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Enclosure in Letter from William Digges Latouche to the Secret Committee of 13 May 1783

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	IOR/L/PS/9/76/32
Date(s)	23 May 1783 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
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About this record

An extract of an intelligence report sent by Sir Robert Ainslie, HM Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, to William Digges Latouche, Resident at Bussora [Basra], received in Bussora on 23 May 1783.

The report concerns the assembly of a large French force at Nice by Baron de Saint-Geniès, thought to be heading for India to capture Tranquebar [Tharangambadi] or establish a colony (see also IOR/L/PS/9/76/25).

This extract was enclosed in Latouche's letter to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors for Affairs of the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies (East India Company), dated 13 May 1783 (IOR/L/PS/9/76/28 and 29).

A duplicate of the report is catalogued as IOR/L/PS/9/76/36.

1 Duplicate Copy.

Extract of Intelligence received by His Excellency, Sir
Robert Ainslie, received at Buzsora the 10th May 1783.

Having begun to give you an account, of the strange
Expedition fitting out in the Ports, on this Side of the Mediterranean,
I think it necessary to continue to transmit to your Excellency,
what I learn, with regard to the Progress of it, that you may be able
to judge how far it deserves Attention. On a slight Consideration,
it was natural to imagine, the Managers of the Enterprise, had
been advised by the French Ministry, to equip their Vessels in neutral
Ports, with a View to elude the British Cruisers in the Mediterranean
during the War, and that immediately on the Signature of the
Preliminaries, the whole would have fallen to the Ground. But the
continued Activity, with which the Preparations were carried on,
after that Event took place, gave Room to conjecture, that these
Adventurers had in the probable Prospect of a Peace, been purposely
placed beyond the reach of the French Jurisdiction, that no stipulation
agreed to by the Court of Versailles, might prevent their proceeding
to the Place of their Destination. And from the Language held by
the Conductor of the Enterprise the Baron de St. Leger to those with
whom he conversed more unguardedly on the Subject, there was
Reason to apprehend, that a Plan was formed to undermine our
Empire, and usurp a Share of our Trade in the East Indies, by the
same Means which have proved too successful in America. Among
other remarkable Expressions, he said, he was confident the English
with all their Power, would not be able to maintain their Ground five
Years longer in Hindostan, you will not therefore be surpris'd,
that I viewed the Matter with a Degree of Anxiety, and thought it
proper to mention to Your Excellency, as well as to Lord Grantham,
and to Mr. Pitt-Coburn. Latter Accounts present it under a new
Aspect. It is said, that a Count de Limburg stirring / of the immediate

Stability

stability of the Empire, but who resides at Paris/pretends in consequence of his Descent from the Dukes of Holstein, to have certain Claims on the Danish Settlement of Tranquabar. that he has made over his Rights, or entrusted the Vindication of them, to Baron de St. Luce whose Intention is to endeavor to take that Place by Surprise, and probably to sell it to the highest Bidder, and then join Hyder ally; unless a favorable Concurrence of Circumstances should tempt him to aim at establishing a new independent Power in India. He applied to a Relation of the Bailli de Suffren/who happens to be at St. Luce/for Recommendations to that Commander, who, he says, may be of Service to him, in a double Respect, to assist him to make his Bargain with Hyder ally, or to afford him, on any Point should he fail in his quixotic Attempt on Tranquabar. Some Persons who have seen the Commissions of the Officers engaged by Monsieur de St. Luce, say they are signed Limburg, and countersigned St. Luce, and the Corps is to have the Name of the Legion de Limburg.

The Ferdinandian Ministry have all along been inclined to believe that the Expedition was intended for Constantinople, and some Expressions thrown out by the Managers of it, whether by Inadvertance or Design, seem still to confirm that Idea, but other Circumstances strongly indicate an Intention of proceeding to the East Indies; such as, that a great Number of the Troops and Officers, are enlisted to serve as Cavalry, and are to carry with them Furniture and Accoutrements for Horses, whereas it is well known, that there is no Encouragement for Foreigners in this Branch of Service in the Turkish Army. that they have purchased a great Number of Leather Bottles, which can hardly be meant for anything else, than a long Journey by Land. that they carry with them, a great Number of Women and Children, which appears to point at some kind of fixed Establishment. I have heard it thrown out that Count Limburg has some Connections with the Court of Vienna, and may have been employed by the Emperor on this Occasion. an Idea, that assumes a Degree of Credibility from the Circumstance of his Imperial Majesty having for some Time past discovered a Wish to acquire a permanent Establishment in India, and his having already had Differences with the Court of Copenhagen, on the Subject of an Island considered as Danish Property. but I see no real Ground for this
Supposition

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May 1783 [2r] (3/4)

②

Supposition, unless it be the general Improbability, that an Individual would have attempted so wild an Enterprise, without the Certainty of future and powerful Support. Be this as it will, the Undertaking, is not publicly protected by the Court of Versailles. The Embargo, has been laid on one of their Vessels in the Port of Marseilles, and Orders have been given by the Government to arrest Monsieur de St Genie, in any Part of France where he may be found, and his Lieutenant Colonel, was seized at Antibes three Weeks ago, in consequence of the Information given by the French Consul at Tripoli. In the mean Time, I am assured one of their Vessels, has appeared at Leghorn, and is already sailed again from thence; and that others are still preparing to sail from the Ports, in the Principality of Monaco, and in the Genoese Territories. But I have no accurate Intelligence on this Head.

Bussora
the 26th May 1783.
A true Copy.
William Digges Latouche

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May 1783 [2v] (4/4)

