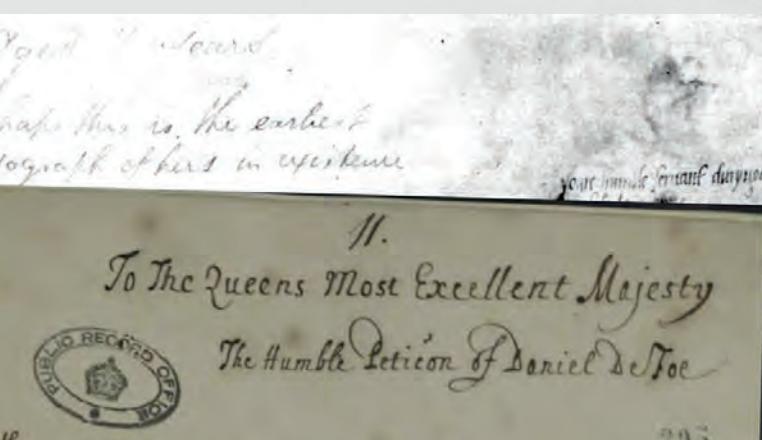


State Papers Confidential

Professor Jeremy Black

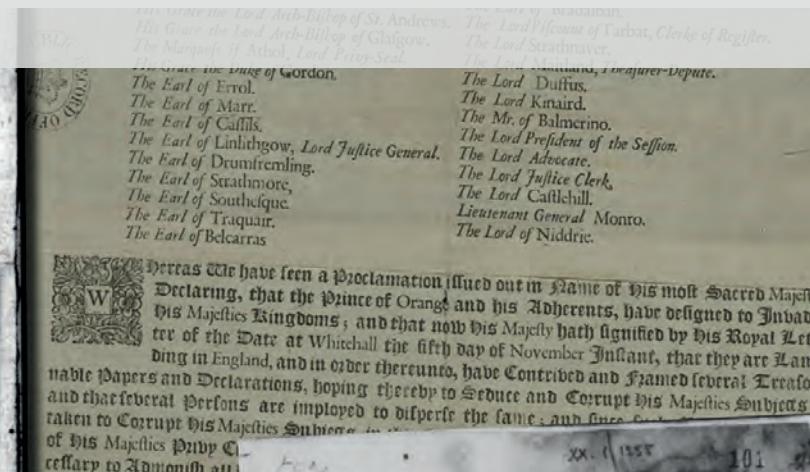
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That yo Petitioners w^t a sincere design to Propogate The Interests of the
newt Succession and to Animate The people against The designs of The Pretender
be Alwys lookt on as an enemy to yo Maj: Sacred Person and government did
th Levevall Pamphlets particularly One intituled Persons agaist The Hannover
sion, what if The Pretender shoud come, and other
In all which books altho' The Titles seemed to look as if written in Favours of the
and Sandy Expressions, as in old Ironicall writing it Mys be May be
ed Against the true Design of the whole, and turned to a Meaning quite different
The Intencion of the Author: yet yo Petitioners Humbly Issues yo Maj: in The
nese Manner Possible, That his True and Only Design in all y said books, was by
onicall Discourse of Recommeding The Pretender, In The strongest and Most Truefull
e to expose his designs, and The various Consequences of his Successing Theran.



Whereas We have seen a Proclamation issued out in Name of His most Sacred Majesties Kingdome; and that now his Majestie hath signified by his Royal Letter of the Date at Whitehall the fifth day of November Instant, that they are Landing in England, and in order theremo, have Contrived and Framed several Treasonable Papers and Declarations, hoping thereby to Seduce and Corrupt his Majesties Subjects and that severall Persons are employed to disperse the same, and since taken to Corrupt his Majesties Subjects ...
of his Majesties Privy C-
cessary to Admonish all
XX. 1. 1688 101

... every out of this mortall life, to one
of yo He sworne Mary Lake green
and: Whiche tould god haue to dispole
ruly right heire, by blood and lawfull he
re said Kingdome of England, and
mier after, and right heire also in all
adell, & give know ledge by this our son
of people being Naturall Subject to every
coming of the 17. Day of this month of No
ur said Deare of his selfe reported from this
Charg of all boundes & dyes of suspcion
to see from, The same time in naturall
to art, as to there only souereign Lad
reced of his own Proclamation great
e promulgation on our part was the last
imperiall revery suppys to their late

