

Britain and the Kingdom of Sardinia in the Eighteenth Century

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Various source media, State Papers Online

*perhaps this is the earliest
biography of him in existence*

11.
To The Queens Most Excellent Majesty
The Humble Petition of Daniel de Tove

That yo^r Petitioner wth a sincere design to Propogate The Interest of the
Prover Succession and to Animate The people against The Designs of The Pretender
Always look'd on as an Enemy-to yo^r Maj^{ties} Sacred Person and Government did
the Several Pamphlets Particularly One Intituled Reasons against The Hannover
ion, what if The Pretender should come, and Others
In all which books Altho' The Titles seem'd to look as if written in Favour of the
and Sundry Expressions, as in all Ironical Writing it Must be, May be
ed Against the True Design of the whole, and turned to a Meaning quite different
of Intention of the Author: yet yo^r Petitioner Humbly Assures yo^r Maj^{ties} in the
most Manner Possible, That his True and Onely Design in all y^e said books, was by
Ironical Discourse of recommending The Pretender, In the strongest and Most Toxicall
ed to Repose his designs, and The ruinous consequences of his succeeding thereon.

...the Lord Arch-Bishop of St. Andrews.
His Grace the Lord Arch-Bishop of Glasgow.
The Marquis of Athol, Lord Privy Seal.
The Duke of Gordon.
The Earl of Errol.
The Earl of Marr.
The Earl of Caithness.
The Earl of Linlithgow, Lord Justice General.
The Earl of Drumfrevling.
The Earl of Strathmore.
The Earl of Southwique.
The Earl of Traquair.
The Earl of Belcarras.

...The Lord Viscount of Tarbat, Clerk of Register.
The Lord Strathnaver.
The Lord ... Treasurer-Depute.
The Lord Duffus.
The Lord Kinaird.
The Mr. of Balmerino.
The Lord President of the Session.
The Lord Advocate.
The Lord Justice Clerk.
The Lord Castlchill.
Lieutenant General Montro.
The Lord of Niddrie.

Whereas We have seen a Proclamation issued out in Name of His most Sacred Majesty
Declaring, that the Prince of Orange and his Adherents, have designed to Inva
His Majesties Kingdoms; and that now His Majesty hath signified by His Royal Let
ter of the Date at Whitehall the fifth day of November Instant, that they are Lan
ding in England, and in order thereunto, have Contrived and Framed several Treaso
nable Papers and Declarations, hoping thereby to Seduce and Corrupt His Majesties Subjects
and that several Persons are employed to disperse the same; and since
of His Majesties Privy C
cessary to Admonish all

mercy out of this world life, to one
... of north ... Mary ...
... and ...
... only right ...
... free said Kingdom of England ...
... civil ...
... and ...
... of peoples ...
... of the ...
... our said ...
... and ...
... to us, as to their only ...
... by ...
... of ...
... of the ...
... of ...

A preoccupation on the part of historians with European expansion across the Atlantic between 1500 and 1800 has to some extent obscured the continued importance of the Mediterranean and of the Italian states at this time. England's (later Britain's) commercial and other relations with many of these states, and the internal development of the latter in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be followed in the State Papers: the Republic of Genoa (SP 84), the kingdom of Naples (SP 79), the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, where British merchants had a growing presence at the port of Livorno, or Leghorn (SP 97) and the Republic of Venice (98). Another Italian state whose history can be pursued using the State Papers is the duchy of Savoy, later known as the kingdom of Sicily (1713-20) and from 1720 as the kingdom of Sardinia (SP 92), which developed a remarkable new relationship with Britain in the eighteenth century and which in the nineteenth century (1861) united the kingdom of Italy.

