



THE SWEDISH PLOT

Midnight, January 29th.

With blatant disregard for international law, members of the Guards burst into the home of the Foreign Ambassador. They find him in the midst of preparing his daily dispatches. The detachment commander, a Major General, no less, calmly shows the startled Ambassador and his anxious wife a warrant for the Ambassador's arrest and for the confiscation of all his state and private correspondence.

There are signs the Ambassador is not unprepared – suspiciously, the smell of burning paper hangs in the air – he and his secretary have been destroying documents. He claims diplomatic immunity, and demands the presence of one of his colleagues as a witness.

The General replies that the Ambassador is under house arrest and shall see no one. Unable to find what they are looking for among the correspondence littering the man's study, the guardsmen break open a locked cabinet belonging to the ambassador's wife – supposedly containing the household silver – despite the woman's shrill protests. Instead of candlesticks and plate, they find papers: solid evidence that the Ambassador is an Agent of Rebellion.

Leaving twenty or so of his men to keep watch over the inhabitants of the house, the General removes a mass of material for closer scrutiny and goes to report to the Secretary of State. A few hours later the arrests begin...

The uniqueness of this not so unique tale (oddly, writers of fiction respect Diplomatic Immunity far more often than real governments), lies in its location. And in the date. And in the people involved. For this event occurred not in 21st Century Iran, or 1950s Cuba, or even in Nazi Berlin. It took place in London, England, in the Year of Our Lord 1717, and the man arrested was a Swede.

The warrant was served by Major General George Wade, seconded by Lieutenant Colonel Blakeney of the Guards, to the Swedish Ambassador, Count Carl Gyllenborg, and read as follows:

"His Majesty hath certain information that Count Gyllenborg is carrying on a treasonable correspondence against His Majesty's government, and hath endeavoured to engage several of his Majesty's liege subjects to execute and stir up a rebellion, toward the support of which he had promised them foreign assistance".¹

It had been authorised by Secretary of State Lord Methuen, and yielded three cartloads of impounded documents. But what had caused the British Government to take such a drastic step?

The '15



Eighteen months before, in the autumn of 1715, there had been a Jacobite Rising. The Jacobites were supporters of the deposed King James II, of the House of Stuart, who, in 1688, had been ousted in a coup and replaced by the Dutchman, William of Orange – a blood relation as well as a relation by marriage, but a foreigner, who sought to use England's wealth in his Continental wars against France. Both

James and William were dead now, the latter succeeded by his sister-in-law Anne, who was also James' daughter. Anne, too, was newly dead, and it was this fact that in 1715 had given the

Jacobites their opportunity to seek a restoration of the old régime under James II's son, James Francis Edward Stuart.

[Above: James Francis Edward Stuart.]

The politically correct alternative to young James was George Louis Welf, Elector of Hanover, a German princeling with comparatively distant ties to the House of Stuart. Though another foreigner (who could not even speak English), and certainly not in direct line of succession, he had his supporters too. For one thing, George was a Protestant, while James was Catholic. Perhaps of more importance in this dawning Age of Enlightenment, James was an advocate of Absolutist Government – arbitrary rule, in the manner of France. George, whatever his private desires, would be forced, as William had been, to reign within the confines of the British Constitution or not reign at all.

In 1715, Jacobitism was still a force to be reckoned with. Though few were die hard fanatics, a large percentage of the population supported them, if only in a spirit of opposition to the inevitable mismanagement of the current Government. As a matter of fact, the fanatics had already tried a counter-coup and failed. It was a jaded politician, a "trimmer" of the old Court Party (composed of place-holding officials), who raised the standard of rebellion: the Earl of Mar.

But, by the spring of 1716, the Earl of Mar's Rebellion, as the rising is usually called, was over. Although begun by the earl for personal reasons, it had been a golden opportunity for the Jacobites. With hindsight, it was probably the Jacobites' best opportunity – though the failed French landing in 1708, when Scottish anger at the Act of Union (1707) was at fever pitch, is also a contender for that honour. Yet in nearly every way, the attempt had been botched. Now the most prominent Jacks were locked in the Tower of London, on trial for high treason, while their followers were lying low.

The more fortunate had escaped to join the exiled Stuart Court in Lorraine. James' closest supporters, cut off from the realities of British life since the 1690s, believed the rebellion could be re-ignited. They were doubtless encouraged by the recent emigres, who claimed the common people would support them, if only they could find some decent leaders – a snide dig at the Earl of Mar.

France's Regent



Circumstances for the Stuarts were not good. France, once so sympathetic to their House, was growing, not exactly hostile, but... cold. A bad thing happened to the Jacks in 1715: Louis XIV, *Le Roi Soleil* himself, died. The Sun King had been a personal friend of the deposed King James II, father of James Francis. He was also a champion, in the true Chivalric sense, of Monarchy, and despised the British Georgian régime as German ducal hicks elevated beyond their station in life by a scaffolding of bourgeoisie merchants.

