

Henrietta Maria, Political Intrigue, and Early Modern Diplomacy

In June 1631, thieves broke into the London home of a prominent French exile, François de Roches, chevalier de Jar, and stole a casket of papers from his desk.¹ While an apparently innocuous burglary, the incident quickly escalated into an international diplomatic scandal, with the French ambassador being implicated in the offence. The English court, already rife with factional politics, became entangled in an increasingly complicated series of events as Queen Henrietta Maria threw her weight behind the chevalier's cause.

In fact, the episode was deeply worrying to the queen, who was familiar with the contents of the stolen box. It contained letters linking her to a number of supporters at home and abroad who, under her leadership, were plotting the downfall of Lord Treasurer Weston in England and Cardinal Richelieu in France.² As she knew, the burglary had been carefully orchestrated by the French ambassador, the marquis de Fontenay-Mareuil, one of Richelieu's allies, in order to discover the identity of the plotters and their intentions.³ Fortunately for Henrietta Maria, the letters did not reveal the full extent of the intrigue and it was to be a further two years before it was brought to an end.

In the process, the queen was to send various trusted members of her household and political circle to carry out a series of official diplomatic and covert missions on the Continent to set the intrigue into motion. As the example of the stolen casket illustrates, the evidence for this plot resides primarily in the letters of the conspirators. By drawing on intercepted correspondence, diplomatic despatches and contemporary newsletters in English and French archives, it is possible to piece together the elements of Henrietta Maria's plot. Between 1630 and 1633, the queen's key supporters—such as Walter Montagu, Henry Jermyn, Sir George Goring and Henry, earl of Holland—were sent on numerous official and unofficial diplomatic journeys to France, the Spanish Netherlands, Savoy and Rome. Once there, they established a social network of friends and contacts which further aided their work by gathering information and placing allies in crucial political positions. As such, it is apparent that the European travels of Henrietta Maria's followers were not ancillary to the queen's scheme, but were the essential element on which the plot rested. Indeed, I will argue that her central strategy was to use the structures of early modern diplomacy to convey both individuals and information abroad in order to bring about the downfall of her enemies.

¹ The National Archives (hereafter TNA), State Papers (hereafter SP) 78/89, fol. 195.

² TNA SP 78/92, fol. 272.

³ TNA SP 78/89, fol. 195.

As I will show, this episode in Henrietta Maria's political career has important implications on how we view the sometimes neglected field of early modern diplomacy. It sheds light on the rather fluid roles of Caroline diplomatic agents, whose activities often spanned the spectrum from legitimate diplomatic responsibilities to covert political intriguing and spying. Furthermore, we can glimpse the establishment of a parallel diplomatic network under the patronage of a queen consort, which attempted to rival that of the king in policy and influence. This did much to establish Henrietta Maria as a strong political force with which English court factions and foreign powers had to reckon. The picture that emerges reminds us that the enterprise of early modern diplomacy was perhaps more complex in its purposes and varied in its participants than is often recognised.

I

The same elements that made it difficult for Cardinal Richelieu to unearth the intrigue despite the stolen papers make it a challenge to the historian. By the very nature of such a risky plot, most of the original letters of the conspirators are no longer in existence, while those that remain were highly encoded in cipher, frequently without author or date, and often only brought to light by those who intercepted the correspondence. This was acknowledged by the English secretary of state, Sir John Coke, who intercepted some of the incriminating letters. In his personal papers he recorded that they were written 'in obscure termes'.⁴ As such, a chronological narrative of the plot is often difficult to reconstruct.

Even so, the portions of the conspiracy that can be unravelled are fascinating. If one pieces together existing sources for 1631 a picture begins to emerge of a carefully orchestrated plot by Henrietta Maria's circle to remove the chief ministers of England and France. Much of the documentation for this scheme can still be found in the English National Archives and the French National Library. The letters housed there include the diplomatic missives of English diplomats in Paris and their French counterparts in London, as well as those of the ministers at both courts.⁵

The group of conspirators implicated in the chevalier de Jar's stolen letters had taken years to emerge as a cohesive unit. Although divided by gender, age, religion and nationality, they were united by friendship with the English queen and shared political leanings, particularly a mutual hatred for Cardinal Richelieu. Following Henrietta Maria's arrival in England in 1625 as the

⁴ TNA SP 78/92, fol. 272.

⁵ See TNA Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) 31/367 for transcriptions of French diplomatic dispatches; TNA SP 78/87-93; Archives des Affaires Etrangères (France) (hereafter AAE), Correspondance Politique—Angleterre (hereafter CPA), 45.

fifteen year old bride of Charles I, the queen spent her early years at the English court strengthening her relationship with the king and establishing a group of English followers.⁶ By focussing on building her court party, it is clear that Henrietta Maria had an eye toward increasing her political involvement from an early stage, although her objectives took longer to come into focus. This was a policy advocated by the French extraordinary ambassador, the marquis de Chateauneuf.⁷ As Louis XIII's representative in London from 1629-30, he strongly encouraged Henrietta Maria to take a greater political role at the English court.⁸ This advice was heeded and laid the foundation for an alliance between the queen and Chateauneuf that would extend into the mid 1630s.

