CHAPTER SIX

THE WAR IN FRANCE, 1545–1546

Owr commune inemy sall have this symmer handis foulle.¹

THE RENEWAL OF WAR AROUND BOULOGNE, 1545

The year 1545, rather than seeing a running down of the war, saw both sides prepared to throw the dice again; conflict was ratcheted up on several fronts. This was also the first year since 1492 in which England found itself locked in conflict with France (and Scotland) without the help of allies, this time, though, beleaguered on several fronts. The capacity of the Tudor state to deploy its power was tested to the limit. The Council informed Wotton in December 1544 that ‘the Kinges Majestie doubteth not but that the French King this somer next ensuyng will employe the uttermoste of his power tattempt the recovery of Bouloyn’ and in particular ‘by see for thannoyaunce of his highnes and his subectz.’ Such intelligence was both accurate and daunting.² The Welsh soldier Elis Gruffydd recalled that Francis had in the meantime sought to ‘put enough hemp on the King of England’s distaff to keep him busy until the summer came.’³ The French were likely to take the initiative; Henry VIII held Boulogne and to some extent the advantage in Scotland and the only way to disturb the status quo was for France to attack. Such an attack had to take place on several fronts. In early February 1545, intelligence sent to the Emperor reported a French plan to continue the war with England in three theatres: the first at Boulogne itself, where a fort was planned to stop the English garrison dominating the country to the south; the second in Scotland with an army under Enghien, the victor of Ceresole; and the

¹ Letter of John Hay to the Queen Dowager of Scotland, 15 May 1545, Balcarres Papers, I, p. 137.
² Council to Wotton, [17 Dec. 1544], NA SP1/195, fo. 235 (Lé-P, XIX, ii, 752).
³ Elis Gruffydd, Chronicle, extract in M.B. Davies, ‘Boulogne and Calais from 1545 to 1550,’ Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of Fouad I University, Cairo, XII, i (19509), p. 4.
third a naval campaign from Normandy attacking England directly. Ships were already being assembled from the Mediterranean galley fleet and it the western ports, though the problem was that, at this point the English were stronger at sea. For this, 3 million lt. was being raised in taxation. At the same time, illness continued to take its toll on the rulers. Francis was again severely ill from the probable effects of venereal disease, which had a devastating effect and left him prostrate for several weeks at Fontainebleau; so planning and action inevitably passed into the hands of his minister-favourite Annebault and other chief advisers.4

Royal letters sent out to demand contributions from the French walled towns in February 1545 for the 3 million lt. declared that the enemies of 1544 had been thrown back by stout defence (‘la force et resistance de nostre royaume’) and that Boulogne would still have been held had its commanders shown enough spirit. Only the King of England, who had rejected reasonable peace terms, remained in arms against France. Thus, it was necessary to expel him from France and carry the war to him (‘nous efforcer à gecter en ses pays la guerre.’) The King therefore projected a large army in the Boulonnais and a powerful fleet to invade England.5 The decision to renew war was thus

---

4 Intelligence report sent by Saint-Mauris, CSP Spain Cal. VIII, no. 115, pp. 217–230 (Le&P, XX, i, 619), wrongly dated to August. The CSP Spain (Simancas Estado 641) gives details of the illness which Le&P, omits: ‘for a long time past, the commencement of his indisposition being a slow fever that he caught…lasting on one occasion for five days….it was discovered that he had a gathering under the lower parts, which distressed and weakened him so much that he could not stand, and he had to keep his bed. For the cure of this gathering the most expert doctors and surgeons of Paris were summoned. After purging the King they applied a cautery to the abcess, in order to open and destroy it. This treatment was continued until the abcess broke: but instead of discharging in one place only, as they expected, it broke out in three, in very dangerous positions: and there is at present no assurance that he will live. He has even fallen into extreme fainting and exhaustion, but he has always retained consciousness and still does so….As the abcesses did not discharge properly, the physicians have applied three fresh cauterias, and this has caused three issues, whence infected matter flows in great abundance. In order the better to recover from his malady, the King has commenced a course of Chinese wood [sandalwood], which his physicians say he must continue for 20 days. All the medical men are of opinion the malady proceeds from “the French sickness”…The King expects to be able shortly to go into the country in a litter, going first towards Blois and thence to his native place, Cognac.’ The cutting of the abcess took place on 7 Jan. (Desjardins, Négociations…Toscane, III, p. 142). See Knecht, Renaissance Warrior, p. 495.