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# **THEATRES OF REVOLUTION: THE STUART KINGS AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF DISRUPTION – CHARLES I: THE COURT AT WAR**

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In my last lecture I described what happened when through choice or catastrophe a monarch cannot rule or live in the palaces and places designed for it. King James I subverted English courtly conventions and established a series of unusual royal residences that gave him privacy and freedom from conventional royal etiquette. Although court protocol prevailed at Royston, there was none of the grandeur that the Tudor monarchs would have expected. Indeed, from our perspective Royston was not a palace at all, just a jumble of houses in a market town. Today we turn our attention to King Charles I. In a completely different way from his father he too ended up living in places which we would hesitate to call palaces. But the difference was that he strove at every turn to maintain the magnificence and dignity due to him as sovereign.

On 22 August 1642 King Charles raised his standard at Nottingham signalling the end of a stand-off with Parliament and the beginning of what became Civil War. Since the 10<sup>th</sup> January, when Charles had abandoned London, after his botched attempt to arrest five members of parliament, he had been on the move. Hastily exiting from Whitehall, he arrived late at Hampton Court which was quite unprepared to receive the royal family; it was cold and only partially furnished when Charles entered his privy lodgings. But the king's main concern was security, not comfort, and preparations were undertaken at lightning speed for the king and queen to move to the safety of Windsor Castle. It was noted that 'things are done in such post-haste that I have never heard of the like for the voyage of persons of so great dignity'

These were the first spontaneous moves of hundreds that the king was to make over the next five years before he eventually returned to St James's, a prisoner, in January 1649. The court normally planned its itinerary months in advance to allow houses to be furnished and repaired and larders and cellars stocked. But, at war, Charles and his family often stayed in makeshift accommodation, the king sleeping under a hedge with his vanguard at Lostwithiel in Cornwall and in his coach in Wolvercote in Oxfordshire. Determined to protect his privileges and pride and finding the process of negotiation with his opponents frustrating and baffling in equal measure, Charles seemed to enjoy being in the field. The Queen more focussed, motivated and angry than her husband also apparently relished the situation in which they found themselves.

The first great battle of the Civil War was fought at Edgehill ten miles or so north west of Banbury and, in its aftermath, it was natural that the court and army should move to Oxford. The university was fervently loyal to the Crown and the city, in the crook of three rivers, was easily defensible. The King was greeted outside the city by the vice-chancellor who was assured by the King that he would only remain until 'we can with safety to our honour and person in peace return to the Jerusalem of our nation, our City of London'

Thus for three and a half years Oxford became the headquarters of the army, in effect the royalist capital city - but it was also the seat of the court and a garrison town, a fact demonstrated by the appointment of Jacob, Lord Astley, as military governor and a board of civilian Lords Commissioners. They had to liaise with the mayor and aldermen on the one hand and the vice chancellor and the heads of the colleges on the other. Governing Oxford while it was the royalist capital was complex and sometimes fraught.

The king made his headquarters at Christ Church. The college had started as Cardinal Wolsey's pet project to build a college named after himself. It was begun in 1525 cannibalising the site of the medieval Priory of St. Frideswide's which had been suppressed for the purpose. Wolsey intended it to be the largest college in Oxford or Cambridge



with a great cloister flanked to north and south by the hall and chapel. The scheme was interrupted by his death in 1530 and, although the hall, the most magnificent in Oxford, was completed, the great cloistered quad (measuring 264 by 261 feet) was only half built and the chapel barely begun. Instead, the partly dismantled priory church became the chapel. But not for long. The episcopal reorganisation that took place after the Reformation saw a new diocese of Oxford formed and the chapel become Christchurch Cathedral with its own dean and chapter.

This combined arrangement of college and cathedral was unique but what made it even more unusual were the provisions in the founding statutes of Wolsey's college which specified that it was to be used by the monarch, his eldest son and their households at will. Where Wolsey intended the royal lodgings to be is uncertain, the obvious place would have been at the high end of the hall leading on to the tower lodging in the south west corner. But when, in 1566 Queen Elizabeth exercised her right to stay in the college, it was in the Deanery which occupied the north end of the east range of the great quad. It was here also that Charles I stayed in 1636 when he was the guest of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud had begun his career as a royal chaplain and, through the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham, had risen, by 1633, to not only the archbishopric but to be Dean of the Chapel Royal, Privy Councillor and Chancellor of Oxford University. At Oxford he had built a magnificent new quadrangle at his former college, St. John's that was the object of King Charles's visit.

