

#### IV.

## Year of Destiny, 1812

The year 1812 was to prove very important. It was the year Liverpool moved from the position of senior cabinet minister into that of a prime minister destined through his success to serve a near-record term. It was the crucial year of the Napoleonic Wars, producing a decisive victory for Wellington at Salamanca and an even more decisive disaster for the Napoleonic Empire in the retreat from Russia. At home, the effects of the industrial revolution and of the government's response were to result in the most severe of the Luddite riots and the Frame-Breaking Act.

The year opened with the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, which Wellington invested on 8 January and, thanks to the unpredictable weather, took on 19 January, with just under 1,000 casualties – completing the operation in half the time he had estimated.<sup>1</sup> Wellington then immediately prepared to besiege Badajoz, which he believed should be done during the winter and early spring, while his troops had supply advantages over the French. After several weeks assembling the necessary equipment and transport, he invested Badajoz on 16 March. By that time, Wellington had been promoted to an earldom.

Meanwhile, back in London, Parliament reassembled on 7 January. On the Royal Address, Grenville referred to the country as being on 'the brink of ruin' to which Liverpool ventured a mild protest. Later that week, Liverpool proposed a Vote of Thanks to Minto for the capture of Réunion, Mauritius and Java, observing that, with French privateering rife, 'It was thought necessary to make France feel that the ocean was the undisputed domain of Britain; and that ships, colonies and commerce, those favourite objects

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1. These dates are confirmed in letters from Wellington to Liverpool, 9 January and 20 January, Gurwood, *The Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, Vol. 8, pp. 518-24 and 526-33. 'Half the time' – personal letter to Liverpool, 20 January, *ibid.*, p. 534. Gurwood, then a lieutenant, himself commanded the 'Forlorn Hope'.



*Arthur Wellesley, first Duke of Wellington in 1814, a mass of medals and victory.  
Source: Wellcome Collection*

of the ruler of France, were at the mercy of this country.’<sup>2</sup> On this occasion, Minto being a Whig, even Grenville was benign and the motion passed *nem. con.*

Even though the Regency restrictions were to expire on 6 February, on 31 January Fitzwilliam<sup>3</sup> introduced a strong measure of Catholic Emancipation, a subject which the Prince Regent was known to oppose. Liverpool made a

2. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 2, cols 126-29 (10 January 1812).
3. William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam (1748-1833). 4th Earl Fitzwilliam from 1756. Whig grandee. Nephew and heir of the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham, who died in 1782. Lord President of the Council, 1794. Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1794-95, 1806. Minister without Portfolio, 1806-7. Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1798-1819.

modest speech in opposition, suggesting that the middle of a major war was not the best time to bring up the question and that arraignment of the court system as an instrument of Protestant oppression, as Fitzwilliam had done, was not the best argument in its favour to moderate minds.<sup>4</sup> Fitzwilliam's motion was defeated by 162 votes to 79, with even the pro-Emancipation Wellesley voting against it on the grounds of bad timing.

The following week the House of Lords first debated an entirely new topic, the 'Nottingham riots'. The bad harvest of 1811 after several years of poor ones led to an increase in the price of corn, which in early 1812 reached 122 shillings, twelve per cent above the previous decade's 1809 peak and second only to the 1800 peak of 131 shillings. This brought enormous distress.<sup>5</sup> In November 1811, in an action attributed to Ned Ludd, who supposedly smashed two stocking frames in 1779, textile workers began holding drills around Nottingham and smashing textile machinery. Similar outbreaks, including a pitched battle with local soldiers, were reported in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The outbreak of frame-breaking, while not unprecedented, was a response to the pains of early industrialisation. Despite a general increase in overall living standards (with occasional setbacks after bad harvests as in the 1790s, 1811 and later 1816), several large categories of workers were losing out badly. E.P. Thompson<sup>6</sup> identifies three such groups: the handloom weavers, replaced by power looms; the framework knitters, replaced by stocking-making machinery; and the 'croppers', who dressed cloth by cutting it with large shears, who were replaced by shearing frames. The croppers were concentrated in Yorkshire, the framework knitters in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire and the handloom weavers were scattered throughout the textile industry in the Midlands and North.

Each of these groups contained hundreds of thousands of workers, in 1800 organised through the 'outwork' system whereby they worked at home, with materials provided by an employer. They were relatively well paid in the early years of the textile industry, as rising output increased demand but after 1800 their wages declined sharply and continued to decline to below subsistence levels.

The last immiserated handloom weavers were commemorated in Disraeli's 1845 novel *Sybil*, a Dickensian 'wallow-in-squalor' that tugged on the heartstrings and derived its information from an 1842 Royal Commission report.<sup>7</sup> By 1850, the handloom weavers had disappeared but the transition

4. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 21, cols 474-75 (31 January 1812).

5. Thomas Tooke, *A History of Prices and of the State of the Circulation from 1793 to 1837*, 6 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1838-57) Vol I p. 475.

6. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Handloom weavers pp 269-313, Croppers pp 522-30, Framework knitters pp 530-41.

7. Disraeli's true distaste, however, was reserved for the self-governing workmen of 'Wodgate' – Willenhall, Staffordshire – who existed in a state of drunken, dog-fighting squalor making locks over a four-day working week, and whose misery

period between around 1815 to 1850 was a hard one, and handloom weavers who did not find a new trade led miserable lives. For croppers and framework knitters, the end came earlier; they were in difficulties from the 1790s and had mostly disappeared by 1825.

For all three groups of ‘outworkers’, a move to the factories seemed unattractive despite the potential for higher wages, because of the long hours and harsh discipline; outwork provided a freedom that factory work lacked. With more freedom, outworkers were also able to organise politically, with both industrial demands for a ban on the new machines and a minimum wage and political demands for parliamentary reform (by which they meant manhood suffrage and annual parliaments, not the limited measures favoured by some Whigs).

Luddism was an almost entirely working-class movement, a novelty in England (the 1790s rioters, like the French Jacobins, had been led by middle-class Radicals). Luddism also involved violent action against local factory owners and magistrates, though not yet a national armed uprising. In 1811-12, there was little coordination between the various areas of unrest, the handloom weavers were as yet little involved and the agitation was primarily industrial, involving frame-breaking and an attempt to get restrictive legislation against new machinery and for a minimum wage.

In this first Lords debate Liverpool, in a brief response to Holland’s question on the subject, recognised the novel nature of the disturbances: ‘There might be riots more alarming in appearance, but arising from a sudden ebullience of resentment, and therefore easily quelled in a short time; but the system adopted in the county of Nottingham undoubtedly gave those disturbances a new character.’<sup>8</sup> Liverpool announced that ‘two of the most intelligent magistrates’ had been sent to Nottingham to deal with the disturbances and that the government would shortly introduce legislation on the subject. In response, Lauderdale claimed that the Nottingham riots ‘might all be traced to the system and conduct of His Majesty’s Ministers, in reducing the commerce of the country to a gambling speculation’.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of February, Liverpool proposed the Frame Work Bill (known after its passage as the Frame-Breaking Act), by which frame-breaking would be subject to the death penalty and those whose frames had been broken would be compelled to report the crime to local magistrates. The Act superseded a 1788 Act that had made destruction of stocking frames subject to seven-to-

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resulted from a lack of local government and social structure, not abject poverty as with the weavers.

8. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 21, cols 602-3, col. 603 (Lauderdale) (4 February 1812).
9. James Maitland (1759-1839). 8th Earl of Lauderdale (Scottish) from 1789. 1st Baron Lauderdale (GB) from 1806. MP for Newport and Malmesbury, 1780-89. Radical and proto-Keynesian economic theorist.

fourteen years' transportation. It was designed to be temporary and to expire on 1 March 1814. By that time a further Act had been passed, once again reducing the maximum sentence to transportation, before the legislation was toughened again to restore the death penalty during the post-war disturbances of 1817. Around 60-70 Luddites were executed in 1812-14 but in no cases do the magistrates appear to have used this Act specifically.

In introducing the measure, Liverpool stressed that it was experimental, intended to be temporary and gave protection to manufacturing by stocking frames the same protection as was given to other kinds of machinery. In response, Lord Byron (in his maiden speech) claimed in an emotional address that the work done by the new frames was inferior in quality, 'not marketable at home and merely hurried over with a view to exportation'<sup>10</sup> so that men were put out of work to no purpose other than the enrichment of the masters. It was an argument that would become familiar over the next two centuries but was at that time novel.

In the Third Reading debate, Liverpool denied that the Orders in Council had caused exceptional distress:

It happened that at a late period there was a sudden excitement of trade; that it was followed by a glut of the market; and that glut, by distress among the workmen. . . . But the present interposition of Parliament is called for, not by the distresses of the workmen, but from a conspiracy against the machinery, which has regularly exhibited itself at all times when machinery has been employed to the disuse of manual labour. We have found penal statutes necessary for the protection of every successive kind of machinery.

Liverpool then read a passage from Archdeacon Paley,<sup>11</sup> implying that the intensity of punishment was to be adapted, not to the enormity of the crime, but to the difficulty of preventing it in society: 'It is on this principle that a man is hung for stealing a sheep or a horse.'<sup>12</sup> The bill passed its second reading by 32 votes to 17, passed its third reading without a division and received the Royal Assent on 20 March.

Liverpool proposed a vote of thanks to Wellington for the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo on 10 February. In his speech he emphasised Wellington's skill in capturing it in only eleven days; the thanks were agreed to without dissent.

10. George Gordon Byron (1788-1824). 6th Baron Byron from 1798. Radical poet. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 21, cols 966-72 (27 February 1812).

11. William Paley (1743-1805). Christ's College, Cambridge, Senior Wrangler, 1763. Archdeacon of Carlisle, 1782. *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785).

12. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 21, cols 1082-83 (5 March 1812).

Ten days later, he proposed an Address to the Prince Regent, thanking him for bestowing an earldom on Wellington and adding a parliamentary pension of £2,000 a year to the honour. Again, the Address and the pension were agreed to without dissent, indicating that both Wellington and the Peninsular campaign had now risen above party strife, except for Grenville's occasional griping. Even a continued £2 million subsidy to Portugal was agreed to without dissent.

By this time, the first of 1812's upheavals in the government had occurred. The ending of the Regency restrictions produced no changes, with the Prince Regent alienated further from the Whigs by the previous week's Catholic Emancipation debate. At the same time, he wanted to bring a section of the Whigs into a coalition government, if this could be done without major alteration in policies that were proving successful; however, Grey and Grenville rejected his overtures for such an arrangement. The petulant Prince Regent did not like Perceval, writing to the Archbishop of York<sup>13</sup> that 'I have now only Lord Liverpool' to trust.<sup>14</sup>

Wellesley had already announced his intention of leaving the government and retiring to the back benches. Liverpool, in a tactful letter to his brother, mentioned that Wellesley was disgruntled at not having his opinion taken into account sufficiently:

However, I do not believe that he has attended more than half the Cabinet meetings which have taken place since he has been in Government; and this circumstance, combined with others, unavoidably prevented him from having the same common feelings with his colleagues as exist among those who not only act but live together.<sup>15</sup>

Wellesley then unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the Prince Regent to replace Perceval by a ministry led by Wellesley and Canning, albeit including Liverpool in his current job, with a partial concession on Catholic Emancipation. He finally resigned on 19 February. Perceval was then able to add significantly to the government's abilities by appointing Castlereagh to the Foreign Office, where he was to remain until his suicide ten years later. Castlereagh would have preferred to return to the War Office, with Liverpool returning to the Foreign Office, but Perceval and Liverpool were united in vetoing that idea.

While Castlereagh's abilities added to the government's stature, Perceval was also able to add to its Commons strength by bringing back Sidmouth as Lord President of the Council, together with two of his adherents in minor positions,

13. Edward Venables Vernon Harcourt (1757-1847). Bishop of Carlisle, 1791. Archbishop of York, 1808-47.

14. Quoted in Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 89.

15. Quoted in Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks Jenkinson*, Vol. 1, pp. 377-78.

while retaining Camden in the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio. With the war proving the government's capability, and reinforcements in both the effective and political spheres, Perceval's government was now a strong one indeed.

After Wellington invested Badajoz, he wrote to Liverpool to discuss strategic possibilities for the rest of Spain, suggesting that a primarily naval attack on Tarragona or Barcelona in north-east Spain by Bentinck<sup>16</sup> and Pellew<sup>17</sup> would prove the most useful in dividing French forces, although he thought in unlikely either would succeed because of the possibility of reinforcements from France.<sup>18</sup> However, the witless Bentinck<sup>19</sup> decided to invade Italy instead, much to Wellington's fury, since an attack on Spain's east coast would have been extremely useful around or after Wellington's victory at Salamanca.

Badajoz was captured by storm on 6 April, after a remarkably swift siege (Wellington was worried about Marmont<sup>20</sup> sending a relief expedition), albeit with the loss of almost 5,000 men killed and wounded. Wellington sent several letters to Liverpool after the victory, one of which (now lost) recommended the establishment of a corps of sappers and miners, as inadequacies in that area had greatly increased the casualties of the assault.

During the remainder of April, Wellington ensured that Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz were garrisoned by local troops and provisioned in case of any attack by the French; this task proved protracted. However, he was delighted to hear from Castlereagh that a subsidy of £1 million was to be given to Spain, since this would increase his control over Spanish troop operations.

On 12 May, Wellington wrote to Liverpool that the American government had imposed a three-month embargo on supplies of grain to his troops. Fortunately, having been warned by Liverpool the previous November that

16. Lord William Bentinck (1774-1839). Whig MP for Camelford, Nottinghamshire, King's Lynn and Glasgow, 1796-1803, 1812-14, 1816-28, 1836-39. Governor of Madras, 1803-7. Major-General, 1805. Lieutenant-General, 1811. Commanded British forces in Sicily 1811-14. Governor General of India, 1828-35.
17. Edward Pellew (1757-1833). Baronet, 1796. 1st Baron Exmouth from 1814. 1st Viscount Exmouth from 1816. GCB, 1832. MP for Barnstaple, 1802-4. Captain, 1782. Captained frigate *Nymphé* to defeat French frigate *Cléopâtre*, 1793. Captained HMS *Indefatigable* to capture French 74-gun *Droits de l'Homme*, January 1797. Rear-Admiral, 1804. Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, 1804-09. Vice-Admiral 1808. Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, 1811-14, 1815-16. Admiral, 1814. Victor at battle of Algiers, 1816.
18. Gurwood, *The Dispatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, Vol. 9, pp. 7-9.
19. Castlereagh wrote to Liverpool (27 April 1814, quoted in 3rd Marquess of Londonderry [ed.], *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, 12 vols [London: William Shoberl, 1851] Vol. 9, p. 410) of Bentinck's 'impracticability and Whiggism, which seems to follow him everywhere'.
20. Auguste de Marmont (1774-1852). Duke of Ragusa from 1808. Served in Toulon, Italy and Egypt with Napoleon. Marshal, 1809. Stayed loyal to Louis XVIII during the Hundred Days but, as Major-General of the Guard, surrendered to Orleanist revolutionaries, July 1830.

no grain shipments were to be expected from England because of the poor harvest, he had bought sufficient grain from America in advance to increase his stocks to 200 days' supply from the previous 3 months, and he expected to maintain them there until he heard news of the 1812 British harvest.

