cabinet' were regarded in England it is possible that Abercromby aired his criticism for purely self-serving purposes. Recognising that both the government and opposition in England would eagerly accept that the Irish 'cabinet' interfered with the efficient command of the military, Abercromby may have hoped to assist his own rehabilitation after the embarrassment suffered by his sojourn in Ireland. If, indeed, this was his plan he was to be rewarded: on his return to England he was immediately made commander of the forces in Scotland.

Attempts made to persuade Abercromby that members of the Irish 'cabinet' were not determined against him were unsuccessful. Camden felt that Abercromby's resignation would lead to the 'worst consequences and cannot be justified on his part by any act of mine or any real disagreement between him and the king's servants here' and he appealed to Dundas to use his influence to get Abercromby to rethink his position; 'The intemperance of some able and effectual Friends of Government has probably reached his ears and he has an idea that he does not possess their confidence'.[809] Portland dismissed Abercromby's anxiety about the role of the Irish 'cabinet'. He stated that Abercromby was only answerable to the lord lieutenant and his chief secretary and the whole:

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[808] Shannon to Boyle, 7 April [1798], P.R.O.N.I. Shannon Papers, D.2707/A3/3/51.
[809] Camden to Dundas, 26 March 1798; Camden to Dundas, 27 March 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/127; /128.

> idea of a Cabinet in Ireland is equally unconstitutional and preposterous and if explained to him might he not satisfy himself that it is a phantom which could not control or retard or in any way affect any operation or measure which he might think necessary for the good of the service. He has not one to consult or to communicate ministerially but the Lord Lieutenant and he has not doubt of his fully possessing the Lord Lieutenant's confidence.[810]

This argument had first been posited by Portland in March 1795 and it is indicative of how far removed Portland had become from the realities of the Irish situation that he considered the Irish 'cabinet' a 'phantom'. Camden had whole-heartedly approved of Abercromby's appointment as commander-in-chief. As he resigned in disgrace, Camden confessed 'I shall conceive myself most sensibly hurt if Sir Ralph is not made to feel and the world to see that his conduct is considered as very culpable in Great Britain as well as Ireland'.[811] His sentiments were echoed by Cooke:

> Every kindness and attention has been shown to Sir Ralph: patience by the parliament, flattery by ministers – in vain. He resigns... I think Sir Ralph's [language] the most unfortunate that could have happened. It has done inexpressible harm, and will be long felt. I think his coldness and obstinacy in refusing conciliation...inexcusable; and if he retires I trust he will be made to feel that all the embarrassment occasioned is of his own making and of his own seeking, and that he will not be smiled upon. You must coventry him.[812]

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[810] Portland to ___, 29 March 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/129. Officially there was no cabinet in either Ireland or Britain. However, the term was regularly used in both countries at this time. The existence of a British 'cabinet' was generally accepted. This was not the case for Ireland. Pitt and his ministers were anxious to ensure that there would be no Irish 'cabinet' and Camden was given instructions to that effect, see Portland to Camden, 26 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3. For examples of the general use of 'cabinet' in both Ireland and Britain see: Memo by Camden, 5 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/1; Grattan to Burke, 14 March 1795, in *Burke Correspondence,* viii, pp 196-7; Grenville to Fitzwilliam, 22 March 1795, B.L. Grenville Papers, Add Ms 41844/58; Camden to Grenville, 26 August [1797], B.L. Dropmore Papers, 58935/178; L[ees] to Auckland, 10 April 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, 34454/210; Pitt to Camden, 27 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/8/1; Cooke to Auckland, 14 January 1795, B.L. Auckland Papers, 35543/143; Beresford to Auckland, 20 May 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, 34454/258.

[811] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/29. Camden forcibly reiterated this sentiment on 25 April but on 28 April, while acknowledging Abercromby was 'not as fair and as candid a man as I expected', he withdrew his objection to Abercromby's immediate re-employment. Given the grave military crisis facing Britain it was unlikely that Pitt would have acceded to Camden's request and, in order to avoid humiliation if Pitt ignored Camden's wishes, it is likely that the lord lieutenant withdrew his objection before it was over-ridden. Camden to Pitt, 25 April 1798, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/290; Camden to Pitt, 28 April 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/281.

[812] Cooke to [Auckland], 24 March 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/32.

Even the announcement of Abercomby's imminent departure from Ireland was not without difficulties. Following the acceptance of his resignation by the king, Camden met with Abercromby. The former commander-in-chief maintained that his position had been untenable, 'under the circumstances - deserted in England and unpopular here, he could not act with zeal in his command and unless a man could act, not only with zeal but with enthusiasm he could not do his duty'.[813] Camden requested that Abercromby refrain from making his resignation public until a replacement had been appointed.[814] This he failed to do, informing a number of military commanders that he would shortly be leaving Ireland for he could not '...consent to my remaining a degraded man'.[815] An irate Clare wrote to Auckland:

> I should suppose that Sir Ralph Abercromby must have lost his senses – Lord Camden kept his resignation perfectly secret. However on Saturday Sir Ralph thought fit to write to General Craig...to inform him that he was about to give up his command, and his resignation is now public. It looks as if this last act of peevish folly was dictated by his resentment at being forced to countermand his absurd order.[816]

In Ireland, Abercromby was condemned, not simply for the general order which was, at the very least, foolish, if not ill-intentioned. His behaviour surrounding his resignation and his attempts to pin blame on the excessive influence of the Irish 'cabinet' won him few admirers among the friends of government. Camden's good standing with the Protestant ascendancy was affected by the Abercromby affair. His attempts to retain Abercromby as commander-in-chief and the delay between the order being given and Camden's public condemnation meant he was portrayed as a vacillating, insecure figure when one of authority and decisiveness was required. John Lees summed up the feelings of many of the Protestant ascendancy when he wrote to Auckland:

> From the moment he came to this country it appears to me that he either wilfully or ignorantly mistook his situation – I respected and esteemed him, but were he my brother I must condemn him – His order and his conduct altogether have been productive of incalculable mischief. Lord Camden received and treated him I know with the attention

[813] Camden to Pelham, [April 1798], B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/353.
[814] Camden to Abercromby, 6 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0166/20.
[815] Abercromby to Dundas, 1 April 1798, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/131.
[816] Clare to Auckland, [April] 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/301.

and affection of a brother. I believe him to be a brave and an honest man, but I am afraid he is obstinate and impracticable. The spirit and resentment in both houses of Parliament are at present very high... I pronounce him a fool, and that in consequence we may all have our throats cut – he has announced his resignation today to all the general officers on the staff – another instance of abominable folly – and having done so, and his intention to resign being declared to the Lord L[ieutenan]t and being permitted by the King to go on any command afterwards, makes me almost angry with Lord Camden in suffering him to act for a moment after the proclamation was issued – I would have put him in arrest.[817]

Camden's relationship with Whitehall was damaged by the Abercromby affair. Up until the summer of 1797 Camden often had cause to complain about Whitehall's lack of interest in Irish affairs. With Lake's dragooning of Ulster and Abercromby's general order the trend was reversed and Whitehall's increasing interest was not always benign. In reality, Whitehall's interference in the aftermath of the dragooning of Ulster was slight. Questions had been raised over the severity of the measures used and ministers made enquiries. Having received explanations from Camden and Pelham they pronounced themselves satisfied. Lake's heavy-handed approach was not condoned by the administration but it did not create serious tensions between the Dublin and London governments. From an administrative point of view Abercromby's actions were much more threatening to Ireland's security. Lake had targeted the disaffected whereas Abercromby had targeted the loyal. Lake's actions were against those who threatened the stability of the country, Abercromby's general order was a slight to the defenders of the country. Abercromby challenged the delicate balance of power in Ireland by offending the armed forces, the gentry and the administration; for that he was condemned.

Camden was adamant that Abercromby's successor should be a man of high-standing as '...Sir Ralph's strictures will be interpreted by opposition in the most invidious manner and therefore the appointment of a general as his successor of equal military merit appears to be absolutely necessary'. Camden

[817] John Lees to Auckland, 2 April 1798. B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/197.

suggested Sir William Howe, lieutenant-general of the ordnance, General Sir Charles Grey or Lieutenant-General David Dundas.[818] Given the controversy that had surrounded Abercromby's brief sojourn in Ireland there was little likelihood of a senior military commander consenting to serve under Camden. Pitt believed that none of the senior generals would go to Ireland 'but by compulsion'.[819] Reluctantly, Camden conceded that General Gerard Lake, as the most senior lieutenant-general in Ireland, might be appointed as a temporary measure if no alternative could be found. It was acknowledged that Lake's 'zeal is most useful and praiseworthy and he has conducted a very unpleasant business in the north with great temper and ability' but Camden concluded that he had 'not that opinion of his capacity as to think the complicated nature of the service in Ireland safe in his hands'.[820] When it became apparent that Lake would replace Abercromby, the viceroy wrote to Pitt commenting 'there shall be no want of cordiality and confidence on my part towards him - my doubt is not at all as to his willingness and exertion, but I question his ability in a difficult crisis'.[821] Abercromby had complained that he was not given the freedom to take military decisions without consulting with the lord lieutenant. Lake was not ot enjoy the limited level of freedom enjoyed by Abercomby; no general order could now be issued without first consulting the lord lieutenant.[822] Lake was informed of his appointment as interim commander-in-chief on 20 April.[823] Doubts as to Lake's abilities were soon proved to be well founded. Within weeks of his appointment Camden complained to Pitt that Lake was 'not equal to the situation'.[824] He argued that 'he has no combination in his mind, he can comprehend and execute the duty of a province but when great arrangements are to be considered his capacity does not extend to them: he becomes extremely

[818] Camden to Portland, 30 January 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/67/35. Howe and Dundas had been suggested as potential commanders-in-chief previously. For example, see Camden to Pelham, 17 August 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/103; Portland to Camden, 8 September 1796, P.R.O. H.O.100/62/224.
[819] Pitt to Camden, 31 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/4,
[820] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/29.
[821] Camden to Pitt, 7 April 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/269; C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/30.
[822] Portland to Camden, [early] May 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/76/156.
[823] Camden to Lake, 20 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0165/8.
[824] Camden to Pitt, 7 June 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/311.

puzzled'.[825] Camden felt that Lake had little to recommend him having '...no arrangements, is easily led and no authority' - hardly ideal in a situation of rebellion.[826]

III

In the midst of the crisis surrounding Abercromby's general order, Camden faced an additional and grave dilemma: Thomas Pelham was seriously ill. Throughout his time in Ireland Camden's chief secretary had suffered from increasingly poor health and, by the spring of 1798, he was so ill as to be unable to actively participate in the administration of the country. Camden, with few advisors he could really trust, was bereft. He had come to heavily rely on Pelham's advice and support and with the chief secretary incapacitated it was imperative that a replacement be found, albeit temporarily. The new chief secretary was required to fulfil two criteria; he must have the confidence of the lord lieutenant and he must be resident in Ireland. While Camden and Pelham had a good and effective working relationship, Camden resented Pelham's lengthy sojourns in England. Pelham had been in London for long periods during Camden's viceroyalty, so much so that though he was M.P. for Clogher from 1790-7 and for Armagh between 1797-1800, he also retained his seat for Sussex so that he could attend parliament when in London. Ill-health and a preference for London living meant that for much of Camden's time in Ireland his chief secretary was absent.

