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### **An Australian Perspective on the English Invasions of the Rio de la Plata in 1806 and 1807**

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On 13 September 1806 Prime Minister William Grenville and his ministers in London received a dispatch from Brigadier-General William Carr Beresford in Buenos Aires informing them of the capture of that city on the preceding 27 June by the small detachment of 1,635 troops under his command, which had been transported to the Rio de la Plata from Cape Town by a squadron of six warships and five transports commanded by Commodore Sir Home Popham.<sup>1</sup> The expedition had been carried out entirely on the initiative of Popham. He had commanded the fleet which had transported the forces under General David Baird that had captured Cape Town from the Dutch some months before, and he had persuaded Baird to provide the detachment under General Beresford for the expedition to the Rio de la Plata. The unexpected and unlooked for success of this expedition provoked a spasm of activity from the Government in London to take advantage of the situation. A force of a little more than 4,000 troops under the command of Sir Samuel Auchmuty sailed from England directly for the Rio de la Plata on 9 October. In addition, in the belief that the moment had come for decisive blows to be struck against the Spanish Empire, plans were drawn up for wide-ranging expeditions against Chile, Mexico and the Philippines.

Brigadier-General Robert Craufurd was given command of a force of 4,000, with instructions drafted by the Secretary of State for War and Colonies, William Windham, to sail for Chile in a fleet commanded by Admiral Sir George Murray, with the object of capturing Valparaiso and other ports and reducing the whole of that country to British rule. Murray intended to take his fleet to Chile by way of Cape Town and Port Jackson (Sydney) in New South Wales, in accordance with advice from Grenville's brother, Lord Buckingham, who had urged him to "advert very particularly to the advantage of ordering Murray to carry Crawford's force direct from their *rendezvous* [at Cape Town] through Bass's Straits to refresh at New South Wales—Port Jackson; and to exchange their less active men for the seasoned flank companies of the New South Wales corps; and to take with them 100 convict pioneers, who will invaluable, as seasoned to work in the sun".<sup>2</sup> Once he had gained control of Chile, Craufurd was instructed to establish "an uninterrupted communication" with General Beresford in Buenos Aires, "by a chain of posts or any other adequate means " between Valparaiso and that city.<sup>3</sup>

In a memorable phrase, the Hon. John Fortescue characterized this in his magisterial *History of the British Army* as "one of the most astonishing plans that ever emanated from the brain even of a British Minister of War". "Military officers," he wrote, "by incapacity and misjudgement have frequently placed Ministers in situations of cruel difficulty, but it may be doubted whether any General has ever set them a task so impossible as that prescribed, not in the doubt and turmoil of a campaign but in the tranquility of the closet, by Windham to Craufurd."<sup>4</sup>

Writing in the *United Service Magazine* in 1905, Captain Lewis Butler was equally withering in his comment: "In truth, among the innumerable wild projects which chased each other at this period through the restless brain-pans of successive Ministers, it would be difficult to find a parallel to this effusion of Windham, either as regards its ill-defined objective or of its inconceivable ignorance, not only of military requirements, but of the most elementary geographical considerations."<sup>5</sup>

These vivid phrases by the two historians who were considered to have written the definitive accounts of the British campaigns in the Rio de la Plata have echoed through all subsequent discussion of those events.

In addition to the Craufurd/Murray expedition to Chile, Lord Grenville in October 1806 also proposed complementary expeditions against the Philippines and against Mexico from both the west and east.<sup>6</sup> Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley was directed in November to report upon the matter and draw up a plan of operations.<sup>7</sup> Grenville referred to his attention a strategy proposed by Sir John Dalrymple, who had studied and promoted the idea of expeditions against the Spanish empire in the Americas and Pacific for over twenty years.<sup>8</sup>

"Fortunately," wrote Fortescue, "Grenville's wild idea was abandoned."<sup>9</sup> Craufurd's force sailed from the Cornish port of Falmouth at the end of November. He reached Cape Town on 20 March 1807, finding there Admiral Murray who had preceded him to the rendezvous, with new orders. News that the local population had thrown the British out of Buenos Aires and compelled Beresford to surrender on 12 August 1806 had reached London on 2 January, and the fast sloop *Fly* had been sent to Cape Town with orders for Murray to take Craufurd's force directly across the South Atlantic to the Rio de la Plata to reinforce Auchmuty in an attempt to re-take Buenos Aires. This was done, with the result that five months later Craufurd was involved in the debacle of 5 July 1807 when the combined British forces under the command of Lieutenant-General John Whitelocke (who had superseded Auchmuty) was defeated in a second attempt to capture Buenos Aires. Craufurd himself was compelled to surrender with his surviving men, and only regained his liberty as a result of the capitulation agreed to by Whitelocke on 7 July, under which all prisoners were exchanged and British forces withdrew completely from the Rio de la Plata.<sup>10</sup>

Considering the whole episode, Fortescue passed judgement on Grenville's Ministry: "they acted in complete ignorance or misconception the true condition of affairs on the Rio de la Plata. No ignorance or misconception, however, can excuse the absurdity

of the orders given to Craufurd, or the contradictory injunctions addressed to Whitelocke."<sup>11</sup>

It is understandable that the failure of the campaign should have exposed the weaknesses of the strategy upon which it was based, and laid open the policy of the Grenville administration to the bitter ridicule and sarcasm of Butler and Fortescue. But they were writing with the advantage of hindsight, and within a narrow compass. Grenville and his contemporaries saw themselves, not as reacting with shocked incoherence to the surprise good fortune of an errant commodore, but as taking advantage of favourable circumstances to put into action a deeply-matured strategy which had been a favourite object of successive British administrations, especially during the long tenure of William Pitt. Grenville and his ministers were acting on advice which carried the weight of the most respectable authority. In his letter to Grenville of 20 October 1806, Sir John Dalrymple recalled how he had been led to propose to Lord North's administration in 1779 the project of complementary expeditions against the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the Spanish empire:

After my Brother Captain William Dalrymple not then 24 years of age had with 109 soldiers taken by Storm Fort Omoah [on the Gulf of Honduras at the boundary of Honduras and Guatemala] Garrisoned by 800 Soldiers, I presented from him to Lord Germain a project to make an attack upon the South Seas from the bay of Honduras through the province of Guatemala to Sonsonate... supported by an armament to India, to sail either by New Holland or by the Philipines to Mexico.<sup>12</sup>

Sir John's brother, William, was in 1779 an Army captain based in Jamaica, where John Dalling was at the time Governor. Sir John was better placed than his brother to promote the plan. As a baron of the Scottish Exchequer, Sir John had the ear of the Secretary of State for Home and American Affairs, Lord Germain, who had charge of the conduct of the American War. The complete Dalrymple plan was for the trans-Pacific expedition to be complemented by another from Jamaica through Guatemala to gain possession of Sonsonate on the Pacific coast, and thus access across the isthmus of Central America to the South Seas. An operation of this nature but, at Dalling's insistence using a route across Nicaragua up the San Juan River, was actually attempted in 1780 from Jamaica under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel John Polson and Captain Horatio Nelson, but without success.<sup>13</sup>

Sir John described the project fully in a book he published in May 1788, *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*. An Appendix, "Account of an intended expedition into the South Seas by private persons in the late war", described his brother's plan. Sir John wrote that the Spanish war had broken out so late in the summer that there was little chance of getting an expedition ready to pass Cape Horn in the proper months of December or January, and that there was therefore a prospect that the most vulnerable parts of Spain's empire, her South Seas, would be safe from attack for twenty months. Since the voyages and discoveries of Captain Cook, there were two easy ways of getting into the South Seas at any time of the year, one from Britain by way of the Cape of Good Hope; the other from India, either by the

Philippines and the North Pacific (the Manila Galleon route), or by New Holland and the South Pacific:

The other route from the East Indies is by the south, to get into the latitude of 40° south in New Holland; and from thence to take advantage of the great west wind, which about that latitude blows ten months of the year, in order to reach Chili, where the south land wind will be found. The facility of this last route was not known till the late discoveries, which will make the memory of Sir Joseph Banks, of Captain Cook, of Lord Sandwich, and of his present Majesty, immortal in history... The very circumstance of the consciousness of Spain of her security for twenty months gave an advantage to those who should attempt to make her feel her mistake. The proper mode of conducting an expedition from Britain in the South Seas, was to run by the Cape of Good Hope and New Zealand to the coast of Chili, from thence along that coast by the south land wind into the gulf of Panama, from thence upon the trade wind with the prizes and such of their goods as were fit for the eastern markets, to the eastern islands, China or India.<sup>14</sup>