Wellington's last long letter to Liverpool as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, dated 26 May, set out his plans for an invasion of the Castilian heartland, with a view to bringing Marmont to battle before the harvest in central Spain allowed Marmont's troops to re-provision themselves. Wellington's troops would have access to secret stores of grain.<sup>21</sup> He arrived at Salamanca in late June and spent the next month besieging the city's forts, which he captured on 27 June, and awaiting an attack by Marmont, which he believed more advantageous than attacking first.

On 3 June, Wellington informed Liverpool that Graham would shortly return to England because of his deteriorating eyesight and requested that no successor be sent out as second-in-command: 'There are but few officers who should be sent from England as second-in-command, who would not come here with opinions formed, probably on very bad grounds, and with very extravagant pretensions.'<sup>22</sup> It is notable that this request was made in a private letter to Liverpool and not to the Commander-in-Chief; it indicates the high confidence between the two men.

In April the House of Lords returned yet again to Catholic Emancipation on a motion by the Earl of Donoughmore.<sup>23</sup> Liverpool in response was more definitive than in the past. His central argument was that the Catholic Church subjected the state to a foreign power and that power was currently under the domination of Napoleon's France. Donoughmore's motion was rejected by a majority of 174 votes to 102 and a similar motion was rejected by the Commons by an even larger majority. This indication that majority opinion in the Lords, the Commons and the country remained opposed to Catholic Emancipation was to be important in the negotiations over the succession to Perceval the following month.

On 24 April, Liverpool laid a declaration of the Prince Regent before the House, which stated that France had repealed the Berlin and Milan Decrees with respect to the United States by an order of 28 April 1811 (in fact, backdated from August 1811). Accordingly, the government was reviewing the possibility of repealing the Orders in Council as they applied to the United States (although it did not appear that full repeal of the Berlin and

21. Gurwood, *The Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, Vol. 9, pp. 172-78.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

23. Richard Hely Hely-Hutchinson (1756-1825). 2nd Baron Donoughmore (Ireland) from 1788. 1st Viscount Donoughmore, 1797. 1st Earl of Donoughmore, 1800. Irish representative peer from 1801. 1st Viscount Hutchinson (UK), 1821. MP (Ireland) for Dublin University, Sligo Borough, and Taghmon, 1776-88. Colonel, 1800. Major-General, 1805. Lieutenant-General, 1812



Milan Decrees, the contingency for automatic withdrawal of the Orders in Council, had in fact occurred). News of this formal notice of the likely repeal of the Orders in Council thus reached Washington, three weeks' sailing away in summer, well before the US declaration of war on 18 June, and probably before President Madison's 1 June Message to Congress.

On 27 April in the House of Lords, Liverpool proposed a Vote of Thanks for the capture of Badajoz, pointing out that the level of resistance made it an exceptionally worthy object for such a vote. Liverpool singled out 'the body of officers forming under Lord Wellington, which would constitute a shield of strength such as had, perhaps, never existed in any other country, or indeed in this, on any former occasion'.<sup>24</sup> The Vote of Thanks was carried unanimously after a favourable speech by Holland.

Liverpool returned to the American question on 5 May, when he denied that Captain John Henry,<sup>25</sup> an agent of Sir James Craig, Governor General of Canada, had attempted to persuade the New England states to secede from the United States. Relations at the time (the winter of 1808-9) had been poor, with the Embargo Act in force and Madison declaring that the US would be justified in invading Canada without a formal declaration of war. However, Henry's instructions had been simply to obtain information as to the temper in New England and he had been withdrawn when Craig learned that Madison had settled differences with the British ambassador.<sup>26</sup>

On Monday, 11 May, Perceval was assassinated in the House of Commons by John Bellingham,<sup>27</sup> a British national, who was imprisoned in Russia in 1804 and who held a long grudge against the British government for not upholding his compensation claim for his imprisonment. He went to Parliament with the express intention of shooting someone in power and Perceval was unhappily the first he came across. Eldon believed he was the intended victim, having walked past Bellingham in an ordinary greatcoat a few minutes earlier, but Bellingham failed to recognise him out of his official regalia.

In the House of Lords Liverpool, when he heard that Perceval had been shot, immediately proposed an Address to the Prince Regent deploring Perceval's death and calling for the apprehension of the murderer.

Bellingham was allegedly cheered by the crowd as he was taken to justice; this reaction, if it existed, was exaggerated by the Radical press (the government

24. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 22, cols 1042-48 (27 April 1812).

25. John Henry (1776-1853). Captain, US Army, 1798. Employed as spy by Sir James Craig, 1809. Sold probably fraudulent papers to President Madison through certainly fraudulent French agent for \$50,000, February 1812.

26. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 14-17 (5 May 1812).

27. John Bellingham (1769-1812). Imprisoned in Russia over a business dispute, 1804. Refused compensation by Britain, 1809-12, on grounds that diplomatic relations with Russia had been broken off in 1808. Blamed Perceval.

was after all to win a large general election majority later that year). However, the reaction to Perceval's death in Nottingham was indeed one of joy, and the militia had to be called out and the Riot Act read. Bellingham was tried on 15 May, found guilty and hanged on 18 May. Brougham<sup>28</sup> condemned the trial as 'the greatest disgrace to English justice' but it is difficult to see why; there were dozens of witnesses to Bellingham's action, and only by the wildest stretch of the imagination can Perceval be held responsible for his misfortune.

Liverpool eulogised Perceval in the House of Lords on 12 May, saying, 'few men ever existed, who were endowed with more virtues; and no man had fewer faults'.<sup>29</sup> Perceval's funeral was held on 16 May, with Liverpool, Eldon, Harrowby and Ryder as pallbearers. Even before then, Eldon had sent a memorandum to the Prince Regent expressing the willingness of the government to carry on under any of the present Cabinet, but that the chances of success were limited without at least attempting to bring Wellesley and Canning into the government.<sup>30</sup>

The Prince Regent therefore named Liverpool interim Prime Minister to take charge of negotiations, while Castlereagh offered his resignation to the Prince Regent, if it would help attract Canning. Liverpool, however, while accepting the possibility of moving Castlereagh from the Foreign Office, insisted in the negotiations with Canning and Wellesley on 17 May that Castlereagh should remain Leader of the House of Commons.

Canning and Wellesley responded that they could not serve in any administration opposed to Catholic Emancipation, that Whigs should be invited to join the government and that Wellesley thought inadequate resources were being devoted to the Peninsular campaign. Accordingly, the government decided to carry on without them. There appeared no reason why they should not succeed; the addition of Castlereagh and Sidmouth to the administration had strengthened a team that was already strong.

