



*Part Four*  
*The Twilight of the Favourite*



*Nicolas Fouquet, the Favourite Manqué*

M. FUMAROLI

At Nantes on 5 September 1661, as the *surintendant* Nicolas Fouquet (pl. 59) emerged from an audience with the king, his chair was stopped by d'Artagnan accompanied by fifteen musketeers.<sup>1</sup> D'Artagnan handed the minister a *lettre de cachet* signed by the king. Fouquet read the missive, and merely remarked 'that he thought that he held a higher place in the king's esteem than anyone else in the kingdom'.<sup>2</sup>

In La Fontaine's poem, *Elégie aux Nymphe de Vaux*, circulated early the following year by the friends of the imprisoned *surintendant*, the poet, imploring the king's mercy, calls on him to witness the 'know thyself' of the favourite disillusioned with favours:

Voilà le précipice où l'ont enfin jeté  
 Les attraits enchanteurs de la prospérité.  
 Dans les palais des rois, cette plainte est commune  
 On n'y connaît que trop les jeux de la Fortune  
 Ses trompeuses faveurs, ses appas inconstants:  
 Mais on ne les connaît que quand il n'est plus temps  
 . . .  
 Jamais un favori ne borne sa carrière;  
 Il ne regarde point ce qu'il laisse en arrière;  
 Et tout ce vain amour des grandeurs et du bruit  
 Ne le saurait quitter qu'après l'avoir détruit.<sup>3</sup>

The 'disgraced favourite' is, as other essays in this volume make clear, one of the commonplace figures in the imagination of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Deceptive enchantment, the height of vanity, a slippery cake of soap, the inconstancy of the sea winds, all these metaphors of tragic irony make of the disgraced favourite a literary character *par excellence* in the seventeenth century. Nicolas Fouquet, in his own right an accomplished man of letters, adulated by the great writers and poets of his day when he was at the pinnacle of his fame,

would possibly receive even greater acclaim after his fall. His charm and misfortune would cast a permanent shadow over the early reign of Louis XIV (pl. 60), and even today they overshadow the radiance of the Great King, just as the prophetic fury of Saint-Simon's *Mémoires* overshadows the closing years of his reign.

The 'favourite', an emblem of transience and illusion, is the antithesis of an institution.<sup>5</sup> In France, apart from the pathetic connotation it might assume in lyrical and tragic poetry, the word 'favourite' designated a political monster: a recipient of the king's personal favours who takes advantage of his master in order to exercise a power in the state which is by definition tyrannical. Nicolas Fouquet would never become a favourite in this quasi-legal sense, though his own destiny would be as tragic. It is this singularity that I wish to examine here.

First of all it is necessary at least to sketch out the typology of the minister and the favourite in France to determine what makes Nicolas Fouquet such a singular case. Louis XIII would have 'favourites' after 1626 in the private sense as the jesuit Bouhours understood it, when he wrote that favourites had no direct relationship to the public sphere. Chalais, Saint-Simon and Cinq Mars were all 'favourites', but they never became ministers. Nevertheless, Richelieu (pls 26 and 47–57), Louis XIII's chief minister after 1624, was dubbed a 'favourite' by the opposition in the sense that, as an agent of royal power, he had wielded it like a Machiavellian prince with Louis XIII's consent. On the other hand, under Henri IV, Villeroy and Sully in particular were never described as 'favourites' but as ministers. They were the servants of a king who governed by himself; they had not taken advantage of the ambiguous favour which originates in the private sphere and spreads out unhindered into the public domain.

As early as 1515, in *De Asse*, Guillaume Budé, the father of French legal humanism, had launched a violent attack on the mismanagement of Louis XII's favourite, Cardinal d'Amboise, who had shown a preference for employing Italians and who had embroiled the king in a disastrous venture in Italy. Budé complained that the kings of France had adopted the disastrous habit of surrendering their power to ambitious and greedy men rather than exercising power by themselves with the love of their people. For Budé, a minister is a man who serves the king while the king exercises full power himself. But a favourite is someone who takes advantage of the king's weakness to misuse royal power and upsets the entire legitimate edifice of the monarchy.<sup>6</sup>

A century and a half later, when another giant of French legal humanism, Pierre Dupuy, wanted to make the name of Richelieu hateful in retrospect, he attributed to him the following maxim: 'No favourite or minister ever perished because he did too little harm, but because he did not do enough.'<sup>7</sup>

In the *Histoire des favoris anciens et modernes*, a posthumous work by Pierre Dupuy published in Leyden in 1660, the only Frenchman mentioned, in an appendix, is Concino Concini, the maréchal d'Ancre, the Italian favourite of

EMBARQUEMENT DU ROI ET DU CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU POUR LA ROCHELLE

47 Jean Picart after Abraham Bosse, *Le Gallion de Roy flottant sur l'océan*. (Engraving in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

## LE GALLION DV ROY. FLOTTANT SVR LOCCEAN, AVEC SES ARGONAVTES STANCES, AVX BONS FRANÇOIS.

48 Jean Ganière, *Richelieu as Defender of France against the Habsburgs* (c. 1628). (Engraving in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

## EMBLEME SUR L'EXTIRPATION DE L'HERESIE, ET DE LA REBELLION PAR LES SOINS DU CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU.



T'EST EN ASES, ILLUS, ET excellant Ministre,  
Qui riche Pouvoirs le plus hôte des Rois,  
Cointant bon le nous lou Profege fainstre,  
Pour ses illustrer jans dante vigeage aux Louys

O qui n'esp Reps ses Transmes fent vides  
Pour ces de toutes parts en voys esclusas  
Ces hystoires punis, et ces vilains Répiles  
Qui tâchent de ternir la beauté de nos LIS.

POUR empêcher ces Fleurs Royales et Daines,  
(Trop cher aux François, et Gage precieux)  
Il ne se laisse point darracher les spines,  
Qui ferment dans nos Chants les mœurs du Patrieux

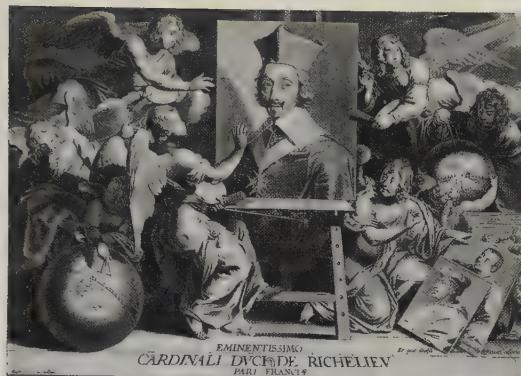
MAS tout nos Enemis trou fables pour nous envier  
Sont en vain contre nous de nos forces  
Car le lion dompté, et l'Aigle de l'honneur  
Tremblent sous RICHELIEU qui les tient en place

49 Philippe de Champaigne, *Cardinal Richelieu*. (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

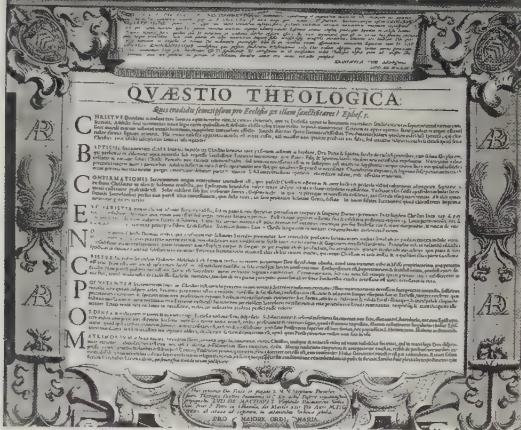


50 Michel Lasne after Philippe de Champaigne, *Cardinal Richelieu Receives the Ducal Crown*. (Engraving in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

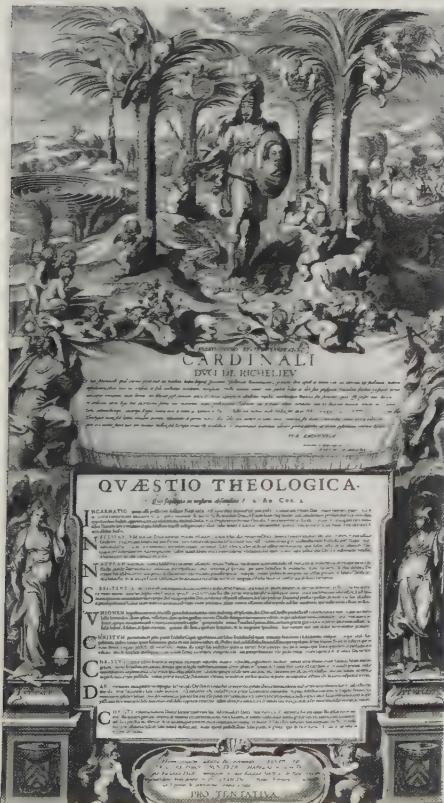




EMINENTISSIMO  
CARDINALI DUCO DE RICHELIEU  
PARIS 1635



51 Michel Lasne after Claude Vignon, thesis of Louis de Machault, prior of Saint-Pierre d'Abbeville (1635), frontispiece. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)



52 Michel Lasne after Abraham van Diepenbeek, thesis of Laurent de Brisacier (1632), frontispiece. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)



53 Grégoire Huret, thesis of Jean Chaillou (1639), frontispiece. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

54 Jacques Stella, *Liberality of Titus* (c. 1637–8).  
(Fogg Art Museum, Harvard)



55 Claude Vignon, *Triumph of Hercules* (1634).  
(Caisse de Monuments Historiques et des Sites,  
Paris)



56 Nicolas Poussin, *Moses and the Burning Bush* (1641). (Statens Museum für Kunst, Copenhagen)



57 Nicolas Poussin, *Time Rescuing Truth from Envy and Discord* (1640). (Musée du Louvre, Paris)





58 Charles Le Brun, *The King Governs by Himself* (1661). (Galerie des Glaces, Château de Versailles)



59 Nicolas Fouquet: the favourite manqué. An engraving of 1660 by Claude Mellan.  
(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

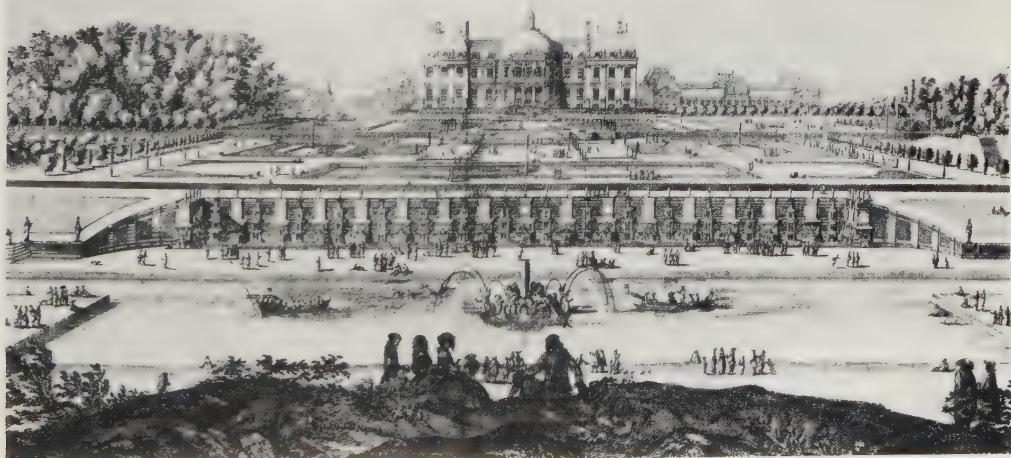
60 Louis XIV of France painted by Henri Testelon in 1648. (Musée du Château de Versailles)





61 Jean Baptiste Colbert: Louis XIV's *contrôleur général des Finances* and a member of his ministerial team. Painted by Claude Lefebvre in 1666. (Musée du Château de Versailles)

62 Fouquet's château, Vaux-le-Vicomte, a residence fit for a king. Engraving by Israel Silvestre. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)



63 Prince Ferdinand Portia, tutor and favourite of the Emperor Leopold I. (Engraving in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)



GIO:FERNANDO DEL SR.I PRINCIPE DI PORTIA,  
MITTERBURG, CONTE DI BRUGNARA, ET ORTENBURG  
SIGNOR IN SENOSETCH, E PREMB, CA' DEL TOSON D'OR  
MAGGIORDOMO MAGGIORE, E PRIMO MINISTRO DI  
LEOPOLDO CESARE.  
*A. Morn. del.*

et Nijssens, Fe, Vienna

64 Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor. Engraving.



LEOPOLDUS D. G. ROMAN: IMPERATOR  
SEMPER AUGUSTUS GERMANIE HUNGARIE  
BOHEMIE, ETC REX ARCHIDUX AUSTRIE, DUX  
BRUGENIE

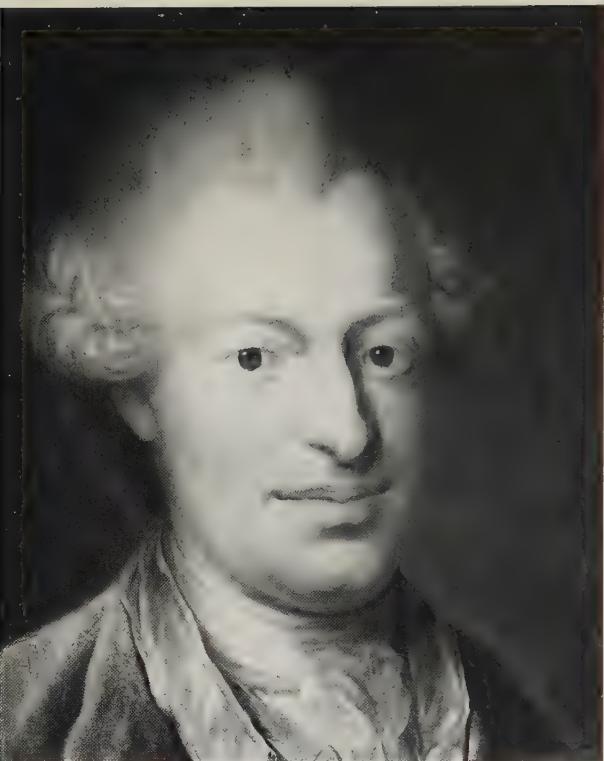


65 Peter Schumacher, Count of Griffenfeld, apostle of absolutism. Painting of the early 1670s by Abraham Wuchters. (Rosenborg Castle, Denmark)

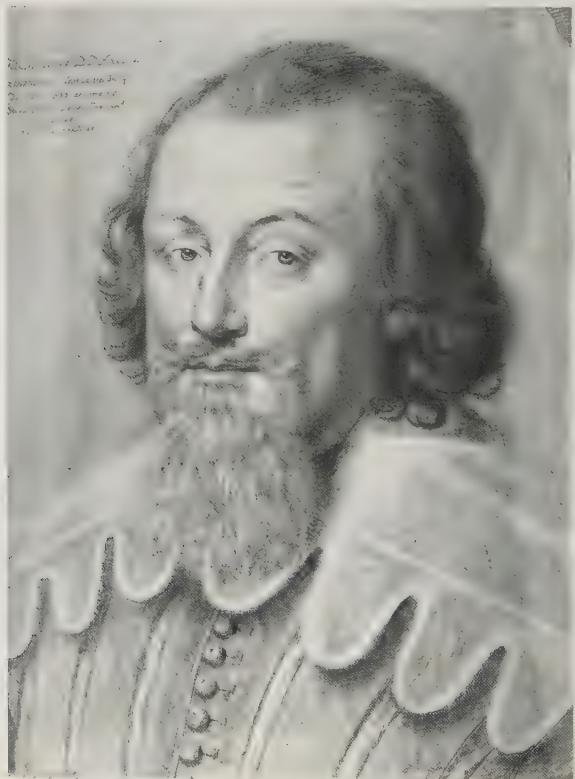


66 Corfitz Ulfeldt, son-in-law and right-hand man to the aging Christian IV of Denmark. Painting of 1638 by Engel Rooswijk. (Det Nationalhistoriske Museum på Frederiksborg, Hillerød)

67 Johann Frederick Struensee,  
physician to Christian VII and the  
last Danish royal favourite. Painting  
by C.A. Lorentzen. (Det  
Nationalhistoriske Museum på  
Frederiksborg, Hillerød)



68 Axel Oxenstierna, chancellor to  
Gustavus Adolphus and Queen  
Christina of Sweden. Portrait of 1633  
by D. Dumonstier. (Statens  
Konstmuseer, Stockholm)



Fly Finch, Wren Winde ore the Banke, Run Razz.



69 The scapegoats of Charles I's personal rule. A woodcut of 1641 showing Laud imprisoned in the Tower of London, looking out at the ghost of Strafford.

70 Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, Lord Deputy of Ireland. Painting of 1636 by Anthony Van Dyck. (National Portrait Gallery, London).



71 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, Charles II of England's Lord Chancellor. Painting of c. 1654 by Adriaen Hanneman. (Private collection)





72 Maximilien de Béthune, duc de Sully, Henri IV's *surintendent des finances*. Engraving, probably from the painting by Ambroise Dubois, in the *Collection d'Estampes*. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)



73 Prince Potemkin, favourite of Catherine II of Russia. Engraving.



74 The Austrian Chancellor Prince Metternich: the last favourite?

Marie de Médicis whom Louis XIII had had assassinated in 1617. The work purports to show, against the memory of Richelieu, that 'favourites' whose absolute power makes a mockery of the laws of the kingdom and who take advantage of the prince's favour are in fact despots opposed to the spirit of French institutions. Apart from the maréchal d'Ancre, the only other contemporary example cited was Rodrigo Calderón, a favourite of Philip III of Spain. To disqualify Mazarin during the Fronde, the *Mazarinades* had described him as a 'favourite'.<sup>8</sup>

Nicolas Fouquet, *procureur général* in the Parlement of Paris since 1650, and *surintendant de finances* in conjunction with Abel Servien since 1651, had made no secret of his ambition to succeed Cardinal Mazarin (pl. 27) as chief minister of the kingdom.<sup>9</sup> During his period as a candidate he was never described as a favourite; and indeed he was neither the favourite of Mazarin, who made a point of pitting him against rivals, first Servien then Colbert (pl. 61), nor did he become a favourite after the cardinal's death during the few months when Louis XIV, although maintaining him in his post of *surintendant*, was secretly plotting his downfall in close collaboration with Colbert. What won him the overall sympathy of the general public and men of letters, who saw him as an innocent victim of Colbert, the real 'favourite', first of Mazarin and then of Louis XIV, was the fact that he neither aspired to be nor became a favourite as Pierre Dupuy understood the term.

Fouquet owed his position as *surintendant* and minister of state not to the favour of Mazarin, who stood in awe of him, but to the immense services he had rendered the queen mother and her chief minister and favourite in the thick of the Fronde of the princes. While Mazarin, unanimously hated, had been forced to flee abroad or stay away from court between August 1652 and February 1653, Nicolas Fouquet, the leader of the loyalist Parlement which had taken refuge at Pontoise – at Fouquet's suggestion – had shown all the intelligence, authority and diplomacy of a statesman, often dictating the conduct of the absent Mazarin and standing in for his disconcerted ministers. His own financial standing and that of his family had already by then enabled him to finance the royal army at home and on the frontiers. It was common knowledge that the crown and Cardinal Mazarin were indebted to Fouquet, who had prepared the triumphant return of the minister to Paris in February 1653 with the help of his brother. On his return Mazarin had no alternative but to nominate Nicolas Fouquet *surintendant des finances* of the kingdom, though he was cautious enough to associate him with Abel Servien in this position.<sup>10</sup>

The real 'favourite' of the cardinal was Colbert, administrator of the cardinal's personal fortune since 1651. He existed through and expected all from him. Fouquet existed by himself and made himself known by himself, through the great political role he had played in the Parlement of Paris at the end of the crisis of the Fronde and by his high standing which made him irreplaceable in the financing of the state. Colbert was the intimate accomplice of his master. This intimacy gave him the means to work against the *surintendant*

and nourish the jealousy and irritation Mazarin felt against a man who had become too indispensable. Goaded on by Colbert, the cardinal expected his new *surintendant* to make regular contributions to the financial needs of the state and on occasion also to the rebuilding of his personal fortune at the expense of the state. Fouquet was forced to walk a tightrope. In 1659 Colbert addressed an exceptionally violent memorandum to the cardinal to overwhelm him with the 'irregularities' committed by Fouquet. Mazarin did not want to follow Colbert's lead, and had even entreated the two men to settle their differences.<sup>11</sup>

On the death of Mazarin in March 1661, therefore, matters hung in abeyance. What was needed now was a decision from the young king. Until then Fouquet had not perhaps been sufficiently concerned. Colbert, on the other hand, following Mazarin's advice, had long since gained the personal confidence of Louis XIV, a docile disciple of the Italian cardinal since early childhood. The young king must have been even more aware than his master of the different positions of Colbert and Fouquet: one was an authority unto himself, who enjoyed a power and a popularity he owed entirely to his own personal abilities and services rendered to the state; the other was an obscure *intendant* who could achieve success, as he understood very well, only by keeping out of the limelight and advancing through the king's favour. Mazarin had already made known his preference for Colbert, to which Louis XIV could only acquiesce. Herein lay the weak spot in Fouquet's ambitious plans.

Moral and political issues of the utmost importance were at stake in the impending decision of the young king. He left matters in abeyance between the death of the cardinal on 9 March 1661 and the date of Fouquet's arrest on 5 September the same year.

The first issue at stake for the king was to free his reign of the odour of racketeering which had made Mazarin's ministry so abhorrent. The gigantic fortune accumulated by the cardinal since 1653 implied a management of public money damaging for the state and shocking to the taxpayers.

As Mazarin's *intendant*, Colbert was in a better position than anyone else to know by what means and how much the cardinal had pillaged the state coffers. Ironically, however, it was his position inside the mismanagement of state funds that made his strength and covered him: for reasons of state the accounts of the cardinal, a 'favourite' of the queen mother and the official designer of the victory of the king over the two Fronde uprisings, could not be publicly attacked. On the other hand, Colbert could intimate to the king that his great rival Fouquet, so much more visible in the public eye than he was himself, was the ideal scapegoat for the cardinal's maladministration of finances. By sacrificing Mazarin's over-conspicuous *surintendant des finances*, he could spare the cardinal's memory, and at the same time satisfy public opinion, by showing that the king was determined to break with the criminal financial practices which had so appalled public opinion under Mazarin. The consequence of Fouquet's sacrifice was the political triumph of Colbert.

Nicolas Fouquet was almost defenceless against this plot: as he had in actual fact been responsible for public finances since 1653, he could be accused of all the misdealing in the place of his deceased master. He was a wealthy man in his own right and through his second marriage into the family of président Jeannin de Castille, *surintendant des finances* under Marie de Médicis. But his opulent lifestyle and his generous patronage of poets and artists might suggest that he was the prime beneficiary of a financial system which the cardinal had sponsored (pl. 62), which Mazarin had more than anyone else used to his own advantage, but from which, for reasons of state, the dead cardinal must be absolved.<sup>12</sup>

This moral and financial stake linked to the memory of Cardinal Mazarin was coupled with a political stake in 1661, this time connected with the legacy of Cardinal Richelieu: the absolutism which the latter had made predominant in the conduct of affairs of state during his ministry. On the threshold of his personal reign, Colbert and Fouquet represented two opposing options for Louis XIV, and Mazarin had left it up to his disciple the king to decide between them.

Colbert could promise the king that he would accomplish the work of the two cardinal ministers, crush the seeds of the Fronde once and for all and resume the construction of the absolute state which had slowed down almost to a standstill under Anne of Austria.

