

## Charles Stuart and the Secret Service



*Dr Robert Franklin is a retired psychiatrist who became interested in Charles Stuart some years ago and published a biography of him. Since then he has returned to his research in order to satisfy his curiosity and produce a further book about Stuart's secret activities, not all of which were in the public service. His research led him eventually to The Rothschild Archive*

CHARLES STUART was the grandson of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, George III's favourite, and the son of

General Sir Charles Stuart, a distinguished soldier. He was a diplomat, whose career began as the Napoleonic Wars began, and ended, to all intents and purposes, when the Revolution of 1830 abruptly ended the Restoration of the Bourbons. He spent the years of the Napoleonic Wars on the continent of Europe, and the years of the Restoration of the Bourbons in Paris. He was British Ambassador at Paris from 1815 to 1824 and again from 1828 to 1830.

Stuart's papers, which are scattered among a number of archives,<sup>1</sup> show that he was often engaged in secret work, and that he had dealings with the Rothschilds over many years. During those years, the Rothschilds were operating a system for the collection and transmission of intelligence with which no government could compete for efficiency, so that in any project of research into Stuart's activities The Rothschild Archive is a natural resource. Legend has it that the Rothschilds bribed General Grouchy to desert Napoleon at Waterloo,<sup>2</sup> and that one of Stuart's servants delivered the bribe,<sup>3</sup> but the first evidence of a link between Stuart and the Rothschilds to be found in The Rothschild Archive is a note dated September 1817.<sup>4</sup>

The Restoration of the Bourbons after Waterloo was the period during which Stuart and the Rothschilds had most to do with each other. It began with the return of Louis XVIII to Paris, accompanied by Stuart, who had been accredited to his Court in exile at Ghent and cannily stuck to him until acknowledged as Ambassador at Paris.<sup>5</sup> It was a period of great political tension, intrigue and paranoia; plots and conspiracies abounded, and spies and special agents lurked round every

corner. Duff Cooper, in his biography of Talleyrand, characterised it as 'a cloak-and-dagger period'.<sup>6</sup>



*Charles Stuart, Lord Stuart de Rothesay by Francois-Pascal-Simon Gérard, c.1828-30 (Courtesy of The V&A Picture Library)*

As soon as Stuart arrived in Paris he began to set up his own intelligence service. An English lady visiting at the time remarked: 'He discovers what others are about or would be about to a degree that must be very useful to him in his situation'.<sup>7</sup> His chief concerns at first were the safety of the Duke of Wellington and the stability of the new regime; but when the Duke had returned to England and Louis XVIII had shown himself settled on the throne there were other matters to engage his attention, particularly certain aspects of French foreign policy. He employed agents and informers, and despatches based on their reports went regularly and frequently to the Foreign Office.<sup>8</sup>

It is felt that this is a fitting opportunity to record the sense of genuine personal regard and affection in which you are held by the entire Jewish Community of which you have so long

His intelligence service was funded through an account at Coutts & Co. in London, called his 'Separate Account' to distinguish it innocently from a personal account at the bank.<sup>9</sup> Amounts paid into the 'Separate Account' were transferred to an account at Bagenault & Co., in Paris, from which agents and informers were paid.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes payments were made directly from the 'Separate Account', as was the case in 1817 and 1818 when relatively large amounts were paid to the veteran operator Quentin Craufurd.<sup>11</sup> Years earlier, most of Britain's military intelligence from the continent had come from Craufurd and his two nephews.<sup>12</sup>

The Rothschild Archive shows that Stuart was useful to the Rothschilds. They were concerned, first and foremost with their business: national and international politics were important to them; and scarcely less so were their relationships with men of influence in the countries of Europe. There are letters in the Archive that refer, for instance, to Stuart's opinion on the affairs of Spain and Portugal, of which countries he had personal knowledge,<sup>13</sup> and to access through him to Wellington.<sup>14</sup> One of the same letters suggests that the Rothschilds might expect to benefit from Stuart's influence in certain negotiations with the French Government.<sup>15</sup>