In February 1798 Beresford confided in Auckland that 'from a hundred different circumstances' he had 'reason to imagine that Mr Pelham does not mean to stay here after the session is over'.[827] By March Pelham was reported to be

[825] Camden to Pitt, 6 June 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/307.
[826] Camden to Pelham, 6 June 1798, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/388.
[827] Beresford to Auckland, 1 February 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/17.

'dangerously ill' and it was feared that '...his recovery is hardly possible'.[828] Camden argued that 'to be without a secretary at this instant is impossible, to take time to look for one in England would be most inconvenient and to have a person appointed to that situation at this moment unacquainted with the country would be most distressing and a measure to which I cannot give my consent'. Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh, step-son of Camden's sister, and private secretary to the lord lieutenant was suggested as a replacement. This was not the first instance of Camden proposing Castlereagh as a suitable chief secretary. At every opportunity Camden, and indeed Pelham, had promoted the idea to Pitt.[829] The chief obstacle to Castlereagh's appointment had been his Irishness. In November 1795 Camden wrote to the prime minister:

> ...I am aware that there are objections to his [Castlereagh] being an Irishman, but when you converse with him you will find he has no Irish prejudices and I do not see any probability of this appointment being drawn hereafter into a precedent that would be difficult to overcome.[830]

In this instance, Pelham consented to remain as chief secretary. By early 1798 it became apparent that Pelham would not remain in the position for long and Camden again suggested Castlereagh, as he 'is considered as perfectly adequate for the situation - the former objection to his being an Irishman cannot now be alluded to under the present circumstances'.[831] By March, Dublin Castle considered the country to be in a state of rebellion and it was vital that an active chief secretary be appointed. Pitt was no longer in a position either to delay or prevent Castlereagh's promotion, as Cooke had noted 'Lord Castlereagh's appointment was unavoidable'.[832] By the end of March Castlereagh was installed as temporary chief secretary. Pelham did not formally retire from his

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[828] Beresford to Auckland, 15 March 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/30; Camden to Pitt, [February/March 1798?], N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/189.
[829] See for example, Pelham to Portland, 26 October 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/17/2; Camden to Pelham, 30 October 1795, B.L. Pelham Papers, 33101/329; Camden to Pitt, December 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156B/1; Camden to Pitt [mid-December 1797?], P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/232. When contemplating resignation in October 1795 Pelham had suggested Castlereagh as a possible replacement. Pelham to Portland, 26 October 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Portland Papers, T.2905/17/2.
[830] Camden to Pitt, 18 November 1795, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/48.
[831] Camden to Pitt, [February/March 1798?], N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/189.
[832] Cooke to Auckland, 2 April 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/199.

position until November provoking Shannon to comment, '...Castlereagh acts as secretary, Pelham gets the pay'.[833]

Remarkably, given Camden's significant contribution to Irish political and military matters in the period between March 1795 and June 1798, he is rarely associated with the 1798 Rebellion. To a degree there is good reason for this. Despite the fact that he was lord lieutenant during the outbreak and first weeks of the Rebellion Camden was not, in reality, directing military policy, as might have been expected given his earlier involvement with matters military. An indication of his distance from the military command can be seen when, in a letter to Portland on 11 May, he confidently reported the 'total cessation of the dreadful madness and outrages which had disgraced the country', though he did acknowledge that 'there is still much to be done, great combinations to break; infinite objections to meet, and the most active energy to combat'.[834] Four days before the formal outbreak of the Rebellion, the night Lord Edward Fitzgerald was arrested, it transpired that Camden had been at the theatre, providing further evidence of his gradual retreat from the centre of Irish political and military activity.[835] Once Abercromby had determined to leave, Camden devoted much of his energies towards persuading Pitt that he too should return to London and be replaced by a man with military background, who would command respect from both politicians and soldiers. To a degree this was an opportunistic move on Camden's part. As lord lieutenant his interest in Ireland was genuine but should the opportunity arise then Camden would enthusiastically embrace the chance to return to England.[836]

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[833] [Shannon] to [Boyd], 28 June 1798, N.L.I. Shannon Papers, 13303/232. Following Camden's recall to London in mid-June and his replacement by Cornwallis, George III hoped that Pelham would return to Dublin as chief secretary. Briefly, in October, Pelham considered resuming his position but concluded that his health was not sufficiently recovered thus leaving the way open for Castlereagh's formal appointment to the position. George III, 10 June 1798; George III, 13 June 1798. N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/315; /323; Nugent to Knox, 19 June 1798; R Marshall to ___, 19 June 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/198; /199; Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh,* (London, 1981), pp 70-1.

[834] Camden to Portland, 11 May 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/76/170.

[835] Camden to Portland, 20 May 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/76/203.

[836] Camden to Pelham, August 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/59.

Camden had first tentatively raised this issue with Pitt in June 1797, but had not pursued it during the summer as Pitt was engaged with unfolding events in Europe; Lord Malmesbury, was again sent to France in July and tentative moves towards peace were to be discussed. However, the peace terms proposed by the French were unacceptable to Britain and Malmesbury was recalled in September. The following month, Austria finally concluded her conflict with France with the Treaty of Campo Formio. The prospect of an end to the war between Britain and revolutionary France receded and with it the likelihood that Pitt would have time to devote his attention to Ireland. Despite this, by October, acknowledging that he had hoped to make this request in peacetime, Camden decided to appraise the prime minister of his desire to leave Ireland in an unambiguous fashion:

> ...it is...from no want of personal attention and I trust from no capricious turn of mind that I am led to wish with great anxiety, for the period when I may return to England... That you may not misunderstand me, give me leave to repeat that as long as my services are really required I will remain here with cheerfulness but as soon as they can fairly be dispensed with you will oblige me infinitely by assisting my return.[837]

Camden cited his wife's ill-health as a reason for his desire to return to England, maintaining that 'although she determined and conceded in undergoing this penance for more than two years, I cannot but perceive it affects her spirits and her health'.[838] There was an additional factor associated with Camden's wish to return to England that had little to do with either the course of the war or his wife's health. In April 1797 he had inherited substantial estates in Sussex and Kent on the death of his cousin, John Pratt and he was anxious to take over the running of these. Pitt, characteristically, did not respond to Camden's overture.

By early 1798 Camden's anxiety to leave Ireland had become noticeable, Beresford commenting 'I have reason to think that Lord Camden...is grown tired of this country'.[839] Only a week before Abercromby's general order was issued Camden had confided to Bathurst, '...God knows how much I wish the time was

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[837] Camden to Pitt, 1 June 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/19; Camden to Pitt, 10 October 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/214.
[838] Camden to Pitt, 10 October 1797, P.R.O. Chatham Papers, 30/8/326/214.
[839] Beresford to Auckland, 1 February 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/17.

arrived when I may return to England'.[840] Camden's anxiety to leave Ireland, coupled with his lack of confidence in Lake, meant that while he oversaw the efforts to put down the Rebellion he did so with little active interest. Beresford complained that:

> the country is highly exasperated. Both houses are at this moment in a smothered flame. It will not long be so. I tell you they will force strong measures, for they will not sit down quietly and suffer their lives and properties to be tamely sacrificed. The universal opinion is for military law.[841]

On 30 March Camden conceded to parliamentary demands and issued a proclamation declaring martial law.

As far as the administration was concerned the country had been in a state of rebellion from March 1798.[842] At the close of May, Camden wrote to Pitt appraising him of the state of the country. The behaviour of the rebels had 'literally made the Protestant part of the country mad'. Camden warned that military excesses would occur as 'it is scarcely possible to restrain the violence of my own immediate friends and advisors within any justifiable bounds' and he maintained that 'no war ever began with such prospect of dreadful slaughter as the present'. As the Rebellion escalated, moderate views were sidelined. This was clearly illustrated when Camden remarked:

> you may easily conceive the violence of my friends when I tell you tho' I suppose I stood yesterday more highly with them and with the Country than any man, an appearance of wishing to avail myself of an opportunity not to exclude the possibility of a speedy return to peace and no more, has made me now the most unpopular man in Ireland.[843]

In early June the lord lieutenant wrote to Pitt stating 'the country will be lost unless the rebellion is speedily crushed, for unless it is crushed it will spread thro' the Kingdom and it will speedily be impossible for Great Britain with all her force to recover the Kingdom'.[844] The seriousness of the situation was acknowledged but Camden reacted with little of the enthusiasm which had been

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[840] Camden to Bathurst, 18 February 1798, in *Bathurst Manuscripts*, pp 22-3.
[841] Beresford to Auckland, 24 March 1798, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/2/31.
[842] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/261.
[843] Camden to Pitt, [late May 1798], N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/297.
[844] Camden to Pitt, 5 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/37.

apparent in 1796 and 1797. Camden's decreasing interest in Irish affairs was obviously recognised by the military commanders. Previously Camden had been in receipt of substantial correspondence from senior military officers offering or requesting advice. Camden's good standing with these men had been weakened in the aftermath of the scandal which had surrounded Abercromby's general order - the commanders resented the fact that Camden had tried to explain the order away as a minor error and had never issued a formal condemnation. By the outbreak of the Rebellion there was very little correspondence between the lord lieutenant and those in charge of the army in Ireland.

