THE CIVIL-MILITARY CONFLICT IN BRITISH WEST FLORIDA, 1763-1783

by

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In 1756, during the Seven Years War, George Dunk, Lord Halifax, president of England's Board of Trade, created the office of Commander in Chief of British forces in North America to which he named John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun. No doubt, Halifax believed that creation of the new position would improve the efficiency of the English military effort in America. It would eliminate the chaotic arrangement in which each colonial governor controlled the military within his own province and replace it with centralized control by a single Commander in Chief. In the short term Halifax may have been right, but in the long-run his "improvement" created as much chaos as it cured, if not more. Loudoun's commission gave him broad but ill-defined powers over all military forces in North America, and the new Commander in Chief mistakenly believed that it abrogated all of the governors' powers over the military. The powers of the governors were never revoked, however; the home government merely requested that governors cooperate with the Commander in Chief. During the war years, most of the governors did cooperate, though some balked at having to surrender some of their power to the Commander in Chief. Loudoun was recalled in 1757 for inaction against the French and replaced by General Jeffery Amherst. But after the war, when London decided to keep a large military force in North America and to continue the office of Commander in Chief,

problems with the governors began.[1]

Creation of the office of Commander in Chief was part of the British government's policy to tighten its hold over its North American colonies. Since the end of the English Civil War the colonial military establishment had been under civilian control. Experience with the early Stuarts had shown Englishmen the danger inherent in an independent military command, and this suspicion of the military had extended to the new world. The governor of each colony was, therefore, given the title of "Captain-General and Governor in Chief," and their instructions from the Crown gave them control over all military forces in their provinces, except in times of war, and the power to call out the militia in times of emergency. A series of colonial wars in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had, however, repeatedly shown the militias' inability to defend the colonies, and Britain had been forced to send regulars to help out. The numbers of soldiers sent to the colonies during these wars had been small, though, and

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[1] John W. Shy, Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 149; Stanely Pargellis, Lord Loudoun in North America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933; reprint ed., Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1956), p. 53-55, 260-68.

they had remained under the control of the governors.[2]

The Seven Years War finally proved that this system was utterly inadequate to defend America. When British regulars had been sent to the colonies before the 1750's, the home government had forgotten them. The government had assumed that colonial governors would take care of the garrisons, but the governors had been more interested in using the army for patronage purposes than in worrying about its condition. When the Seven Years War broke out, the condition of the military was deplorable, and after the Braddock disaster, the Earl of Halifax, recognized the necessity of immediate reforms. One of those reforms was the decision to appoint a Commander in Chief to organize the war effort in North America.[3]

The decision to keep this office after the war had several early critics, and those writers clearly recognized a problem that the new arrangement introduced into the colonial system. In his The Administration of the Colonies, Thomas Pownall complained that the office of

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[2]Jack P. Greene, "'A Posture of Hostility': A Reconsideration of Some Aspects of the Origins of the American Revolution." Preachers and Politicians: Two Essays on the Origins of the American Revolution (Worcester, Massachusetts: American Antiquarian Society, 1977), p. 5-46; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 3, 38; W. Calvin Smith, "Mermaids Riding Alligators: Divided Command on the Southern Frontier, 1776-1778," Florida Historical Quarterly 54 (April 1976): 443; Stephen Saunders Webb, The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1569-1681 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. xv-xxi, 461-66.

[3]Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 37, 57.

Commander in Chief encroached on the power and prerogatives of royal governors. As a former governor of Massachusetts, Pownall realized that a permanent military force was important for the defense of North America, but he also wanted to return military control to the royal governors, who by their commissions were "Captain-General in their province." Moreover, Pownall was one of the first to recognize that creation of the office of Commander in Chief created dual authority over the military, because the powers of the governors over the military had not been revoked in conjunction with the creation of this office. And Pownall recognized that this dual authority could create a serious problem - who would ultimately control the military force in a colony, its governor or the Commander in Chief?[4]

During the past two hundred years, few historians have followed Pownall and explored this problem. John W. Shy in his excellent book Toward Lexington uses the problem of divided authority to emphasize the point that the British government did not have a definite policy for the army in North America. Shy furthermore seeks to show how this lack of a policy led Americans to misunderstand British intentions concerning the role of the army and to perceive it as a threat to their freedom. Shy, however, does not concern himself with the problems that divided authority caused within colonial governments but only

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[4]John W. Shy, "The Spectrum of Imperial Possibilities: Henry Ellis and Thomas Pownall, 1763-1775," in A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence, edited by John W. Shy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 50-51, 54-55.

how the problem effectively destroyed military preparedness in North America. The present study is an attempt to show how the problem of divided authority hampered and even crippled governmental efficiency in the American colonies. Tightening imperial control required efficient, cooperative, and stable colonial governments, but the battle for control of military forces in North America at various times disrupted the governments of almost every colony in which royal troops were stationed. These disputes had a tendency to weaken colonial government and were partially responsible for making the enforcement of imperial control difficult, if not impossible. Thus, the problem of divided authority should be viewed as more than just an example of Britain's inability to coordinate colonial military policy; it was one of the many forces that weakened imperial control over the colonies and left Britain unprepared for the crisis of the American Revolution.

West Florida provides an excellent example of how the problem of divided authority could cripple royal government in a colony. Because it was a new colony, the British government wanted to encourage immigration to Florida and to do so had to offer settlers protection against Florida's Indians and Latin neighbors. For most of the colony's existence there was a large military force present. Moreover, because the colony was so young, it did not have a powerful general assembly. Thus, disputes between the governors of West Florida and its military commanders were for the most part unencumbered by bickering between the assembly and governors. Unfortunately, West Florida historians

have not explored the effect of the disputes on the political, economic, and social development of the colony. The major studies of West Florida, Cecil Johnson's British West Florida, 1763-1783 and Clinton Howard's The British Development of West Florida, 1763-1769, mainly concentrate on the early social and political development of the colony, and only use the civil-military conflict as an interesting sidelight to the colony's history without investigating its effect on the royal government. Even the study of West Florida during the Revolution, J. Barton Starr's Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida, rarely addresses the problem of divided authority in the colony.

West Florida, however, was not the only colony to suffer from civil-military problems. East Florida, Quebec, and almost every colony where royal troops were stationed faced similar disputes. But the problem in West Florida split that colony like no other, competition for control over its garrison destablized the entire colony. This was one reason both for West Florida's slow social and economic development under Britain and for its inability to fend off the Spanish attack in 1779. West Florida can also be seen as an example of how the problem of divided authority eventually undermined imperial control and weakened London's ability to confront the crisis of the 1760's and 1770's.[5]

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[5]For an excellent overview of the problem of civil-military authority, see Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 148-190.

Chapter II

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH WEST FLORIDA

With the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, Britain won undisputed supremacy over the eastern half of North America. The treaty of Paris gave Britain all French territory east of the Mississippi River, except for New Orleans and the delta region, which had been given to Spain, and two small fishery islands off Canada. Spain had also been forced to part with Florida. The British colonies were no longer hemmed in by their Latin adversaries.

Since the early seventeenth century, Britain had been trying to expand its own colonies and to expell both the French and Spanish from North America. Britain especially wanted a colony along the Gulf of Mexico in order to protect the southern flank of its mainland colonies and to increase their trade with the Spanish colonies. Therefore, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Britain increasingly focused its interest on the deteriorating Spanish Empire. About Spain J. Leitch Wright has written, "At home her economy was in a miserable condition; here leading manufacturing and commercial centers were decaying; her navy was shattered; her population was decreasing." Britain realized these weaknesses and began a contest for control of the Gulf Coast, a contest that Spain showed little enthusiasm to enter.[1]

British attempts to destroy Spanish power in Florida during the

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[1] J. Leitch Wright, Jr., Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), p. 11-22, 47.

From Johnson, British West Florida 1763-1783.

first half of the eighteenth century failed. Ironically, when Florida and the Gulf Coast finally did fall to the English during the Seven Years War, Spain had to give them up without firing a shot in their defense. The war for Florida was fought in the Caribbean, and for Spain, which entered the war late, it was a disaster. Havana fell to British forces, and Spanish leaders felt that they had to recover it at any cost. Thus, when the British offered to exchange Havana for Florida, Spanish negotiators jumped at the chance. Although Spain did not want to give up Florida, because it helped guard the passage of the flota, the Spanish treasure fleet, the British pointed out that Britain already controlled the Bahama Islands and Channel and could intercept the flota any time it wanted. Moreover, the Spanish realized that without Havana, the great terminal of the Indies, Florida would be useless anyhow. Reluctantly, the Spanish agreed to British terms.[2]

There was a great public outcry against the acquisition of Florida instead of Havana, but the British government had several reasons for divesting itself of Havana. It would be more economical for Britain to send ships to Spanish Havana from the mainland colonies than to face the expense of making Havana a base from which to trade with both Mexico and the Indies. Furthermore, one of Cuba's staple crops was

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[2]Ibid., p. 4, 66; Richard Pares, War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939; reprint ed., London: Frank Cass and Co., 1963), p. 593, 598; Robert L. Gold, Borderland Empires in Transition: The Triple-Nation Transfer of Florida (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), p. 15; Zenab E. Rashed, The Peace of Paris 1763 (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1951), p. 180-183.

sugar, and British sugar producers feared that additional production within the empire would depress prices in the British market. There were also real benefits to be gained through the acquisition of Florida. For those in the government with a bent toward expansion, Florida was the fulfillment of imperial ambitions. For those whose interest in the Gulf was mainly commercial, the Floridas, especially West Florida, could be used as a center for the West Indian trade, in which Britain would exchange manufactured goods for Spanish bullion. Mobile in West Florida might deflect the native Indian trade from New Orleans and destroy it as a commercial rival. Lord Bute, the British Prime Minister, although he had to put pressure on the cabinet to accept his wishes, was more than willing to exchange Havana for Florida. Therefore, in 1763, Florida passed into British hands, but its ultimate value to England depended on how much effort the Mother Country was willing to expand on developing its new colony.[3]

There was only two major settlements in West Florida, Mobile and Pensacola. Mobile, the more important of the two, was larger and better established and even had a brick and stone fort. It was also

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[3]Pares, War and Trade, p. 481; Rashed, The Peace of Paris, p. 183; Robert R. Rea, "British West Florida: Stepchild of Diplomacy," in Eighteenth-Century Florida and Its Borderlands, ed. Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975), p. 68; Robert R. Rea, "Lieutenant Colonel James Robertson's Mission to the Floridas, 1763," Florida Historical Quarterly 53 (July 1974): 33; J. Barton Starr, Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1976), p. 2; Peter J. Hamilton, Colonial Mobile (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, and Company, 1910; revised., ed. Charles G. Summersell, University: University of Alabama Press, 1976), p. 222.

important for commercial interests, because it controlled the Alabama basin and the fertile lands of the Tombigbee, Pearl, Pasacogula, and Mississippi Rivers. For the military, it could be used as a base of operations from which to control the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley. Mobile, therefore, soon became important in Britain's two-year plan to regain the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys from the Indians of Pontiac's uprising. Pensacola was smaller and isolated in the southwest corner of the province. But because of its fine harbor, it could be used to exploit the Spanish trade, and the British Crown chose Pensacola for the capital of West Florida in October 1763.[4]

Almost as soon as the peace treaty had been signed, Britain began to transfer forces from the Caribbean to occupy West Florida. Admiral Augustus Keppel, then commanding the British Caribbean squadron at Port Royal, Jamaica, was in charge of the operation and wanted to send Colonel James Erskine to Mobile with around 2,500 troops. Erskine had recently participated in the return of Martinique to the French, and Keppel hoped that he had learned enough there to carry out the transfer of Mobile smoothly. Keppel's plan was dropped on July 18, 1763, when General Lord Jeffery Amherst, Commander in Chief in North America,