The most prominent member of her early circle was the earl of Holland, a privy councillor to the king and the queen's steward from 1626.⁹ Yet he also had the diplomatic experience which was to prove so important to the queen's strategy for her plot. In 1623, Holland had been involved in Charles' abortive Spanish marriage negotiations and later was one of the two extraordinary ambassadors who oversaw the French match in 1625.¹⁰ Henrietta Maria's other key supporters had similar credentials. Sir George Goring, the queen's Master of the Horse, had been sent abroad by James I to Heidelberg in 1613 for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth, to France in 1616, to Scotland in 1617, and again to France in 1625 with the earl of Holland.¹¹ Walter Montagu, who did not hold office in the queen's household until exile yet was at the centre of her circle throughout the 1630s, had been employed on diplomatic missions in Paris in 1625. He had then spent significant amounts of time on the continent in 1627 and 1628 to negotiate an

⁶ Her earliest years at the English court were overshadowed by domestic problems—resulting in the deportation of her French attendants in 1626—and conflict with Charles and his favourite, the duke of Buckingham. However, Buckingham's 1628 assassination opened the way for the queen to emerge as the king's new favourite and to surround herself with a party of supporters left patron-less by the duke's demise. H.F. Brown and A.B. Hinds (eds), *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, 38 volumes (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1900-1947) (hereafter *CSPV*) volume dated 1628-29, 287; M. A. E. Green, John Bruce, et al (eds.) *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 27 volumes (London: Her Majesty's Stationer's Office, 1857-1897) (hereafter *CSPD*) vol. dated 1628-29, 391; British Library (hereafter BL) Additional Manuscripts (hereafter Add. MS) 35331, fol. 27. For a more detailed examination of these years, see Michelle Dobbie, 'The "Queen's Party": Henrietta Maria's Court Circle, 1625-1642' (PhD, University of Cambridge, 2009), 20-57.

⁷ *Historical Manuscript Commission* (hereafter *HMC*) *Report on the MSS of the Duke of Buccleuch MSS, Volume II, Number 6* (London: His Majesty's Stationer's Office, 1926), 346.

⁸ Charles de L'Aubespine, marquis de Chateauneuf was extraordinary ambassador to England from July 1629-30. See Madleine Haehl, *Les Affaires Étrangères au Temps de Richelieu* (Brussels: P.I.E-Peter Lang, 2006), 225; R. M. Smuts, 'The Puritan followers of Henrietta Maria in the 1630s', *The English Historical Review* 93.366 (Jan., 1978), 28-30.

⁹ Thomas Birch (ed.), *Court and Times of Charles I* 2 volumes (London: Henry Colburn, 1848), vol. 1, 140-1.

¹⁰ *CSPD 1623-25*, 203, 312, 340, 470.

¹¹ *CSPD 1628-29*, 218-19; *CSPV 1628-29*, 213; Barbara Donagan, 'Goring, George, first earl of Norwich (1585-1663)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11101>, accessed 16 July 2007].

alliance between England, Savoy and the Spanish in an effort to topple Richelieu from power.¹² Henry Jermyn, one of the gentlemen of the queen's privy chamber, had also travelled to France at the time of the marriage negotiations and subsequently as a diplomatic courier for the queen in 1627.¹³ Together these men became the core of the queen's court party in the 1630s and using their diplomatic experience, Henrietta Maria launched the three year intrigue against Weston and Richelieu that positioned her as a political player on European stage.

It was made possible by a convergence of events in these years that established a network between Henrietta Maria's supporters in England and those in the Spanish Netherlands and France. One of these events was the reinstatement of Marie Rohan, duchess of Chevreuse, to the French court. Her connections with influential persons in Europe were widespread, yet her consuming passion was to remove Richelieu from power.¹⁴ She was a close confidant of the French queen, Anne of Austria, but had suffered multiple exiles for plotting against Richelieu.¹⁵ Chevreuse's return to the French court in 1630 was brokered by Charles, Henrietta Maria, and other English friends.¹⁶ Ultimately, Richelieu allowed it in the hopes of gaining Anne of Austria's support, thus stripping the exiled Marie de Medicis of further allies in Paris.¹⁷

Not long after her recall, the marquis de Chateauneuf completed his embassy in England and also returned to France. His arrival was fortuitously timed in light of Michel de Marillac's removal from the post of Keeper of the Seals later that year.¹⁸ As Marillac's replacement, Chateauneuf was aptly positioned for his later involvement in the conspiracy.¹⁹

Another participant in the scheme to oust Richelieu and Weston was Abbot Alessandro Scaglia. A career diplomat from a prominent Savoyard family, Scaglia was known for his Spanish ties and long-standing dislike of Cardinal Richelieu. He had been a friend of Buckingham and was introduced to the duke's circle during Charles' and Henrietta Maria's marriage negotiations in

¹² Dobbie, 'Henrietta', chapter 1.

¹³ TNA PRO 3/3/65, fol. 97; CSPD 1627-28, 328; CSPV 1626-28, 297-8.

¹⁴ The duchess of Chevreuse was a personal friend of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, the earl of Holland, Duke Charles IV of Lorraine, and Anne of Austria. See Michael Prawdın, Marie de Rohan: Duchesse de Chevreuse (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971), 34-7, 46-7.

¹⁵ Louis Batiffol, La Journée Des Dupes (Paris: Hachette, 1925), 27, 116 ; AAE Mémoires et Documents (hereafter MD) 248, fols 221

¹⁶ Armand du Plessis, duc de Richelieu, 'Mémoires du Cardinal de Richelieu (1629-1635)' in J. P. Michaud (ed.) Nouvelle Collection des Mémoires Relatifs a L'Histoire de France depuis le XIII siecle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII siecle 34 volumes (Paris: Didier 1854) vol. 22, 87 ; TNA SP 78/86, fols 77, 79, 80.