Camden did not concern himself with specific cases as in the summer and autumn of 1797. However, there was one significant exception to this; the arrest and subsequent death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Many of the difficulties surrounding Lord Edward's arrest reflected Camden's position in Ireland. Lord Edward, a senior United Irishman, was also well connected with powerful families in both Ireland and England. A son of the Duke and Duchess of Leinster, he was also a nephew of Thomas and Louisa Conolly, a nephew of the Duke of Richmond and a cousin of Charles James Fox. The arrest of Lord Edward was certain to attract the close attention of the political elite on both sides of the Irish sea and given the recent furore created in London by Abercromby's general order, Camden was determined to closely monitor the political feeling regarding Lord Edward. Lord Edward's radical, later republican, beliefs were well known. His connection with the United Irishmen was potentially both dangerous and embarrassing and evoked a range of opinion. A year before the Rebellion, Lord Waterford echoed the thoughts of many of the Protestant ascendancy when he described Lord Edward as 'a wild rash boy' and added 'I grieve for his family'.[845] However, few would have felt quite so charitable as the security situation in Ireland continued to deteriorate. It is unlikely that many would have concurred with Louisa Conolly when she wrote, following the arrest of members of the Leinster Directory at Oliver Bond's house on 12 March, that 'those who differ most in sentiment with him, lament more

[845] Waterford to ___, 29 May 1797, B.L. Windham Papers, Add Ms 37877/68.

than blame'.[846] Camden had considered arresting Lord Edward in late December 1797 when he received information that a rising was planned for Christmas Eve.[847] No arrest was made but by March 1798 Camden realised that despite the potential political difficulties that might surround it, Lord Edward had to be arrested. It was reported that £1,000 was offered for apprehending Fitzgerald on a charge of high treason.[848]

The capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald on 19 May generated much comment. Dromore reported to his wife that Fitzgerald 'flew like a tiger' upon his captors and 'fell to stabbing them in a shocking manner'.[849] Lieutenant Swan from the Revenue Corps and Captain Ryan, a yeoman, were injured. Ryan later died of his wounds.[850] Lord Edward himself received bullet wounds to his arm and shoulder while resisting arrest. The house on Thomas Street where Fitzgerald was captured attracted visits from a number of curious individuals. Dromore accompanied his hostess, Mrs Law, there, where they 'saw the military bring out the furniture and burn it in the street'.[851] During their visit John Claudius Beresford and George Hill discovered in a loft, under sheepskins, a complete rebel uniform in 'dark green, with crimson cape and cuff and silk lace' and a cap of liberty, reportedly two foot long. John Beresford hoped that Camden would seize the opportunity afforded to him with the arrest of Fitzgerald:

> We have the ball at our foot and if government will allow us to disarm the city which we can easily do now and bring on the trials of Lord Edward, Oliver Bond, McCann...the rebellion will be crushed, but there is a backwardness and timidity in certain people, which makes them dreadfully unwilling to venture upon any exertion.

The following day Beresford retracted his criticism as he was 'summoned to the Castle where we had a Cabinet and the evidence we have considered, it is

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[846] Louisa Conolly to [Duchess of Leinster], 14 March 1798, B.L. Letters to the Duchess of Leinster, Add Ms 30990/12.
[847] Camden to Pelham, 27 December 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33105/311.
[848] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1798; Dromore to Mrs Percy, 14 May 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/15.
[849] Dromore to Mrs Percy, 21 May 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/21.
[850] For an account of Fitzgerald's arrest see *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 22 May 1798; Cooke to [Auckland], 20 May 1798; Cashel to Auckland, 30 May 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/256; 294.
[851] Dromore to Mrs Percy, 21 May 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/21.

thought perfectly full against Lord Edward, Bond, O'Connor and some others and they are to be brought to trial as soon as may be'. Beresford anticipated that the result of any trial would be 'the just forfeit of their lives'.[852]

For Camden, Lord Edward's arrest had a personal as well as a political impact. Never particularly close to either the Conollys or the Leinsters, he had come to respect them and the influence they commanded among the Irish political elite. Camden, as Fitzwilliam's replacement, did not receive their approval. The political differences between the Camdens and the Conollys were substantial but both Lady Camden and Louisa Conolly agreed that despite their political differences they should meet socially.[853] Yet, it was not until July 1796 that relations with Leinster and Conolly were sufficiently comfortable for Camden to feel at ease visiting either Carton or Castletown.[854] Politically, however, the men remained divided. Both Leinster and Conolly were involved in promoting the idea that the Prince of Wales should be appointed as lord lieutenant of Ireland in February 1797, a suggestion, not surprisingly, dismissed by both Pitt and George III.[855] As political and military tension increased, Leinster and Conolly's distrust of the Irish administration was dissipated somewhat. Conolly was commander of the Londonderry Militia, and in December 1797, he offered the army the use of Louisa's property at Ballyshannon, County Donegal, to accommodate troops.[856] Leinster was in charge of the Kildare Militia. But, as government policy became increasingly severe, both men raised doubts about the necessity of such brutality. Leinster was dissatisfied with those in the Irish 'cabinet' and sought their resignation. He also appealed to Camden to use his influence to prevent the acts of cruelty

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[852] B[eresford] to Auckland, 20 May 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/258.
[853] [Lady Camden] to [Louisa Conolly], 6 June 1795; Louisa Conolly to [Lady Camden], 7 June 1795; 10 June 1795, P.R.O.N.I. McPeake Papers, T.3048/B/7; /8; /9.
[854] Camden to Pelham, 9 July 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/51.
[855] See for example, Wales to Pitt, 8 February 1797; Conolly, Leinster, Charlemont, William Ponsonby to Wales, [February 1797], in *Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales,* iii, pp 313-6; 320-1; Pitt to Lord Keith, 18 February 1797; Wales to Pitt, 23 February 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/76; 78; R.L. Edgeworth to Charlemont, 12 February 1797, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, pp 295-6.
[856] Conolly to ___, 29 December 1797, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/127.

perpetrated by the army.[857] Unhappy with the administration, Leinster resigned from the Kildare Militia in May 1797 stating: 'I cannot think of continuing in the military under an administration I so totally disapprove of'.[858] Conolly threatened to resign his command in April 1798.[859] Relations which had been cordial, if not warm, were severely tested from the spring of 1797 and reached their nadir with the arrest of Lord Edward in May 1798.

Lord Edward's capture also attracted attention in England. The Duke of Richmond, formerly master-general of the ordnance and one of the wealthiest and most influential British peers, raised the issue of Lord Edward's arrest with Pitt and then communicated directly with Camden. Recognising that Camden would be both unable and unwilling to release Lord Edward, he appealed to his friendship, and 'your own love of justice tempered with that humanity that makes you revered', noting 'I know the duties so distressing to your Lordship's nature that you are called upon to fulfil, nor would I presume to divert you from them'. However, Richmond thought it would be impossible for his nephew to get a fair trial 'in a place where martial law is proclaimed' and he beseeched Camden 'to allow of Lord Edward's [trial] to be postponed till a quieter moment than the present. If he should prove innocent, how happy will you feel to have guarded by your prudence and moderation against a hasty conviction'.[860]

In the days prior to Lord Edward's death it was reported that the Duke of Leinster and Lord Henry Fitzgerald intended to travel to Dublin to see what they could do to assist Lord Edward.[861] The wounded nobleman was not treated as a regular prisoner. Fresh fruit was sent from the orchards at Carton and he was attended by senior medical practitioners. The Irish surgeon general, George

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[857] Camden to Leinster, 29 April 1797; Leinster to Camden 12 July 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0182/23; /33.
[858] Leinster to Camden, 30 April 1797; Leinster to Camden, 28 April 1797; Camden to Portland, 19 May 1797, P.R.O. H.O.100/69/329; /323; /317; Leinster to Camden 14 May 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0182/27.
[859] Camden to Conolly, 20 April 1798; Conolly to Camden, 7 May 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0168/1; 5.
[860] Richmond to Camden, 2 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0199/1.
[861] Cashel to Auckland, 2 June 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/306.

Stewart, visited daily as did Dr Armstrong Garnett. In addition, Lord Edward was seen by Dr Lindsay who was in the employ of the Fitzgerald family.[862] Both Camden and Clare were under pressure to allow members of Lord Edward's family visit him in gaol, a request not usually granted to relatives of those accused of high treason. Clare, despite regarding Lord Edward as a 'reprobate', consented to accompany his aunt, Louisa Conolly, and his brother, Lord Henry Fitzgerald, on a brief visit to Newgate.[863] Several hours later, in the early morning of 4 June, Lord Edward died of his wounds, thus avoiding the requirement of a trial, conviction and public execution. This spared Camden the necessity of making a decision regarding Lord Edward though he assured Richmond 'had he lived...he should have had an impartial trial'.[864] It may not have been a deliberate policy of the Irish administration to allow Lord Edward to die before going to trial but it was certainly not to be regretted as it removed the necessity for a politically sensitive trial and execution. As Beresford astutely commented 'this is an unfortunate event apparently and yet I think it may be attended with advantage for certain I am that we should not have a chance for peace or quiet while he lived'.[865] It was also noted that it saved his family 'from the disgrace of his trial and execution'.[866]

Clare and Castlereagh had consented to Louisa Conolly's request to allow Lord Edward a small private funeral. Even this did not pass off smoothly. Cooke's office failed to inform Gregg, the gaolor at Newgate, of this arrangement. When Louisa Conolly, accompanied by two servants, arrived to collect Lord Edward's body no arrangements had been made. Eventually permission was granted and Lord Edward's body was taken to the nearby St Werburgh's church. Louisa Conolly wrote to Camden detailing her anger and

