Strike and Pillage: some aspects of the behaviour of the Scottish mercenary during the wars in the Netherlands, 1572-1603

R.C. DERKSEN

INTRODUCTION:

In 1572 parts of the Netherlands rose in revolt against their natural ruler, Philip II, King of Spain. Within a few months Scots were to be found in the service of the rebels, and they continued to serve throughout the wars, which lasted until Spain recognized the independence of the Republic of the United Provinces in 1648, and until the end of the 18th century. We shall be looking at the most difficult times, the period 1572 to 1603, as they constitute the most interesting chapter in the history of the Scottish involvement in the Netherlands. The numbers of Scottish soldiers and the number of Scottish companies fluctuated wildly during these thirty years, depending on the situation. While only 200 saw service in 1572, and only about 800 in 1584, the usual figures fluctuate between 1,000 and 2,000, reaching peaks of 4,000. The soldiers were all voluntary mercenaries, who came to the Netherlands for employment.

Especially the 19th century liberal historians were uneasy about the blatant mercenary nature of the soldiers in the Dutch service. P.J. Blok stated categorically that there were two types of persons fighting for the precious liberty of the Netherlands: on the one hand the idealists, the leaders of the revolt, and the common Dutchers who were willing to do their share for the fatherland; on the other hand we have the foreign mercenaries, who were not fighting for freedom, but were cowardly, and served any master who paid them and let them plunder. The England of Elizabeth in its expansion stage, so highly praised by A.L. Rowse, is condemned without reserve by Douglas Campbell:

The first class in the community, moved to take an active part in the struggle [against Spain], was, as might be expected, not composed of the religious or even the sober-minded element. It was made up of the men whom civil convulsions usually bring to the surface, the scum of society, broken-down adventurers, who, having gambled away all else, have nothing left but their lives for stakes ... Some did good service in the siege of Harlem, forming part of the heroic garrison which was massacred at its capture. But the majority were of a different stamp, being willing to fight on the side which gave the larger pay.²

On the other hand, Scottish historians have often gone too far in the other direction, suppressing, or more likely, ignoring, anything which they felt would harm the reputation of the Scottish soldier abroad. Thus Ferguson in his history of the Scottish Brigade carefully ignored, what he would have felt, were disgraceful occurrences. Burton, in his history of the Scot abroad, aside from ascribing only the highest motives to the Scots serving in the Netherlands, goes so far as to seek a racial explanation for Scottish perfection.³

Both the condemnation and the praise are based on 19th-century assumptions concerning duty, morality, and the revolt of the Netherlands. Whereas it is relatively easy to agree with Blok and Campbell that the foreigners in the Dutch forces were mercenaries, their outright condemnation does not have to follow. Whereas Blok saw the struggle as a fight for a 19th-century type of liberty, and Campbell saw it in religious terms as a struggle between the forces of evil and those of good, the actual picture is more complicated, if one is willing to look seriously into the nature of the revolt, the character of the wars, and the Scots who came over. To state that a mercenary serves only for pay is a mistake, and a serious anachronism. While we would expect this in our society with its division of labour, and its espousal of value-free spheres of activity, this cannot be assumed as readily for the 16th century. As for the revolt, it cannot be seen solely in terms of a religious struggle or a politically, liberal-oriented one. The character of the revolt shares with the mercenary the fate of having at times been examined in exclusive, monistic terms. The Scottish mercenary reflected the revolt and his times. While the revolt had religious aspects, we cannot claim that it was solely motivated by this. Similarly, the Scots who came over were not all Protestant, nor was this a requirement during our period. As for the cruelty in
which the Scots took part, this too was a reflection of the standards of the day, and if we insist on chalkling up rights and wrongs, the record of the States General is no better than that of the Spanish command. Before 1572 the Netherlands was a unified whole only in name. As a result the revolt was characterized strongly by local issues, accentuating any one or more of the political, religious, social and economic problems and conditions which plagued the Netherlands as a whole at the time. It is therefore not surprising that in many ways it was not only a revolt against the ruler, but a civil war as well. We can therefore expect the Scottish mercenary to act according to the standards of the time, as well as the nature of the struggle in which he was involved.  