The provision of information by diplomats was but part of the process by which the British government acquired knowledge about the capability and intentions of foreign powers. Much of this process did not involve diplomats. Indeed, a key aspect of the application of science in diplomacy was the development of codebreaking in so-called Black Chambers. Although the use of cryptography was longstanding, the rise of the Black Chambers was basically an eighteenth-century phenomenon, being introduced for example in the United Provinces in 1707, in part in response to events in the War of the Spanish Succession and to changes and tensions in inter-allied relationships.^[1] Such activity was encouraged by the extent to which formal diplomatic processes were encouraged by secret diplomacies: differing networks of command and control that arose from the personal role of the Crown and from ministerial struggles, as with the *Secret de Roi* in France and the private correspondence with Austrian envoys of ministers, notably Prince Eugene, the War Minister.^[2]

In Britain, the important role of the Post Office in the interception of foreign diplomatic correspondence^[3] is reflected in State Papers 107, but the series is incomplete. Much was clearly due to inadvertent destruction: 'they were thrown in a closet as papers of no consequence, and ... an immense quantity perished'^[4] The uneven nature of the series is readily apparent. For example, eleven volumes of intercepts survive for 1733, but no letters for 1735, and there are none for the period October 1745 to October 1751. However, there are also intercepts in other series in the National Archives, although the absence of a catalogue creates serious problems for searchers. Intercepts could be sent to envoys who it was felt would find them

useful.^[5] In 1730, State Papers Prussia (SP 90) contains intercepts of the secret correspondence of the Prussian minister, General Grumbkow, and Benjamin Reichenbach, the Prussian Resident in London^[6]. Sir Charles Hotham, envoy for George II, was instructed to secure the disgrace of the former and the recall of the latter on the grounds that they were attempting to thwart a reconciliation between Britain and Prussia.

Foreign diplomats were well aware that the post was opened and the crucial element was not this interception, but, rather, the deciphering. This was a skill the British possessed in abundance, especially after the appointment of the Reverend Edward Willes, later a conscientious Bishop of Bath and Wells, as Decipherer in 1716, a post he held until his death in 1773. Earlier, in an important link with the world of science, the post had been held in 1701-3 by John Wallis, an eminent mathematician. From Willes' appointment the decipherer's office was continually staffed by members of his family until its abolition in 1844, and from 1762 onwards the entire office were members of the family. From 1701, when the office was placed on a regular basis, until 1722, the salaries were paid at the Exchequer, thereafter by the Secretary of the Post Office, out of the Secret Service money, until 1782, when the office was placed under the authority of the newly-created Foreign Office.^[7]

The success of the office can be gauged from SP 107, State Papers Foreign, Confidential. Its contents proves the office's ability to decipher the codes of most European states, including Austria, Bavaria, Denmark, France, Hesse-Cassel, Modena, Naples, the Palatinate, Parma, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Sardinia, Saxony, Spain, Sweden, Tuscany, the United Provinces (Dutch) and Venice.^[8] Although the office was frequently tested

by new cipher keys, evidence of a failure to decipher is rare, whether of intercepts that were incompletely deciphered or not deciphered at all, or references to the problem in correspondence.

Much of the strength of the British information system derived from allied co-operation, and the efforts made by ministers and diplomats in sustaining that co-operation began before the accession of George I or example, William III was supplied with correspondence between Paris, Copenhagen and Stockholm intercepted at the Hanoverian post office in Celle.^[9] The quality of Hanoverian interception remained high throughout the century. In 1750, Frederick II of Prussia informed the French envoy that the Hanoverians had broken his cipher.^[10]

In addition, particularly in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the Dutch maintained the tradition of assistance developed during William III's reign, as in 1730 when they provided copies of the correspondence of Count Degenfeld, the new Prussian envoy in London.^[11] Degenfeld intercepts can be found in SP 107.^[12]

The diminution in the quantity of surviving intercepts from the mid-1740s makes it harder to gauge success after the 1730s. Indeed, the naturally-cantankerous George II complained about the poor quality of postal interception in 1752.^[13] However, as a valuable context for SP 107, there are indications of an important continued capability. Surviving intercepts reveal the French plan for an invasion of Britain in 1759, while in the mid-1760s and early 1770s, French diplomatic correspondence with Sweden was regularly deciphered, and in the late 1760s French and Prussian codes were broken. When, in 1773, Anthony Todd, who

had been Foreign Secretary of the Post Office since 1752, referred to the problems facing the decipherers, he noted that three Russian ciphers as well as the Swedish cipher had been broken.^[14]