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[862] For a detailed account of the medical care given to Lord Edward see 'Report on the last days of Lord Edward Fitzgerald' by J. Armstrong Garnett, 4 June 1798; 'Clarifying note on the report of 4 June', 19 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0199/5.
[863] Clare to Auckland, 21 May 1798; Beresford to Auckland, 4 June 1798; Cashel to Auckland, 4 June 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/262; /309; /308.
[864] Camden to Richmond, 6 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0199/2.
[865] Beresford to Auckland, 4 June 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/309.
[866] Dromore to Mrs Percy, 5 June 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/33.

frustration with the authorities.[867] Camden, in the midst of trying to organise his own departure from Ireland, was distressed by Lady Conolly's letter. He explained his actions regarding the arrest and detention of Lord Edward, commenting that 'among the various of painful anxieties I suffer at this moment, it is not amongst the least that the line of conduct which my public duty compelled me to follow has been interpreted into unkindness and want of feeling'. Camden's conduct towards Lord Edward was the result of 'following the advice I did receive of pursuing an equal line of conduct towards all persons under the same circumstances' yet he pursued it 'with more pain than I ever felt in my life' and assured her that 'every feeling of my heart would have prompted me to have shown Lord Edward every possible indulgence'.[868]

IV

As Ireland teetered on the brink of complete rebellion and the Irish administration began to lose control of both political and military aspects of Irish government, Camden suggested the appointment of one man to assume the positions of both commander-in-chief and lord lieutenant. Military issues had become an integral part of Irish political life and while Camden actively involved himself in all aspects of his administration he was always conscious that he lacked formal military training. He suggested to Pitt that:

> this government is now become so intermixed with military measures, [and] military measures are so connected with the politics of the country that the Lord Lieu[tenan]t ought to be a military man and really to command that army of which he is nominally at the head. This sort of appointment with a man of legal experience as his secretary is the government which ought to subsist in this kingdom at present. The situation of Comm[ander] in Chief here is one of little power, but of great responsibility, it will be difficult to find an officer of approved merit willing to undertake the task and yet without such an aid I should be a very unworthy subject of the King and a very dangerous friend of yours did I continue in the government.[869]

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[867] Lady Louisa Conolly to Camden, 10 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0199/3.
[868] Camden to Lady Conolly, 12 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0199/4.
[869] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/29.

In May 1797 Camden had first requested that the roles of lord lieutenant and commander-in-chief be combined.[870] During the Abercromby crisis, Camden again referred to his desire to combine these in the one person commenting, 'I believe a military character used to command cannot submit to be under the command of a person in my situation, and the country cannot be saved without a military character of experience and ability being sent here'.[871] This was not the first time that there had been tension between the positions of lord lieutenant and commander-in-chief. In 1776 the lord lieutenant, Harcourt, wrote to the prime minister, Lord North, that he found it intolerable remaining in Ireland while the commander-in-chief usurped the viceroy's powers.[872] Camden recognised that no distinguished military man would enthusiastically embrace the prospect of serving in Ireland but he argued that the country faced ruin 'if some most efficient military man is not placed at either at the Head of the Government or of the army'.[873] There were a number of advantages to combining both roles in the one person:

> The reason that I have thought a military man should be Lord Lieutenant of Ireland at this time is that it is scarcely possible to procure a general of experience who will lend himself as much as a commander-in-chief must do to the political situation of the country and act under orders which as a military man he feels to be incompatible with discipline and as he is responsible for the discipline of the army it is natural he should be unwilling to adopt measures which might inspire it, whereas the military and civil responsibility centring in the same person he would be better able to act for the general good of the country.[874]

Lake's inability to control the troops was another factor in increasing Camden's demands to have a military man as lord lieutenant arguing 'I return to the opinion I had entertained before that the lord lieutenant ought to be a military man. The whole government of the country is now military and the power of the chief governor is almost merged in that of the General commanding the troops'.[875]

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[870] See for example Camden to Cornwallis, 23 May 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0179/3.
[871] Camden to Pitt, 23 March 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/257.
[872] Harcourt to North, 13 September 1776, in *Harcourt Papers*, x, pp 183-5.
[873] Camden to Pitt, 6 June 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/307
[874] Camden to Pitt, 7 April 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/30.
[875] Camden to Pitt, 6 June 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/307.

Camden proposed that Cornwallis be sent to Ireland to replace both Abercromby and Camden.[876] The appointment of Cornwallis as commander-in-chief had been mooted as early as March 1795.[877] In May 1797 rumours abounded that Cornwallis, then master-general of the ordnance, was to be appointed as commander-in-chief while Waterford commented that 'all letters from England mention Lord Cornwallis as our Lord Lieutenant'.[878] Lord Shannon authoritatively stated that 'Cornwallis is to be here about the 16th as commander-in-chief'.[879] Camden had written to Pitt in May and June requesting the appointment of Cornwallis but the latter dismissed the idea explaining that circumstances were such that he was not in a position to even contemplate going to Ireland at that time but should he be appointed he would do all in his power to assist Camden in any way possible.[880] Despite being fully aware that Cornwallis was not about to arrive in Ireland in 1797, Pelham was slow to inform the military commanders in Ireland. Rather, he confirmed that '...it certainly has been in the contemplation of His Majesty's ministers to send Cornwallis as Commander in Chief to this country'.[881] It is likely that Pelham exaggerated the likelihood of Cornwallis' appointment simply to put a stop to generals such as Dalrymple offering to take on the position themselves.[882]

Camden's desire to return to England was to be realised but the manner in which it occurred was resented. In response to Camden's suggestion of a change in the Irish administration, Pitt had voiced doubts about the suitability of Cornwallis for the position of lord lieutenant of Ireland. The prime minister was not convinced that 'his temper of mind and prejudices on Irish subjects make him qualified for the task'. In addition, Pitt had declared himself 'perfectly satisfied that nothing could compensate in this moment for your [Camden] quitting your

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[876] Camden to Pitt, 26 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/29.
[877] *Freeman's Journal*, 26 March 1795.
[878] G Hewitt to ___, 25 May 1797, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/81; Waterford to ___, 29 May 1797, B.L. Windham Papers, Add Ms 37877/68.
[879] Shannon to Boyle, 31 May [1797], P.R.O.N.I. Shannon Papers, D.2707/A3/28.
[880] Camden to Pitt, 1 June 1797; Cornwallis to Camden, 1 June 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/19; 0179/4.
[881] Pelham to Dalrymple, 7 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/199.
[882] Dalrymple to Pelham, 10 June 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33104/211.

situation'.[883] Camden had no indication that Pitt had changed his mind until he wrote, on 11 June, to inform the viceroy that he would be replaced forthwith by Cornwallis. Pitt commented that:

> ...it is impossible for me not to be convinced (tho' I own most reluctantly) of the absolute necessity of an immediate new arrangement of the military command and I still more reluctantly own that I see no way in which that can be effected so as to completely to answer the purpose intended but by the union of the two characters of commander-in-chief and lord lieutenant in the person of Lord Cornwallis.[884]

Camden was pleased that his replacement was Cornwallis noting 'I resign with cheerfulness the government into his hands' yet he feared that his removal might be misrepresented and that 'it might be said I am afraid of waiting to fight out the crisis which I have brought on'.[885] Pitt was willing to allow it be known that the change of personnel resulted from Camden's 'urgent representation of the advantage likely to arise at the present moment from uniting the functions of lord lieutenant and commander-in-chief in some distinguished character'.[886] Portland, too, sought to placate an irritated Camden, assuring him that:

> It is most essential that every man in Ireland should know the exact truth and circumstances of this measure and that your quitting the administration of the Irish government is not only your own act but your own suggestion and the effect of your repeated representations and requests to his majesty - whose satisfaction with every part of your conduct from your landing in Ireland to the present moment had been complete and perfect.[887]

Yet, the reality, in England, was that by June 1798 Camden was thought, by the king at least, to be incapable of controlling the country. George III commented that he was unwilling to send any additional forces to Ireland unless 'a military lord lieutenant...be instantly sent there'. He felt Camden was 'too much agitated...and totally under the control of the Irish Privy Councillors'.[888]

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[883] Pitt to Camden, 31 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/4.
[884] Pitt to Camden, 11 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/7.
[885] Camden to Pitt, 15 June 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/331. See also Camden to Pitt, 16 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/44.
[886] Pitt to Camden, 11 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/7.
[887] Portland to Camden, [12] June 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/81/78.
[888] Memo by George III, 10 June [1798], N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/315.

Camden set about informing his 'Irish privy councillors' and other advisors of the proposed changes. According to Camden, both Clare and Foster were disappointed to learn of Camden's imminent departure.[889] Beresford confessed to being extremely surprised by Camden's announcement. He had 'suspected he would not stay, but however I did not expect such a sudden shot'.[890] Cooke thought the manner in which Camden was recalled was hasty, 'I did not like and I don't like this sudden change' but he acknowledged that 'credit is done to Lord Camden's motives and feelings'.[891] Louisa Conolly thought the news that Cornwallis was headed for Ireland to be 'quite a surprise'.[892] Camden felt that he deserved 'a public mark of approbation' in order to convince men in both Dublin and London that his recall was not prompted by a belief that he was incapable of quashing the Rebellion.[893] He appealed to Elliot and Pelham to use their influence to persuade their friends that Camden was deserving of a position in the cabinet so that his recall from Ireland should not be seen as a criticism of his conduct.[894] Pitt did offer the returning lord lieutenant a seat at the cabinet table and also proposed he be made a Marquis, however there was to be no office to accompany the cabinet position.[895] Camden declined the offer of Marquis fearing that 'receiving that rank might be misconstrued...and it might be considered...gratifying my vanity instead of rewarding my services'.[896] Despite his refusal of the title he was anxious that it be made known that it had been offered it. Camden's real ambition was to be installed as a Knight of the Garter.[897]

On 31 March 1798 Pitt had written to Camden informing him that 'all you have done in the critical situation in which you are placed is felt by