¹⁷ Prawdın, Chevreuse, 54.

¹⁸ Armand du Plessis, duc de Richelieu, Les Papiers de Richelieu ed. Pierre Grillon, 6 volumes (Paris: A. Pedone, 1982-85) vol. 5, 694.

¹⁹ TNA SP 78/87, fols 386-7.

1625 and a mission to England in 1626.²⁰ He also worked particularly closely with Walter Montagu, one of Henrietta Maria's key supporters, in a failed attempt to topple Richelieu in 1627.²¹ His networking in the 1620s, particularly between Buckingham's clients and discontents such as the duchess of Chevreuse and chevalier de Jars brought together the key individuals who sought to oust Weston and Richelieu in 1633.

It appears that the intrigues of Henrietta Maria, her circle and the French discontents began to take coherent shape in 1631. As has been shown, a number of factors and individuals came together to make this possible. However, the initiator behind the plot seems to have been the duchess of Chevreuse, although this is difficult to substantiate definitely as little documentation has survived for the early days of the intrigue. Her reinstatement to the French court put her in the ideal position to plot against the cardinal.²² This was hardly a new undertaking for the duchess. However, in this instance it caught Richelieu completely off guard. By all accounts she appeared so changed towards the cardinal that rumours began to circulate at the French court that they were in love.²³ This seemed to be confirmed by the duchess' silence throughout the disagreements between Henrietta Maria's mother, Marie de Medici, and Richelieu. Chevreuse even refused to oppose Richelieu at the Day of Dupes, something completely out of character for the inveterate schemer.²⁴ However, her actual affections were centred on the new Garde des Sceaux, the marquis de Chateauneuf. He had been hand-picked for the position in November 1630 for his loyalty to the cardinal. Yet, according to one court observer, that allegiance did not withstand the seduction of Marie de Rohan.²⁵

By becoming involved with Chateauneuf, the duchess gained a strategic ally in her plot. As one of the highest officials in the French government, a trusted supporter of Richelieu and recent ambassador to England, the marquis had access to all the resources necessary to bring about the cardinal's downfall. The most important of these was the ability to pass correspondence between France, England and the Spanish Netherlands without undue suspicion. It was this capability that allowed the plot to take shape while leaving the documentary trail that we can follow today.

²⁰ Toby Osborne, *Dynasty and Diplomacy in the Court of Savoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106.

²¹ CSPV 1626-28, 168; Richelieu, 'Mémoires (1629-35)', 88.

²² TNA PRO 31/3/67, f. 32.

²³ Prawdin, *Chevreuse*, 54.

²⁴ Batiffol, *Chevreuse*, 137.

²⁵ Françoise Bertaut de Motteville, *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville Sur Anne D'Austrich et Sa Court*, 4 volumes (Paris: G. Charpentier et cie, 1886) vol. 1, 50-1; Victor Cousin, *Madame de Chevreuse* (Paris: Perrin, 1886), 94-5.

II

Initially, Henrietta Maria had focussed her attentions on Lord Treasurer Richard Weston, who led the rival Spanish party at the English court.²⁶ He was disliked not only for his penny-pinching financial policies and Hispanophile leanings, but also for his attempts to supplant the queen as royal favourite. The dangers of such an opponent were easily perceived by Henrietta Maria. After an abortive attempt in November 1630, the queen and her circle extended their schemes to include not only the removal of Weston from power, but also Cardinal Richelieu in France.²⁷

The expansion of the intrigues to include the French cardinal revealed the growing dynastic interests of the English queen. If Charles did not agree with them, he certainly could understand them. Both he and his father had made the recovery of the Palatinate for his brother-in-law, Frederick V, a focus of international policy since 1620.²⁸ For Henrietta Maria, dynastic politics translated into a consuming desire to oust Richelieu in the 1630s. During 1625 and 1626, he had been a hopeful saviour to rescue her from the wiles of the English and restore her French servants.²⁹ However, by 1633, she had launched a full-scale, international scheme to remove the French minister from power.

The roots of this hatred for the cardinal can be attributed to the ramifications of the Day of Dupes in France. Taking place between 10 and 12 November 1630, this event was the culmination of the political battles between Richelieu and Marie de Medici for Louis XIII's favour.³⁰ The events of that day are too well-known and recorded to be repeated in detail here. However, the outcome of the queen mother's attempt to force Louis XIII to dismiss his chief minister was failure.³¹

This was the context in which Henrietta Maria found herself in the early 1630s. While the queen was in the process of building an English court circle, her family's feud culminated in exile for the queen mother and the heir to the French throne (Henrietta Maria's brother, Gaston d'Orléans). It appeared to the queen that the perpetrator of these evils was her brother's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu: to eliminate him would be to eradicate the source of her family's troubles. In fact, her dislike of the cardinal built on a deep distrust of royal favourites in general. As Lloyd Moote has shown, there were many similarities between chief ministers throughout

²⁶ Smuts, 'Puritan', 31.

²⁷ CSPD 1625-49, 381-2.

²⁸ Geoffrey Parker, (ed) *The Thirty Years' War*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 55; See also Brennan C. Pursell, *Winter King: Frederick V of the Palatinate and the coming of the Thirty Years' War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 224-5, 236-8.