The Savoyard state was a typical "composite" polity in which the prince or sovereign ruled a collection of territories rather than a single monolithic entity. Around 1680, the dukes of Savoy possessed four main territories: the duchy of Savoy, the duchy of Aosta, the county of Nice (giving access to the Mediterranean) and the principality of Piedmont, location of the ducal capital, Turin. Piedmont was the largest, most populous and wealthiest of the duke's territories and for that reason the polity is sometimes referred to as Savoy-Piedmont, or some other name that tries to capture its composition. To further complicate things, some of the ducal territories were part of the Holy Roman Empire, subject to the jurisdiction of the Austrian Habsburg Emperor.

Before about 1680 the Savoyard state had not enjoyed a high profile abroad. In the last decades of the Italian Wars (1494-1559) the French king had occupied the ducal territories, forcing Duke Charles II (d. 1553) into exile. The restoration of his son and successor, Emanuel Philibert (1553-80) was an important part of the conclusion of that cycle of wars. Following his restoration, Emanuel Philibert rebuilt the state. He was succeeded by his son, Charles Emanuel I (1580-1630), who married a daughter of Philip II of Spain and sought – with little success – to exploit the rivalries of France and Spain. Unfortunately, the early death of Charles Emanuel's own successor, Victor Amadeus I (1630-37), meant the crown passed to a minor, Charles Emanuel II (1638-75). As so often happened in such situations, the minority triggered a power struggle, which escalated into a short-lived civil war that drew in surrounding powers. The adult Charles Emanuel II sought with some success to rebuild ducal authority and to encourage the economic development of his territories. In 1669, for example, he concluded an agreement with Charles II of England intended to attract English merchants to the port of Nice. On the whole, however, contact between the dukes of Savoy and their subjects, and the kings of England and their subjects were limited. One reason for this was the fact that the Catholic dukes of Savoy were reluctant to tolerate Protestantism in their territories and instead persecuted the Vaudois or Waldensian Protestants of Piedmont. As recently as the 1650s, the persecution of the Vaudois had horrified their English co-religionists.

Charles Emanuel was succeeded by his infant son, Victor Amadeus II (1675-1730). Once again, a minority meant political difficulty, not least because the regent, Charles Emanuel's widow, Maria Giovanna Battista, had

political ambitions of her own. She sought to both further encourage economic development and to remove her son from Turin (where she expected to continue as regent) by marrying him to the infant of Portugal. The scheme however failed, due to domestic Savoyard opposition and the reluctance of Victor Amadeus to co-operate. In 1684, the young duke effectively ousted his mother, in a palace coup which was backed by the French king, Louis XIV, the Savoyard state being very largely at this time a French satellite state. Turin was squeezed between French garrisons in the fortresses of Casale in Monferrato (since 1681) and Pinerolo in Piedmont (since 1631). Victor Amadeus had secured the support of the French Court by, among other things, marrying Louis XIV's niece, Anne-Marie, daughter of the Duke of Orleans and his wife, Henrietta, the sister of Charles II and James II (and daughter of Charles I). His marriage thus linked Victor Amadeus to the house of Stuart. Already the young duke was displaying the remarkable political capacity which would so impress his contemporaries in subsequent decades.

While Louis XIV's support had helped him secure power, Victor Amadeus increasingly resented Louis's domination and in 1690 he seized an opportunity to throw off that yoke. Following the outbreak of the War of the League of Augsburg or Nine Years' War (1688-97), the Grand Alliance of England, the Dutch republic, the Holy Roman Emperor and Spain hoped to invade France from north Italy, sending an expeditionary force across the territories of the Duke of Savoy (whether he liked it or not), to take advantage of the passes through the Alps into France that lay in his state. This was both a threat and an opportunity for the duke, who in the summer of 1690 indicated that he was ready to join the

allies against Louis XIV. In October 1690, William III and the Dutch republic concluded a treaty of alliance with the duke, promising him subsidies to enable him to raise more troops, which might invade France, and promising to secure for him Pinerolo. For his part, the duke promised toleration for his Vaudois subjects. This was the first of a series of alliances between England and the Savoyard state between 1690 and 1748, in which monarchs and ministers in London hoped, by aiding the duke with money, to take advantage of the strategic situation of his states. More or less permanent diplomatic relations were established between the two states, generating the correspondence now in SP 92.