Visits by the Stuart kings, and the expectation of more, drew attention to the fact that incomplete Christchurch had all the prestige of a royal foundation but none of the expected architectural magnificence. This want was highlighted by the spectacular new courtyard at St. John's with its bronze statues of the king and queen by Hubert LeSeur. At Christ Church Dean Thomas Duppa and his successor Samuel Fell, both fervent royalists, set out to complete Wolsey's unfinished works, but the only part to be completed before the outbreak of war was the great stair leading up to the hall which was covered with one of the largest fan vaults ever built.

In October 1642 the arrival of the court in Oxford was, in one sense, an unexceptional event. On progress the court frequently established itself in towns and cities and, because of the status of Christ Church, the king's arrival there was much like entering one of the many royal progress houses maintained by the Crown. Yet there was a difference. The royal family rarely moved together and when the Queen joined the king there would, unusually, be four households in total including those of the Princes. There was then the army and its officers and increasing numbers of officers of state; because of the war, some brought their wives and children with them. The court always had followers, but in Oxford it became a magnet for dispossessed, penurious or simply frightened royalists of all classes. To make matters worse for every man of any status there was at least one horse and the requirements for stabling was immense.

There were three authorities charged with finding lodgings in Oxford for those with official duties: the quarter master of the army requisitioned lodgings for soldiers; the royal harbingers billeted members of the royal households and the governor of the city housed the garrison. Everyone else had to scramble for a place to stay. In order to ease the pressure, the King issued a series of proclamations ordering people with no official post to leave.

Householders were paid an allowance of 3s 6d a week for feeding a soldier and colleges charged their guests for board and lodging, rather as they did students. Private owners could exchange billets (accommodation notices) issued by the royal harbingers for cash. The pressure on accommodation was acute. Ann, Lady Fanshawe, was summoned by her father to join the court at Oxford in 1643. Her father, Sir John Harrison, a die-hard royalist, had his estates sequestered by parliament and, by the time he reached Oxford was, in Anne's words, 'as poor as Job'. Ann wrote in her autobiography that 'from as good house as any gentleman of England we had come to a baker's house in an obscure street, and from rooms well-furnished to lie in a very bad bed in a garret'. She describes the plague and sickness 'by reason of so many people being packed together, as I believe there never was before of that quality' but most, she claimed, 'bore it with a martyr-like cheerfulness'.

The King moved directly into the Dean's lodgings at Christ Church. In 1621 these lodgings comprised twelve rooms. On the first floor the king had presence and privy and withdrawing and back stairs leading up to the withdrawing room. Privy Council seems to have met in the Chapter House and the council of war met in the Audit House, the old infirmary of the priory hung with portraits of former deans. The royal lodgings were furnished with tapestries textiles, plate and other furniture from the royal wardrobe. When the king's baggage train



was captured at the battle of Naseby it contained 200 wagons containing the king's household goods, coin and the king's personal correspondence.

Although Archbishop Laud had characterised Christchurch as having 'many fair lodgings for great men' there was not enough space to accommodate either the offices or officers of state let alone the wider royal household. To the east of Christchurch were two colleges that were contiguous, Corpus Christi and Merton; across a narrow lane was a third, Oriel. All three were effectively absorbed into the royal residence.

After Henrietta Maria joined the king in Oxford in July 1643, she was given lodgings at Merton. The king and queen had been feasted here in 1629 by the warden, Sir Nathaniel Brent, but Brent had elected to side with Parliament and had been ejected from his lodgings in the Fitzjames gateway. This fifteenth century gatehouse now became the queen's lodgings; it was directly adjacent to Fellows Quadrangle, one of the most modern in Oxford, completed in 1610 and adorned with James I arms - in here were placed the queen's household.