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[889] Camden to Pitt, 15 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/43.
[890] Beresford to Auckland, 16 June 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/343.
[891] Cooke to Pelham, 19 June 1798, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/443.
[892] Louisa Conolly to Richmond, 18 June 1798, P.R.O.N.I. McPeake Papers, T.3048/B/27.
[893] Camden to Pitt, 15 June 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/331.
[894] Camden to Elliot, 15 June 1798; Camden to Pelham, 15 June 1798, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms, 33105/431; /441.
[895] Pitt to Camden, 27 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/8/1.
[896] Camden to Pitt, 29 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/45.
[897] Camden was made a Knight of the Garter in August 1799, Camden to [Foster], 25 July 1799, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0184/5.

everyone here as a proof that you are better able than any other man to do all that is now so necessary for the safety of the country'.[898] Less than a fortnight later, on 11 June, Camden was recalled. This does not necessarily indicate that Pitt was dissatisfied with his lord lieutenant, nor does it devalue Portland's remark of 12 June that 'there never was or will be a better [lord lieutenant] than Lord Camden'.[899] In the period between the two letters to Camden, Pitt had determined to change Britain's Irish policy. On 28 May he decided to pursue a union between Britain and Ireland and to do this he concluded that a change of lord lieutenant was necessary.[900] There were a number of other factors that combined to precipitate Camden's recall. Rebellion had broken out in Ireland in late May and it was belatedly accepted that government action against the rebels would be more effective with one man combining both roles of lord lieutenant and commander-in-chief. Cornwallis was regarded as being supremely qualified for the job. Allied to his political and military expertise, Cornwallis was well known to be in favour of granting further Catholic relief.[901] Pitt, conscious that to garner sufficient support for a union some concessions might have to be offered to the Catholics, realised that Cornwallis would be more acceptable than Camden to oversee potentially delicate negotiations. It is likely that Pitt offered Camden a cabinet seat in order to bolster support for the union within the cabinet. The inclusion of a figure who had direct and recent experience of Ireland could only serve to endorse Pitt's arguments for union. Indeed this endorsement was soon forthcoming; shortly after Pitt's offer Camden composed a detailed memorandum outlining his advice on how the British administration should proceed towards union.[902]

Cornwallis' appointment was made public on 17 June. There would be no sweeping personnel changes to accompany his arrival in Ireland. All government advisors would retain their positions, the only significant alteration

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[898] Pitt to Camden, 31 March 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0190A/4
[899] Portland to Pitt, 12 June 1798, in *Correspondence of George III,* iii, p. 77n.
[900] Geoghegan, *Act of Union,* p. 10.
[901] Ibid, p. 216; Bartlett, *Fall and Rise,* p. 246.
[902] Camden to Pitt, [17?] June 1798, in Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon,* pp 335-8.

was that Cornwallis would be both lord lieutenant and commander-in-chief.[903] Following the announcement of Camden's imminent departure there was a deluge of tributes to him. This was hardly surprising; almost inevitably the retirement or recall of a lord lieutenant prompted an outpouring of praise rarely heard while they held office. On 18 June both houses of parliament met to present an unanimous address of thanks to the departing lord lieutenant. The members declared that:

> in the perplexing difficulties arising from the complicated efforts of a malignant conspiracy his Excellency has ever preserved our confidence. Whatever delusion was practised his Excellency was not to be deceived; he discovered, he counteracted the secret plots of the disaffected, and he was prepared to repress and crush their open insurrection.[904]

Many wrote personally to the lord lieutenant expressing their dismay at his departure. Charles Kilmore penned one of the most excessively sycophantic letters, writing:

> he carries away with him the regret of all persons in this country of whatever rank and description, whose good opinion is worth having. The strict integrity which has marked his whole conduct - his uniform civility, his liberality...in short the whole tenor of his conduct has secured to him more personal friends among the really well disposed people of this country than I believe any lord lieutenant before him ever enjoyed.[905]

John Lees, in an emotional letter to Auckland, declared that 'perhaps no man ever left this country, possessing so perfectly the affection, esteem and love of the people... I love the man - a worthier never existed'.[906]

It was expected that Camden would leave Ireland on 26 June.[907] For months Camden had been anxious to be relieved of his position. Indeed for much of his time in Ireland he had been there under sufferance, taking every opportunity to note that while he had discharged his responsibilities with good

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[903] Nugent to Knox, 19 June 1798; R Marshall to ___, 19 June 1798, N.L.I. Lake Correspondence, 56/198; /199.
[904] 'Address to the Lord Lieutenant', 18 June 1798, *Journal of the Irish house of commons*, xviii, pp 341-3.
[905] Charles Kilmore to ___ [June 1798]. C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0195/6. Clanricarde to Camden, 21 June 1798; John Toler to Camden, 10 August 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0195/3; /7.
[906] L[ees] to [Auckland], 23 June [1798], B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/367.
[907] Dromore to Mrs Percy, 17 June 1798; 18 June 1798; 22 June 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/50; /54; /58.

grace he would be obliged if these duties were removed. Camden was anxious to get to London as soon as possible so that he could, in person, explain his return to England which 'tho' right in principle is most disadvantageous in the mode of carrying it into execution'.[908] This desire to leave Ireland was tempered somewhat by the genuine attachment Camden now felt to the country. There was undoubtedly much truth in Camden's claim that 'I have received so many acts of kindness from individuals and the country has been so uniformly kind to me that I feel myself performing a very painful duty in quitting it'.[909] While he had arrived in Ireland convinced the country should be governed according to Whitehall's instruction and for England's advantage he left it with a revised opinion. The connection with England ought to be defended and reinforced, but Camden had concluded that this could best be achieved by allowing Ireland to manage her own affairs without excessive interference from London. However, the advent of the Rebellion and the ongoing European conflict ensured that there would be no opportunity for Camden's ideas to be properly tested; the bond between Ireland would be strengthened by a legislative union.

Camden's arrival in Ireland had been marred by riotous scenes. His departure was a much more subdued affair. He left during the Rebellion; military matters took precedence over all else and so his departure was understated. By the time he returned to England much of the Rebellion was over. The Rebellion in the north had been quashed and in Wexford the rebels had been defeated at Vinegar hill. The French had not yet landed at Killala nor had Wolfe Tone yet returned to Ireland but militarily the government forces had control. The real threat had passed under Camden's stewardship not Cornwallis', a fact often overlooked. Cornwallis, as political and military commander, finished the job Camden had begun, and took all the credit for it.

[908] Camden to Pelham, 19 June 1798, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33105/441.
[909] Camden to Pitt, 16 June 1798, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/44.

'A Splendid Banishment'[910]?

Conclusion

Camden was lord lieutenant of Ireland during one of the most eventful periods of Irish history, yet he has been greatly underestimated by all historians of the 1790s. He may not have been the most imaginative or charismatic viceroy but his administration had a considerable impact on Anglo-Irish relations, on the 1798 Rebellion and ultimately on the successful implementation of the act of union. Having examined the issues in depth it is certain that Camden was a more influential viceroy than he has hitherto been given credit for. From the beginning his position was almost untenable. Britain may have sent him with the best of intentions, but circumstances conspired against both Britain, Camden and Ireland. The war with France, an increasingly restless opposition and precarious economy at home, naturally pushed Ireland off Pitt's immediate agenda. Ireland may have been important but there were simply greater demands to be met. Camden needed troops to pacify Ireland, he needed the money to pay them, but the European war meant that Britain could not meet his requirements. Camden was effectively at the mercy of Britain's woes. He arrived in Ireland determined to administer the country in accordance with the wishes of the ministers at Whitehall, but the time of his departure he had become an ardent defender of the Protestant ascendancy. He did not reconcile the divergent priorities of the cabinet in Whitehall and the 'cabinet' in Dublin Castle but it is difficult to imagine that anyone else could have succeeded where he had failed.

The position of lord lieutenant of Ireland in the late eighteenth-century was a difficult one. As the king's representative in the country he was the most senior figure in the political and social establishment. Yet, the lord lieutenant was an English peer and not always a senior English peer, which irritated the Protestant ascendancy who were conscious that they were regarded as inferior to

[910] Camden to Thomas Steele, 18 March 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0194/1.

their English counterparts.[911] The difficulties this raised was summarised in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of July 1797:

> Although the viceroy of the sister kingdom bears about with him the trappings of royalty, he is, in truth, only an officer delegated to discharge the functions of government. In that capacity he must ever be subject to the control, the advice and the mandate of the British cabinet.[912]

The Irish administration lacked the prestige of a royal court and to compensate for this the lord lieutenant presided over a series of lavish dinners and flamboyant balls. Camden took the social role of the office seriously and endeavoured to contribute to the 'gaiety of Dublin'.[913] Such extravagance led to accusations from London of frivolous spending. Camden defended himself vigorously from such allegations commenting:

> it may be supposed I have indulged in expenses in Establishments and Parades beyond the necessary dignity of this Station - this is by no means the case - I have only lived as every man in this situation set out to do "Liberally".[914]

In addition to playing the generous host he was also the grand master of the Knights of Saint Patrick, established in 1783 by Lord Temple as the Irish equivalent of the Scottish Order of the Thistle and the English Order of the Garter. Attended to with great pomp and ceremony, the Knights of Saint Patrick were never regarded as the equal of the English or Scottish Knights. Despite being replete with all the trappings of aristocracy, it was impossible to persuade the Protestant ascendancy that the impression of grandeur they enjoyed in Dublin was even remotely comparable to the reality of that of the English court.