Fouquet, on the other hand, let the French public foresee a regime of reconciliation, synthesis and compromise between the restored authority of the state and the political forces which had strenuously opposed the excesses of absolutism since 1624.

How could Fouquet, so clearly a member of the party that had been victorious in the Fronde, appear in 1657–61 as the candidate for chief minister, supported not only by former *frondeurs* such as the duc de La Rochefoucauld but also by moderate loyalists? The party of reconciliation which he led responded to a personal inclination already perceptible in his earlier career, and to a tradition derived from his personal background. His father, François Fouquet, first magistrate and then *conseiller d'état*, had served Richelieu well, although with moderation and personal reservations. Nicolas himself, a *conseiller* in the Parlement at Metz at the age of eighteen in 1633, was no doubt appreciated by Richelieu and his successor. An *intendant* of Dauphiné in 1645, he had fought off a fiscal revolt with a courage and a humanity that contrasted sharply with the customary repressive habits of royal agents. An *intendant de la généralité* in Paris in 1648, then *procureur général* in the Parlement of Pontoise in 1650, his loyalty towards the royal cause had always expressed itself with a freedom of speech and an original stance that heralded a totally different concept of the state from the one held by Mazarin and his ministers.<sup>13</sup> His remarriage, to Marie-Madeleine Jeannin de Castille in 1651, did not only make him a member of a very wealthy family: his wife was a cousin of Chalais' widow, a favourite of Louis XIII and an early victim of Richelieu's arbitrary rule.

François Fouquet, the father of Nicolas, had sat in the *chambre de justice* which had condemned Chalais to death. Fouquet had inside knowledge of the arbitrary nature and the violence inherent in absolute power. In 1657 he married his eldest daughter to Armand de Béthune, marquis de Charost, a great-nephew of Sully, whose legend, with its links to the good 'King Henri', was more popular than ever. These indications are consistent with what Fouquet stated in a letter to Mazarin as early as 1652, in which he outlined in no uncertain terms a political programme that was the exact opposite of absolutism.<sup>14</sup>

At the height of the Fronde uprising, he was working towards the victory of the king devoid of vengefulness and without a return to the excesses of authoritarianism that had so disgusted the French. He had opted for Cicero against Caesar, for Sully against Richelieu. The most discerning members of the vanquished *frondeurs* gave their support to him. His candidacy to succeed Mazarin was a response to the overall desire to put an end to extreme government. And he took pains to organize this consensus around his candidacy.

Between 1653 and 1659, when the death of Abel Servien left him as the sole *surintendant des finances*, Fouquet was building up a network of family connections, clients and friendships on all sides of the political divide. It was a real political party as well as a reservoir of funds. Were he to have become chief minister, this party would have enabled him to govern using the same blend of authority, diplomacy and humanity of which he had shown himself capable in 1651–3.<sup>15</sup>

The ramifications of his party were so far-reaching that, in the event of his disgrace, Fouquet could even envisage taking to the maquis and negotiating a 'settlement' with the court from a position of strength. What we have here is indeed a traditional view of monarchy, one with which Richelieu, *nolens volens*, had been obliged to come to terms in his conflicts with the princes or Protestants entrenched in their fortified strongholds. The notorious 'projet de défense' drafted by Fouquet in 1657–8, discovered behind a mirror in the château de Saint-Mandé in 1661, is indeed part of the traditional political game of the monarchy. Mazarin, 'disgraced' by the king against the king's own wishes, had, during the Fronde of the princes, set an example for Fouquet by negotiating his return from a position of strength, first from the fortified city of Sedan, and then from the German town of Brühl.<sup>16</sup>

The death of the Italian cardinal on 9 March 1661 left the succession open. Now for the first time the young king Louis XIV entered the scene at the age of twenty-two. Louis was known above all for his docile behaviour towards his master Mazarin, his talents as a dancer and his appetite for amorous affairs. On 10 March 1661, the young king gathered around him at the Louvre the chancellor Séguier, the *surintendant* Fouquet, the secretaries of state Le Tellier, Lionne, Loménie de Brienne and his son, Duplessis-Guénégaud and Phéypeaux de la Vrillière. According to the *Mémoires* of the young Brienne, to the general surprise of the assembly the king expressed in no uncertain terms his intention to govern by himself.<sup>17</sup>

This proud declaration seemed to correspond to the age-old desire to see the king of France exercise his *potestas* himself, without the services of a self-seeking 'favourite'. This desire had always emanated from the most liberal minds, who expected the king to exercise a moderate and generous power, the antithesis of the Machiavellian excesses committed by ephemeral 'favourites'. The king, it would seem therefore, for the first time since the reign of Henri IV, wanted to do without the services of a favourite and 'govern by himself'. In actual fact the end of his declaration gave Colbert his first opportunity and he became Fouquet's *contrôleur*. It intimated that beneath the ostentatious statement of principle lay the makings of a 'favourite'. No one could have imagined then that the king's avowed desire to 'govern alone' concealed a plan with the aid of the utterly devoted Colbert for restoring the absolute state that had made Richelieu hated and which the Fronde had stopped Mazarin from implementing. Fouquet and his friends were justified in thinking that this statement of aims marked the young king's desire to break with absolutism and therefore with the reign of 'favourites'.

No one had interpreted the victory of the regent and Mazarin over the two Frondes as a prelude to the restoration of the dictatorship which Richelieu had enforced between 1624 and 1641. The advent of civil peace was the result of a general weariness and Mazarin's able politics, supported by Fouquet. The signing of the Treaty of the Pyrénées in 1659, accompanied by the marriage of Louis XIV to the Infanta Maria-Theresa of Spain, had moreover brought an end to the Thirty Years War in which Richelieu had involved France in 1635, and which had provided an alibi for the cardinal's iron rule. Peace in Europe brought a general amnesty in France, starting with the pardon granted to Condé, the leader of the princely Fronde. Now that peace was restored, it was to be hoped that both inside and outside France a reconciliation between the court, the Parlement and the princes would also be on the agenda.

Nicolas Fouquet's candidacy for the post left vacant by Mazarin embodied this assumption, which benefited from the general approval of men of letters and the members of high society in Paris who had opted for the party of reconciliation. Former repentant *frondeurs* and 'honnêtes gens' from all sides of the political spectrum could identify themselves with Fouquet, an accomplished 'honnête homme' himself, a diplomat, a *gentilhomme*, educated, witty, connoisseur of the fine arts and a great patron of the arts of peace. After serving admirably and even saving the court in the dark years, he epitomized the triumph of royal authority and civil order over the aberrations of the two Frondes. His personality at once forceful and yet flexible, his talents as a charmer and his considerate generosity gave assurance that if he were to become chief minister the triumph of the court would in no way aspire to revenge or restoration. In his harmonious hands never again would the exercise of royal authority assume the abrupt arbitrariness and cold cynicism that had so aroused the French against Richelieu and Mazarin.

Thanks to his mother, Marie de Maupeou, co-foundress of the Dames de la Charité with St Vincent de Paul, and thanks to his three clerical brothers and his six sisters who were nuns (three of them had entered the Visitandines), Fouquet had powerful sympathizers in the church. This did not prevent him from gaining the confidence of Protestants.<sup>18</sup> One of his admirers was the Huguenot Turenne, and Pellisson, another Huguenot, became his right-hand man in 1657. His talent for synthesis made Fouquet the heir of the spirit of the Edict of Nantes. He was in all respects the candidate for civil peace and moderation.

All that remained for Fouquet, who had the favour of 'gens de bien', was to obtain the most important favour of all, that of the young king. Nothing at first sight seemed more natural. Until the death of Cardinal Mazarin, the young king had symbolized the return to normality of the institutions of the realm and the expectation of a long-lasting, peaceful and prosperous reign.

If Fouquet were to become chief minister, the king would become, to use the language of the age, the Augustus of a new Maecenas, the Henri IV of a new Sully. Fouquet and his party indeed saw matters in this light. But they had misunderstood the self-pride of a king who possessed neither the moderation of Augustus nor that attributed to King Henri. Fouquet's personal talents, his popularity, his party and even the debts incurred by the crown in his favour were reasons enough to incur the loathing of Louis XIV, a man possessed by 'l'amour de soi-même et de toutes choses pour soi', 'à couvert des yeux les plus pénétrants'. A close friend of Fouquet, the duc de La Rochefoucauld, would devote an entire volume to maxims that analyse the hidden power of self-love, a power which pushed the king towards a concept of 'divine kingship' and placed him above the law.

However, by June 1661, Fouquet had lost his best advocate with the king, the queen mother, whom the duchesse de Chevreuse had succeeded in turning against him. To thwart this intrigue Fouquet had not hesitated to beg pardon from Louis XIV for his 'earlier faults', a polite way of reminding him of Mazarin's involvement in the mismanagement of the state finances: at the end of his audience with the king, Fouquet still had every reason to believe that the second Henri IV would ask him to become his Sully.<sup>19</sup>

But on 14 August 1661 Fouquet, confident of the overtly warm signs of 'friendship' which the king lavished on him, made one fatal mistake: he relinquished the office of *procureur général* in Parlement in favour of the *président*, Achille de Harlay. This office had ensured that, in the event of arrest, he could be judged only by his peers according to the procedures of the Parlement of Paris, immune to pressure from the court. By giving up this judicial office, which was associated moreover with the distasteful memories of the Fronde, he thought he had removed the last obstacle in the way of his political appointment by the king as head of the council. He even went so far as to believe – and the king did nothing to discourage him – that Louis would be gratified to receive, as a political 'wedding gift', the considerable sum arising from the sale of the office of *procureur général*.<sup>20</sup>

No doubt as early as June 1661 he had been forewarned of his impending downfall by his spies. But by then it was too late to do anything. He still wanted to believe in the king's good faith. He could never have guessed how much Louis XIV was irritated by the sympathy of Paris towards him, in particular the Paris of former *frondeurs*: the king never pardoned the rebels who had dared to frighten him when he was an adolescent, and who had defied his nascent authority.

Fouquet was the least satisfactory candidate for a king whose self-love was synonymous with the absolute state. He aspired to be emperor in his own kingdom, not an *optimus princeps* along the lines of the Ciceronian concept. Colbert, the zealous *intendant* of Mazarin's personal fortune, the man behind the scenes, unknown to the public but well known to the king, had the makings of a great minister, which for Louis XIV meant an upper-class domestic servant. Unlike his father Louis XIII, the young king felt no moral or emotional distress at embodying the absolute state. And, unlike Richelieu, Colbert would never presume to dictate reason of state to the king, though he knew how to apply it without hesitation. However absolute and contrary to national customs Richelieu's rule had been, Colbert, this *vir marmoreus*, this 'Nord' as Madame de Sévigné called him, was ready to take upon himself what in Louis XIV's government was abhorrent to all French 'honnêtes gens', whether they had been *frondeurs* or loyalists during the regency.

In the months following Fouquet's arrest, the devious trap laid with profound duplicity by the king and Colbert operated like clockwork. As was to be expected, the exasperation of the taxpayers which had been building up during the years of war focused on the sacrificial victim. Mazarin's reputation had remained intact as, on 23 September 1661 in violation of all the legal rules and even without a warrant from the king, Colbert had had taken from the château de Saint-Mandé the letters and papers that could have provided evidence of the rather shameful role Mazarin had played in his administration of public finances. Condemned to solitary confinement, overwhelmed by public loathing, prosecuted not only for embezzlement but also for the crime of *lèse-majesté*,<sup>21</sup> Fouquet seemed destined for imminent death and ignominy.

But a nucleus of Fouquet's most fervent friends, convinced of his innocence and well acquainted with the truth of the matter, were not to be intimidated. As the arbitrary nature of the new regime began to emerge gradually from the *chambre de justice* in charge of the trial, public opinion slowly started to move in the opposite direction. The Parisian world of letters which had acclaimed Fouquet as a new and unparalleled Maecenas, placed all its talent and influence at the service of the *surintendant's* family and his followers.<sup>22</sup>

The members of the republic of letters in Paris had detested the idea of 'another Tiberius' embodied in Richelieu. They had on the whole 'fronded' Mazarin, who had imported Italian artists to Paris and who had disdained or ignored French writers. They were disgusted to see under the new 'favourite' the reappearance of the Richelieu-style, servile publicists. Much to the

disapproval of the king and Colbert, they played a vital role in instigating a real 'Fouquet Affair'. Gilles Ménage, Gui Patin, Pierre Corneille were all the more sympathetic towards the campaign which the family and friends of Fouquet conducted on his behalf because for them the trial of the *surintendant* threatened a principle which they held dear and which had made the Fronde appealing to them: freedom of thought and expression.<sup>23</sup>

The 'pope' of the Parisian republic of letters, Pierre Dupuy, had bequeathed in advance a testament which had laid down the rules for the struggle on behalf of Fouquet. Pierre Dupuy had died in 1651 in the midst of the parliamentarian Fronde, universally venerated by educated magistrates, renowned university professors and scholarly men of letters. He embodied the grand tradition of the French 'politiques', the tradition of Michel de l'Hospital and Jacques-Auguste de Thou. Until 1657, the Academy of which he was the 'prince' would continue to meet in the king's library under the leadership of his inseparable brother, Jacques Dupuy. Pierre Dupuy was, as everyone knew, an historian and a jurist renowned in Europe. He had devoted the last years of his life to a vain attempt to obtain the posthumous rehabilitation of his cousin, François-Auguste de Thou, executed in 1641 at Lyon following a sham trial for complicity in treason with his friend Cinq Mars. The documents for the rehabilitation file had been widely circulated with the aid of the so-called Dupuy Academy, highly influential in parliamentarian circles.<sup>24</sup>

In this series of learned and eloquent *Mémoires*, Pierre Dupuy had examined all the facets of the mock trial which had led to the condemnation and execution of the young magistrate, the pressure exerted on the *commissaires* nominated to condemn him and the stratagems employed by Richelieu's tool, Laubardement, to topple Cinq Mars and his friend, using one against the other. His analysis was not simply an implacable indictment of the tyranny that Richelieu had imposed on France, but was also a plea to restore the rule of law in the kingdom. The De Thou Affair, removed from parliamentarian checks, riddled with irregularities which had enabled Louis XIII's favourite to indulge his thirst for blood and revenge, was a faithful portrayal of the state of violence into which France had been plunged during the cardinal's ministry.

Citing a long list of historical precedents, notably relating to violations perpetrated by Louis XI, Pierre Dupuy, by profession a lawyer, had established that exceptional courts or *commissions de justice* appointed by kings or their ministers and beyond the control of Parlement, usually under the authority of the *chancelier de France*, had on many occasions condemned innocent people, who would be rehabilitated with *éclat* under subsequent regimes. It was just such a rehabilitation that Pierre Dupuy requested in his *Mémoires pour justifier M. de Thou*, sentenced to death for complicity in a plot against the state, having refused to speak rather than make a cowardly denunciation of his best friend.

In his accounts of the execution of de Thou and Cinq Mars that Dupuy appended to his *Mémoires*, both young men are portrayed as Christian martyrs and as the heroic victims of a pagan dictatorship, which one had dared defy

and the other had simply detested in silence. Pierre Dupuy drew a striking contrast between this elevation of the soul and the baseness of the publicists who surrounded Richelieu.<sup>25</sup>

Even though the moral intransigence of the old Cato was no longer in tune with the elegant and refined sensibilities of the new generation, it had not lost its authority in 1661 for any truly educated mind or truly Christian soul. It expressed the voice of conscience for magistrates who, like Lamoignon, Pontchartrain, d'Ormesson, Roquesante, summoned to sit in the *chambre de justice* appointed by the king, were nonetheless not disposed to appear in the eyes of their peers and posterity as the accomplices of a new Laubardemont reincarnated in Colbert.

The voice of conscience held sway over highly educated men such as Pellisson, Maucroix, La Fontaine, and their adherence to the moral, legal and political values developed in the *Grande Robe* circles since the age of the Valois kings ensured their affection for Fouquet. The disgraced *surintendant* had made his career within the inner circle of Parlement, where he had so recently been one of the highest magistrates: nothing better demonstrated the arbitrary nature of his trial. As soon as he could answer his judges, he pleaded his case like a great professional lawyer, especially on matters of financial procedure. From behind the courtier, the habitué of the salons, the elegant conversationalist, there emerged in full view a French Cicero, the worthy son of the monarchy's 'Sénat'.

His assistant public prosecutor, Jacques Jannart, conducting his defence in conjunction with Pellisson, who was incarcerated in the Bastille, had in 1659 taken up residence in the Quai des Orfèvres inside the parliamentary enclosure, probably to bring his home and office closer together, and perhaps also to guard against a search by Colbert. When La Fontaine lived in Paris from 1661 to 1663, he stayed with Jannart, in the midst of the frenetic activity of Fouquet's defenders. It was here, at his uncle's house, in the shadow and shelter of the parliamentarian citadel, that the poet composed his *Elégie aux Nymphe de Vaux* and *Ode au roi*.<sup>26</sup>

The *surintendant* and his family benefited, too, from the support of Port-Royal, a notorious victim of the tyranny of Richelieu and Mazarin. One of the most illustrious *solitaires*, Antoine Le Maître de Sacy, had been one of Fouquet's colleagues in Parlement. Another *solitaire*, Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, and his son Simon Arnauld de Pomponne, were so closely connected to Fouquet that Pomponne was exiled to Verdun in September 1661. For the *solitaires*, as for the Parisian educated public, it was imperative to link the case of Fouquet, a victim of Colbert's arbitrary rule, with that of the great Arnauld, the theologian of Port-Royal, victim of an iniquitous condemnation by the Sorbonne in 1656 – a condemnation confirmed by Parlement at the request of Fouquet, who had been forced to bow to Mazarin's orders. The campaign conducted by Pascal in his *Petites Lettres*, printed in secret and circulated with resounding success between 1656 and 1658, had then rallied support from the educated public for Antoine Arnauld's cause and had avenged his honour. Like

the *Mémoires pour justifier M. de Thou* by Pierre Dupuy, Pascal's *Petites Lettres* presented a model, a precedent and a method for Jacques Jannart, Paul Pellisson and Fouquet's faithful friends.

In the first weeks of 1662 his friends had boldly seized every opportunity that presented itself. The *premier président*, Lamoignon, who led the proceedings in the *chambre de justice* from 3 December 1661 was a scrupulous magistrate. He owed his office to the *surintendant*, despite their differences of opinion. From the depths of his cell in the Bastille, Pellisson managed to get Jannart to publish secretly a *Discours au roi par un de ses fidèles sujets sur le procès de M. Fouquet*, which was soon followed by other documents.<sup>27</sup> With an eloquence both ardent and moderate, which Voltaire would compare with that of Cicero, Pellisson challenged the extraordinary commission instructed to try Fouquet, demanded that the case be brought within the normal procedures of the realm, and recalled that the entire administration of the *surintendant* was the responsibility of the defunct Cardinal Mazarin.<sup>28</sup> The *Discours*, which ran into at least three editions, made a resounding impact. It was supported by the admirable *Elégie* by La Fontaine, also published secretly and anonymously on loose sheets like the *Mazarinades* and the *Provinciales*.

In July Pellisson launched a second plea, *Considérations sommaires sur le procès de M. Fouquet*, while Fouquet's mother, wife and daughter, the marquise de Charost, appeared before the *grand-Chambre* of Parlement to appeal for its support. The *premier président* Lamoignon, accompanied by a delegation from Parlement, went to present the petition to the king, who could not conceal his anger. The following December, Lamoignon was requested to give up his post as head of the *chambre de justice* to Chancellor Séguier, a long-standing accomplice of Richelieu's exactions.

On 30 July 1662, Fouquet's wife wrote a letter to the king as impassioned against his 'favourite' Colbert as had been Pierre Dupuy's retrospective *Mémoires* against Louis XIII's 'favourite'.<sup>29</sup>

The preliminary investigations, which purported to carry out an in-depth examination of the state accounts during Fouquet's entire administration, dragged on. In January 1663, the prisoner managed to write his own *Défenses* and get them to his supporters; they were printed secretly and enjoyed the same success as had Pellisson's pleas. A first-class lawyer and writer, Fouquet skilfully justified the arduous management of state finances and, above all, recalled the irregularity of the preliminary investigation, in particular Colbert's seizure of 1,600 letters written by Mazarin from Saint-Mandé, which would have easily cleared him of the charges against him. He wrote numerous requests for proceedings to be initiated against Colbert and for the dismissal of judges who were related to the minister or too obviously biased.<sup>30</sup>

On 23 August 1663, Jacques Jannart and his nephew, La Fontaine, too openly compromised in the defence of Fouquet, were sent into exile at Limoges.<sup>31</sup> The most visible pressure was exerted on those judges who had displayed signs of

impartiality, in particular Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson, a relative of Madame de Sévigné.<sup>32</sup>

When the preliminary proceedings were complete, not without much delay and procrastination, the accused was, on 14 November 1664, brought before the Chamber, which was sitting in the Arsenal rather than the Palais de Justice. Apprised of the ups and downs of the sessions at first hand by Olivier d'Ormesson, Madame de Sévigné would relate them in her letters to Simon Arnauld de Pomponne, in exile at Verdun.<sup>33</sup>

Fouquet, with a perfect mastery of oratory, knew how to mitigate the impression made when the chancellor Séguier read the *projet de Saint-Mandé*, the key document put forward to support the charge of a crime against the state; he reminded Pierre Séguier that he himself during the Fronde of the princes had not been satisfied with the promise of his own eventual escape to safety (as Fouquet had been in a moment of panic), but had agreed to become the mentor of a rebel government, and, with the power as chancellor of France to call on foreign troops to support the revolt (of July 1652), he had effectively betrayed his king. At this same crucial moment, Fouquet, in his own capacity as the king's *procureur général*, had joined the sovereign at Pontoise and played a large part in the final victory of the court. Both Séguier and Fouquet's roles were well-known and fresh in the minds of the general public, but Séguier had since been forgiven by the king.

On 20 December, after hearing the two *rapporteurs*, d'Ormesson and Saint-Hélène, the Chamber stated that it was in favour of d'Ormesson's findings by a majority vote. The punishment was to be exile abroad for life.<sup>34</sup> Exercising his right to grant pardon in reverse, the king commuted this relatively mild sentence to life imprisonment at Pinerolo, where Fouquet would die eighteen years later, in 1680. Of the judges who had shown indulgence towards Fouquet, some, such as Roquessante and Bailly, were sent into exile, others like Pontchartrain and d'Ormesson, were forced to retire. The latter, who received a congratulatory visit from the maréchal de Turenne after the sentence, was generally held in esteem for the rest of his life.