In order to link Merton and Christchurch doorways were cut in the garden walls either side of Corpus Christi and a gravel path laid between them. At Corpus lodged John Ashburnham Treasurer and Paymaster to the army who was visited there by both the king and his sons as the bursar tipped the royal trumpeters and footmen. The Provost of Oriel was John Tolson, a fervent Royalist who became vice-chancellor in 1642 and played a major role in the fortification of the city. Oriel was home to the Lord Treasurer, Francis Cottington and the dean of the chapel royal, Richard Steward and 35 other royal servants and army officers. Cottington chaired meetings of the executive committee of Privy Council (or Junto) there. Perhaps the most important role of Oriel was as editorial office for *Mercurius Aulicus* or the *Court Mercury*, the royalist Newspaper published in Oxford from 1643 to 1645 and the mouthpiece of the royalist cause.

Although Christ Church, Corpus and Merton might seem from this to be an elegant royal enclave it was also a war zone. Oxford was a walled city and the medieval defences were supplemented by a series of modern bastions and gun emplacements. A plan of the fortifications drawn by Bernard de Gomme, later to be Charles II's military engineer, shows the fortifications hurriedly built by conscripted labour. Two buildings are identified by name - Oxford Castle and Christ Church, the two most important strategic locations in the city. A tower on the town wall at Merton was cut down for a gun platform covering the Christ Church water meadow which had been deliberately flooded. There was a magazine at New College, an artillery park at Magdalen College Grove and a canon foundry at Christ Church. In the schools building small arms were repaired, drawbridges manufactured, and armour and uniforms stored. Powder, meanwhile, was prudently milled on the outskirts of the city. Oxford was full of soldiers often short on pay and temper, the city was over-full, prone to disease, squalor, fire and disorder.

At the gates of Christ Church was St. Aldgates, the parish church that gave its name to the long street that led from Folly Bridge to the city centre. This was where the bulk of the royal household was accommodated. In private houses on the street lodged the king's surgeon, his tailor, his barber, his apothecary and the royal seamstress. These people all held posts that brought them into close contact with the king. Others in the street, in lesser accommodation, included a royal poulterer, two royal bakers, the coal-carrier to the court and various other humble servants. Eighty of the king's red-coated lifeguard of foot were also billeted in St. Aldgates, including their colonel, Montagu Bertie, Lord Willoughby d'Eresby, who was also, from 1642, the king's Lord Great Chamberlain. The larger houses accommodated, at various times, senior army officers and peers of the realm who needed to be close to court. On the west of St. Aldates was Pembroke College whose master was the royalist Thomas Clayton. Here resided the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Nicholas, and 79 men 23 women and five children.

These people made their homes in Oxford, many remaining in residence when the army left to campaign in the summer. Some married, many had children, and a few died: the burial records of Christ Church Cathedral include entries for an officer of the counting house, the Clerk Comptroller, two yeomen of the wardrobe, two garter heralds and the keeper of the Great Seal.

Soon after establishing himself at Christ Church the king issued a series of orders for the regulation of access to his lodgings. The yeomen of the Guard were ordered to stand at the foot of the stairs and gentlemen ushers were posted at the doors of the presence and privy chambers to regulate access. The drawing room was only open to nobles, Privy Counsellors, judges, bishops and members of the war council. The exigencies of war required the



king to admit key allies into his bedchamber giving them direct access to his person. The most prominent example of this was the almost simultaneous promotion of William Seymour, marquess of Hertford, to be a Lord Commissioner of Oxford, Vice Chancellor of the University and Groom of the Stole, combining three key posts in the hands of a single courtier. Hertford had lodgings at Christ Church from where he exercised his responsibilities. Colonel William Legge the Governor of Oxford and royalist master of the armoury (who lived in St Aldates at the gates of Christ Church) was made a groom of the bedchamber also giving him right of access to the king.

On 14<sup>th</sup> July 1643 the queen made a ceremonial entry to Oxford the streets lined with soldiers. First came a carriage containing her ladies followed by her servants and gentlemen pensioners. Next came the heralds and sergeants at arms in their uniforms the sergeant carrying a mace; preceding the royal coach was the queen's chamberlain the earl of Dorset. After a speech of welcome at Carfax she proceeded to Christchurch where she was welcomed by the vice chancellor and then escorted by the king to her lodgings at Merton where the orator of the university gave another speech. Henrietta Maria was accompanied by her Catholic confessor, priests and attendants. There was anxiety about holding Anglican services in the Merton chapel while she was in residence, but the queen insisted they continue, and she heard Mass with her household elsewhere in the college.