John Walter,<sup>31</sup> the proprietor of *The Times*, is said to have hesitated at supporting 'a body of men so critically situated and so doubtful of national support' but *The Times* was still an ordinary Whig/Radical paper, without

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28. Henry Peter Brougham (1778-1868). 1st Lord Brougham and Vaux from 1830. Whig MP for Camelford, Winchelsea, Knaresborough and Yorkshire, 1810-12, 1815-30. Lord Chancellor, 1830-34. His *Historical Sketches of Statesmen who Flourished in the Time of George III* (1839) is scathing about Liverpool, especially about the gold standard decision.
29. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 168-69 (12 May 1812).
30. Quoted in A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Letters of King George IV, 1812-30*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938) Vol. 1, pp. 74-75.
31. John Walter (1776-1847). Son of John Walter (c. 1739-1812), the founder in 1785 of *The Times* (c. 1739-1812). Manager/Editor of *The Times* from 1803. Whig MP for Berkshire, 1832-37, for Nottingham, 1841, 1842-43. Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 91, gives Walter's view but Walter was hardly impartial.

the towering influence it was later to gain. It did, however, play a role by publishing (possibly without permission) Wellesley's statement justifying his resignation, which accused both Perceval and the rest of his colleagues of downright incompetence and alleged that the Peninsular War had been fought on a 'narrow and imperfect scale'.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, when on 21 May Stuart Wortley,<sup>33</sup> a generally pro-government backbencher connected to Liverpool by marriage, proposed a Commons motion asking the Prince Regent to appoint a 'strong and efficient administration', the motion was carried by 174 votes to 170 with Wellesley's supporters and the unreliable Canning voting against the government.

Stuart Wortley's motivation in bringing down the embryonic Liverpool government is unclear. His father had been a Whig who crossed the aisle with Portland in 1794, and he had been a reliable supporter of the Portland and Perceval ministries and a friend of Perceval. However, his political views were modifying; he had recently announced his support for Catholic Emancipation. Later, he was to prove by no means reliable in support of Liverpool's government but was, nonetheless, rewarded with a peerage in 1826, after which he was included in Peel's Cabinets of 1834-5 and from 1841 until his death in 1845.

In the first days when the Liverpool administration was being formed there was dismay among some country gentlemen that Liverpool had been unable to attract Canning and Wellesley and this, together with his new-found sympathy for Catholic claims, may have motivated Stuart Wortley to propose his motion. It was so unpremeditated that he had not lined up a seconder but the Whig Lord Milton,<sup>34</sup> heir to Fitzwilliam, was happy to second a motion that promised to disrupt Liverpool's new government.

Stuart Wortley deplored the failure of the next three weeks' negotiations and on 11 June proposed a second motion regretting the failure of attempts to broaden the government and calling for further such attempts, which was rejected by 289 votes to 164. In the end he congratulated himself that Liverpool's government 'stood better than at its first formation in the eyes of the country'.<sup>35</sup> Liverpool, a forgiving man, appears to have preserved

32. A copy of Wellesley's statement is contained in Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 367-70.

33. James Archibald Stuart Wortley (1776-1845). 1st Baron Wharnccliffe from 1826. MP for Bossiney and Yorkshire, 1802-26. Lord Privy Seal, 1834-35. Lord President of the Council, 1841-45. Married to a niece of Louisa, Lady Liverpool.

34. Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam (1786-1857). 3rd/5th Earl Fitzwilliam from 1833. MP for Malton, Yorkshire, Peterborough, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire, 1807-33. His Yorkshire election in 1807 cost £100,000; it is believed to have been the only pre-reform election where expenditure exceeded the 1754 Oxfordshire contest (for further information, see Namier and Brooke, *The History of Parliament*).

35. Thorne, *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*. "Stuart Wortley, James Archibald."

cordial relations within the family but notably failed to give Stuart Wortley preferment, which came only from Peel a generation later. It should be noted that the delay caused by Stuart Wortley's motion prevented the repeal of the Orders in Council until 24 June, i.e. after the US Congress had declared war, and thus significantly contributed to the outbreak of that unnecessary conflict.

The day after Stuart Wortley's motion, even though the vote was a narrow one in a fairly thin House, the Cabinet resigned, while pledging to carry on their departmental work until the Prince Regent had formed an administration. The Prince Regent began by approaching Wellesley but Wellesley had already wrecked his relationship with his former colleagues by his statement in *The Times*, which his former colleagues blamed for the Stuart Wortley motion, and by his publication the following day of Liverpool's letter to him on the Catholic question.

Thus, when on 23 May Canning, on Wellesley's behalf, asked Liverpool whether he would join them, Liverpool responded that both he and the entire outgoing Cabinet would not serve in any government of which Wellesley was a member.<sup>36</sup> Liverpool also wrote to Canning disclaiming any personal hostility to Wellesley but pointing out that the publication by Wellesley of an attack on Perceval and his Cabinet colleagues made it impossible to work with him.

The Prince Regent asked them to reconsider but, via a further Cabinet minute of 27 May (from which Castlereagh and Camden, his uncle, were absent 'out of delicacy'), they confirmed their refusal to unite with Wellesley and Canning. At the Prince Regent's request, Liverpool, Melville, Mulgrave, Sidmouth, Westmorland, Buckinghamshire, Eldon, Harrowby, Ryder and Vansittart reinforced the point in separate letters, pointing out that Catholic Emancipation and Castlereagh's position were further obstacles to any such combination.<sup>37</sup> The loyalty of the Cabinet to Liverpool is notable and in marked contrast to the squabbles that had taken place in the previous decade. Liverpool's position was thus strong.

Wellesley then opened negotiations with Grey and Grenville, asking whether they would serve in an administration pledged to Catholic Emancipation and vigorous prosecution of the war. This epitomised the problem facing the attempt to construct an administration without Liverpool and his team. On Catholic Emancipation, the Wellesley/Canning group and the Whigs were united but were faced with a public opinion massively opposed. On the war,

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36. Most of the relevant correspondence is contained in Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, Appendix, cols i-xliv.

37. Both the two Cabinet minutes and the nine supporting letters are contained in Aspinall, *The Letters of King George IV, 1812-30*, Vol. 1, pp. 83 and 90-98. Liverpool's letter is not there but it is contained in Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks Jenkinson*, Vol. 1, p. 393.

Wellesley's claim that the Perceval administration had been feeble made little sense and was in complete opposition to the Whigs, who had mostly favoured pulling out of the peninsula altogether.

Moira, the Prince Regent's close friend, expressed enthusiasm for a joint administration, provided Grey and Grenville were included, as did Lansdowne, so Wellesley then formally invited Grey and Grenville to join him in an administration with himself at the head and with Whigs making up four or five of the twelve to thirteen members, plus Erskine<sup>38</sup> and Moira. On 3 June, having led Wellesley on, Grey and Grenville then refused to serve in a Cabinet in which Whig participation was limited in advance. Moira attempted to change their opinion, but to no avail.

That same afternoon Liverpool told the House of Lords that he was serving only until a new government could be formed. Wellesley growled darkly that 'dreadful personal animosities' on the part of Liverpool and his colleagues had prevented him from forming one, after which Stanhope nicely described Liverpool's position as 'not a minister, but a daisy, a flower, that appears in bloom in the morning, that dies at night and is no more thought of'.<sup>39</sup>

After Wellesley showed Grey and Grenville's memorandum to the Prince Regent, he withdrew Wellesley's commission and on 6 June, possibly at Arbuthnot's earlier suggestion,<sup>40</sup> instructed Moira to open discussions in an attempt to form an administration. Grey and Grenville then raised an additional objection, requiring the officials of the Royal Household to be changed by the new administration. Moira was not authorised to offer this, so negotiations again broke down.

