

Richard in Holland, 1461

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CONTACTS between England and the Low Countries (Friesland, Gelderland, Utrecht, Holland, Sealand, Brabant, Hainault and Flanders, all mentioned at one time or another in this period as separate 'nations') had of course been very extensive long before the middle of the fifteenth century. Since the earliest times conquering princes, marriageable princesses, invaders, refugees, traders, pirates, missionaries, mercenaries, ambassadors, spies, scholars and craftsmen had crossed the Narrow Seas, the interflow only increasing or diminishing as the needs of the moment, especially the economic and sometimes the whimsical needs of the lords on one or either side of the sea dictated.

In the fifteenth century the Low Countries (though not Friesland and Gelderland, and Utrecht only indirectly) were ruled by the French Valois dukes of Burgundy. These provinces formed the separate northern and wealthiest part of their dominions and trade contacts were both natural and necessary to England and this part of 'Burgundy' all through the middle ages, and no doubt the first cause of all other relations, but they have been either studied thoroughly (like those between England, the Low Countries and the Hanse), or not at all (like the ups and downs of trade with Burgundy in Richard III's time) and I am not competent to discuss them.

Personal relations between reigning houses of both countries, too, were frequent: marriages were often made (like those of Edward III with Philippa of Hainault and of Humphrey of Gloucester with Jacqueline of Bavaria) or—very often—planned (like that of Edmund of Langley with Margaret of Flanders, who in the end married John the Fearless, the second Valois duke of Burgundy, or of the future Henry V with one of John the Fearless' daughters) with various motives, but the actual effect of them was never as great as it might have been. Princes also offered each other, and lesser foreign lords, membership of their own order of chivalry and these ties were not without influence on their ideas and conduct.

Thirdly the geographical proximity of the 'parties beyond the sea' did make them an excellent place of refuge for Englishmen fleeing from justice or party strife, for example Thomas Becket in his time was welcomed in Flanders and Richard II's favourite, Robert de Vere, fled to Dordrecht and Utrecht and spent the rest of his life in these regions, living comfortably on money he had deposited in Bruges in advance. In 1450 the Duke of Suffolk was caught when on his way to Flanders and many more would go that way during later troubles.

In the fourth place the use of mercenaries and other military aid from across the sea was common in both countries: English archers were sought by Burgundian dukes—as well as by their enemies in Liège—and Burgundian handgunners and *petardiers* were prized as experts by English commanders. Henry V was aided by dozens of ships from Holland and Sealand. Edward III had sought and received assistance—men and ships from all parts of the Low Countries—when he sailed from Holland to take the kingdom of England into his hands.

Almost everything that happened to Richard III and Edward IV and everything they did in relation to the Low Countries, had happened before, had been done before and would be seen again.

In the 1450's the relations between the princes of France, Burgundy and the English factions of York and Lancaster were nicely balanced: Charles VII of France favoured his niece Margaret of Anjou and Lancaster; Philip the Good and the Dauphin supported the Yorkists, while Charles of Charolais was inclined to the Lancastrian side. All this was partly the outward sign of a conflict between generations¹—when the Dauphin and the Count of Charolais came to power they would both continue the policy of their fathers. In each case there were also other personal reasons: Charolais knew and felt himself to be, through his mother, a descendant of John of Gaunt; Philip and Henry VI are said to have detested each other since the treaty of Arras and relations between Philip and Charles of France were deteriorating because of numerous frontier incidents;² Charles VII himself was failing and French policy—or lack of it—was being made by Margaret of Anjou's family in competition with their enemies.³

In England the troubles between York and Lancaster were coming to a head. When after the first battle of St. Albans (22 May 1455) the Yorkists were in the ascendant again, the Earl of Warwick received the Captaincy of Calais as part of the spoils of victory, installed himself at Calais and, among other activities, began negotiations with Philip the Good about a marriage of York's son the Earl of March and Philip's niece, Katherine of Bourbon. This would have meant too great a commitment for Philip, however, and it would have ended the advantages of his having a foot in both the rival English camps. He refused, and the ambassadors moved on to France to try again there and sow some discord while they were about it.⁴