[Above: Philippe, 2nd Duc d'Orléans.]

Now, ironically, King Louis showered riches and honours on his bastard children, especially those of Madame de Montespan, while seeking to curtail the rights of the Old Nobility, even when some of its members were his own legitimate children. Shortly before his death he made a will in favour of the Duc du Maine and the latter's brother, the Duc de Toulouse. To tell the truth, it

was not wheedled out of him, nor was it slipped in amongst other papers – the King was not a dotard. He was simply worn down by constant nagging.

This digression is not without significance. And, there is one other wrinkle to reveal before the explanation. Due to an outbreak of smallpox and, according to rumour, the judicious application of poison, the late king's only direct heir was now his sickly, five-year-old great-grandchild, Louis XV.

Well, you can guess what happened. On the King's death, a struggle for the post of Regent broke out. This authority was what the Duc de Maine had gained by the will, negating that of the legitimate and traditional choice, the late king's nephew, the Duc d'Orléans. After a great fight in the council chambers and on the back stairs, the cabal of “The Bastards” was worsted and Orléans reclaimed his right. But his position was far from secure.

[Toulouse, by the way, got off lightly. He was well liked, even by the Peers, and in the great trial where he and his brother lost their ranks, his was after freely restored to him. He had no desire to be master of France.]

Orléans was a very curious man, described by his friend, the Duc de Saint Simon, as a genius. His knowledge was encyclopaedic, he understood politics and economics, and he knew what made people tick, yet he was so indolent and fond of pleasure that he could barely stir himself to action even when his life was threatened – as it most assuredly was during the aforementioned crisis of state. A man of Reason – a man of wealth and taste – he professed Atheism to the point of being a Diabolist. He said he did not believe in God, but he did believe in the Devil – and wasted countless nights in weird rituals chanting gibberish to no effect. Yet he was afraid of going to Hell. He was also the lifelong friend of the ultra-Catholic Saint Simon.

He had the rank and authority, and bloodline, to take France for himself, but he preferred to minister it on behalf of his relation. Partly this was cleverness, partly justice to his race, and partly laziness. He also had enough problems to deal with. Du Maine and his associates were down but not out. The Empire across the Rhine was not particularly well-disposed to France. And, there was Spain.

Fortunately, the old Queen of Spain and the lady in waiting who had been de Montespan's protégé and d'Orléans' bane were gone. Occupying the vacancy, however, was a fiery Italian princess, Elisabeth Farnese. Her malleable husband, Felipe V, was a Bourbon, of the Anjou branch of the family, who *might* be preparing to try for the throne of France. Though he had renounced his claim, there were rumours that he wished he had not. More of a threat however, was the royal couple's chief minister, Giulio Alberoni.

An appointee of the Queen, Alberoni was, in his heyday, the true master of Spain. He held the royal couple in bondage. Not, it is true, in a literal, or even a moral sense, but he controlled all access to the throne, ensuring the King and Queen only had contact with those he personally approved of, and issuing orders in their name without bothering to notify them. (*Why does the name “Wormtongue” come to mind?*)

He held a grudge against Orléans from the days when the latter had served in Spain, during the War of the Spanish Succession. He still had links to the de Montespan crew, and was even now plotting to overthrow the Regent.

[Orléans earned the everlasting enmity of de Montespan and her Spanish catspaw, when, exasperated by their handling of the war – yes, the women's handling of it – he made a joke at the Spanish Court about “the Marshal of France and her General”. That is Alberoni, bottom left.]

Orléans had already sought help in a most unlikely quarter: from England. One of the Regent's cronies was the Abbé Dubois, a gargoyle of a man (inside and out), who was collecting a fat paycheque from the British Government for the purpose of rendering France impotent.

[Dubois was the Fouché of his day – the Indispensable Necessary Evil.]

Because of the dynastic threat from Spain, the Anglo-French relationship began to jell. England had waged the late war specifically to prevent such a union of crowns, and she had succeeded in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). Put crassly, this treaty was written by England, benefitted her almost exclusively, and was foisted upon an exhausted Europe that had suddenly discovered a lion loose in its midst.

Now, only a few years later, England still held a good hand of cards. She needed a quiescent neighbour, thanks to the many enemies she had earned, but could afford to ask for more than she needed to give. The price of support for the Regent of France was the removal of the Jacobite Court from France.

Initially, James Francis Stuart was merely forced to move his exiled court from fashionable Paris to the recently annexed territory of Lorraine. But that was not far enough. He was asked to move to Avignon – as Papal territory it was outside French jurisdiction. Later he would be pressured to go to Rome. The greatest hardship was not the loss of a damp and draughty château, but the termination of his French pension.