Nicolas Fouquet had paid a high price for presuming to become Louis XIV's chief minister, thinking, like Cicero, that the best credentials for high office were to have saved the state, to be trusted by the worthies and to have given proof of his enormous talents and devotion. When his trial was in full swing, a sermon on ambition preached at the Louvre by Bossuet on 19 March 1662 called on the judges to show no mercy. Gallic theology thus sought to legitimize the political thinking of Machiavelli and Hobbes.<sup>35</sup>

A tragicomedy by Madame de Villedieu, performed by Molière and his troupe before the king in 1665, shows how the memory of the downfallen could be played out at court. The action of the play, *Le Favori*, is set in a mythical Spain. Moncade, the favourite of the king of Barcelona, is tormented by bouts of melancholy which even mar the delights of his castle and gardens. In reply to his prince, who reproaches him for coldness, he says:

Je suis jaloux de ma propre fortune,  
 Ce n'est pas moi qu'on aime, on aime vos faveurs  
 Et vos bienfaits, Seigneur, m'enlèvent tous les coeurs,  
 Ce serait pour mon âme un sujet d'allégresse;  
 Je sens bien qu'il est doux et glorieux pour moi  
 De devoir mes amis aux bontés de mon roi.  
 Je voudrais dans l'ardeur du zèle qui m'inspire  
 Que je vous dusse aussi tout l'air que je respire;  
 Que je ne puisse agir ni vivre que par vous,  
 Tant d'un devoir si cher les noeuds me semblent doux.<sup>36</sup>

Despite his refined expressions of servility, it turns out that Moncade has been so bold as to fall in love with the beautiful lady Lindamire of whom the king is enamoured. Moncade is sent into exile, and his cowardly friends all abandon him. Lindamire, however, confesses her love for him and brings him consolation. In a rage on learning of this the king makes up his mind to take revenge on Moncade. But then he comes to his senses, gives up Lindamire, punishes Moncade's unfaithful friends and reunites the two lovers.

All that remains of the Fouquet Affair in this charming divertissement, which delighted the king, is a witty *courrier du cœur* which strives to play down the *coup d'état* which enabled Louis XIV to become an 'absolute' sovereign. The height of injustice meted out to Fouquet, imprisoned in Pinerolo, was that it explained the cause of his downfall as an amorous rivalry with the king.

## Notes

1. There is an abundant bibliography on Fouquet. The most recent synthesis by D. Dessert, *Fouquet* (Paris, 1987), sheds fresh light on the topics of wealth and finance. In addition, we have made extensive use of earlier, broader works, in particular A. Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires sur la vie publique et privée de Fouquet, surintendant des finances*, 2 vols (Paris, 1862); J. Lair, *Nicolas Fouquet, procureur général, surintendant des Finances, ministre d'Etat de Louis XIV*, 2 vols (Paris, 1890, repr. 1980); and on Fouquet's role in the art world, U.-V. Chatelain, *Le Surintendant Nicolas Fouquet, protecteur des lettres, des arts et des sciences* (Paris, 1905, repr. Geneva, 1971). O. Lefèvre d'Ormesson's *Journal*, ed. A. Chéruel, 2 vols (Paris, 1860–1) is particularly useful. We must also mention the excellent and lively synthesis, favourable to Fouquet, by G. Mongrédiens, *L'Affaire Fouquet* (Paris 1956). Lastly, see Richard Bonney's recent article, 'The Fouquet–Colbert Rivalry and the "Revolution" of 1661', in Keith Cameron and Elizabeth Woodrough, eds, *Ethics and Politics in Seventeenth-Century France* (Exeter, 1996), pp. 107–18.
2. According to the account by the clerk Foucault mentioned in Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, p. 243.
3. 'Elégie pour M. F[ouquet] ou Elégie aux Nymphes de Vaux, pour le malheureux Oronte', in Jean de La Fontaine, *Oeuvres: sources et postérité, d'Esopo à l'Oulipo*, ed. A. Versaille, preface by M. Fumaroli (Brussels, 1995), p. 158.
4. A quotation by Firenzuola from the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca . . .* (Venice, 1612) corroborates the definition of the favourite: 'Abbiti cura della invidia, la quale come palla di sapone, si mette sotto i piedi dei favoriti'. And in Furetière's *Dictionnaire*, La Bruyère is quoted in support of the definition of the illusory favour of monarchs and great men: 'On voit des hommes que le vent de la faveur pousse d'abord à pleines voiles, et à qui elle fait perdre la terre de vue en un moment' (*Dictionnaire universel* (1st edn, 1690; numerous later editions)).

5. The word never appeared in official political discourse, at least not in France. A highly significant passage from P. Bouhours is quoted in Furetière's *Dictionnaire*: 'Les favoris n'ont aucune relation directe avec le public. Toutes leurs fonctions ne regardent que la vie privée du Prince.'
6. G. Budé, *De Asse*, edition used: *Opera omnia*, 5 vols (Basel, 1557, repr. London, 1966), ii, pp. 302–3.
7. [P. Dupuy], 'Mémoires et instructions pour servir à justifier l'innocence de Messire François-Auguste de Thou . . .', in J.-A. de Thou, *Histoire universelle*, x: *Pièces* (The Hague, 1740), p. 661. It is highly likely that the *Mémoires* were known and circulated in manuscript form.
8. [P. Dupuy], *Histoire des plus illustres favoris anciens et modernes* (Leiden, 1660). Few copies of this work remain.
9. On Fouquet's ambition and his clash with Colbert, see Dessert, *Fouquet*, pp. 232–8.
10. On the nomination of both *surintendants*, see Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, pp. 226–38.
11. This was a real project for the re-establishment of the finances, but in establishing a *chambre de justice* he programmed Fouquet's downfall. Fouquet was informed of the project thanks to Gourville and kept a copy; exhibited during Fouquet's trial, it saved him from the death sentence: cf. J. Hérauld de Gourville, *Mémoires*, ed. L. Lecestre, Société de l'Histoire de France, 2 vols (Paris, 1894), i, pp. 153–5. Colbert's plan was edited by P. Clément in *Les Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*, 8 vols (Paris, 1861–82), vii, pp. 164–83.
12. Dessert has made a good analysis of this aspect of Fouquet's 'necessary sacrifice' as the price to be paid for cleansing Mazarin's memory: *Fouquet*, pp. 231–9.
13. Chéruel, who was not in favour of Fouquet, could not help concluding the first chapter of his *Mémoires*, i, p. 47, on Fouquet's early career with the remark: 'Sans nous faire illusion sur les causes qui déterminèrent le procureur général à s'attacher à Mazarin, nous ne pouvons qu'applaudir à la fidélité avec laquelle il le servit dans la mauvaise comme dans la bonne fortune.'
14. 'J'ai grand déplaisir', he wrote, 'de voir les serviteurs de Votre Excellence déchus de l'espérance qu'ils avaient eue de la voir présentement rentrer dans l'autorité avec l'agrément et la satisfaction de tous les peuples, du consentement des princes, et du Parlement, et dans la réjouissance d'une paix si universellement souhaitée': Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, p. 183, letter dated October 1652.
15. What Dessert would call 'le lobby Fouquet', the title of one of his chapters: *Fouquet*, pp. 137–96.
16. Dessert has reproduced the 'Projet de Saint-Mandé' in an appendix to his work, *ibid.*, pp. 354–62. On its composition, see Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, pp. 360–4.
17. First, he addressed the chancellor: 'Monsieur, je vous ai fait assembler avec mes ministres et mes secrétaires d'Etat pour vous dire que jusqu'à présent, j'ai bien voulu laisser gouverner mes affaires par feu M. le Cardinal; il est temps que je les gouverne moi-même. Vous m'aideriez de vos conseils quand je vous les demanderai.' Then, turning to his secretaries of state, he added: 'Et vous, mes secrétaires d'Etat, je vous défends de rien signer, pas même une sauvegarde ni passeport sans mon ordre, de me rendre compte chaque jour à moi-même et de ne favoriser personne dans vos rôles du mois. Et vous, Monsieur le Surintendant, je vous ai expliqué mes volontés; je vous prie de vous servir de Colbert, que feu M. le Cardinal m'a recommandé.' L.-H. de Loménie, comte de Brienne called the jeune Brienne, *Mémoires*, ed. P. Bonnefon, Société de l'Histoire de France, 3 vols (Paris, 1919), iii, p. 36. An earlier, more restrained account of the meeting is also to be found in the *Mémoires*: *ibid.*, ii, pp. 56–60.
18. See Dessert, *Fouquet*, pp. 48–9.
19. The Abbé de Choisy has preserved the memory of his request for pardon to which Fouquet alluded on several occasions in his *Deffenses*. On the evening before his arrest, 'il conta à Brienne qu'à Fontainebleau il avait représenté au Roi que le Cardinal faisant tout à sa tête, et sans observer aucune formalité, il lui avait fait faire beaucoup de choses dont il pourrait être recherché que lui en son particulier avait aussi fait des fautes considérables, et des dépenses excessives; et que pour mettre sa conscience et son honneur en sûreté, il suppliait le Roi de lui pardonner tout le passé, et qu'il était persuadé que sa majesté aveu eu la bonté de le faire . . .': Abbé de Choisy, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV*, ed. G. Mongrédiens, coll. 'Le temps retrouvé' (Paris, 1979), p. 98.
20. The sale of the office to François Harlay de Champvallon for the sum of 1,400,000 livres, of which Fouquet immediately offered the king 1,000,000, put him in debt, but he thought it would open the way to the highest honours: cf. Dessert, *Fouquet*, p. 240: 'Il y a là tout Fouquet: le panache, la passion de la gloire, le besoin de se faire valoir l'emporte sur tout autre considération.' His contemporaries were well aware of what was at stake. For instance, on 12 July 1661, before anything had been settled, Guy Patin wrote: 'Je viens d'apprendre que M. Fouquet a vendu sa charge . . . On prétend par là qu'il est fort en crédit près du roi . . . qu'il sera ministre d'Etat ou Chancelier

- de France, si la corde ne rompt; mais d'autres soupçonnent pis.' Letter quoted by Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, pp. 177–8.
21. Serious mistakes had been made early on in the proceedings which moved even those in charge: cf. Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, pp. 271–88. Mongrédién, ed., *Mémoires*, pp. 81–96, gives a good summary.
  22. On this reversal of events, see an analysis of the manuscript sources in Mongrédién, ed., *Mémoires*, pp. 96–116, 'L'opposition naissante à Colbert'.
  23. Chéruel, ed., *Mémoires*, ii, pp. 386–410, points out the role played by Hesnault, Loret, Corneille, La Fontaine and Racine in the case of Fouquet and Pellisson. See also Chatelain, *Le Surintendant Nicolas Fouquet*.
  24. They consist of Dupuy's 'Mémoires et instructions', referred to and extensively quoted by Giuliano Ferretti in his edition of Philippe Fortin de la Hoguette's *Lettres aux frères Dupuy et à leur entourage (1623–1662)*, Corrispondenze letterarie, scientifiche ed erudite dal Rinascimento all'età moderna, vol. vii (Florence, 1997), pp. 56–8, 441–2, 444–5.
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 661: 'L'esprit du Cardinal enflé d'une si souveraine et absolue autorité, recevoit avec joie les flatteries infâles de tant de petits Poëtes affamés, de tant de plumes vénérables, de tant de misérables panégyristes qui l'ont élevé par dessus tous les mortels, l'ont fait égal à Dieu, et à tout ce qu'il y a de plus saint et vénérable parmi les hommes. Cet esprit si corrompu et altéré par ces continues flatteries, ignorait qu'il n'y a que les mauvais Princes et les Tyrans qui se plaisent à ces vaines et fausses louanges.'
  26. Cf. L. Petit, 'Autour du procès Fouquet, La Fontaine et son oncle Jannart sous la griffe de Colbert', in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* (1947), pp. 193–210.
  27. In his *Etude sur la vie et les œuvres de Pellisson* (Paris, 1859), F. L. Marcou analyses the 'Discours au Roy par un de ses fidèles sujets, sur le procès de M. Fouquet, ou première défense de M. Fouquet', the 'Seconde défense de M. Fouquet', the 'Considérations sommaires sur le procès de M. Fouquet' and the 'Suite des Considérations . . . '.
  28. Here is an example of his oratory, quoted by Marcou, *ibid.*, p. 221: 'Ils [les intendants] sont innocents; cependant c'est M. Fouquet qui est criminel, parce qu'il a fait pour des millions, tout à la fois, ce que les autres faisaient pour cent mille écus, parce qu'en son temps la nécessité a été plus grande, qu'il a été plus pressé, qu'on l'a traité avec plus d'empire, qu'il a mieux obéi, mieux servi, qu'il a eu plus de soumission, plus de courage, dites, si vous voulez, plus de témérité, plus d'imprudence; mais je ne le dirai pas, ni son zèle ne le mérite, ni la bonté et la justice du roi ne semblent le permettre.'
  29. Quoted in Mongrédién, ed., *Mémoires*, pp. 114–15: 'Pendant que le roi décharge sa conscience sur les juges, les juges déclarent qu'ils obéissent aux ordres du roi. Mais ce qui va étonner Paris, la France, l'Europe, c'est que Colbert ait eu la hardiesse d'assister au conseil, comme juge de mon mari, lui qu'on sait publiquement être sa plus véritable partie, que personne n'ignore avoir depuis six ans été son adversaire déclaré, avoir inspiré tout ce qu'il a pu de chimérique et de faux contre lui: premièrement, à son Eminence . . . puis à Votre Majesté, où son emploi lui donne moyen d'être à toute heure; pouvaient servir à la justification de mon mari . . . lui qui s'est expliqué, non pas une fois mais plus de cent, comme j'offre de le prouver et vérifier à Votre Majesté . . . que mon mari méritait la mort. . . .'
  30. All these papers have been gathered together in *Les œuvres de M. Fouquet, ministre d'Etat, contenant son arrestation, son procès et ses défenses, contre Louis XIV, roi de France*, 16 vols (Paris, 1668, re-edited 1696). On the impression made by the circulation of these documents during the preliminary investigation, see Mongrédién, ed., *Mémoires*, pp. 119 and 125.
  31. The journey lasted from August to November 1663 and, as we know, was the source of La Fontaine's *Relation d'un voyage de Paris en Limousin*.
  32. On the pressure exerted directly by Colbert on André d'Ormesson and his son Olivier, who lost the *intendance* of Soissons, see the son's *Journal*, ii, p. 139, where he writes: 'M'ôter l'intendance de Soissons, c'était me faire honneur et se charger de honte, en faisant croire que l'on désirait des choses injustes et que j'avais assez d'honneur pour y résister. . . .' The role of this honest magistrate was capital for the outcome of the trial: cf. Mongrédién, ed., *Mémoires*, pp. 184–91; Dessert, *Fouquet*, pp. 257–62.
  33. For example, on 3 December, she wrote to her correspondent: 'Notre cher et malheureux ami a parlé deux heures ce matin, mais si admirablement bien que plusieurs n'ont pu s'empêcher de l'admirer. M. Renard entre autres a dit: "Il faut avouer que cet homme est incomparable; il n'a jamais si bien parlé dans le Parlement; il se possède mieux qu'il n'a jamais fait"'. Mme de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, ed. R. Duchêne, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 3 vols, i (Paris, 1972), p. 68.

34. 'Tout Paris', the magistrate relates in his *Journal*, 'attendait cette nouvelle avec impatience . . . elle fut répandue en même temps partout et reçue avec une joie extrême, même parmi les plus petites gens des boutiques, chacun donnant mille bénédicitions à mon nom sans me connaître. Ainsi M. Fouquet, qui avait été en horreur lors de sa prison, et que tout Paris eût vu exécuté avec joie incontinent après son procès commencé, est devenu le sujet de la douleur et de la commisération publiques par la haine que tout le monde a dans le cœur contre le gouvernement présent, et c'est la véritable cause de l'applaudissement général . . .': Lefèvre d'Ormesson, *Journal*, ii, pp. 283–4.
35. 'Assur s'est élevé . . . comme les cèdres du Liban; le ciel l'a nourri de sa rosée, la terre l'a engraisse de sa substance; les puissances l'ont comblé de leurs bienfaits, et il suçait de son côté le sang du peuple. C'est pourquoi il s'est élevé, superbe en sa hauteur, étendu en ses branches, fertile en ses rejetons . . . un grand nombre de ses créatures, et les grands, et les petits, étaient attachés à sa fortune; ni les cèdres, ni les pins, c'est-à-dire les plus grands de la Cour ne l'égalaien pas . . .': sermon quoted in Jean Meyer, *Colbert* (Paris, 1981), p. 79.
36. Madame de Villedieu, *Oeuvres*, 3 vols (Paris, 1720), acte I, scène 6, p. 163.

*The Demise of the Minister–Favourite, or a Political Model at Dusk: The Austrian Case*

JEAN BÉRENGER

This chapter considers the reasons why the office of chief minister was quickly suppressed in western Europe after the so-called ‘French revolution of 1661’, the year that Louis XIV (pl. 58) established his personal monarchy. Under the system of the chief minister, royal favour was appropriated by an individual, his family and his supporters. The system was ineluctably connected with the wider phenomena of clientage and the court favourite, and for this reason was unacceptable to the aristocracy and the higher clergy who were excluded from political and financial power. In their view, the invention of this new institution in no way improved the administration of the state. We will describe first the decline, or better the suppression, of this office, and then we will examine why it occurred by exploring the justificatory ideology of its seventeenth-century political opponents.

The ‘revolution of 1661’ occurred after the death of Mazarin, and comprised two moments. First, in March, the Council of State was profoundly reformed with the dismissal of the mere ministers of state, such as Turenne, and members of the royal family, like the queen mother: this moment marked the elimination of the chief-ministerial office. Later, in September, the dramatic arrest of Superintendent Fouquet, brilliantly evoked in the previous chapter by Marc Fumaroli, demonstrated that Louis XIV did not want to rule in collaboration with a new chief minister, even if the candidate had the support of public opinion. This second political crisis at the same time confirmed the emergence of the definitive ruling team which took the place of the chief minister. The new supreme council (*Conseil d'En Haut*) was a smaller, limited version of the Council of State and consisted only of three so-called ministers of state, Lionne, Le Tellier and Colbert, in place of Fouquet. This transformation of the French government represented the demise of the minister–favourite as head of the executive. Louis XIV in his *Mémoires pour l'instruction du Dauphin* explained why he had not taken over the reins of government at an earlier date:

I do not know if I should number among my faults the fact that I did not take upon myself the conduct of my state [from the beginning of my reign]. I can honestly say that this was not the result of negligence or laziness. [It was rather that] I was still quite young, albeit older than the majority of kings whose elevation has been advanced by the laws of the state to avoid greater evils, but not as old as ordinary people are when they begin to control their affairs freely.<sup>1</sup>

The young Louis XIV (pl. 60) did not feel himself able to manage the affairs of his kingdom; he lacked experience and he had great confidence in the capacity and fidelity of his chief minister, whom he considered his best educator and mentor. Nevertheless, he progressively found Mazarin's position a burden and awaited the time when he would be able to govern without such a figure. Although Mazarin had once promised the succession to Turenne, he changed his mind on his deathbed. Instead, he warmly recommended Louis not to replace him with another chief minister but to assume the office himself and rule with the support of some chosen councillors.<sup>2</sup>

The 'revolution' in France was followed four years later by a similar development in Austria on the death of Prince Ferdinand Portia (pl. 63), who had been in charge of the Viennese government from the accession of the Emperor Leopold (pl. 64) in March 1657. Portia was an aristocrat who hailed from Friuli and had had various official careers, as imperial chamberlain, as administrator of Inner Austria and even as a diplomat. His opportunity came when he was appointed to look after the education and supervise the personal court of Archduke Leopold, the younger son of the emperor Ferdinand III, who was brought up to be a future bishop. Portia was a highly educated man and he encouraged the interests of his pupil. He established good relations with the archduke, paying him the deference due a scion of the House of Austria, yet becoming a confidant of the young prince. But Portia was not a second Mazarin. He was a lazy and inexperienced statesman, who was very conservative and proved incapable of sustaining the Austrian monarchy in the serious crisis of the Turkish war of 1663–4. He encouraged his master to be a lover of music, theatre and erudition.

A brief reference to the influence and death of Portia is to be found in the life of Leopold written by the German historian Gottlieb Eucharius Rinck, who was commissioned by the imperial Diet to write an official posthumous biography of the emperor.<sup>3</sup> The death of the high steward and royal favourite in February 1665 seems to have led to a short political crisis which allowed the young Leopold to imitate his French cousin and carry through a political revolution. According to the ordinance of 1527, which defined the chief organs of Austrian central government, the high steward (*obrister Hofmeister*) was the premier privy councillor and chairman of the Privy Council (*Geheimer Rat*), when the emperor was not present at the meeting. In a letter to his ambassador in Madrid, Count Poetting, Leopold declared he would be his own chief minister and

explained the reasons for not creating a new one. First, he was young enough to work by himself (Leopold was actually twenty-five). Secondly, he would thereby remain the master, and no other man would be able to boast that everything depended on him. Thirdly, he would be more responsible for his own decisions.<sup>4</sup> In another letter to his cousin at Innsbruck, Archduke Sigismund of the Tyrol, Leopold reiterated that he had taken the decision not to have a new chief minister and claimed that he would govern with the help of some members of his Privy Council.<sup>5</sup> A despatch of the French envoy to the Viennese court, Grémonville, also revealed Leopold's intention,<sup>6</sup> and another a week later from the same source confirmed that no new chief minister had been appointed but that the high steward's office had been given, after negotiations with Prince Auersperg, to Prince Lobkowitz.<sup>7</sup>

Had Leopold wanted to appoint another *premier ministre*, then Auersperg was an obvious choice. He was the former chief minister of the emperor Ferdinand III, in succession to Count Trautmannsdorff, and an extraordinarily talented diplomat who had been a successful negotiator at Osnabrück.<sup>8</sup> But in 1665 Auersperg merely retained his place as a privy councillor. This decision reflected in part the young emperor's dislike for a man considered an able minister but restless and domineering: after all, Leopold had already removed Auersperg as *premier ministre* on his accession and replaced him by his own high steward and tutor, Count Portia. But the decision also reflected court rivalry. If appointed, Auersperg would have exerted an influence upon his master which would have excluded other councillors from power and probably reinforced the authority of the so-called Spanish party.<sup>9</sup> The latter gave unconditional support to the declining Spanish monarchy and paid no regard to the interests of the exhausted Hereditary Lands (Bohemia and Austria), which needed peace for reconstruction.

A further factor affecting the emperor's decision, revealed by the French envoy Grémonville, was the influence of the Jesuits, especially the royal confessor Father Müller, who urged Leopold to follow the French king's example.<sup>10</sup> Auersperg and the Jesuits, it seems, were at daggers drawn. The Society had not forgotten the humiliations that it had once experienced at his hands and therefore supported his enemies.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the decision was also backed by Empress Eleonora, Leopold's stepmother, who gave her approval in a talk with the papal nuncio. Thereby, she believed, Leopold could escape the overweening influence of a single favourite and finally benefit from the suggestions of different ministers.<sup>12</sup>

Like his cousin Louis XIV, Leopold wanted to conduct diplomacy himself. As Grémonville reported to his master, the emperor would in future receive foreign ambassadors personally and this important task would no longer be left to a member of the Privy Council.<sup>13</sup> In so doing, Leopold imitated Louis exactly, but in his case the burden was heavier because the emperor did not have at his disposal a secretary of state for foreign affairs, as had been the case in France since the beginning of the seventeenth century. For ten years, from 1665

to 1675, Leopold did try to establish such a secretary to the Privy Conference (see below) in the person of the Baron Abele von Lilienberg, but this experiment did not succeed and was abandoned. In reality, conduct of foreign policy was primarily controlled by the imperial Chancery (*die Reichskanzlei*), which dealt with both the administration of the Holy Roman Empire and diplomacy, under the aegis of an imperial vice-chancellor. But the Austrian Court Chancery (*die österreichische Hofkanzlei*) and the Council of War (*der Hofkriegsrat*) were also responsible for some areas: the latter, for instance, was in charge of relations with the Ottoman Empire.