²⁹ Charles Baillon, *Henriette-Marie de France, reine d'Angleterre* (Paris: Didier, 1877), 348.

³⁰ Georges Mongrédien, *La Journée des Dupes* (Paris : Gallimard, 1961), 65-6.

³¹ TNA State Papers (hereafter SP) 78/87, fol. 376.

Europe during the seventeenth-century.³² These ‘minister-favourites’, whether Spain’s Olivares, England’s Buckingham, Sweden’s Oxenstierna or France’s Richelieu, all rose in power because of relatively weak kings and the incessant European wars of the period.³³ With recollections of Buckingham still fresh in Henrietta Maria’s memory, Richelieu’s recent actions confirmed her suspicion of chief ministers in general. This, in turn included Lord Treasurer Richard Weston who gained popularity with Charles I during the early 1630s.³⁴ And it is in the intrigues against Richelieu and Weston between 1630 and 1633 that Henrietta Maria’s use of diplomatic channels—official and unofficial—emerges.

Knowing that Henrietta Maria already had schemed against Lord Treasurer Weston and taken the side of her mother in the Day of Dupes, the duchess of Chevreuse elicited her friend’s support for a plot to oust Weston and Richelieu simultaneously. It seems that the intrigue was hatched by Madame de Chevreuse in early 1631 during the queen mother’s house arrest in Compiègne. However, it was solidified by Abbot Scaglia in July 1631. At that time, he travelled from France to London on an unknown mission. He purported to make the journey in order to mediate between Marie de Medici, Gaston d’Orléans and Louis XIII.³⁵ Nevertheless, everyone—including the cardinal—suspected that he had secret instructions from the Spanish to organise an anti-Richelieu alliance. The English ambassador in Paris wrote that ‘the going of Abbate Scaglia into England doth trouble these people more then the retrait of the Queen and Monsieur’.³⁶ Scaglia’s favourable reception by Henrietta Maria confirmed the cardinal’s fears. Furthermore, the French ambassador in London wrote that the abbot held secret meetings for several days with Madame de Vantelet.³⁷ This worried the French because Vantelet was a veteran lady-in-waiting to Henrietta Maria and an avowed enemy of the cardinal.³⁸ When the abbot left in March 1631, the purpose of his mission was still a mystery. However, as he went into self-imposed exile in Brussels and attempted to become an accredited Spanish envoy to Marie de Medici’s exiled court, there was little doubt as to his political loyalties.³⁹

³² Moote, ‘Richelieu’, 19, 23-24, 38.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ BL Add. MS 35331, f. 29.

³⁵ Osborne, ‘Chimeres’, 150; There is some indication that the scheming against Richelieu began earlier in the disagreements with the queen mother, before the Day of Dupes in November 1630. A secret message proposed an anti-Richelieu partnership between the duke of Savoy and noble French discontents in early 1630. The discontents’ plan was that Savoy would offer an alliance with France on the following condition: Savoy would abandon its ties with the Habsburgs in Mantua only if Richelieu was removed from power. While the proposal came to nothing, it shows the nascent political ties between French courtiers and Savoy in attempts to oust the cardinal. See TNA SP 78/88, fols 376-7.

³⁶ TNA SP 78/89, fols 349-52.

³⁷ TNA PRO 31/3/67, fol. 36.

³⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale de France (hereafter BnF) MS Français 3692, fols 48-50.

³⁹ Osborne, ‘Chimeres’, 156.

It soon became Henrietta Maria's policy to use diplomatic channels as her method of communication to the members of the intrigue in France. From this point forward, Henrietta Maria appears to have taken the reins of both the strategy and aims of the cabal. Numerous dispatches during the next two years testify that Montagu and others were 'bring[ing] orders and letters fro[m] the Queen...'⁴⁰ To that end, it was decided 'for the servants of a king in neer place: intrusted w[i]th affaires, & sume not only of his councel but of his select confidents, to keep entercourse by cipher w[i]th the ministers of other Princes...and to intertaine this correspondence, *without his M[ajesties] allowance or knowledge*.'⁴¹ In order to do so, the queen sought to persuade Charles to appoint the men in her circle to extraordinary embassies abroad, which would give them access to diplomatic couriers and the ability to meet without undue suspicion.⁴² This tactic met with some success. Secretary Coke, who intercepted some of the correspondence, noted that 'the entercourse is not casual, nor upon occasion, but ordinarie and by continual weekly packets and by persons of confidence and secrecie most part the curriers of a foren state, particular servants sent express or by frends.'⁴³

In January 1631, the Venetian ambassador in London reported that Walter Montagu attempted to obtain the appointment of ordinary ambassador to France, with the support of Chateauneuf because they both belonged 'to the party opposed to the treasurer [i.e. Weston]'.⁴⁴ Although this failed, it provides a glimpse of the developing cabal against the two ministers. In addition, the participants had to maintain a careful game of deception with the cardinal. So, in May 1631, Montagu was sent to France as extraordinary ambassador to inform Louis XIII that England refused assistance to Gaston's rebellion.⁴⁵ Furthermore, during the embassy Montagu delivered secret letters from Henrietta Maria to Chateauneuf.⁴⁶ The following month, Montagu's servant, John Scanderet, was sent to Paris as a diplomatic courier to Ambassador Wake. However, Wake wrote that 'he had an other paquet addressed unto the Garde des Seaux [Chateauneuf], the speedy delivery whereof he did presse so farre as if that were the principall and mine onely

⁴⁰ TNA SP 78/88, fols 200, 362; TNA SP 78/92, fol. 272.