Interceptions were useful for a number of reasons, including the political one of strengthening the ministry by discrediting its opponents. They also threw much light on the foreign perception of British politics. Horace Walpole recorded an event that allegedly occurred soon after the death of Queen Caroline in 1737: 'the King reading with Sir Robert [Walpole, the Prime Minister] some intercepted letters from Germany, which, said that, now the Queen was gone, Sir Robert would have no protection.'^[15]

It was possible to gain information from intercepts on the impression created by parliamentary debates, and on the extent to which foreign envoys were influenced by domestic British politics. Evidence of intrigues between diplomats and the opposition was more serious. Thanks to intercepts, the ministry was well aware of the hostile intrigues of the Austrians Starhemberg (1725), Palm (1726-7), Kinsky (1728-30) and Strickland (1734-5), the French Broglie (1730-1) and Chavigny (1732-6),^[16] the Prussian Reichenbach (1726-30), the Spaniards Monteléon (1718),^[17] Pozobueno (1726) and Montijo (1733-5), and the Swedes Gyllenborg (1716-17) and Sparre (mid-1730s).^[18] As a result, attempts were made to have envoys recalled (Broglie) or expelled (Palm, Strickland, Gyllenborg). In 1736, an intercept revealed a Prussian effort to develop links with the Prince of Wales, who hosted opposition politicians.^[19]

The monarchs took a close interest in the intercepts, and appear to have read them regularly. Intercepts

were sent from London to Hanover when the king went there. In addition, royal instructions were sought on the best way in which to make use of their intelligence.^[20]

Intercepts were also of value in understanding the foreign policies and domestic politics of other powers. The surviving intercepts, for which the best evidence and source is SP 107, suggest that the British were able to benefit from a mass of information and opinion in assessing these policies, although their value was limited by measures taken to avoid interception such as the use of couriers. The use of couriers restricted potential interception of messages to their points of departure or arrival, rather than en route. In 1735, the British successfully recruited François de Bussy, a senior member of the French Foreign Ministry, although they subsequently failed in an effort to recruit Germain Louis Chauvelin, the French Foreign Minister.^[21] In 1738, an Englishman detained in Calais and interrogated by the French claimed that George Robinson, a former MP, who had fled Britain in 1732 when his frauds had been discovered, had been able, for a period of about three years, to gain copies of French diplomatic correspondence in Paris and to send them to London.^[22]

A close reading of SP 107 provides a valuable supplement to the regular diplomatic correspondence in State Papers Foreign. This can be seen in the development of Anglo-Russian relations in the 1730s. Anxiety was recognisably there in the early 1730s as can be seen from several examples. There is an interesting discussion in 1732 between William, 1st Earl of Harrington, the Secretary of State for the Northern Department, and the Danish envoy Count Rantzau, on the Russian naval threat in the Baltic.^[23] The following year, the British rejection of Russian pressure to take a

supportive stance over the Polish succession was noted,^[24] but other envoys saw British policy to be pro-Russian. Baron Sparre, the Swedish envoy, reported being informed by Harrington of the Russian invasion of Poland, which was aimed at thwarting the election of the French candidate, Stanislaus Leszczynski:

'I could sufficiently observe by his discourse, that seeing King Stanislaus' election could not be hindered otherwise, those advices were not unacceptable to the Court here; for he absolutely took the part of the Russians, saying ... that by a treaty of 1717, Russia as guarantor was obliged to maintain the Liberty of Poland, against all force and oppression, nor to permit King Stanislaus to be chosen From this discourse of the Secretary of State as well as from diverse others of his before, as also from other intelligence I have here at Court, I am certain that the Court is now more in the Russian interest, than I ever suspected they would be. I will not accuse them that they are so of inclination; but the alliance with the Emperor [Charles VI, ruler of Austria] and the safety of the King's German dominions [Hanover] upon the foot of his present system, may be the true motives thereto.'^[25]

Sparre followed up by reporting that, although Harrington had disclaimed to him any pro-Russian tendencies, 'this Court believes they find their account by the Russian Court better now than they have done for these fourteen years past.'^[26] Such material is a crucial supplement to British diplomatic correspondence and an important part of the sources available for an understanding of British foreign policy in the period in which Britain became the world's leading power.