William Knox, Under-Secretary to Lord Germain in the Home Office during the North Administration, published his memoirs in 1789, in which he stated that he had read Dalrymple's *Memoirs*, in particular his Appendix, and went on: "lest it might be supposed from that publication that it was not properly attended to, I will take upon me to assure Sir John and the public, that whoever can obtain leave to read over his Lordship's secret correspondence with Governor Dalling at Jamaica, and Governor Robertson at New York, will find sufficient information to satisfy him, that the object of that plan was so far from being treated with neglect, that it was comprehended in one of *much greater extent*." Dalling, he added, had thought so highly of the scheme and had been so confident of its success that he had applied to be appointed the King of England's first Viceroy of Peru and Mexico. "How it happened to fail will, I hope, become one day the object of Parliamentary enquiry", he concluded.<sup>15</sup>

Dalrymple apparently took some action in accordance with Knox's suggestion when war with Spain again appeared imminent over the Nootka Sound incident, for in the second edition of his book, published in London and Dublin in 1790, he said:

Since publishing the first edition of these Memoirs, I have learnt the circumstances of the above expedition. It was planned and proposed to the cabinet ministers by Colonel Fullarton of Fullarton, who acted in conjunction with the late Colonel (then Major) Mackenzie Humberstone... They raised 20,000 men at their own expence with unusual dispatch... The object of it was, an attack upon the coast of Mexico; the troops were to sail to Madras, and to be joined there by a body of Lascars, who were to proceed with them to one of the Luconia islands, in order to refresh the men; and then to make for the coast of Mexico, in the tract of the Acapulco ships. Lord George Germaine added to this idea, the idea of another expedition to the Spanish main; which was, to go across to the South Sea, and join that on the coast of Mexico; and there is no

doubt that if the junction had been made, Spain must have instantly sued for peace. But the unexpected breaking out of the Dutch war obliged the expedition intended for Mexico, to be sent upon an attack on the Cape of Good Hope; and when that was found improper, it was employed in the war of India...

Although Germain told Dalrymple in October 1779 that "secrecy and prudence were of the last consequence" for the success of the expedition, an article in *The Whitehall Evening Post* of 20 January 1780 would have been read attentively in Spain and Spanish America:

The power of France being totally annihilated in the East-Indies, it is said, that an expedition was planned, and ready to be carried into execution, against the Spanish settlements in the South Seas, as soon as three ships of the line could be spared, and it was known that Spain was preparing to break with us. So early as the 23d. of May last a person was dispatched over land to India, to inform the Company's servants there of the approaching rupture with Spain; so that we may reasonably conclude by this time, that Sir Edward Vernon is in the neighbourhood of Acapulco, and beating up the Dons quarters in that part of the world. The force destined for this service is said to be three men of war of the line, frigates, country ships &c. and six thousand land forces. It is not above six or seven weeks sail from part of the British dominions in India to the Coast of Chili, in South-America, if care be taken to reach a certain latitude at the time the monsoon or trade wind sets in.

As Dalrymple said in the second edition of his *Memoirs* published in 1790, instead of his own scheme, which was essentially a privateering venture, the North Administration took up a plan proposed by William Fullarton in June 1780, for an expedition to proceed from Madras by way of the "Luconian Islands" (the Philippines) and New Zealand. This plan involved, not merely spoiling raids as Dalrymple proposed, but the ambitious aim of rousing Chile and Peru to revolt against Spain. Fullarton explained:

The object of this force should be to secure one of the small Luconian Islands, and then proceed to some healthy Spot in New Zealand, in order to establish means of refreshment, communication and retreat; from New Zealand the Armament should sail directly to South America; there is not one place, from California to Cape Horn, capable of resisting such an equipment, if properly provided and properly conducted. Some advantageous Ports should be fortified and Terms of *Independence* offered to the Native Mexicans, Peruvians and Chilians. If these Settlements are effected it is evident that the Trade of South America would be opened to our East Indian Territories: if they were not effected still the Blow to Spain must be fatal because her richest possessions would be alarmed, their Commerce and remittances interrupted, their Ships destroyed, their Towns plundered and the Inhabitants incited to revolt.<sup>16</sup>

After much delay and several changes of plan, the South Seas expedition was finally approved by the North Cabinet on 3 August 1780. A further Cabinet meeting on 25 November decided to combine the South Seas expedition with an attack on Monte Video, to capture the Spanish treasure fleet which was reported to be assembling there. Naval command of the expedition was given to Commodore George Johnstone. Dutch entry into the war against Britain in December led to a further Cabinet decision on 29 December 1780 to order Johnstone to first of all direct his efforts toward the capture of the Cape of Good Hope. The expedition sailed on 12 March 1781 but, on the way to the Cape Johnstone's fleet was mauled at the Azores by a French squadron under Admiral de Suffren, who then sailed on to reinforce the Dutch at Cape Town. Suffren's action effectually blocked Johnstone from achieving the goals of his expedition.<sup>17</sup>

Johnstone's return to England in February 1782 coincided with the fall of his patrons in the North Administration. Germain was replaced as Secretary of State for Home and American Affairs by Lord Shelburne. Shelburne took up William Dalrymple's scheme for attacking the Spanish possessions in America but, on becoming Prime Minister in July 1782, left it to his successor in the Home Office, Thomas Townshend, to undertake the organization of the new South Seas expedition. Shelburne left a memorandum to Townshend, setting out the major tasks requiring his attention. This memorandum indicates how closely the two matters of an expedition against Spanish America and the disposal of the convicts who could no longer be transported to America were juxtaposed in the Home Office's order of priorities. Six matters were listed as requiring his urgent attention, among them:

Preparations and Plans for W.India [i.e. Spanish America] Expeditions require to be set forward — Major Dalrymple has a Plan against the Spanish Settlements;

and immediately following on the list

Convicts require to be sent to the Coast of Africa.— Something must be done immediately about them, for the Judges have repeatedly remonstrated, and the Hulks are in a State, which will excite a Publick Clamor if not attended to.<sup>18</sup>

For assistance in planning the "West Indian" expedition, Townshend turned to Captain Arthur Phillip. Phillip had served as a captain in the in the squadron of the Portuguese Royal Navy in Brazil commanded by Robert McDouall during the Colonia War of 1775-1777. This war was fought between Spain and Portugal over the southern frontier of Brazil. He had rendered outstanding service in the defence of Colônia do Sacramento, the Portuguese colony on the north shore of the Rio de la Plata opposite Buenos Aires. During the organizing of Johnstone's expedition in 1781 he had provided First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich with valuable charts of the Brazilian and Rio de la Plata coasts, which he had prepared during his period of service in McDouall's squadron.<sup>19</sup> When they first learned of <sup>th</sup>at expedition, <sup>the Spanish suspected that Phillip would have command</sup> of it, "por su conocimiento de este Río"<sup>20</sup>

The Phillip plan involved a squadron of three line-of-battle ships and a frigate attacking Monte Video and Buenos Aires in the first instance, and from there proceeding to the coasts of Chile and Peru to maraud, and ultimately crossing the Pacific to join Admiral Hughes' squadron in the Indian seas: "This expedition might proceed to the Isle of St Catherine's or Rio Negro for intelligence or water, and failing of success at the River of Plate to proceed immediately round to Callao. On success at the River of Plate, such force as could be spar'd might be sent as a Reinforcement to India, or to the south Seas, as the circumstances of the case should make most prudent."<sup>21</sup>

The plan bore a remarkable similarity to a plan promoted by Captain William Robarts, who had been, like Phillip, a British officer commanding a Portuguese ship in McDouall's squadron.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the two had discussed such an operation in 1777, when both were at Rio de Janeiro. Robarts had also been at Colônia, in January 1763 when he had commanded the frigate *Ambuscade*, which formed one of a squadron of nine vessels under the command of John MacNamara which had attempted unsuccessfully to re-take the settlement for Portugal after it had been captured by the Spanish under Pedro de Cevallos.<sup>23</sup> McDouall, who like Phillip had returned to the British Navy following his service in Brazil, sailed with Johnstone's expedition, but had been detached from it to sail to Rio de Janeiro in the *Shark* sloop, where he had obtained information on Spanish defences from Robarts, who was still serving in the Portuguese Navy.<sup>24</sup> This information was used in planning Phillip's expedition.

The expedition, consisting of HMS *Grafton*, 70 guns, HMS *Elizabeth*, 74 guns, HMS *Europe*, 64 guns, and the *Iphigenia* frigate, sailed on 16 January 1783, under the command of Commodore Robert Kingsmill, with Phillip in command of the *Europe*. Shortly after sailing, an armistice was concluded between Great Britain and Spain. Phillip put in for storm repairs at Rio de Janeiro (the other ships of Kingsmill's squadron having been driven back to England by bad weather). He wrote to Townshend from Rio de Janeiro on 25 April 1783, expressing his disappointment that the ending of the American War had robbed him of the opportunity for naval glory in South America:

I have been under the necessity of putting into this port, and I can assure you Sir that the situation of the Spanish Settlements are such as I always thought them... All the Regulars in Buenos Ayres Monte Vedio, and the different Guards in the River of Plate do not amount to five hundred Men No ship of the Line, and only two frigates in the River. You will Sir, easily suppose how much I must be mortified in being so near & not at liberty to Act.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than return immediately to England to be paid off, he decided to sail on to India by the Cape of Good Hope to join Admiral Hughes' squadron at Madras, which was still confronting Suffren's fleet in the Indian seas. When news of the conclusion of peace reached India, he left Madras in October 1783 with a convoy for England, where he arrived in April 1784. In September 1786, having spent the intervening period on secret service under Home Office direction in France, he was appointed by Townshend founding Governor of the new convict colony the British Government was establishing at Botany Bay in New South Wales.