⁴¹ TNA SP 78/92, fol. 271. Emphasis the author's.

⁴² TNA SP 78/92, fol. 272.

⁴³ TNA SP 78/92, fol. 271.

⁴⁴ CSPV 1629-32, 464.

⁴⁵ TNA PRO 31/3/67, fols 2-3 ; AAE MD 252, fols 168-9; Richelieu, *Papiers*, VI, 225.

⁴⁶ TNA SP 78/89, fol. 151 in which Monsieur de Bouthillier, secretary of state, seems to have suspected that a scheme was being hatched through the correspondence. He told Sir Isaac Wake, English ordinary ambassador to France, that 'ces gens peuvent bien brouiller les affaires, mais ils ne les avanceront jamais' ('these people can stir up matters well, but they will never advance them').

the accessorie.⁴⁷ It seems that a reply was sent to Montagu in the return English diplomatic packet to London.⁴⁸

At the same time, the earl of Holland sought employment as English extraordinary ambassador to the queen mother in the Spanish Netherlands.⁴⁹ Little imagination is needed to understand why Henrietta Maria wished to place members of her circle at courts of France and the Spanish Netherlands. When this failed to succeed, the queen made plans to try to have the 'Erle of Hollande journey into France and how it should bee continued under color of imploiment.'⁵⁰

By July 1631 Chateauneuf was joined in France by chevalier de Jars, a compatriot whom he had befriended during his embassy in England. Importantly, they were introduced by Henrietta Maria and united by a mutual dislike of the English Lord Treasurer.⁵¹ Furthermore, de Jars was a former co-conspirator against Richelieu with Chateauneuf's new paramour, the duchess of Chevreuse. As such, it was through the marquis that Louis XIII pardoned de Jars and allowed him to return to France in 1631.⁵² On his arrival in July 1631, he was quickly pulled into Chateauneuf's orbit. The English ambassador in Paris wrote that 'The Garde des Seaux doth make very much of him both in publique and private'.⁵³ With Chateauneuf's support, de Jars gained influence at the French court. It was not long before the two asked Louis XIII to make de Jars ambassador to England in the place of the alienated marquis de Fontenay.⁵⁴ While this appeared a logical choice for the French court, it was a strategic move for the plotters. In their covert letters to one another, they pointed out the advantages of obtaining the post of ambassador for de Jars. One benefit was that it would have eliminated the snooping of the present French ambassador in England into Henrietta Maria's activities. In addition, it would have allowed easy correspondence between the conspirators: Madame de Chevreuse apparently had letters 'w[hi]ch for secrecie shee would have carried by de Jars himself for feere of accidents'.⁵⁵ However, in the longer term de Jars would have allowed 'letters to be gotten from the Queen to Chasteauneuf'.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ TNA SP 78/89, fol. 212.

⁴⁸ TNA SP 78/89, fols 212, 242.

⁴⁹ TNA PRO 31/3/67, fol. 36.

⁵⁰ TNA SP 78/92, fol. 272.

⁵¹ CSPV 1629-32, 527; TNA PRO 31/3/66, fol. 49.

⁵² TNA SP 78/89, fols 257, 281.

⁵³ TNA SP 78/89, fols 327-30.

⁵⁴ Henrietta Maria had succeeded in alienating Fontenay-Mareuil from court affection because she blamed him for the burgling of Jars' papers. Until he left, it was noted that 'her majesty never assented him a gracious look that myght tell shee had forgotten her interest in du Jars sufference...' See Sir John Finet, *Ceremonies of Charles I: The Note Books of John Finet 1628-1641* ed. Albert J. Loomie (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987) 104-6; TNA SP 78/90, fol. 514.

⁵⁵ TNA SP 78/91, fols 234-6; 78/92, fol. 272.

⁵⁶ TNA SP 78/92, fol. 272.

The political purposes behind the attempt to make de Jars ambassador were not overlooked by the circle's opponents. In fact, this may have prevented him from obtaining the appointment. Whatever the reason, Fontenay wrote that Weston was greatly alarmed at the prospect of de Jars' coming, indicating his knowledge of the intrigues against him.⁵⁷

This alarm was shared by Richelieu. It seems that the minister-favourite's suspicions, ever acute, were slowly growing with regard to de Jars and members of Henrietta Maria's circle. His memoirs indicate that he suspected an alliance was underway between the Habsburgs, Spain, Lorraine, the queen of France, and Gaston d'Orléans, with attempts to draw England and Savoy in, as well.⁵⁸ However, it does not appear that he grasped the full extent of the plot against him in 1632. Nevertheless, with knowledge of their mutual political vulnerability, Richelieu proposed an unorthodox alliance: he wrote to the English Lord Treasurer and suggested that they carry on a correspondence for their mutual political safety. Despite divergent policies, nationalities, and temperaments, the ministers recognized the wisdom of the old adage that there is 'safety in numbers'. The proposal itself is evidence of the unconventional nature of the agreement between the two men. Richelieu's communications were conveyed furtively by Sir Isaac Wake, English ambassador in France. He wrote to Weston:

The Cardinale de Richelieu doth conceive that it is necessary for the good of all Christendom in this conjuncture...that such Ministers as have principall part in the direction of the affayres of their Majesties should hold strict intelligence together, & concurre unanimously not onely to the common good, but to the individual preservation of each other in their charges & places against all supplantation of private enemyes who do, or may envye their greatnes.⁵⁹

So it was that the two ministers embarked on an association that continued until Weston's death in 1635.⁶⁰ During that time they exchanged letters approximately once every two months, a testament to the fear that they had for their safety.