ENDNOTES

^[1] K. de Leeuw, 'The Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic during the War of the Spanish Succession and its Aftermath, 1707-1715,' *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 133-56 and 'Cryptology in the Dutch Republic: A Case-Study,' in *The History of Information Security*, edited by K. de Leeuw and J. Bergstra (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 327-67.

^[2] E. Boutaric (ed.), *Correspondance secrète inédite de Louis XV sur la politique étranagère* (2 vols, Paris, 1886); M. Braubach, *Die Gehemdiplomatie des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen* (Cologne, 1962).

^[3] K. Ellis, *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Administrative History* (London, 1958) and 'The Administrative Connections between Britain and Hanover,' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3 (1969), pp. 556-66; P. Fritz, 'The Anti-Jacobite Intelligence System of the English Ministers, 1715-1745,' *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), pp. 265-89, and *The English Ministers and Jacobitism between the Rebellions of 1715 and 1745* (Toronto, 1975). Fritz has little to say about the situation after 1727.

^[4] Mr Thomas to C. Lechmere, 1 May 1838, NA. SP. 107/1.

^[5] E.g. George Stepney to James Vernon, 19 September 1693, NA. SP. 80/17.

^[6] NA SP 90/27

^[7] Ellis, *Post Office*, pp. 66-8, 127-42; J.C. Sainty, *Officials of the Secretaries of State 1660-1782* (London, 1973), pp. 51-2; W. Gibson, 'An Eighteenth-Century Paradox: The Career of the Decipherer-Bishop, Edward Willes,' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 12 (1989), pp. 69-76.

^[8] J. Black, 'British Intelligence and the Mid-eighteenth-century Crisis,' *Intelligence and National Security*, 2 (1987), pp. 209-16, and 'Eighteenth-century Intercepted Dispatches,' *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 11 (1990), pp. 138-43.

^[9] Ellis, *Post Office*, p. 74, 'Administrative Connections,' pp. 560-1, and 'British Communications and Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century,' *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 31 (1958), p. 163; B. Peterson, '"The Correspondent in Paris": en engelsk informationaskalle udner 1700-talet,' *Scandia*, 27 (1961), pp. 387-99; S.P. Oakley, 'The Interception of Posts in Celle, 1694-1700,' in R. Hatton and J.S. Bromley (eds), *William III and Louis XIV* (Liverpool, 1968), pp. 95-116.

^[10] *Polit. Corresp* 7, pp. 281-2, 290.

^[11] Philip, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, envoy in The Hague to George Tilson, Under-Secretary, 10 October 1730, NA. SP. 84/308.

^[12] Degenfeldt to Grumbkow, Extract. 15 August 1730. NA. SP 107/2 f.1.

^[13] Thomas, Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, to Henry Pelham, First Lord of the Treasury, 26 July 1752, BL. Add. 35412.

^[14] B. Williams, *The Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham* (2 vols, London, 1913), I, 399; Oakley, 'Interception,' p. 95; BL. Add. 32309; Sir John

Fortescue (ed.), *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783* (6 vols, 1928), III, 39-40.

^[15] P. Cunningham (ed.), *The Letters of Horace Walpole I* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. cxxxviii.

^[16] NA SP107/20

^[17] NA SP107/1C

^[18] NA SP107/1B

^[19] NA SP 107/21

^[20] Newcastle to George II, 4 April 1730, NA. S. 36/18; undated correspondence between George II and Townshend, William Coxe (ed.), *Walpole* (3 vols, London, 1798), II, 536-7.

^[21] Robert Walpole to James, 1st Earl Waldegrave, envoy in France, 7 March 1737, Chewton, Waldegrave papers.

^[22] 'Interrogation du ... Thomas Limpous,' 27 July 1738, AE. CP. Ang.

^[23] Rantzau to Count Rosenkranz, 25 March 1732, NA. SP. 107/5.

^[24] Count Philip Kinsky, Austrian envoy, to the Emperor Charles VI, 11 September 1733, NA. SP. 107/16.

^[25] Sparre to the Swedish first minister, Count Horn, 21 August 1733, NA. SP. 107/15.

^[26] Sparre to Horn, 25 August 1733, NA. SP. 107/15. See also, same to same, 11 September 1733, NA. SP. 107/16.

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