Wellesley also refused to take second place in a Moira government,<sup>41</sup> so Moira was reduced to trying to form an administration with Canning, Melville (who had inherited his father's cadre of loyal Scottish Commons supporters) and some second-tier Tories, such as Huskisson and Arbuthnot. Liverpool undertook to support such a ministry but not to serve in it. The Prince Regent, realising that any such administration would not be remotely 'strong and efficient' then terminated Moira's commission and on 8 June authorised Liverpool to resume his efforts to form a government.

Liverpool's final accession to office was thus a matter of chance even after Perceval's assassination. Wellesley's foolish publication of correspondence and Grey and Grenville's extraordinary intransigence were the only obstacles to

38. Thomas Erskine (1750-1823). 1st Baron Erskine from 1806. Whig MP for Portsmouth, 1783-84, 1790-1806. Lord Chancellor, 1806-7.

39. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 332-34 (3 June 1812).

40. Arbuthnot letter of 29 May to Colonel McMahon, the King's Secretary, in Aspinall, *The Letters of King George IV, 1812-30*, Vol. 1, p. 99. Arbuthnot's reasonable argument was that nobody hated Moira, unlike Wellesley, so a combination might be more feasible. Colonel Sir John McMahon (1754-1817). MP for Aldeburgh, 1802-12. Prince Regent's Private Secretary, 1811-17.

41. Wellesley papers, quoted in Aspinall, *The Letters of George IV, 1812-30*, Vol. 1, p. 104.

forming an administration without him, either mostly Tory or mostly Whig, based on support for Catholic Emancipation. Given the prima donna-ish natures of Grenville, Wellesley, Canning, and to a lesser extent Grey, and the major policy differences between them, such an administration would not have survived for long, especially as it would soon have had to fight an election with an electorate that remained staunchly anti-Catholic. However, the disruption caused by such a short-lived administration would have been highly damaging to the war effort and to Britain's overstretched finances.

Before forming a government, Liverpool had to face the House of Lords. He announced that the Prince Regent had commissioned him to form a government, whereupon the Duke of Norfolk enquired what the government were doing about the Orders in Council, saying that not a single day should be lost before repealing them and pacifying the United States. Liverpool responded that the US Congress had shown signs of becoming more hostile but that no definitively hostile acts had yet taken place.

Then, after Moira had paid a gentlemanly tribute to Liverpool's response to his attempts to form a government and Liverpool had moved that the House adjourn, Wellesley lowered the tone by accusing Liverpool and his colleagues of holding 'dreadful personal animosities' against him. Liverpool wisely let the well-liked Harrowby respond to this, by pointing out that, only a few days before Stuart Wortley's motion, Liverpool and his colleagues had been attempting to form a government with Wellesley. However, the publication of Wellesley's attack on both Perceval and his ministers, accusing the whole team of incompetence, had naturally changed the situation. Wellesley denied authorising the publication but reiterated that he did not consider Perceval 'a fit man to lead the councils of this great empire'.

Grey then intervened to claim that he and Grenville could not enter a government in which their principles would not be allowed their full expression, as had been the case in both the Wellesley and Moira negotiations, after which poor Moira expostulated reasonably that: 'I shall not be satisfied with being told that I conducted myself with frankness, but that I was only a dupe, and that I was not aware of the designs to which I was instrumental.' Grenville then claimed that he and Grey were constitutionally entitled to demand the replacement of the Royal Household, after which Eldon thankfully moved the adjournment for a second time.<sup>42</sup> It had been an unedifying discussion, from which only Harrowby and Moira emerged with credit.

Liverpool was well aware of the Prince Regent's high regard for Moira and of the need to see him well provided for. Accordingly, the following November the East India Company elected Moira as the next Governor General, with Liverpool's support, even though Moira was a Whig. The huge salary and perquisites attached to this post solved Moira's financial difficulties and it was

42. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 356-81 (8 June 1812).

to prove an excellent appointment. Moira remained in office for a decade of high achievement, working well with Liverpool's government, and would be promoted Marquess of Hastings in 1816.

To form a stable administration, it was essential for Liverpool to establish a *modus vivendi* on the vexed subject of Catholic Emancipation, since his administration would contain both pro- and anti-Emancipationists. He did so by leaving it a completely open question, allowing ministers on both sides to speak for and against such a measure, without committing the government either way. This was a major breach of the already half-formed doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility but it worked. Intended initially as a stopgap for a short-lived government, it remained a central principle of Liverpool's government and its successors for over sixteen years.

Liverpool had little difficulty remaking the Cabinet he had inherited from Perceval. The feeble Ryder was removed as Home Secretary and replaced by Sidmouth, an able administrator with major Commons support. Sidmouth's ally Vansittart had already been installed as Chancellor of the Exchequer in May, a post made vacant by Perceval's death. Another Sidmouth ally, Charles Bragge Bathurst<sup>43</sup> was installed in the lucrative office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, also vacated by Perceval's death. Liverpool's old office as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies was filled by the Earl Bathurst, promoted from the Board of Trade. The reliable Harrowby was given Sidmouth's former office as Lord President of the Council. The Earl of Buckinghamshire, President of the Board of Control (responsible for India) was promoted to the Cabinet.

With Liverpool and six ministers remaining in place, Eldon as Lord Chancellor, Castlereagh at the Foreign Office, Westmorland as Lord Privy Seal, Melville as First Lord of the Admiralty, Mulgrave as Master General of the Ordnance and Camden as Minister without Portfolio, this made a Cabinet of thirteen, reduced to twelve after Camden retired later in the year with a marquessate.

Junior ministers with significance for the future included Palmerston, remaining as Secretary at War, and Peel, promoted in August from Under Secretary for War and the Colonies to the important job of Chief Secretary for Ireland, under the Duke of Richmond, who remained Lord Lieutenant (outside the Cabinet) until the following year. At that time Henry Goulburn,<sup>44</sup> previously Under Secretary at the Home Office was transferred to Peel's old

43. Charles Bragge Bathurst (1754-1831) MP for Monmouth, Bristol, Bodmin and Harwich, 1790-1823, Treasurer of the Navy, 1891-03, Secretary at War, 1803-04, Master of the Mint, 1806-07, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1812-23, President of the Board of Control, 1821-22. Married Charlotte Addington, Sidmouth's sister, 1781.

44. Henry Goulburn (1784-1856) MP for Horsham, St. Germans, West Looe, Armagh and Cambridge University, 1808-56. Under Secretary, Home Office, 1810-12, Under Secretary, War and the Colonies, 1812-21, Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1821-27, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1828-30, Home Secretary, 1834-35, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1841-46.

job. Frederick Robinson, a Lord of the Treasury from June, was promoted in September to Vice-President of the Board of Trade, where his skills were useful – he and Huskisson, who joined the government in 1814, provided Liverpool with invaluable support on financial and economic matters.