The institutional result of the 'revolution of 1665' was the creation of the Privy Conference, which was always a part of the Privy Council and thus more akin to a Spanish *junta* than the French supreme Council of State (*Conseil d'En Haut*). The project mentioned by Grémonville in the same report – to allocate a department to each minister of the conference – was never realized. Leopold would give ministers the task of studying a particular piece of business, consulting with colleagues and writing reports purely on an *ad hoc* basis. A report would usually receive the emperor's approbation with the words 'placet wie gerathen'.<sup>14</sup> Leopold chose the members of the Privy Conference from among the privy councillors, but their number was always few, only five or six according to the first description of the institution given by the Swedish diplomat Esaias Pufendorf in 1674. Initially they were four: Prince Wenzel Lobkowitz, the new high steward; Prince Weikhard Auersperg; Count Johann Lamberg, a personal friend of the emperor who was promoted lord high chamberlain (*Oberstkämmerer*); and Prince Johann Schwarzenberg, who was chairman of the Imperial High Court (*Reichshofsrat*). None was head of a department. They were then joined by the chairman of the War Council and the Austrian court chancellor.

Transforming Austria into a personal monarchy in the French mould was never going to be easy because the political structures of the two monarchies were so different. The Austrian monarchy was never a centralized and absolute state where the dynasty was served by a relatively devoted administration. Austria in the seventeenth century remained a confederation of states where the landed aristocracy ruled their peasantry without interference. Since the Habsburg victory at the Battle of the White Mountain, the emperors had been able to rule over the Hereditary Lands and the Bohemian crown lands with little restriction, but Hungary jealously guarded its self-government.<sup>15</sup> Political power there belonged to the aristocracy, who dominated the local Diets and the Viennese councils and chanceries which dealt with Hungarian affairs largely unchallenged. In consequence, they had plenty of opportunity to influence Habsburg foreign policy, for instance by restricting financial help.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, Leopold stuck to his resolution of February 1665. He always refused to give his new high steward, Prince Lobkowitz, the title of chief minister, and stayed faithful throughout his reign (forty years) to the system of the Privy Conference, although its inefficiency became obvious to foreign

observers in the coming years. In 1669, for example, the nuncio Pignatelli claimed that nobody in the government was able to put the decisions of the Privy Conference into effect because the emperor was unable to manage diplomacy and administration.<sup>17</sup> Two years later, the Venetian ambassador wrote to the Senate complaining about the lack of a chief minister: 'The feebleness and the negligence of an Emperor who amuses and diverts himself means there is no one who keeps a cold eye on affairs of state. . . . There is here neither a chief minister nor a responsible councillor. The prince's good will offers no resistance to artifice; his goodness is incapable of knowing the disorders of the state.'<sup>18</sup>

Even on the eve of the second Austro-Turkish War, a period of real tension, Leopold steadfastly refused to give the position of chief minister to his confidant and confessor, Father Sinelli, the newly promoted Bishop of Vienna, although the latter had been privately counselling the emperor on political matters for more than ten years. As a report to Louis XIV from the French resident at the imperial court, the marquis de Sébeville, makes clear, Sinelli had been angling for the office for some time and was expected to succeed in his quest. Leopold's refusal to take the bait speaks volumes for the emperor's hostility to re-establishing a position he could not tolerate:

Monsieur the Bishop of Vienna has been appointed a councillor of state the day before yesterday and all the evidence suggests that we will soon see him in charge of the Council, although the Emperor is hostile. For some time the Bishop has been encouraging different individuals to complain to the Emperor about the drift in the state's affairs, to make clear that things will not improve unless someone is given the power to lean on those who are entrusted with their discharge and to make them accountable, and to point out that the Emperor cannot get involved in this kind of detail unless someone keeps him informed and lets him know who is doing their duty.<sup>19</sup>

By this time the system of the minister-favourite was roundly condemned by European public opinion. Noblemen, clerics and princes considered it a manifestation of tyranny and a usurpation of the power of the absolute monarchy. The only state where the system remained intact, apart from Muscovy, was the Ottoman Empire, which was considered to be the epitome of tyranny and slavery anyway and was seen as a state where a man of obscure (and unfree) origin could substitute his own authority for that of the legitimate and all-powerful sultan.

The decline of the institution in the 1660s is easily explicable in the light of the many contemporary critiques of the office that promoted this negative view. Much more than Olivares, it was Richelieu (pls 26 and 47–57) who came to symbolize the unacceptable face of the minister-favourite. For instance, one of the main and most brilliant protagonists of the Fronde, Paul de Gondi, from 1651 Cardinal de Retz, went so far as to accuse the cardinal of treason in his *Mémoires*. He compared Richelieu to a Turkish grand vizier, to the

Merovingian mayors of the palace and to the counts of Paris at the end of the Carolingian dynasty. In all these cases royal authority was usurped: the grand vizier was actually in charge of imperial affairs; the mayors of the palace took over the throne at the expense of the legitimate rulers; while Hugues Capet, Count of Paris, replaced the Carolingian usurpers with his own dynasty, which was still ruling France in the seventeenth century.

We know today, through the work of modern French historians, that it is an exaggeration to consider Richelieu a usurper or a mayor of the palace handling state affairs in the place of a lazy king. No one now would accept Cardinal de Retz's assertion that Richelieu 'formed in the most legitimate of monarchies the most scandalous and dangerous of tyrannies which has perhaps ever enslaved a state'.<sup>20</sup> This myth of the lazy king ('le roi fainéant') was given substance by the seventeenth-century historian Mézeray, but it seems to have been common currency soon after Louis XIII's death. Louis XIV in his *Mémoires* (written in the 1660s for the benefit of the dauphin) claimed that even as a young boy he had been shocked by the evocation of the image. Retz maintained that Richelieu, far from reforming the French state, put his own favourites and relatives in the best offices of the royal administration. Moreover, with the creation of the provincial *intendants*, he consolidated his reputation as a tyrant because his subordinates in local government (in fact no more than thirty individuals) were his creatures, who controlled without the least spark of compassion the subjects of Louis XIII – noblemen, clerics or members of the Third Estate.<sup>21</sup> They mercilessly executed the instructions drafted by Richelieu and were always ready to behead rebels ('faire tomber des têtes').<sup>22</sup> In training Louis XIV for kingship, Mazarin insisted upon the dangerous effect of alienating royal power. In theory the chief minister was under the king's control, but in reality he was independent of or even usurped royal authority. According to Mazarin, it was not right that a minister should build up his own clientele by distributing offices, pensions or honours to his own favourites. He recommended the young king to govern with the help of the Council of State but to be its master, taking decisions alone after a discussion without being obliged by a vote of the councillors.

Emperor Leopold was educated according to the same principles. Leopold, too, was taught that the main duty of the sovereign was to make the chief decisions himself, but he had wait until the death of Portia in 1665. The reform he carried through in 1665 was inspired by two confidential documents, produced for earlier Habsburg archdukes. The first is the *Princeps in compendio*, which was written for the future Ferdinand III, and the other a memorandum by Prince Gundacker von Liechtenstein, which was intended to instruct the elder brother of Leopold I, the Archduke Ferdinand.<sup>23</sup>

The *Princeps in compendio* belongs to the 'Mirror of Princes' tradition of political theory (in German *Fürstenspiegel*) that dates back to the Middle Ages. It was written at the request of Emperor Ferdinand II, probably by his clerical favourite, Father Lamormaini, a Jesuit. The latter was officially the confessor of

the sovereign and was the inspiration behind the Edict of Restitution of 1629, which brought so much trouble and unrest to the Holy Roman Empire. The work was probably composed in 1632. In 1668 Leopold, after the birth of his first son Archduke Ferdinand (who died a few months later), ordered a second edition of about ten copies.

The tenth chapter of the pamphlet, *De intimo principis*, clearly condemned the institution of the chief minister. The king was not to rely on an all-powerful minister, although Father Lamormaini did distinguish between an honest councillor who could be asked to state his opinion on important matters of government and an evil adviser who abused his influence. Father Lamormaini declared himself hostile to royal favourites because the prince became a puppet in the hands of his creature and could not take any decision himself. The sovereign in the Jesuit's eyes had the right to ask advice from his councillors of state but he had first to choose the questions he wanted discussed and was to keep the processes of giving advice and taking decisions separate. To avoid one minister becoming dominant, the sovereign was to consult in turn each councillor or minister of state at the ordinary meetings of the Imperial Privy Council.

Ten years later an aristocrat composed the second memorandum. Gundacker of Liechtenstein was a privy councillor and the younger brother of Prince Karl of Liechtenstein, the governor of Bohemia after the Battle of the White Mountain, and the man responsible for the merciless repression of the defeated Czech nobility. Both were stalwart supporters of the Habsburgs and the Counter-Reformation, but Gundacker's career was less brilliant than his elder brother's. Like many other Austrian aristocrats, Gundacker of Liechtenstein was a man of good education and culture. Born in 1580, he was originally a Protestant, who studied law and philology at the universities of Basel, Padua and Bologna. He became a Roman Catholic in 1602 and remained thereafter firm in his new faith, refusing in 1609 to endorse Rudolf II's *Letter of Majesty*, which granted toleration to the emperor's Bohemian subjects. He believed that the *Letter* placed too great a constraint on royal authority in Bohemia by giving too much political advantage to the Bohemian estates (comprising the nobility, gentry and the free cities). Gundacker was a specialist in financial matters. As early as 1606 he was appointed councillor of the Court Chamber (*kaiserliche Hofkammer*) or Imperial Treasury and he became its chairman in 1620. As a result, he then became responsible for the financial administration of the whole Austrian monarchy and member of the Privy Council. But his efforts to put the emperor's finances in order at the beginning of the Thirty Years War were unsuccessful and he resigned his chairmanship before the bankruptcy of 1624 (the famous so-called *Münzcalada*). He was nevertheless appointed lord high steward in 1629 and chairman of the Imperial Privy Council, thereby becoming the virtual head of the state apparatus. However, he gave up his office after two years and retired to his large estates in Silesia, rarely taking any further part in the discussions of the Privy Council. In 1636 Ferdinand II called

him back to Vienna and made him his chief minister, but again Gundacker surrendered his office, this time to Trautmannsdorff, who occupied it until his death in 1649. In retirement Gundacker turned his attention to political theory. In 1642 he wrote his own *Fürstenspiegel*, entitled ‘Gutachten über die Edukation eines jungen Fürsten’.

In this memorandum, Gundacker condemned absolutely the recourse to favourites and recommended that the emperor employ a team of ministers who would study separately the problems of state entrusted to them. It was Gundacker’s view that, even if a powerful prince has a servant in his court who enjoyed his master’s particular confidence, it was still not possible for that prince to place every matter of state in the hands of a single individual. The emperor must divide the burdens and responsibility of government according to the knowledge and abilities of each minister. When the problem was discussed before the Privy Council, the minister in charge of the affair should read his report first and only then should the other members present express their opinions.<sup>24</sup>

In conclusion, of course, the emperor was invited to put these recommendations into effect. What Gundacker of Liechtenstein proposed in his memorandum was the system Emperor Leopold actually used after 1665. The memorandum demanded a modernization of the system of collegiate government which was in harmony with the aspirations of the Austrian aristocracy and the balance of power in the Habsburg monarchy.

In 1682, when Emperor Leopold was subjected to pressure from Father Sinelli to restore the office of chief minister, another Austrian aristocrat, Count Johann Quintin Jörger, wrote a further sharp critique of the abolished institution. Jörger was the author of a critical history of the Austrian monarchy which remained unpublished in the Viennese archives. In this work, he remarked on the numerous failures and mistakes of the Austrian government; instead, he preferred the collegiate form of government. Like Gundacker, Count Jörger was a distinguished member of the Imperial Court Chamber, where he was successively councillor and deputy chairman, although never a minister of the Privy Conference. He was later appointed governor of Lower Austria (*niederösterreichischer Staathalter*) and was a participant in many executive commissions of the Privy Council.<sup>25</sup>

Jörger’s manuscript, which was judged controversial, was confiscated and today still lies in the Austrian State Archives at Vienna under the title ‘Different Matters’ (*Unterschiedliche Motiven*). In the chapter ‘Against chief ministers’ (‘Excerptiones contra primos Aulae ministros’), he quoted four reasons for abolishing the office. First, a chief minister is not capable of handling all government matters from his own knowledge (‘Ministrum sua Scientia non posse cuncta complecti’). Second, chief ministers know no restraint and are the victims of their passions. They become veritable tyrants who use informers, kill illegally (‘occidunt praeter leges exemplo Cardinalis de Richelieu qui etiam Regi amantissimos interfeci curavit’), threaten privileges, make unheard-of

innovations, and even chase away queen mothers ('more eiusdem Cardinalis') or determine their royal master's marriage, as did Prince Auersperg, who wanted to make the emperor his brother-in-law. Third, chief ministers exhaust the royal treasury by bestowing largesse on their own favourites at the expense of the king's subjects. And here Jörger cited examples peculiar to Austria: Liechtenstein, Trautmannsdorff and Auersperg (the three successive chief ministers from 1630 to 1657).

Fourth, chief ministers are a threat to the sovereign's authority. Here Jörger recalled all the legal indictments of fallen chief ministers and mentioned specifically the dismissal of Auersperg, who was exiled by the emperor in 1669. As a minister of the Privy Conference, Auersperg was in charge of secret negotiations with the French ambassador concerning the partition of the Spanish empire on the expected death of Charles II.<sup>26</sup> These negotiations were a success for French diplomacy in that the Austrian heir to the Spanish empire admitted the rights of Maria-Theresa, Queen of France, notwithstanding her formal renunciation of any dynastic claim in 1659. Auersperg hoped that he would be rewarded by France by being made a cardinal at the next promotion and that his new dignity would lead to his gaining the office of chief minister in preference to Prince Lobkowitz. Unfortunately, he was not supported by Louis XIV, who instead asked the pope to elevate the nephew of Turenne, Cardinal de Bouillon. Auersperg's machinations were then revealed and Emperor Leopold ordered him to retire to one of his Carinthian estates. His public career thus came to an end, although he was never impeached, unlike Cardinal Klesl in 1618 at the beginning of the reign of Ferdinand II. Obviously Auersperg was no favourite of Leopold's, as we have seen. But he was not the only minister to be rusticated by Leopold. Prince Lobkowitz in turn was later exiled to his Bohemian estates in 1674, when his pro-French foreign policy was abandoned in favour of participation in the Franco-Dutch War.

Jörger's argument was clever. First of all, he refuted the essential premise on which justifications of the office of chief minister were based: that the chief minister would be a man of extraordinary intellect who would understand all governmental matters and be an inestimable prop to the prince. He then moved on to discuss the two-fold accusation of tyranny and usurpation. For Jörger the model of a tyrant seems to have been Richelieu, as described by Cardinal de Retz: his chief reproach was directed against the cardinal-minister's judicial execution of Cinq Mars and the exile of the queen mother, Marie de Médicis. He thus followed exactly Retz's Black Legend and ignored the fact that Cinq Mars was not just Richelieu's foe but a conspirator who had negotiated with the Spanish government over ending the war. Cinq Mars was nothing but a traitor and Louis XIII did not need the prompting of his cardinal-minister to send his favourite to the block.<sup>27</sup> Again, in the delicate matter of the relations between Louis XIII, his mother and his chief minister, it was Marie de Médicis who refused to be reconciled after the Day of Duples, left the French court and fled to the Low Countries, where she

hoped to gain support from the Infanta Isabella and her father Philip IV of Spain.

When Jörger discussed the charge of usurpation he generally chose Austrian examples. In Vienna, as in Paris, chief ministers created a clientele using public funds, which were even more mismanaged than in France. As an administrator at the Treasury, Jörger had access to the files and knew his facts: he had himself led an enquiry to uncover and check the abuse.

If the *haute noblesse* was on the whole opposed to the office of chief minister, the Catholic church, with the exception of the odd diplomat, was hardly more favourably inclined. Some prelates, such as Retz, were downright hostile. Admittedly, some bishops who were engaged in day-to-day political affairs, especially in the Austrian lands, seem to have wanted a ministerial intermediary with whom they could negotiate quickly and efficiently. The papacy, however, never forgot its difficulties with Richelieu, while the Jesuits seem to have rejected the institution early on, particularly if it is accepted that the *Princeps in compendio* was written by Father Lamormaini. By 1660 Jesuit hostility to the office of chief minister was indisputable. Father Müller, Leopold's confessor, was a quiet man and a scholar, who did not interfere in politics unless the interests of Roman Catholicism were at stake. After 1670 he played an important part in the emperor's attempt to impose the Counter-Reformation on Royal Hungary (that part of the kingdom not under Turkish administration). Yet in the mid-1660s there can be no doubt, as we saw, that he played an important role in persuading the emperor not to appoint a successor to Portia.

It would be interesting to know what the official policy of the Society of Jesus was to the office of chief minister, the theoretical framework in which that policy was couched, and, most of all, what suggestions in case of need were made to the provincials of the order and to royal confessors. What were the motives informing the Society's position? Were they tactical or moral? Did the Jesuits fear the hostility of some chief ministers towards the Society or towards the Counter-Reformation that the order was defending? Did the office of chief minister run counter to the Jesuits' conception of the Christian prince? All these questions can be properly answered only after lengthy immersion in the Rome archives in search of a pan-European solution to the problem.

The Jansenists (always, it must be recalled, a tendency within the church and the French nation, not an institutionally grounded party) never stopped condemning the office of chief minister for moral reasons. The eminent historian of Jansenism in Lorraine and France, René Taveneaux, has demonstrated that the disciples of the Bishop of Ypres were not really political animals. They did, though, have their own opinions on contemporary political problems.<sup>28</sup> It is well known that in France the opposition between the Jansenists and the royal government dated from Richelieu's imprisonment in the Bastille of the founding father of the movement, the abbé de Saint-Cyran, where he remained until the cardinal died. In Richelieu's eyes the early Jansenists were a clerical and

judicial elite who were hostile to the all-powerful authority of the state and the absolute monarchy. They in turn came to see the holder of the chief ministerial office as a potential tyrant.

This was the point of view still defended by the abbé Duguet at the extreme end of the seventeenth century. The Oratorian Jacques-Joseph Duguet was a friend of Arnauld and Quesnel. He played a leading role in the Jansenist party and on many occasions successfully counselled moderation. He alone, with Pascal and Nicole, wrote directly about politics. At the request of the abbé de Tamié he wrote a book entitled *De l'institution du prince* for the educational benefit of the heir to the duchy of Savoy.<sup>29</sup> Written in 1699 the book was only published much later at Leiden in 1739 and then was quickly banned in France by Cardinal Fleury for its unequivocal, albeit moderate condemnation of the office of chief minister. Nonetheless the work enjoyed a success comparable to that of Fénelon's *Aventures de Télémaque*.

In the chapter 'Un prince habile et prudent n'a point de premier ministre', Duguet dealt frankly with the problem. He criticized implicitly the role played by Richelieu in granting ministries, offices and gifts to his creatures and he took up the theme of 'lazy' kings ('les rois fainéants'). Like Jörger in Austria, he went so far as to accuse Richelieu of conducting an aggressive foreign policy in order to make himself indispensable. His critique of the cardinal-minister's tyranny was admittedly more discreet, but its general thrust was just as cutting. He concluded the chapter with a condemnation of rule by chief minister even where the favourite was upright and capable.

The sole precaution that prudence can deploy is to place all ministers on an equal footing under the prince, ensure that they are subject to him alone, and not confuse two apparently similar things: full confidence and complete authority. A good man may merit perfect trust but a good man can never be worthy of the prince entrusting his authority to him. And if the prince has a weakness in that direction, not only must he not abuse it, but he must employ all his efforts to prevent himself being degraded by such an act of alienation. If a prince does otherwise he fails in one of his most essential duties.<sup>30</sup>

What is remarkable about the works cited above is the similar structure of their arguments, even though most were not published until the eighteenth century or not published at all. It might be possible, of course, to discover a common textual source for the personal and isolated ruminations of a Louis XIV or a Jörger on the office of chief minister by hunting in better-known literary texts, but in our opinion this would be to miss their point. Do they not represent the shared reaction of different members of Europe's political class when faced by a usurper who has got his hands on the helm of state with the support of his creatures and threatens the prince as much as traditional elites? The chief-ministerial system threatened the monarchy as much as the section of the nobility excluded from power and the wealth accruing from office and service.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century this system was perhaps a positive innovation, designed to make life easier for a lazy or immature sovereign. But the system was quickly and rightly condemned for leading to tyranny and usurpation: both nobles and commoners were its victims and the king its fall-guy. In an age when the monarch was the incarnation of the state, political commentators accused the chief minister of being a barrier between the king and his subjects (like the Ottoman grand vizier). After 1650, these criticisms continued to multiply as all sections of the governing elite felt frustrated by the existence of an individual who deprived them of political power. In consequence, an ideology hostile to the chief-ministerial system was developed, which was shared by princes, clergy, nobles and officials. All these different sections of the governing class felt, albeit indistinctly, that the chief minister was one of their own number who had managed to monopolize political power and its financial advantages for his own benefit. Instead of hundreds of families taking their turn in enjoying the fruits of office and power, there was only one: the *familia* of the chief minister, a clan of relatives and clients who could count on picking up benefices and honours. However, in France, after the 'revolution of 1661', there was but one clientele, the king's, and this fact undoubtedly helped to restore the state's authority. That was the main reason why the new model was adopted by other monarchs, particularly the Austrian emperor, and why the phenomenon of the favourite as chief minister and head of the royal council largely disappeared.

## Notes

1. *Mémoires pour les années 1661 et 1666*, ed. Jean Longnon (Paris, 1927), p. 53.
2. 'Mémoire dont le Roy mesme dicta la substance au sieur Rose, secrétaire de son cabinet, et relut tous les articles après les avoir fait entendre en sa présence en la forme ci-dessus', in *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert* (Paris, 1861), i, p. 535.
3. 'Den 7 Febr. Vormittage zwischen 9. Und 10. Uhr starb des Kaysers Mignon und Obrister hofmeiszter Johann Ferdinand Fürst von Portia, welcher bis anhero des Kaysers Herze in Händen gehabt hatte': G. E. Rinck, *Leopolds des Grossen . . . Leben und Thaten* (Leipzig, 1708), ii, p. 117. Details of his career are given on p. 118.
4. Emperor Leopold to Poetting, Vienna, 18 February 1665, in *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum, Diplomataria*, ed. A. F. Pribram, lvii, 'Denn erstens bin ich noch jung und kann arbeiten, zweitens bleibe ich Herr und kann ein anderer nicht vantieren, dass alles von ihm dependiere, und drittens kann ich besser verantworten, dann alles ich mir selbst attribuierne kann.'
5. Renner, *Wien im Jahre 1683* (Vienna, 1883), p. 6: Leopold declared he would 'nun keinen ersten Minister mehr zu bestellen, sondern sein eigener primado zu sein, und nur einige Räthe beizuziehen'.
6. Grémonville to Louis XIV, Vienna, 19 February 1665: 'On dit pourtant que l'empereur veut établir cinq ministres, qui auront chacun leur département, et qu'il n'y aura plus de premier ministre': see Archives des Affaires étrangères, Paris, Correspondance politique, Autriche [hereafter AAE], vol. 20, fol. 233.
7. Grémonville to the king, Vienna, 25 February (1665): 'L'empereur n'a point fait de premier ministre. Il a seulement conférée la charge de majordome au prince de Lobkowitz'. For Auersperg's ambitions, see Rinck, *Leopolds des Grossen*, ii, p. 118. See also Adam Wolf, *Wenzel Fürst Lobkowitz* (Vienna, 1869), AAE, vol. 20, fol. 251, and H. F. Schwarz, *The Imperial Privy Council* (Cambridge, Mass., 1943), pp. 143ff., 201f.

