*The Duke of Richmond on the Conduct of the War
in 1793.*

Two letters of the duke of Richmond to Pitt, dated 3 and 5 April 1793, which have been hitherto unnoticed, deal with important questions bearing on the whole course of the war with France. At that time, not long after the receipt of the news of the defeat of Dumouriez at Neerwinden and of his attempt to overthrow the Jacobins at Paris, there seemed every prospect of easily overcoming the resistance of France; and ministers were evidently contemplating the advisability of colonial and coast expeditions rather than an extended campaign in concert with the prince of Coburg in Flanders. As is well known they finally attempted to undertake all three forms of warfare, and with disastrous results. It is clear that the duke of Richmond, and to some extent perhaps also Pitt, preferred expeditions against the French colonies. The duke wished the government to take a firm stand at the conference of the commanders-in-chief and envoys of the allies soon to be held at Antwerp for the discussion of the plan of campaign. In the shorter and less important letter of 3 April he expresses a fear that the ardour of the duke of York will lead him on into a Flemish campaign, and points out that Great Britain will effect far more by efforts against the French ports from Cherbourg to Bordeaux. In any case, he says, we must not attempt both kinds of warfare at once. The second letter is too long to print *in extenso*, but all the important parts are here given in full, along with a *précis* of the others.

J. HOLLAND ROSE.

Goodwood: Friday morning, April 5, 1793.

My dear Sir,—It strikes me that if your ideas are quite clear that we must make expeditions on the coast of France and to the West Indies our principal object as soon as we are able, it would be far better, indeed fairer, immediately to apprise the meeting at Antwerp [7th inst.] of such being our resolution, and particularly to state to them that any co-operation of the British forces with the German armies, if it can be essentially useful in the present moment, we could only so far give as not to interfere with our own plans—that is, until we can be ready to carry them into execution—and that we hope after the next six weeks the Austrians and Prussians would not require our aid, or at least only in a small proportion. Knowing these to be the sentiments of Great Britain, they will be able to state theirs to you, and I make no doubt will strongly remonstrate against your plan.

[The duke adds that they will urge their very heavy losses in war, the difficulties of the campaign, the pressing need of 5000 or 6000 British horse, and that France, if not pressed, will recover from her recent losses.]

To these arguments your minister at the conference should be prepared to answer that Great Britain was originally no party in this war, or in any shape consulted as to the manner of undertaking it. That she became

one only when she and her ally, the Dutch, were attacked. That she immediately proposed a concert of operations, but hitherto without effecting that object. That we never had it in our contemplation to engage in a Continental war, which is always so ruinous in expense and so much against the sentiments of this nation. That were the British government to involve itself in such measures they might be obliged to abandon them at some critical moment, and perhaps thereby ruin the common cause. But that, confining our operations to a naval war and to such expeditions on the coast of France or on her possessions abroad as we could manage, we should be sure of support at home and essentially assist the allies, perhaps more so than by engaging in a plan of war which would be unpopular. That we had, it was true, sent what troops we could into Holland for the defence of our ally, and should have sent our whole force, if necessary, for that service; but by so doing we by no means meant to engage any further, and that, however formidable the attack might at first appear, we trust that, under all the circumstances of the war, it might have been defeated by the Dutch themselves, aided by the English and the Hanoverians in our pay. That the able and glorious attack made by the prince of Coburg, immediately as it has saved Holland, was no less necessary for the operations of the Austrians to recover their provinces in the Netherlands. That we also feel the force of his reasoning for pressing the enemy as far as possible and taking advantage of their present state of dismay; but that, however useful every addition of force may be, we cannot persuade ourselves that in armies of 200,000 men the difference of 10,000, which is the utmost force that we could send this year, could be so essential as to decide the success of such vast armies. That there is besides a circumstance that makes it peculiarly unadvisable for England to send British forces to act immediately on the Continent, which is that our army, cavalry and infantry, consists almost wholly of recruits, no part of which, men or horses, have been raised two months, and the greater part of which are at this moment only raising.

[The duke of Richmond then states that the prince of Coburg should be informed of all this frankly, otherwise he would have great cause of complaint against us, if he relied on us and then was disappointed. Pitt should therefore send a special messenger at once to Lord Auckland at the Hague to inform him of these ideas. Coburg would probably urge that the British, Dutch, and Hanoverians should besiege Dunkirk, Gravelines, and St. Omer. The duke adds that he thinks it likely that the duke of York might then press on to Paris; also that we should not even so have a very large voice in the peace negotiations; that the German powers would probably dismember France, in which case we should acquire little of importance. More would be gained by our acting elsewhere and securing the destruction of Cherbourg, Toulon, &c.]