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[4]Cecil Johnson, "Expansion in West Florida, 1770-1779," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 20 (March 1934): 481-82; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 223; Clinton N. Howard, "The Military Occupation of British West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 17 (January 1939): 187; Starr, Tories, p. 1.

ordered Major Robert Farmar, with the 22nd and 34th Regiments instead.[5]

Farmar and his regiments left Port Royal in August and arrived off Mobile two months later. On landing they found the fort at Mobile, renamed Fort Charlotte, in deplorable condition. It suffered from frequent flooding, which caused the brickwork to disintegrate, and the whole citadel needed urgent repairs. Gun platforms had rotted; glass had been knocked out of the windows; brick and stone work had become overgrown with weeds; support houses needed to be rebuilt, and even the front gate had been unhinged. Most of these defects could soon be remedied, but keeping the fort repaired would be a constant problem for the military.[6]

The fort at Pensacola was almost as dilapidated as the one at Mobile. The stockades were rotten; houses in the town were made of bark, and almost none had chimneys. When the Royal Americans (60th Regiment) under Lieutenant Colonel Augustine Prevost, arrived on August 6, 1763, the men suffered terribly from the lack of housing; they were housed in "miserable bark huts without any sort of fire places or windows, void of every necessary utensil." In conjunction with the occupation of West Florida, troops of the 9th Regiment were sent to

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[5]Charles J. Price and Claude C. Sturgill, "The Role of the British Navy in The Landings In West Florida in 1763 As Revealed in The Letters of Captain William Bayne," The Alabama Review 30 (January 1977): 52-54.

[6]Rea, "Robertson's Mission," p. 43; Clinton N. Howard, "The Interval of Military Government in West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 17 (January 1939): 19-21.

St. Augustine under the command of Major Francis Ogilive.[7]

As the British completed the occupation of the Floridas, they also established a chain of command. The commanders at Mobile, St. Augustine, and Pensacola, Farmar, Ogilive, and Prevost respectively, each received instructions concerning their conduct during the transfer of the Floridas and the establishment of a garrison in each port. Unfortunately, the wording of these instructions were not exactly the same; there were important differences in the instructions concerning the chain of command. These instructions told the commanders whose orders they were to follow and to whom they were to send their monthly returns (regimental strength reports), but they disagreed on who was to receive these monthly returns and who could give orders to the military commanders.[8]

Farmar and Ogilive received similar orders. Both commanders were to follow the orders of the Commander in Chief, Sir Jeffery Amherst, and to send their reports to Amherst, his adjutant general, and the Secretary of War. Neither man was ever told that a governor had

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[7]Prevost to [?], September 4, 1763, Dunbar Rowland ed., Mississippi Provincial Archives, English Dominion, 10 vols., Jackson, Mississippi, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1: 15-16. Hereafter cited as M.P.A.; Volume 1 in the series is published, (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1911), and all page numbers refer to that edition, while for volumes 2 to 10 all pagination refers to the transcript edition at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi; Robert R. Rea, "Graveyard for Britons, West Florida 1763-1781," Florida Historical Quarterly 47 (April 1969): 345; Mark F. Boyd, "From A Remote Frontier," Florida Historical Quarterly 19 (January 1941): 180.

[8]Rea, "Robertson's Mission," p. 33-35.

control over them. The problem developed in West Florida because the commanders never received orders to follow the commands of a governor and thus did not believe that the governor had any authority over them.[9]

Prevost's instructions did contain the order that he "correspond with . . . such persons as His Majesty had appointed . . . Governor of Florida, under whose Orders you are to put yourself, as soon as he shall be Declared." This line in Prevost's instructions followed the common practice outlined in the "Warrant for settling the Rank and Precedence in North America, 17 December 1760," which stated that in military command, governors of royal colonies rank second, behind the Commander in Chief, so it is odd that neither Farmar's nor Ogilive's instructions included that clause. Unfortunately, Prevost, the senior ranking officer in the colony, seems to have left the colony either before or soon after the governor's arrival, and his replacement, judging from his actions, did not believe that the governor had any authority over him. Thus, the only man who received instructions to follow the orders of a governor and who might have been a moderating influence in the disputes, left the colony soon after arriving.[10]

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[9]Egremont, Instructions to Officers Commanding Gage's [and] Cavandish's Regiments, at The Mobile, May 21, 1763, M.P.A., 1: 131-32; [William] Keppel, Instructions to Farmar and Officers of the Corps destined to Mobile, July 19, 1763, M.P.A., 1: 128; Keppel to Ogilive, July 19, 1763, M.P.A., 1: 127-28.

[10]Keppel, Instructions for Lt. Col. Prevost of His Majesty's 60th of Royal American Regiment of Foot at Havana, July 3, 1763, M.P.A., 1: 130; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 158.

In addition to the three garrison commanders, the British government also appointed a civilian governor, George Johnstone, the fourth son of a Scottish baron and a post captain in the Royal Navy. Johnstone arrived armed with a commission that granted him certain authority over the military. It granted him:

> authority to Levy, Arm, Muster, Command, and Employ all persons whatsoever residing within our said Province and as Occasion shall serve them, to March, Embark, or Transport from one place to another for the resisting or Withstanding of all Enemies, Pirates and Rebels both at land and at sea and to transport Such forces to any of Our plantations in America if Necessity Shall require for the Defense of the Same against the Indians or Attempts of any of Our Enemies, Pirates & Rebels (If there shall be Occasion) to pursue and Prosecute in or out of the Limits of Our Province and Plantations . . .

In the months that followed, Johnstone used these powers in an attempt to gain authority over the military forces in West Florida. This attempt disrupted the political and economic development of the colony.[11]

Given the failure to define the powers of the governor over the military at the beginning, problems between civil and military authorities would continue. These problems led to an almost total breakdown of the government in British West Florida.

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[11] James A. Padgett, ed., "Commissions, Orders, and Instructions Issued to George Johnstone, British Governor of West Florida, 1763-1767," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 21 (October 1938): 1028-1030.

Chapter III

THE JOHNSTONE YEARS

Probably through the influence of Lord Bute, George Johnstone was appointed governor on November 21, 1763, though he did not arrive in Pensacola until eleven months later. Meanwhile, the colony waited for its new governor, hoping that his arrival would inaugurate the growth and prosperity England had promised.[1]

At first, Johnstone seemed an intelligent and capable leader and he quickly initiated a variety of policies designed to improve the colony. He ordered Elias Durnford, the colony's royal engineer, to survey Pensacola and to lay it out with regular blocks and streets. Johnstone also constructed a road between Mobile and Pensacola. But, his most important act was convincing the Board of Trade to raise Florida's northern boundary to the confluence of the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers (near present day Vicksburg). Johnstone claimed incorrectly that the original boundary excluded Mobile from the colony. Shifting the boundary did not affect Mobile, which was already in Florida, but it did open up the fertile lands around Natchez. From this start it looked as if the colony would begin to prosper.[2]

Ruling with the governor was a lieutenant goveror, who had not yet

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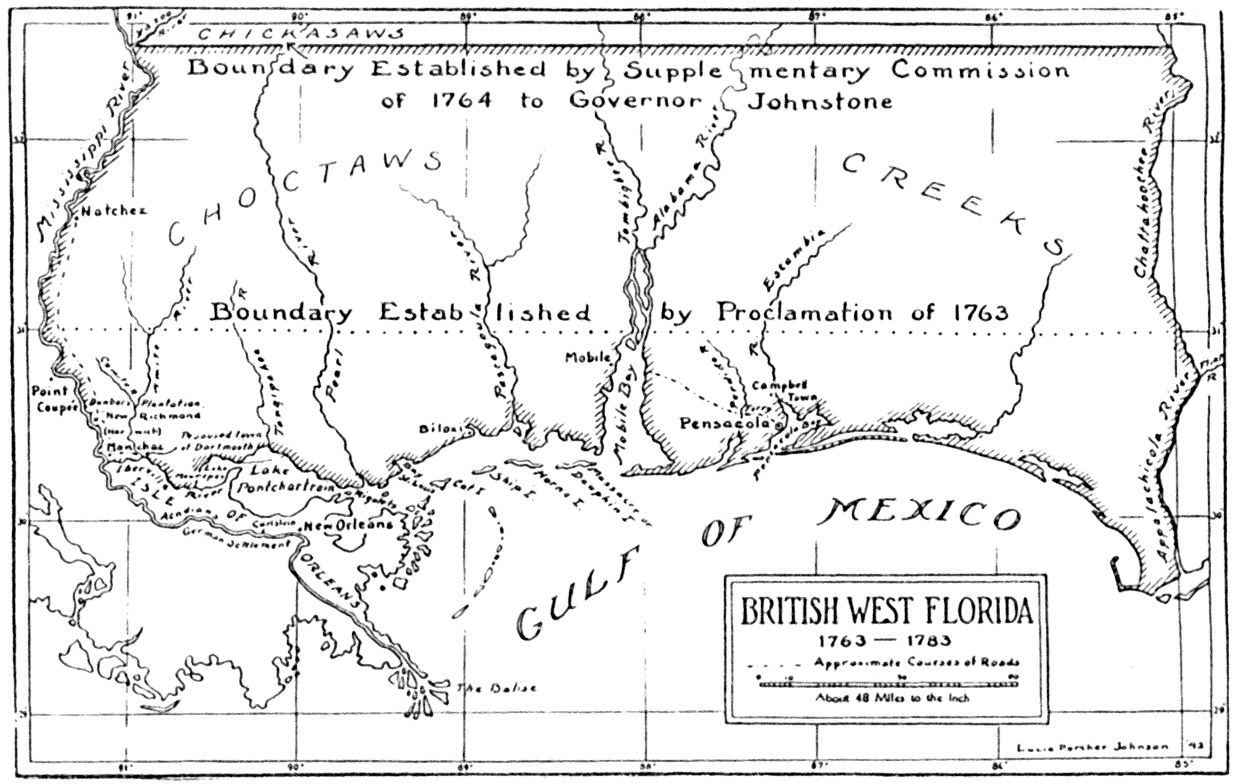
[1] Padgett, "Commissions," p. 1020-1030.

[2] Howard, "Military Occupation," p. 181; Clinton N. Howard, "Colonial Pensacola: The British Period, Part. I," Florida Historical Quarterly 19 (October 1940): 110; Cecil Johnson, "Pensacola in the British Period: Summary and Significance." Florida Historical Quarterly 37 (1958-59): 226; R. F. A. Fabel, "Governor George Johnstone of British West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 54 (April 1976): 504.