Even after the conclusion of peace with Spain, Townshend (Lord Sydney as he became after March 1783) remained interested in schemes for liberating South America from Spanish rule. The Spanish Ambassador in London, Bernardo del Campo, reported to Florida Blanca on 23 July 1783 that Sydney had received one Luis Vidal.<sup>26</sup> Vidal presumably laid before Sydney a version of the plan he drew up in a memorial he presented to the British Government dated 12 May 1784, for a revolution in New Granada.<sup>27</sup> The Viceroyalty of New Granada had been the scene of a Creole revolt against the Spanish authorities in 1781 which, as it took place at the same time as the large-scale revolt of the Indians of Peru led by Tupac Amaru, had assumed very serious proportions before it was put down. Vidal came to London as a representative of the Creole gentry of New Granada, seeking British aid in a new rising which would liberate the Viceroyalties of New Granada and Peru. While Vidal was in London, and probably not unconnected with his mission, another South American Juan Antonio de Prado and his English sponsor, Edmund Bott, during the autumn and spring of 1783-84 pressed upon the British Government a scheme for a force of 1,200 men in six vessels manned by English volunteers which would land at Callao to instigate a native uprising in Peru. This was a scaled-down version of a plan devised by Prado and the Creole revolutionary "Association" of which he was a member, during the 1779-83 American War. That plan was to request the British Government to dispatch a squadron with 6,000 troops to the province of La Plata. Of these, 4,000 would proceed to occupy Buenos Aires, whilst the remainder were to make the Chile coast, and thence advance upon Peru. These operations were to be assisted by an uprising in New Granada (i.e. the present Venezuela and Colombia), where the Association had for some time been organizing and drilling a force. The war had ended before these plans could be brought to fruition.<sup>28</sup>

Campo was even more concerned when the South American revolutionary conspirator, Francisco de Miranda appeared in London in February 1785. He reported in a despatch to Florida Blanca dated 18 March 1785 that Miranda had been interviewed by Sydney, Howe and a former Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>29</sup> Miranda had given valuable information about the fortifications of Havana to the British Governor of Jamaica, John Dalling, in 1781. He had been a member of the same Association as Prado (and probably Vidal), and was to devote his life to the liberation of his native South America from Spanish rule. He desired to see all of Spanish America, south of a border drawn along the west bank of the Mississippi to its source and junction with the 45° North Parallel of Latitude, and including all the lands southward to Cape Horn, constituted a huge federal state, headed by an Emperor of Inca descent and governed through a bicameral legislature, one chamber of which to consist of hereditary *caziques*, the other a house of commons elected by universal franchise. A close alliance with Britain would guarantee its independence from Spain. A small British expeditionary force would be all that would be required to spark the great uprising which would accomplish this project.<sup>30</sup>

Sydney, Pitt himself, and other members of the British Government were fascinated by Miranda's idea, the more so in view of the near success of the revolt led by Tupac Amaru between 1780 and 1783. In fact, the Viceroy of La Plata, José de Vertiz, when informed of Johnstone's expedition, had pointed out to Secretary of State for the Marine and the Indies,



José de Galvez, in a despatch dated 30 April 1781 his fear that Johnstone would proceed to Peru to join up with the Indian rebels under Tupac Amaru.<sup>31</sup> The project of establishing a British colony in New South Wales was linked to this strategy.

All the proposals made to the British Government for establishing a colony in New South Wales referred to the strategic importance of the colony as a base for naval operations against the Spanish possessions in the Pacific. John Call began the proposal which he presented to Sydney in August 1784 for a colony in the South Pacific by referring to a plan he had proposed in 1779 during the American War for an expedition to assist the natives of Chile and Peru to revolt against Spain: "Had it been undertaken at the time and in the Manner suggested, it must have been attended with great Loss to the Spaniards, and probably with future Advantages to this Country in its consequences, because the Natives soon after, without foreign assistance, attempted to liberate themselves, and tho' their Endeavours are suppressed for the present, yet it is more than probable their Efforts will in the end be successful."

Comment on the Botany Bay project published in the press, pamphlets and books in Britain could not but have aroused Spanish curiosity and suspicions. An article in the London newspapers on 13 October 1786 said:

The central situation which new South Wales, in which Botany Bay is situated, holds in the globe, cannot fail of giving it a very commanding influence in the policy of Europe....When this colony from England is established, if we should ever be at war with Holland or Spain we might very powerfully annoy either State from the new settlement. We might, with equal safety and expedition, make naval incursions into Java, and the other Dutch settlements, or invade the coast of Spanish America, and intercept the Manilla ships. Thus this check would, in time of war, make it a very important object, when we view it in the chart of the world with a *political eye*.

This report was an excerpt from the proposal for the formation of a colony at Botany Bay drawn up by James Matra under the direction of Sir Joseph Banks and put to Lord Sydney in 1783. Almost all the English newspapers published the same excerpt from Matra's proposal, and from these it was widely copied in the press of other European countries and in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Ambassador Campo immediately forwarded a translation of this passage, and others drawn from Matra's memorial referring to the advantages of a settlement in New South Wales, to Prime Minister Florida Blanca in Madrid.<sup>33</sup>

Captain Sir George Young, Matra's co-sponsor together with Sir Joseph Banks of the Botany Bay project, published his own proposal in April 1785. As one of the principal advantages of the proposed colony, he said:

Its great extent and relative situation with respect to the Eastern and Southern parts of the Globe, is a material Consideration; Botany Bay, or its Vicinity, the part that is proposed to be first settled, is not more than Sixteen hundred

Leagues from Lima and Baldivia, with a fair open Navigation, and there is no doubt but that a lucrative Trade would soon be opened with the Creole Spaniards for English Manufactures. Or suppose We were again Involved in a War with Spain, Here are Ports of Shelter, and refreshment for our Ships, should it be necessary to send any into the South Seas.<sup>34</sup>

In late 1786, the London publisher (and friend of Banks), John Stockdale, published *An Historical Narrative of the Discovery of New Holland and New South Wales*, to explain the reasons for the Government's decision to settle Botany Bay. The conclusion of this book stated (p.53), in summarizing the advantages of a settlement at Botany Bay:

Should a war break out with the Court of Spain, cruizers from Botany Bay might much interrupt, if not destroy, their lucrative commerce from the Philippine islands to Aquapulco, besides alarming and distressing their settlements on the west coast of South America.

The preface of a revised edition of this book, published by Stockdale in early 1787 under the title of *The History of New Holland* stated that the Spanish of the preceding century had abstained from making use of the discoveries of Torres, Mendaña and Quirós to establish colonies in the South-Sea islands, as that "would not but serve to encourage other powers to dispossess them, and thereby not only to gain the settlements from which they might be driven, but fix themselves perhaps in a situation commodious for annoying either their American dominions, or the Philippine islands, in the most effectual manner".<sup>35</sup>

The near prospect of a renewal of war with Spain and France as a result of civil war in the Netherlands during the mid-1780's meant that Lord Sydney had to give close attention to strategic matters (in particular, plans for an expedition against Spanish America) as well as domestic affairs during this period. By a treaty with France of December 1785, the Netherlands States-General had linked their country with the Franco-Spanish Bourbon Family Compact. On 12 August 1786 the British Government received a letter from their Ambassador at the Hague, Sir James Harris, in which he stated, "the crisis which, in my opinion, is to determine the political existence of This Republic is drawing nearer and nearer every hour."<sup>36</sup> Harris's letter was prompted by the deposition of the pro-British Stadholder and prospect of the installation of a pro-French government in the Netherlands. This development seemed to be the preliminaries of a renewal of hostilities in which Britain would be again confronted with the alliance of the three naval Powers which had brought her to defeat in 1783.

It was in Britain's interest to attempt to break up this alliance by forcing its weaker members, Holland and Spain, to bear the brunt of the coming conflict by attacking their widespread and vulnerable possessions in the East and West Indies (i.e. India, the Malay Archipelago and the Americas). The attraction of a strategy which offered the possibility of dealing a crippling blow against the weaker partner of the Bourbon alliance, Spain, by depriving her of her American and Pacific possessions, was obvious. The threatened imminence of war between Britain and the Bourbon Powers arising from the Dutch crisis provided the strategic stimulus for the decision to settle Botany Bay taken in August

1786.<sup>37</sup> Matra's proposal indicated how a settlement in New South Wales could facilitate British attacks upon the Spanish provinces of Chile and Peru.