Summer was the campaigning season and the King and his army were in the field, but as the court retreated to Oxford in the winters of 1642-3, 43-4 and 44-5 court life became almost normal. The royalist army officer Sir Henry Slingsby described the king's daily routine in 1644: 'He kept his hours most exactly, both for his exercises and for his dispatches, as also his hours for admitting all sorts to come to speak with him. You might know where he would be from any hour from his rising, which was very early, to his walk he took in the garden, and so to chapel and dinner; so after dinner, if he went not abroad, he had his hours for writing or discoursing, or chess playing, or tennis'. As before the Civil War the king spent much of his leisure time in the queen's lodgings where he could be free of the restrictive etiquette of his own apartments. As their youngest child was conceived in Oxford, he probably also spent the night there.

The annual round of court ceremonial continued uninterrupted. The King attended services in the cathedral, publicly taking Communion to dispel rumours that he was a Catholic, and on Maundy Thursday distributed the Maundy money to the poor in the great hall. A chapter of the Order of the Garter was held in March 1645 in the privy chamber, two new knights were made, and the St George's day service held in the cathedral. The young John Aubrey recalled often watching the king dining in public in the great hall and, in April 1643, two humble cannoneers knelt and kissed the king's hand on his way to dinner. There was no shortage of food, for the royal table at least, and Christ Church hall set up for public dining would have given a magnificent impression.

A parade of foreign ambassadors was received, given formal receptions in the great hall and private conference in the deanery. In 1643 French ambassador was welcomed by the firing of many canons as he entered the city. After dining at St John's where he was staying, he was visited by the king and queen who conversed with him for two hours. The next day at 4pm he processed in state to Christchurch where he had an audience and, after a short rest, was feasted in the great hall.

To Oxford also came Parliamentary representatives to negotiate with the king. Early in 1643 Bulstrode Whitelocke was one of a twelve-man deputation who came to present parliament's proposals. They had their first meeting with the king in the gardens of Christchurch where they kissed his hand and read their scripts. Although later negotiations were conducted in the king's rooms, including his withdrawing chamber, the outdoor reception signalled royal coolness towards emissaries. The king called Parliament in January 1644 and 83 peers and 175 MPs attended him in the Hall of Christ Church for its opening. Later they took their seats – the Commons in the Convocation House and the Lords in the upper schools.

The ordered maintenance of court and state etiquette and the use of its theatre was as important to the king as the military effort. For Charles to be visibly king and to be afforded due deference was crucial, not only to his own dignity, but to the dignity of his office. The Oxford court was no ramshackle compromise, it was conducted with deliberate dignity and magnificence. There were a few compromises; in June 1643 the king banned the wearing of laces and fringes made of gold and silver on clothes and saddlery to avoid accusations of frippery and, in March 1643, notices were erected forbidding the infected to assemble for the traditional touching for the king's evil, presumably to avoid the more people in the city.



While the ceremonial side of the king's life was upheld there was no neglect of pleasure. Charles hunted with his hounds in his own park at Woodstock and elsewhere and, in poor weather, he played tennis with the Prince of Wales, Duke of York and Prince Rupert. There was a tennis court at the back of Christ Church near Oriel and in November 1643 the king asked the Master of his Robes to send a servant from London to Oxford to bring a bolt of taffeta and 'two pairs of garters and roses with silk buttons' to make him a tennis suit.

Although most court musicians stayed in London a small number came to Oxford and accompanied services at Christ Church and the queen's chapel as well as performing chamber music for the king and queen. According to a hostile parliamentary report on one occasion they accompanied Prince Rupert and other Lords dancing in the streets of the city. Likewise, a small number of musicians and actors came to perform plays and masques at court although without the complex scenery that had become commonplace at Whitehall. In February 1646, when it was clear that Oxford would be lost, a play was acted before the king 'to keep up his spirit in stead of good success from his soldiery'.

Sir Anthony van Dyck had died as the Civil War began and his English Protégé the brilliant portrait painter, William Dobson, followed the court to Oxford. He rented a house for his family in the high Street and set up a studio in 1645 in the best rooms in the Canterbury Quadrangle at St. John's College. In these were painted Princes Rupert, Maurice, James and Charles as well as the king himself. While Dobson's work at Oxford illustrates how some of the king's family and friends spent their enforced leisure in Oxford it also brings them to life. A group portrait of 1645–6 shows a meeting between three Royalist commanders: Prince Rupert, William Legge and Colonel John Russell (commander of the prince's elite Blue Coats).