From Johnson, British West Florida, 1763-1783.

arrived, and a bicamerial legislature - the lower house an elected assembly, and the upper an appointed council. The assembly met only between 1766 and 1771 and once in 1778. Besides its own arguments with the governor, it had little to do with relations between the civil and military authorities. The members of the West Florida Council were usually appointed by the governor, and Johnstone was able to control it. Thus, in the disputes the Council would support Johnstone.[3]

Upon his arrival, Johnstone found the colony in deplorable condition. There was a shortage of staple and consumer goods with very little cash circulating while merchant's inventories rotted on the shelves. The governor claimed this was due to a lack of cash and trade, and he wrote the Board of Trade: "Unless Regts. are sent out [and] the Spanish trade opened up as formerly[,] I see little prospect of Prosperity to this colony which might otherwise become one of the most useful [and] opulent." Johnstone also wanted to clear the Iberville River of debris in order to establish direct communication between Mobile and the Mississippi. This, he hoped, would eliminate the necessity of going through New Orleans, where the English were "entirely at the Mercy of the French," it would also cut New Orleans off from the Indian trade. This last idea was a secondary consideration because Johnstone did not believe that the Indian trade would be as profitable as the trade with Spain. With the above plans, he hoped to turn the

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[3]Cecil Johnson, British West Florida, 1763-1783 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942; reprint ed., Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), p. 93; Johnson, "Pensacola," p. 264.

dismal economic situation around. Johnstone also had problems with the Indians and sickness among the troops. But the most pressing problem, at least in his mind, was control of the colony's military forces. This eventually overshadowed all other problems.[4]

Johnstone believed that through his commission he should have complete control over all military forces in the colony. The commanders at Pensacola and Mobile disagreed with this observation, because their instructions indicated that they were solely under the orders of the Commander in Chief. This problem was not unique to West Florida. East Florida and Quebec faced similar troubles.

If Johnstone had a honeymoon in office, it came to an abrupt end just two weeks after his arrival as troubles arose over command of the forces at Pensacola. Johnstone's opponent in this was Captain Robert Mackinen of the 35th Regiment; this unit had arrived in Pensacola in November 1763. Mackinen was acting commander of the Pensacola garrison and member of the Council, and he refused to turn command of the garrison over to Johnstone.[5]

As the debate opened, Johnstone wrote to Mackinen: "It appears to me by His Majesty's Commission which I had the Honor of Transmitting to you . . . That I am 'Captain-General and Governor in Chief' in and

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[4]Johnstone to [The] Board of Trade, October 31, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 152-53; Farmar to Secretary of War, January 24, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 7-17; John D. Born, "Governor Johnstone and Trade in British West Florida, 1764-1767," Wichita State University Bulletin 44 (May 1968): 4.

[5]Johnstone to Pownall, November 9, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 158; Born, "Johnstone and Trade," p. 4; Johnson, West Florida, p. 25.

over the Province of West Florida." The governor used his royal instructions of November 1763 to claim power over the military. Along with his authority to command "all persons whatsoever residing within our said Province," the instructions allowed Johnstone to build or dismantle any fortification within the colony. He used this clause to claim that if he had the right to build or tear down forts, he should have command over the troops within them.[6]

The heart of Johnstone's letter stated:

> It is a known Military maxem [sic] that, whoever is Governor must give the Parole [sign, countersign] of the Garrison, and whoever gives the Parole, has the Right to the Report of the Guard.
>
> Imperium im Imperio cannot exist in a Commonwealth much less within the Fortification of a Garrison, either You must have command of the fort; or I; this is indubitable.

Johnstone's argument that either he or Mackinen should have sovereignty in the colony was based on the British tradition that there could be only one ultimate and supreme power in a state. Johnstone believed that his commission gave him this supreme power in West Florida, and that it was impossible to divide it between the governor and an army commander. He contended that "whenever a Military force exists on that footing all Civil forms are a farce."[7]

Mackinen, however, believed that the military was "independent of

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[6]Johnstone to Mackinen, November 3, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 158-61.

[7]Ibid.; Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1967), p. 198-229.

Civil Authority." He delayed several days before writing back and then related to Johnstone an order he had received from the Secretary of War. It stated, "On Your arrival in the Continent of North America, you shall follow all such orders as you shall from time to time recieve [sic] from the Commander in Chief of His Majesty's forces in North America." To Mackinen, this meant that he was solely under the command of General Thomas Gage, who had succeeded Amherst as Commander in Chief in November 1763. However, because Johnstone's commission did grant him some authority over the military in times of emergency, Mackinen was willing to perform any service that Johnstone required as long as it was an emergency and for the good of the King's service. He also wrote that he was acting under orders from a superior and wished that the dispute could be solved.[8]

Johnstone was not satisfied with this defense. Mackinen had not answered Johnstone's basic complaint: "either you must be Governor or I; there cannot be two in the same garrison." So the next day, Johnstone continued his attack on Mackinen asserting that the governor was the supreme power in the colony. Writing to ask Mackinen, Johnstone demanded to know:

> . . . Who is Now Governor in this Garrison?
>
> Who is now answerable for the Defense of this Fort? and in Consequence who has the Distribution of the Guards and Posting of the Centuries [sic] as may be thought most essential for the First committed to him.

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[8]Mackinen to Johnstone, November 6, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 162-64; Johnson, "Expansion in West Florida," p. 481; Johnstone to Mackinen, November 3, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 158-161.

> Who has now the Direction of the King's Houses within the Fort?
>
> . . . Who has Now the Ultimate Direction of the Artillery and Stores, and distributing them through the Province, and seeing they are properly Lodged, and that the Officer appointed to take charge of them to do their duty?
>
> . . . Am I or any one in West Florida entitled to the General Monthly Returns of the State of the Troops, Stores, Ammunition, Provisions, and Publick [sic] Works?

Johnstone concluded by telling Mackinen that West Florida "is the First settlement of any colony, . . . where somebody on the spot had not the general Command of the Whole Military force within the Province."[9]

Mackinen, desperately trying to smooth over the problem without surrendering his authority over the garrison, answered that:

> . . . you are the Governor of this Province, and . . . the Defense of the Fort will be in you;
>
> . . . The King's Troops, when they march into a Garrison are entitled to proper Quaters; after they are Quater'd, I make no pretence to the disposal of any house.
>
> . . . The direction of the Artillery and Stores is entirely under your Excellency's Disposal.
>
> . . . The care of the Provisions is a Civil branch to which I have no claim, . . . I must repeat . . . Whatever assistance you may want from the 35th Regiment, shall be ready on the shortest notice.
>
> . . . I shall with pleasure give you a monthly State of the Troops in Garrison for your own Satisfaction and that of the Council.
>
> I must still remain in opinion that I cannot withdraw Myself from the Command of General Gage, nor be

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[9]Johnstone to Mackinen, November 7, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 164-65.

> answerable for doing so without an order for it from proper authority.

From a quick reading it might seem that Mackinen submitted to the governor, but that was not the case. Mackinen never admitted that Johnstone was in command of the garrison, only that he was governor of the province. Nor did Mackinen acknowledge the governor had any authority over him, only Gage did.[10]

This first dispute shows clearly the problem of divided command. The issue centered around who would rule in the colony, the military or the governor. Mackinen was following his orders only to take commands from the Commander in Chief. Time after time he wrote that he was willing to serve for "the Good of the Province and his Majesty's Service in General," just as General Keppel's instructions directed. But it is also apparent that Johnstone was not willing to acquiesce his right of command over the military. The issue remained unresolved for some time. But, for the moment, Johnstone had more pressing problems with the neighboring Indians to worry about.[11]

It was at an Indian congress in 1765 that a problem flared up with Major Robert Farmar, commander of the Mobile garrison. It seems that Farmar and Johnstone had not gotten along from the beginning. The real explosion between the two occurred over Farmar's handling of preparations for an expedition into the Illinois region. Farmar had orders

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[10]Mackinen to Johnstone, November 7, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 164-65.

[11]Ibid.

from Gage to take the 34th Regiment to occupy Illinois. Trouble with Johnstone over this was inevitable because the governor claimed command over all military forces in the colony. Allowing Farmar to leave West Florida on Gage's orders would be conceding that the governor did not control the military after all. In an attempt to stop Farmar, Johnstone accused him of embezzling public funds, but the major left for Illinois before the charges were presented. Nevertheless, Farmar wanted a court martial to clear his name and wrote the Commander in Chief requesting one. Gage agreed that the charges were odious and consented to Farmar's request for a hearing.[12]

When word of the Mackinen dispute reached London in late 1764, it worried Lord Halifax, now Secretary of State for the Southern Department. Hoping to clarify the situation, he wrote a letter to Gage on the issue of disputed command (see Appendix). He explained that when the Commander in Chief or the brigadier generals of the Northern and Southern departments were present in a province, they should have sole control over the military there. Only when neither of these officers was present would the governor have control over the military. Otherwise he was not to interfere with the "Detail of the Military."

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[12]Clinton N. Howard, "Governor Johnstone in West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 17 (April 1939): 285-86; Fabel, "Johnstone," p. 105; Clinton N. Howard, The British Development of West Florida 1763-1769 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947; reprint ed., Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1974, p. vii-viii; Gage to Halifax, February 23, 1765, in Clarence Edwin, Carter ed., The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931; reprint ed., Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1969), 1: 51. Hereafter cited as Gage Corr.; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 154.

Johnstone and the commanders in West Florida received copies of this letter.[13]

But the problems of supremacy refused to go away. This time Johnstone's rival was Captain Andrew Simpson, also of the 35th Regiment. On May 23, 1765, Johnstone ordered a Lieutenant Crutchfield (sometimes referred to as Brutchfield) to move out of his house in the fort at Pensacola to make room for the superintendent of Indian affairs. The governor tried to justify his action by telling Simpson that Crutchfield was moving into better quarters, so there could be no "hardship" on account of this action. Johnstone then ordered Simpson to relate to him any orders that he had received from General Gage concerning West Florida, so he could possess "the knowledge . . . which may be necessary for the discharge of the powers vested in me."[14]

The next day, May 24, Simpson told Johnstone that he refused to evict Crutchfield. He also refused to show the governor his orders. Citing Halifax's recent letter, the captain wrote.

> there being nothing in that letter relative to the Quartering the Troops; and the Regiments Quaters being settled before I commanded it shall not take upon me to make any alterations. As it does not appear to me, that there is anything in the Earl of Halifax's letter, that vests your Excellency with the entire Command of the Troops here. I therefore hope you will excuse my not sending the specific Orders you were pleased to mention.[15]

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[13]Halifax to the Garrison of Pensacola, May 25, 1764, M.P.A., 1: 187-88.

[14]Johnstone to Simpson, May 23, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 94-95.

[15]Simpson to Johnstone, May 23, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 96.

Johnstone was livid at this response. He ordered Simpson arrested on charges of treason because he would not transmit Gage's orders to him. Simpson coolly refused to be placed under arrest, and the military closed its protective ranks around him. Johnstone then took his problems to his council. The council called Admiral William Barnaby, senior naval officer in the colony, and Lieutenant Colonel Wedderburn, commander of the Mobile garrison and since his arrival in February 1765, senior army officer in West Florida, as witnesses. In their opinion, the governor was in charge of the fort and had the right to move Crutchfield. Simpson, therefore, had acted improperly and "has not complied with His Majesty's Intentions." When the council asked if Johnstone had acted properly when he placed Simpson under arrest, both answered yes. Wedderburn added that the governor has to "enforce Obedience to these Orders and that the Mode in which it appears to me that this has been executed is regular and decent." The council, for unknown reasons, was unwilling to call Simpson before it to answer questions and apparently did not take any action against Simpson. Johnstone, nevertheless, persuaded Barnaby to land twenty marines and Wedderburn to bring part of his detachment from Mobile to take control of the fort at Pensacola. Simpson, under this pressure, caved in. He apologized and surrendered the keys of the garrison to Johnstone.[16]

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[16]Johnstone to Simpson, May 24, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 97; Minutes of His Majesty's Council for the Province of West Florida, May 18, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 101; Minutes of His Majesty's Council for the Province of West Florida, May 26, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 95; Johnson, West Florida, p.53.