The crisis in the Netherlands of which Harris had warned in August 1786 finally arrived on 28 June 1787, when Wilhelmina Princess of Orange, wife of the Stadtholder and sister of Frederick William of Prussia, was arrested by Free Corps belonging to the pro-French Patriot party. Europe seemed about to be plunged into a general war, with Prussia and Britain arrayed against Holland, France, Austria, Spain and Russia. Britain's fleet had already been mobilized when the Ottoman Turks attacked Russia. While the British fleet was being mobilized, *Lloyd's Evening Post* of 5 October 1787 published a letter from a correspondent in the naval base of Portsmouth, who said "We have nothing but war here, and this place is all alive". The newspaper observed:

It is undoubtedly the interest of Great-Britain to remain neuter in the present contest between the Russians and the Turks; she certainly is warranted to render no assistance to the Empress, both on account of her behaviour during the last war, and the preparations necessary to be made by Great-Britain for an approaching war with her old enemy....Couriers are almost daily passing between the Courts of Versailles and Madrid; and it is now generally believed by the best informed men, that Spain will enter into the designs of France.<sup>38</sup>

The Turks' attack on Russia tipped the European balance of power against France. Russia called upon Austria for assistance against Turkey, so Austria was unable at the same time to assist France in a war against Prussia and Britain over the Netherlands. France had to allow the Prussian King to advance with his army into Holland unmolested to restore his sister and her husband to liberty and authority, and a general European war was postponed. While the Dutch crisis was being resolved in this way, the First Fleet sailed to New South Wales. The fleet carrying the 750 convicts and 200 marines and their families who were to be the first settlers in the New South Wales colony sailed from Portsmouth under Commodore Arthur Phillip in May 1787. The fleet called at Rio de Janeiro during its voyage to Botany Bay to obtain essential supplies. This stay apparently re-awakened Phillip's regret at the opportunity lost by the failure of his 1783 expedition. From Rio de Janeiro, Phillip sent word to Sydney and to Shelburne (now Lord Lansdowne) in a letter to Nepean dated 2 September 1787:

You know how much I was interested in the intended expedition against Monte Vedio, and that it was said that the Spaniards had more troops than I supposed. The following account I have from a person who was there all the war and I am certain that the account is exact:

One Regiment under	700
Four Companies of Artillery	400
Dragoons	400
Two Battalions of Infantry	700

These were divided on the north and south shores, and in different towns. Monte Vedio would not have been defended, as half these troops could not have been drawn together. Of this you will be so good as to inform the Lords

Sydney and Landsdowne; it will corroborate what I mentioned before I left town.<sup>39</sup>

In sending this letter, Phillip may not have been merely sighing for past disappointments, but reminding his government patrons that the strategy behind the 1783 expedition would still be viable in the event of a renewal of hostilities between Britain and Spain. His recalling of discussion of the matter before he left London early in 1787 would indicate that Sydney was thinking about such an expedition at that time, if as seemed probable civil war in the Netherlands should have led to war with France and Spain. Following the arrival of the fleet at Port Jackson in January 1788, Phillip assumed his authority as first Governor of the colony and proclaimed British sovereignty over all of the eastern half of New Holland (Australia) and the islands of the South Pacific eastward of the meridian of 135°East of Greenwich, an extraordinary claim indicating the dimensions of Britain's imperial ambitions, which rivalled Spain's claim to an exclusive right to navigation in the Pacific.

Sir John Dalrymple wrote in the preface to *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*, dated 3 November 1787, that he had sent his manuscript to the publisher in the expectation that Britain would soon be at war with France and Spain as a result of the civil war which was then taking place in the Netherlands.:

if the war should take place, I imagined that some of the papers I had written, pointed out weak spots in the French and Spanish monarchies, which England might take advantage of in the course of the war... These are chiefly to be found in the Notes and Appendix, and I account them the best part of the publication, because the most useful.<sup>40</sup>

Immediately upon publication of Dalrymple's book in May 1788, Ambassador Campo reported to his Prime Minister in Madrid, Count Florida Blanca, transcribing and translating these passages, and discussing the strategy it described. "Fortunately," he said, the British Government had not given the proposal "the confidence and attention it merited," and peace had supervened to remove for a time such expectations. He continued:

But after having read it with the most serious attention, and having compared it with the kinds indicated in the voyages of Anson, Bougainville, Cook and others, I formed the judgement that the enterprise would have been successful, with very considerable losses on our part, and that in any other succeeding war it would be equally so.<sup>41</sup>

In September 1788, the Spanish Court received a treatise on the new British colony from one of their own naval officers, Francisco Muñoz y San Clemente, who had returned earlier that year from a voyage to the Manila as master of the merchantman *Aguila Imperial* under charter to the Royal Philippines Company. "The grave dangers," Muñoz said, "which in time our commerce will experience because of their neighbourhood to South America and the Philippines, has obliged me to treat of the [English] settlements." The treatise considered the advantages which New Holland offered for settlements to the English, the sea lines of

communication between the new colony and India, China, the Philippines and South America; and finally, indicated the dangers which it posed to the Spanish possessions both in peace time from the development of a contraband commerce, and in war time as a base for British naval operations:

After they finish the first necessary works, the new inhabitants will begin to dedicate themselves to agriculture and commerce.... But what could the nature of this commerce be? A clandestine one with all of South America.... The commodities of India and China introduced into that continent could be sold at much more agreeable prices than those attempted by our commerce, and this would occasion a contraband prejudicial to our interests.... These dangers are grave, but those in time of war will be even greater. The colonists will be able to fit out lucrative privateers so as to cut all communication between the Philippines and both Americas; they will think perhaps of extending their possessions, or they may influence some revolution which will diminish ours.... These possessions will have a Navy of their own, obtaining from the Southern region whatever is necessary to establish it, and when they have it ready formed they will be able to invade our nearby possessions with expeditions less costly and surer than from the Ports of England, and it will not be difficult to foretell even now which will be their first conquests.... In sum, it all announces to us ill future consequences, worthy of occupying all the attention of our Government in order to forestall them opportunely.<sup>42</sup>

Also in September 1788, naval captains Alexandro Malaspina and José de Bustamante y Guerra submitted to the Minister of Marine a plan for a "politico-scientific" voyage of exploration around the world which stressed the need for Spain not to abandon the field of Pacific exploration to her European rivals, France and Britain: "the scientific part will be carried out with much care, following the designs of Messrs. Cook and La Pérouse." As the imperial power in the Pacific, it was incumbent on Spain to develop navigation in that ocean, and also to gather up to date information on all that pertained to the political state of her wide-spread possessions in that immense ocean. The future development and defence of those possessions would depend on a more accurate knowledge of their natural resources and industries, and of their capacity to support naval and merchant shipping. Spain's monopoly of colonial enterprise in the Pacific was already being challenged by England, and therefore, as a covert objective of the voyage, it would be necessary to investigate the newly established British colony at Botany Bay.<sup>43</sup> Added weight and definition of the need for an investigation of the new English colony was given by Muñoz's "Reflexiones".

On 23 December 1788, the Viceroy of Mexico, Manuel Antonio Flores, wrote to Antonio Valdés, Minister for the Marine and for the Indies, discussing the peril Spain's territories on the Pacific coast of North America would face in future years from encroachment by the newly independent United States. Meanwhile, there were more immediate concerns: "the Russian projects and those which the English may make from Botany Bay, which they have already colonized, menace us."<sup>44</sup> Flores' concern may have been heightened by the warning sent from London by Ambassador Campo in his letter of 4

June 1788 to Prime Minister Florida Blanca discussing Sir John Dalrymple's book. Campo's letter had been sent to the viceroys, and in it he had written:

if until now we have seen as the greatest security of our South Sea possessions the circumstance that, having once passed Cape Horn, the enemy would have neither port nor shelter in such a vast extent of coasts.... today I do not believe we should flatter ourselves with such obstacles, for in the many islands which the English have frequented they have found at all times provisions, firewood and all kinds of assistance; they can leave their sick to be cured; form magazines for as much as they require; they will have shelters not only to careen and repair their vessels, but also to construct others.<sup>45</sup>

In March 1788, Flores had sent Captain Esteban José Martínez in command of the *Princesa* and *San Carlos* to investigate the presence of Russians and others on the North West American coast. On his return to Mexico, Martínez told Flores that he had obtained information from Russian fur traders while at Unalaska and Kodiak Islands in July that their government intended to send an expedition from the Baltic to occupy the port of Nootka Sound in 1789, and claim the whole North West American coast for Russia. This was a reference to the proposed expedition under the command of Grigory I. Mulovsky, which in fact was prevented from being undertaken by the outbreak of war between Russia and the Ottoman Turks.<sup>46</sup> The intelligence brought back by Martínez only confirmed the worst Spanish fears. Flores ordered Martínez north on a second voyage in February 1789 to forestall any such Russian attempt by occupying Nootka for Spain, and to enforce Spain's claim to the North West coast against all comers. Soon after he established himself at Nootka, Martínez arrested the *Argonaut*, an English trading vessel under the command of James Colnett, a British Navy lieutenant in private employment, and her consorts, the *Princess Royal* and *Northwest American*, which arrived there in July 1789 to set up a fur trading factory for a consortium of English merchants. This action by Martínez began an eighteen month long dispute over conflicting claims to territorial and navigation rights in the Pacific, which brought Britain and Spain to the brink of war.