In 1643 the king issued orders for all royal servants to come and join him at Oxford. This was the prelude to an attempt to relocate the central organs of the state to his new temporary capital. The Chancery, Exchequer and the courts of law were all ordered from Westminster to Oxford where they were set up in colleges and university buildings. Parliament had taken control of the Mint at the Tower of London and the king had established a mint in Shrewsbury using his own plate and Welsh silver to mint coin. In January 1643 the Shrewsbury mint was ordered to Oxford and set up at New Inn Hall (the site of St. Peter's College). It was remarkably successful producing coin for the war effort. One coin struck there deserves special mention. The Oxford Crown minted in 1644 has a detailed representation of Oxford from the north on one side. The legend advertises the king's intention to uphold the Protestant religion, the laws of England and the freedom of Parliament.

This remarkable coin must have been struck on the king's orders for while the slogan proclaiming his aims was common to most Civil War coinage the depiction of Oxford was unique on an English coin. The King was extremely proud of Oxford, its buildings, beauty and history and was determined that it should not be damaged by the war. In 1645, when there was still the opportunity to move the court to the West of England, he resolved to stay as Oxford was the only City that could have accommodated the court in comfort and the only place suitable to his and its magnificence.

Henrietta Maria was pregnant and found overcrowded and unhealthy Oxford increasingly intolerable. Eventually the 34-year-old consort informed her husband that she was going to leave. She slipped out of the city and made for the South West where, in Exeter she would eventually give birth to her last child, Princess Henrietta. Charles would never see her again as, only a month later, she boarded a ship and sailed for the Low Countries. After losing the battle of Naseby in June 1645 and surrendering Bristol it became clear that the war was over, and the Prince of Wales was sent abroad after his mother. On 27 April 1646 the king rode out of Oxford disguised as a servant and accompanied by three attendants, abandoning his capital and his young son, the Duke of York.

On June 25 the keys of the surrendered city were handed to general Fairfax who, with the other senior Parliamentary officers, entered the city and made for Christ Church. There was Prince James. One by one they kissed the twelve-year-old's hand, only one of their number knelt at his feet as they did so. That man was Oliver Cromwell. Even in the humiliation of defeat the magic of monarchy was alive.

In July the Oxford royal lodgings at Christ Church were dismantled and the king's furnishings sent to Hampton Court. With them came the remainder of the king's household, a mixture of domestic servants and hangers-on.



Charles surrendered to the Scots who took him north to Newcastle before an accommodation could be reached with parliament. The deal struck in January 1647 allowed for the king to be moved south again, under close guard; first to Holdenby House in Northamptonshire, then on to Royston and Hatfield, and finally to Hampton Court.

Hampton Court was to be his resting-place from 24 August for about eleven weeks. What is usually described as Charles's imprisonment was barely house arrest. Not only did the king have free movement about the palace and parks but he could retain his own attendants enabling him to hold a court in miniature maintained by Parliament's official sanction.

The house was specially re-furnished for his arrival and plate was issued from the jewel house at the Tower for his table. It also seems that Charles requested paintings of his family to be sent from Whitehall. He successfully petitioned parliament for his children to visit him and, between June and November 1647, they came several times a week, talking, hunting and playing tennis with their father. In October Charles requested that they should be allowed to stay overnight - a request that was granted. Elizabeth came to stay in a bedroom off the privy gallery, she asked for the king's guards to be moved further off as she claimed that their noise kept her awake.

Charles's stay at Hampton Court was a happier one than it might have been in such circumstances. Royalist supporters came from London to see him and pay their respects. Also came senior parliamentary officers including Oliver Cromwell and Henry Ireton, with whom the king discussed the so-called 'Heads of Proposals', the draft agreement which was being touted by them as the best constitutional settlement on offer. On 9 or 10 November Cromwell wrote to Colonel Edward Whalley, Charles's supervisor, warning him that the army might try to assassinate the king. Whalley showed the letter to Charles. The following night, under cover of darkness, the king escaped.