The only remaining question was the fate of Canning, Liverpool's oldest friend and less tainted with the 'dreadful personal animosities' that had caused the Cabinet to form a solid wall of resistance to Wellesley. Liverpool offered him Castlereagh's post at the Foreign Office, with Castlereagh moving to the Exchequer but remaining Leader of the House of Commons. However, Canning refused to allow Castlereagh to 'lead' him in the Commons, even though Canning would have the senior and more lucrative office. Liverpool and even Castlereagh himself pleaded with him repeatedly, but to no avail.

By his final refusal Canning was shut out from Cabinet office for four years and from senior Cabinet office for a decade – he was only eventually recalled because of Castlereagh's suicide. His faction in the House of Commons was also decimated at the 1812 election, reduced to no more than a dozen. From



*Henry, 3rd Earl Bathurst as elder statesmen, 1834. A rock of support and reliability for Liverpool's Cabinet.*

the viewpoint of posterity, we can breathe a sigh of relief that he rejected the Foreign Office at this time; his combination of insubordination, hatred of the Continental autocracies, scheming and quarrelsomeness would have been hopelessly counterproductive at the Congress of Vienna.<sup>45</sup>

Liverpool wrote to Wellington on 10 June to tell him of the formation of the new government, apologising for the friction with Wellesley and encouraging him about Bathurst's capabilities and the government's commitment to the Peninsula. Thereafter most of Wellington's correspondence with the government was conducted through Bathurst and the few letters to Liverpool were primarily personal.

On 16 June Brougham proposed a Commons motion demanding immediate abolition of the Orders

45. More on Liverpool and his colleagues at the website [www.lordliverpool.com/chronology](http://www.lordliverpool.com/chronology)



in Council banning trade with French-controlled territories. The motion failed, but Liverpool was well aware of the urgency and hence the Orders in Council were repealed completely on 24 June. It was too late; on 18 June the United States had declared war. Meanwhile, a tentative approach to France for peace in April was rejected because it demanded recognition of the 'actual dynasty of Spain', i.e. Napoleon's brother Joseph, whose unsteady grip on the country was weakening further.

On 17 June Vansittart presented the Budget for the fiscal year to 5 January 1813, which had been mostly prepared by Perceval before his death but which Vansittart had gone through with Liverpool in the preceding week after the government was formed. Total expenditure was projected at £58.2 million, up about seven per cent from the previous year's budget, with army expenditure rising slightly to £17.8 million, plus £5.2 million extraordinary expenditure relating to the Peninsular campaign, while navy expenditure had declined about three per cent to £19.7 million. A special expenditure of £90,000 for a Marylebone barracks had been eliminated by Liverpool for lack of proper time for consideration.

Vansittart had that morning raised a loan of £15.65 million from the City, £27.54 million principal amount of three per cent stock, on which he regretted that the interest rate payable had risen to 5.28 per cent (7.09 per cent including the sinking fund provision). Two days later, he and Liverpool met with the Bank of England and agreed that only one quarter of this money would be applied to replacing short-term Exchequer bills, even though the total thereof had risen sharply during the lengthy interregnum between administrations.<sup>46</sup> Liverpool well knew how crucial the government's liability management was for the war effort.

In terms of raising new taxes, Vansittart raised a laugh by claiming his first tax was one nobody would pay – he intended to abolish a bounty totalling £308,000 on the export of printed goods, which had become redundant: 'Wherever British manufactures are permitted to enter, their superiority is universally acknowledged.'<sup>47</sup> He doubled the tax on hides and shoes, which had not previously been raised since 1711. He would also double the tax on glass, little used by the poor. He would add ten per cent to the tobacco duty. He would charge the duty on auctioned property on inclusion of the property in a public auction whether or not it was actually sold. He added a penny to the tax on postage – he regretted this additional burden on business correspondence.

Perceval had proposed a tax on private brewing, calculated at five shillings per head of families where brewing was undertaken. However, Vansittart believed this tax fell too harshly on the poor, whose beer was inferior and should not be taxed so heavily, and so abandoned it. Instead, he increased the

46. Bank of England, Minutes of the Court of Directors, 25 June 1812.

47. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 559-74 (17 June 1812).

‘assessed taxes’ on such items as carriages and manservants, horses and dogs, which acted as sumptuary imposts. The total raised by new taxes would thus be £1.9 million.

This first Liverpool/Vansittart budget, although carried over from Perceval, included several features that were to be a staple of fiscal management for the next decade. Taxes were increased, to finance more of the extraordinary war expenditure incurred, so that a higher percentage of expenditure was covered by tax than was generally the case in Pitt’s wartime budgets. At the same time, the new taxes were spread around, with only a small part of them (the hides and shoes tax) falling primarily upon the poorer members of society. Notably, the new taxes would fall on consumption, not on income as under Lansdowne’s 1806 doubling of income tax, nor on economically valuable production. It is not surprising that Vansittart became unpopular but his austere fiscal management was to pay immense dividends.

According to modern computations,<sup>48</sup> the deficit for the calendar year 1812 was £24.5 million, up from £16.4 million in the preceding year. The 1812 fiscal gap was thus 26 per cent of public spending (including interest), up from nineteen per cent of public spending in the previous year; for context, in the year to October 1797 the peak fiscal gap ratio was 63 per cent, in 1801, 40 per cent and 23 per cent in 1805, Pitt’s final year.

On 29 June news of serious disturbances in several manufacturing districts was reported to Parliament by Sidmouth and Liverpool. The matter was referred to a select committee. Stanhope feared the suspension of habeas corpus, and described Liverpool as a ‘minister who had no fixed principle at all, and was more versatile than a weather-cock, turning about with every change of wind’.<sup>49</sup> The opposition also claimed that the distress was due to the Orders in Council but Liverpool pointed out that Birmingham, badly affected by the Orders in Council, had suffered few disturbances whereas Huddersfield, with among the worst disturbances, had suffered little from the Orders in Council. The Select Committee reported within a couple of weeks, and by the end of July a Public Peace Act had been passed, operative only until March 1813, giving magistrates in affected districts the right to search houses and seize arms caches. The Act passed the Lords by seventeen votes to six at the end of the session.

In a separate discussion on the Framework Knitters Bill, attempting to set hours and wage rates in that sector, Liverpool expounded the virtues of *laissez-faire* and non-interference by government, saying:

48. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, pp. 581 (Income), 587 (Expenditure), 577 (1797, Income), 580 (1797, Expenditure). The year-end for 1797 is 11 October, that for 1801, 1805 and 1812 is 5 January, so to get the figures for the (approximate) calendar years 1801, 1805 and 1812, you should use the 1802, 1806 and 1813 figures in the tables.

49. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 23, cols 796-800 (29 June 1812).

Were we once to entangle ourselves in the principle which this bill sought to establish, I know not where we are to stop until the commerce and manufactures of the country are utterly ruined. It is to machinery that we owe our superiority in commerce and manufactures amongst the nations of the world.<sup>50</sup>

The bill was defeated, with the enthusiastic agreement of the Whig Holland.

On 1 July Wellesley brought up a motion for Catholic Emancipation, the third that session, in an effort to exploit the differences between members of Liverpool's Cabinet on the issue. The Cabinet was indeed split, with Harrowby and Melville supporting Wellesley's motion on the grounds that some modest progress towards Emancipation should be made, while Liverpool and Eldon opposed it on the grounds that tranquillity was essential at that difficult time. The division was extremely tight, with Eldon's motion for returning to the previous question passing by 126 votes to 125. It was the closest Catholic Emancipation had come to passing so far, but it put Liverpool on record firmly against it; useful with an election due soon.