8. Schwarz, *The Imperial Privy Council*, pp. 143ff., 201f.; Grete Mecenseffy, *Im Dienste dreier Habsburger: 'Fürst Auersperg'*, *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, 114 (1938), pp. 225–50.
9. Grémonville to Louis XIV, 25 February: 'On lui [Leopold] fit apprendre que la force de son génie lui ferait insensiblement prendre trop d'empire sur son esprit et sur ses affaires, que quand il ne serait point premier ministre les conférences se tenant chez lui comme plus ancien conseiller d'Etat qu'il en serait comme le maître par le rapport qu'il en devrait faire, qu'il était trop partialement attaché aux Espagnols dont il rendrait Sa Majesté Impériale l'esclave. . . Ces raisons jointes à l'aversion naturelle qu'Elle a pour lui le firent résoudre de conférer la charge de Majordome au prince de Lobkowitz, laissant par cette disposition le prince d'Hocsberg [sic] simple ministre': AAE, vol. 20, fol. 251.
10. 'Il est assez public que le Père confesseur a toujours persuadé l'Empereur de suivre l'exemple de Votre Majesté, et de ne faire aucun premier ministre. C'est bien jusqu'icy son intention d'user de même': *ibid.*
11. 'Les Jésuites ayant dans les ministères passés expérimenté les rigueurs du Prince Auersberg [sic] se sont joints aux ennemis de celluy-ci et ont tant fait que l'Empereur luy a donné l'exclusion, l'ayant persuadé de prendre luy mesme la direction de ses affaires à l'exemple du Roy': *ibid.*, fol. 263.
12. Declaration of the Empress Eleonora, widow of Ferdinand III, to the nuncio apostolic in October 1665; see A. Levinson, ed., 'Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland', *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, 103 (1913), p. 787.
13. Grémonville to the king, Vienna, 25 February: 'L'ambassadeur de Venise qui eut audience avant-hier, me dit qu'il avait demandé à l'empereur auquel ministre il se devait adresser pour ne se point rendre importun à Sa Majesté, lui répliqua qu'il vint à sa propre personne': AAE, vol. 20, fol. 250.
14. Report from the nuncio at Vienna, 12 August 1665; see A. Levinson, ed., 'Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland, im 17 Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, 105 (1918), p. 241.
15. J. Bérenger, 'La Hongrie des Habsbourg au XVIIe siècle: république nobiliaire ou monarchie limitée?', *Revue historique*, 483 (1987) pp. 31–50.
16. J. Bérenger, *Finances et absolutisme autrichien dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1975).
17. Nuncio's report 12 August 1665, in Levinson, ed., 'Nuntiaturberichte', p. 241.
18. Despatch of ambassador Cornaro to the Venetian senate, 15 August 1667: Archivio di Stato, Venice, Senato, Segreta, Dispacci da Germania, filza 129.
19. Sébeville to the king, Vienna, 12 April 1682: AAE, vol. 53, fol. 125.
20. Jean-François Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, *Mémoires*, ed. M. Allen (Paris, 1950), p. 65.
21. Instruction of the cardinal secretary of state to the nuncio, Scotti, 21 May 1639; see R. P. Blet, *Correspondance du nonce en France Ranuccio Scotti (1639–1641)* (Rome, 1965), p. 96.
22. 'Si Richelieu n'était fort que de la clientèle qui le suivait, cette même clientèle lui suscitait des ennemis': V.-L. Tapié, *La France de Louis XIII* (Paris, 1967), p. 286.
23. *Princeps in Compendio, hoc est puncta aliquot compendiosa quae circa Gubernationem Republicae observanda videntur*, 1632, published by Oswald Redlich in *Monatsblätter des Vereins für Landeskunde Nieder-Österreichs* (Vienna, 1906), pp. 105ff.; 'Gutachten des Fürsten Gundacker von Liechtenstein über Bildung eines jungen Fürsten und gute Bestellung des Geheimen Rathes', Vienna, National Bibliothek, MS 10286, fols 14–20.
24. 'Gutachten', para. 5.
25. J. Bérenger, 'Le Conseil d'état autrichien et la politique financière de l'empereur au XVIIe siècle', *Journal des Savants* (1971).
26. *Ibid.*
27. Tapié, *La France de Louis XIII*, pp. 393–6.
28. R. Taveneaux, *Jansénisme et politique* (Paris, 1965), p. 100.
29. Jacques-Joseph Duguet, *De l'institution du prince; ou traité des qualités, des vertus et des devoirs d'un souverain*, i (London, 1738).
30. *Ibid.*, pt 1, ch. xi, pp. 203–5.

*The Last Favourite? The Case of Griffenfeld:  
A Danish Perspective*

KNUD J. V. JESPERSEN

*Peder Griffenfeld*

Peder Griffenfeld (pl. 65), the all-powerful first minister of Denmark, 1670–5, was born Peder Schumacher in 1635, the son of a well-to-do wine merchant in Copenhagen. His father was a first-generation immigrant from Germany while his mother belonged to one of the better families of the capital's bourgeoisie. Physically a weak child, he early showed himself to possess extraordinary intellectual gifts. It was only natural, therefore, that he should choose an academic career, and at the age of eighteen he graduated as a theological candidate from the University of Copenhagen.<sup>1</sup>

Soon afterwards he set out for a lengthy additional education abroad. His long journey took him to several German universities and on to Leiden, where he studied for two years. In 1657 he entered The Queen's College in the University of Oxford, where he specialized in constitutional law and witnessed at close quarters the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. Having spent a further couple of years in Paris, Spain and Italy he returned in 1662 to Copenhagen and soon entered the service of the absolutist king as a royal librarian and archivist. Those posts brought him into close contact with the king, Frederik III, who himself took a keen interest in scholarly matters. On the strength of this relationship he was promoted in 1665 to the post of private secretary to the king. In this capacity he was entrusted with the important task of working on the text of the Royal Law, the fundamental constitution of Danish absolutism – to my knowledge the only written absolutist constitution in Christendom. He handled this delicate task so well that the road to new and still more powerful positions was now wide open for the ambitious and talented young man.

High in royal favour he was soon entrusted with important key posts in the royal administration and the Supreme Court. At the same time he formed a warm personal friendship with Ulrik Frederik Gyldenløve, the king's natural son, who was viceroy in Norway and very influential in leading circles. This

friendship protected him from his enemies at court and at the same time gave him free access to the uppermost circles in the aristocracy.

The real days of glory for Peder Schumacher dawned, however, in 1670, when Christian V succeeded his father on the throne. A powerful alliance of Schumacher, Gyldenløve and Frederik Ahlefeldt – the latter was viceroy in the duchies – persuaded the new king to dismiss the members of the court faction opposed to them. As the two viceroys had to take care of their duties in Norway and the duchies respectively, it was thus Schumacher who became the person in charge of the central administration and the key figure in Copenhagen, the real power-centre of the absolutist state – the new king being still young, inexperienced and of only moderate intelligence.

Schumacher exploited his great influence to carry through a comprehensive reorganization of the state administration, with the result that virtually all power was soon concentrated in his hands, and he alone had access to the king as his sole adviser. This unique position was exploited in several ways. In the first place, he carried through a number of much needed economic reforms after the model of the great Colbert. Secondly, he introduced several measures aimed at finally breaking the influence of the old nobility – a project crowned with considerable success. Finally, he secured for himself, his friends and his family many royal favours in the form of official posts, land and wealth. Schumacher himself was rewarded with extensive donations of land in Denmark and Norway, and eventually, in 1673, he was raised to the ranks of the peerage with the title of Count of Griffenfeld. His position seemed virtually inviolable in the 1670s and his power without limits. It was he who was the real ruler in Denmark, while the formally absolutist monarch seemed to wane in his powerful shadow.<sup>2</sup>

That he was nevertheless precipitated in 1676 from the pinnacle of power into the abyss of utmost humiliation can best be explained by the fact that, intoxicated by his many successes, he allowed himself to forget the basic fact that it was after all the king, and not he, who was the real source of power – even though, ironically enough, he himself eleven years earlier had gone out of his way to emphasize this very fact in the Royal Law. In the turmoil of all his busy activity he forgot that his position, in the end, depended exclusively on the king's grace, and that the king who had elevated him also had the power to throw him away when and if he became a liability. He forgot moreover that a necessary precondition of his power was his ability to maintain at all times a high degree of identity between the king's wishes and the interests of the state. He forgot, in short, that the absolutist king and the state – in the famous phrase of Louis XIV – were one and the same. He had created his splendid career by faithfully serving the king's interests, but, eventually taking greater and greater responsibility for the state's affairs, he ended up acting more and more in accordance with *raison d'état* as he perceived it – which was not necessarily identical with the king's interests and wishes.

It was in the area of foreign affairs that Griffenfeld's fate was finally sealed. The king and the activist generals around him nourished a burning desire for a

war of revenge against Sweden which, a few decades earlier, had succeeded in mutilating Denmark, and by the mid-1670s they felt the time was ripe. Such plans were, however, contrary to what, according to Griffenfeld, served Denmark's interests best. He believed a decisive showdown with Sweden to be premature, and worked instead for closer relations with France – Sweden's traditional ally – thus trying to isolate Sweden and destroying the alliance which over the years had caused Denmark so much harm. But his ultimate goal, of weakening Sweden and so eventually regaining the lost provinces, was no different from that of the king and the generals. The difference was one of means: he preferred diplomacy to war.<sup>3</sup>

Things went fatally wrong when Griffenfeld, by means of a diplomatic double-game, tried to force through his own plans even after the king had made his decision and the state of war was a fact. His double-game was eventually disclosed, and his many enemies eagerly persuaded the king to regard it as a clear act of treason. They also saw to it that the king was informed of several cases in which Griffenfeld had manipulated him or even acted directly against his orders. Moreover, the numerous cases of corruption and sales of offices and honours during Griffenfeld's years in power were now also brought into the open.

The conclusion was foreordained: the king had to drop his powerful first minister and former favourite, and Griffenfeld's fall was precipitous indeed. After a show trial in the spring of 1676 he was sentenced to death, but at the last moment pardoned, the sentence being graciously changed to life imprisonment and the loss of honour and property. Griffenfeld spent his remaining twenty-three years alone in prison – at first in the Citadel of Copenhagen and later in the isolated Norwegian fortress of Munkholm in Trondheim Fjord. He died at long last in 1699, sixty-four years old, lonely and forgotten.

### *Danish Absolutism*

The fate of Griffenfeld is a drama involving great triumphs as well as obvious tragedy. It is the story of a young upstart, rising like a star from nothing, illuminating the sky over Denmark for a short while and then disappearing over the horizon into oblivion and darkness.

The necessary preconditions for such a fate were, of course, unusual talents and an exceptional personality – and Griffenfeld certainly possessed both. But it required extraordinary societal conditions, too. And these were indeed present in late-seventeenth-century Denmark. This leads us on to a brief description of the power-structure that conditioned the rise and fall of Griffenfeld, the wine merchant's son.

In the autumn of 1660 Denmark experienced a political revolution which turned the power-structure of the country upside down. Before then, it had been an aristocratic kingdom, like Poland, in which the old nobility exercised the real influence, while the king's power was strictly limited by the

constitution. It was the aristocratic State Council that wielded effective sovereignty. An ill-fated war in 1657–60 against Sweden proved disastrous for the State Council's reputation, however, and the result was an absolutist revolution in 1660 during which the monarchy, in alliance with the non-noble estates, deposed the old power-elite and – following other European precedents – invested all power in the king.<sup>4</sup>

It was one thing, however, to grant on paper unlimited power to the king, and an entirely different matter to transform this formal absolutism into daily administrative practice. Certainly the fundamental law of Danish absolutism – the Royal Law of 1665 – firmly stated that the king should personally make all decisions and with his own hand sign all administrative decrees, but in the real world it was of course far beyond the capacity of a single human being – even a king – to make personal decisions on the hundreds of large and small matters handled daily by the royal administration, even down to the appointment of parish clergymen. If the system was to be made workable it was necessary, therefore, to delegate much of the decision-making downwards in the hierarchy.

This necessity confronted the theoretically absolutist king with an almost insoluble dilemma: should he take the words of the Royal Law literally and insist that all business must pass across his desk? If so, he could easily be reduced to the First Bureaucrat of the realm, drowning himself in petty business and thus ending up as a hostage to bureaucratic administration with no time left for more far-sighted, strategic decision-making. Or should the king perceive himself rather as standing above the administration and intervene only in matters of a certain importance, leaving routine business to the bureaucrats? If he did this he risked losing influence over day-to-day administration and thus becoming unable to fulfil the requirements in the Royal Law for unconditional absolutism.<sup>5</sup>

This painful dilemma was a most real one in the first decades of absolutist government, the regime having not yet found administrative routines capable of combining absolutist royal sovereignty with a reasonably efficient and quick administration. The later seventeenth century, therefore, witnessed several experiments in this field. One solution was to insert a strong, competent first minister, enjoying the king's full confidence, between king and administration. The idea was, of course, that such a trusted minister could act as a sort of filter between king and administration and, at the same time, handle routine business on the monarch's behalf, thus relieving him of making numerous trivial decisions without his losing control over the daily administration.

Griiffenfeld embodies this solution, the precondition of his power being a great capacity for work and an unconditional loyalty towards the king's person and interests. His capacity for hard work remained intact to the end; his fall, however, was caused by his inability to sustain his loyalty.

Griffenfeld's years as minister–favourite, in other words, represented a difficult transitional phase in the development of the politico-administrative system:

the old pre-absolutist patterns had become obsolete, while the new structures had not yet assumed definite forms. But the question remains whether special importance should also be attributed to the fact that Griffenfeld came from the middle class and was not a born member of the old noble elite. The answer to this question is yes.

In a very real sense the old nobility were the principal antagonists of the new absolutism, representing as they did the old pre-absolutist power-elite, and the old system being almost identical with the noble estate and noble values. No wonder, then, that the early absolutist kings preferred to recruit their most trusted servants from the middle class, their faithful ally during the revolution. In their testaments the monarchs warned time and again of the danger of a noble counter-coup, and strongly advised against ever again allowing members of the old nobility any influence. Loyal to this understanding Griffenfeld, during his years in office, worked hard and successfully to undermine the unity and power of the old nobility by creating a formal order of ranks, founding an entirely new order of knighthood and arranging for a new and elevated class of titled aristocracy – all aimed at weakening the old ruling class and introducing a new rank-determined social structure with the absolutist king at the top. Honoured by the knighthood of the Order of the Elephant and adorned with the title of count, Griffenfeld himself became a prominent member of this new rank-determined structure, built not upon noble birth but upon royal favour and faithful service to the absolutist state.<sup>6</sup>

Griffenfeld, in other words, was typical of a power-structure in the process of stabilizing itself, his great strength being his ability to offer solutions where others were irresolute. Being a brilliantly gifted man with a formidable capacity for administrative work, he was able to lift the heavy burden of decision-making from a king who was young, inexperienced and moreover disliked the dull business of governing. His fatal mistake, however, was that he tended more and more to forget that even his elevated position was conditional on total loyalty to the king – even when the young man on the throne was in his eyes intellectually inferior and a weak personality. This blindness was even more remarkable considering that Griffenfeld himself was the main architect of the new system.

### *The Last Minister-Favourite?*

In a longer time-perspective Griffenfeld was neither the first nor the last minister-favourite in Denmark, nor indeed was he even the first of middle-class extraction. Going back to the years around 1520 we find a rather unusual example of a middle-class favourite exercising a very strong influence with king and government without, however, possessing any formal position. The person in question is the Dutch-born Mother Sigbrit, mother to Dyveke, the mistress of Christian II. For several years this strong-willed middle-class woman exercised a strong influence over the king, forcing his policy into a controversial

anti-noble course, thus provoking an aristocratic revolt which resulted in the subsequent deposition and expulsion of the king in 1523, after the failure of several attempts to persuade him to drop her.<sup>7</sup>

It was no accident that Mother Sigbrit's years in power coincided with attempts, supported by the middle class, to secure a foothold in Denmark for the Renaissance state. This experiment failed at the time, because the nobility was still too strong – unlike England, for instance, where the first two Tudor kings, efficiently assisted by favourites like Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, both of humble origin, succeeded in establishing the strong Tudor state.

A somewhat later example of a favourite of a quite different type is Corfitz Ulfeldt (pl. 66), King Christian IV's son-in-law. In the 1640s, when the old king was weakened by old age and bad health, Ulfeldt succeeded in acquiring a power-position which in reality put the king out of the game. By birth, however, he belonged to the uppermost stratum of the nobility and would therefore be regarded as predestined to rule. But what was unusual was the range of his power, which for a few years raised him high above his equals and made him a virtual *alter rex*, until his sudden and dramatic fall in 1652.<sup>8</sup>

It may also be illuminating to draw attention in a much later period to the German doctor Johann Friedrich Struensee (pl. 67), who in 1770–2 was the *de facto* absolutist ruler of Denmark for over a year. The background to this strange episode was unusual. The reigning king, the young Christian VII, was mentally ill and completely incapable of ruling. Dr Struensee was his personal physician and, in this capacity, gained strong influence over his royal patient. Moreover he also became the lover of the young and lonely queen. Armed with such assets he succeeded in squeezing himself into a position where he alone controlled access to the king, while at the same time acquiring full authority to issue cabinet orders in the king's name. He devoted his unique power to carrying through a series of progressive reforms, effectively introducing enlightened absolutism into Denmark. His restless reforms, however, antagonized the established elite, who regarded the foreign upstart with suspicion and disgust. One night early in 1772 he was overthrown in a military coup, in the course of which his enemies seized control of the helpless king's person. Struensee was soon afterwards convicted of high treason and executed in public, while the poor unfaithful queen was hurried off into a lifelong exile in Celle in Hanover.<sup>9</sup>

Those examples are adduced in order to demonstrate that Griffenfeld – in a Danish context at least – was only one in long line of favourites spread over a wide span of time. A common denominator of those favourites is that they all gained so much influence that they tended to outshine the king in the public consciousness, and even stepped into his place. Another common denominator is that their tenure of power was relatively short, and that they all faced a violent and tragic end. On their way up they had crossed, consciously or unwittingly, a number of taboo-lines, thereby challenging the old ruling elites and offending

public ideas of legitimacy. For this and for other reasons the reaction was so violent when it finally occurred. Indeed, the case of Griffenfeld differs from that of the others only in one point: he was the only one born in Denmark of middle-class parents.

### *Preconditions of the Minister–Favourite*

As demonstrated, it is possible in Danish history to point to examples of favourites over a time-span much longer than the period singled out as distinctive by Professor Bérenger in his stimulating article in *Annales*, namely the early seventeenth century when the modern state established itself.<sup>10</sup> This prompts a few reflections on the preconditions of the phenomenon in a broader sense, the Danish examples tending to indicate that it was, after all, not specifically located in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Taking those examples as a starting point, two basic preconditions should be suggested. The first, obviously, is that an organized and centralized state-power must be in existence: without this, there can be no ministers – and hence also no minister–favourites. The implication, in a European context, is that the phenomenon belongs in general to the era of the modern state materializing from about 1500 – that is the powerful, centralized state which, while certainly assuming different shapes in different parts of Europe, nevertheless possessed the common characteristic of being far more powerful than any other organization or group of organizations in society.

In England this process gained speed under the early Tudors and fostered in its early stages minister–favourites like Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell. In Denmark the same process was initiated under the Renaissance king Christian II, who deliberately sought the support of the middle class in his attempt to build a new state-power. This brought to the fore Mother Sigríð, the real brains and brawn behind the royal reform policy. But she aroused such intense hatred among the nobility that she provoked an aristocratic reaction which brought the modernization process to a stop. Only after a bitter civil war and the Lutheran church reformation in 1536 could the process be resumed. From then on the Danish version of the powerful early modern state gradually emerged, and eventually transmuted into a genuine absolutist regime with further centralization and concentration of power as its advance continued.

On considering the line of Danish minister–favourites it is evident, however, that a further condition had to be fulfilled before the minister–favourite could emerge: the formal ruler, the king, had to be temporarily weakened or, for other reasons, unable to govern.

Thus Corfitz Ulfeldt appeared on the stage precisely when Christian IV was weakened by illness, old age and private sorrows. Nor was it pure accident that Griffenfeld's time of greatness coincided with the early years on the throne of a young and not particularly bright king. Nor was it accidental that Dr

Struensee's short rule coincided with a marked worsening of the mental illness of the young King Christian VII, which prevented him from carrying out his duties. Yet the duties of ruling had to be carried out all the same, and it thus fell to the king's trusted physician and his queen's lover to run the government in his name. If anything, Struensee was the trusted favourite *par excellence*, who – without a platform in the existing hierarchy of power – came to exercise genuine royal power, with excellent results for Denmark, but with terrible personal consequences for himself.

The case of Dr Struensee underlines the fact that the minister-favourite is also found in a fully developed absolutist state with a fixed bureaucracy and fully fledged administrative routines – indicating, therefore, that the phenomenon may not be quite as closely associated with a specific transitional phase in the evolution of state-power as Professor Bérenger seemed to maintain. Instead it might perhaps be rewarding to look for explanations of a more general nature – explanations, for instance, related to the fact that regardless of how regular and bureaucratic an administration is built up there will always remain a grey zone in its uppermost strata where the process of political decision-making escapes all rules or tends to obey the basic rule of the law of the jungle, the right of the strongest. The minister-favourite belongs to and operates precisely in this zone. In my opinion it is consequently this grey zone that deserves attention in any attempt to isolate and appraise this phenomenon.

### *Absolutism after Griffenfeld*

In conclusion it is worth considering what lessons the absolutist king learnt from his years with Griffenfeld, and following this with a few observations on his and his successors' efforts to resolve the inherent contradiction between absolutism in its purest sense of personal rule and the heavy load of daily business. Inevitably this problem resurfaced with renewed strength as the king, from one day to the next, had to do without Griffenfeld's expert handling of administrative affairs.

On the arrest of Griffenfeld the king declared – obviously inspired by the example of Louis XIV – that from now on he intended to be his own first minister. For this task, however, he had neither the physical strength nor the intellectual capacity. For the rest of his reign, which ended in 1699, he therefore depended heavily on political advisers and strong bureaucrats in the administration. But having learnt from his previous experience he took the utmost care to make sure that the group of advisers changed continually, and he never again vested his full confidence in a single person. He mastered, in short, the noble art of divide and rule.

Moreover he reinforced his council, the closest formal group of advisers, which was to assume an important policy-making position in the zone between the king and his administration. In his last years he even created a series of *ad hoc* commissions with specific administrative tasks in order to prevent the

hardening of existing bureaucratic patterns. But the system never came to work in a fully satisfactory way, and King Christian V never found an ideal solution to his dilemma. His administration was marked by many, often unsuccessful, experiments in the fields of policy-making and the handling of business. Intrigue and slander flourished in his court – as the English diplomat Robert Molesworth correctly observed in his famous book of 1694, *An Account of Denmark as it was in the Year of 1692*, with its heavy criticism and frontal attack on Danish absolutism.

Instead it was his son and successor, Frederik IV (1699–1730), who resolved the dilemma, and his solution was personal absolutism. Unlike his father, Frederik IV was intellectually gifted and, at the same time, extremely hard-working. He was thus well suited to put into practice his father's notion that the king should be his own first minister. He insisted from the very beginning that all decisions in vital areas, like finance and defence, should pass across his desk, and for thirty extremely busy years on the throne – and, in particular, behind the royal desk – he managed with an iron-hard working discipline to act as the head clerk of the realm without sacrificing his wider political vision. In a very real sense he was the first servant of the state.