In return, the Rothschilds were helpful to Stuart. We know that he was able to make use of their courier service,<sup>16</sup> though we do not know to what extent. We know, too, that intelligence obtained by them was sometimes shared with him. In April 1822, for instance, information from James enabled him to assure the Foreign Secretary, Lord Castlereagh, that a crisis in relations between Russia and Turkey had passed. James, in Paris, had had this information from Salomon, in Vienna, and he had had it from Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor, whose authority for it was Tsar Alexander.<sup>17</sup> It is clear from letters in The Rothschild Archive that the brothers were helpful to Stuart financially, indirectly if not directly.<sup>18</sup>

What does The Rothschild Archive tell us about Stuart's secret activities? Given that Stuart and the Rothschilds had dealings in certain fields in 'a cloak-and-dagger period', and given also that the

Rothschilds had a better system for the collection and transmission of intelligence than had the Foreign Office or the Diplomatic Service, it seems likely that there was co-operation between ambassador and bankers in this particular field. Unfortunately, the Archive throws little light on the subject; but there is, in the collection, one letter that seems significant.

This letter was addressed to Nathan, in London, by John Charles Herries, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, in November 1823. The two men knew each other well: they could reasonably be described as having been unofficial business partners.<sup>19</sup> Frederick Robinson was then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

*Mr Robinson desires I will state to you that Sir Charles Stuart is in want of a sum of between five and six thousand pounds at Paris, and I am to request you to place this sum at Sir Charles' disposal and to inform you that it will be replaced about the month of April next. The sum in question is required to defray the expenses of repairs to the Ambassador's home at Paris.*<sup>20</sup>

There was nothing to make anybody think twice about it, and that was probably as had been intended. But 'the sum in question', a large one, was paid into Stuart's 'Separate Account' at Coutts & Co., his secret service account.<sup>21</sup> It can be inferred that this was a put-up job, arranged to finance some clandestine operation approved at a high level. Since Nathan was close to Herries, it can be inferred, too, that he was privy to the arrangement.

Disappointed researchers in secret areas do well to remember Castlereagh's famous reply to a Member of Parliament who questioned him on the subject of secret service money. If the honourable member wished to know how much had been spent on the secret service recently, he was welcome to the information, said the Foreign Secretary; 'but if he wished to know the particular details of how it was expended, it was rather an Irish proposition, for then it would be secret service money no longer'.<sup>22</sup> Too much must not be expected. Nevertheless, as research in The Rothschild Archive has shown, patience may be rewarded, if only by a glimpse of a hidden past.

## Notes

1. *Private Papers of British Diplomats 1782-1900* (The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1985), p. 65
2. Niall Ferguson, *The World's Banker* (London, 1998), p. 16
3. East Sussex Record Office: AMS. 6297/15
4. Rothschild Archive London: X1/T17/65
5. National Library of Scotland: MS. 6164, p. 727
6. Duff Cooper, *Talleyrand* (London, 1997), p. 284
7. The Hon. F. Leveson Gower (ed.), *The Letters of Harriet Countess Granville* (London, 1894), v. I, p. 67
8. National Library of Scotland: MS. 6175-6179; MS. 6182-6183; MS. 6196; MS. 6214
9. Coutts & Co. Account Books, Sir Charles Stuart; Elizabeth Sparrow, *Secret Service* (The Boydell Press, 1999) p. 44
10. National Library of Scotland: MS. 6165-6195
11. Coutts & Co. Accounts Books, Sir Charles Stuart
12. Elizabeth Sparrow, *Secret Service*, p. 54
13. Rothschild Archive London: X1/109/8
14. Ibid. X1/109/9
15. Ibid. X1/109/8
16. British Library: Add. MSS. 41533, f. 203
17. National Library of Scotland: MS. 6212
18. Rothschild Archive London: X1/109/8; Ibid. X1/109/9, Ibid. X1/T17/127
19. Niall Ferguson, *The World's Banker*, p. 164 ff
20. Rothschild Archive London: X1/T6/32
21. Coutts & Co. Account Books, Sir Charles Stuart
22. Hansard, 1822, v. 6, col. 1430