These concerns had been further confirmed not long before Weston and Richelieu entered into their agreement. As recounted previously, de Jars' house had been broken into and a casket of papers stolen from his desk only a short time before his return to France in 1631. According to de Jars' maid, they had been stolen by servants of Ambassador Fontenay who had entered the

⁵⁷ TNA PRO 31/3/67, fol. 57.

⁵⁸ Richelieu, 'Mémoires (1629-1635)', 379.

⁵⁹ TNA SP 78/89, fol. 380; TNA SP 78/90, fol. 27.

⁶⁰ These letters can be found in the English National Archives and in the French Foreign Affairs Archive. See TNA PRO 31/3/66, fol. 165; TNA SP 78/90, fols 27, 132-3; AAE CPA 45, fols 111, 120, 123, 137, 163, 224, 244, 271.

house in his absence under pretence of other business. When the chevalier discovered his loss, he strongly remonstrated to the queen and king of England for the return of his papers. The incident caused a great scandal at court and Fontenay came under increasing pressure to justify his actions.⁶¹ The matter continued to escalate as both men attempted to gain the upper hand in a struggle of the highest stakes. For de Jars, the fact that the stolen papers were related to the cabal against Richelieu and Weston did nothing to alleviate his fears.⁶² He and his supporters (particularly Henrietta Maria) were infuriated at Fontenay's audacity in openly stealing the papers and then claiming diplomatic immunity for his servants.⁶³ Furthermore, they rightly suspected that the French ambassador's actions were at the behest of Richelieu. The situation was still unresolved when de Jars returned to France, necessitating continued negotiations by the English ambassador.⁶⁴

Thus, it appears that by 1632, Richelieu was aware of intrigues against him, yet waited for more evidence to emerge. He allowed madame de Chevreuse and de Jars to return to France, perhaps as a way to keep a closer watch on them. Moreover, he used Ambassador Fontenay and his friend, Lord Treasurer Weston, as his eyes and ears in England. In late 1632, his suspicions of his trusted servant, Chateauneuf, were aroused and the cardinal placed spies to report on his actions. A letter from the duchess of Chevreuse made the marquis aware of the situation: '...he is spying on us, both you and me...'⁶⁵

As such, Richelieu watched and waited as members of Henrietta Maria's circle travelled to France. Walter Montagu and Henry Jermyn travelled to France twice each in 1632. Montagu went to negotiate about the disputes over Port Réal in Canada and the payment of the rest of the queen's dowry in January 1632.⁶⁶ A month later, it seems that the two men were involved in a covert mission abroad, as they were paid large sums later in the year for 'secret service' carried out in February.⁶⁷ In October, Jermyn found himself in France to carry royal condolences to Queen Anne about the fall from her coach.⁶⁸ Throughout these journeys the men conveyed

⁶¹ Finet, *Ceremonies*, 104-6.

⁶² Although the casket contained letters from chief intriguers against both ministers, including Madame Vantelet, Montagu, Chateauneuf, de Jars, and the queen mother, they primarily concerned Weston, rather than Richelieu. This may account for Richelieu's decision not to act against the plotters at this time. See AAE CPA 45, fol. 237.

⁶³ TNA SP 78/89, fol. 195.

⁶⁴ TNA SP 78/91, fols 298-9.

⁶⁵ Prawdin, *Chevreuse*, 68.

⁶⁶ CSPD 1631-33, 260; TNA PRO 31/3/67, fols 70, 73.

⁶⁷ These sums were not insignificant: Montagu was paid £2,000 and Jermyn £400. See TNA E 403/2751, fols 131, 432.

⁶⁸ TNA SP 78/92, fols 157, 185; TNA LR 5/65; Birch, *Court*, I, 176.

messages between the conspirators.⁶⁹ Furthermore, they schemed to have Holland sent to France in order that he might hold conference with the conspirators in person.⁷⁰ Yet, simultaneously Holland, Montagu, and Vantelet audaciously assured the cardinal of their loyalty towards him.⁷¹

Sometime during 1632, a further meeting was planned between key members of the conspiracy. Holland and Montagu hoped to journey to Paris via Calais and Amiens in order to meet in person to discuss the plot.⁷² It may be that they were beginning to become aware that their letters were being intercepted by Secretary Coke. About this time Coke wrote that it would be desirable 'to cut off[f] this intercourse', but fails to explain in further detail how it would be done.⁷³

Nevertheless, events overtook any plans to quietly end the plot through English disruption of the correspondence. The plotters' fatal mistake occurred in November 1632 when Cardinal Richelieu fell seriously ill in Bordeaux. As he grew worse, his death appeared imminent, and the duchess of Chevreuse and Queen Anne did little to hide their joy. The French queen threw a ball while the cardinal seemed to be on his death-bed and Chateauneuf made the grave error of attending.⁷⁴ When Richelieu surprisingly recovered, he knew who his enemies were. He travelled to Paris in January 1633 and conferred with the king, who also had noticed Chateauneuf's decided lack of concern over the minister-favourite's illness.⁷⁵ Although the Keeper of the Seals gave excuses for his conduct, his chilly reception at court foreshadowed the disgrace that awaited him. On 25 February 1633, Chateauneuf was arrested, stripped of his office, and his papers taken from him.⁷⁶ The loss of the papers, which implicated all the conspirators, included over fifty letters from Madame de Chevreuse, Chevalier de Jars, the earl of Holland, Montagu, Puylaurens (chief minister to Gaston d'Orléans), the duke of Vendôme,

⁶⁹ Many of these were intercepted by Secretary Coke who deciphered and recorded their content. See TNA SP 78/92, fols 271-3.