Four distinct groups influenced the direction of Camden's viceroyalty; the government at Whitehall, the Irish 'cabinet', the military command in Ireland and the Irish gentry. Pitt and his ministers in Whitehall wanted to dominate the Irish administration. They were content to allow Camden control of domestic policy but they intended directing all matters that concerned Britain. At the outset Camden complied with Whitehall's demands but it quickly became

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[911] Malcomson, 'A Lost Natural Leader', pp 61-3.
[912] *Gentleman's Magazine,* July 1797.
[913] Camden to Pelham, 23 May 1796, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/15.
[914] Camden to Pitt, 10 February 1798, N.L.I. Lord Lieutenant's Correspondence, 886/221.

apparent that the English cabinet's interest lay with the progress of the war against France and not with the domestic concerns of Ireland. Despite his repeated requests for guidance, Camden received little more than words of encouragement. From a position in March 1795 where Camden was informed that he would never have to 'commit himself for the responsibility of any measure which must undergo Parliamentary discussion' he found himself, in November 1797, noting with some irritation that:

> so much delicacy exists in treating of Irish affairs in the British parliament that I have frequently taken notice that ministers have answered the observation upon the state of this kingdom with the remark that those considerations are outside the province of the English parliament.[915]

Such indifference to Irish affairs is hardly surprising since Camden's viceroyalty coincided with a period where Britain was frequently in danger of capitulating to the French.

On the continent French victories were many; by 1795 the first coalition was severely disabled with the defeat of the Prussians, the Dutch and the Spaniards. This left Austria and Britain as the only two major forces ranged against the French but by the spring and summer of 1796 Napoleon Bonaparte was in the ascendant with a series of stunning victories against Austria. Austria and the Italian states were forced to make peace with France in April 1797 leaving Britain isolated.[916] In addition, Pitt and his ministers faced strong internal opposition to the war which, allied to the Nore and Spithead naval mutinies of April and May 1797 and the financial crisis that saw Britain come off the gold standard during the spring of 1797, help explain why Ireland was not a priority for Whitehall during most of Camden's viceroyalty.[917] Two of Pitt's closest advisors who had experience of Ireland, Dundas and Grenville, were reluctant to become involved in Irish matters. Grenville had held the positions of chief secretary and home secretary before being appointed foreign

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[915] Portland to Camden, 6 March 1795, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0142A/3; Camden to Pitt, 3 November 1797, C.U.L. Add Ms 6958/2257.
[916] Hugh Gough, 'The French Revolution and Europe, 1789-1799', in Hugh Gough and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and the French Revolution,* (Dublin, 1991), pp 9-10.
[917] For greater detail on how Britain dealt with the war with France between 1795 and 1798 see Peter Jupp, *Lord Grenville 1759-1834,* (Oxford, 1985), pp 185-238.

secretary in 1791. He refused to concern himself with Irish affairs beyond offering encouragement to the lord lieutenant; 'I need not tell you how much I rejoice at hearing how prosperously you are going on. You know the interest I take in it on your account'.[918] Henry Dundas had been intimately connected with Irish affairs in the early 1790s. Indeed he had been closely involved with the successful passage of the 1792 and 1793 Catholic relief acts.[919] However, by the late 1790s Dundas, though he proclaimed himself 'personally and politically warmly attached to Lord Camden...had not the most distant desire to take any concern in any of the details of Irish Government'.[920] There appeared to be much truth in the Earl of Guilford's avowal that English ministers had not 'shown any attention to the interests of Ireland since Earl Fitzwilliam was recalled'.[921]

Distant from London it was hardly surprising that Camden turned to his Dublin advisors for guidance. A powerful, experienced and strong-minded body of men, Camden never allowed them to dominate government policy. This Irish 'cabinet' had the ear of the lord lieutenant but Camden's concessions to them were largely on his terms not theirs. In addition, the gentry, a somewhat amorphous group, exerted considerable influence over the viceroy. Initially unenthusiastic, the vast bulk of the gentry came to respect Camden. His willingness to listen to and act upon their demands, particularly from the autumn of 1796, endeared him to them. Conscious of their need to defend themselves, he kept troops dispersed throughout the countryside until the establishment of the yeomanry in October 1796. Additionally, a factor contributing to his good relationship with the country gentlemen was the fact that Camden knew little of Ireland, beyond the capital. He had no Irish estate and he, as was the case with many of his predecessors, did not travel much beyond Dublin Castle, his official residence in the Phoenix Park and his summer abode in Blackrock, County Dublin. For information on the state of the country he relied heavily on the,

[918] Grenville to Camden, 14 November 1795, Grenville to Camden, 11 April 1797, B.L. Dropmore Papers, Add Ms 58935/174; /176.
[919] McDowell, *Imperialism and Revolution,* pp 397-418.
[920] Dundas to [Lady Donegall], 2 August 1797, N.L.I. Melville Papers, 54A/110.
[921] Guilford, 21 March 1797, *Parliamentary History,* xxxiii, p. 120.

often exaggerated, accounts sent by the local gentry to the Dublin administration.

Camden's serious involvement with military strategy originated almost by default. As lord lieutenant he exercised much control over the dispersal of military patronage but it was not anticipated that he would play a serious role in the development of military strategy. However, the Irish military command was weak and ineffectual and Camden's advice was regularly sought. The commanders-in-chief often found that they had little control over the activities of the local military commanders. Increasingly Camden was the recipient of correspondence from various military commanders who considered it wiser to consult the lord lieutenant than their senior officer. Despite having no military training Camden took an intense interest in the formulation of Irish military policy and became personally involved in many of the high profile incidents between 1796 and 1798.

Pitt and the British cabinet, the Irish 'cabinet', the gentry and the military command all had an impact on Camden's viceroyalty. They each had different priorities, demands and expectations but in many respects they were interconnected. The world in which Camden operated was a small one and personal and familial relations played a considerable, if often unrecognised, role in the Irish administration and Anglo-Irish relations. Close friendships between men of influence in England and in Ireland were important. Former lord lieutenants and chief secretaries such as Buckingham, Carlisle, Fitzwilliam, Auckland and Grenville retained an interest in Ireland. Lord Clare, John Beresford, Edward Cooke and John Lees were regular and intimate correspondents of Lord Auckland. Whigs such as Lords Moira and Charlemont enjoyed a close friendship with Lady Londonderry, Camden's sister. Women,

despite having no formal political position, were influential.[922] It was Louisa Conolly who compelled both Clare and Camden to take an active interest in the fate of her nephew Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Lady Londonderry was prominent in her defence of William Orr and Lady Moira made her political opinions widely known. Preparations for Lady Camden and her daughters' departure from Ireland during the Rebellion were made with great secrecy and caution. It was feared that panic would ensue if the wife of the lord lieutenant was known to have fled. It was only a careless remark from an unwitting Lady Castlereagh that revealed Lady Camden's proposed departure to England on 11 June.[923]

Camden arrived in Ireland in controversial circumstances. He was promised support that did not materialise, he oversaw a weak military command with poorly trained and ill-disciplined troops and he had to deal with advisors who sought to dominate the lord lieutenant while at the same time he struggled to maintain peace in the countryside. Notwithstanding the many challenges faced by Camden's administration, there were considerable successes. He dealt swiftly and decisively with the Catholic question. The establishment of Maynooth College ensured the docility of the Catholic hierarchy. Parliamentary opposition was numerically weak; they failed to garner sufficient support to either reject, or ensure the passage of, one bill through parliament during Camden's time in Ireland. Yet, conscious of the support for men such as Grattan and Curran outside the houses of parliament, Camden did not dismiss them and made concerted efforts to ensure that the administration always had an large majority in parliament. College Green was symbolically important but in reality impotent, indeed it was reported that 'politics may be said to go on smoothly here, so far as relates to the ordinary proceeding of government little can be done

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[922] For greater detail on the political influence of aristocratic women see Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows. Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women,* Georgia, 1995; P.J. Jupp, 'The Roles of Royal and Aristocratic in British Politics, c. 1782-1832', in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert, (eds), *Chattel, Servant or Citizen. Women's Status in Church, State and Society,* Historical Studies xix, (Belfast, 1995), pp 103-133; Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire;* Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats. Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832,* (London, 1994).

[923] Dromore to Mrs Percy, 11 June 1798, B.L. Percy Papers, Add Ms 32355/37; Camden to [?], 10 June 1798, P.R.O. H.O.100/81/61.

by opposition, deserted, dwindled and dispersed as they are'.[924] During the financial and political crisis that followed the attempted French descent on Bantry Bay in December 1796 Camden did well to appease the fears of the Irish gentry and to ensure that the armed forces remained paid despite the dismal state of the Irish finances.

The attempted French invasion of Ireland indicated that the British administration's confidence in the invincibility of the British navy was misplaced. They could no longer be certain that they ruled the waves. This meant that Ireland remained vulnerable to external threat as the internal security situation deteriorated. With the war with France ongoing there was no hope of additional regular troops and Camden decided to adopt a series of repressive measures which gave the military greatly increased powers. The issue of military excesses was a critical matter during and long after Camden's tenure had expired. Most frequently commented upon were the methods adopted during General Lake's dragooning of Ulster in 1797 and the criticism levelled at the entire military establishment by its commander-in-chief, Sir Ralph Abercromby, in February 1798. Initially determined to countenance no excesses, by the spring of 1797 Camden had reversed his former policy and determined to stand by his military commanders whatever criticism came their way. Lord Wycombe believed that Camden's intentions were honourable but ill-advised commenting that 'he acts with violence conceiving that he acts with vigour'.[925] Not all considered that Camden had sanctioned the use of sufficient, let alone excessive, force. John Lees thought Camden too slow to act and longed for the time when 'a little more of the Devil can be infused into the breast of the best and most amiable of men, Lord Camden'.[926] Many among the Protestant public felt likewise: in a pamphlet published in Dublin in the summer of 1798 Camden was criticised for not adopting sufficiently rigorous measures:

> It had...been mentioned to my Lord Camden, by a nobleman of good sense and quick conception that, "if his excellency gave them liberty to go to war with us, and only gave

[924] Robert Thornton to Sir William Lowther, 19 February 1796, in *Lonsdale Manuscripts*, pp 146-7.
[925] Wycombe to Lady Londonderry, 20 November 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 C563/7.
[926] Lees to Auckland, 4 April, 1798, B.L. Auckland Papers, Add Ms 34454/201.