The internal problems of England were not solved by St. Albans: the existence of an incapable but still living King and the presence of Margaret of Anjou fighting for the rights of her young son made any real settlement between Lancaster and York impossible.⁵ The encounters at Blore Heath and

Ludford (September/October 1459) were indecisive. After the latter, which never became a battle because Warwick's Calais soldiers refused to fight against a reigning king, the Duchess of York and her two younger sons, George and Richard, were left behind, taken prisoner by the royal army and so, very passively, enter the records of history. The Yorkist leaders, returned from exile, managed to win the battle of Northampton (10 July 1460) and took possession of King and government. The Duke of York, having at last apparently made up his mind, actually claimed the throne. He was killed, however, in the north at the very end of the year 1460, and after this notable success for Queen Margaret, she, with her northern and Scottish forces began to move south, burning and plundering, fanning the latent differences between the north and the south into fierce hatred and so strengthening the support of the Yorkist cause in the southern part of the country.⁶

It was at this moment, shortly after York's death at Wakefield, that his two younger sons were sent across the sea for safety. As Sir George Buck later wrote:

'And then the Duchess of York, their mother, much fearing that her two sons could not be safe in any part of England, by reason the faction of Lancaster, after the slaughter of the Duke of York, was grown very insolent and also very strong and evil, and did bear a mortal hatred to the House of York, she secretly and suddenly conveyed her two sons, the Lord George Plantagenet and the Lord Richard Plantagenet, and out of this land, and sent them by shipping into the Low Countries, . . . , where they were very kindly and honourably received and were brought to Utrecht, the chief city then in Holland, where they had a liberal and princely education, the young Lord Richard being about the age of ten years'⁷

Utrecht, of course was not quite the 'chief city in Holland' where the Duke of Burgundy used to receive his most honoured and welcome guests, though Buck, apparently not knowing the sequel, would have us think so. It was not even part of the Duke's lands, but only, I believe, a safe place where, in the care of Philip's bastard son, David, Bishop of Utrecht, the boys could be 'kept' until more was known with certainty about their status and political value.⁸

The only near contemporary source is *The Great Chronicle* and it is a little confused.⁹ There are however some letters from Bishop David and from his city of Utrecht that prove at least that the children had indeed been there at one time.¹⁰ These letters are a few among the many that were written in 1468/9 by several continental princes and cities, asking the English King to release members of the Hanse and others who had been taken prisoner in retaliation for an outrage committed by the King of Denmark.

A copy of the first letter that concerns us is kept among the Hanse papers in the archives at Cologne.¹¹ It is undated because the lowest part of the page has been cut off, but the words: 'Duerstede XVII' are visible in the margin. There is an almost identical copy of this same letter in Kampen,¹² which is complete and dated: '*Ex castro meo de Duerstede xvii septembri Anno 14 lxviii*'. In both the same sentence occurs:

'Cumque, celeberrime princeps, germanis inclitis et insuper mercatoribus subditis vestre regie maiestatis, qui apud civitatem meam Traiectensem et alibi in dominiis meis aliquantulo tempore tam bellorum quam pacis regni vestri temporibus se receperunt, ego et subditi mei quantam potuerimus impenderimus humanitatem et si ampliore requisissent utique proposse impendissemus, suscepi admirationem cur is casus in meis sine culpa accederet subditis . . .' (But, most celebrated prince, because I and my subjects have, as far as we were able, given hospitality to [your] famous brothers and moreover to merchants, subjects of your royal majesty, who betook themselves to our city of Utrecht and elsewhere in our lands for a while in times of war as well as of peace in your kingdom, and if they needed it again, would give it again to the best of our ability, we are amazed that this happened to our subjects who have done no wrong . . .).