This was not the first time that Johnstone had tried to put an officer under arrest. Earlier that same month, May 1765, he had tried to arrest a Lieutenant Downman. Downman had promised to send an orderly with the returns of an artillery unit and when neither the orderly nor the returns appeared, Johnstone sent for Downman. The lieutenant told Johnstone that he had not received any orders to hand over the returns from Captain Simpson, "under whose command alone he apprehended he was." The governor liked Downman's reply even less than his refusal to send the returns, and he told Downman that he was under his command and asked for his sword. Downman responded that he did not wear one. Johnstone then ordered Downman to be placed under arrest. Downman replied "that he had no power to place him under arrest." Frustrated, Johnstone seems to have let the matter end there.[17]

After these two events, C. N. Howard, a recent historian of British Florida, has written that "the case of the Governor against the military forces and vica [sic] versa appears to have crystallized into stubborn assault and defense on both sides." The result of these disputes was a dead-locked government. As the situation in Florida deteriorated, Lord Halifax tried to avert a complete collapse of authority in the colony. He wrote to Johnstone and informed him that it would be wise to "cultivate by a uniform Conduct of Moderation, that Harmony and good understanding, which are so essentially necessary of

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[17]Minutes of His Majesty's Council for the Province of West Florida, May 18, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 99.

the Good of His Majesty's Service." While at the same time he told Gage to make sure military officers understood his letter concerning disputed commands that he had sent them. Despite Halifax's plea, Johnstone was unwilling to back down and the problem remained.[18]

Commander in Chief Gage, already beseiged by appeals from both sides to solve the problem, responded to Halifax's letter with an effort to protect the authority of his officers. Relying on Halifax's promise that when a brigadier general was in the colony all military orders would go through him, Gage appointed one in hope of solving the problem. The Commander in Chief chose General Henry Bouquet to take command of the "Southern District" in the hope of "restoring the King's affairs to proper order," but Bouquet died a few days after arriving in West Florida. Johnstone then assumed command would fall to him. Gage, however, appointed Major William Tayler (later General) of the 9th Regiment at St. Augustine to take temporary command. Tayler arrived, but Johnstone refused to accept his commission. Johnstone's feud with Tayler continued during the months following the latter's assuming command, but it was soon eclipsed by Johnstone's even more furious battle with Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Walsh, commander of the garrison at

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[18]Howard, "Johnstone," p. 290; Halifax to Gage, April 13, 1765, Gage Corr., 2: 25; Johnstone to Conway, October 24, 1765, M.P.A., 2: 293.

Pensacola.[19]

The two had first quarreled in late 1765 when Johnstone wanted Walsh at Pensacola to send troops to Manchac. Walsh had been ordered by Johnstone to escort some immigrants to Manchac, then to stay with them for two months to protect the settlement. The lieutenant colonel consented, sending twelve men with the settlers, but wrote to Johnstone that he did so because it was for the good of the colony and not because of Johnstone's orders. From this inauspicuous start, relations between the governor and Walsh rapidly deteriorated over the question of using the huts within the fort at Pensacola. On January 6, 1766, Walsh tried to take over a hut, but was refused the key on the grounds that if he wanted to change the quarters of the troops he would have to ask permission from the governor. Walsh refused to seek permission, broke into the hut, and confiscated it. Later, Johnstone placed several sailors in an empty hut without informing Walsh, and Walsh threw them out. On January 11, at a council meeting, Walsh defended his actions. He believed, for unknown reasons, that this was his department and that he had acted properly. The council disagreed, however. Its members felt that Johnstone did have command over the quartering of troops and

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[19]Rea, "Robertson's Mission," p. 33-48; Gage to Halifax, April 27, 1765, Gage Corr., 1: 56; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 255; Howard, "Johnstone," p. 291-92; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 174; "In the British Army 'brigadier general' was (and is) a temporary rank given to the officer commanding a brigade, a unit consisting of two or more regiments brigaded together. The rank thus stands between those of colonel and major general." Charles L. Mowat, "The Southern Brigade: A Sidelight on the British Military Establishment in America, 1763-1775," Journal of Southern History 10 (February 1944): 62.

over the houses in question. Two days later, they met again and on the basis of a letter from Gage stating that Walsh did not have command over the houses proclaimed that Walsh had acted in contempt of Johnstone's authority. That did not, however, address the real issue, which as Chief Justice William Clifton commented, could only be solved by the Commander in Chief or a brigadier general, or a new letter from Halifax.[20]

Johnstone was unwilling to wait for such a solution. He simply made matters worse. Johnstone ordered Walsh's arrest, but Walsh refused to consider himself under arrest. Moreover, by trying to arrest Walsh, the governor had placed himself in a very bad situation. Relations were now so bad between the governor and Walsh that Johnstone had lost control of the fort in which his house was located. Every time he wanted to enter, leave, or entertain, he had to get permission from the fort's commander, Walsh, who was supposed to be under arrest.[21]

In yet another effort to force the situation, later in January, Johnstone ordered that the keys to the garrison be taken from the guard house and brought to him. When this was not done, he received the consent of the council and ordered Colonel Edward Maxwell, who had become in 1765 commander of the Mobile garrison, along with part of

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[20]Barton Starr, "Campbell Town: French Huguenots in British West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 54 (April 1976): 538; Johnstone to Pownall, January 28, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 88: Minutes of His Majesty's Council for the Province of West Florida, January 11, 1766, January 13, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 116, 123.

[21]Johnson, West Florida, p. 93; Howard, "Johnstone," p. 295.

the 21st Regiment to Pensacola to take the fort and "quell a most dangerous Munity." When Maxwell finally arrived on January 31, 1766, an awkward situation became farcical. First, Walsh ordered the gates shut against Maxwell's arrival, sentries posted, and guns loaded. When Johnstone tried to leave the fort to meet with Maxwell, he found himself trapped inside. His private secretary, Primrose Thompson, rushed to Walsh's office, arrested him, and turned him over to the provost marshal. This time Walsh consented to being arrested for a few minutes at least. Johnstone then quickly left the fort and urged Colonel Maxwell to force the gate, but Maxwell refused on the grounds that to do so would endanger the lives of his men. Walsh, meantime, had reassumed command when Johnstone left the fort and would not allow anyone in without the proper orders.[22]

With negotiations at the fort's gate stalled, Johnstone tried to return to his house. The gate was still locked and the governor had to climb over the stockade while his secretary defended him. By that time, some soldiers had gathered at the inside base of the stockade to jeer at Johnstone as he climbed over the rampart. In fact, the governor claimed that the soliders attacked him with bayonets, tearing his breeches. Back inside the fort Johnstone took command and ordered the gates opened. Maxwell then entered the fort and took command for

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[22]Monfort to Browne to [?], March 24, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 297-303; Johnson, West Florida, p. 93.

several days, ending the problem for the time being.[23]

The lull was only temporary, though, and the spring and summer of 1766 saw the situation deteriorate again. Walsh continued to command the fort at Pensacola, having reassumed command after acceeding to Maxwell's request that he return the governor's sentries and accord the governor the honor due him (and presumably not to lock him out of the fort again). Relations between Walsh and the governor did not improve. Indeed they seemed to grow even worse as the two argued over trivial matters. For example, when Walsh fired cannons in honor of St. Patrick's day in 1776, Johnstone claimed it was contrary to orders and that only the governor was in charge of regular expenditure of ordinance supplies. And when Governor Ulloa, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, arrived in New Orleans in April, he sent a letter announcing his arrival to Walsh, who used this to show that Ulloa regarded him as supreme commander. Ulloa soon sent a note to Johnstone apologizing for his error, and Johnstone used this to reverse Walsh's triumph. Moreover, the battle was expanding to involve more than just Walsh and Johnstone.[24]

For example, it also led to problems between the governor and his Council. Johnstone wanted to bring Walsh before the council for his actions in January, but Chief Justice Clifton stopped him. Clifton

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[23]Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 183; Monfort Browne to [?], March 24, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 297-303; Johnson, West Florida, p. 93; Howard, "Johnstone," p. 295.

[24]Ibid.

declared that the council had "no power to call any person before them, to answer for any offense, and in default of appearing, to commit for contempt; but must proceed in the ordinary course of law." This did not please Johnstone, who believed that "The Council had to have the power of summoning persons to attend, and punishing them in default." By the beginning of April 1766, Johnstone was convinced that Clifton had undermined his authority too. Johnstone argued that "if the Council can not call anybody before it then it will undermine the institution of the governor and the Council," and maintained "that the Council is superior to all even the Chief Justice." Eventually Johnstone suspended Clifton. The war between the governor and military had seeped over into the civil government and poisoned Johnstone's relationship with his officials.[25]

Commander in Chief Gage also got involved in the Walsh affair. He wrote Walsh chastising him for allowing himself "to submit to an arrest from the governor." "This," wrote Gage, "would be submitting his command to the Governor." This letter did little to help the situation and seemingly strengthened the resolve of Walsh and the other commanders in West Florida - never again would a commander submit to being arrested by the governor. Nevertheless, Johnstone still insisted that he

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[25]Robert R. Rea, "Life, Death, and Little Glory: The British Soldier on the Gulf Coast," in The Military Presence on the Gulf Coast, ed. by William S. Coker (Pensacola: Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference, Proceedings, vol. 7), p. 28; James Johnstone to [The] Pro[vost] Marshall of West Florida, March 30, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 353.

commanded all troops in the province.[26]

As the Walsh affair dragged on, though, Johnstone finally went too far. The governor had recently, and reluctantly, recognized General William Tayler as brigadier of the province. The fact that Tayler had promised to help get the Walsh court-martial underway may explain Johnstone's new policy, but this cannot be proved. Their truce, if it were one, was short-lived, though. In late 1766, Johnstone challenged Tayler in a military matter. The Creek Indians had begun to stir up trouble with British traders in Florida and Johnstone wanted the Indians crushed. The Creeks had also been at war with the Choctaws for some time but were not causing any real trouble for the British. General Gage advocated a policy of moderation. Gage also wanted John Stuart, superintendent of Indian affairs, to look into the Creek charge that British traders had not abided by the terms of a recent treaty. Johnstone would not listen to this policy of moderation and prepared for war. He probably hoped that a war would unite the military behind him. The Commander in Chief ordered his long-ignored brigadier to keep Johnstone from escalating his war plans. Johnstone and Tayler were soon embroiled in an argument over the issue. By the time Johnstone's letter proposing the Creek war reached London, the ministry had had enough. William Petty, Earl of Shelburne, Secretary of State for the Southern

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[26]Johnstone to Pownall, January 28, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 88; Minutes of His Majesty's Council of the Province of West Florida, January 20, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 130.

Department, had already begun the process of recalling Johnstone.[27]

It is debatable whether his war policy was the only reason for Johnstone's recall. At the same time the governor's feud with Tayler was escalating, his relationship with Shelburne was also breaking down. Shelburne finally recalled Johnstone in February 1767. Shelburne may have ordered the recall before Johnstone's letter concerning the Indian war had arrived in London. The Secretary did not like Johnstone - he referred to his conduct as that "of a Perfect Madman," and he was annoyed by the disputes with the military that had in his mind, ruined the colony. In reviewing the correspondence, Shelburne discovered that Johnstone had not only alienated almost every military officer in the colony, but the attorney general, the chief justice, and the lieutenant governor. He also received a complaint from several residents of the colony complaining of Johnstone's "thirst of Power and Command." Shelburne realized that the efficient government needed to stabilize the colony no longer existed in West Florida. Because Shelburne aimed at peaceful colonies, he could no longer tolerate Johnstone. Because Lord Bute, Johnstone's patron, was out of office, Shelburne could remove the governor without any real problems. Shelburne took over the Colonial office in August 1766 and by September had granted Johnstone a leave of absence and ordered him to get his affairs in order. Johnstone knew that this was the equivalent of dismissal, and he left the colony

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[27]Fabel, "Johnstone," p. 508-510; Johnstone to Tayler, April 24, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 481-82; Tayler to Johnstone, April 30, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 484.

for England in January 1767. In February, Shelburne dismissed him.[28]

Thus, ended Johnstone's administration. For all practical purposes it was a disaster. Johnstone did not create a peaceful colony but a disunited one. He turned soldier on soldier in a colony whose proximity to the enemy demanded unity among its officials lest the enemy see a colony in shambles.