This performance was nothing short of heroic and represented, at the same time, personal absolutism carried to the limits. The hard-working and scrupulous Frederik IV was precisely the type of monarch outlined in Griffenfeld's Royal Law of 1665: ready to work around the clock. None of his successors, however, equalled him as far as hard work and political insight are concerned, and his death in 1730 therefore heralded a new stage in Danish absolutism, that of bureaucratic absolutism. From then on the established bureaucracy gradually took over and saw to it that Denmark was properly ruled, even when the king – like Frederik V (1746–66) – was an alcoholic.

One particular situation, however, was always beyond the range of the bureaucracy, because it was not foreseen in the Royal Law: where the all-powerful king should suffer from a mental illness so serious that he was totally unable to carry out even the most simple act of governing. This contingency became a grim reality with the accession of Christian VII in 1767. The scene was thus set for the emergence of Denmark's last real minister-favourite, Dr Struensee, who was to pay the highest price of all, because he was tempted at a critical time to step into the power-vacuum created by the king's mental illness. In so doing he offended against one of the most fundamental principles of absolutism: that the king, God's anointed, was the sole source of all power in the state.

## Notes

1. The most recent biography of Griffenfeld in Danish is Knud Fabricius, *Griffenfeld* (Copenhagen, 1910). Though an excellent standard work for its time, a modern successor is obviously much needed. Works in English with Griffenfeld as the main topic are, to my knowledge, non-existent. He is briefly mentioned in passing in Thomas Munck, *Seventeenth Century Europe, 1598–1700* (London,

- 1990), pp. 341, 345, 388ff.; in David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World, 1492–1772* (London, 1990), pp. 213, 270; and in a few other general English textbooks. In the following the references to Danish literary sources are kept to a minimum as readers of this essay are not expected to be familiar with that language.
2. For a rough outline of the reforms that eventually broke the influence of the old nobility see my article, 'The Rise and Fall of the Danish Nobility, 1600–1800', in H. M. Scott, ed., *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2 vols (London, 1995), ii, pp. 41–70, esp. pp. 56ff. Readers who find it indelicate of me to refer so often to my own articles in the forthcoming pages will allow me to remark that publications in English on early modern Danish history are actually very few.
  3. The endless Danish–Swedish controversies are treated in a wider context in my article 'Rivalry without Victory: Denmark, Sweden and the Struggle for the Baltic, 1500–1720', in Göran Rystad, Klaus-R. Böhme and Wilhelm Carlgren, eds, *In Quest of Trade and Security: The Baltic in Power Politics, 1500–1990*, 2 vols (Stockholm, 1994), i, pp. 137–76.
  4. The main features of the political revolution of 1660 and its repercussions are discussed in E. Ladewig Petersen's and my own article, 'Two Revolutions in Early Modern Denmark', in E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott, *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Elton on his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (London, 1987), pp. 473–501.
  5. The parallel texts of the Royal Law in Latin and Danish with related documents are published by A. D. Jørgensen, ed., *Kongeloven og dens Forhistorie* (Copenhagen, 1886, repr. 1973), pp. 38–67. For a summary presentation of its wording and consequences, see Ernst Ekman, 'The Danish Royal Law of 1665', *Journal of Modern History*, 29 (1957), pp. 102–7; cf. also my own article, 'Absolute Monarchy in Denmark: Change and Continuity', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 12 (1988), pp. 307–16.
  6. Cf. the reference in note 2 above. The last will of Christian V written in 1683, seven years after Griffenfeld's fall, is a collection of rules and good advice for his successors and can thus be regarded as a supplement to the Royal Law; it is published by J. J. A. Worsaae, ed., *Kong Christian den Vtes Testamente som Tillæg til Kongelov* (Copenhagen, 1860). Curiously enough it contains not the faintest reference to experiences from Griffenfeld's time in power, thus perhaps indicating that the king may not have felt his position so threatened by his powerful minister as Griffenfeld's enemies had maintained at the time.
  7. For a brief presentation of Mother Sigbrit and a discussion of her role, see Alex Wittendorff, *På Guds og Herskabs nåde, 1500–1600* (Copenhagen, 1989), pp. 77–80 with references.
  8. This highly intelligent but deeply neurotic character whose many machinations have left deep traces in Danish history has recently received an excellent biographical treatment by Steffen Heiberg, *Enhjørningen. Corfitz Ulfeldt* (Copenhagen, 1993). Unfortunately the book has not yet been translated into one of the major languages.
  9. For Dr Struensee and his time, see the congenial interpretation by Svend Cedergreen Bech, *Struensee og hans tid* (Copenhagen, 1989).
  10. Jean Bérenger, 'Pour une enquête européenne: le problème du ministéariat au XVIIe siècle', *Annales*, 29 (1974), pp. 166–92; now compare also H. M. Scott, 'The Rise of the First Minister in Eighteenth-Century Europe', in T. C. W. Blanning and David Cannadine, eds, *History and Biography: Essays in Honour of Derek Beales* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 21–52.

## *Concluding Remarks: The Anatomy of the Minister-Favourite<sup>1</sup>*

L. W. B. BROCKLISS

The underlying aim of the essays in this book and the conference from which they derived has been to take up a challenge issued by the French historian Jean Bérenger nearly twenty-five years ago, and examine an historical paradox.<sup>2</sup> The High Renaissance, roughly the century and a quarter 1550–1675, like the periods that preceded and followed it, was an age of personal monarchy, yet it was also an age in which many, if not most, of Europe's rulers seemed to play second fiddle to their principal advisers. Bérenger believed that this historical paradox was not a quirk of particular national histories but a European-wide phenomenon which merited serious comparative examination. His own pioneering article offered a preliminary exploration of the rise of the principal minister, but his primary intention was to put the problem on the historical map and encourage others to follow his lead.

A quarter of a century on, now that much more is known about the nature of princely authority and government in the different states of Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the sort of careful European-wide examination which Bérenger desired has become much more feasible. As Sir John Elliott pointed out in his Introduction, the essays in this volume do not cover every individual principal minister, let alone every manifestation of the historical problem. Indeed, it was felt unnecessary to provide readers with accounts of the political careers of the most famous principal ministers, whose lives have been studied in detail by historians in recent years. Taken alongside these studies, the essays do, however, make it finally possible to move on from Bérenger's preliminary conclusions and construct a more sophisticated account of the historical phenomenon. This concluding essay is a personal attempt to piece together a picture of the position that we have now reached in the ongoing debate. At the same time, it emphasizes that the jigsaw is still incomplete and suggests a number of areas of future research which will need to be pursued before a satisfactory solution can be reached.

## Characteristics

Throughout recorded history, rulers, whatever the system of government, have had their favourites, men and women (wives as well as mistresses and confidantes) whose varying degrees of influence over the affairs of state owed everything to their affective relationship with the fountain of authority and usually next to nothing to any official position that they might occupy in the government hierarchy. Just as Roman emperors and medieval kings had their favourites, so too had and have many popes, presidents, prime ministers and party secretaries. Both Sejanus and the colourful and much maligned Empress Theodora have had many successors. In important respects, Marcia Williams and Nancy Reagan are as much the descendants of the one as Martin Bormann and Che Guevara are of the other.<sup>3</sup> What all favourites share is their permanent access to the ruler, for as long as their favour lasts: they are the persistent voice in the ruler's ear that mixes often contentious advice with the honeyed words of affection. And for this they have been universally execrated by their contemporaries: by insiders because they appear to have usurped the authority of properly constituted officials; by outsiders because they appear to be the source of every ill-fated governmental decision.<sup>4</sup>

There is nothing extraordinary therefore in the fact that the princes and popes of Europe in the century 1550–1650 should have surrounded themselves with favourites. Nonetheless, in the long and ongoing history of the favourite as a political phenomenon, this period cannot but attract especial attention, for it witnessed the rise and then rapid decline of a particularly interesting species of the genus. Admittedly, the century continued to see the star of many common or garden favourites wax and wane – a Ralegh in the England of Elizabeth, a Chalais or Cinq Mars in the France of Louis XIII. However, it also saw the temporary blooming of an entirely new type of favourite, a prickly, dangerous and vigorous brier, not unknown to flourish in the same courtly soil as the more effete hardy perennial. Recently dubbed the ‘minister-favourite’ by A. Lloyd Moote, this was a new and singular variety that took root for a time in virtually all the large courts of Europe and many of the small ones too, as Ronald Asch’s account in the present volume of the rise and fall of Matthäus Enzlin in Württemberg reminds us.<sup>5</sup>

The singularity of the minister-favourite – a term which captures more carefully the aulic origins of the species than Bérenger’s modern-sounding *premier ministre* – was displayed in three principal ways. In the first place, the new type of favourite was always a male and his hold over the ruler’s affections was not usually the result of attractive looks or manners. Some minister-favourites did begin their rise up the slippery pole by attracting the prince’s wandering eye – most obviously George Villiers, later Duke of Buckingham – but most did not. Many were relatively colourless professional pen-pushers and lawyers, such as Burghley in England or Griffenfeld in Denmark. Some were downright ugly: Robert Cecil was a hunchback, while the most remarkable

feature of Olivares was his bulbous nose. In this regard then the minister-favourite must be distinguished from the countless consorts, lovers and mistresses who have used their physical allure to pull the strings of state across the ages, or, as Knud Jespersen's account of the pro-active early sixteenth-century Danish reformer Mother Sigbrit reminds us, thrust their relatives (in this case even a female relative) into positions of power.

In fact many *premiers ministres* were not the stuff of classical favourites at all in that they were or became clerics and churchmen – Cardinal Klesl (the servant of the Emperor Mathias), Richelieu and Mazarin, Archbishop Laud, Lerma on the eve of his disgrace.<sup>6</sup> As a result, such minister-favourites could also be legitimately placed in an entirely different and long-standing tradition in Christian Europe: they belonged to the capacious category of the political prelate. Nonetheless, if it was a commonplace in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance for churchmen to occupy prominent positions in a prince's administration, few ever enjoyed the favour and omnicompetence permitted their successors in the century 1550–1650. The first half of the sixteenth century witnessed the political ascendancy of a number of powerful ecclesiastics, usually lord chancellors, such as Cardinal Duprat in the France of Francis I and Cardinal Beaton in the Scotland of James V. But none except Cardinal Wolsey could be classed as their prince's *alter ego*. Indeed, Wolsey's career is particularly interesting in this comparative context because he was so obviously in many ways the prototype of the later ecclesiastical minister-favourite. Another lord chancellor, he governed England on Henry VIII's behalf for nearly twenty years, completely dominated patronage in state and church to the increasing annoyance of rivals, and conducted with his master's support an ambitious, if only partially successful, foreign policy, aimed at making an under-resourced Tudor dynasty the arbiter of Europe.<sup>7</sup>

These ecclesiastical minister-favourites, it must be stressed, likewise seldom owed their elevation to a close, albeit less physical, relationship with their royal master or mistress in their early careers. Unlike Wolsey in this respect, they had not usually gained the prince's confidence through being his chaplain, confessor or almoner. Most minister-favourites, then, lay or cleric, were not the prince's intimates. They were seldom even natural courtiers, although they managed to navigate the shoals of the court with great success. What earned and retained them the prince's peculiar favour was their perceived competence as administrators. In some cases – usually where elevation to this managerial role initially stemmed from their physical attraction – the ruler or the regent took their capacity on trust and was sometimes sadly disappointed: Robert Carr turned out to be no Robert Cecil and lost his secretarial post in the fall-out from the Overbury Plot.<sup>8</sup> Usually, however, minister-favourites came to the ruler's attention because they had already demonstrated their managerial skills in some office of importance. Cecil had already shown his paces under Elizabeth and had effectively secured James the throne; Mazarin had served Richelieu as a diplomat and negotiator in various contexts in the final years of the reign of

Louis XIII. Even when the future minister-favourite owed his fledgling position to the influence of a patron he usually received the backing of the crown only because his administrative capacity had been already displayed. Thus, the role of Marie de Médicis in Richelieu's elevation to the council in 1624 was clearly crucial but the cardinal had proved himself an able Bishop of Luçon, had already shown his potential as a short-lived minister in the Concini era, and had been an effective factotum to the queen mother in her wilderness years.<sup>9</sup> The ruler, then, did not necessarily love the minister-favourite, although respect and affection could grow over the years under the favourite's prompting, as evidently happened in the case of Philip IV's regard for Olivares.<sup>10</sup>

In the second place, the minister-favourite was much more active and visible in day-to-day government than the favourite *tout court*: the new breed were 'doers'. Historically favourites have tended to hide in the shadows, influencing appointments and decision-making but not putting their name to the documents that flowed from their counsel. The minister-favourite in the period 1550–1650, in contrast, was clearly at the centre of the administrative and patronage machine. He may have been just as venal as the traditional favourite – Richelieu died worth 20 million livres, Mazarin possessing 40 million – but he usually worked tremendously hard, enmeshed in paperwork, often to the detriment of his health. Both Richelieu and Olivares suffered from persistent migraines and Richelieu was prone to nervous collapse.<sup>11</sup> The one obvious exception was Lerma, whose notorious bouts of inactivity may have reflected not so much indolence as periods of deep depression. Sometimes, the minister-favourites held an actual administrative position that justified his role – most notably Chancellor Oxenstierna of Sweden (pl. 68).<sup>12</sup> Normally, however, he was a minister without portfolio, presiding over the prince's council and co-ordinating his administration through his clients and allies who occupied the official posts of secretary of state, treasurer, chancellor and so on. Thus, Richelieu's only right to chair the *conseil d'état* of Louis XIII came from the fact that he was a cardinal, and church dignitaries had precedence by custom.<sup>13</sup>

Total or nearly total control over the patronage and administrative system was so clearly the defining characteristic of the minister-favourites or *premier ministre* that a number of powerful or would-be powerful servants of princes who have been traditionally given the sobriquet should perhaps be deprived of their title. The presence of Charles I's ministers Laud (pl. 69) and Strafford (pl. 70) on the list is particularly problematic. Whatever their ambitions to be the only minister-favourite diarchy and whatever the opinion of later parliamentary detractors, they only ever had a tenuous hold on power and on the king's affections. Archbishop Laud permanently had the royal ear and served on the council, but he was never really a hands-on administrative co-ordinator and he had no clients in the central administration, apart from Bishop Juxon, who served for a time as lord high treasurer. In fact Laud expended most of his energies revitalizing (or undermining – it depends on one's point of view) the Church of England, where he was definitely the administrative co-ordinator

from 1628, if only Archbishop of Canterbury five years later. Thomas Wentworth, at least before 1639, was equally powerless, languishing for most of the Personal Rule in the north or in Ireland as lord deputy. If he unofficially tried to advise Charles from faraway Dublin Castle, he had little effective input in decision-making. Charles I was very much a king, we now know, who created his own policies. Laud and Wentworth had to compete with other councillors for the royal ear and usually lost: hence the endless whingeing in their correspondence about the power of 'Lady Mora' (Weston, Cottington *et al.*).<sup>14</sup>

In the third place, the minister-favourite differed from the common or garden variety by dint of his independence of mind vis-à-vis his princely patron. Traditional favourites, whatever contemporaries might have initially believed, were invariably toadies. They did not so much supplant royal authority as encourage it into unpopular channels. It is perhaps not surprising then that the three English medieval kings most remembered for their passion for favourites – Edward II, Richard II and Henry VI – eventually all met the same end as their henchmen. Removing the favourite had little permanent effect, as Piers Gaveston, the Earl of Oxford/Duke of Ireland and the Duke of Suffolk were only singing the royal tune.<sup>15</sup> The minister-favourites, on the other hand, were by and large surrogate sovereigns. To all intents and purposes they took the cares of royal administration completely out of the prince's hands: they not only largely determined patronage decisions (always the most time-consuming part of early modern administration), but they also formulated policy – foreign and internal. Although we are well aware today that the princes in the period 1550–1650 continued to maintain a lively interest in the administration of their realm, even when they left day-to-day business to the minister-favourite, this does not detract from the fact that the favourite educated the prince into seeing the virtue of accepting his advice: he was far more than the prince's favoured servant: Olivares and Richelieu especially had their own radical, reform agenda.<sup>16</sup> Very often the prince was thereby left with little to do but pursue his passion for hunting or warfare. Thus Oxenstierna ran the Swedish Empire, while Gustavus Adolphus sought to expand its size. Sometimes the minister-favourite usurped the ruler's military role as well.<sup>17</sup> Both Buckingham and Richelieu were generals for a short time in the 1620s: the siege of La Rochelle was to prove as much the swan-song of the one as the apotheosis of the other. Both Buckingham and Richelieu were frequently far from their masters' side. But so too were all minister-favourites. The close relationship between prince and favourite was no more based on propinquity than on physical affection.<sup>18</sup> Again, unlike the traditional favourite, the new breed could safely sit in the capital and busy themselves with government while the prince travelled the country showing himself to the people or went abroad in search of *gloire*.

Picked for his administrative competence and appetite for work, not for his looks, the minister-favourite inevitably had staying-power: a number, like Wolsey, controlled the state for twenty years – Lerma, Richelieu, Olivares,

Oxtenstierna, Mazarin. Courtier opponents found them annoyingly hard to remove by the usual methods. They were not to be displaced by bringing to court a handsome man or woman as a lure. Those who successfully convinced the prince of the appropriateness of their policies, even when they failed to deliver the goods, were also frustratingly immune from innuendo or criticism through the estates. Buckingham in 1628 was felled not by opposition in parliament but by the assassin's hand.<sup>19</sup> Even age did not wither them in the prince's affections. While traditional favourites, as James M. Boyden's essay on the genus in Spain before Lerma reminds us (see above, Chapter 2), frequently fell from power when they lost their looks (witness the downfall of Ruy Gómez in the early years of the reign of Philip II), the minister-favourite often grew old with his prince and metamorphosed into a curmudgeonly avuncular crutch, like Burghley – Elizabeth's little pig. Often release came only with the prince's death, when his successor tried to curry favour with disgruntled members of the elite by arranging the minister-favourite's judicial murder, as happened to Enzlin in Württemberg. In normal circumstances, the confessor or chaplain rather than the courtier was the more likely to incite a royal change of heart: hence Richelieu's constant anxiety about the potential disloyalty to himself of the Jesuits who controlled Louis XIII's conscience.<sup>20</sup>

Yet the era of the minister-favourite proved strikingly transitory. Apparently a vigorous plant in full bloom everywhere in Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century, this new variety of favourite quickly withered and all but disappeared after 1660. Louis XIV began the trend by deciding, on Mazarin's death in 1661, that he would take over the reins of government himself. His macho initiative was almost immediately imitated by Leopold of Austria on the death of Prince Ferdinand Portia in 1665, and then by Louis' cousin Charles II of England when he dismissed Lord Chancellor Clarendon (pl. 71) in August 1666.<sup>21</sup> Minister-favourites were still to be found in Denmark and Sweden in the 1670s where, in the first case, Griffenfeld and, in the second, La Gardie monopolized royal authority until their respective downfalls.<sup>22</sup> But they were the last examples in the seventeenth century of the cluster of supernovae whose brilliance had spasmodically dominated the political firmament for a century and a quarter and successfully dimmed and sometimes obscured the hereditary effulgence of their princely patrons. The apparent reinvention of the Merovingian office of mayor of the palace was not destined to last. No European minister-favourite was to gain such a grip on power that he could turn his family into the permanent arbiters of princely patronage and institutionalize the role of administrative *metteur-en-scène*. The Togukawa dynasty in Japan might have succeeded in doing just that at the turn of the seventeenth century and reducing the emperor to a state of permanent powerlessness that would last two and a half centuries, but there were to be no European imitators of their bravura, largely because the political culture of the two parts of the world was so different: there was no European tradition of imperial invisibility.<sup>23</sup> Only one long-lasting father-and-son team appeared in the age of the

minister–favourite – Burghley and Salisbury – and, if the Cecils since 1612 have played a not inconsiderable part in the political history of the British Isles, none of their descendants could claim to have run the state again until the premiership of the Marquess of Salisbury at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, if there was any correspondence between the political histories of Europe and the Orient in this period, it lay rather in events in China. There the Ming dynasty too in its final hundred years seems to have kept its subjects at arm's length, leaving the running of the empire to a series of eunuchs. When the Manchu took over in 1644, on the other hand, as the Ming era collapsed in anarchy, the new emperor anticipated Louis XIV's decision seventeen years later: the Ching dynasty ruled as well as reigned, none more so than the peripatetic K'ang Hsi, virtually the exact contemporary of the Sun King.<sup>25</sup>

### *Rise*

Traditional historiography attributed the rise of the minister–favourite to the contemporary emergence on the European stage of a string of peculiarly lazy monarchs. Since the publication of Bérenger's pioneering article in 1974, this explanation has generally been dismissed in favour of a more structural analysis of the development of the political phenomenon, but perhaps it should not be discarded entirely. As Pauline Croft's contribution to this volume reminds us (Chapter 6 above), the Stuart monarchs at least were not always assiduous rulers. Charles I may have been a 'hands-on' monarch but James, the father whom he much despised, had come south in search of the quiet life after years of struggling with a recalcitrant Scottish nobility. On the other hand, the detached attitude to their responsibilities shown by James and another proverbially laid-back Stuart monarch, his grandson Charles II, especially in the early years of his reign, may have been exceptional in the period, for the putative laziness of other European monarchs has not easily stood up to close scrutiny: it is now recognized that both Louis XIII of France and Philip IV of Spain, for instance, took a definite interest in the affairs of state and could, occasionally, be extremely conscientious.<sup>26</sup> There thus has to be a deeper cause of the rise of the minister–favourite.

Bérenger himself argued that the appearance of the phenomenon could be traced to the growth of the early modern state. As the feudal monarchy was replaced by the bureaucratic state in an age of 'military revolution' (to borrow Michael Roberts' phrase), traditionally trained kings and princes (with the exception of the better-prepared Philip II of Spain) found themselves ill equipped to administer the expanding apparatus of government: they needed an aide-de-camp who would look after the state, while they immersed themselves in the customary round of war, hunting, courtly ritual and showing themselves to their subjects. Kings (and queens) were part of an extremely 'active' honour culture, where the daily round even in peacetime was organized in such a way

as to ensure (in theory) that the prince was in peak condition for performing his primary role as the military protector of his own and his subjects' interests. Being a traditional king was a time-consuming business, which required constant travelling and the constitution of an ox: a prince was destined to long hours in the saddle, at table and (when young) on the dance-floor. Traditional kings did not have the time to immerse themselves in the paperwork thrown up by the burgeoning bureaucracy.<sup>27</sup>

This argument is still very attractive, if only because it helps to explain the relative absence of the minister-favourite in those European states where there was little government expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Poland is a case in point, as Antoni Mączak's contribution to this volume emphasizes (Chapter 10 above). A country with an elective monarchy and a highly decentralized system of government based around noble-controlled county Diets, Poland seems to have produced only one minister-favourite over our period, George Ossolinski, who in the mid-seventeenth century was the right-hand man of Ladislas IV. If there were other ministers who dominated central government at an earlier date, notably the chancellor Zamoyski, they were the creatures of the magnate families who traditionally controlled the king, not the king's personal servants. Of course, Bérenger's argument cannot explain the phenomenon entirely, in that a cluster of minister-favourites did appear in one highly unbureaucratized, albeit juridically and ideologically centralized, country – England.<sup>28</sup> But England across our period was arguably peculiar. Not only, as we saw above, were two of the Stuart monarchs comparatively indolent, but the dutiful Elizabeth was a woman. She needed a Burghley to run her administration, just as in the later part of her reign she needed a Leicester, an Essex or a Mountjoy to lead her armies. In Elizabeth's reign at least, moreover, the English minister-favourite lacked the authority of his continental cousins. As Paul Hammer's essay reminds us (Chapter 3 above), Elizabeth did not want to entrust her realm to a surrogate monarch and she struggled hard to ensure that her minister-favourites operated within a restricted sphere. No one individual ever totally dominated the state apparatus, not even the indispensable Burghley. Those who had ambitions to do so, like the high-flying Raleigh and Essex, found they had been borne aloft on wings of wax which would quickly melt when exposed to the heat of the queen's anger. Elizabeth's minister-favourites were limp insular representations of the European species.