The Spanish seizure of Colnett's ships provoked the British Government to extend the protection of the British Navy to the North West fur trade. Home Office Under-Secretary Evan Nepean drafted a letter to the Admiralty in early February 1790, outlining the Government's response to the events at Nootka Sound, saying "His Majesty has judged it highly expedient that measures should instantly be taken for affording protection to such of His Subjects as may have already proceeded to that part of the American Continent".<sup>47</sup> In the plans drawn up under Nepean's direction, the New South Wales settlement was assigned a role in the provision of this assistance to the North Pacific fur trade.<sup>48</sup> Instructions were drawn up for Governor Arthur Phillip at Port Jackson to supply a detachment of marines and convict workers — thirty persons altogether, with stores — to an expedition whose object would be to form a settlement on the North West coast, which would "lay the foundation of an establishment for the assistance of His Majesty's subjects in the prosecution of the Fur trade from the North West Coast of America".<sup>49</sup> The proposed expedition was to consist of three ships, two of which, the *Gorgon* (44 guns) and *Discovery* (10 guns), were to go first to Port Jackson. The *Gorgon* was already preparing to go there

with new troops and stores for the colony, and the *Discovery* was readying for a voyage of exploration to the South Atlantic. From Port Jackson, these two ships were to proceed to Hawaii, where they would rendezvous with a frigate sent from India, from whence all three would proceed under the command of the frigate captain to the American coast. The London newspaper *The Gazetteer* of 8 May 1790 carried an article which stated:

By the bill passed into law this Session, the Settlement of Botany Bay may be made useful in case of a rupture. The Governor is empowered to remit the remaining term of the sentence of such persons as shall behave well. Under this Act he may therefore embark a number of them on board King's ships, and make them act as soldiers on any adventure. We can foresee an occasion on which they might be most advantageously employed for their mother country. At the same time this gives these unhappy men a good incentive to behave well.<sup>50</sup>

When the Nootka Sound crisis threatened to become open war from May 1790, the plan for wide-ranging attacks on Spanish America was revived. An article in *The Whitehall Evening Post* of 3-5 June 1790 declared that, "without the aid of France, the Spaniards could never sustain a conflict with Great Britain and Holland". The article briefly described the plan proposed by Fullarton during the American War and how the forces raised to carry it out were diverted to Johnstone's expedition against the Cape in 1782 in preference to Fullarton's original project "which, if it had been carried into execution, might have subverted the Spanish empire in the southern hemisphere. Of this, the Spaniards seem to be aware..." Spanish awareness was no doubt assisted by the *Post's* article, and by the publication in June 1790 of the second edition of Dalrymple's *Memoirs*. *The Gazetteer* declared on 16 June 1790: "If the dispute with Spain should terminate in a war, the nation will profit from the valuable information given by Sir John Dalrymple in the Appendix to his Memoirs".

Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Campbell, who had recently returned to Britain from the military governorship of Madras in India, was appointed to overall command of operations against Spanish America, under the political direction of the Secretary of State, William Grenville. Campbell was assisted by William Dalrymple (now a Lieutenant-Colonel), who had served under him in Jamaica in 1782 and 1783 when Campbell had been Governor following Dalling, and by Home Riggs Popham, a Navy lieutenant retired on half pay who had been engaged in private trade in the Indian Ocean. Popham described his role in this episode in a "Secret Paper on South America" he wrote to the Home Secretary, Charles Yorke, on 26 November 1803:

The Continent of South America has naturally engaged the attention of this country in every probable rupture with Spain, and in the year 1790 it was so seriously taken up, that, if hostilities had commenced, I have little doubt but an armament of considerable magnitude would have sailed to that country: for Sir Archibald Campbell, who expected the command, consulted me on the occasion, particularly with respect to the co-operation from India, and all the

previous measures necessary to be adopted, that no time might be lost when the enterprise was actually decided on.<sup>51</sup>

Campbell set out his plan in a memorandum to Pitt written in July, 1790:

Spain is no where more vulnerable than in her Colonies abroad. The Phillipine Islands, Mexico, and South America afford to the British Nation, Objects of serious Importance for Military Enterprise. The Phillipine Islands are to be attacked with most Effect from the Presidency of Fort St. George [Madras] in the East Indies, Mexico and the Western Coast of South America from the Island of Jamaica in the West Indies. If the West Indian Army could be supported from the East Indies, across the Pacific Ocean, their Operations could not fail to meet with complete Success... the Fleet on the South Seas might be directed to rendezvous off Panama, about the Period the Jamaica Army might be thought to arrive at Chagr , as by that Means, they would co-operate with that Army, and their Appearance facilitate the Reduction of Panama. By this Cut across the Isthmus, Mexico would be separated from Peru, and as it often happens that the Natives of these Kingdoms are in a State of Rebellion, a force from Panama aided by a Squadron of Ships of War in the South Seas, would be enabled to give Encouragement to the Revolters, or engage their Aid in the Prosecution of any Attacks which may be thought advantageous or honourable for the British Nation. An Expedition against Buenos Ayres would in all Probability be directed with most Effect from Europe.<sup>52</sup>

In a memorandum he drafted in May 1790, Lord Mulgrave, one of the Admiralty Lords, considered several alternative routes an expedition against Spanish America might take after Manila had been captured. He said that "the expedition might proceed South" from Manila, "touching at New Holland or New Zealand for Refreshments and crossing the Pacific Ocean in South latitudes by this Rout."<sup>53</sup> William Dalrymple confided to Pitt in a letter of 10 May 1790 that:

The Resources of Troops from India are Original Thoughts of Sir Archibald. I have been in India since Sir Archibald first mention'd it to me in Jamaica often thought of it and am clearly and Decidedly of his Opinion to Carry Troops from the East Indies to the South Sea... Bring Lord Cornwallis on to the South Sea in Command and he will take the Manilla's in his Way — A small Squadron should Double Cape Horn in the end of Novr with 1000 or 1500 Land Troops on Board and Assom e Them from all Quarters.<sup>54</sup>

The London press announced Campbell's appointment on 15 October 1790 in the following terms:

General Sir Archibald Campbell is the most probable person to have the chief command of the Troops, on any expedition that may take place in the Western Hemisphere. From the circumstances of the ten thousand stand of arms being



ordered to be shipped on board the fleet destined for foreign service, it may be fairly presumed that a plan of operation is concerted in the Cabinet, of a nature decidedly offensive. The Spanish settlements already entertain a disposition of revolt. When furnished with arms, and encouraged by powerful support, there cannot be a doubt but that they would rise against their present Masters.<sup>55</sup>

The newspaper article also revealed the presence in London of Francisco de Miranda, and that he had "had frequent interviews with the Minister [Pitt]". This press article, which demonstrated that the British were confident enough of their naval strength to reveal their general strategic intentions, was perhaps designed to put additional pressure on the Spanish Government. Alone, Spain could not match Britain's naval might, and Louis XVI was in 1790 in no position to offer effective assistance to his cousin Carlos IV. In the end, Britain and Spain decided it was not the time to go to war, and a convention was signed in Madrid on 28 October 1790 resolving the Nootka Sound dispute.<sup>56</sup> Captain George Vancouver was subsequently sent in command of the *Discovery*, *Chatham* and *Daedalus* to re-possess Nootka and lay the foundations of a colony in that part of the world. At Admiralty Inlet on 4 June 1792 (the King's Birthday) he took formal possession of all the coast and hinterland contiguous to the Strait of Juan de Fuca under the name of New Georgia, but was prevented by the local Spanish commander at Nootka from establishing a colony.<sup>57</sup>

The two ships of Malaspina's expedition, *Descubierta* and *Atrevida*, finally reached Port Jackson [Sydney], New South Wales, in March 1793, and during their one-month stay there, Malaspina and his officers collected as much information as possible relating to the purpose and condition of the "Botany Bay" colony, both from direct observation and from published sources, including *The History of New Holland*. The information gathered was put together in Malaspina's "Examen Politico de las Colónias Inglesas en el Mar Pacifico".<sup>58</sup> In this, Malaspina compared the reasons given in London for the Botany Bay project as set out, for example, in *The History of New Holland* (the disposal of convicts and the production of agricultural commodities such as wine, tobacco and flax), with the actual situation existing at Port Jackson. He saw the sterility of the soil, the poverty of agriculture, the absence of good timber or any other commercial produce, and the great expense of sending out and maintaining the convicts, the administration and the 500 men of the colony's garrison, the New South Wales Corps. He also saw the strategic advantages of Port Jackson, and noted the amplitude of the territorial jurisdiction given to Governor Phillip, which included all the islands of the South Pacific. The question which therefore arose was: "What are the advantages which, at the cost of sacrifices not indifferent to the Treasury, at the cost of the violation of individual and public rights, and at the cost of a thousand risks impossible to foresee, the British Government think to derive from their present steps in the Pacific?" He saw the advantages which the British hoped to derive from their new colonies in the Pacific as twofold:

The first is to sustain the public credit with new speculations, which feed the hope of being able to one day extinguish the public debt; hopes, without which it would be impossible to contract new national debts, necessary on the other hand just at the moment when a Rupture is so feared; the second, to ensure that

Holland and Spain suffer the main brunt of the outbreak of war, with help of the Islands of the Pacific for essential maintenance of squadrons, or corsairs, which would at will direct their courses now toward Asia, now toward America.