Finally, Liverpool introduced a Toleration Bill which repealed the seventeenth-century Conventicle Act, the Five Mile Act and other legislation against dissenters, reducing the requirement for dissenting meetings to one of simple registration. He pointed out that 'an enlarged and liberal toleration was the best defence of the Established Church' and that the restrictions against dissenters were outdated. In this legislation, he was supported by most public opinion; the public attitude towards dissent was now far more tolerant than that towards Catholicism. The legislation also had the effect, which would become apparent in the autumn's elections, of drawing many Methodists away from the Whigs and towards Liverpool's government.

The disquiet caused by the American declaration of war was alleviated within a few weeks by news of Wellington's victory at Salamanca on 22 July. For the first time, British forces had obtained a decisive strategic victory over French forces in the Peninsula, even though the French enjoyed slightly superior numbers, with 13,000 French casualties against 5,000 Allied, allowing Wellington to occupy Madrid for three weeks.

Wellington was rewarded by the Prince Regent with a marquessate just six months after his earldom, with a proposed Parliamentary grant of £100,000. He still wrote to Liverpool occasionally, congratulating him for the 'favourable prospect which you have before you'<sup>51</sup> but suggesting his government still needed additional support, preferably Canning or his brother Wellesley-Pole.<sup>52</sup>

50. Ibid., Vol. 23, cols 1249-50 (25 July 1812).

51. Wellington to Liverpool, 7 September 1812, in Gurwood, *The Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, Vol. 9, p. 401.

52. William Wellesley-Pole (1763-1845) 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Maryborough from 1821, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Mornington (Ireland) from 1842. MP (Ireland) for Trim, 1783-90 MP for East

Later in September, he wrote thanking Liverpool for his work in identifying a country seat for Wellington to buy: 'It rarely happens that a person in your situation has leisure to attend to his own private affairs, much less to those of any other individual.'<sup>53</sup>

Wellington's Salamanca success paid important electoral dividends for Liverpool; it also allowed the government to loosen the purse strings on Wellington's activities. The Budget's additional £2 million of new taxes to support him sailed through Parliament in the first flush of the victory.

In the autumn the Bank of England objected to a request from Bathurst and the Privy Council to supply £400,000 in bullion to Wellington's troops on the grounds of lack of bullion in its vaults, protesting in person to Liverpool.<sup>54</sup> However, the government repeated their order to the Bank to supply Wellington with £400,000, in four monthly instalments of £100,000 each. It then opened a new channel of bullion supply to Wellington through the Rothschild<sup>55</sup> banking dynasty, which had offices all over occupied Europe.

After unsuccessfully besieging Burgos, having had a narrow escape – 'the worst scrape I ever was in' – from the entire French force of 90,000 men, Wellington retreated into winter quarters in Portugal. However, it represented only a temporary check to Wellington's success. The failure of Napoleon's Russian campaign had left him in an excellent position to advance quickly in 1813.

The success of Stuart Wortley's motion in May had demonstrated to Liverpool that the government could not be sure of a majority in the Parliament elected in the different circumstances of 1807. While convention would indicate that an election should not be called before the spring of 1813, six years after the last poll, the precedents of 1784, 1806 and 1807 had demonstrated that a government could call an election earlier, provided the monarch agreed.

Two factors convinced Liverpool that an early poll might produce favourable results. First, the three attempts in the 1812 session by the Whigs, allied with Canning and Wellesley, to push through Catholic Emancipation had aroused considerable hostility in the country. Having seen the electoral results achieved by Portland in 1807, Liverpool could hope for something of a repeat

Looe, 1790-95, MP for Queen's County, 1801-21. Secretary to the Admiralty, 1807-09; Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1809-12; Master of the Mint, 1814-23; Master of the Buckhounds, 1823-30; Postmaster-General, 1834-35.

53. Wellington to Liverpool, 15 September 1812, in Gurwood, *The Dispatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, Vol. 9, p. 427.
54. Bank of England, Minutes of the Court of Directors, 8 October 1812.
55. Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1777-1836). Freiherr von Rothschild (Austria) from 1818. He had begun in 1798 trading in textiles from Manchester, then from 1804 began to deal in bills and bonds in London, as well as foreign exchange. He became a bullion dealer in 1809. Entered the international loans business in 1818 with a £5 million loan to the Prussian government and solved the Bank of England's liquidity problems in December 1825. Co-founded Alliance Assurance Co. in 1824. Worth about £3 million at his death in 1836.

performance. In later years, the Whigs would have more sense than to push Catholic Emancipation just before an election; indeed, it was the Wellington government's final passage of that measure in 1829, followed by an unexpected election due to George IV's death, that brought to an end the Tory hegemony of this period. Nevertheless, Portland's triumph of 1807 had been the first time public opinion had played a decisive electoral part, and politicians were not yet accustomed to electoral management on this basis, rather than on the old basis of ministerial, Court and local influence.

The second factor influencing Liverpool was the victory at Salamanca. With this triumph, prospects for an election were too good to miss and accordingly Parliament was dissolved on 29 September.

The result was a triumph for Liverpool – like Portland's in 1807, but slightly larger. The favourable war situation pushed voters towards the government, although economic hardship, extensive in 1812 but easing late in the year after the good harvest, operated in the opposite direction. According to Thorne's calculations,<sup>56</sup> the government gained some 30 seats, bringing its total to 419 against the opposition's 239, a majority of 180 compared to a government majority of about 150 following Portland's victory. As important, Canning's pro-Emancipation supporters were reduced from about 30 to eleven members and those of Wellesley to twelve, greatly reducing their potential for disruption.

Canning, however, won a personal triumph in the trading port of Liverpool, being elected with 1,631 votes ahead of the Tory anti-Catholic (and pro-slavery) sitting member Isaac Gascoyne with 1,532 votes (both well ahead of the Whigs Henry Brougham and Thomas Creevey<sup>57</sup> with 1,131 and 1,068 votes, respectively).

This was the first of Liverpool's four electoral triumphs. Apart from providing him with a secure majority for the next six years, it also marked a setback for Catholic Emancipation. Grattan's<sup>58</sup> motion of 1813 received less support than Canning's Commons motion of the previous year, while in the House of Lords it never got as close as the one-vote margin by which Wellesley's motion was defeated. The issue was thus on the 'back burner' during this Parliament, a blessing considering the excessive economic hardships of the early post-war years.

Liverpool knew that electoral conditions had changed since the 1780s. In a letter to Eldon's brother, who was anxious to secure a seat, Liverpool pointed out that he had only one Treasury seat available, which had gone to

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56. Thorne, *The History of Parliament. the House of Commons 1790-1820* Presumably the Portland and Perceval governments had lost some seats in by-elections.

57. Thomas Creevey (1768-1838). Whig MP for Thetford, Appleby and Downton, 1802-6, 1807-18, 1820-26, 1831-32. Secretary to Board of Control, 1806-7. Diarist.

58. Henry Grattan (1746-1820). MP (Ireland) for Charlemont, Dublin City and Wicklow, 1775-1801, MP for Malton and Dublin City, 1803-20. Notable orator. Pushed through Act making Irish parliament independent, 1783, and Irish Catholic Emancipation, 1793.