The other letters that mention George's and Richard's stay in Utrecht were written later: when Edward had made no response to David's efforts, the Bishop wrote once more (12 January 1469; this time without referring to the King's brothers)¹³ and to George and Richard themselves.¹⁴ This copy, too, is undated but followed immediately¹⁵ by a not identical but very similar one from the city of Utrecht to the same, which has: *'Scriptum nostro sub sigillo xvii mensis januarii anno Lxix'* The first of the two is addressed: *'Illustrissimo principi et domino domino Ritsardo klotsestrie duci, domino et consangwineo nostro'* and *'Illustri et magnifico principi et domino domino Georgio duci Eboracensi [sic] domino et consangwineo nostro'*, and contains the sentence:

'Cum autem, illustrissime princeps, ad vestram dominationem, quam apud nos ante tempora existentem ex bono affectu una cum subditis nostris libenter venerati sumus, singularem fiduciam habeamus, adeandem confugimus supplicesque exoramus: Dignetur celsitudo vestra una cum germano vestro Georgio Eboracensi duce illustrissimo aures regias parumper emulcere . . .' (However, illustrious prince, because we have singular confidence in your lordship, whom, when you were with us aforetime, we have willingly out of our love honoured together with our subjects, we turn to you and pray you as supplicants: that your highness together with your brother George, illustrious Duke of York, will deign to speak softly for a while to the royal ears . . .).

And the next letter, preceded by: *'Sequitur copia missive civitatis Traiectensis ad duces klosssestrie et Eboracensem'* has this:

'Cum autem, illustrissime princeps et domine germane, ad vestram maiestatem et magnificentiam, quam apud nos ante tempora existentem ex bono affectu iuxta nostre proutatis vires libenter venerati sumus et quantum possemus si casus occurrent veneraremur . . .' (However, illustrious prince and lord brother, because we have singular confidence in your majesty and magnificence, whom, when you were with us aforetime, we have out of our love honoured willingly according to our power and inclination and would honour again as far as we could if it befell again . . .') etc. as above.)

That the two brothers of Edward IV had at one time before 1468 been in a position to accept hospitality at Utrecht is clear and combining this with what other sources tell us, it must have been in the winter of 1461. ← ?

The only contemporary literary source which is quite clear about the fact that the boys were staying somewhere else in the Low Countries before they



came to the Duke of Burgundy's court and has some details, is Jacques du Clercq:

*'Durant le temps qu'il avoit sy grande guerre en Angleterre, . . . , le roy Edouard, duc d'York, avoit envoy  deux de ses freres, lesquels estoient josnes enfans de noeuf ou dix ans environ, en garde audit duc de Bourgogne en son pays de Hollande, lesquels y feurent certain espace de temps, puis les fait venir ledit duc grand honneur et les fiet festoyer.'*¹⁶

This story is explained by the fact that while George and Richard were having their 'princely education' their brother had been very active in England. At Mortimer's Cross (February 1461) he laid the foundation for his later reputation of never losing a battle; on 4 March he seated himself on the throne of England, which his father had only laid a hand on, and on 29 March he shattered Lancaster and especially the power of the Northern lords at the battle of Towton. By these two battles he established his position and quickly turned his brothers into honoured guests in Burgundy.

The news of Edward's taking of the throne on 4 March was known at Bruges on the ninth or slightly earlier,¹⁷ but apparently did not make Philip the Good change his attitude towards the 'children of York'. The news of Towton was rumoured at Calais on 3 April¹⁸ and on the same day unspecified news about England which had reached Middelburg, was brought to the Duke.¹⁹ Perhaps this was an early rumour of Towton and perhaps it was enough to make the Duke send to Utrecht, then or shortly afterwards. On the tenth this was known in London: 'It is reported among the English lords that the Duke of Burgundy is treating the brothers of the King with respect.'²⁰ This, I feel sure, refers to the *change* in Philip's attitude.