Malaspina saw the settlement at Port Jackson as part of a pattern of projected English settlements at Nootka Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca on the Pacific Northwest coast of America, in the Sandwich Islands, and in New Caledonia, in addition to the settlement already established on Norfolk Island. Of all these settlements, which already existed or which he thought were soon to be established, he considered the most terrible for Spain was that at Port Jackson, "from whence with the greatest ease a crossing of two or three months through healthy Climates and a secure navigation could bring to our defenceless coasts two or three thousand cast-away bandits to serve interpolated with an excellent body of regular Troops."

During the Nootka Sound crisis, the Malaspina expedition had been making its way along the western coasts of Spanish America. The expedition's two warships, each carrying 24 guns, constituted a formidable force in comparison to what Britain had in the Pacific at that time and Malaspina was quite ready to employ it against the British settlements if need be, as he told Viceroy Revillagigado when he reached Mexico.<sup>59</sup> Concerned about this naval force in the context of planned expedition of the *Gorgon* and her consorts to the North West Coast, the British Secretary of State had in February 1790 requested the British embassy in Madrid to discover the size and force of "the Ships which sailed a few months ago for California under the command of M. Melaspina".<sup>60</sup> A naval battle at Port Jackson in May 1791 between Malaspina's warships and British frigates convoying an expedition bound for Spanish America is one of the "might have beens" of history! At the height of the crisis, Alleyne Fitzherbert, British Ambassador to Madrid, had a private meeting with Prime Minister Floridablanca, who:

gave me to understand that he considered our sending Ships to purchase Skins at Nootka as a shallow artifice calculated to cover a real design of making ourselves masters of the Trade of Mexico, that our Southern Whale Fishery covered a like design against Peru & Chili, and as to our colony at Botany-Bay that it must necessarily have been founded with a view to seconding these designs & of adding to our other conquests that of the Philippines.<sup>61</sup>

The precarious peace that had subsisted between Britain and France since 1783, finally came to an end in February 1793. Spain was dragged into the war on the side of France in late 1796, and the plan for an attack on Chile and Peru using Port Jackson as a base was at once revived. Command of the expedition was given to Major-General Sir James Craig, who had been involved in planning for the 1790 expedition. Captain John Hunter, who had succeeded Phillip as Governor at Port Jackson, was ordered to recruit extra troops for the New South Wales Corps, and to prepare provisions of wheat and flour (although, in a good example of the secrecy which always cloaked these plans, he was not told the reason for these preparations). The plan to be followed on this occasion was

indicated by Under-Secretary for War and Colonies, William Huskisson, in a letter dated 21 January 1797, which he sent to Craig at Cape Town:

I enclose by Mr Dundas's desire for your confidential information a Copy of a letter which he has this day written to Lord Macartney [British Governor at newly-captured Cape Town]. It relates as you will perceive to an Expedition to which it appears your thoughts were first turned several years ago. The pace of the discussion with Spain in the Nootka business prevented our then striking those blows which contrary to the perfidious calculations which have led to the present unprovoked aggression, I hope we shall even at this period of the War have the means of directing with effect against their Empire in America. This you appear to have foreseen when you lately proposed to the Duke of York in a letter he communicated to Mr Dundas [Secretary of State for War and Colonies] the very plan of Operation it is intended to adopt, and to place under your direction and Command.

The Craig plan involved the expedition staging at "Botany Bay" (*i.e.* Port Jackson) drawing 500 recruits from the convicts and troops at that settlement:

In order to form an Expedition from the Cape for the Coast of South America it is proposed that the Garrison of that Settlement should furnish *two Battalions* of 800 rank & file each and three Troops of Cavalry of not less than 60 each... It is proposed that the Force from the Cape should be joined in its passage to the South Seas by 500 Men from Botany Bay, part to be recruited from the Convicts & the remainder from the Corps now there into which the former would be received... The Expedition to the Rio Plata will require three British regiments.<sup>62</sup>

A third expedition was to be sent from Calcutta and Madras to capture Manila.<sup>63</sup> Colonel Arthur Wellesley took his regiment from Calcutta to Prince of Wales Island (Penang), the designated rendezvous on the West coast of Malaya, in preparation for this attempt but, as on previous occasions, events conspired to thwart the ambitions of the strategists. In early 1797, Britain's naval and military resources were stretched to the full by commitments in Haiti and the other West Indian islands, not to speak of the danger of invasion of Ireland and Britain, and a combination in February 1797 of a bank crisis and a French raid on Fishguard in Pembrokeshire sufficed to cause abandonment of the expedition.

In July 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte captured Alexandria in Egypt. In response to this event, Robert Saunders Dundas, secretary to his father, Secretary of State for War and Colonies Henry Dundas, proposed striking a blow against the Franco-Spanish alliance by making an attempt to detach Chile from the Spanish Empire. Pointing out the advantages of Port Jackson as a place of rendezvous where an expedition against Chile could assemble undetected by the Spaniards, Saunders Dundas said:

The adoption of this port as the point of reunion could give opportunity to take on forces from New South Wales, which would avoid the necessity of taking troops from India; even though the Bengal artillery and the Lascars would be of the highest utility in an Enterprise of this kind. If it is objected that the latter plan would augment considerably the extent of the voyage, it could be contested that in point of time there would be no comparable difference, because the winds from the West which blow regularly from New South Wales to the coasts of the Pacific Ocean would impel the proposed Expedition to its destination with much greater rapidity and certainty, which would compensate for the inconvenience to be feared from the increased distance.<sup>64</sup>

This proposal was complemented by another from the leading figure in the Southern Whaling trade, Samuel Enderby, for an expedition against Chile and Peru, which he set out in a letter to Pitt dated 3 December 1799:

An Expedition into the Pacific Ocean by the Cape of Good Hope & New South Wales may sail in any one Month of the Year and may be so secretly conducted as to prevent almost a possibility of its being known or counteracted.... The Ships to sail singly from the Cape G. Hope (as for the East Indies) for Port Jackson in New South Wales making that the grand Rendezvous for the Expedition.... it is presum'd the New South Wales Corps might make part of the Troops, and as many Recruits might be procur'd from the Convicts as it would be prudent to trust.... Speaking sanguinely it appears impossible the Spaniards can have an Idea that such an expedition would take place by the Cape of Good Hope and the Ships appearing so unexpected on the Coast and the enemy so unprepar'd that it must insure Success.... The attacking or emancipating South America from Spain would deprive France of the Spanish Treasures, and it does not require any great Expence to give such an Expedition its full Success.<sup>65</sup>

On 22 March 1801, Captain James Colnett, the same whose capture in July 1789 had provoked the Nootka Sound Crisis, wrote to Admiralty First Lord, Earl St Vincent, proposing "a plan for attacking the Southern settlements of the Spaniards by a Southern route with a great degree of secrecy and surprise." Colnett wrote:

altho to a Man not acquainted *with Geography and prevailing winds* it would appear a very circuitous route but your Lordship will see the facility plainly being well acquainted that the Westerly winds blow constantly from the Cape of good Hope to New Holland where first after leaving that Cape I would propose to touch on the Coast of New South Wales in order to refresh the Crew leave the Sick behind and take others in lieu — By this time the Soldiers would be enured to Climate & Sea and well calculated for any enterprise and with the prevailing and trade winds would be expeditiously carried to the Coast of Chili & Peru.<sup>66</sup>

Colnett had met Arthur Phillip in Rio de Janeiro in February-March 1793, and may have discussed this plan with him then. Phillip was returning to England from his governorship of New South Wales, and Colnett had just completed a survey of the South East Pacific Ocean in command of HMS *Rattler*.<sup>67</sup>

The British Government took no action on these proposals before peace negotiations with France brought hostilities to a halt in 1801.