There again, a number of essays in this volume suggest that Bérenger's argument, if useful as a point of departure, needs refining in the light of more recent research on the development of the early modern state. Linda Levy Peck, trying to integrate the exceptional case of England into the general pattern (Chapter 4 above), argues that the real cause of the rise of the minister-favourite lies in the mechanics of patronage, an aspect of early modern government which has received particular attention in recent years.<sup>29</sup> According to Peck the rise of the minister-favourite was not so much a response to the growth of early modern government as a reflection of office-hunger. By the turn of the

seventeenth century, the prince was besieged by a legion of place-seekers, anxious to enjoy the rewards of government service. The prince therefore needed a patronage manager who would organize the distribution of royal bounty and protect the crown from the inevitable anger of the disappointed. The appearance of the minister-favourite was therefore the result of a collapse in the equilibrium of the patronage market, as the potential candidates for office grew faster than the number of places. Peck does not offer an explanation for this state of affairs, but it is not difficult to suggest a cause. Presumably, it reflected the broader social effects of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century economic growth, which led to an expansion both in the number of well-to-do bourgeois aspiring to government office as an investment and in the number of indigent nobles/gentry who needed to supplement their income by state service. Presumably, too, the bottleneck would have been particularly grave in England, where there were relatively few offices – hence the system of holding offices in reversion from the 1590s.<sup>30</sup>

I. A. A. Thompson (Chapter 1 above) accepts the first part of Peck's analysis. In his view, the emergence of the minister-favourite can definitely not be attributed simply to the growth of the state itself, for there was no cultural reason why princes should not be chief administrators. Rather the phenomenon arose out of the sheer complexity of the administrative system that emerged in the course of the sixteenth century. As early as 1540 in the case of Spain, he insists, there was a need for an administrative co-ordinator who could oversee the disparate and often conflicting branches of the burgeoning bureaucracy. As the effective prince could only be a policy-maker, not a pen-pusher (hence the weakness of Philip II's personal rule), a trouble-shooting intermediary had to be found who would make the system work properly, especially in times of war. This had to be somebody the prince could trust totally – hence the minister-favourite. The latter's power stemmed, however, not just from royal favour. Although Europe's nascent bureaucracies were relatively large by the turn of the seventeenth century, their structures were still not fully formalized: there was as yet no conception of internal promotion ladders. The astute minister-favourite could therefore use the crown's patronage power to insert his own clients into positions of importance and thus gain complete control of the machine.

Both essays clearly help to flesh out Bérenger's original argument, though readers may wonder how far problems of office-seeking and/or administrative complexity played a part in the appearance of the minister-favourite all over Europe. In contemporary eyes, the Swedish bureaucracy was a model of rationality: can the rise of Oxenstierna, therefore, be attributed in any way to its Byzantine structure? More importantly, both essays develop Bérenger's argument in an entirely new direction. It was not that the prince in this period was ill equipped by background and training to manage the new early modern state; it was rather that, if he wished to be a *successful* prince, he was politically wise not to try to do so. There was a need for him to distance himself from his

apparatus if he was to make objective decisions and retain the loyalty of his subjects. This argument could be taken further, if contemporary views of good kingship are introduced into the analysis. The good prince at the turn of the seventeenth century, as in the late medieval era, was one who preserved the laws, liberties and customs of his subjects and maintained the true religion. In the period 1550–1650, however, it was more difficult than usual for princes to live up to the ideal, thanks above all to the virtually pan-European breakdown in Christian unity.

This was an era of perpetual religious conflict and little respect for the confessional position of opponents. In many states there were now powerful religious minorities who were ready to resort to civil war rather than give up their faith at the prince's command. Where rulers were in control of multiple kingdoms or principalities, like the early Stuarts or the Austrian Habsburgs, it was often the case that the majority religious preference differed from place to place. The prudent ruler either accepted the wisdom of legalizing to a degree religious dissent (as in France, albeit sporadically, from the time of Catherine de Médicis until the death of Louis XIII) or turned a blind eye to the persistence of heresy (as in Ireland). At the same time, as the pursuit of dynastic ambition became more costly, even the wealthiest monarch was strapped for cash and felt the need to ride roughshod over traditional rights in search of money. Dynastic ambition, as the French kings knew, could also conflict with religious duty. From the time of Francis I, Catholic French kings would ally with Protestant princes, not to mention the sultan, to prevent a Catholic Habsburg hegemony in Europe, even if this meant (as it did in the era of the Thirty Years War) ensuring that the Counter-Reformation would never recapture northern Europe.

Time and again, princes in the period 1550–1650 were drawn into actions that many nobles and ecclesiastics thought were amoral but in the circumstances made perfect sense. Princes then had to protect their flanks from the criticism of the religious bigot and the jaundiced traditionalist. The employment of a minister-favourite was the perfect solution. A Richelieu or Olivares took the flak, while the monarchy generally escaped unscathed. Prince and minister-favourite made an effective double act. The prince presented himself to the world as the good king of yore; the minister-favourite openly pursued a policy of *Realpolitik*. The one carried in his robe Cicero's *De officiis*, the most widely read classroom text of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which stressed that there was only one single morality for both the governed and the governor; the other continually conned the *Annals* of Tacitus (a Latin author virtually ignored before the second half of the sixteenth century and his promotion by Justus Lipsius), and became schooled in the novel art of *raison d'état*.<sup>31</sup>

The success of the tactic can be seen in the contemporary portrayal of the minister-favourite. Bérenger in his original article stressed that minister-favourites were universally execrated: contemporaries portrayed them as

machiavels, tyrants and, above all, usurpers of royal authority; they had ceased to be the servants of monarchy and had become its masters. A number of essays in this present volume confirm this view. According to Blair Worden's exhaustive study of the portrayal of the minister-favourite on the English stage (Chapter 11 above), theatre audiences in London at least were continually and exclusively presented with a negative characterization of the political phenomenon. Antonio Feros' general study of the image of the minister-favourite (Chapter 13 above) is admittedly more nuanced in its conclusions, but he too discovers widespread acceptance of the political development only in Spain, a reflection, one might suspect, of the fact that the Castilian monarch from the reign of Philip II deliberately cultivated a more distant relationship with his subjects. Moreover, as Feros' account of writers, such as Maldonado, who argued forcibly in favour of the institution makes clear, even positive portrayals of the *valido* would have done nothing to correct the popular perception that the minister-favourite was a surrogate prince. Maldonado and other Spanish propagandists stressed that the minister-favourite was the lynchpin of the state, a royal intimate and friend, whose advice and judgement in consequence alone could be relied on in a world full of ambitious flatterers. David Woottton (Chapter 12 above) makes much the same point in his analysis of Francis Bacon's understanding of the political phenomenon in England in the reign of James I: royal favourites were not the king's servants but his chosen friends, trusted *participes curarum*. In France, too, Richelieu's hacks equally defended the omnicompetence and authority of the minister-favourite, if they understandably made no attempt to claim that the cardinal was the king's boon companion. According to de Silhon's *Ministre d'état* of 1631, Richelieu was a divine instrument, providentially sent by God to rule over France and clear up disorder. Guez de Balzac even openly extolled the role of the minister-favourite as the prince's protector, an instrument of government who would take unpopular but necessary decisions upon himself and thereby draw the ire of an ignorant and fickle people.<sup>32</sup>

Many minister-favourites themselves only encouraged observers to believe they had usurped the authority of their masters. As the essay of Jonathan Brown effectively demonstrates (Chapter 14 above), three of the leading examples of the genre – Buckingham, Olivares and Richelieu – were committed self-publicists, who used the artist as well as the writer to justify and glorify their power. Richelieu thought nothing of presenting himself as a new Moses saving France (see pl. 56). Furthermore, he unashamedly placed himself on the same level as his king, when he decorated the facing end-walls of the gallery of his palace at Richelieu, the *galerie des batailles*, with two equestrian portraits of himself and his master.<sup>33</sup> Brown surmises that such grandiose statements were more than just reminders to the clients and courtiers who saw the paintings of the achievements and status of the minister-favourite: rather, the constant iconographical hints of opposition in the wings suggest that the paintings were intended to bolster an inner insecurity.

This argument makes sense when it is recalled that the use of art as secular propaganda was revived in Europe in the Renaissance by Italian merchant-princes anxious to consolidate their dominant position in urban oligarchies – notably the Medici. Significantly, it was Marie de Médicis who taught Richelieu the value of art and display. Regardless of the truth of Brown's observation, however, the artistic representation of the minister-favourite can only have further encouraged many contemporaries to look on the political phenomenon with a jaundiced eye. It was of a piece with the favourites' frequently ostentatious, self-aggrandizing lifestyle, which in Richelieu's case put Louis XIII himself in the shade.<sup>34</sup> Inevitably, it was not only jealous and embittered courtiers, like the archbishop of Paris, de Retz, who came to loathe the cardinal-ministers. Even Parisians outside the court's ambit were convinced that Richelieu and Mazarin had usurped the king's power, as the vitriolic correspondence of the Parisian physician, Gui Patin, reveals.<sup>35</sup>

Given the dislike with which the minister-favourite was viewed, it is surprising that any of their number survived in office for long. That several did reflected an uncanny ability to maintain the prince's affection. Constantly the subject of court intrigue and the butt of a nascent public opinion, the minister-favourite owed everything to royal favour. As Sir John Elliott reveals in this volume (Chapter 8 above), Olivares' survival seemed so improbable to contemporaries that it was assumed that he had bewitched his master. In fact, he was just remarkably adept at bolstering Philip IV's confidence and presenting himself to the king as a disinterested minister and counsellor: he eschewed the term *valido*. Minister-favourites were clearly Janus-faced: to the outside world they appeared as demi-gods; in the royal closet they were humble and contrite servants. Richelieu was notorious for his ability to produce tears at will, as his stellar performance before Louis XIII and his mother on the Day of Dupes (11 November 1630), famously reveals.<sup>36</sup> Minister-favourites were master role-players and even the most successful were eventually exhausted by the combined pressure of their political and administrative duties. As the prince's fall-guy in an age of *raison d'état*, they continually had to watch their backs, often literally. Opponents did not wait quietly for the king to tire of his favourite: Buckingham was assassinated and Richelieu the intended victim of several plots.

On the other hand, they played their role so effectively that their princely partners in crime largely escaped scot-free. The only monarchs in the period to be felled by the assassin's knife were Henri III and Henri IV of France. The first was too obviously involved in the murder of the Guise, while the second had committed the cardinal sin of changing his faith for political reasons, not once but twice. Even so, arguably, Henri IV could have deflected the criticism levelled at his *politique* regime more effectively had he entrusted power more completely to Sully (pl. 72). In some respects, Henri IV and Sully formed the greatest double act of them all in the period. While the Gallic Hercules and Catholic convert bought the loyalty of the unruly French nobility by out-

whoring, out-drinking and out-gambling his erstwhile Ligueur enemies and pandered to the Counter-Reformation church by patronizing the Jesuits, the Protestant Sully methodically filled the state's coffers by fair means or foul.<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, the double act was too transparent. Theirs was not the relationship of king and minister-favourite, for Henri IV always made it crystal clear that he was in charge, especially of his state's pro-Protestant foreign policy, with the result that it was the minister not the king who survived into ripe old age.<sup>38</sup> Kings more willing to shelter behind their favourites' coat-tails could pursue with impunity policies that the social elite found controversial.

Being a minister-favourite was clearly an exhausting, debilitating and dangerous business. That Richelieu and Mazarin should have accumulated vast amounts of money and land in pursuing their perilous *métier* is quite understandable. They must have felt that they deserved a share of the prince's estate in return for saving the royal face. Indeed, Orest Ranum's analysis of Richelieu's economic vocabulary (Chapter 9 above) suggests that one minister-favourite at least quite explicitly saw the spoils of office as the legitimate return for services rendered. Although Richelieu remained in many ways wedded to the neo-Stoic discourse of his age which unreservedly criticized venality, he also had a more modern mercantilist concept of wealth. In Richelieu's opinion he had personally increased the material prosperity of his king's state (or tried to), so he was entitled to a commensurate material reward. He was not therefore embarrassed by his great wealth, in contrast to Mazarin who used the more traditional language of a man in his position needing to keep up appearances to justify his riches and exorbitant lifestyle. Of course, many minister-favourites or would-be members of the species may have been quite simply greedy and have taken as much as they could. This was the late C. V. Wedgwood's final verdict on the rapacious behaviour of Strafford (although he, unlike Richelieu, never seems to have directly cheated the king).<sup>39</sup> However, even the greedy as they accumulated offices, honours and land usually did so with an ulterior motive. J.-F. Dubost's study of Concini in this volume (Chapter 5 above) reveals that even a relatively lightweight representative of the genre, who began his career as a traditional favourite, had a strategy of accumulation: he tried to protect his back by building up a power-base in Picardy and having his own personal army, a survival tactic later adopted by Strafford in Ireland.

## *Decline*

Just as in explaining the rise of the minister-favourite, so in accounting for the decline of the phenomenon after 1660 the emphasis has been traditionally placed on changes in the calibre of Europe's princes. If no one has ever suggested that the leadership qualities of Europe's princes suddenly improved *en masse*, it has often been claimed that the era of the dolt and the dunderhead had largely passed by the second half of the seventeenth century (except in Spain).

In the light of the rehabilitation of the princes in the first half of the century, of course, such an explanation can retain little credibility. Yet it would be wrong not to give some weight to individual factors in accounting for the disappearance of the minister-favourite.

One monarch in this new era – Louis XIV (pl. 58) – was particularly talented and influential. When the Sun King, much to the surprise of his entourage, took the decision in 1661 to employ no more minister-favourites, he set an example that Europe's lesser princes definitely hastened to follow. Moreover, Marc Fumaroli's detailed and subtle study in this volume (Chapter 15 above) of Louis XIV's decision to rule alone, emphasizes the peculiar context that led to his taking this momentous step. Fumaroli believes that Louis XIV would in normal circumstances have appointed his *surintendant des finances*, Nicolas Fouquet, to Mazarin's position, and that the king had no long-standing commitment to ruling on his own. Fouquet, however, had an Achilles heel: he was too closely associated with the forces in Paris that disliked the heavy-handed rule of the cardinal-ministers and longed to return to a more consultative absolutist system of an earlier era: paradoxically, then, Fouquet, a jumped-up bourgeois, becomes the unlikely precursor of the two aristocratic critics of the regime of Louis XIV, Fénelon and Saint-Simon. Apprised of this constitutionalist tendency by Colbert (himself too small a fry to inherit Mazarin's mantle), Louis was persuaded to take up the reins of office and bring to an end the era of the minister-favourite in France.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, what Fumaroli's elegant story unravels is the specific context determining the timing of the disappearance of the minister-favourite in France: it cannot explain the general demise of the institution. There were deeper forces pushing Europe's princes, even Louis XIV, towards jettisoning the political phenomenon: the political revolution of the second half of the seventeenth century cannot just be accounted for by princely serendipity and the power of imitation. Bérenger's essay in this collection (Chapter 16 above) suggests that one such force lay in the volatile and fraught political climate that the age of the minister-favourite had itself brought into being. Taking up a point raised in his original article, Bérenger argues that the hostility to the minister-favourite, in the territories of the Austrian Habsburgs at least, had become so great by 1660 that the institution had lost its *raison d'être*. Far from strengthening royal authority, the employment of a minister-favourite now threatened to undermine it. The opposition rhetoric had successfully soured the political atmosphere.

Bérenger's argument is an important one, for it emphasizes the dynamic possibilities of political discourse. The attacks levelled against minister-favourites by sidelined courtiers and ecclesiastics (in Austria's case, Jesuits) not only reflected the success of the institution in deflecting flak from the prince. Perversely, they may also have created a new political environment which reduced the value of the minister-favourite. It may be suspected, however, that Bérenger overstates his case. That there was widespread hostility in

court circles to the minister-favourite as an institution cannot be doubted, but how far that hostility was given a wider public airing remains to be seen. Obviously in England, where, as Worden's essay reveals, the evils of the minister-favourite were publicly and continually exposed on the London stage, hatred of the institution must have been widespread. In many other countries, however, one suspects that the critical discourse of the court overflowed into the streets only at moments of political breakdown. In France, for instance, there seem to have been sudden upsurges in the literature of popular complaint only during the crisis of the 1590s, the mid-1610s and the years of the Fronde.<sup>41</sup> Denunciations of individual minister-favourites as tyrants and usurpers were largely the stuff of private correspondence and unpublished political treatises. In normal circumstances, the minister-favourites themselves policed the public sphere too closely to permit the formation of a widely diffused opposition consciousness. If a ruler's horizons were totally defined by the court, then Bérenger's argument makes sense; if not (and the young Louis XIV who set the ball rolling by failing to appoint a successor to Mazarin certainly had some understanding of the wider world), then the political consequences of the opposition rhetoric can only have been a part of the story.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, it is not hard to suggest other contributory factors to the demise of the minister-favourite in the second half of the seventeenth century. A leading factor in producing the phenomenon in the first place, it was argued above, was the difficulty most princes had in reconciling their traditional role as peripatetic action men with the demands of a burgeoning administration. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, combining the two roles had become more manageable, for the concept of traditional kingship had been significantly transformed by noble internalization of early-sixteenth-century humanist ideas of Christian civility and gentility. Princes were no longer expected to be Jaques' soldier-braggart 'seeking the bubble reputation / Even in the cannon's mouth' or periodically risking their necks in tournaments, but rather the epitome of courtesy, self-control and restraint. This was a princely-cum-courtly ideal first popularized even before the age of the minister-favourite in Castiglione's *Courtier* of 1529, a work which transferred the Erasmian concept of the universal Christian soldier to the specific context of the prince's household.<sup>43</sup> However, it took many decades for the new ethic to become firmly rooted at court. If there were several notable individual illustrations of the ideal in the second half of the sixteenth century, particularly Sir Philip Sidney, who expressed the ideal both as a courtier-poet and as a courtier-soldier, the ethic was not widely internalized.<sup>44</sup>

The sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century court was a violent, frequently murderous place, where courtiers kept their tempers (just) in the presence of their prince but committed acts of affray on its fringes with impunity and often with their lord's connivance. The massacre of the Huguenot nobility that occurred in Paris on 22 August 1572 was admittedly unique in its savagery, but it remains testimony to the burning hatred that often divided factions at court

and could rise to the surface when the prince (in this case the mollycoddled Charles IX) allowed the mask of courtesy to slip. Sixteenth-century courtiers still lived, by and large, according to late-medieval concepts of honour. The development of the duel in France and other countries (not England) from the 1580s was an attempt to channel and control the endemic violence of the court, not to outlaw it.<sup>45</sup> It took a further fifty years and Richelieu's notorious martyrdom of Montmorency-Bouteville in 1626 for all forms of physical violence to be banished from the French court. It was only towards the mid-seventeenth century, by which time the new ethic had been institutionalized in a new educational institution – the noble academy – that princes and their courtiers finally began to judge each other by the polish of their manners rather than by their pugnacity and brio.<sup>46</sup>

Princes in the age of Louis XIV, then, were no longer expected to expend their energies in a constant round of travelling, fighting, drinking and whoring. They might continue to hunt and produce a bevy of illegitimate children,<sup>47</sup> but they were now much more discreet in their appetites. Some of their number, too – Charles XI and XII of Sweden, William III of Orange – might continue to lead their armies into battle, but this was no longer *de rigueur*. It was enough to be acquainted with the theory of the art of Mars, to be painted in a military posture and to visit the front from time to time. Instead, Europe's leading princes fixed their court in one particular place, avoided the rigours of campaigning and enmeshed their courtier-nobles in a complex web of ritualized service of the kind most famously orchestrated by Louis XIV at the Louvre and eventually Versailles. Princes no longer earned the loyalty of their magnates by demonstrating their superiority in the traditional martial and courtly arts (as Francis I and Henry VIII had done). Rather, they elevated their persons to a state of semi-divinity and, taking a leaf out of the minister-favourites' book, emphasized their grandeur through extravagant and self-referential patronage of the arts: Augustus had replaced Hercules.<sup>48</sup> Princes, moreover, also came to believe that representations of royalty were more effective ways of retaining their subjects' allegiance than the thing itself. It was the prince's image (served up in a plethora of different forms) that was continually thrust before the eyes of adoring subjects in the second half of the seventeenth century, not the prince's occasional person. Admittedly, earlier princes or regents had not been unknown to promote a positive image of themselves, but scarcely to the same extent, apart from a handful of particularly insecure and usually female rulers, such as Elizabeth I and Marie de Médicis.<sup>49</sup>

The Sun King's image was the most developed and the most bogus. It was not that in his later years Louis XIV's full-length portrait displayed him as a man in his prime when he had gone to fat; he was not the first prince to want to be seen to be eternally young. It was rather that his image-makers presented him as the new Charlemagne, defending Catholic Christianity against the heretic and heathen, when nothing could be further from the truth. Louis wanted to be seen as crusader, ardent to regain Jerusalem for the faith, but the heir to St

Louis could not even be bothered to send troops to save Vienna from the Turks in 1683.<sup>50</sup>

The prince in the second half of the seventeenth century, therefore, had much more time to turn to administrative matters. Provided he did not become totally immersed in administrative details, as Philip II had been, the prince could once again bestride both the court and the bureaucracy. Louis XIV (inevitably) was the master of the art, carefully dividing his day between the bedchamber and the bureau. And in his case the routine was never altered. Even when the Roi Soleil received the cataclysmic news of the dauphin's death towards the end of his reign, he retained his self-control: quickly recovering his composure and much to the court's astonishment, he pointedly informed an attendant minister that the council would meet the next day as usual.<sup>51</sup> Admittedly, not every European prince in the second half of the seventeenth century wore such a conspicuous mask of gentility, though those who did not were usually the subject of peer-group censure. When Peter the Great visited western Europe incognito in 1697, he and his entourage behaved little differently in their cups from Henri IV and his cronies a century before. While attending an anatomy lesson at Leiden, Peter even ordered squeamish members of his entourage to tear out the corpse's muscles with their teeth. At the turn of the eighteenth century, however, the Russian emperor was labelled a barbarian.<sup>52</sup>

The prince's new-found ability to balance his two roles after 1660 also went hand in hand with an important change in the political atmosphere. To the extent that the appearance of the minister–favourite can be associated with the contemporary suspicion of the new politics of *raison d'état*, it is surely a significant factor in his demise that by the second half of the seventeenth century hostility to the state's pursuit of an independent secular agenda had greatly waned. The Thirty Years War and the contemporaneous Franco-Spanish struggle had been a bloody and protracted affair which cost the Holy Roman Empire perhaps a third of its population (as many as had been killed by the Black Death of 1348). This orgy of blood-letting might not have taught Europe's elites the futility of war, but it did demonstrate to most Protestants and Catholics (even members of the clergy) that the religious divide was here to stay and that a state's foreign policy should henceforth be conducted purely on dynastic grounds. Cross-confessional alliances no longer raised the ire of the pious. The state, too, frequently emerged from the conflict with an enlarged bureaucracy and standing army. Paradoxically, it now became much easier for the ruler to play his appointed role as defender of the faith in his own territories, whatever the religious complexion of his international alliances. The Thirty Years War and the other conflicts that beset Europe in the middle decades of the seventeenth century ironically finally made it possible for rulers to turn the doctrine of the 1555 Peace of Augsburg – 'cuius regio, eius religio' – into reality. Bohemia became a Catholic state; so too did France in 1685; while Ireland could well have become permanently Protestant had Cromwell lived and his son

Henry continued to pursue his hardline policies beyond 1656. The pious then may have lost their dreams of the religious reunion of Christendom by force but they were frequently wooed and appeased by the prospect of internal proselytization. In such an environment, there was no need for the prince to hide behind minister-favourites: he no longer needed a fall-guy.<sup>53</sup>

The state's attack on its subjects' traditions and privileges in search of money was equally less contested. After several decades of continual warfare the population had largely grown used to heavier and unconstitutional taxation: in pre-industrial Europe changes which lasted long enough to become familiar always ended by becoming acceptable. The process of acceptance was only aided by the fact that the privileged orders were generally protected from the new fiscalism and sometimes even able to benefit from it. In Restoration England, for instance, the introduction of permanent peacetime taxation took the form of an excise on alcoholic beverages which inevitably hit the poor rather than the rich.<sup>54</sup>

Even if the population did not get used to the new tax demands, it still largely kowtowed, for the wars had seen the maturation of an ideology of absolutism which stressed that kings were gods and their commands unquestionable. In both Protestant and Catholic countries the second half of the seventeenth century saw the successful promotion of a novel ideology of sovereign authority, first developed by Bodin in the 1570s and secularized and taken to its fullest extent by Hobbes.<sup>55</sup> To all intents and purposes the much older ideology of the right of rebellion, even tyrannicide, which had been articulated by Aquinas and espoused by both Calvinists and Jesuits in the second half of the sixteenth century, was completely excised from European political culture for over a century, except for its temporary and limited re-emergence in England and the Netherlands in the 1690s with John Locke and Jurieu. Pointedly, in the France of Louis XIV, where future members of the elite were inculcated in the absolutist ideology even while learning classical languages, the most fulsome account of royal power was to be penned by a Huguenot, Elie Merlat, on the eve of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.<sup>56</sup>

Thus the rhetoric of disappointed courtiers, a new court culture, a more realistic approach to the division of Christendom and the successful inculcation of a cult of obedience all seem to have combined to hasten the disappearance of the minister-favourite after 1660. As a result his star shone in the political heavens for barely a century. The minister-favourite was clearly the political institution of the High Renaissance. The phenomenon helped the prince negotiate that period of political instability and transition that marked the bridge between the late medieval state and its *ancien régime* successor.<sup>57</sup> The minister-favourite oversaw the transference from the relatively simple, personal and (often cruelly) spontaneous state of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to the much more complex, impersonal and bureaucratic state of the period 1660–1789. The first was effectively described by Machiavelli, although the Florentine grossly exaggerated the amoralism of the princes north

of the Alps: they were conventional dynasts who believed that God would bless or damn their cause on the field of battle.<sup>58</sup> The second was brilliantly described by Tocqueville, though his fixation with the administrative centralization of mid-nineteenth-century France prevented him from seeing how corporatist the absolute state really was.<sup>59</sup> No contemporary political theorist-cum-sociologist of lasting significance, on the other hand, ever attempted to define the state of the era of the minister–favourite – Balzac and its other supporters were little more than propaganda hacks.