The boys arrived at Sluys on 9 April, accompanied by twenty-three persons and stayed for a week at the *Teste d'Or*,²¹ clearly to await confirmation of their brother's victory, which reached Bruges on 12 April at the latest.²² Even firmer news came on the sixteenth or thereabouts: Master Antonio, physician to Francesco Coppini, Papal Legate to England, who tells us this, adds: 'The brothers of the king are at Sluys, and are to come here *tomorrow or Saturday* after dinner. I have been asked by the English to go and accompany them as a mark of respect, on behalf of your lordship (the Legate). I shall do so, because it is my duty, although I have not been told, offering myself in your name to do such things as are honourable and lawful.'²³ As he is supposed to be writing on a Friday (17 April) this is a bit strange, but I have not seen the Italian/Latin and he may have meant: 'tomorrow i.e. Saturday'. Moreover, the dating of this latter does not agree with the accounts of the Duke of Burgundy,²⁴ according to which the boys lived at Bruges from the sixteenth. On that day they were fetched with ceremony from Sluys, not only accompanied by Master Antonio,²⁵ but also by 'Jehan, bastard de Renti . . . chevalier, premier maitre dostel de mondit seigneur et autres chevaliers et escuiers de sondit hostel.'²⁶

There are two other contemporary comments about their stay in Bruges. The first comes from the Milanese ambassador at the French court, writing from Bruges to his Duke:

'Since I wrote today the two brothers of King Edward have arrived, one eleven and the other twelve years of age. The duke, who is most kind in everything, has been to visit them at their lodging, and showed them great reverence.'¹⁷

The second piece of information comes from the town accounts of Bruges:

'Van eenen banquette ghegheven onzen gheduchten heere ende den kyndren van Jorck up tscopenhuus, daer de joncvrauwen van der stede ghebeden waren, ende daer ooc vele andre edele heeren van ons voors. gheduchts heeren bloede ende rade waren . . .' (For a banquet given to our dread lord and the children of York in the aldermen's hall, where the ladies of the city were invited and where also many other noble lords of our aforesaid dread lord's blood and council were present . . .)¹⁸

In the first rejoicing at the victory and the new show of friendship there may have been talk of one of the boys marrying Charles of Charolais' daughter Mary,¹⁹ but, as before, on the earlier occasion when Warwick had tried to ally the houses of York and Burgundy by marriage, this may have gone too far for Philip. He did, however, resume active diplomatic relations with the house of York.²⁰

The Duke of Burgundy himself left Bruges on 22 April to go and celebrate *'la feste de sa toison dor'* in St. Omer. The princes stayed another two days in Bruges at the Duke's expense and then, by way of Nieuwpoort, Duinkerken, Bergues and Gravelines, they were brought to Calais, accompanied by *'philippe bastard de brabant, glaude de toulangeon, glaude de rochebaron et plusieurs autres gentilz hommes et officiers delostel.'*²¹ They were at Calais on the twenty-eighth, quickly brought to England and feasted at Canterbury.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. M. R. Thielemans, *Bourgogne et Angleterre, relations politiques et économiques entre les Pays-Bas Bourguignons et l'Angleterre*, Bruxelles 1966, p.373.
2. P. M. Kendall, *Louis XI*, London 1971, p.97.
3. *ibid.*, p.97.
4. Thielemans *op. cit.*, p.372; Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, London 1972, p.45-6.
5. B. P. Wolfe, *Henry VI*, London 1981, p.312.
6. C. Ross, *Edward IV*, London 1974, p.30.
7. Sir George Buck, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. A. N. Kincaid, Gloucester 1979, p.17.
8. Robert de Vere in 1394 was equally unwelcome and told by Duke Albert to leave Holland. He, too, settled at Utrecht.
9. *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A. D. Thomas and I. D. Thornley, London 1938, p.195: 'The duchesse of york modyr unto the fforenamyd Erle of march, fferyng the ffortune of that world sent ovyr the See hyr yonger Sonys George & Rychard unto a towne In Flaundes namyd uteryk, where they Restid a whyle.'