Initially, the alliance worked well. Victor Amadeus was twice defeated by the French forces (1690, 1693) but he refused to give in and led an invasion of France in 1692, demonstrating his value to the Allies. However, he worried about the growing power of the Austrian Habsburg Emperor in Italy, and began to suspect that his allies, unable to defeat and impose terms on Louis XIV, would not give priority to his own war aims. The religious issue also caused some tension with his Protestant allies, who obliged him to issue a limited toleration for the Vaudois in 1694. In addition, the strain of the cost of the war meant that his subsidies were beginning to fall into arrears by 1696, prompting English proposals to replace those subsidies by English cloth exports, part of a much larger scheme to encourage Anglo-Piedmontese economic links at the expense of France that threatened to disrupt the Piedmontese economy. For his part, Louis XIV found the war in north Italy a major distraction from his efforts to secure victory elsewhere, and was willing by 1696 to do a deal with the duke, and to restore Pinerolo if Victor

Amadeus would abandon his allies. This the duke did in the summer of 1696. It was immediately apparent that the duke had betrayed his allies, who were obliged to agree to the neutralisation of Italy. This in turn contributed enormously to the conclusion of a general peace in 1697, at Ryswick. Victor Amadeus' ability to outmanoeuvre his more powerful allies, each of whom had conducted at one time or another their own negotiations for a secret deal with Louis XIV, ensured that he was renowned throughout Europe for his political adroitness. But the victims of his manoeuvring, including William III, reviled the duke.

Victor Amadeus's "betrayal" in 1696 may have cost him, a descendant of Philip II of Spain, William's support for a share of the Spanish Monarchy when William sought through the Partition Treaties of 1699 and 1700 to prevent a European war over the inheritance of the childless Charles II (1665-1700), last of the Spanish Habsburgs. It may also have cost him, or rather his wife and two sons (born in 1699 and 1701), their place in the English succession. Following the death of Queen Anne's only surviving child, the Duke of Gloucester in 1700, the Act of Settlement of 1701 provided that Anne should be succeeded by the house of Hanover. No provision was made for Victor Amadeus's wife and her heirs, the duke's representative in London making a formal protest in consequence. Undoubtedly the main reason for this was religious, since Victor Amadeus and his wife were Catholics. However, lingering resentment at the duke's conduct in 1696 may also have influenced attitudes in England.

In 1701, too, the duke looked to be very much in the Bourbon, French camp. Following the death of Charles II of Spain and the succession of the first Bourbon king of Spain, Philip V, Victor Amadeus was again

surrounded by the Bourbons, in France and now also in Spanish Milan. Initially, Victor Amadeus decided that he could do little but co-operate with the Bourbons, marrying his daughter to Philip V. (Another daughter had married the Duke of Burgundy, Louis XIV's grandson and Philip's elder brother, in 1696 as part of the peace settlement). However, Victor Amadeus continued to worry about his situation. He found his remedy following the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession and the creation of another Grand Alliance against the Bourbons by joining that coalition. Just as he had thrown over Louis in 1690, and the allies in 1696, in 1703 he again abandoned Louis (and Philip). Once again, England promised cash help to enable Victor Amadeus to maintain armies with which he could not only defend his own states, but also invade France. As in the 1690s, the war pressed hard on the duke and his subjects. The turning point came in 1706, when the besieged ducal capital, Turin, was relieved by the victory over the Bourbon forces of those of the Emperor, led by Victor Amadeus's cousin, Prince Eugene of Savoy.^[1] The following year, Eugene led an allied army into France, against the naval base at Toulon. However, the Emperor was more interested in conquering the various territories which had formed part of Spanish Italy - notably Milan and Naples - than in operations in France. After 1707 therefore Victor Amadeus, who as in the previous conflict (and along with many of the other Italian princes and republics) worried about the Emperor's growing power in Italy, concentrated on making gains on his own alpine border with France.^[2]

