AGAINST WAR AND EMPIRE

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Against War and Empire

Geneva, Britain, and France in the Eighteenth Century

Richard Whatmore

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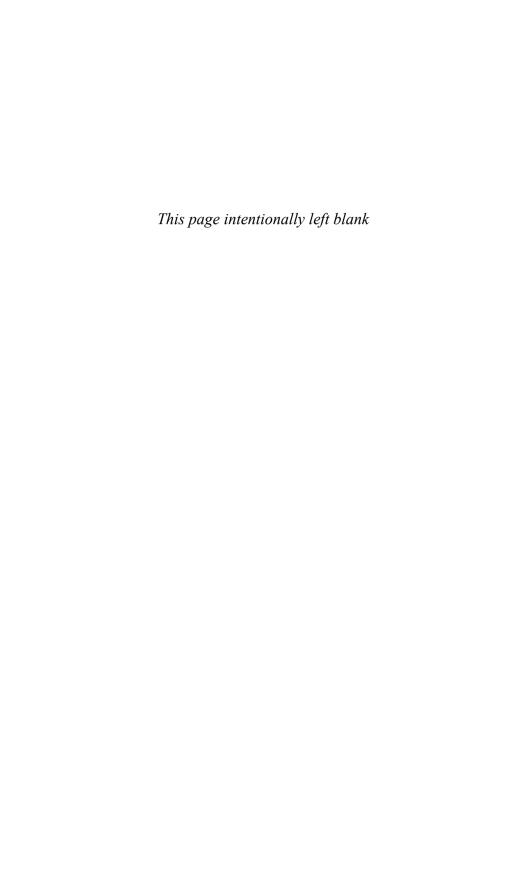
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To my wife, Ruth Woodfield, and our three boys, Jess, Kim, and Davy Whatmore



It is not to be expected, among Men, that a superior Power will contain itself within the Bounds of an exact Moderation, and it will not employ its Force to obtain, for itself, what Advantages it can, by oppressing the Weaker. Or if this Power should happen to be for some time harmless in the hands of an Excellent Prince, who could hear such Prosperity so well, the Wonder 'tis likely would cease with his Reign.

— François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, Two Essays on the Ballance of Europe (London, 1720), 6–7

Wars and the administration of public affairs, are the principal subjects of history; but the number of persons interested in these busy scenes, is very different, according to the different condition of mankind. In great monarchies, millions of obedient subjects pursue their useful occupations in peace and obscurity. The attention of the Writer, as well as the Reader, is solely confined to a court, a capital, a regular army, and the districts which happen to be the occasional scene of military operations. But a state of freedom and barbarism, the season of civil commotions, or the situation of petty republics, raises almost every member of the community into action, and consequently into notice. The irregular divisions, and the restless motions, of the people of Germany, dazzle our imagination, and seem to multiply their numbers. The profuse enumeration of kings and warriors, of armies and nations, inclines us to forget that the same objects are continually repeated under a variety of appellations, and that the most splendid appellations have been frequently lavished on the most inconsiderable objects.

-Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 1 (London, 1776), 2nd ed., 241