Timely Assistance

With a bevy of impecunious nobles relying on him for perquisites, James was soon busy casting about for financial aid. Enter Sweden, in the form of a couple of Jacobite fanciers: namely, the Swedish Ambassador to England, Count Karl Gyllenborg, and Eric Sparre, Swedish Ambassador to France.

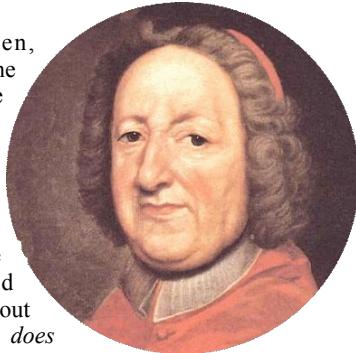


Gyllenborg had lived in England since 1703, and had married Sarah Wright, daughter of an English Jacobite. Sparre, a more recent appointee, feared that a Franco-English rapprochement would put a greater strain on his own monarch's Baltic plans.

[Above: Count Karl Gyllenborg.]

King George supported Denmark, still a powerful kingdom in those days, against the even stronger Kingdom of Sweden. France, on the other hand, traditionally provided a critical subsidy to Sweden that allowed her kings to field a far larger army than they could otherwise. If France became subordinate to England, this subsidy would stop.

The current King of Sweden was that amazing man, Charles XII. Known to contemporaries as “the Mad King of the North” or “the Last Viking”, Charles had spent over a decade (so far) engaged in the Great Northern War. Only recently returned from exile in Moldavia, he had finally given up on Russia, and was now waging war against Denmark, while receiving the occasional jab from George's Hanover.



George & Charles



George I, besides being King of England, was also Elector of Hanover, a title that he infinitely preferred. As Elector, he sought to expand his realm at the expense of Sweden's Continental possessions, specifically by seizing the secularised bishoprics of Bremen and Verden, ownership of which allowed Hanover access to the sea and opened up her Baltic trade.

Being also King of England, George hoped to use the Royal Navy, and potentially the British Army, to further his designs. This had been strictly forbidden under the terms of Succession that allowed him to rule the island kingdom. However, by one excuse or another, in both 1715 and 1716, he had been able to send a squadron of eight ships under Admiral Norris to the Baltic to harass the Swedes and protect his newly acquired bishoprics. The difficulty was in maintaining it there, as the funds necessary had to be voted for each year, and each year the excuses made for various overseas deployments got thinner.

[In fact, the Baltic was a critical source of timber and tar for the Royal Navy, as well as iron. The squadron had to be withdrawn each year because the Baltic Ports were ice-bound during the winter months.]

Charles XII was so incensed with George's actions, that during Mar's Rebellion he had rashly offered a corps of 12,000 men to the Stuarts. Admittedly, he had made a similar statement in 1712 which came to nothing because of an imminent Russian threat, and he likewise backed down in 1715, unwilling to risk a war with England. However, the Jacobites still had fond hopes of his support.

They were happy to receive aid from anyone, and realised that accepting a Protestant ally was a good public relations move. A Swedish alliance would even earn the support of non-Jacobites at home, especially the merchant community, plagued by a wave of Swedish privateers since 1715.

[So heavy were their depredations, that a convoy system had to be instituted.]

[Above: Charles XII; top: George I.]

King George was using the commerce raiding as an excuse to continue his Baltic operations (which had of course started it in the first place), but the People were beginning to complain, saying that if he would desist in his overseas endeavours, the Swedes would leave them alone, insurance premiums would drop, and trade would increase.

This is where matters stood in 1716. France and England In Bed Together, a Dynastic Threat from Spain, Franco-Spanish Cabals, War in the Baltic, British Trade in Peril, a Scandinavian Knight Errant with a Powerful Army, and an Exiled Royal Court Seeking Justice.

Revelations

Now we must pause and take a deep breath, because things are about to get complicated. The surface facts are these. In 1715, King Charles' First Minister, Baron George Heinrich von Götz von Schlitz, arrived in Paris. Here he learned from Ambassador Sparre of the Jacobites' yearning to return home at the expense of King George's peace of mind. Götz agreed to contact King Charles and see what could be done – in exchange for a hefty monetary contribution from the Jacobites. The "donation" was to be used to fund the invasion, according to Götz.

[Above: Ambassador Sparre.]

Count Gyllenborg was roped in as a conduit for additional funds from the Faithful in Britain. (So much cleaner to milk the source than have the money pass through sticky fingers – James Stuart's Court being composed of the gamut of political types).