**STRIKE AND PILLAGE**

Causes for the Scottish troops refusing to continue or start their services were without exception related to the failure of the employers to pay wages. Neither working conditions nor ideology were ever at issue. Hence we feel justified in using the term "strike", rather than "mutiny" to denote this activity. Lack of payment meant deprivation not only of the basic necessities of life but also of the tools with which one had to ply one's trade. Without payment the soldier could not obtain his food, clothes, weapons and ammunition. Strike connotes a conscious activity. Undoubtedly they knew what they were doing, and that they were using the one lever for obtaining funds which did not alienate them from their employers. On the other hand, it must also be remembered that payment for the day labourer, in which class the soldier falls, was always marginal in early-modern Europe. Thus the soldier became immobile when he was not paid for his services. Strike, conscious or not, was the inevitable and logical outcome of his material condition. It was therefore not an unreasonable measure.

We have taken note of the following strikes. The list is not meant to be comprehensive, as the sources do not lend themselves to this. However, we have noted all these occurrences which match our definition. The main ones run over the years 1577 to 1584, a period of serious disorganisation for the States General, and in sharp contrast to the successful 1590's. In December 1577 Colonel Henry Balfour and his regiment refused to go to camp until the States threatened to dismiss them.  

Colonel William Stewart of Houston probably arrived with his regiment in April, 1578, but refused to serve until June, when the States satisfied his demands.  

From August 1578 to March 1579, for nine months, the Scots were basically useless, and engaged in pillage and strike. In June, 1579 Stewart's troops went on strike at Mechelen, and Balfour's at Meenen. From June to September, 1580, Stewart's Scots were striking at Brussels. From December 1580 until June 1581 strikes and other troubles occurred on and off in Stewart's regiment at Vilvoorde. There were further troubles when his troops were at Eccloo, from December 1581 to April 1582. During January and February 1582 Colonel Trail's Scots were on strike at Meneen. During the first few months of 1583 Stewart's old companies, and perhaps other Scottish companies as well, were on strike in the Pay de Waas. Colonel Preston was murdered during a strike at Meneen in June, 1583. In September of the same year the Scots were on strike at Alost. The last attempted strike during our period took place in August 1593.

There were three distinct types of action which striking troops usually took. First of all, they could refuse to march. Secondly, they could march, but not with the intent of following orders, but rather, to press for satisfaction. Thirdly, they could organize among themselves and refuse to be commanded by their officers. Although each action could be distinct, it was more common that during a strike two, or even all three, of the measures were explored. A few examples will suffice.

The most obvious behaviour during a strike was the refusal to march. On June 21, 1579, Cobham reported to Lord Burleigh that the mutiny of the Scots at Meneen was continuing, and that they refused to enter the field service and leave the town without payment.

The year before discontented States' troops, including Scots, had decided to march towards Brussels in order to obtain satisfaction. Of course this alternative to the refusal to obey marching orders led to much the same thing, and was really much more threatening.

The throwing off of the authority of the colonel or captain was usually partly of the strike as well, and for two reasons: in the first place, the striking troops, distrusting their officers, or trying to push them into action, often elected their own leaders; secondly, the captains themselves, and not the States, were at times at fault for the hardship suffered, or suspected of being so by the soldier. For example, in December 1578 Colonel Stewart reported to the States that he was unable to make his soldiers obey him due to lack of payment. The situation was so serious that the Prince of Orange recommended that the States treat with both Stewart and Balfour. However, the States were slow to act as usual, and somewhat later in the month received another request from Stewart, accompanied by a letter from the soldiers themselves. They demanded payment of wages, for otherwise they would withdraw from Stewart's command.
STRIKE AND PILLAGE

Usually, as we have stated, a mixture of the elements outlined above was involved, as the following troubles of Colonel Stewart throughout 1581 and 1582 illustrate. In the spring of 1581 the Scots at Vilvoorde went on strike, and threw off Stewart's authority. They were only quieted after a great deal of trouble. In December 1581 the Scots refused to march to Nynhove, which was threatened by the enemy. Instead, they chose to camp at Eccloo. "So there is great disorder here for want of obedience, for there is no man that will obey." The following April Stewart's plans to leave for Scotland were hampered by the ill-will of his troops. They "... exhibited supplications against him, and mean to be discharged of his government, and to be assured of their money received by him." At times the officer class formed a common front with the soldiers. During the troubles of the spring of 1582 it was reported by Stewart that not only the soldiers, but also the captains and other officers were on the point of mutiny.

While this was an unusual situation, the captains were usually part of the inactivity as well. When a dispute arose, the captains as spokesmen for their soldiers would move to the seat of residence of the States General with their petitions, leaving their troops behind. During the disputes of 1582 not only the captains, but other officers as well went to present their petitions to the States General, who ordered them to return to the troops.