Part of Johnstone's problem resulted from his personal animosity toward Farmar, Walsh, and almost every other military man, and this may have sprung from Johnstone's own sense of importance. He may also have been bitter over the inability to get what he felt was rightfully his. He had become angry over the fact that the military had never submitted to his command, as he felt that the commission had required it to do. He had also grown frustrated over his inability to increase the colony's trade. He worked diligently to get Spanish bullion for the colony's raw materials, especially lumber and naval stores, and for British manufactured goods. This trade would bring the colony badly needed cash. However, British trade regulations had hampered him, and the navy was exceedingly alert in stopping illegal trade. It seems that all the plans to make Pensacola the center of the Indies trade had come to naught. The same government that wanted the trade also forbade it,

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[28]Tayler echoed Shelburne's view of Johnstone, he wrote: "When Madman are sent out it would be a proper precaution to send keepers and chains with them" cited in Johnson, West Florida, p. 56; Fabel, "Johnstone," p. 508-10; Robert R. Rea, "The Naval Career of John Eliot, Governor of West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 57 (July 1979); 454-55.

and the Board of Trade refused Johnstone's request to change the regulations. His frustration and anger combined with the military's resistance to his command could have led Johnstone to act the way he did.[29]

This is not to suggest that Johnstone was the sole source of the problem. Military men were just as stubborn as Johnstone. Men like Walsh also liked authority and did not wish to see their power reduced. There was little spirit of compromise on either side during most of the disputes. No matter how cordial the letters, as in the case of Mackinen and Simpson, the governor refused to listen to moderation, and the military felt compelled to take firmer stand against Johnstone.[30]

Johnstone's problem was primarily one of overlapping authority, a problem neither he nor anyone else managed to solve. There was simply no clear directive delineating areas of command for the governor and the military commanders. While the latter had never been instructed that they were under the command of a civil governor, but the governor's instructions were so ill-defined that he truly believed he had command over the military.

West Florida was not the only colony to experience these problems of disputed authority. East Florida and Quebec faced similar problems.

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[29]Howard, Development of West Florida, p. 23-30; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 234; Rea, "Naval Career of John Eliot, p. 250; Born, "Johnstone and Trade," p. 44; Lawrence Henry Gipson, The British Empire Before the American Revolution, vol. 9: The Triumphant Empire: New Responsibilities Within the Enlarged Empire 1763-1766 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., A Borzoi Book, 1956), p. 214.

[30]Ibid.

As in West Florida, these colonies suffered from no clear direction delineating area of command for the governor and the military commanders. However, in East Florida and Quebec the disputes were not as debilitating to the government as they were in West Florida, and in Canada there was an attempt to solve the problem.

In East Florida, Governor James Grant, wanted to control the military. Gage would not hear of it, though. He told his commanders that in military matters only the Commander in Chief could issue orders and told Grant that if he wanted to command the troops, "the system for the Military Affairs in America must be changed." In spite of this attitude, there was much more cooperation between Grant and his commanders than between Johnstone and his. Grant had served with Gage. Perhaps this helped to keep the conflict in East Florida from escalating into the circus that developed in West Florida. Nevertheless, Grant was able in 1764 to pressure the commander at St. Augustine into letting him run the regiment there.[31]

During that same year, 1764, military anc civil authorities in Canada also quarreled over their respective powers. James Murray, the governor of Quebec and Johnstone's uncle, believed that as governor of Quebec, the capital of Canada, he had control over all the troops in the colony. Canada had been divided into three military districts,

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[31]Gage to [Capt.] Harries, March 31, 1764, Cited in Mark F. Boyd, "From a Remote Frontier," Florida Historical Quarterly 19 (April 1941): 410; Charles L. Mowat, East Florida As A British Province, 1763-1784 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1943; reprint ed., Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1964), p. 28-30.

Montreal, Quebec, and Three Rivers, and Murray's insistance that he control the military did not sit well with the other two governors. Murray continued to request command over the troops even after Colonel Ralph Burton had been appointed Brigadier General of the "Northern District" (Canada). Murray and Burton contended for control of the troops and Murray split the colony by cultivating factions among the officers of the different regiments. Burton, in turn, tried to undermine Murray's control over the civilian population. By 1765, London had had enough, and in the spring of that year, both Murray and Burton were recalled. In their place Colonel Guy Carleton, Quebec's lieutenant governor, was appointed both governor of Quebec and Brigadier of the Northern Department. Combining the two offices succeeded in solving the problem of divided authority in Canada. The British would not try this solution in other troublesome colonies until Gage took over the governship of Massachusetts in 1774. It seems that the British were unwilling to try this solution in other English colonies because of the English fear of an independent military force.[32]

The Johnstone years were active and important ones for West Florida. Within the first months of his arrival in the colony, Johnstone had created a civil government, established the assembly, made treaties with the Indians, and attempted to increase Spanish trade in an effort to improve the colony's economic condition. These constructive

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[32]Gage to Halifax, February 28, 1765, Gage Corr., 1: 52; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 159-62; Richmond to Gage, June 18, 1766, Gage Corr., 1: 41.

beginnings were for the most part dissipated, however, by the governor's disputes with the military. These quarrels paralyzed the colony by turning it into two hostile camps, one supporting the governor, the other supporting the military. This was hardly conducive to the creation of a stable, prosperous colony. Available correspondence shows that from 1765 on the governor did little else but engage the military over jurisdictional squabbles. Most of his projects to improve West Florida, such as clearing the Iberville and increasing Spanish trade, were either slowed down or came to a complete stop. London could only hope the next administration would behave itself better.[33]

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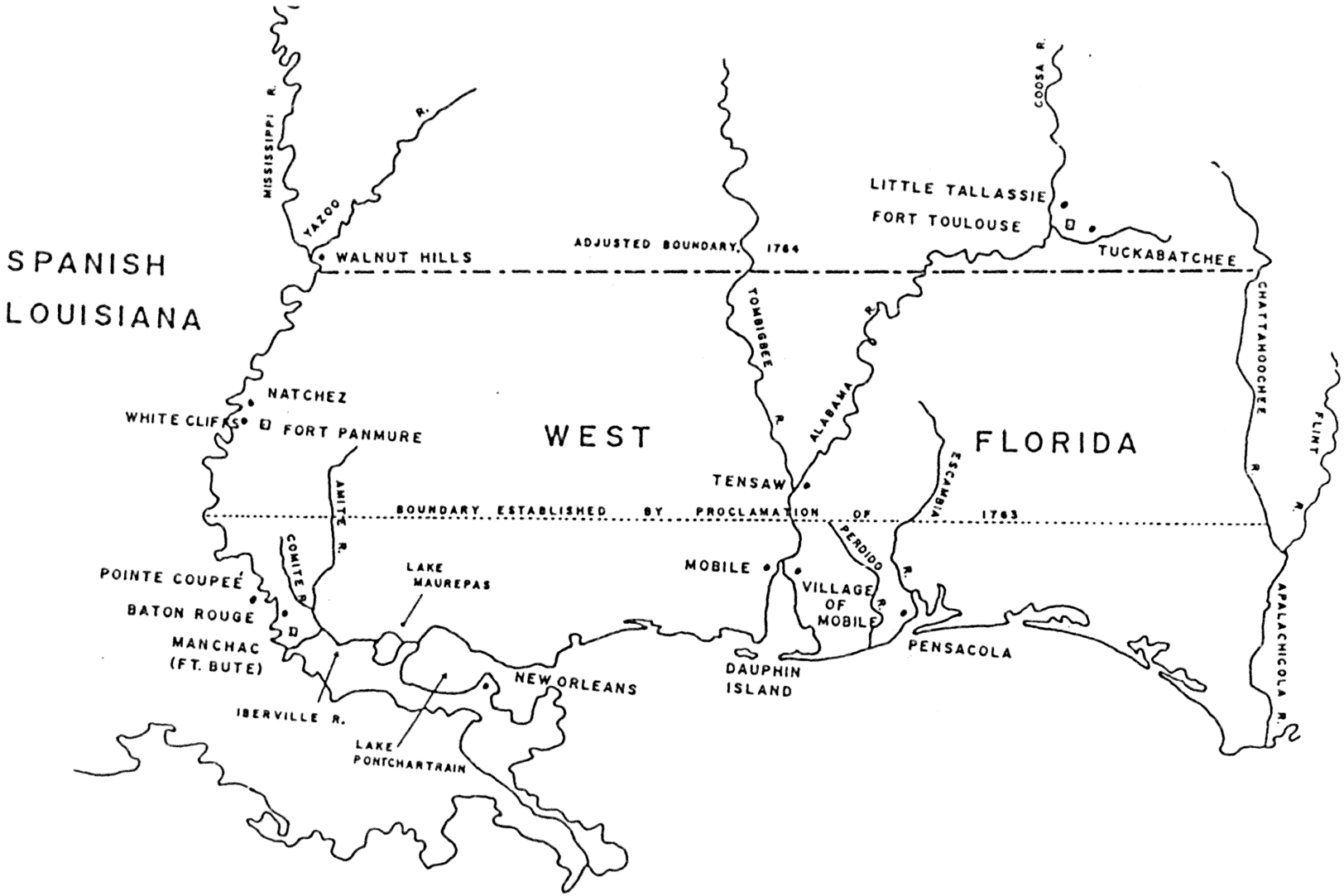
[33]Johnson, West Florida, p. 60.

Chapter IV

THE END OF BRITISH DOMINATION

To the relief of many colonists and especially the military, Johnstone left West Florida on January 9, 1767. With the arrogant governor gone, hopes rose that development of the colony could begin afresh.

When Johnstone departed, Montfort Browne, lieutenant governor since January 1766, took over the administrative duties of the province. Unfortunately, Browne was both unpopular and an incompetent administrator. For unknown reasons, during Johnstone's tenure he had associated himself with elements in opposition to the governor. Upon assuming office himself, he was not very popular with the council. Because of this opposition and Johnstone's own jealous regard for his rights, Browne never had a chance to learn the administrative routine of the colony. It seemed that from the time of Browne's arrival, he and Johnstone could not get along. Johnstone refused to accept Browne's commission on the grounds that it was "dormant" and rarely, if ever, included Browne in the decision-making process. He apparently believed that the administrative duties of the colony were his concern and refused to share any of them with his lieutenant governor. As governor, Browne's position was further weakened by knowledge that his tenure would be brief. Soon after Johnstone left West Florida, word reached the colony that John Eliot had been appointed its new governor. Browne,



British West Florida, 1763–83. Drawn by Rex A. James, Jr.