⁷⁰ TNA SP 78/91, fols 234-6.

⁷¹ TNA PRO 31/3/67, fols 48-9.

⁷² TNA SP 78/92, fol. 273.

⁷³ TNA SP 78/92, fol. 273.

⁷⁴ H. Noel Williams, A Fair Conspirator: Marie de Rohan Duchesse de Chevreuse (New York: Scribner, 1913), pp. 101-2.

⁷⁵ Cousin quotes a dispatch between the minister of finance, Bullion, and Richelieu in which Bullion writes: 'Le roi est en extrême colère contre 64 (Chateauneuf) de ce qu'il vous a quitté, et cinquante fois m'en a témoigné une extrême indignation'. ('The king is very angry with Chateauneuf for leaving you, and has witnessed his extreme indignation fifty times.') Quote from Cousin, Chevreuse, 394.

⁷⁶ AAE MD 253, fols 151-2; BnF Clairambault 745, fol. 146.

and Henrietta Maria.⁷⁷ It was the final blow to the plot and caused the arrest of Chevalier de Jars some days later.⁷⁸

When the news of the arrests broke in England, it caused no shortage of court gossip. However, Charles did not move against the queen's circle. While sentences were handed out against the conspirators in France, the English court remained relatively calm.⁷⁹ It certainly heightened the animosity of court factions, but the king appeared to turn a blind eye. Perhaps he wished to draw attention away from his wife's involvement in the international intrigue. Possibly, he believed that the plot was aimed primarily at Richelieu, instead of the Lord Treasurer. Or maybe the evidence was not yet clear in England as to the intrigues of the queen's circle. Whatever the case, Charles had not acted before Henrietta Maria's party was involved in another court scandal.

In April the tensions between the queen's circle and that of the Lord Treasurer spilled over into an attempted duel between her men and the Lord Treasurer's son, Jerome Weston. Many at court predicted that the men would receive harsh punishments for their deeds as the queen's petitions did little to allay the king's anger. In fact, the French ambassador commented that there was some alarm for the queen's pregnancy as she feared the ruin of her men.⁸⁰ However, it seems that some days under arrest and full letters of apology brought about reconciliation. All of the perpetrators sent confessions to the king, the Lord Treasurer, and the younger Weston.⁸¹ Consequently, despite expectations of ruin, about a week later the men were pardoned.⁸²

III

This brief episode in the history of the queen's party illustrates a number of characteristics of early modern diplomacy. First, Henrietta Maria's activities in the early 1630s show that the diplomatic enterprise was perhaps more multifaceted in terms of gender in the early modern era than has previously been acknowledged. This is obviously an area that needs much further

⁷⁷ Cousin, Chevreuse, p. 96. Although consulted in the nineteenth-century and quoted extensively by Cousin, these letters have since been lost. I am grateful to Professor Malcolm Smuts for discussion of this point.

⁷⁸ CSPV 1632-36, 82-3.

⁷⁹ Chateaufort was put under house arrest that lasted until Richelieu's death in 1643. Jars was condemned to death until his sentence was commuted to permanent imprisonment. For accounts of the arrests and interrogations see Motteville, Mémoires, I, 52-3, 56; Richelieu, Papiers, VI, 726-7; TNA SP 78/94, fols 303-4. Madame Chevreuse escaped relatively lightly, banished to Dampierre and Tours for four years. See TNA SP 78. 93, ff. 179-80; Leopold von Ranke, History of England Principally in the Seventeenth Century 6 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), vol. 2, 147.

⁸⁰ TNA PRO 31/3/67, fol. 88.

⁸¹ CSPD 1625-49, 491; CSPD 1633-34, 15; HMC Ninth Report, Appendix XXII, Salisbury MSS (London: His Majesty's Stationer's Office, 1910), 274-5.

⁸² CSPV 1632-36, 100; Gazettes, 210.

exploration. Although *formal* channels of diplomacy were almost exclusively confined to the male gender, Henrietta Maria shows that there were roles—albeit limited ones—for queen consorts and even noble women within the broader diplomatic context.

Secretary Coke's records of the intercepted correspondence of the queen's circle during their intrigues against Richelieu are very revealing. They show Henrietta Maria's intimate involvement in the details of the plot and her leadership in using diplomatic channels to send her co-conspirators abroad.⁸³ The queen's docquet books also reveal that Henrietta Maria paid Montagu for sending a man into France 'at o[u]r direction'.⁸⁴ This was undoubtedly related to the plots as it coincided with Montagu's journeys to France to meet with the conspirators. Furthermore, little is done to hide the fact that Montagu and Jermyn went to France during this time 'onely in the name of the Queen'.⁸⁵ This unusual diplomatic status is confirmed by Secretary Dorchester to the English agents in France. He told them that 'Mr Montague, who though he be principally employed by the Queen yet you will well conceive the king and she understand one another; and so his Majesty requires you and Mr. Montague should doe and ionctly advance both theyr Majestys services in that court'.⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that Dorchester took such pains to explain Montagu's and Jermyn's diplomatic accreditation. It was almost unparalleled for a queen consort in early modern Europe to send envoys in an official yet separate capacity from the king.