There were also uglier aspects to strikes. In the summer of 1582, the Scots at Meneen under Colonel Trail in their irritation started to fight with the French. In May, two months before, the situation had been even worse, however. The soldiers had taken Colonel Trail prisoner and the Spaniards had held high hopes of buying the Scots over. On June 8, 1583, a year after these disputes, Colonel Preston, the successor to Trail, was killed by his own men. Again the grievance which started it all had been lack of payment. Preston had gone to the States to talk about the matter, but returned empty-handed. He then proceeded to arrest some of the common soldiers and a sargeant, who had been the leaders, and charged them with mutiny. The result was a general uprising and Preston's death. It does not seem that the Scots received any punishment for this. Although the act was termed disgraceful, and James VI was rather upset by it, the assassination hardly created a stir. The reasons are not difficult to find. Preston had gone against the ethical code of strike in arresting the leaders. The grievances were justified and the troops were in the right.

STRIKE AND PILLAGE

Strikes could also have their shows of loyalty. In the spring of 1581, the striking Scots at Vilvoorde received persuasive letters from Farnese to change sides. However, the soldiers refused to open them, in order to make sure that they would not be contaminated with the suspicion of being in league with the enemy. Thus the captains opened the letters and read them to the soldiers.

But the soldiers hearing it, called out loud that they were not "mutinated" for any other purpose but for money, and that they would become no traitors, but remain loyal to the Prince of Orange and the States till death; and therefore took the drummer and the miller's brother [Farnese's messengers] prisoners. With the army reforms of 1588-9 a new attitude arose to strikes. Not only were they not tolerated, and quickly quashed, but the leaders were punished, as the last attempt at strike, in 1593, illustrates. The grievances which prompted the trouble were the same as usual: lack of pay. On August 6 all the Scottish companies in camp at Hedel, except Waddel's, received a double loan from the captains. The result was that Waddel's men refused to accept their single loan, and the lieutenant and the ensign of the company had to take some harsh words, as the captain himself was not there. Consequently one soldier was arrested; he was liberated by his companions, and when the officers tried to interfere, they were threatened. Now outside interference became inevitable. The Lord of Barchon arrested four of the leaders. The company mutinied, demanded release of the four, as well as a settlement of their wages, stating that they had nothing against the States or Count Maurice, but solely against their own captains, who they felt were withholding payment. Furthermore, they asserted that they were not the only ones grieved, and that they represented the whole regiment, some of whose members were worse off than they. They demanded all their back pay, which for some went back 22 months. The threat was added that if the command was going to use force, the officers would see that the whole regiment felt the same way. With the promise that justice would be handed out the soldiers were quieted for a while, and the arrested leaders were let go. Yet two more disturbances took place, one on August 11, and the other the next day. Both times assault and murder were involved, and the instigators' ideas seem to have been that punishment for these crimes would be an excuse to start a strike. The result was the start of an investigation on August 13. The Scots could
not be trusted, and therefore were not part of the movement of the army to the north. They remained behind near Dordrecht, and only on the 18th, with the outcome of the hearings, the execution of the ring leaders, and the States’ promise of settlement, did the Scots move north to rejoin the rest of the army.

Several novelities must be noted about this last attempt at strike. First of all, the action by the States General and the military command was extremely swift, in sharp contrast to a decade before. Secondly, the States promised the soldiers that in future they would be more prompt in paying them, and more careful in seeing to it that the captains were honest. Third, the instigators, four Scottish soldiers, were hanged on August 18. Finally, the States admitted to themselves that the troublemakers had had a just cause. Then why was the reaction of the States General so harsh? The explanation can only be that the States were very much afraid that the terrible conditions of the late 1570’s and the 1580’s would repeat themselves, not only in the form of strikes, but also with pillage and betrayal. We shall touch on these later.32

While a threat of strike could be in the air for a long time, the actual strike was over as soon as payment was made. This was realized by everyone. The States in February 1578 resolved to pay Balfour’s Scots in order that they could go on the campaign,33 for it was noted that good service could be gotten out of them, since they were in good condition.34 A year later letters were sent to Colonel Stewart “...pour les encourager et assurer du payement d’un mois de gaiges;” while defending the town of Herentals.35 In the fall of 1580 similar measures were taken to make Stewart’s Scots go to Vilvoorde.36 On September 24, 1595, the States resolved to send to France, among others, the regiment of Colonel Murray. To make the Scots more content, they were to be paid 1/2 month’s wage on their back-pay, as long as this would not discontent the other troops to be sent.37