> us liberty to go to law with them, the issue of the contest could be foreseen without the aid of any peculiarly enlightened observation". My Lord Camden, at the time this observation was made, conceived it to be some joke and as he did not find any clause in his patent directing him to unravel the wit of His Majesty's subjects, he smiled, as is usual...[927]

There is no doubt that military excesses regularly took place during Camden's viceroyalty. Lake is held responsible for the atrocities committed during the dragooning of Ulster and while he, undoubtedly, must bear much of the blame he was acting with Camden's approbation. Camden's personal involvement with a number of cases, most notably the trial of four Monaghan Militiamen and that of William Orr, gave him a reputation as a man who believed harsh examples would restore tranquillity to the country more effectively than displays of mercy. When afforded the opportunity to chose a play to be performed, Camden selected Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice". William Drennan thought this a particularly 'strange choice if he knew there was a speech such as Portia's'.[928]

The prospect of union between Britain and Ireland was not novel but as Camden's tenure of office came towards a close it was increasingly spoken of. Camden had always been a supporter of a union. In 1793 he had observed to Robert Stewart, later Lord Castlereagh, that 'Ireland must be our province if she will not be persuaded to a union'.[929] Abercromby's resignation and the outbreak of Rebellion persuaded both Camden and Pitt that the time was right to begin to take the first tentative steps towards a formal union between Britain and Ireland. Camden's position had been weakened by the debacle surrounding Abercomby's general order and he desired to resign his position in favour of Cornwallis who

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[927] *Considerations on the Situation to which Ireland is Reduced by the Government of Lord Camden.* 6th ed. (Dublin, 1798), p. 13.

[928] Drennan to Martha McTier, 8 February [1798], in *Drennan-McTier Letters,* ii, p. 364. The speech Drennan is referring to in this letter is most likely to be Portia's speech at the trial where she extols the virtues of being merciful. 'The quality of mercy is not strain'd,/ It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven/ Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd/ It blesseth him that gives and him that takes...' Portia, Act 4, Scene I, lines 183-6 in William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice.*

[929] Camden (then Lord Bayham) to Robert Stewart, 4 Feburary 1793, in *Castlereagh Correspondence,* i, pp 156-9.

could combine the positions of commander-in-chief and lord lieutenant. Camden had long believed that, if union was decided upon, he should not 'be the instrument to carry the measure [union] into effect'.[930] Upon his return to England he took his seat in the house of lords where he was unobtrusive and rarely participated in debates. However, his absence from Ireland did not diminish his interest in the country and he maintained contact with many in the Irish administration.[931] His letters regularly advanced the prospect of a union between Britain and Ireland; when Foster made it known that he would not be a supporter of a union, Camden immediately attempted to persuade him of its merits.[932] In the house of lords he spoke in two debates and strongly endorsed the proposed union with Britain; Irish politicians would be 'engaged in...important concerns, instead of having to deliberate upon mere local questions' - a reference, no doubt, to the powerlessness he had often felt during his period as viceroy in Ireland.[933]

Camden returned to England at the end of June 1798 and took up his position in the cabinet. He was a secretary of war between May 1804 and July 1805, lord president of the council, 1805-6 and again between 1807-12. He became Marquis Camden in 1812 and in 1834 was appointed chancellor of Cambridge University, a position he was to hold until his death in 1840. On his death a poem was commissioned to celebrate his life. It concluded:

> ...And as the clouds of radiance leave the sky
> Floating in tranquil majesty on high
> Behold a pearly star!
> Some orbs more brightly, none more calming shine
> Camden! than thine![934]

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[930] Camden to Pitt, 1 June 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/19.
[931] See, for example, Camden to Shannon, 8 February 1799, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0175/10; Camden to Clare, 8 February 1799, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0183/13; Cooke to Camden, 7 May 1799, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 081/1.
[932] Camden to Foster, 25 July 1799, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0184/5.
[933] Camden, 21 April 1800; Camden, 19 March 1799, *The Parliamentary History of England*, xxxv, p. 180; xxxiv, p. 685. For a more detailed discussion on Camden and Union see O'Brien, 'Camden and the move towards Union 1795-1798', in Keogh and Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union*, pp 106-125.
[934] 'Ode upon the Death of Marquis Camden', B.L. 11646 G. 51.

Admittedly this is doggerel, but it is an accurate appraisal of a man who, surrounded by brighter stars, was often overlooked. However, upon examination it is clear that he played a pivotal role in ensuring that the delicate balance of power between Dublin and London was carefully maintained between 1795 and 1798.

When Camden was appointed as the king's representative in Ireland it was fully anticipated that he would be compliant and act in accordance with British interests at all times. The outcome was not so straightforward. Soon after Camden's arrival in Ireland, the lord chancellor, Fitzgibbon remarked:

> it is essential to the peace of this country that all parties should be satisfied of the determination of the British government to maintain and defend the remnant of political strength which is left in the hands of the Protestants of Ireland. I hope that such is their determination, else they never can preserve this country to the British Empire.[935]

For three years Camden strove to 'maintain and defend the remnant of political strength' possessed by loyal Irish Protestants. Anxious to secure the Protestant interest and bind Ireland closer to Britain, Camden soon realised that this could not be achieved by acting as Whitehall expected. Isolated, apart from his close relationship with his chief secretary, Pelham, Camden relied on manipulating political and military powers in Ireland, in an effort to maintain order in the country. Hampered by a lack of troops and cash he addressed the security and economic crises with enthusiasm and vigour.

In March 1797 Charles James Fox outlined his vision for government in Ireland: 'I would have the whole Irish government regulated by Irish notions and Irish prejudices; and I firmly believe...the more she is under the Irish government the more she will be bound to English interests'.[936] Camden had come to the conclusion that this was the most effective method of governing Ireland but with the outbreak of Rebellion he concluded that union was both necessary and inevitable. Camden had arrived in Ireland 'a very prejudiced Englishman' regarded 'instead of a viceroy...no more than a vice-Pitt' and

[935] Clare to Auckland, 18 May 1795, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/9.
[936] Fox, house of commons, 23 March 1797, *Speeches of Charles James Fox*, p. 642.

departed 'infected with Irish prejudice' and with an Irish chief secretary.[937] A reluctant lord lieutenant, Camden always harboured desires to return to England yet he came to regard Ireland and the Protestant ascendancy with a grudging affection. At his departure he claimed that he left behind an army that would defeat 'both Insurrection and Invasion' and that he had been enabled 'to develop and to expose the deepest conspiracy that ever existed and to place the kingdom in a state to meet the efforts of a foreign as well as a domestic enemy'.[938] Faced with an Ireland that, for Auckland, was 'like a drunken man who staggers unhurt and miraculously many a mile, amidst waters and precipices without drowning himself and breaking his neck', Camden had proved himself a careful and competent administrator, loyal, diligent and capable of maintaining a precarious equilibrium between those who made conflicting demands on his administration.[939] What had been 'an honourable banishment' for Lord Northington, lord lieutenant in 1783-4, was undoubtedly 'a splendid banishment' for Camden.[940]

[937] Camden (then Lord Bayham) to Robert Stewart, 4 Feburary 1793, in *Castlereagh Correspondence,* i, pp 156-9. Charlemont to Halliday, 26 July 1795, in *Charlemont Correspondence,* ii, p. 265; Camden to Pitt, 31 January 1797, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0156A/8.
[938] Camden, 18 June 1798, *Journal of the Irish house of commons,* xviii, p. 343.
[939] Auckland to Beresford, 28 March 1796, *Beresford Correspondence,* ii, pp 122-4.
[940] Camden to Thomas Steele, 18 March 1796, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0194/1.

Figure 1

Number of French Ships and Men Reported to be in Bantry Bay, 21 December 1796-2 January 1797

Date	Number of Ships	Number of Men
21 December 1796	22	-
22 December	38	50,000
	36	-
	-	80,000
	38	50,000
	40	-
	28	-
23 December	73	-
	25	-
	35	-
25 December	20	-
	16	-
	17	-
26 December	50	25,000
	17	-
	60	-
	50	25,000
28 December	60	-
29 December	-	20,000
	17	20,000
30 December	-	12,000
2 January 1797	59	12,500
	50	20,000

Source: Capt Courtenay, H.M. Sloop *Kangaroo*, 21 December, Jones *An Invasion that Failed*, p. 187; James O'Sullivan, 22 December, P.R.O.H.O.100/62/389; Surveyor of Bearheaven, 23 December, P.R.O.H.O.100/65/210; P.R.O.H.O.100/62/399; Dalrymple to Pelham, 23 December, P.R.O.H.O.100/62/385; Dalrymple to Pelham, 22 December, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/384; Roger Sullivan to his aunt, 22 December, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/387; James O'Sullivan, 22 December, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/388; Daniel O'Sullivane to Maurice O'Connell [Hunting Cap], 22 December, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33102/405; Coote to Kingsmill, 22 December, Jones, *An Invasion that Failed*, p. 186; Dalrymple, 23 December, Bradley, p. 61; Dalrymple, 26 December, P.R.O.H.O.100/65/217; Kingsmill, 26 December, N.L.I. DeVesci Papers, P6799; Pelham to York, 26 December, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33113/71; General Nugent, 28 December, P.R.O.N.I. Portla Papers, T.2905/21/29; Wolfe to Lady DeVesci, 29 December, N.L.I. DeVesci Papers, P6799; Clare to Auckla, 2 January, P.R.O.N.I. Sneyd Papers, T.3229/1/11; Beresford, *Beresford Correspoence*, ii, pp 144-5.; Elphinone, *Monarch*, 30 December, C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0170/16/1, 30 Dec 1796.