In 1713, Victor Amadeus got his reward as a loyal member of a victorious coalition, and for co-operating with the separate peace prepared by Queen Anne's Tory

ministry. In addition, Anne clearly felt that her cousin, Victor Amadeus's consort, deserved some consolation for being excluded from the English succession in 1701. Victor Amadeus gained territory from France and some additions of territory in the east at the expense of Milan and Monferrato. But the duke's chief prize was the island kingdom of Sicily and with it, at last, the crown that successive dukes of Savoy had sought for the best part of a century. For Queen Anne's ministers, Sicily in possession of a prince but without a navy would be dependent for its defence on Britain, which could thus be sure of its trade in the Mediterranean and the Levant. Victor Amadeus and his consort sailed to Sicily aboard English ships and were crowned in Palermo in December 1713.^[6]

In 1714, the future looked bright for a Savoyard state which had gained enormously^[4] in territory, resources and reputation since 1690. However, some other states resented the Savoyard success, including the Emperor – now the dominant figure in Italy – and the King of Spain, the latter wishing to recover his lost territories. In 1717, Spanish forces conquered Sardinia and in 1718 invaded Sicily. Victor Amadeus's position in Sicily was undermined by the fact that he had ruled more harshly than had the Spaniards, who were well received by many Sicilians. Victor Amadeus was also *persona non grata* in London. A beneficiary of the Tory peace of 1713, he was less favoured by George I's Whig ministers. In addition, his wife's Stuart connections made him suspect to the Hanoverian regime.^[5] The religious issue, too, continued to complicate relations. It was soon apparent that the simplest solution to the tensions in the Mediterranean was to satisfy Spain and the Emperor at the expense of Victor Amadeus, who unable to resist, was obliged to join the Quadruple Alliance

and, in 1720, to exchange Sicily for the smaller, poorer island of Sardinia, whose only value was that it too gave him a crown. This was a traumatic experience which Victor Amadeus never forgot – or forgave.^[6]

The events of 1718-20 demonstrated the limits to what the Savoyard state could do. However, it remained strategically important and when another war loomed in 1725-26 between the rival alliances of Hanover and Vienna, the British government sought to win Victor Amadeus for the former. The king again sought to sell his allegiance dearly, the English minister sent to deal with him declaring that he was "weary of endeavouring to hold an Eel by the tail".^[7] In the event there was no war. This allowed Victor Amadeus to devote the 1720s to domestic reform: reorganising the administration, overhauling the tax system (which attracted much interest abroad), protecting the domestic silk industry and encouraging the textile industry. These latter measures created some difficulties with Britain, who wanted to export its woollen cloths to Piedmont and at the same time develop its own silk industry, to the detriment of Piedmontese silk exports.

In 1730, Victor Amadeus abdicated, once again creating a sensation in much of Europe.^[8] His son and successor, Charles Emanuel III (1730-73) and his chief minister, the Marquis of Ormea, initially found themselves drawn into the Bourbon camp, since France and Spain (about whose ambitions the Court of Turin was increasingly anxious) were determined to assault the Emperor in Italy, while Britain refused to intervene. During the War of the Polish Succession (1733-38), Charles Emanuel conquered Milan, but was obliged to return most of it at the peace, which was forced on his reluctant allies by the French king, Louis XV, and his chief minister, Cardinal Fleury.