These efforts took some months, and involved a number of Jacobite agents and several (often competitive) clandestine groups. James Stuart's titular Secretary of State, Lord Middleton, for example, had his own team at work. They collected some money – not a great deal – which was sent to James. Simultaneously, the Jacks and the Swedes went ahead with political measures and operational planning. By January 1717, the plan, a scaled down version of the one proposed in 1712, was formalised by treaty, with the invasion date set for the spring of 1718.

The conspiracy leaked like a sieve. Almost from the start, the English knew what was happening, and that same month saw the British Cabinet come to a decision. The first (public) act opened with Wade's actions in the dead of night, and the last ended with the detention of Götz by the Dutch, a wave of anti-Jacobite propaganda, and enough invasion hysteria to guarantee the maintenance of George's Baltic squadron. And that was that. It is in the details of the affair, however, where the interest lies.

The Plot

As early as 1715, Baron Sparre had discussed options with James FitzJames, Duke of Berwick. Berwick was one of France's best marshals, and a natural son of James II. He was the man to deal with at a time when France was still pro-Jacobite. It is likely, given the date, that his meeting with Sparre had the full approval of the French government. Sparre could not claim the same for his side, however.

The Ambassador suggested that the Jacobites offer Charles XII 50,000 crowns (150,000 livres) in exchange for twelve battalions of Swedish infantry (7-8000 men) who would leave Gothenburg for England under command of Major-General Hugo John Hamilton, a Scotsman in Swedish service.

[Some sources give Hamilton's rank as Lieutenant General; possibly a brevet promotion, typical in overseas operations where indigenous troops are involved.]

But Charles XII, probably embarrassed by his hot-headed offer, was no longer interested. He wanted to avoid war with Britain, and thereby limit King George's options. In fact, Sparre was reprimanded for approaching the Jacobites at all. Nonetheless, the money was duly advanced by the Jacks. It was as scrupulously returned.

[Whether Sparre was diplomatically “disowned” in this affair, or whether he had indeed made the first contact on his own initiative is unclear, but it can be said he was sympathetic to the Jacobite Cause.]

Somewhat later a letter was sent to Sweden asking for aid. No reply was received. Later still, a mission was proposed and encouraged by Sparre, despite Charles’ cold shoulder, which sent the Earl of Mar’s cousin, John Erskine of Alva, to Sweden, but he was turned back, forbidden to enter the country. The Jacobites sorrowfully realised that the time was not yet ripe; but, Charles’s most vulnerable point was his pocket book, and if they paid their they ought to gain his support.

The Baron

The moment came the next year. The Last Viking, now short of funds to fuel his war effort, sent Baron Görtz on a grand tour of the Western European countries in order to scare up some cash and buy ships. The Baron arrived in Amsterdam on July 2nd, 1716, and from there proceeded to The Hague.

Görtz was a lovely piece of work: a Franconian adventurer of whom Voltaire said, that “he was equally lavish of gifts and promises, of oaths and lies.” Most sources concur that Görtz was not interested in the Jacobites at first, but was looking for money from any possible source. He tried the United Provinces, but the newly signed Treaty of Westminster (May 25th, 1716), linked them too closely with England.

[Above: Baron Görtz. For some reason, this grainy image, compared with the high quality court paintings of the other players, reminds the author of the “last snapshot of Colonel Kurtz” in Apocalypse Now. And it is by “an unknown artist”. Perhaps Görtz had him “disappeared”...]



Next on the list was Paris, but the French were also too friendly with the English, besides being out of pocket, as usual. Görtz even considered a bid by a band of pirates from Madagascar, of whom one was a Jacobite named Jasper Morgan, an ex-member of the Royal Navy. Rumours of the time claimed that Morgan was a key player in the later negotiations with the Jacobites, but his presence was probably a coincidence. Finally, Görtz listened to Sparre’s proposal.

[The pirates were finding it hard to make a living with all the warships floating about the Indian Ocean, and wanted to fly the Swedish flag as privateers – that is, legitimate commerce raiders as opposed to mere robbers.]

By this time he was desperate. Charles XII needed a large sum of money by October. Görtz was reluctant to treat with a group as flighty as the Jacobites (in fact, it was not until January 1717 that he became firmly committed). At first, he wanted to deal directly with the Movement in England, so as to avoid having to arrange a treaty between Charles and James. Partly, this was because he lacked the authority to make treaties at that time, but more importantly, it is believed, because he was dealing with the Jacobites against the wishes of his King.

Sparre and Görtz were both of the Hawk faction in Sweden. The Doves wanted peace for Sweden at any price. The Hawks were looking for a way to support Charles’ war machine and bring the conflict to an honourable conclusion for Sweden. Sparre, although he put his own country first, appears to have been sympathetic to James’ plight, but Görtz saw only a means to an end.