Figure 2.1

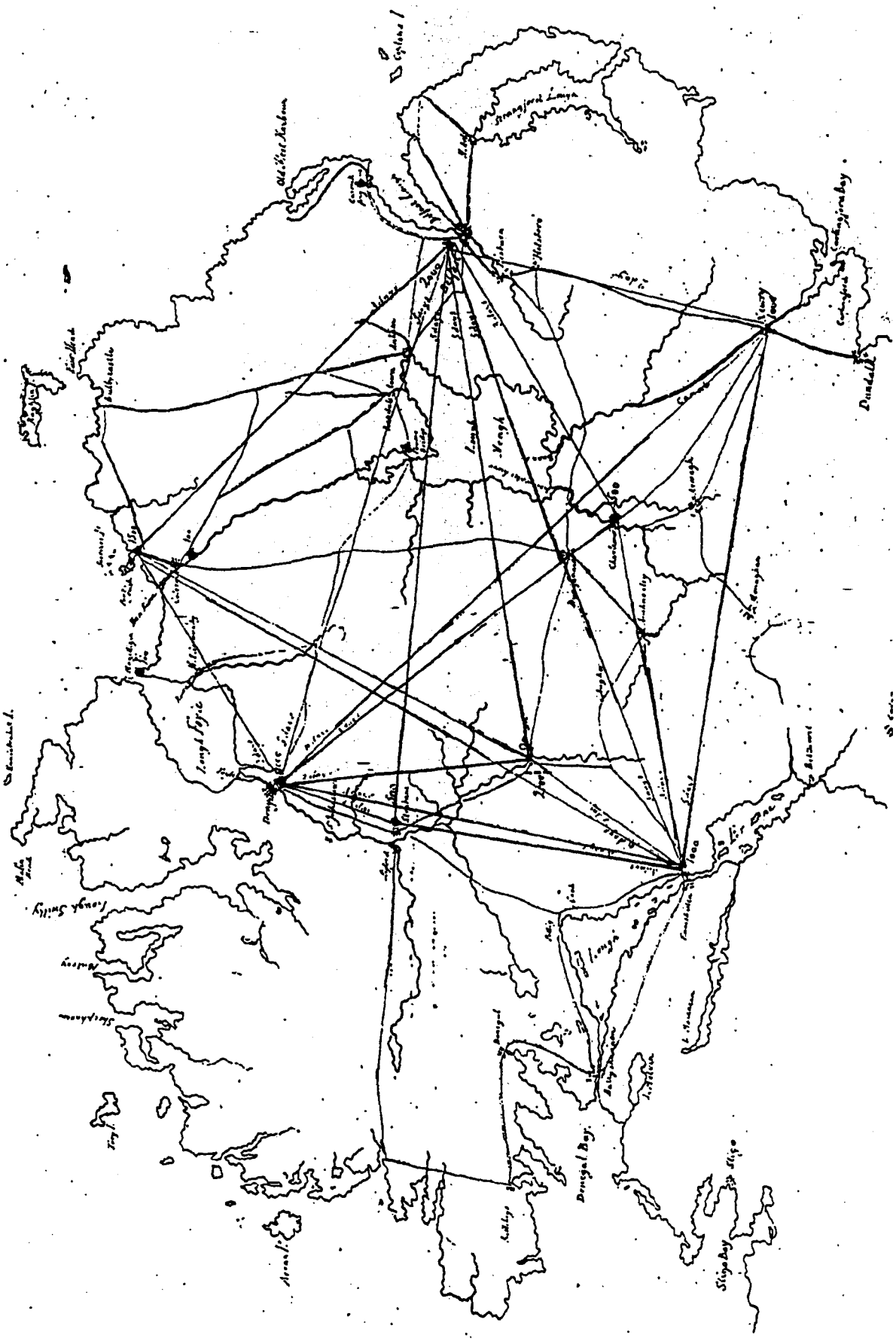
Troops stationed in the North, early 1797

Location	Number of Troops
Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal	1,000
Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh	1,000
Strabane, Co. Tyrone	500
Omagh, Co. Tyrone	2,000
McGilligan's Point, Co. Derry	100
Derry, Co. Derry	1,000
Portrush, Co. Derry	1,500
Coleraine, Co. Derry	100
Toome, Co. Antrim	100
Belfast, Co. Antrim	2,000
Newry, Co. Down	1,000
Charlemont, Co. Armagh	500
Cavan, Co. Cavan	200
Monaghan, Co. Monaghan	200
Downpatrick, Co. Down	200
Total Force in the North	**11,000**

Source: 'Volume of Defence Plans' [late 1796/early 1797], C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0172

Figure 2.2

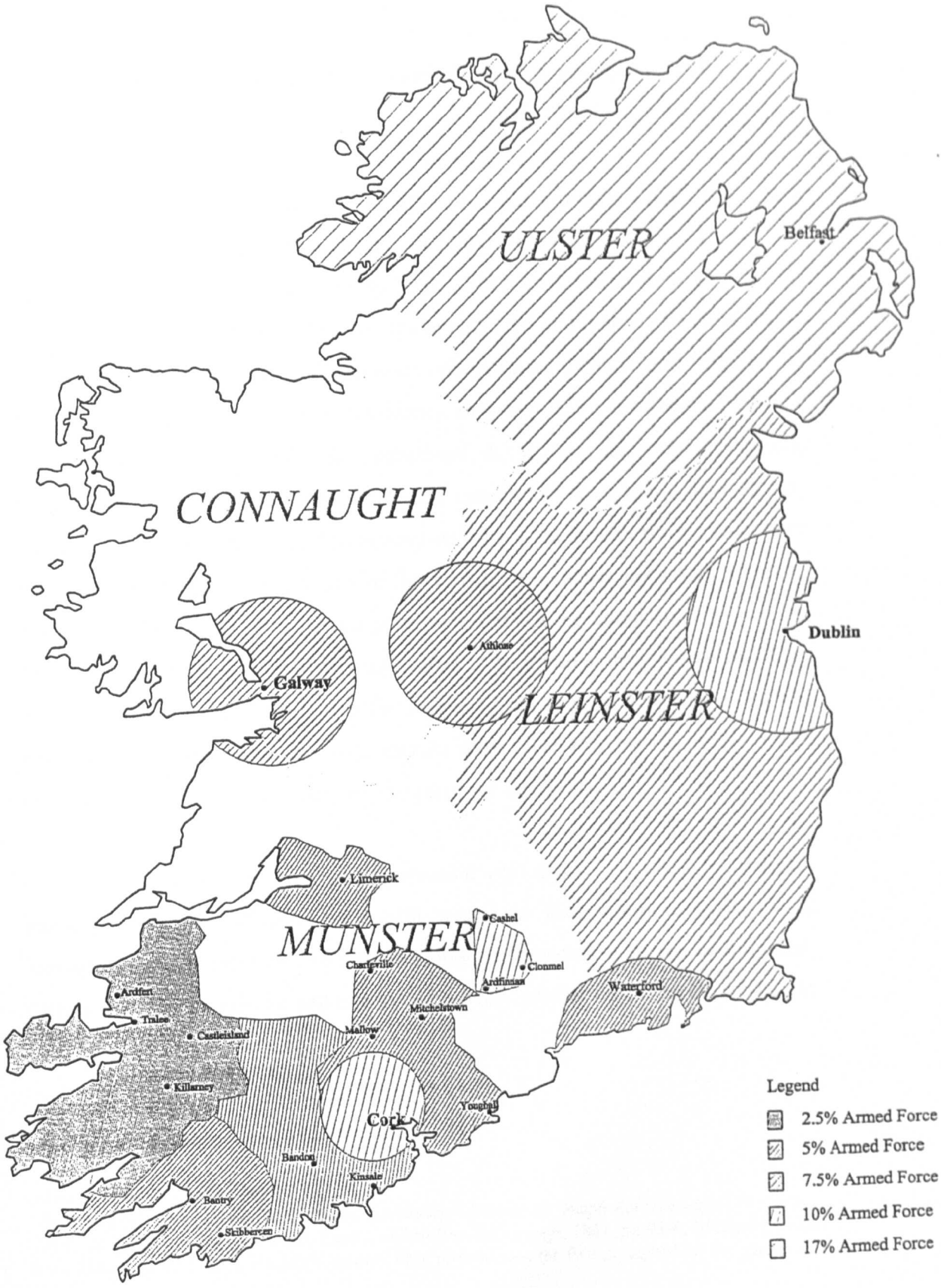
Location of Troops Stationed in the North
and
Marching Times Between Towns, early 1797



Source: 'Volume of Defence Plans', (late 1796/early 1797), C.K.S. Pratt Papers, U840 0172

Figure 3

Proposed Troop Distribution, February 1797



Source: ' Proposed troop distribution', February 1797, B.L. Pelham Papers, Add Ms 33119/1

Appendix

Sir Ralph Abercromby's General Order, 26 February 1798[1]

The very disgraceful frequency of court-martials, and the many complaints of irregularities in the conduct of the troops in this kingdom, having too unfortunately proved the Army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to every one but the enemy, the commander-in-chief thinks it necessary to demand from all generals commanding districts and brigades, as well as commanding officers of regiments, that they exert for themselves, and compel from all officers under their command, the strictest and most unremitting attention to the discipline, good order and conduct of their men, such as may restore the high and distinguished reputation which the British troops have been accustomed to enjoy in every part of the world. It becomes necessary to recur, and most pointedly to attend to the standing orders of the kingdom, which at the same time that they direct military assistance to be given at the requisition of the civil magistrate, positively forbid the troops to act (but in the case of attack) without his presence and authority, and the most clear and precise orders are to be given to the officer commanding the party for this purpose.

The utmost prudence and precaution are also to be used in granting parties to revenue officers, both with regard to the person requiring such assistance, and those employed on the duty. Whenever a guard is mounted, patrols must be frequently sent out to take up any soldier who may be found out of his quarters after his hours.

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[1] James Abercromby, Lord Dunfermline, *Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Abercromby K.B. 1793-1801. A memoir by his son James, Lord Dunfermline.* Edinburgh, 1861, pp 93-4; McAnally, *The Irish Militia,* p. 323. Dunfermline's account only re-produces the first paragraph of the general order.

A very culpable remissness having also appeared on the part of the officers respecting the necessary inspection of barracks, quarters, messes etc. as well as attendance at roll-calls and other hours, commanding officers must enforce the attention of those under his command to these points and the general regulations for all which the strictest responsibility will be expected for themselves.

It is of the utmost importance that the discipline of the dragoon regiments should be minutely attended to, for the facilitating of which the Commander-in-chief has dispensed with the attendance of orderly dragoons on himself, and desires that they be not employed by any general or commanding officer, but on military and indispensable business.

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