Letter from John Spencer Smith to Harford Jones

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	IOR/L/PS/9/76/91
Date(s)	17 Jul 1799-17 Aug 1799 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 item (4 folios)
Copyright for document	Open Government Licence

About this record

A copy of a letter from John Spencer Smith, Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople [Istanbul], to Harford Jones, Resident in Bagdad [Baghdad], sent from Constantinople and dated 17 August 1799.

The letter forwards a report on the movements of French and Spanish warships for the attention of Rear-Admiral John Blankett, Commander of the British naval squadron in the Red Sea (see below). It also forwards a proclamation from the Porte [Government of the Ottoman Empire] appealing to French troops to desert and offering safe passage home, which Spencer Smith recommends Blankett to distribute in Suez and Cosseir [Al Qusayr] (not enclosed).

Attached is a letter from Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, sent from Mahone [Mahón] and dated 17 July 1799. The letter forwards reports from a Gibraltar privateer that the combined French and Spanish fleet has entered the Atlantic Ocean, pursued by Vice-Admiral George Keith Elphinstone.

(1)

Constantinople 17 August 1799.

Sir,

My last dispatch concluded with an account of all that was then known of the Enemy's fleets. I now take up the pen to give you our subsequent information which cannot prove less interesting in India than the former intelligence. It is contained in the annexed paper, sent to me by Rear Admiral Lord Nelson containing the deposition of the Master of a Gibraltar privateer by which the Combined fleets appear beyond a doubt to have reposed into the Atlantic on or about the 9. July followed by his Majesty's fleet under Vice Admiral Lord Keith.

I transmit this document principally for the information of R. Admiral Blankett: to whom you will consequently take the trouble to forward. It with my best compliments and good wishes, In point of opinion there upon altho' the undiscovered movements of a force of this magnitude be undoubtedly

Harford Jones Esq.r &c.

undoubtedly a Source of disquietude: yet I by no means feel justified in has arding the Supposition that any dangerous detachment may be sent towards the Indian Seas: nor to create any alarme which might check Admiral Blankett's ofpera:tions in that Side.

On the Contrary is my ain to contribute to their efficacy by putting into that Commanderi hands a weapon which has been judged useful in those of our Commodore on this Side. It is at all events necessary that our thró Squadron cooperating to one common purpose the deliverance of the Otto=man territories should be guided by one common System avowed by this Court and concurred in by His Majesty's Mission I the=refore beg you will equally convey to Admiral Blankett or the Commanding officer on the coasts of Arabia, the enclosed certified Copy, of a proclamation, to disseminate amongst the french Troops whereby the Porte aims at weakening the Enemy's force in Egypt, and even at its total evacuation by facilitating the means of escape to the discontented individuals of that army. and even extending the mild condition of conveyance home safe in person and property to whole corps or garrisons, enclined to lay down their arms: and to turn their backs upon their iniquitous chief who has betrayed them to their ruin, and sa=

=crificed

(2)

sacrificed the flower of his fellow Soldiers to his own selfish purposes. This is considered as the fit language by which to insulate him whom it would be advisable by all possible means to bar the escape of to commit more mischief elsewhere; and if praticable procure his being sent dead or alive to Constantinople For I anticipate the posibility of his seeking an issue for his own person to the Mauritius, now that his obedience to the recall of the Directory is rendered sohopeless by way of the Mediterranean.

Admiral Blankett might do well to distribute at Cosseir, and Suez a number of these which can be expeditiously reprinted at Bombay, and quarranted by his countersignature.

I have the honor to be with great truth and regard

Sir

Your most obedient

humble Servant

Spencer Smith

(3)

Copy for Admiral Blankett

Mahone the 17. July 1799.

Joseph Montano Master of the Privateer called the Prince Edward his crew consisting of 23. Men arrived this Morning at 11. O'Clock, delivered his dispatches at one quarter before Twelve and gave verbally the following Intelligence.

That on Sunday the 7. Instant early in the Morning a Signal was hoisted, on the Rock at Gibraltar for a fleet seen to the East, that between 7. and 8 of same, Morning Lord St. Vincent ordered a Kings Cutter to go and reconnoitre the fleet (light breezes from the West) as the Cutter did not return Montano was ordered to repair to Lord St. Vincent on board a Line of Battle Ship in the Bay, the only one there, at 12. O'Clock he was directed to ready for sea, and at about 7. (the Cutter was not returned) he took on board an English Officer he supposed to be a Capt of a Frigate with dispatches, he immediately rowed round the Rock and at about 8 O'Clock he set sail Wind N.W. he steered East, and at three the next Morning having gone about 24. Miles he heard about 10. (praised) Guns fired it

it thundered and lightened was very gloomy and by means of the Lightening he perceived the fleet to be South of him, but could not Count the Number, he Continued, to steer East, and Saw nothing, more till the 11: about: Midday when the Officer Spoke the Master of a Danish Brig 15: Leagues to the South of Alicante coming from Norway and bound for Naples who informed him that on the 1: Instant being off Cape Gate was board or Saw the French & Spanish fleets 60 in number the greatest part of which were Line of Battle Ships he further Says that on the 11: being to the S.E. of Ivica distant about 12: Miles, he discovered the Fleet Commanded by Lord Keith going under an easy Sail (a convoy preceeding it) Composed of 31: Line of Battle Ships and One frigate about five he Spoke a Line of Battle Ship of Said fleet and about two the Officer he had on Board went into Lord Keiths Ship the privateer was detained about a quarter of an hour and received dispatches for Mahon, the fleet crowded all Sail possible, when he left Gibraltar, Lord St Vincent dispatched a Privateer for Portugal from, the Wind he had he Supposes the Enemy's fleet might go through the Fret, if not on the 8: 9. Certainly he judges Lord Keiths fleet may have passed the Streights of Gibraltar by this Time on the

15

(4)

15. and 16. the Wind was very fresh from the East.

Yrs Apri

Harford Jones

(4v)

To Lieut. Col. Harford
Jones
Resident Bushire
Persia

L/PS/9/76/91