In October 1804, hostilities having again broken out with France and Spain, Captain Sir Home Popham submitted to Pitt a memorandum on a revised and comprehensive version of the plan for attacks from the Atlantic and Pacific sides upon the Spanish empire in America. As well as his experience in planning the proposed expeditions under Sir Archibald Campbell in 1790, Popham had also been involved in planning the subsequent proposed expeditions in 1796 and 1797. His memorandum was prepared following an interview he had with Pitt and Dundas at Pitt's home in Wimbledon. In it he outlined a strategy very similar to that proposed by Campbell in 1790:

The next point from Europe must certainly be Buenos Ayres, and to accomplish this object it will be necessary to have a force of three hundred men... Then with respect to the Pacifick Ocean, I consider two points of descent as sufficient, one however might suffice but if the other can be accomplished it will have great effect upon the people to the Southward of Buenos Ayres. I mean in speaking of this which is on the coast of Chili to propose Valpariso, and if the force for that object would either be concentrated at, or taken from, New South Wales, by new levies or otherwise, it would make this proposition perfect. The great force however for the Pacifick which I will propose to come from India and to consist of 4,000 Sepoys and a small proportion of Europeans should direct its course to Panama, which is fixed upon as the point of concentration for all our forces.<sup>68</sup>

Shortly afterwards Pitt annotated a memorandum of 17 September 1804 which listed enemy concentrations around the globe, against "Valparayso on the Coast of Chili," using Popham's words, "Force concentrated by New Levies or otherwise at New South Wales".<sup>69</sup> In December, Popham was appointed to command of the *Diadem*, an appointment he took to be for the purpose of putting into execution the strategy set out in his memorandum of 14 October, although he received no official instructions to that effect.<sup>70</sup> In August 1805, he sailed as commodore of the squadron conveying Baird's troops in the expedition to capture Cape Town, without having clarified whether the Government expected him to subsequently capture Buenos Aires.

On 26 October 1804, William Jacob, a London merchant who had traded to South America and Fellow of the Royal Society, prepared for Pitt a memorandum on "Plans for occupying Spanish America, with Observations on the Character and Views of its Inhabitants". He advocated overthrowing Spanish rule, and erecting the several provinces into independent governments, allied to Great Britain. The naval and military forces necessary to effect these changes would be sent from British possessions in separate but

related expeditions against the east and west coasts of Spanish America. An expedition from Madras, India, would be directed to capture Valdivia and the island of Chiloe, in Chile, and subsequently Callao and Lima, in Peru. The place of New South Wales in this expedition was explained:

Stores of every Kind might be sent to meet the Expedition, at Port Jackson, on New South Wales, where it is important the whole should rendezvous; by meeting there a short time, the Troops would be refreshed; and as the Weather is always fine, and the Wind favourable, they would arrive on the Coast of South America fresh and fit for immediate Action.<sup>71</sup>

In August 1806 the Government led by Lord Grenville, who had become Prime Minister following the death of Pitt in February 1806, received a memorial from John Hunter, Phillip's successor as Governor of New South Wales from 1795 to 1800, on the suitability of Port Jackson as a staging point for a squadron sailing against Chile and Peru. Echoing the words of James Matra's 1783 proposal for a colony in New South Wales, Hunter wrote:

From its situation on the Globe, we may see, by examining a general Chart of the world, the advantage of that Situation in a *Political* Point of View. It has generally happened when we have been involved in a war with France, that Spain and Holland have been dragged into hostility against us: The proximity of our Colony in that Part of the World to the Spanish Settlements on the coast of Chili and Peru, as well as those of the Dutch amongst the Molucca Islands, makes it an important Post, should it ever be found necessary to carry the war into those seas; for here you could rendezvous a small Military Force, for any occasional Service, with a convenient light Squadron for their conveyance to any Point they might be required at.<sup>72</sup>

In October 1806, having received news of the capture of Buenos Aires by Popham and Beresford, Grenville sought the advice of Sir John Dalrymple regarding his plan for complementary assaults from the East and the West on Spanish America, and subsequently passed on Dalrymple's plans to General Sir Arthur Wellesley for evaluation and development.<sup>73</sup> In a memorandum dated 20 November 1806, Wellesley wrote:

After the fullest consideration of the subject, it appears decided that the principal attack on New Spain must be made by one corps on its eastern coast [from Jamaica]... in order to reinforce and support this corps, which will have made its attack on New Spain, 3,000 sepoys and 500 Europeans are to be sent from Bengal in the month of October... This corps ought to arrive upon the western coast of New Spain in the month of February. It may be expected that they will be four months on their passage; and one more is allowed for stopping at places of refreshment. These should be, in the first instance, at Prince of Wales Island [Penang]... and in the second, at Botany Bay. There they ought to be encamped in a healthy situation... I cannot at present

determine upon the landing place for this corps in New Spain... at all events it will be possible to communicate to them their ulterior orders in New Holland.<sup>74</sup>

On 12 November 1806, Sir Joseph Banks received from Captain William Kent, Governor Hunter's nephew, a memorial he had drawn up, "Remarks on His Majesty's Settlement in New South Wales and on the Harbour of Port Jackson, as an eligible place from which a Squadron could sail against the Spaniards on the Coast of Chili and Peru". Kent wished Banks to draw it to the attention of the Secretary of State for War and Colonies. It set out the reasons Windham may have referred to in advising Murray to transport Craufurd's expedition to Chile by way of Cape Town and Port Jackson. Harking back to the expedition to the South Seas commanded by George Anson in 1740-1744, Kent wrote:

Port Jackson on the East side of New Holland... nearly opposite to Valparaiso on the West Coast of America, is admirably suited for sending forth a Squadron against the Spaniards on the Coast of Chili and Peru.— A Squadron sailing from England for that purpose, if they were fortunate in meeting with a fair Wind which carried them into the North East Trade, might be able to get to Port Jackson, by the Eastern Rout, in a little more than three Months.— There Water, Wood, Fruit, Vegetables, and fresh Provisions might be procured in great abundance and even Men, if they were wanted to augment the Crews, as Seamen are frequently left behind from Merchant Ships that have reason to visit that Port.— No Squadron has been upon the West Coast of America since Commodore Ansons... Had Commodore Anson gone the Eastern Route, where he would have met with constant fair Winds, although the distance is greater than that by the Westward, and although he would have had no such place to stop and refresh at as Port Jackson, there is little doubt he would have carried all his Squadron with him to the Coast of Peru, and might in that case have been able to fulfil the high expectation the Nation entertain'd of his Voyage.<sup>75</sup>

Kent had been commander of the colony's storeships *Supply* and *Buffalo* for twelve years. He had originally submitted this memorial in 1803 to Philip King, Hunter's successor as Governor of New South Wales. King subsequently drew the idea to the attention of Secretary of State Lord Hobart in a despatch from Sydney dated 7 August 1803.<sup>76</sup> In May 1807, returning to England at the conclusion of his governorship, King stopped over at Rio de Janeiro where he learned of the expeditions to the Rio de la Plata. He stayed at Rio de Janeiro until August of that year and used his good offices to obtain supplies from Brazil for the British forces in the Rio de la Plata.<sup>77</sup> As he explained in a letter to the British ambassador in Lisbon written from Rio de Janeiro on 6 August 1807, his intervention in his official capacity was essential: "a vessell was sent here with a request from General Whitelocke to His Excellency, the Vice-Roy, who did not consider himself justifiable in allowing the Grain to be taken, as however certain it was that it was for the ultimate use of His Maj:s Government at the River Plate, yet as it was to be acquired in the first Instance by means of private Commerce between the Merchant & the Captain of the Vessell: It became impossible for the Vice-Roy to accede as not consistent with his Instructions and Treaties". King's personal request to the Viceroy was successful

because, as he explained: "On application from the Master, I applied to His Excellency on the immediate part of Government & offered to furnish the Cargo as a public affair and be answerable that it was deliver'd to General Whitelocke for the use of His Maj:s Govt."<sup>78</sup> King had been at Rio de Janeiro as Phillip's lieutenant in 1782 and 1788, and seems to have benefited from Phillip's high standing with the Portuguese. More than Brazilian maize and flour for his troops were needed, however, for General Whitelocke to achieve success at the Rio de la Plata.

The principal cause of the failure of the British adventure in the Rio de la Plata in 1806-1807 was ascribed on all sides to the refusal of the Grenville Government to permit its generals to appear in South America as allies of the native independence movement. Windham's instructions to Craufurd directed him to employ all the means in his power, whether of authority or conciliation, "to prevent among the inhabitants a spirit of insurrection". He was "by no means to encourage any acts of insurrection or revolt, or any measures tending likely to any other change than that of placing the country under His Majesty's protection and government".<sup>79</sup> The same instructions were given to General Whitelocke when he was sent in February 1807 to take command of the combined British forces.