With payment the bad feelings that had arisen immediately evaporated, and the Scots returned to conscientious duty. Stokes informed Walsingham on February 4, 1582 that:

The Scots at Meneen, who were half in mutiny for their pay, are now contented for a time with 2 months’ pay. This week those Scots have made sundry skirmishes against the Marquis of Risbourg and Montigny, who lie at ‘Russellers’; greatly to their praise, for it seems the enemy had the worst in every skirmish.38

While Anjou had tried to take Antwerp, the English and Scots mutinied in the Land van Waas, but with the settlement made between the States and Anjou they took the same oath as the French and were moved to save Eindhoven.39 The defense of Eindhoven in which the Scots took part is one of the outstanding chapters in the history of the Scottish forces in the Netherlands.

The attitude of the various parties to strikes has already been made clear. The troops involved did not like them, and were usually happy to be back in service again, as were the captains and the colonels, who were caught in the middle. The government despised of strikes also, but incompetence and the lack of a sense of responsibility were the main reasons for the ineffective handling of the troops during the decade 1577 to 1588. For example, in spite of the fact that the Scots, French, and English were devastating the countryside in January 1579, contract negotiations with Stewart dragged on almost indefinitely.40 Negotiations were often prolonged because the States, always short of money, tried to strike a bargain with the troops, and thus avoid paying the full sum of what was owing.41

The Prince of Orange was more conscientious than the States. He wrote Ypres in August 1580 to urge the town to pay Balfour’s Scots, in order to avoid disorder and inconvenience.42 Orange talked about “ung fort grand prejudice au bien publicq” when referring to a Scottish strike early in 1582.43 In a letter of January 21, 1581 to the States of Flanders, Orange, urging payment to meet the contract made with Stewart, stressed the well-being of the commonweal once again, and the grave consequences if the contract was not kept.44 Yet at times even he became exasperated with the demands of the Scots, for on December 15, 1581 he wrote to the Council of States about the strange behaviour of Stewart in his strict interpretation of the contract.45

Local governments were the most selfish, and self-centred. Not all local governments were as adept as that of Ghent which made sure that the striking Scots would not bother them by driving them out.46 Early in 1579 the States of Zeeland looked after their own well-being when the Scots invaded Tholen, and were so thankful that they gave Henry Balfour a gold chain worth £. 400 for his efforts in getting the Scots out.47 Yet this same government refused to pay Stewart’s regiment in April 1580, barely a year later, when it was making life miserable for the burghers of Brussels.48

The negative reaction of Orange and the various governments to strikes was not solely the result of activity of the strikers. This in itself
would have done only limited harm. There was another aspect to strike which has not been touched, but is worthwhile treating separately, namely, pillage.

PILLAGE:

Generally during periods of strike and hardship civilians were the ones who paid for the tardiness of government finance. The Scottish reaction to hardship caused by lack of payment constituted no exception to the general rule. To illustrate this, we shall cite some examples from 1578 and 1579, two different years. After the States’ victory at Rynemen, in August 1578, the troops were not paid, and the English and Scots were giving themselves over to all kinds of excesses.49 When the Scots plundered the island of Tholen early in 1579, favourite objects were farm animals and furniture.50 At the same time other bands of Scots were plundering the rural areas of Hainault.51 In April and May we have complaints from Mechelen that the English and Scots were plundering the countryside.52 In June they are reported to have mutinied and sacked Meghen and Ravesteigne.53 In July La Noue wrote to Ghent that the Scots at Bruges were, because of lack of money, oppressing the people and committing immoral acts.54 In September the deputies from Brussels were complaining that lack of pay for Stewart’s Scots was causing extreme poverty and calamity in Brussels.55 A few years later, in 1583, the Spaniards heard that the Scots in Allost had mutinied, and taken over the food supplies in the town. As a result, the burghers were threatened with starvation, as no provisions remained for them.56 This sounds like a town undergoing the stresses of siege, but it was not. A major reason given by Artois, Hainault and Douay in rejecting the pacification of Ghent on January 6, 1579, and forming the Union of Artois, was the plundering of the country, in spite of numerous pleas to have an end put to this.57