In the following War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), Charles Emanuel's situation resembled that of his father in 1690 and 1701-3. He opted to ally with Britain and the Austrian Habsburgs at the Treaty of Worms in 1743, the former nation again paying a subsidy and also promising to secure for the king the port of Finale at the expense of the Republic of Genoa, the Savoyard state's neighbour and rival. The war, like those in the 1690s and 1700s, was very tough for Charles Emanuel and his subjects, the French as in previous conflicts occupying not only Nice and Savoy but also much of Piedmont itself. But Charles Emanuel remained loyal to his allies. Unfortunately for the king, however, the allies had enjoyed patchy success and so had to make some concessions in the peace of 1748. Charles Emanuel's objectives could not be given priority. So, while he recovered his occupied territories he did not secure Finale. Nice remained his only viable outlet to the Mediterranean.

Greater contacts between Britain and the Savoyard territories between 1690 and 1748 meant that for many British Grand Tourists, the route to Rome passed through Turin, where the most distinguished were often presented at Court; some, for example Henry Fiennes Clinton, Earl of Lincoln and Duke of Newcastle, even attended Turin's Accademia Reale, widely regarded as one of the best places in Europe to acquire the polish appropriate to a nobleman.^[9]

In the decades after 1748 the international situation changed to the disadvantage of the kingdom of Sardinia. For one thing, the Spanish Court abandoned its Italian ambitions and agreed with the Court of Vienna to accept the status quo in Italy, in the Treaty of Aranjuez (1752). More important was the "Diplomatic Revolution" of 1756. Since 1690, Victor Amadeus and

Charles Emanuel had exploited the antagonism between Austrian Habsburgs and French Bourbons to good effect. The alliance between those two old enemies threatened the Court of Turin and undermined its ability to exploit its strategic position in a European conflict. This would influence Savoyard policy, making it more cautious, up to the French Revolution.^[10] Finally, and despite the subsidies received from Britain during the recent war, the Savoyard state emerged from that conflict with a large debt. As far as Charles Emanuel was concerned, this ruled out expensive international adventures. Indicative of the reluctance to act, even before the Diplomatic Revolution, was Charles Emanuel's failure to give full vent to his anger at the breach of his sovereignty when in 1755 French troops arrested a French smuggler, Louis Mandrin, who was operating out of Savoy. The king's refusal to enter the Seven Years' War, against the advice of some of his ministers, helped to ensure that for the first time since 1690, a major European war did not extend to Italy. Indeed, Savoyard diplomats helped to mediate the peace of Paris (1763).

The King of Sardinia and his ministers put much energy into projects intended to stimulate and diversify the economy of the king's states, which was thought to be too dependent on silk; these included efforts to export Piedmontese wines to Britain through Nice, with a new road planned between Piedmont and Nice to facilitate this.^[11] These projects had made little progress before 1789, and in fact relations between Britain and Sardinia experienced some difficulties in this era. In 1773, at the start of the reign of Charles Emanuel's successor, Victor Amadeus III (1773-96) an affair blew up which seriously threatened the good relationship developed since 1690. An Englishman, Mearns, had entered the

employment of the King of Sardinia, removing with his family to Nice, where there was a growing community of British visitors and residents. His daughters were educated in a local convent and one of them subsequently declared her wish to convert to Catholicism, to the horror of her father. Mearns' assertion of his paternal authority clashed with Victor Amadeus's belief that he must respect the conversion.^[12] The issue escalated into a crisis, not least because ministers in London feared that their political opponents might exploit it in the press and in Parliament. In the end Victor Amadeus capitulated,^[13] giving some foundation to the very jaundiced assessment of the place of the kingdom of Sardinia in Europe by the then British minister in Turin: "My Lord, this country has imposed upon Europe long enough for its wisdom, its policy and its police. I am the most mistaken man in the world if ever it can make a great figure again".^[14] The episode also confirmed a number of British prejudices about the Savoyard state as authoritarian and bigoted and against its inhabitants: according to the same minister, "vanity is the rock a Piedmontese splits upon, ...angle with that bait and ...tickle him like a trout".^[15] Recollections of the Mearns episode may have contributed to the fact that in 1780, during the Gordon Riots in London, the chapel of the Sardinian embassy (in Sardinia Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields) was ransacked by a Protestant mob.^[16]

Those riots occurred against the background of an American War which, while Turin was excellently placed (as in the Seven Years' War) to secure intelligence regarding the fleets of both France and Spain,^[17] also strained relations between the Courts of London and Turin. Victor Amadeus remained neutral in a war which again, partly in consequence of this stance,

did not extend to Italy.^[18] He did not join the Armed Neutrality as Catherine the Great pressed him to do, but did feel that he must allow American ships into his ports at a time when many European sovereigns were wondering whether Britain would survive as a major power.