### *Unanswered Questions*

Although it is now possible to construct a more nuanced picture than hitherto of the rise and fall of the minister–favourite, it remains the case that there are still aspects of the phenomenon that require fuller research. Above all, much more needs to be known about the minister–favourite’s relationship to the rituals and structure of the early modern court. In recent years, the court has become a focus of serious historical interest for the first time. Historians no longer contend that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a period of bureaucratic state-building that left the court relatively marginalized. Rather, they have come to understand that the burgeoning administrative apparatus remained deeply embedded in the court. The court, then, was still the epicentre of royal government, even if the prince was peripatetic for most of this period and parts of the administrative machine (usually those concerned most closely with justice) had become permanently fixed. This new understanding of the importance of the court clearly must be taken into account in any attempt to comprehend the phenomenon of the minister–favourite.<sup>60</sup> Retaining the prince’s favour and dominating the machinery of state principally required control of the court. How did the minister–favourite achieve this? This present set of essays, it must be admitted, offers no obvious answer, for its authors make little attempt to engage directly with this new history of the court. Yet if, as was earlier pointed out, the *premier ministre* was not necessarily a natural courtier and was frequently absent from his master’s or mistress’s side, the question of how he retained his authority at the centre of power becomes an even more interesting one.

Given the drift of much of the recent research into the power-basis of the minister–favourite – represented in this volume particularly by the essay of Sir John Elliott on Olivares (Chapter 8 above) – one would expect a solution to this conundrum to be found yet again through a study of patronage. Presumably, the minister–favourite constructed a ministerial clientele within the court, as he did throughout the wider administration. It may be time, however, for historians of the phenomenon to begin to think about the establishment of the *premier ministre*’s authority in a more imaginative way. It may well be the case that early modern European society was largely held together by the glue of

material rewards. To an important degree, it was the honours, offices and cash that princes showered upon their minister-favourites which confirmed the latter's overweening authority, just as the minister-favourite's liberal distribution of patronage among his clients helped reduce the possibility of the disappointed challenging his pre-eminence. There again, this was a society in which obedience and deference were largely engendered through the ownership and exercise of certain rituals of power rather than through the crude monopoly of wealth and physical force. Wealth might help to embellish these rituals but was not strictly necessary: effective rituals do not have to be extravagant *pièces de théâtre*. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries formed one of the great eras of the invention of court ceremonial. The rituals that orchestrated the relations between an Elizabeth I or a Louis XIV and their courtiers were not aesthetic constructs but statements about princely authority which their enactment created and enhanced.<sup>61</sup> It behoves us, then, to explore whether the appearance of the minister-favourite was accompanied by the development of courtly rituals peculiarly aimed at stabilizing his honour and dignity.

In the case of many minister-favourites the need to construct such a symbolic suit of clothes must have been all the greater in that they were metaphorically speaking semi-clad. As they were seldom personal favourites, their position in the king's affections would not have been continually confirmed by passionate embraces and frequent visits to the royal bed. In a period in which male friendship and trust was publicly and graphically displayed, the personal favourite's authority over the court would have been continually consolidated by acts of intimacy. If this could be a double-edged privilege in that it allowed the jealous to spread rumours of homosexual relations between friends of unequal status, it was still the case that this was a symbol of princely favour to which most minister-favourites had no access.<sup>62</sup> To the extent, too, that many minister-favourites did not hold a major court or administrative office, they had no alternative way of commanding the deference of courtiers. It is no wonder that a Richelieu or a Mazarin prized his cardinal's hat!

It is unlikely, of course, that specific ceremonies were created to clothe the minister-favourite's nakedness, which might be part of the explanation why there were no European equivalents of the Togukawa. What we know of an Olivares or Richelieu suggests that they were interested in using ceremonial to exalt the king rather than themselves. Even Richelieu's famous staged entrances were aimed at emphasizing his ecclesiastical dignity, not his ministerial status. Perhaps minister-favourites felt it sufficient to have their power and deeds frozen once and for all iconographically on the walls of their palaces, rather than referred to repeatedly in a series of gestures and words. But, even if a fuller knowledge of the minister-favourite at court leads to the conclusion that the phenomenon was too dynamic and protean to be defined by a set of rituals (there were certainly ones of a common character, given the heterogeneity of the European court before 1650), it seems more than likely that the individual minister-favourite would have left some mark on his contemporary aulic

culture. It has often been noted how careful Richelieu was to be deferential before Louis XIII, always insisting on standing, for instance, in the king's presence even when bedridden with illness. What was the purpose of such courtesy? Obviously, it was part of the cardinal's wider campaign to have royal authority treated with respect: courtiers as well as provincial Frenchmen had to learn that the Lord's Anointed and his servants could not be approached like common mortals.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, in thereby enhancing the crown's dignity, the cardinal safeguarded his own position. Once the king too had learnt that intimacy with the royal person or his representative was conduct unbecoming, indeed the crime of *lèse-majesté*, the traditional advantages of the personal favourite in the power-game at court were reduced.

Did the minister-favourite, too, devise new ways for the king to bestow his esteem, if traditional methods of physical intimacy were sidelined? Was it Richelieu, for instance, who invented the ritual of the royal *regard* in France, brought to perfection by Louis XIV? If so, the narrative of the Day of Dupes takes on a new poignancy. After Richelieu's tempestuous interview with Louis and Marie de Médicis, the cardinal waited patiently at the bottom of the staircase for the king to emerge from the queen mother's chambers. When he did so and descended the stairs, Richelieu bowed low but the king walked past without bestowing a glance in the cardinal's direction. This, it seems, was the sign that the court had waited for: it was not the sound of the queen mother's anger or Richelieu's tears: the cardinal was finished because he had been ignored by the king. But when and how had the royal *regard* acquired such importance, and what subtle changes in the inclination of the head and the royal mien portended favour or dismissal? The early modern royal physiognomy remains a closed book to historians. Indeed, so too does the broader 'science' of reading a man's character and intentions in his face, despite the fact that it was one of the most widely disseminated belief systems of the age, as Martin Porter's recent doctoral thesis reveals.<sup>64</sup>

Naturally, the minister-favourite not only had to fashion a royal protocol that included a series of gestures which would unambiguously reveal to the court how high he was placed in the king's esteem: he also had to ensure that royal favour continued. Once more, it must be admitted, the essays in this volume add little to existing understanding. We remain locked in the assumption that minister-favourites, who hardly ever won the prince's affections through their looks, had a psychological hold based on their ability to articulate the prince's wishes and put them into effect. Even if this argument is inherently plausible, we need to know much more about the minister-favourite's own reading of his position. Presumably, most minister-favourites for most of the time were very unsure of their domination. Given that success was seldom assured and frequently unachieved, what steps did they take, beyond surrounding the king with their own clients, to ensure that they remained first in the royal affections? Arguably, there is still a tendency to see the minister-favourite as a modern man, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century exponent of *Realpolitik*. This is to

forget that they were late Renaissance figures, part of a cultural environment dominated by hermetic and occult ideas.<sup>65</sup>

Sir John Elliott's essay informs us that contemporary Spaniards thought that Olivares had bewitched Philip IV. However absurd such an explanation for the *conde-duque*'s political success may seem to us, the statement needs to be taken seriously. Most educated Europeans before 1650 believed in the realities of witchcraft and possession, and most princes and their advisers consulted astrologers and warlocks. It is by no means improbable that minister-favourites contrived to retain their prince's affection by recourse to magic. Richelieu for one was extremely interested in the occult. How should we read the fact that after the Day of Dupes he imprisoned one of the king's physicians, Semelles, in the Bastille for casting a horoscope predicting that Louis XIII would die in September 1631? Did he silence Semelles because he feared such predictions would give hope to his enemies, or did he really suspect that Semelles might have the power not just to know but to create the future?<sup>66</sup> Even trivial anecdotes about Richelieu's life take on an added importance if we remember his interest in the forbidden arts. On one occasion, he danced the saraband before the queen, Anne of Austria, another of his political enemies. Should this be taken as an interesting insight into the cardinal's 'other' more passionate side, the courtier *manqué* pandering to the queen's Spanish roots, or is it stretching credibility too far to suggest it might signify something more sinister? The saraband was a *sorcier*'s dance. Was Richelieu attempting to bewitch Anne of Austria to win her favour by calling up hidden forces of nature, in much the same way as Henri III and his *mignons* at an earlier date possibly staged magical masques at court depicting the triumphs of peace over civil war with the intention of summoning the support of benevolent spiritual powers? We know much about the minister-favourite as a Machiavellian; we know next to nothing about him as a magus.<sup>67</sup>

Nor do we know enough as yet about the way in which the minister-favourite was perceived by his contemporaries. At present, the species has the solidity of an historical construct. Did the host of contemporary commentators on the phenomenon (usually critical) distinguish the minister-favourite from the more common or garden variety? Several essays in this volume suggest that this was not the case: hostile observers seem to have been more than ready to blacken the reputation of a contemporary *premier ministre* by calling to mind the power and influence of earlier, detested conventional favourites, such as Piers Gaveston. There again, other essays raise the possibility that some critics at least understood the difference. Does the presentation of Sejanus as an archetypal point of reference in the critical literature reflect the newfound interest in Tacitus or a deeper realization that plausible historical parallels from the national past could not be easily found? There was no whiff of intimacy about the relationship between Tiberius and his favourite: the emperor purportedly invited young boys to his bed, not his principal administrative agent.

Clearly more work needs to be done on the contemporary discourse of the minister-favourite to see whether or not he was perceived as a distinctive political animal. A more detailed study of the positive accounts of the phenomenon would be particularly useful. How far did the minister-favourite's 'spin-doctors' actively attempt to fashion a portrait of the *premier ministre* as a novel political figure? Equally, though, we need to pursue the negative portrayal of the phenomenon in much greater depth to grasp more securely the popular perception of the species. The study of the critical literature of the court, however sensitive, is insufficient here. Even the analysis of plays performed on the London stage only touches the surface.<sup>68</sup> We need the minister-favourite to be pursued across the continent through his manifestation in the ballad, broadsheet and woodcut. At the moment only the literary ephemera of the Fronde has been studied in detail. In particular, a deeper acquaintance with this contemporary discourse will throw greater light on Bérenger's suggestion that the minister-favourite disappeared after 1660 because the hostility to the phenomenon outweighed its utility. We want to know how great that hostility actually was. We need, too, to know how far the popular success of the critical literature can be attributed to the manipulation of powerful and disconcerting images in the historical memory. In addition, there is a need to explore how far those images were all the more disconcerting in that increasingly over the period Protestants and Counter-Reformers were attempting to redraw the boundaries of public intimacy.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, while attempting to understand more deeply the historical reality of the minister-favourite in the century 1550–1650, it is important that the extent of his singularity is examined in the light of the apparent reappearance of the species in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is indisputable that the long reign of Louis XIV sees the sudden death of the phenomenon. Yet, as Hamish Scott has reminded us in an essay published in 1996, omnicompetent principal ministers were once again a commonplace in the absolute states of continental Europe after 1750. Pombal in Portugal, Potemkin in Russia (pl. 73), Kaunitz in the Austrian Habsburg Empire, Maurepas and Vergennes in the France of Louis XVI, A. P. von Bernstorff in the Denmark of the mad Christian VII – the names of statesmen in the second half of the eighteenth century who monopolized or virtually monopolized political authority litter the stage of Europe. Only Frederick the Great of Prussia maintained the tradition of Louis XIV and was his own very dedicated principal minister.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the species began to reappear even before 1750 in France and Russia, where Cardinal Fleury in the first part of the reign of Louis XV enjoyed similar power and influence to Richelieu and Mazarin, and a bevy of minister-favourites, such as Bestuzheff under the Empress Elizabeth, relieved the successors of Peter the Great of the mantle of office.<sup>71</sup>

Scott's point is well taken. In fact, one could extend the list into the first part of the nineteenth century, for some of the absolute states of the Restoration also had their principal ministers. The most obvious candidate for the sobriquet

is the 'coachman of Europe', the Austrian chancellor Count Metternich (pl. 74), who ruled the roost in Austria, above all in the realm of foreign affairs, from 1810 to the Revolution of 1848.<sup>72</sup> The re-emergence of the phenomenon clearly cries out for comparative study. Yet, to date, historians of the minister-favourite of the late Renaissance have ignored the resurrection of the species entirely.

At first glance, it must be said, the points of contrast between the two periods seem stronger than the points of comparison. The two sets of minister-favourites definitely shared one important characteristic in that the eighteenth-century principal minister was also not a favourite in a conventional sense. Only Potemkin and Struensee, Bernstorff's predecessor and the ill-fated lover of the Danish queen, owed their elevation to the politics of the bedroom.<sup>73</sup> There again, the eighteenth-century *premier ministre* was much more the officially recognized head of the administration with a definite title and personal sphere of competence (usually in foreign affairs). He was also much more a reformer than a patronage-broker (if he survived long enough to effect significant change). Only a detailed comparative analysis of the two sets, however, will confirm this initial impression. In particular, historians will need to focus their attention on a further apparent point of distinction between the two eras. Whereas the phenomenon of the minister-favourite in the period 1550–1650 was almost universally execrated, in the eighteenth century the institution, if not necessarily the individual representatives of the species, received a much better press. By and large, contemporaries accepted the position and raised little objection to the concept of royal surrogacy *per se*.

Why did the minister-favourite's second coming cause so little furore? According to Scott, we should attribute the reappearance of the phenomenon to an unprecedented expansion in government activity from the middle of the eighteenth century, as princes and their advisers showed a novel interest in managing the economy and effecting social and educational reforms. As the business of the state expanded, the average prince no longer had the stamina to run the machinery of state himself, and so called in a professional co-ordinator. This explanation obviously derives from Bérenger's original account of the rise of the late Renaissance minister-favourite, and for this reason alone should be treated with caution. If true, however, it might help to explain the relative absence of criticism the second time round. Arguably, the growth in government activity made it abundantly evident to contemporary observers that princes could no longer perform their dual function as heads of the court and the administration, especially in an age which had discovered privacy. Monarchs, like Louis XV and Louis XVI, wanted to spend time on their own or in retreat with their mistress or family.<sup>74</sup> Obviously they had to sacrifice one of their roles and, given their totemic function at the pinnacle of the hierarchical society, they could hardly abandon the court. Only the spartan and probably misogynist Frederick the Great turned himself into a full-time administrator and left the court to be run by his siblings. It was Frederick, too, of course, who

originally articulated the novel ‘Enlightenment’ theory of kingship which declared that the monarch belonged to the state, not the state to the monarch. Other princes later copied him in this profession, but none, apart from Joseph II of Austria, mouthed the sentiment that the prince was ‘the first servant of the state’ so honestly.<sup>75</sup>

At this stage in our knowledge, though, any answer to the question as to why the minister-favourite was better received in his later manifestation must be pure speculation. This is equally true of another aspect of the re-emergence of the minister-favourite that Scott hints at but does not develop – the British connection. How far should the recourse to a principal minister in a second period of administrative growth and reorganization be in any way seen as an attempt to revivify an ancient, discredited institution? Rather, should it be connected, in an era of relative Anglomania, with the establishment from the second decade of the eighteenth century of the purely British institution of prime minister? Britain’s ‘first’ prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, of course, had many of the characteristics of a traditional minister-favourite, not least his dependence on Queen Caroline for maintaining his credit with George II, and the office might not have developed so quickly after 1714 had it not been for the Hanoverians’ foreign roots. But traditional minister-favourites operated within a court not a parliamentary context, and Walpole ultimately retained the favour of the king only as long as he commanded a Commons majority. Moreover, as a gifted financial administrator, who had lined his own pockets but saved the country at the time of the South Sea Bubble crisis, he had nothing in common with the earlier generation of minister-favourites, who usually had little financial acumen.<sup>76</sup>

Arguably, then, it was Walpole and his successors, whose power was public and challengeable, who were the real models for the continental development of the office of principal minister after 1750, not an Olivares or Richelieu. An institution that the British crown had been forced to foster in order to cope with the complexities of managing Britain’s peculiar parliamentary monarchy may have seemed the ideal solution to the complex administrative problems of enlightened despots.<sup>77</sup> Yet, if this was indeed the provenance of the eighteenth-century principal minister, perhaps the likes of Fleury and Bestuzheff should not be included in Scott’s list at all. Instead, they should be seen as throwbacks to an earlier era, whose control of power in France and Russia in the second quarter of the eighteenth century is to be explained simply in terms of the laziness of Louis XV and the chance occurrence of a clutch of female Romanovs.

This final suggestion, of course, must be treated with the same caution as its predecessors. To argue that the return of the era of the cardinal-ministers to France had no wider European significance is to assume again what may seem inherently plausible but has yet to be substantiated – that the two sets of

minister–favourites are only superficially comparable. The ultimate aim of this concluding essay can only be to set an agenda for future research. If it has offered a more detailed analysis of the phenomenon of the minister–favourite than Bérenger's original article, it makes no claim to present more than a preliminary sketch. Indeed, it is the purpose of the volume as a whole to rekindle an old debate rather than provide a definitive overview. This volume will have achieved the aim of its editors if it has encouraged historians of the early modern period to look more closely at the structure of the European state in the century 1550–1650 and to treat the institution of the minister–favourite as a significant historical phenomenon.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank the following friends and colleagues for their help in preparing the final draft of this essay: Joseph Bergin, David Parrott, Clive Holmes, Felicity Heal and Martin Porter.
2. J. Bérenger, 'Pour une enquête européenne: le problème du ministériat au XVIIe siècle', *Annales*, 29 (1974), pp. 166–92.
3. The most colourful favourite at present on the Western political scene is Claude Chirac, daughter of the French president. Dubbed 'Rasputin in miniskirts', it is claimed that 'nobody [apart from the then prime minister] gets a tête-à-tête with Chirac without going through Claude': see *The Times*, 15 March 1997, p. 21.
4. Favourites, even in the twentieth century, have seldom left their own account of their time at the top: they are primarily known through their detractors. In this respect the appearance of Marcia Williams' and Nancy Reagan's autobiographies may mark a new trend: see Marcia, Lady Falkender, *Inside Number 10* (London, 1972); and Nancy Reagan, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (Leicester, 1989).
5. A. Lloyd Moote, 'Richelieu as Chief Minister: A Comparative Study of the Favourite in Early Seventeenth-Century Politics', in Joseph Bergin and Laurence Brockliss, eds, *Richelieu and his Age* (Oxford, 1992), esp. p. 16. Enzlin is not mentioned by Moote.
6. Being in orders was an insurance policy. If and when the favourite fell, his demise was unlikely to be terminal; only Laud among clerical favourites in this period was executed (in 1645).
7. Peter Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1992), esp. ch. 3, on the 1518 Treaty of London; S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley, eds, *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge, 1991), intro.
8. Anne Somerset, *Unnatural Murder: Poison at the Court of James I* (London, 1997).
9. Richelieu's political apprenticeship is effectively dealt with in Joseph Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu* (New Haven and London, 1991), chs 3–6.
10. Olivares' power over Philip IV in the 1620s was based on his role as a father figure to an unsure prince: see J. H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven and London, 1986), esp. pp. 170–1.
11. J. H. Elliott, *Richelieu and Olivares* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 16–18. On the fortunes of the cardinal-ministers, see Joseph Bergin, *Cardinal Richelieu: Power and the Pursuit of Wealth* (New Haven and London, 1985), esp. ch. 7, and D. Dessert, 'Pouvoir et fortune au XVIIe siècle: la fortune de Mazarin', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 23 (1976), pp. 161–81.
12. Oxenstierna was chancellor from 1612 till his death in 1654. The office and its streamlined administration were at the apex of internal and foreign affairs: see Michael Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden, 1611–1632*, 2 vols (London, 1953–8), i, pp. 271–6. There is no complete biography of Oxenstierna in any language.
13. Richelieu's clerical but scarcely political rival, Cardinal Rohr, presided over the council before him: see Joseph Bergin, *Cardinal de la Rohr: Leadership and Reform in the French Church* (New Haven and London, 1987), pp. 62–5; *idem*, *Rise of Richelieu*, p. 253. On Richelieu's control of the central administration through his creatures, see Orest Ranum, *Richelieu and the*