Even his own people did not fully realise that Görtz was playing a lone hand. Having failed to acquire any new ships for Sweden, the Baron next conceived of persuading those Jacobite lawmakers lurking in the shadowy corners of Westminster – there were still quite a few – to prevent the sending of the hated Baltic squadron by political means. Later, he saw how they could contribute directly (i.e. monetarily) to the Swedish war effort. The 50,000 crowns that James had offered the year before caught Görtz’s eye.

The Baron corresponded with Count Gyllenborg in London, and met with Sparre, the Duke of Ormonde (the ex-Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, who had been attainted for his part in the ’15), and possibly James Stuart himself. Both Gyllenborg and Sparre had encouraged the Jacobites to believe that Charles XII was bound to support them, and now here was Charles’ “money man” saying the same thing.

Proposals

On the Jacobite side, a rather grandiose plan was proposed. They would mediate a full peace between Russia and Sweden. These two countries would then unite against England and Hanover. Charles would land an army of 12,000 men in Scotland and descend upon London, inspiring the Jacobites to rise and seize power. It would be a Protestant, as well as a Jacobite revolution, under a man of proven martial ability. Again, however, Görtz’s realism prevailed.

[Peace between Russia and Sweden, although seemingly remote at the time, could have been made possible by the many Jacobite contacts in that country, where most of the men of power were of foreign descent.]

On August 29th, 1716, General Dillon of the Irish Brigade, a close friend of Sparre’s, met with the Baron in Paris. Sparre told Dillon that Görtz would back them as go-betweens for the Swedish King and the Jacobites, and that Charles XII was now waxing hot.

[Chevalier Dillon died at the battle of Fontenoy in 1745, leading his regiment in a charge that drove back the English advance.]

Görtz asked for a letter that would formally request assistance from the King of Sweden and offer him immediate cash. After the letter had been sent and credentials had been received from Charles, authorising Sparre and Görtz to assist, the Jacobites could expect troops and supplies by November or December of 1716.

[The letter was in code, with the names “Arthur” for James, “Bernard” for England, and “Humphrey” for Charles.]

Dillon travelled to Avignon, where he spoke separately to the Queen Mother, Charles Middleton (Secretary of State), and Father Lewis Innes, the Queen Mother’s Confessor. It was the Father who wrote the letter to Charles, stating that James was assured of the support of both Church (but which Church?!) and the Tory Party, and asking for 6,000 Swedish regulars and 30,000 stands of arms. James, according to Father Innes, pledged to “put his ally and benefactor once more in possession of all his just rights”.² Almost immediately however, dissension arose among the many factions at the shadow Court. The Earl of Mar wanted 8-10,000 men, so as to simultaneously land in both England and Scotland. Others favoured a purely English Rising.

Meanwhile, the Swedish “benefactors” had agreed on their agenda. On September 15th, General Dillon, now back in Paris, was given a list of demands to be met by the victorious Stuarts, such as a commercial treaty, and confirmation that Bremen and Verden would be restored to Sweden. Most importantly, they again asked Dillon how much James himself was prepared to contribute financially. Dillon wrote to the court at Avignon:

"the King of Sweden is in absolute need of money to pay his troops in the exigency in which he finds himself... If Your Majesty, by means of your funds in England, would satisfy him on that point, it is the essential stake, and one that will energize that prince to make the utmost efforts to restore you to the throne of your ancestors."³

James immediately offered 60,000 *livres*, something like a third of his original bid, and reiterated his own demands: now 8,000 foot, with 2,000 horse and dragoons; 30,000 firelocks – of equal calibre, mind; 30,000 bayonets; 6,000 swords; 500 cwt. of powder; and 20 field guns (ten four-pounders and ten eight-pounders), all to be available by the 20th of April, 1717, or sooner. James also indicated that the money for all these items was in the process of collection. On September 29th, Gyllenborg wrote to Görtz and explained that a sign of Charles' good faith was needed to proceed any further. If the Swedish King could guarantee 10,000 men, the money would be assured.

[At some point the Spanish gave James 1,000,000 livres, but whether this was after the fact, to cover his debts, or on the Spaniard Alberoni's initiative to sow trouble with the English, is not consistently explained in the sources. Alberoni seems at this time to have been courting England. It was only later that he took up the Jacobite cause in the form of the Spanish invasion of 1719. The sum referred to, therefore, was probably given after the failure of the Swedish plot; it drew the Jacobites' attentions to Spain. The story that Alberoni was weaving a mighty intrigue, using the Swedes and the Jacobites as cat's paws, is a bit hard to swallow. Likely enough, though, he was keeping himself informed of affairs in case the knowledge should prove useful. It should also be noted that every account seems to have different figures. No doubt the numbers were constantly being reworked, and different scholars have latched on to different proposals.]