In fact, relations with Britain remained good down to and beyond 1789, although that story – and the collapse of the Savoyard state in the face of the challenge of revolutionary France in the 1790s – must be read not in SP 92 but in the Foreign Office series that replaced the State Papers in 1782. It should be clear, however, from what has been outlined above, that while Britain's relations with the other Italian states – most notably Genoa, Tuscany, Naples, and Venice – cannot be ignored, a special relationship of sorts had developed between Britain and the kingdom of Sardinia in the eighteenth century, with important implications for the future of Italy.

NOTES

- ^[1] At one point, Victor Amadeus asked the English envoy to obtain a refuge in the neighbouring republic of Genoa for his wife and sons, Chetwynd to Hedges, 23 June and 4 July 1706, SP 92/27 ff. 347
- ^[2] The English minister in Turin feared that Victor Amadeus might "play us some scurvy trick" because of those fears, Chetwynd to the Earl of Dartmouth, 1 July 1711, SP 92/27 f. 458
- ^[3] See the French language accounts of Victor Amadeus's formal entry into Palermo in December 1713 and his coronation, in SP 92/27 ff. 645ff
- ^[4] See the petition of the Vaudois pastors to George I, 22 Mar. 1715, SP 92/27 f. 664-65
- ^[5] For Anne-Marie's awareness of her Stuart origins and attentions to English visitors to Turin, cf. Allen to Newcastle, 28 Aug. 1728, SP 92/33
- ^[6] Cf. Hedges to Tilson, 15 Feb. 1727 and same to Robinson, 8 Mar 1727, SP 92/32, f. 136, 158
- ^[7] Hedges to Delafaye, 14 June 1727, SP 92/32, f. 214
- ^[8] Cf. Edward Allen to the Duke of Newcastle, 3 and 30 Sept. 1730, SP 92/33, f. 450, 462
- ^[9] Villettes to Newcastle, 12, 14 and 21 Oct. 1739, SP 92/42. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* omits this detail of his career
- ^[10] Cf. Dutens to Egremont, 19 Dec. 1761 SP 92/68 and Poyntz to Chamier, 24 Nov. 1779, SP 92/82. The same point was made by other British ministers in Turin in this period
- ^[11] Cf. Mountstuart to Hillsborough, 8 March and 1 April 1780, SP 92/83
- ^[12] Lynch to Rochford, 11 September 1773, SP 92/77
- ^[13] The episode can be followed in the correspondence in SP 92/77
- ^[14] Lynch to Rochford, 6 Oct. 1773, SP 92/77
- ^[15] Lynch to Rochford, 26 Nov. 1774, SP 92/78
- ^[16] George III ordered his representative in Turin to express his great "sensibility" at this "infamous attack upon the Law of Nations in the person of one of his best and dearest allies", the Earl of Hillsborough to Lord Mountstuart, 13 June 1780, while the Sardinian minister in London estimated the damage to his chapel at almost £2,000, Marquis de Cordon to the Earl of Hillsborough, 9 Aug. 1780, both in SP 92/83
- ^[17] Cf. typically, Poyntz to Chamier, 2, 16, 23, 26 and 30 Dec. 1778, SP 92/82
- ^[18] For divisions among Victor Amadeus's ministers, some preferring to join the war, cf. Mountstuart to Hillsborough, 1 Jan 1780, SP 92/83

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