From Starr, Tories, Dons, and Rebels.

however, continued to work diligently until Eliot arrived some two years later.[1]

Browne's first priority was quieting the Indians whom Johnstone had stirred up with his war talk; in this he was successful. He also followed Johnstone's example and tried to increase trade with the Spanish. Browne believed that the only way to make the colony profitable was to open the Indies trade. In a move to open this trade, Browne sent inquiries to Havana in September of 1767, principally to assist in the collection of insurance for a British ship that had been grounded there two years earlier, but also to ascertain if Spanish traders there had any interest in coming to West Florida to purchase British goods - a trade that was still illegal under Spanish and British laws. Within the next few months several ships did come to Pensacola, and more were expected.[2]

In conjunction with the change in the civil administration, Gage appointed a new brigadier general, General Frederick Haldimand. Gage apparently wanted a clean break from the troubles of the past

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[1]Johnstone to Pownall, April 1, 1766, M.P.A., 2: 293; Starr, "Campbelltown," p. 539; Johnson, "Pensacola," p. 272-75; Johnson, West Florida, p. 60; Robert R. Rea, "John Eliot, Second Governor of British West Florida," The Alabama Review 30 (October 1977): 252.

[2]Clinton N. Howard, "Colonial Pensacola: The British Period, Part II," Florida Historical Quarterly 19 (January 1941): 253; Johnson, West Florida, p. 63-64; Johnson, "Pensacola," p. 274; For a view of Spanish trade laws see C. H. Haring, The Spanish Empire in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jouanovich, 1952), especially chapter sixteen; and J. H. Parry, The Spanish Seaborne Empire (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1977), p. 304-06.

administration, and Haldimand was a logical choice. He was a capable leader and a trusted friend of Gage. Moreover, Haldimand had already experienced the problems involved with divided authority. In 1762 and 1763, when he was governor of the Three Rivers military district in Canada, he had quarreled with James Murray, the military governor at Quebec, over the drafting of Canadians and according to Gage had handled himself quite well. Haldimand was an even-tempered man, not inclined to act rashly, and Gage probably hoped he had gained enough experience at Three Rivers to provide the stabilizing influence West Florida needed. In sending Haldimand to West Florida, Gage seems to have made a conscious effort to send an officer whose personality was not likely to involve in him disputes over authority. But the inhert flaw in the system was so bad that not even Haldimand could stay free of trouble.[3]

The new brigadier arrived in Pensacola on March 24, 1767, and was appalled at the condition of the garrison. Haldimand spent most of his time in Florida rebuilding and improving the fortress at Pensacola - allowing sea breezes to circulate within the stockade by relocating the wall farther from the buildings; draining the swamps around the fort, thus improving the drinking water and sanitation; building a new hospital; and improving the food supply by ordering a garden to be planted. He also wanted to rebuild the barracks, but Gage warned him that he needed London's approval before he could begin construction. Haldimand persevered, however, believing that he was doing the best for the

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[3]Rea, "Eliot," p. 255-56; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 159-61.

garrison and promised that he would keep expenses as low as possible. Eventually London did grant him money to rebuild the barracks. In this effort to reduce sickness and save lives among the garrison, Haldimand was fortunate that Johnstone had already left the colony. He could spend his time improving the condition of his command instead of arguing over petty jurisdictional rights.[4]

Nor did acting-governor Browne have much interest in engaging Haldimand in a debate over the rights of the governor at this moment. He had other concerns. Instead of immersing himself in squabbles with the military, Browne had become involved in a series of disputes with the assembly, principally over the salaries they had voted themselves. Browne also ran into trouble over the misappropriation of the Indian and contingent funds. The problem may have been more the result of bad bookkeeping than larceny by Browne, but it does seem that he supplied his family and servants from the Indian fund, intending to pay it back later.[5]

Haldimand's situation was hardly perfect, though. The problems that Johnstone left with the military when he departed still lingered.

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[4]Rea, "Brigadier Frederick Haldimand-The Florida Years," Florida Historical Quarterly 54 (April 1976): 512-31; Gage to Shelburne, June 13, 1767, Gage Corr., 1: 143; Rea, "Graveyard," p. 345-64.

[5]Browne to Shelburne, June 29, 1767, cited in Howard, "Pensacola, Part II," p. 252, 257; Johnson, West Florida, p. 71-72, 101-105; Johnson, "Pensacola," p. 272-274; Robert R. Rea and Milo B. Howard, Jr., eds., The Minutes, Journals, and Acts of the General Assembly of British West Florida (University: University of Alabama Press, 1979), p. 73. Hereafter cited as Rea, General Assembly.

Farmar's court martial had not begun when Johnstone had been recalled, and the job of conducting this trial fell on Brigadier Haldimand. Haldimand had trouble even getting enough officers to form a board. Between deaths and leave of absences, it was not until May 1768 that the trial began. Haldimand wanted to change the court martial to a court of inquiry, but Gage who wanted the trial to prove Farmar's guilt or innocence, turned down this request. The trial ended in June of 1768 in an acquittal, to the "joy of the whole Southern detachment at the victory over Governor Johnstone." Farmar was acquitted of embezzlement because there was not enough evidence for a conviction. He either resigned or lost his commission and retired as a planter along Mobile Bay.[6]

Just as the Farmar trial ended, a disaster struck Browne's administration. Gage had ordered Brigadier Haldimand to abandon Fort Bute and Natchez and to send all but three companies of the two regiments in West Florida to St. Augustine. The British cabinet took this action to reduce the expense of colonial administration by reducing the military establishment west of the Alleghanies. Browne wrote letter after letter to Hillsborough complaining that if the troops were removed, Florida would be open to Indian attack and their losing the military trade would damage, if not destroy, the colony's merchants. But his protest was to

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[6]Gage to Barrington, January 23, 1768, May 14, 1768, June 16, 1768, Gage Corr., 2: 448, 470, 475; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 262; Rea, General Assembly, p. 159; Howard, Development of West Florida, p. 37, 56-57, 63, 69.

no avail. Both Gage and Haldimand supported the move on the grounds that the army could not defend West Florida from an enemy attack. The two generals agreed that an enemy attack would be seaborne and that only the navy could properly defend Mobile and Pensacola against such an attack. Departure of the military was slow, and Haldimand was not able to leave until the spring of 1769. The two regiments were back by spring of the next year, though; the French rebellion against Spanish rule in New Orleans and the Falkland Islands crisis changed the importance of West Florida as a military base. These two events will be discussed later. The year that the military was out of the colony greatly improved the civil-military relations in the colony. Since the majority of the military establishment was now in St. Augustine, and away from the governor, the chances of a dispute breaking out were reduced.[7]

While Haldimand and most of his troops were in East Florida, West Florida's new governor finally arrived to take up his duties. On March 16, 1767, Lord Shelburne had advised the Board of Trade he had appointed John Eliot governor of West Florida. Eliot was only twenty-four when he received his commission, and it is apparent that Eliot obtained this position through family connections. By marriage, his family was connected to George Anson, First Lord of the Admiralty.

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[7]Johnson, West Florida, p. 65; Browne to [?], August 16, 1768, M.P.A., 3: 115-16; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 259; Address of the Council [and] Assembly of West Florida to His Majesty, August 25, 1768, M.P.A., 3: 173-74; Rea "Haldimand," p. 512-14.

Moreover, Eliot's uncle, Robert Nugent, was president of the Board of Trade, and his brother, Edward, was also a member of the board. His uncle and brother together controlled ten seats in Parliament, seats that could be very important to Chatham in the crisis facing his ministry. The Eliot case is a perfect example of how the patronage game was played. The governorship of a backward and seemingly unimportant colony was given to a post captain in return for his relatives' support in Parliament. Eliot did not leave England immediately. Political changes in London, the final collapse of the Chatham ministry, and the creation of a separate American department headed by the Earl of Hillsborough held his attention. Eliot also believed that since Browne was a long time resident of West Florida and knew the area and its problems, he would do at least a respectable job as governor and there was no need to rush out to his new post. Eliot was wrong. Browne's attempt to govern was hindered by his disputes with the assembly over the salary question, and the new governor's arrival was anxiously awaited.[8]

Two years after his appointment, Eliot inexplicably left for Pensacola on January 6, 1769, and arrived on Sunday, April 2. Eliot's instructions concerning the military read exactly the same as Johnstone's. London obviously had made no effort to solve the problem of divided authority. Unfortunately, Eliot's administration was short

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[8]Both Eliot and Johnstone had served on the same ship during the Seven Years War. Rea, "Eliot," p. 251-52; Rea, "Naval Career of John Eliot," p. 451-56.

lived. It ended a month later when he committed suicide. The reasons for Eliot's suicide are mysterious. His contemporaries believed that the governor took his life because he had finally seen his new post. A more plausible explanation was that he may have been suffering from a brain tumor, which could have left him "totally deprived of his senses." The pain of this tumor, along with the news of the death of his mother, the one truly close person in his life, may have driven him to hang himself.[9]

The shock of Eliot's death was compounded by the Pensacolians' knowledge that Montfort Browne would return to the governor's office. Browne's second attempt at governing was as unsuccessful as his first. It started off badly when a group of citizens asked the council to request that Browne not reassume the office. When the council refused to grant this request, these discontented residents went to the chief justice, who also refused to grant their request. Ironically, several officers from the Mobile garrison sent Browne "a letter of confidence and appreciation," probably because of Browne's assistance to the military during its disputes with Johnstone. On his return to the governorship, Browne tried to defend himself against the accusations of his enemies. He sent Hillsborough an account of the governor's problems via Elias Durnford, the province's surveyor, who was going to England.[10]

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[9]Eliot to Hillsborough, February 25, 1768, M.P.A., 3, 23; Rea, "Eliot," p. 255, 265; Rea, "Naval Career of John Eliot," p. 451-67.

[10]Johnson, West Florida, p. 70; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 535.

While Durnford travelled to England, Browne's political problems continued. He fought again with the assembly, this time over the appointment of the colony's treasurer. During this quarrel, two members of the council insisted that Browne consult and receive advice from that body. He promptly dismissed them, and in protest, two additional members of the council resigned. Browne also had another run in with Farmar, now a popular and powerful figure in provincial politics and a member of assembly from Mobile. Both Farmar and Browne claimed lands on Dauphin Island near Mobile. Before Governor Eliot's arrival, and while Browne was in Pensacola, Farmar seized Browne's plantation. Browne sued and won the plantation back, but that only aggravated the situation in the assembly further. With the assembly and the council angry, Browne was not going to risk losing the support of the military by arguing over jurisdictional rights.[11]

In August 1769, Browne received word from Hillsborough that he was being recalled. And to Browne's further disgust, Elias Durnford, his agent to Hillsborough, was appointed lieutenant governor in his place. Browne believed that Durnford, a man he felt was his friend, had betrayed him. Durnford arrived back in West Florida in December 1769, and the two old friends immediately attacked one another. Durnford accused Browne of not surrendering government papers, while Browne countered that Durnford had prevented him from acquiring the documents necessary for his defense against the charge of using colonial funds to

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[11]Johnson, West Florida, p. 71; Rea, General Assembly, p. 173, 206.

supply his family. Animosity between the two reached a climax on February 5, 1770, when Browne and one of Durnford's assistants, Evan Jones, duelled. Neither died but Jones was badly wounded. Chief Justice Clifton wanted to bring Browne to trial but stopped when informed by a justice of the peace, Alexander Moore, that Jones did not want to bring charges against his assailant. Moore and Durnford allowed Browne to leave the colony and return to England with no further trouble. Durnford wanted to get Browne out of the colony and start repairing the damage that Browne had caused with the assembly and council.[12]

Two events late in 1769 and early 1770 greatly affected the military in West Florida. In August 1769 a revolt by French citizens at New Orleans against Spanish rule brought the Spanish governor, Don Alexandro O'Reilly, to New Orleans with between 3,500 and 4,500 troops. With so many Spanish soldiers so close to West Florida, its inhabitants began to get nervous. Their consternation became so great that Gage wrote Haldimand on February 26, 1770, to place Pensacola and Mobile "in a state of defense as shall discourage or disappoint any sudden attempt to distress or break up our infant settlements." Haldimand arrived back in Pensacola by mid-May and was off to study the defenses of Mobile. The second crisis shook the British ministry in the fall of 1770, when the governor of Buenos Aires seized the Falkland Islands. If war broke out with Spain over these islands, Pensacola's fine harbor

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[12]Johnson, West Florida, p. 72-73; Howard, "Pensacola, Part II," p. 264-66.

would become an important strategic base for the British navy. These two events convinced Gage that West Florida needed a stronger garrison. By the spring of 1770, the garrisons at Pensacola and Mobile were back to their original strengths.[13]

Greater news, however, stimulated the colony. In 1770 the Earl of Hillsborough nominated Peter Chester to be governor of West Florida. Unlike the first two governors, Chester was a Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army. Both Johnstone and Eliot had been naval men. Little is known of Chester before he joined the army during the war of Austrian Succession, and it remains a mystery why he was appointed governor. But appointed he was, and Chester left England on March 2, 1770, arriving in Pensacola on August 10, eager to get on with the business of government.[14]

Chester, however, had stepped into a changing colony. Mobile and Pensacola were no longer its most important centers. It was apparent by this time that any hope of attracting Spanish trade was dead. The war scare of 1770 and Spain's strengthened alliance with France probably contributed the most to the death of this dream. Furthermore, London's refusal to modify the navigation laws also hampered the trade.