Görtz wrote back "not to make any mention in your letters to the king, or to your correspondents in Sweden, of what has been secretly proposed to you about the Pretender"⁴. While this missive may be merely a caution against spies, it more likely serves as another indication of Görtz's lone hand. Görtz further cautioned the Jacobites against a formal treaty with Charles, and discouraged James from moving his Court to Stockholm as he had been hoping to do. Meanwhile, he asked the Jacobites in England to "trust him". Their reply was short and to the point:

"Why should we run the risk of making a loan to the King of Sweden when we can invest our money here in England at seven or eighth percent? Let us be assured that by our money we shall merit his help and actually have it".⁵

Again, Gyllenborg was sympathetic and Görtz was not. Nevertheless, the Baron was forced to reverse his position, partly because of the Jacobites' firm stand, but more importantly because of a failed harvest in Sweden. Charles belatedly gave him the power to make treaties in the king's name. Görtz had written to Charles on October 25th, claiming he had been offered 300,000 *thalers* (but apparently not stating the source of the funds), so Charles gave the Baron the power

"to treat and conclude in our Name, with all singular persons of what condition soever, and all matters which relate to our service, and he for our Interest; Promising on our Royal Word, that we will approve and ratify, and put instantly into execution whatever the said Baron Görtz shall so transact and conclude."⁶

Whether the exiled court of the Stuarts was a singular person was presumably left for Görtz to decide. Obviously he interpreted his powers rather broadly. One wonders if Charles knew his representative was dealing with the Jacobites or if he fancied it was some shipping cartel. Still, Görtz was not particularly keen to yoke his King to the Stuart cause, but after trying Paris one last time without success, he met with General Dillon at the Hague on January 17th, 1716, to hash out the details to their plan.

Further Negotiations

The day before, James had given his agent at The Hague (an English banker named Jerningham) full powers to negotiate and conclude a treaty with Görtz. Dillon, surprisingly, was not given this power, but Jerningham already had the authority to act on behalf of the leaders at the English end, and at this point, it was doubtless felt that he would be an effective broker between them and the Swedes.

In England, the Bishop of Rochester and the Earl of Oxford were the main plotters, along with the Earl of Arran, the Duke of Shrewsbury, Sir William Wyndham, and other prominent landowners. A certain John Menzies was the London agent, and Captain John Ogilvie was the Continental messenger for Oxford. The Earl of Arran was to be Commander in Chief of the Rising, while Rochester was in charge of collection. Something of a firebrand, he was nevertheless reluctant in the present enterprise.

[Rochester was at the center of Jacobite activity in England until his banishment in 1723.]

He and Oxford could not settle their differences, which dated from the death of Queen Anne. At the same time, the Bishop did not want the authority and responsibility that had been thrust on him. For this and other reasons, the collection of money went slowly. Since mid-July of 1716, agents had been taking contributions for "the factory trade", for "the woolen trade", and for "muslin manufacture".

[Rochester's feud with Oxford arose thus: the former wanted to call upon James Stuart to take back his throne as soon as the death of Anne was announced, but Oxford wanted to wait and see. In consequence, the opportunity was lost and King George took over without opposition.]

[The textile references are not perhaps entirely "randomised" selections. The English ancestors of this author's own family were involved in the Lancastrian silk weaving trade and had strong Catholic and Non-Juror leanings. (My Scottish ancestors, ironically, appear to have been mainly Presbyterian Whigs.)]

James had received assurances of £30,000. By late October, £50,000 was being demanded; Rochester pledged £20,000. The richer Jacobites were reluctant to contribute, demanding that Austria somehow tie down the Dutch States, lest the 6,000 men that country was obliged to provide the Hanoverians should crush the rising. In point of fact, Rochester had only collected £5,000 by November 19th, and was refusing to part with it until he heard from Dillon. Once the Bishop got the go-ahead, he was to hand the funds over to Arran (the man actively negotiating with Gyllenborg at this point), who would pass them on to the Ambassador. Rochester was reluctant to give signed receipts (naturally), so he allowed John Menzies and his banker, Jerningham, to act in his name.

Simultaneously, other groups were contributing to the effort. For example, a total of £8,000 had been collected by the Catholics, represented by the priest, Thomas Southcott, and sent directly to Avignon, care of the Queen Mother. The Scots, too, were approached, but most of the sympathetic magnates had forfeited their lands and had nothing to give. Only £18,000 was eventually collected, £10,000 by Rochester, plus the £8,000 from Southcott, of which £15,000 went into Görtz's hands. And yet, as late as October 16th, the players at Avignon were promising £60,000 in their latest proposals. Clearly they had only a slim grasp of the realities of the situation.