Vansittart, and two others whose patronage had been given to him. Since Curwen's Act of 1809, it was no longer possible for government funds to be used to buy support from borough proprietors. Instead, public opinion and the general good reputation of government must be used to win support in open boroughs.<sup>59</sup>

The remainder of 1812 saw a modest positive balance for British arms against the United States, even though Britain had only 6,000 regular troops in Canada and reinforcements were impossible until Napoleon's defeat in 1814. On the negative side, in August 1812 the 38-gun frigate HMS *Guerriere* was sunk by the 44-gun USS *Constitution* and later in the year two more frigates, HMS *Macedonian* and HMS *Java*, were captured (HMS *Java* off the coast of Brazil). These losses were to result in a debate on naval administration in the House of Lords the following May, in which Liverpool successfully defended government policy by pointing out that repeal of the Orders in Council had been expected to appease the Americans and that, while isolated frigates could be captured whatever the balance of forces, in general, British forces were stronger than American on all the west Atlantic stations. Further, no British merchantmen had been lost other than those which sailed without convoy.<sup>60</sup>

On the positive side, in August US General William Hull, after attempting to invade Canada, was forced to surrender Detroit to a smaller force of Canadian soldiers led by Major-General Isaac Brock and First Nations<sup>61</sup> forces led by Tecumseh. Brock then won a second victory when a US invading force led by Steven van Rensselaer was defeated by a British/First Nations force at the Battle of Queenston Heights.

Nevertheless, Britain's naval losses were sufficiently disquieting that Wellington, dependent on a sea-borne supply line, wrote to Vice-Admiral George Martin in December: 'Government appear to be at last making a serious effort to get the better of the American navy, which might as well have been made before.'<sup>62</sup>

Of far more importance than the skirmishes in North America was the Battle of Borodino on 7 September, a huge engagement involving 250,000 troops, with 70,000 casualties, and a tactical French victory in which the

59. Quoted in Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks Jenkinson*, Vol. 1, p. 444.

60. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 26, cols 201-2 (14 May 1813).

61. I am happy to be as politically correct as I can but to call Tecumseh's forces Native Americans is inaccurate. The Canadian term 'First Nations' seems more appropriate, even though many of them inhabited what is now the United States. The old-fashioned 'Indians' while also appropriate runs the risk of confusion with the inhabitants of today's India, even though the context generally clarifies this.

62. Wellington to Vice-Admiral Martin (10 December 1812), in Gurwood, *The Dispatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, Vol. 9, pp. 611-12. Sir George Martin (1764-1847). Commander-in-Chief, Lisbon, 1812-14. Captain, 1783. Rear-Admiral, 1805. Vice-Admiral, 1810. Admiral, 1821. Admiral of the Fleet, 1846.

Russians under General Mikhail Kutuzov<sup>63</sup> nevertheless acquitted themselves well. Liverpool, writing to Wellington when the news arrived, immediately recognised its significance: 'If Russian perseverance should continue for six weeks or two months longer, Bonaparte will be in a situation more critical than any in which he has ever yet been engaged.'<sup>64</sup> Even more significant, in Liverpool's view, Czar Alexander I had ordered the Russian fleet to sail to Britain for safe keeping.

In a second letter to Wellington, apart from commending the Russian abandonment of Moscow, Liverpool went in detail into the dangers surrounding Napoleon and the difficulties he was now facing. He also pointed out that, even if Napoleon somehow managed to extricate his forces, the whole of French resources must be employed in either extricating Napoleon from Russia or sustaining him there, so there would be no reinforcements for French forces in Spain. He requested Wellington's thoughts on the next year's campaigning and suggested that, if France could be driven out of the Peninsula, an attack on southern France would be preferable to any other operation.

Wellington in reply explained his strategic thinking. With a tired army and heavily outnumbered (he gave his reasons for thinking the French forces against him numbered 90,000 men), it was difficult for him to take the strategic initiative – also, his army needed a winter's rest to recover. However, he believed that, if the French entered Portugal they would be beaten, since Wellington holding the border forts could cut their supply lines, and that the large French army would be broken up over the winter, giving him excellent opportunities in the New Year.

During the winter Wellington, who had now been appointed Commander-in-Chief of Spanish forces, would go to Cádiz, the siege of which had been raised, and attempt to improve Spanish organisation and discipline. Wellington recounted the achievements of the year and apologised for the failure of the Burgos siege, which stemmed from his troops' inexperience and a failure by the commander of the initial assault. Still, the siege of Burgos had been entirely his idea and should certainly not be blamed on the government.

The guns were fired in Hyde Park to celebrate Napoleon's retreat from Smolensk, which marked the end of his hopes in Russia. He was to leave the army by sleigh on 5 December, after rumours reached him of an attempted coup in Paris; the army left Russian territory on 14 December.

The Prince Regent opened the new Parliament in person on 29 November. In the debate on his speech Wellesley began with a blistering attack on the

63. Mikhail Kutuzov (1745-1813). Count from 1811. Prince from 1812. Brigadier, Russian army, 1782. Major-General, 1784. Lieutenant-General, 1791. Governor General of Crimea, 1787-91. Austerlitz, 1805. Russo-Turkish War, 1806-12. Borodino, 1812.

64. Quoted in Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks Jenkinson*, Vol. 1, pp. 438-39. Second letter to Wellington, pp. 440-42.

government for not properly funding Wellington's Peninsula campaign. Liverpool responded that the resources in the Peninsula were far greater than had been imagined in 1809 and that, while Napoleon's defeats in Russia opened a new opportunity, it was still necessary to tailor resources to a long campaign, because an overwhelming short-term effort opened up too great a risk of failure. Grenville, supporting Wellesley, then claimed that the retreat after Burgos proved that, even after three campaigns, the government was no closer to achieving its objectives in the Peninsula. However, the government's position was so strong that the opposition did not divide the House. The opposition's weakness was emphasised during a subsequent debate on the £100,000 grant to Wellington, which Holland supported and was agreed without dissent.

On 13 December the Prince Regent delivered another message to Parliament asking for a charitable grant of £200,000 to assist Russians hurt by Napoleon's invasion. Liverpool took the opportunity to extol the Russian people, who had emulated the Spanish in their resistance to French invasion, and to rejoice in the commercial benefits of Russian alliance: 'Was it nothing to have the market of 36 million people? . . . Every channel of commerce had received fresh life and vigour through the success of the Russians.'<sup>65</sup> Again, the Whigs failed to divide the House.

Liverpool summed up his view of the military situation in another letter to Wellington. He believed Napoleon's defeat in Russia meant he might withdraw troops from Spain, because he would need a large force to maintain order in Germany. While Napoleon did not abandon Spain until he was forced to, Liverpool was prescient in pinpointing the attitude of Austria as critical in the attempt to liberate Europe. Castlereagh's diplomacy through the first half of 1813 would be devoted to drawing the cautious Austrians into what became the Great Alliance.

For the first time it now appeared possible that Napoleon's hold over Europe might be loosened and a stable peace achieved. War with the United States added another difficulty; but events there had suggested that the danger to Canada was manageable and the resources required would be modest. After the distress and unrest early in the year, a good harvest and firm policy had quietened the manufacturing districts and economic prospects had brightened. Finally, Liverpool himself had won a notable election victory and consolidated himself in power; it was now likely that he would make a major mark on the future of Britain. For Liverpool and the world, 1812 was a truly memorable year.

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65. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. 24, cols 319-22 (13 December 1812).