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[13]Rea, "Haldimand," p. 522; Johnson, West Florida, p. 68.

[14]Hillsborough to Lords of the Admiralty, July 15, 1770, M.P.A., 4: 63; Chester to Hillsborough, September 24, 1770, M.P.A., 4: 447; Mrs. Dunbar Rowland, "Peter Chester: Third Governor of the Province of West Florida Under British Dominion, 1770-1781," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Vol. 5 (Jackson, Mississippi: Press of the Mississippi Historical Society, 1925), p. 1-2.

The fertile Mississippi basin was the attraction for the new settlers. From 1770 on the colony did grow through an increase in immigration that flooded the fertile lands along the Mississippi River, but this immigration could never replace the Spanish trade in making the colony wealthy.[15]

Chester, like the other governors, had also been appointed "Captain-General and Governor in Chief." The London government gave Chester the same rights and privileges over the military Johnstone had. He had the right command "all persons whatsoever residing within our said province;" to transport these forces; to build, with the advice of the Council, all fortifications "as you . . . shall judge necessary," and to furnish these fortifications. And, as in the past, these powers conflicted with the powers of the military.[16]

Apparently, before Chester left for West Florida he was informed of the troubles former governors had had with the military. This aspect of the colony's affairs had been quiet for the past few years for several reasons. First, most of the military had been removed from the colony and sent to St. Augustine for about one year. Second, and more important, Browne had been too busy fighting with the assembly, the council, and Durnford to waste time in skirmishes with the army. And third, Browne had allied himself with the military during Johnstone's quarrels and wanted to keep this alliance strong during his own squabbles.

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[15]Johnson, "Expansion in West Florida," p. 481-96.

[16]Hillsborough to Chester, January 10, 1770, M.P.A., 10: 609.

But now that a new governor was taking over, there was no doubt that London warned Chester to avoid such altercations. Chester indicated as much in a letter to Hillsborough dated September 26, 1770, just six weeks after his arrival. He explained that since arriving, he had avoided "every appearance that could have a tendency to create even a suspicion" that there could be trouble between Haldimand and himself. Fortunately, both men realized the importance of defusing any disputes that started. Chester and Haldimand did not, however, agree on every question of authority; they did get involved in several disputes but not with the ferocity of earlier ones. These differences were simple in nature, and both men tried to solve them as quietly as possible.[17]

The first such dispute occurred about a year after Chester's arrival and centered on the construction of a new government house. The house Chester was to occupy was in very poor condition. The foundation posts were rotten, and the house was supported by the chimney "and a few cedar posts which ran as props through the center of the house." After an inspection it was decided that the house could not be repaired and that a new structure should be built. The dispute started when Chester decided the house should be built within the fort. Haldimand protested because he wanted to build a new set of barracks within the fort and felt, for unknown reasons, that a government house in the same area could only be "an apple of discord." Moreover, Haldimand believed that

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[17]Chester to Hillsborough, September 26, 1770, in Rowland, "Chester," p. 18: Clinton N. Howard, "Colonial Pensacola: The British Period, Part III," Florida Historical Quarterly 19 (April 1941): 369-70.

the fort was under his command, and he could not allow the house to be built until he had received appropriate orders from Gage. It was with this last point that Chester disagreed. In a letter to Hillsborough, Chester wrote that his commission:

> granted unto me full power and authority, by and with the advice and consent of His Council to erect . . . so many Forts[,] Cities[,] Boroughs[,] Towns[,] and Fortifications as I by advice aforesaid shall judge necessary.

And since he had received the advice of the council, he should be allowed to build the house where he wanted. Chester also pointed out that Haldimand had control only over the troops, not the fort. Gage wrote Haldimand and told him that he had no power over the fort and to let the governor build the house anywhere he wanted.[18]

A new, more serious dispute, broke out at the same time, though. Chester was concerned over the giving of the parole (pass-word and counter-sign) when Haldimand was not in Pensacola. Once again the dispute centered on who had authority over the military. Chester raised the issue when he learned that Haldimand left behind a list of paroles to be given out in his absence visiting the western posts. Chester questioned this practice in a letter to Hillsborough as "contrary to the Custom and Practice of the Army." Chester believed:

> that the Civil Governor of the Province shall give the Word

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[18]Haldimand to Chester, August 29, 1771, M.P.A., 4: 781; Chester to Haldimand, August 29, 1771, M.P.A., 4: 773; Howard, "Pensacola, Part III," p. 370-71; Rea, "Haldimand," p. 525.

> [parole] in all places, when the Commander in Chief, or Brigadier General shall be in the same place. By this I understand that when . . . Haldimand . . . leaves this town and is absent . . . that I am then to give the Word.

Haldimand, however, believed that as long as he was in the province, he should give the parole. Chester then asked London for advice on the matter.[19]

Word of these disputes eventually reached London, and in January 1772, Hillsborough wrote Gage about them. The Secretary of State informed Gage that he was to direct Haldimand not to "interfere with any matters that concerned the fort that is vested in the governor," and to inform him "that a Governor had the right to build where he pleased, and desired . . . without waiting for orders." Hillsborough also wrote that some other "Mode might be fallen upon of giving Word that might not unnecessarily carry with it an Appearance of Disrespect and Offense to the King's 'Governor'." This response did not solve the problem, but Hillsborough may have been echoing Gage's opinion "that it was not worth a dispute." However, these disputes forced Haldimand to draw a line between the troops and the forts. With the governor controlling the forts and Haldimand the troops.[20]

This was the last dispute for the next six years. During that time, there seems to have been unaccustomed harmony between the governor and

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[19]Chester to Hillsborough, August 27, 1771, M.P.A., 4: 683-85.

[20]Hillsborough to Gage, January 11, 1772, Gage Corr., 2: 139-40; Gage to Hillsborough, April 13, 1772, Gage Corr., 1: 321; Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, p. 288.

the military. There is no evidence that Chester and Haldimand engaged in any further disagreements. If there were any, they seemed to not have committed them to paper.[21]

This "unaccustomed harmony' came about because in March 1773 Haldimand received what must have been welcome orders to leave West Florida and proceed to New York. Gage had asked for a leave of absence and wanted his old friend to take command in his place. Haldimand quickly left what he considered "this lousy country," and the colony lost a competent and able administrator, who was more concerned with the welfare of his command then with debating over jurisdictional rights.[22]

From 1773 to 1778 the colony was without a brigadier general. During this time Chester controlled both the civil and military functions of government. These five years, however, had seen a revolution break out in the older thirteen colonies. The revolution left West Florida untouched until 1778, when the Willing Raid, an attempt by the Continental Congress to secure supplies that had been delivered to New Orleans for the rebellious colonies and to secure the neutrality of the inhabitants of West Florida, made a mockery of West Florida's defenses.[23]

After the Willing Raid, London felt that a commander was needed on the spot to oversee West Florida. Therefore, late in the autumn of

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[21]Lieutenant Col. W. Stiell to [?], June 3, 1777, M.P.A., 7: 122.

[22]Rea, "Haldimand," p. 529.

[23]John Caughey, "Willing's Expedition Down the Mississippi, 1778," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly 15 (January 1932): 5-36.

1778, Brigadier General (later Major General) John Campbell received orders to report to Pensacola to take command of all military forces there. A fundamental change had occurred in the brigadier's position relative to the governor. In 1775, with the outbreak of the American Revolution, London had "issued orders which deprived the governors of any possible pretensions to power over the army." This directive had little effect on the relations between Chester and Campbell, though.[24]

Campbell arrived in Pensacola on January 17, 1779 with letters from Lord Germain, Secretary of State for the American Colonies, directing him to ready the military defenses of the colony. The military establishment in West Florida was in dire straits. The colony lacked money to pay the troops, vessels, provisions, stores, and tools and craftsmen either to construct new fortifications or repair the old ones.[25]

Campbell had also been ordered to erect a new fort at Manchac (near Baton Rouge) and to equip this outpost, and all western forts, so they could defend themselves. He had brought reinforcements of artillery, The Third Regiment of Waldeck, a Hessian mercenary unit, and two corps of Pennsylvania and Maryland loyalists. These were not the best soldiers in the army, but it was all the British could spare. Chester,

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[24]George C. Osborn, "Major-General John Campbell in British West Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 27 (April 1949): 317; John Richard Alden, General Gage in America: Being Principally A History of His Role in the American Revolution (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1948; reprint ed., New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 87.

[25]Osborn, "Campbell," p. 317-19.

meanwhile, had organized three companies of local militia, and John Stuart had raised troops among the Indians. Campbell wanted command over all of them, and this would be a sticking point later.[26]

Campbell had also been ordered to maintain relations with Spain. He need not have worried about this, for on June 15, 1779, Spain declared war on Great Britain. Spain had been waiting sixteen years to regain Florida. Now it had the chance.

Even before war began with Spain, Chester and Campbell had argued over military matters. Campbell was no Haldimand, and Chester, while not as bad as Johnstone, still believed that the governor should control the military. They disagreed over where the fort at Manchac should be located and on "the acreage of land which should be allocated for the fort." Chester also felt that Campbell should consult him on defense policies for the colony, but Campbell did not. He believed himself to be the sole military authority in the colony. He concluded that "no government [as such] can have any command over the King's troops in his government whilst an officer is present with the superior rank to colonel." This jealousy could have inspired him not to "share" responsibility and his authority with Chester. He did not believe that Chester should have any authority over the military. For a colony on the verge of war, this could be disastrous.[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid; Clinton to Campbell, October 21, 1780, Cited in Starr, Tories, p. 181-82.