Charles had almost certainly slipped down the back stairs and out through the south front gardens. Accompanied by a groom of the Bedchamber he had reached the waterside where a boat ferried him across the Thames to a waiting horse. There was no agreed plan and it was not until the party had passed Farnham that the King finally decided that he would make for the Isle of Wight where there were no army units and, it was believed, the new Parliamentary Governor, Colonel Robert Hammond might be sympathetic. 26-year-old Hammond had probably been one of the army officers who came to Hampton Court to pay respects to the king in his confinement but, asked to shelter the king at Carisbrooke Castle he was horrified. The King too, was lukewarm about the idea of placing himself in the hands of a Parliamentary officer with conflicted loyalties, but had little choice and so, made the short sea crossing to the Isle of Wight and on to Carisbrooke.

Carisbrooke had long been strategically important and had most recently been remodelled as an artillery fort to guard against the threat of Spanish invasion in the 1590s. The massive new stone-faced outworks had been erected under the authority of the Island's Captain Sir George Carey for whom the constable's lodgings were also rebuilt. Carey was the son of Lord Hunsdon, the Queen's Cousin, and inherited his titles in 1596. In 1583 he had been appointed to the Isle of Wight as captain and over the next three years created a large residence in the castle on the site of the twelfth century great hall. It was in this thirteen-room mansion, with 'a fayre pair of large stairs' that Charles, as Prince of Wales had been feasted in 1618.

In November 1647 things were rather different. The King received a number of island dignitaries in the constable's lodgings and explained that 'my resolution in coming here being but to be secured till there may be some happy accommodation made'. How long this was going to take nobody knew and so Charles successfully requested that some of his household left behind so suddenly at Hampton Court could join him. A large posse arrived at the end of November with several cart loads of furnishings which transformed the large and elegant Elizabethan Constable's lodging into a handsomely furnished royal palace. A month later the royal coach, with liveried coachmen and footmen were shipped across by sea and delivered to the castle. At first the king was remarkably free to travel round the island sightseeing and hunting, but by the end of the year security was tightened and the king went out much less; after a feeble attempt by some local people to rescue him, the excursions ceased and he was effectively imprisoned.

What is striking about the king's initial establishment is that he was accommodated in fine rooms, richly furnished and attended by a household of some XX people. Even after parliament purged his household of suspect servants there were some thirty royal attendants in the castle. They managed to continue royal life with a considerable



degree of formality, the king ceremoniously dined in public, went to daily prayers, received visitors, read books sent down from London, listened to music, touched for the King's Evil and, after the construction of a bowling green in the castle's east bailey, regularly played bowls. Towards the end of the summer a pavilion was built at one end of the green for the king's shelter; it was clearly a building of some pretention.

Two incidents in particular reflect the king's mental state. One of the guests brought up from London was John Webb, Inigo Jones's assistant; in his luggage were plans and elevations for a comprehensive rebuilding of Whitehall Palace – one was inscribed by Webb with the words 'taken King Charles I', in other words the king had decided on a plan for rebuilding Whitehall while locked up at Carisbrooke. At the same time the Royal Librarian Patrick Young received a letter by the hand of the king asking him to consult the antiquary Sir Simonds d'Ewes and sort his coin collection at St. James's Palace, placing specimens in date order and removing duplicates.

These acts of fantasy on the one hand and denial on the other encapsulate the whole period I have been speaking of this evening – A king focussed on his royalty, on the deference due to him, on his rights and prerogatives, and unable to see that resolution was unlikely without

After several hopeless attempts at escape frustrated by treachery, bad luck and incompetence, and after negotiations had ended in stalemate the army lost patience. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1648, after a year's residence at Carisbrooke Charles was removed to Hurst Castle on the mainland, one step towards London and, although nobody at the time appreciated it, one step towards the executioner's block.

Tonight, we have seen how, in a completely different way from his father Charles established his court in complex and unexpected environments. These were not out of choice but out of circumstance – but the king was determined that circumstances would not compromise the deference and order about his person, indeed these courts were as ceremonious as the fixed courts before the Civil War. Next time we look at Charles II court: not the familiar court after 1660 but his court in exile and consider how British etiquette interacted with architecture in far from ideal circumstances in France and Holland.

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