Even when the Scots were not on strike, their violent behaviour was a commonplace. Some of it constituted acceptable behaviour. With the taking of Meenen in October 1579, the Scots reaped a lot of spoils, as the town had been a Spanish robbers’ nest, and Orange wrote to the States of Flanders that they should be allowed to keep the fruits of their labour.58 With the recapture of Mechelen in April 1580, the Scots, and others, who had taken part in the enterprise, immediately started plundering the churches, monasteries and houses of those who had given the city to Farnese in the first place. This went on for several days.59 In March 1581, a States’ force, which included Scots, encountered 70 enemy soldiers at Merville, in Artois, along with 400 peasants, who were determined not to let them pass through. However, the States’ forces got the better of the encounter, and after their victory proceeded to burn down all the houses in the village.60

The above were all exceptional situations, however, and most of the plundering and violence was not condoned, although it took place frequently. When Stewart’s Scots were taken into service, Thomas Wals, employed by the States to lead them to camp, was cautioned that he would have to be on his guard that the countryside would not suffer from foul occurrences.61 On March 23, 1580, the States wrote to Balfour about the cruelties committed by Oggehe’s and Egittson’s companies in the district of Ypres. The States of Flanders termed the atrocities those of barbarians, and their acts as transgressions of every human right and military order.62

Foul occurrences of this nature were not only present during the period of the greatest troubles. In 1590 Prop’s company of Scots was charged by Gelderland of being guilty of plundering.63 They asked that the guilty be punished, and the damage be made good. At this time plundering had become an intolerable practice, owing to its bad effects and the excesses during the decade after the pacification. One of the complaints of the dissatisfied captains and Colonel Balfour in 1594 was that now they were making less profit than before, since previously they were allowed to add to their earnings by pillaging the countryside of the enemy.64

Yet even with the new discipline in force, pillage was not given up. Rather, it was used by the States General as a means to finance the war, and force the hesitant neighbouring states into line. This no doubt contributed to the barbarisation of the troops, as this strategy often involved punitive raids of the most gruesome sort. For example, in order to force the Bishop of Coesen in line in 1596, Edmond and his Scots were sent into the territory to lay it waste.65

Plundering after a siege was also still allowed at times, but only when the defenders were considered unreasonable in their delays in giving up the town. This was a common educational measure at the time. Thus in October 1597 the Scots and the rest of Maurice’s army were allowed to pillage Brevoort.66

As a result of this barbarisation, the temptation to plunder was always there. In January 1600 the ruler of Gulik complained to the States about the excesses committed by Colonel Edmond’s troops, and the States decided to investigate the matter.67 In May 1611 an investigation was started into excesses committed by some Scottish cavalry under the command of Captain Wishart.68 Nonetheless, the fact that these matters
were looked into, and the guilty punished, shows great advances over the previous period, when violent acts were too numerous to mention, and a matter of course.

The victims constituted every part of the civilian population in the Netherlands. The countryside, however, bore the brunt of the burden. Complaints by Mechelen in 1579 center on the plundering of the Scots in the countryside around the town. When the Scots went on strike late in 1578, they immediately headed for Tholen, an island with no major towns and defenses. The result was that the robbed people of Tholen could not pay their taxes in 1579.70

Cities did not escape either. In 1579 Orange complained that there was not a single city which, as soon as it had received a garrison, tried to get rid of it again as fast as possible. Other cities, because of the troubles, had been lost.71 In the same year the Scots pillaged one Catholic Church after another in Brussels, drinking holy wine, and dancing around the fountain of the Three Virgins, mocking the Catholic Church.72 This was followed by a general dissatisfaction among the Scots with their pay, causing the Brussels deputies to complain that especially Catholics and Catholic priests had to endure threats and hardships.73 The next year the town was still plagued by similar behaviour.74

Even the highest-placed individuals sometimes suffered from the Scots. In January 1577 the deputies of Amsterdam, on their way to negotiate the entry of the city into the Pacification, were captured by Balfour's Scots and held to ransom.75 On the whole, however, it was the lesser people who suffered most. A letter from the Four Members of Flanders to the Prince of Orange in March 1580 is worth quoting in full:

Plaise a so Exce descrier ung petit de lettre a la requête des quatre membres de Flanders au Colonel Balfour, afin qu'il defende aux capitaines de son regiment, d'Oghe et Egiston desquez les soldatz font journellement de grandes excursions sur les contribuans avec le membre de la ville d'Ypre, en sorte que ilz ont depuis quelques jours enca emprisonniez dixsept censiers de la paroisse de Boesschepe, y ayans brulee ugne cense avec le bestial et granges, ensamble les biens et fruictz y estantz ayant aussy ranconne les dyt a la some de quatre mille livres de gros, dont aulcuns ont paye grande somme sy comme les ung trois cens, les aultres six cens, les aultres mille florins et les aultres quy n'ont poinct moyen sont encore es prisons a Menin, quy ons este cruel-