Counterespionage



Unfortunately for the Jacobites, their schemes had been unmasked early on. With all the people involved, some of them trying to do each other's job, it is not surprising that word leaked out. Whether the information was given by Swedish Doves, French Intelligence, or simply the intrigue-ridden Jacobite Court itself, is not clear. The English had a highly effective espionage system in France at this time. What is known is that the British not only

employed skilful and observant agents, but also intercepted the Gyllenborg's mail, steaming his dispatches open and resealing them with an exact copy of the Ambassadorial Seal, before re-posting them. The two Secretaries of State, James 1st Earl Stanhope and Charles, 2nd Viscount Townshend, deducing that Sweden would be the Jacobites' best hope, began intercepting Gyllenborg's mail in September. By the 23rd of that month, Townshend was able to report to Stanhope that Charles XII (according to the correspondence) was definitely planning to restore the Stuarts.

[George needed two secretaries: one for London and one for Hanover, as he was continually traveling between his two realms. Scotland had its own Secretary until 1746. That's Townshend above. Stanhope farther down the page.]

During November, the Ambassador's mail was being circulated among the most trusted members of the Cabinet Council; all agreed that they must take precautions and put a stop to the plot, as well as see to it that Sweden posed no threat (preferably by keeping Charles busy in the Baltic). However, they hoped, with further information, to be able to determine the source or sources of the Jacobites funds before this was done. Another reason for the delay was the King's absence. Parliament was not sitting and could not sit until he returned from Hanover, and it was Parliament who would vote on any warlike measures.

Then, in December 1716, an internal hiatus seemed to threaten the Whig hegemony and smooth the path for the Stuarts. Townshend broke with his old comrade Stanhope, and took Robert Walpole, Chancellor of the Exchequer (the most powerful position in the Government) with him into Opposition. The details of the affair had mostly to do with internal power plays amongst the Whigs, and yet the action was linked to foreign events. Townshend did not believe that the current Parliament would survive a long war with Sweden; Stanhope on the other hand was all for it. Stanhope was in Hanover, and had the King's ear. Despite their division, though, Stanhope wisely advised Lord Methuen (the new Secretary of State at home) to continue with Townshend's policies towards the Jacobite plans. In fact, the Swedish Plot, when revealed, actually strengthened the shaky Administration by presenting an enemy that all could unite against, and helped prevent Parliament's dissolution.



Direct Action

On January 17th, 1717, matters came to a head. Word had been received that Görtz was to be in Holland on the 29th to meet Gyllenborg and take charge of a parcel of money. That same day, Stanhope informed the Privy Council, which came to the decision to arrest Gyllenborg, issuing the warrant to General Wade, a man known to history mainly for his engineering feats in the Scottish Highlands and his poor showing against Bonnie Prince Charlie, but whose real specialty was internal security.

[Road building in the Highlands at that time was internal security. Below: General Wade.]

Gyllenborg's subsequent detention was justified on the grounds that he was acting to incite rebellion, which was clearly against the law of nations, and that he therefore should not be subject to the protection of international law. In the main, the Courts of the other European powers agreed that the English were in the right, especially after Lord Stanhope sent their ambassadors selections of Gyllenborg's mail:

"There is no medium. Either Bremen or the Hanoverian must be sacrificed. The latter is not difficult, considering the general discontent. 10000 men would be sufficient. The malcontents [Jacobites] require but a body of forces, to which they may join themselves. That body being transported in the month of March, when the easterly winds reign, and when it will not at all be dreamt of, will cause a general revolt."⁷

Gyllenborg suggested an alternative: bribing George I with recognition of his claim to Bremen in exchange for assistance against Russia. The Ambassador warned that if terms were not come to, the British Parliament would be forced by circumstances to pass a resolution against Sweden; perhaps even vote for war – “we must either ruin them, or be undone ourselves”⁸.

One of Görtz's replies stated: “*There is, therefore, now no other question but of the best means to satisfy our just desire of revenge. For several months past we have had some preliminary negotiation upon these matters with the court at Avignon; and which way can the King of Sweden better secure to himself the recovery and possession of the Duchy of Bremen, than by reducing King George to be nothing more than an Elector of the Empire?*”⁹ He claimed that he had strongly recommended the Jacobite plan to the Charles, but given Görtz's character, this statement is debatable.

On February 1st, the British Government sent a letter to the European foreign ministries, apprising them of the situation. The other ambassadors in London had fled, but were soon reassured of the facts and returned. Only the Spanish Ambassador, a personal friend of Gyllenborg, protested his arrest. Among others arrested were Sir Jacob Banks MP, who was of Swedish birth; Mr. Charles Caesar, who was one of James Stuart's negotiators and related to Gyllenborg's wife; and Major Boyle Smith, another Jacobite agent. The major players like Oxford and Rochester, as is often the case, were beyond reach. Oxford was tried and acquitted soon after for his part in the 1715 rebellion.