These instructions completely disregarded the advice Popham had sent back from Buenos Aires after its capture in July 1806: "The object of this expedition was considered by the natives to apply principally to their independence; by the blacks, to their total liberation: and if General Beresford had felt himself authorized, or justified in confirming either of these propositions, no exertions whatever would have been made to dispossess him of his conquest".<sup>80</sup> The truth of this was corroborated by General Auchmuty who, after he had captured Montevideo, was assured by the principal citizens that "if I would acknowledge their independence, and promise them the protection of the English government", Buenos Aires "would submit to me."<sup>81</sup>

Gaining the support of the local populations had always been regarded as essential for success by those British strategists who advocated expeditions to Spanish America. Sir Archibald Campbell wrote in his memorandum to Pitt of 18 October 1790:

I beg Leave on this Occasion, to say, that by *Conquest* I mean not, the Reduction of those Kingdoms to the absolute Dominion of Great Britain; but that by assisting the Natives with a Military Force, they may be enabled to throw off the Spanish Yoke, and resume their ancient Government, Rights, Privileges and Religion. It is but reasonable to expect, that, exclusive of the Distress which Spain must experience from the Diminution of her Revenues in that Quarter of the World, the British may, for such an Act of Liberality to the oppressed Natives, secure to themselves a Preference in all Articles of Commerce from those extensive and opulent Kingdoms.<sup>82</sup>

William Jacob had warned Pitt in his memorandum of 26 October 1804 that an attempt to conquer and reduce the South American provinces to the status of British possessions similar to Canada would fail, whereas a policy of erecting them into



independent governments on the model of the United States of America would attract the support of all the local population except the Spanish officials.<sup>83</sup> The fear of Jacobinism and democracy in London prevented the Grenville Government and its successor from adopting this bold approach. In his instructions to Craufurd, Windham said:

The ruling consideration which long restrained his Majesty from invading any part of the enemy's territory in South America was the danger of exerting [exciting?] in that country, from the well known impatience of that government felt by the inhabitants, a spirit of insurrection and revolt leading to the most sanguinary excesses, and which except by the presence of a very superior force, might have been found impossible to controul.<sup>84</sup>

Lord Castlereagh became Secretary of State for War and Colonies in the Government of the Duke of Portland, which succeeded that of Lord Grenville in March 1807. In a memorandum for the Cabinet in which he discussed the policy to be adopted regarding South America, he wrote: "the most serious objections that have occurred to those who have considered the policy of countenancing separation [*i.e.*, independence] are the probability that any local government which might be established would become democratic and revolutionary".<sup>85</sup> General Whitelocke, deprived by his Government's policy of being able to offer the only incentive which could have won over the Spanish Americans, found himself in the hopeless situation of confronting the united hostility of the people of the Rio de la Plata. The instructions he had been given by his Government, which condemned his expedition to failure, fully merited the severe criticism they received from Fortescue's pen.

Although the English invasions of 1806 and 1807 were a military disaster, the strategy upon which they were based did have two unintended but important consequences. First, the English invasions broke the tie between Spain and America, and precipitated the struggle for independence. Napoleon's usurpation of the Spanish Crown by installing his brother Joseph as King in April 1808 brought about an alliance between Britain and the legitimate Borbon Monarchy. Major-General Arthur Wellesley was directed in June 1808 to take the force he had already assembled in Ireland for a renewed assault on Spanish America to the Iberian Peninsula instead. The Peninsular War thenceforward absorbed all Britain's military resources, while on the other side of the Atlantic the breaking of the link with metropolitan authority which the English invasions of the Rio de la Plata in 1806 and 1807 had caused began a process of revolt which subsequently led through many years of struggle to the complete independence of America from Spain.

The second consequence of the strategy of attacking the Spanish empire was the founding of an English colony in New South Wales, which was at least in part due to the expected role the settlement would play in assisting expeditions against Spanish America. The settlement outlasted this short-lived consideration to become the metropolis of modern Australia.



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- <sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 15 September 1806.
- <sup>2</sup> Buckingham to Grenville, 16 November 1806; quoted in *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, Preserved at Dropmore (Dropmore Papers)*, London, Vol.VIII, 1912, pp.435-6.
- <sup>3</sup> Windham to Craufurd, 30 October 1806; quoted in *Proceedings of a General Court-Martial for the Trial of General Whitelocke*, London, 1808, Vol.I, App.xxvii, "Instructions for Brig-Gen. Craufurd"; and *Annual Register* for 1807, pp.215-6.
- <sup>4</sup> J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, London, 1906, Vol.V, pp.376-8.
- <sup>5</sup> Lewis Butler, "Minor Expeditions of the British Army from 1803 to 1815", *The United Service Magazine*, no.920, July 1905, p.387.
- <sup>6</sup> Cabinet Memorandum from Secretary of State for War and Colonies Lord Castlereagh, 1 May 1807, in Charles Vane (ed.), *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, London, Vol.VII, 1851, pp.314-24.
- <sup>7</sup> *Supplementary Despatches and memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington*, London, John Murray, 1858-72, Vol.VI, pp.35-61.
- <sup>8</sup> Sir John Dalrymple to Lord Grenville, 20 October 1806, Huntington Library (San Marino, Calif.), Stowe MSS, Admiralty Boxes 9 and 37; Charles F. Mullett, "British Schemes against Spanish America in 1806", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol.27, no.2, May 1947, pp.269-78.
- <sup>9</sup> Fortescue, Vol.V, p.379.
- <sup>10</sup> In a tribute to the classical education of the officers of both sides, the negotiations were conducted in Latin, the only language they had in common (M. D, "Latin as a Universal Language", *Notes and Queries*, series 5, vol.VIII, 18 August 1877, p.132).
- <sup>11</sup> Fortescue, p.435.
- <sup>12</sup> Charles F. Mullett, "British Schemes against Spanish America in 1806", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol.27, no.2, May 1947, p.274.
- <sup>13</sup> Dalrymple to Grenville, 20 October 1806; quoted in Mullett *op.cit.* See also Tom Pocock, *The Young Nelson in the Americas*, London, Collins, 1980.
- <sup>14</sup> Edinburgh and London, 1788, Vol.2. Dalrymple's "Account" was published in *The Scots Magazine* of August and September 1788 (pp.384-8, 438-42) and it was fully described in *The London Review*, August 1788, pp.107-110.
- <sup>15</sup> [William Knox], *Extra Official State Papers*, London, 1789, Vol.II, pp.62-3; quoted in Vincent Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire*, London, Longmans, Vol.II, 1962, p.639.
- <sup>16</sup> Public Record Office, *War Office*, 1/178: 93-5, "Extract of a Proposal by Mr. Fullarton for an Expedition to Spanish America, by India, 3 June 1780". Also held at India Office Records, *Political and Secret*, 1/6.
- <sup>17</sup> G. Rutherford, "Sidelights on Commodore Johnstone's Expedition to the Cape", *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol.28, 1942, pp.189-212, <sup>290</sup>-308.
- <sup>18</sup> Brotherton Library (Leeds), *Sydney Papers*, MS R8.

- 19 Phillip to Sandwich, 17 January 1781, National Maritime Museum (Greenwich), *Sandwich Papers*, F/26/23.
- 20 Francisco de Medina to Vertiz, <sup>18 May 1780; cited in Aníbal M. Riverós Tula, "Historia de</sup> la Colonia del Sacramento, 1680-1830", *Revista del Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay*, Montevideo, 1959, P.209.
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- 25 British Library, *India Office Records*, H 175, f.237.
- 26 Archivo General de Simancas, *Estado*, 8139; cited in W.S. Robertson, "Francisco Miranda and the Revolutionizing of Spanish America", *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1907*, Vol.1, pt.xii, p.209, in United States 60th Congress, 2nd Session, 1908-09, *House Documents*, Vol. 126, no.1282, CDS 5536, pp.189-490.
- 27 PRO, *Chatham MS* 351 and *Pitt Papers*, 30/8/345; quoted in Robertson, *op.cit.*, pp.513-4.
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- 32 *The Daily Universal Register*, *The General Advertiser*; *The London Chronicle*; *The Morning Chronicle*; *The Whitehall Evening Post*; and *The Morning Post*, of 13 October 1786; *The New Hampshire Spy*, 16 January 1787; Spanish translation prepared by the embassy in London, Archivo Historico Nacional (Madrid), *Estado*, legajo 4250/1.
- 33 Campo to Florida Blanca, 13 October 1786, AHN, *Estado*, legajo 4250/1. This document was drawn to my attention by Dr Eric Beerman.
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- 35 <sup>The</sup> *History of New Holland*, London, Stockdale, 1787, p.16. Dalrymple's "Account" was published in *The Scots Magazine* of August and September 1788 (pp.384-8, 438-42) and it was fully described in *The London Review*, August 1788, pp.107-110. When the second edition of the Memoirs was published in 1790, the Appendix was published in *The Gazetteer* of 6, 10 and 24 August 1790.
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