Those who suffered sometimes wished to take revenge. After the battle of Gembloux, Don John decided to send the Scottish prisoners out of the country via France, but he had to provide a strong escort, for otherwise the angry peasants would have killed them.77 In 1578 Captain Campbell married a local girl from Termonde. However, at the wedding celebrations Campbell, his new bride and her entourage, as well as three companies of Scots were hacked to pieces by the farmers of the area, who were upset by the spoilage committed by the Scots.78

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Aside from strike and pillage there were other ways in which the Scottish troops coped with crisis in their lives. The Scots at times toyed with the idea of betrayal, and the actual betrayals which were carried out were all carefully premeditated. In the period up to 1577 there were plots and rumours of plots, but no signs of carefully-worked out ones, and there were no actual betrayals. Things were different between 1582 and 1587. In 1582 Semple betrayed the town of Lier. The Setons failed to betray either Ghent or Dendermonde, but Captain Seton nonetheless went over into the Spanish service. Colonel Boyd was part of a plot to betray Bruges, which succeeded. Colonel Patton betrayed the city of Gelre in 1587. It is no wonder that the States General were edgy when troubles with the Scots arose once again in 1593, and we find references to their acts of betrayal, which were only matched in number and importance by those of the English.79

A final and much more satisfying solution for many of the Scots was desertion, which went on all the time, whether in the confused 1580's or when the army was under the leadership of Maurice of Nassau in the 1590's. In all cases noted, those who deserted did so shortly after coming to the Netherlands, regardless of the conditions of work or pay. The raw recruits, not used to the soldiering life, whether in the 1570's or in the
early 17th century, all came to the conclusion that desertion, and a quick return to Scotland was the only way out. The mercenary was prevalent in every army in 16th-century Europe, to the regret of people like Machiavelli. Yet he was a necessary element, for states could not fight each other, and subjects could not successfully rebel against their sovereign without him. The wars in the Netherlands had many religious overtones, but we must not forget that this was part and parcel of the general social, political, and economic situation, and we cannot isolate one factor in the revolt of the Netherlands. Furthermore, 16th-century society was, by our standards, a violent one, and violence was the rule, and provided the norm, although we fail to witness the enormous crimes against humanity which the present century has witnessed. The Scottish mercenary, like mercenaries in general, merely reflected the norms of his society.

References:
8 Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, XIII, 178; Resolution of States-General, II, 540-1, 628, 633-6; M. Gachard, ed., Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d’Orange, publié pour la première fois, Brussels, 1851, 1854, V, 97-8.
11 Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, XIV, 477-8; XV, 116, 156, 638.
12 Ibid., XV, 415.
13 Ibid., XV, 480.
14 The Scots Brigade in Service of the United Netherlands, I, 23.
The North British Review — Advocate of Italian Independence

JANET FYFE

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

In his Recollections, John Morley tells of a discussion he had one day with a leading French writer. Each century, according to this unnamed Frenchman, could be represented by a book or particular body of writings which formed a centre for the best observation of fresh flowing currents of thought, interest and debate. The writings of Port Royal, he claimed, performed this function for the 17th century, the Encyclopédie for the 18th, and the British reviews for the 19th.1 Morley did not dispute the claim, and indeed it seems to be commonly accepted that the reviews are fundamental to an understanding of political opinion in the 19th century. If this is true in general, it is also true in particular. A study of Scottish public opinion on any of the major issues of the 19th century would be incomplete without consideration of the views expressed in the Edinburgh Review for the earlier part of the century, and, after 1844, in the North British Review.

As an indicator of Scottish opinion on the particular issue under discussion here, the North British is the more important of the two. As the compilers of the Wellesley Index point out, although the total circulation of the Edinburgh Review was greater than that of the North British by about 2000 subscribers, the picture changes if comparison is made between their respective circulations within Scotland alone. The North British is then seen to have outdone its competitor quite considerably, and may therefore be assumed to have had more influence in Scotland.2

Furthermore, for the greater part of our period, the Edinburgh was Scottish only in name. Its headquarters were in London from 1847 on; its