Görtz did not escape. He was at Calais, waiting for a passage to England, when he heard of the arrest of Gyllenborg. He fled to The Hague, where he arrived on February 8th, and there heard of the order for his own arrest; he was reluctantly apprehended by the Dutch States at Arnhem¹⁰ on the 10th.



[The States participated in the affair at England's request. They dragged their feet over the whole issue, slowly and deliberately pursuing the full legal formulae in council before acting, but as they owed their economic survival to the British, they really had little choice.]

Political Fall Out

By this time, Banks, Smith, and the others had already been interrogated and released, for lack of enough solid evidence against them. Or, it may have been rising sympathy for the Jacobites; already the Peers in the Tower had gained many supporters. Most of the people arrested were just go-betweens and knew very little anyway. The Government wanted to know where the money was coming from; “*Where the devil do they get it from to throw it away in that fashion?*” exclaimed Lord Polwarth¹¹. Thwarted in their efforts to dry up the flow of Jacobite funds, the government was at least able to eliminate the Swedish threat.

Charles XII made no direct reply to the accusations directed at him, but had Mr. Jackson, the British Resident in Sweden, seized as a hostage (despite his being warned in a timely fashion by his own government) for Görtz’s release. However, no further actions were taken at the international level. By mutual consent, Görtz and Jackson were exchanged and the matter was swept under the rug.

Whether Charles XII was in on the plot or not is still debated, but it seems more likely that Görtz acted on his own initiative, although Charles may have simply have given him a long leash. Certainly, Charles’ silence seems to indicate a lack of knowledge as to the details. All signs indicate that Görtz was more interested in acquiring funds for Charles XII than really carrying out a Jacobite Restoration. If this is the case, then he was not only conning the Jacobite Court, but putting one of his own countrymen in a false position for nothing. Gyllenborg, married into a Jacobite family, and apparently at home in English society, seems truly to have believed in the plot. Apart from Görtz’s natural thirsting for revenge, which may have led him to recommend the Jacobites to that master intriguer, Cardinal Alberoni of Spain, the main effect of the Swedish Plot was to assist George in having his way with Parliament.

The public was thoroughly aroused through a skilful pamphleteer war¹², which pre-empted Gyllenborg’s own pro-Jacobite propaganda plan that he was apparently preparing to take before Parliament at almost the same time. So successful was the Government in their efforts that a state of near panic ensued. Admiral Byng’s squadron was sent to the North Sea, while Admiral Littleton patrolled the Scottish coast. The army was put on alert. Paranoia fed on itself, and the Administration, too, went into hysterics upon reports of a Swedish armada approaching the east coast – but it was only the Dutch merchant fleet.

Amidst the furore, Parliament opened on February 20th. Lord Stanhope sent copies of the Swedish correspondence to both Houses. The material had been well prepared. Both Lords and Commons expressed their indignation and agreed that the army should continue its preparations and buildup. Most important of all, George got his Baltic Squadron (21 ships!) approved for another year, by a margin of 4 votes. England was drawn further into Continental affairs, and the Jacobite cause suffered yet another defeat.

All the same, there is a school of thought that holds the Swedish threat to have been a real one. A scant year later, the idea of Swedish intervention was being raised among the Jacks once more, this time in tandem with a Spanish Armada. According to Jacobite sources, only Charles XII’s untimely death in November of 1718 prevented his participation in the affair of 1719...

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Cover Illustration. Cassel’s. Plate.187. p.361. The Arrest of the Swedish Ambassador.

General Wade. Quote from Lenman, Jacobite Risings, p.187.

Front Cover is taken from Cassel’s Illustrated History of England. Vol 4. Cassel, Petter, and Galpin. London, 1873.

Footnotes

¹Fritz, Paul S. The English Ministers and Jacobitism Between the Rebellions of 1715 and 1745. University of Toronto, 1975. p.23.

²I.e. give back Bremen and Verden. Fritz. The English Ministers and Jacobitism. p.13.

³Ibid. p.13.

⁴Ibid. p.17.

⁵Fritz. The English Ministers and Jacobitism. p.17

⁶Ibid. p.18

⁷Cassel’s Illustrated History of England. Vol 4. Cassel, Petter, and Galpin. London, 1873. p.363.

⁸Ibid. p.363.

⁹Ibid. p.363. As a word of warning, most of these quotations are taken from those publicly circulated, and are therefore highly selective. They may also have been doctored.

¹⁰Some accounts say Amsterdam.

¹¹Fritz. The English Ministers & Jacobitism. p.26.

¹²We should never forget that the news media originated as an organ for political propaganda, not the dissemination of truth.