10. The fact that they stayed at Utrecht is mentioned by several late chroniclers, apart from Buck and *The Great Chronicle*. John Stow, *The Annales or General Chronicle of England* . . . , London 1615, p.414: 'The Dutches of Yorke, seeing hir husband and sonne slaine, and not knowing what should succede to her eldest sonne, sent her two youngest sonnes George and Richard, over the Sea to the Cittie of Utrich in Almaigne, where they were of Phillip duke of Burgoigne well received, and so remained there till their brother had got the throne'. C. L. Kingsford, *Chronicles of London*, reprint Dursley 1977, p.174 (Vitellius A XVI, f. 120 v.): 'Thenne the Duchesse of York, heryng the losse of that ffeeld, sent ovir the See hir yong Sones George and, Richard, which went unto Vtryk'. Of modern writers Thielemans (*op. cit.*, p.379), who in passing gives a lot of details about their stay in Flanders, does not seem to realize that they did not arrive there directly from England (nor is she surprised that they came to Burgundy more than a week after Towton), although she does give du Clercq (see note 16 below) as a reference. Kendall (*Richard III*, London 1972) puts their departure in the middle of February, when indeed Queen Margaret's forces were threatening London (p.41-3), makes them arrive 'after an interval' at Bruges around the 18 April, and then, as an afterthought adds: 'This fine welcome, however, came two months after they had reached Burgundy' and that they had been at Utrecht. He gives no reference. M. A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjured Clarence*, Gloucester 1980, p.16, n.15 uses *The Great Chronicle*.
11. Stadt Archiv Köln, Hanse IV, f. 85 v. (2).
12. Archief der Gemeente Kampen, Oud-Archief Kampen I. nr. 11, f. 342.
13. Stadt Archiv Köln, Hanse IV, f. 85 (1).
14. *ibid.*, f. 86 (1).
15. *ibid.*, f. 86 (2).
16. Jacques du Clercq, *Mémoires 1448-1467*, ed. F. A. F. T. de Reiffenberg, Bruxelles 1823 (4 vols.), vol. 3, p.121; Philippe de Commines has seen them at the Burgundian court (*Memoirs*, Harmondsworth 1972, p.309).
17. *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts relating to English affairs existing in the archives and collections of Milan*, ed. A. B. Hinds, London 1912, p.56, no. 72.
18. *ibid.*, p.67-8, no. 83.
19. Lille (France), Archives Departementales du Nord (A.D.N.), Chambre des Comptes série B, Recette Générale des Finances no. 2040, f. 235 v.
20. CSP Milan, *op. cit.* n.17, p.67, no. 82.
21. Thielemans, *op. cit.* n.1, p.379, n.80; A.D.N., B 2040, f. 266 r. and v.: Paid to 'bauduin du moustier hoste de la teste dor en la ville de l'escluse et a jehan baiart receveur dudit lieu la somme de soixante douze livres . . . pour le defraielement et despenses de bouche de messeigneurs george et richart freres enfans de feu monseigneur le duc diork . . . '.
22. CSP Milan, p.67-8, no. 83.
23. *ibid.*, p.72, no. 88.
24. A.D.N., B 2040, f. 266 v.
25. . . . and not the Papal Legate himself (as Hicks *op. cit.*, p.17, and following him C. Ross, *Richard III*, London 1982, p.5), who was at St. Omer (CSP Milan, p.71, no. 87).
26. A.D.N., B 2040, f. 266 v.
27. CSP Milan, p.73, no. 90.
28. L. Gilliodt van Severen, *Inventaire des archives de Bruges, 1248-1497*, Bruges 1871-8, vol. 5, p.531.
29. CSP Milan, p.67, no. 82.
30. Thielemans, p.380-1.
31. A.D.N., B 2040, f. 267.