From the beginning Campbell was pessimistic about the defenses of West Florida. In letter after letter he complained of the "Ruin and Desolation" of the "military works." If war broke out, which by now no one doubted, Campbell's defense plan was to attack New Orleans first. If he were successful, then the delapidated condition of Florida's forts would not matter. If he was not or if Bernardo de Galvez, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, attacked first, Campbell could find himself in serious trouble.[28]

Unfortunately for Campbell, Galvez did attack first. Not until September 9 did Campbell receive word that Spain had entered the war, but news had reached Galvez by August 20 at the latest. Galvez then attacked the British Mississippi forts, and on September 21, 1779 Baton Rouge fell and Natchez surrendered.[29]

Even with the colony under direct attack, Campbell and Chester could not bury their differences. In November, Chester sent home a blistering attack on Campbell's policies. Chester believed it was Campbell's fault that Baton Rouge and Natchez had fallen and accused Campbell of not sending enough men to defend them. Even worse in Chester's mind, Campbell "has never thought proper to communicate to me one plan, or ask my opinion upon one subject, necessary for the Welfare or Defense of the Province." Campbell did not believe he had

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[28]Campbell to Clinton, March 22, 1779, cited in Osborn, "Campbell," p. 322-25.

[29]Johnson, West Florida, p. 212; Osborn, "Campbell," p. 326-28.

to ask the governor's opinion on anything. In a letter to a fellow officer, Campbell wrote:

> . . . I understand that Governor Chester is restricted and prohibited from any interference, Command or Controll [sic] over His Majesty's Forces in West Florida; and His Excellency the Commander in Chief Orders to me that on my Arrival here I was to take upon me Command of His Majesty's Forces in West Florida.

This seems to show his opinion of the limits of his command and role Chester played within these limits.[30]

The year 1780 brought no end to the problems in West Florida. In February, Galvez left New Orleans for Mobile. His force of twelve ships and 750 men were reinforced by five ships from Havana before the expedition arrived at Mobile on March 1. Lieutenant Governor Durnford was in command of Fort Charlotte, and he refused the first Spanish offer for surrender. The Spanish then set up siege operations and by March 12 had breached the walls of the fort. Campbell rushed reinforcements to Mobile, but they arrived too late. On the morning of the 13th Durnford capitulated, and the relief force retreated. Galvez then prepared to attack Pensacola, the last British stronghold in West Florida.[31]

While the province was slowly being overrun, Chester and Campbell carried on a bitter fight over the awarding of contracts for the

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[30]Chester to Board of Trade, November 15, 1779, M.P.A., 8 [no page]; Campbell to J. Robertson, July 27, 1780, M.P.A., 9: 237-38.

[31]Johnson, West Florida, p. 211.

approximately 2,500 man garrison at Pensacola. Chester attempted to restrict Campbell's control over the supplies for the garrison. When a letter arrived from the treasury department requesting a list of the type and quantities of supplies, the governor took it upon himself to do the job. His commission did grant him control over storehouses and control over contracts issued to the colony, but the letter was addressed "to the officer commanding His Majesty's troops." It seems, however, that Chester's name had been attached to the original letter, and Chester felt that it was his responsibility. Campbell insisted that Chester's name had been added by mistake, which Chester denied. Clearly the issue was not simply who would compile a mere list, but who controlled the supervision of "contracts for supplying the garrison at Pensacola." Mobile had just fallen, Pensacola was threatened, and the most important men in the colony were arguing over that.[32]

Galvez did not sit still after the capture of Mobile. During the winter of 1780-81, he organized his forces at Havana and on the last day of February easily entered Pensacola harbor, thanks to its inadequate defenses. The siege was long and stubborn, but on May 8, the powder magazine was hit by a shell, and the resulting explosion so damaged the fort that further resistance was useless. Spain had achieved its revenge. It took two more years of negotiations, but

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[32]Osborn, "Campbell," p. 332; John Robinson to [?], October 3, 1779, M.P.A., 9: 249; Campbell to Chester, July 26, 1780, M.P.A., 9: 240-41. Chester to Campbell, July 28, 1780, M.P.A., 9: 242-45.

in 1783 the Floridas were returned to Spain.[33]

The last decades of British rule in West Florida saw an improvement in relations between the civil and military authorities for several reasons. First, the colony had a brigadier general from 1767 to 1773 and from 1778 to 1781, and this helped to regularize relations between the governors and the military. While there were quarrels between the governors and brigadiers during this time, there were none of the absurd antics that marked the Johnstone disputes. Second, and more important, the men involved were a little more conciliatory toward each other. They were willing to work out their problems through compromise rather than forcing the other side to back down.

The British in this last decade had taken a lackadaisical view of defense, and by the time the mistake had been realized, it was too late. Furthermore, in trying to solve the disputes between the governor and the army, the British government weakened the military's ability to defend the colony. When London during the Johnstone and Chester disputes had taken control of the forts away from the military, it created a situation where the colony was in grave danger of being lost.

Campbell and Chester did not work closely together. They were more concerned with protecting their own spheres of influence than with working to fend off the Spanish attack. The British government had contributed to a disaster by so completely dividing the civil and military authorities in West Florida.

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[33]Johnson, West Florida, p. 216-18.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Studying the problem of divided authority in West Florida raises two interesting questions: Why was the British colony of West Florida such a failure and so easily conquered, and what does the civil-military dispute in the colony reveal in general about the problem of divided authority in British North America.

The disputes that racked the colony from the establishment of civil government were partially responsible for the loss of West Florida. The quarrels between Johnstone and his commanders were by far the most destructive. Johnstone's drive to acquire command of the military split the colony into two hostile camps which, instead of working to make West Florida prosperous and stable, fought over their respective rights. Johnstone and subsequent governors would not renounce their powers over the military and at best would acknowledge only a shared command. Military commanders, on the other hand, regarded the governor's control as limited to the civil branch. The resulting squabbles poisoned relations between the two sides in the colony and at their height created a situation in which the military no longer controlled the fortifications it occupied. Unless the governors and commanders cooperated, there was little chance that the military could effectively defend the province. During the Revolution, this cooperation was nonexistent. With Chester and Campbell working independently of one another, there was little chance that West Florida could survive a

Spanish attack.[1]

The problem of divided authority was not unique to West Florida. Other colonies faced similar problems, and this suggests that the British had no coherent policy regarding the mission of the military in North America. In 1763, when the Pitt ministry decided to create a permanent American garrison, some officials in London believed that the army would be used to control the Indians. Others believed that it was to promote and protect imperial trade. Still others indicated that it would be used to control the colonists. Without a clear statement of military policy, London could seldom decide who had ultimate control over the colonial garrison. Neither the ministry, the governors, nor the commanders, had any precedents to follow, since the military establisment in America before 1763 had been small and under the command of the governors. This failure to formulate a new statement of policy regarding the military is the major reason the problem of divided authority arose.[2]

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[1]Clarence E. Carter, "Some Aspects of British Administration in West Florida," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 1 (December 1914): 374-75; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 155; Smith, "Mermaids Riding Alligators," p. 445.

[2]Ira D. Gruber, "The Origins of British Strategy in the War for American Independence," in Military History of the American Revolution, edited by Stanley J. Underal (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 43; Shy, Toward Lexington, especially chapters two, four, six, seven, and nine; John W. Shy, "Thomas Gage: Weak Link of Empire," in George Washington's Opponents: British General and Admirals in the American Revolution, edited by George Athan Billias (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1969), p. 11, 13-14.

The main reason for this incoherent policy was the absence of any clear lines of authority over the military in London, between London and its commanders, or within the North American command. In London no one man or ministerial office had ultimate control over the military. While the crown was trying to tighten control over the military in the colonies, there was no similar centralization in London. And the instability of British ministries further complicated matters. In the decade of the 1760's ministries changed so often that no clear policy could develop.

Problems stemming from the lack of clearly defined authority and a coherent policy regarding the military were complicated by the distance between America and London. When it took upwards of three months to make an inquiry and receive an answer, a dispute could quickly become unreconcilable. The time involved in asking a superior for advice usually left to the conflicting parties the job of settling the problem themselves. With no precedents to follow, the process led to endless bickering between commanders and governors seeking to establish them.[3]

Even when superiors did intervene and try to solve the disputes, they failed. Neither the Commander in Chief nor officials in London ever issued the clear-cut orders that West Florida and other colonies needed to solve the problem of divided authority. Only in Canada where the government decided to combine the office of brigadier and governor

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[3]Starr, Tories, p. 12-13; Shy, Toward Lexington, p. 48.

was there an attempt to solve the problem. This solution may have worked for West Florida, but the British governments wanted to encourage settlement to the colony and needed to have a civil government similar to those in the older colonies to attract settlers. Combining the offices of brigadier and governor might have raised the specter of a military force independent of civil control.

Creation of the office of Commander in Chief, as Thomas Pownall argued, may be another reason there was so much trouble in West Florida. How could a Commander in Chief in New York effectively control a military force in Florida? The office reduced the power of the governors. While their commissions gave them authority over the military, they could not command it. Disputes over control of the military weakened both sides considerably, and may be one reason why West Florida and the rest of the colonies could not handle the problem of the 1760's, and why the colonies were able to successfully break from England in the 1770's.

APPENDIX

Halifax's Letter Concerning Disputed Commands

Haxifax to Gage, February 9, 1765

. . . in order to prevent in future all Misunderstandings between the Civil Governors & Military Commanders concerning their respective Powers, the King has been pleased to declare it to be his Intention.

That, according to His Majesty's Commission granted for that purpose, the Orders of His Commander in Chief, and, under him, of the Brigadiers General commanding in the Northern and Southern Departments, in all Military Matters, shall be Supreme, and must be obey'd by the Troops, as such in all the Civil Governments of America.

That in cases, where no Specific Orders have been given by the Commander in Chief, or by the Brigadiers General Commanding in the District, . . . the Civil Governor may for the Benefit of his Government, give Orders for the Marching of Troops, the Disposition of them, for making and marching Detachments, Escorts, & such purely Military Services, within his government, to the Commanding Officer of the Troops who is to give the proper Orders for carrying the same into execution; provided they are not contradictory to, or incompatible with, any Orders he may have recieved [sic] from the Commander in Chief, or the Brigadier General of the District; And the Commanding Officer is from time to time duly to report, with all convenient Expedition, to the Commander in Chief, or to the Brigadier General, Orders, which he shall have so recieved [sic] from the Civil Governor.

That the Civil Governor of the Province shall give the Word in all Places, when he shall be within his Province, except when the Commander in Chief or Brigadier General shall be in the same place.

That the returns of the State & Condition of the Troops, Magazines, and Fortifications shall be made to the Governor, as well as to the Commander in Chief and Brigadier General.

That the Civil Governor is not to interfere with the detail of the Military Regimental Duty and Discipline, the Reports concerning which are to be made to the Commanding Officer, who is to make his General Report to the Civil Governor.

When the Commander in Chief or Brigadier General shall be present, all Military Orders are to be issued by them only.

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THE CIVIL-MILITARY CONFLICT IN BRITISH WEST FLORIDA, 1763-1783

by

Gregory A. Smith

(ABSTRACT)

After the Seven Years War, the British government decided to keep a large military force in North America. To coordinate these forces, the Crown decided to continue the office of Commander in Chief. The Commander in Chief had broad authority over the military in the American colonies. This authority, however, conflicted sharply with similar prerogatives granted to royal governors. With neither side willing to surrender any of their power or authority, a series of battles broke out over the supremacy of the army in almost every colony where royal troops were stationed. West Florida, a British colony established after the Seven Years War from captured French and Spanish Territory, provides an excellent example of how the civil-military conflicts could cripple royal government in a colony. Many historians have failed to assess adequately the impact these disputes had on colonial government in America. The purpose of this thesis is to show that the civil-military disputes disrupted colonial governments, and was one of the forces that led to the breakdown of British rule in North America during the 1760's and 1770's.