By securing embassies and missions for Holland, Montagu and Jermyn, the queen revealed that she had significant influence over the selection of diplomats at the English court. This was not an insignificant role in the early modern era when the choice of the ambassador played a large part in the success or failure of a diplomatic mission. And in fact, by 1636, Henrietta Maria's activities extended to the creation of completely separate channels of diplomacy from that of her husband, including sending and receiving envoys from Rome. In addition to the queen, the part played by the duchess of Chevreuse in Henrietta Maria's plot shows that noble women could mastermind political intrigues, aid foreign diplomats with court connections and information and play complex games of political deception.

Nevertheless, what is perhaps of more significance in this account is the growing acceptance of diplomatic immunity for accredited ambassadors in Europe, despite the absence of any national

⁸³ TNA SP 78/91, fols 234-6; TNA SP 78/92, fols 271-3.

⁸⁴ National Library of Wales, Wynnstey Manuscripts 174; TNA LR 5/64.

⁸⁵ TNA SP 78/88, fol. 362.

⁸⁶ TNA SP 78/88, fol. 200.

laws to that effect.⁸⁷ François de Callières, an ambassador to Holland under Louis XIV and author of an early treatise on diplomacy, affirmed this when he wrote, 'If princes had a right to proceed against a foreign minister who negotiates with them he would never be in safety, because those who would have a mind to get rid of him, would never want pretexts for colouring such a resolution.'⁸⁸ While there were violations of these diplomatic protocols, the unspoken law of reciprocity—in which monarchs extended a range of privileges to foreign ambassadors so that their own envoys would receive the same treatment—to a large extent guaranteed fair treatment for diplomats.⁸⁹ Charles I wrote to this end in a royal order, dated 12 April 1635: '[H]is Majesty is careful not to have any just privileges of the Ambassadors infringed'.⁹⁰

The growing strength of early modern diplomatic immunities is strongly supported by Henrietta Maria's strategies to place her men at various European courts in legitimate, accredited ambassadorial roles as a cover for their intriguing activities. She recognized that Holland, Montagu, Jermyn, and de Jars would be better protected from foreign prosecution as ordinary or extraordinary ambassadors. As Montagu had already spent four and a half months in the Bastille in 1627 and 1628 in the process of plotting against Richelieu for Buckingham, immunity was an important aspect of the success of the queen's scheme.⁹¹ We also see France's recognition of this diplomatic protocol in the incident of Fontenay's servants stealing de Jar's papers. Clearly, Richelieu also depended on the strength of diplomatic immunity when he ordered the raid on de Jars' house and expecting his underlings to escape prosecution.

Not only was the diplomatic immunity of the ambassador himself apparent in the queen's intriguing, but also that of diplomatic despatches. While this protocol was also often violated, its existence is evidenced by Henrietta Maria's plan to use diplomatic packets and couriers as the primary mode of communicating between the plotters. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of such

⁸⁷ Holland was a notable exception to this rule. See E.R. Adair, The Exterritoriality of Ambassadors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1929), 295.

⁸⁸ François de Callières, The Art of Diplomacy ed. H.M.A. Keens-Soper and Karl W. Schweizer (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), 122.

⁸⁹ The law of reciprocity was an ad hoc way to trying to mesh two rival legal systems in existence in early modern Europe (territorial law and Roman/civil law). Territorial law emphasized the supremacy of the sovereign to determine the laws of his land and the necessity of all residents (including foreigners) to obey it. However, civil law stressed the ambassador as the prince in proxy. As such, the territorial sovereign actually desired civil law abroad for his own benefit. This led to an unsaid agreement in which kings allowed visiting ambassador rights of immunity reciprocally. Zouch wrote to this effect, saying 'that the privileges of ambassadors proceed not from the Law of Nature, but from the consent of the nations.' See Adair, Exterritoriality, 10, 30.

⁹⁰ CSPD 1635, 21.

⁹¹ TNA SP 78/82, fol. 207; CSPV 1626-28, 526-7; CSPD 1628-29, 81; HMC Tenth Report, Appendix I, Skrine MSS (Salvetti Correspondence) (London: Her Majesty's Stationer's Office, 1887), 146.

letters to interception was notorious throughout Europe and it is unsurprising that English officials first became aware of the plot through such methods.⁹²

However, a system of diplomatic immunity based on protocol rather than law had its strengths and weaknesses. Because there was no law defining the extent or limits of diplomatic immunity, there were gaping holes that could be manipulated by the host country or the visiting diplomat. For instance, silence on the question of diplomatic immunity for the household and servants of ambassadors allowed Fontenay's servants to get away with burgling de Jars' house, despite pressure for an explanation from the English crown. And yet, operating under the law of reciprocity, the host kingdom was often reticent to prosecute foreign diplomats who were clearly involved in questionable activities because their own agents often acted with equal duplicity. Overall, this lack of definition infused the diplomatic enterprise with a fluidity that could encompass everything from legitimate diplomatic responsibilities to covert intriguing and spying, as seen in Henrietta Maria's intrigues between 1630 and 1633.

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⁹² TNA SP 78/91, fols 234-6; TNA SP 78/92, fols 271-3.