Cryptology and statecraft in the Dutch Republic

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Citation for published version (APA):

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The Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic and the Seven Years’ War, 1751–63

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Using mainly primary sources, this article looks first at the complicated framework of the Dutch state and its foreign policy during the period under investigation, tracing the roots of the Black Chamber and its first results with regard to the Prussian codes. It then attempts to explain how and why the first French codes were broken and shows under what conditions the Black Chamber acquired permanent status. Finally the article investigates the scope and limits of its success.

In *The Codebreakers*, a famous book on the history of cryptography, David Kahn devotes a whole chapter to the predecessors of the modern ‘signal intelligence units’: the so-called ‘Black Chambers’. During the early modern period these entities were usually located in a separate quarter of the General Post Office. Their main task was the opening, copying and, ultimately, decoding of letters of foreign diplomats. They consisted of a small team of clerks with superior language skills, professional forgers of seals and trained cryptanalysts who, more often than not, transferred their arcane knowledge from one generation to the next.¹ These Black Chambers, although not without precedents in earlier periods, were basically an eighteenth-century phenomenon. The War of the Spanish Succession apparently left few major European powers without one and these units continued to operate well into the nineteenth century, leaving their mark on much of contemporary warfare and diplomacy. For that reason alone, it seems justified to treat them as part and parcel of the European state system of that era, including the Napoleonic period and beyond.²

The history of these Black Chambers has still in large measure to be written. The impact of these bodies has seldom been treated in general works of political history in more than a marginal way, nor has any explanation for their rise ever been sought.³ Particularly

Diplomacy & Statecraft, Vol.10, No.1 (March 1999), pp.1–30
PUBLISHED BY FRANK CASS, LONDON
interesting in this respect is the question of in what way the emergence of a Black Chamber in one country enhanced a similar development in another.

The whole nature of the enterprise probably prohibited any direct exchange of information, but it seems unlikely that these parallel developments in so many countries in roughly the same period should have occurred by chance alone. The only way one can hope to tackle the problem is by undertaking a number of case studies and singling out the factors that were decisive for their emergence and their decline. This article focuses on the Dutch Republic during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Dutch acquired a Black Chamber of their own only in 1751 and it had already been shut down by 1803, much earlier than was the case in the rest of Europe. It shows that even a power without any political ambition other than staying out of conflict could not do without one and it makes us wonder to what purpose it was installed and, particularly, what its impact had been on Dutch foreign policy.

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Except for the introductory paragraph, this article is mainly based on primary sources, the foremost being the vast volumes of intercepted letters in the archives of the Fagel family and the archives of Stadholder Willem V. These were supplemented with the notes of Pierre Lyonet and Samuel Egbert Croiset regarding their work as code breakers and some related correspondence in the archives of Princess Anne of Hanover, Willem Bentinck van Rhoon, Hendrik Fagel in The Hague, and those of Ambassador Joseph Yorke, his Secretary of State, the Duke of Newcastle, and his under-secretaries in London. Dutch historiography has largely neglected the subject. Around the middle of the nineteenth century an article was published by K.J. de Jonge that revealed the existence of the Dutch Black Chamber and pointed to the importance of the large collection of intercepted letters for the study of Dutch foreign policy. At around
the same period, a piece in a literary magazine was written by A. Ising about his ancestor Pierre Lyonet, the Black Chamber’s principal collaborator, and his difficult position in the state bureaucracy. In 1912 one important series of intercepted letters, those written by the Prussian Ambassador Thulemeyer were scrutinized by H.J. Colenbrander, compared with the original letters in Berlin and subsequently published. Colenbrander professed his admiration for the accuracy of Lyonet’s solutions without fully understanding the effort it took to get them because he presumed that the ambassadors’ code-book remained the same for more than 20 years. In reality, however, the Prussian code-books changed every few years, as we shall see, and Lyonet had to prove his ability to break them over and over again. In 1942, W.J.M. Benschop, an authority on the history of the Dutch Post Office, wrote a fine article about the interception of letters at the Post Office in The Hague, how it was done, by whom and, particularly, how it was financed. Lyonet and his collaborator, S.E. Croiset, are mentioned repeatedly but their contribution as codebreakers is not given attention because the author did not feel able to say anything in this respect. Finally, in 1962, a biography was published by W.H. van Seters about Pierre Lyonet. The focus of this book is on Lyonet’s activities as a member of the scientific community, although some attention was paid to other aspects of his life, including his work as a translator, a cipher clerk and a code breaker. However, in the field that matters to us most, this book is a little disappointing because it takes Lyonet’s own statements for granted. All contributions have in common that they make no effort to explain why the Black Chamber was called into existence in the first place and in none of them is an account given of its successes and failures.

Dutch Foreign Policy after the War of the Austrian Succession

In 1715 the War of the Spanish Succession had left the Dutch Republic with a huge national debt and the obligation to maintain a barrier of fortresses in the Southern Netherlands to counter a possible French attack on the Low Countries. The outcome of the war had made clear that the Republic had little to gain in any major political conflict and it therefore embarked cautiously on a course of
neutrality, relying for its independence on a balance of power that was the result of the continuing rivalry between Austria and France and the willingness of Great Britain to support it.\(^\text{10}\)

The War of the Austrian Succession that broke out in 1740 between Austria and Britain on the one side and France, Bavaria and Prussia on the other put the Dutch Republic in a difficult position. The Dutch were obliged to defend the Austrian Netherlands in case of a French attack without any formal declaration of war, whereas its neutrality was ‘guaranteed’ by Great Britain.\(^\text{11}\) Naturally, this situation could only last as long as the French were willing to tolerate it. In 1746 this was no longer the case. France launched an offensive that conquered most of the Southern Netherlands and directly threatened the Dutch Republic itself. This could only be halted by a combined Anglo-Dutch campaign under the command of the Duke of Cumberland, one of the younger brothers of George II.\(^\text{12}\)

The main consequences of the war, however, lay in the field of domestic politics. The oligarchy of rich merchants and bankers that controlled the Dutch town councils and, consequently, the public affairs in the Republic as a whole, had tried to avoid open war by a policy of appeasement and was now held responsible by the mob for failure to reach its objective. This wealthy elite had suddenly to fear for its physical safety and was desperate to find a way out. This was offered by the arrival of Prince William IV of Orange in The Hague and his elevation to the dignity of hereditary Stadholder. This prince, a relative, but not a descendant of Stadholder-King William III, already held this office in the northern and eastern provinces of the Dutch Republic and he was expected, like his illustrious predecessor, to be able to unite the whole country against the French invaders, from both a social and a geographical point of view. Formally the Stadholders, mere commanders of the army and the navy, had always been servants of the states-provincial in each province, bodies consisting of representatives of the nobility and important towns that wielded sovereignty. In reality, however, matters of war and peace were decided at the states-general, comprising of representatives of all provinces, and the Stadholders dealt directly with this body at The Hague. Moreover, the Stadholders themselves had a big say in the conduct of foreign policy as well.

The architect of this restoration was Count Willem Bentinck van
Rhoon, a son from the second marriage of the Duke of Portland to a
daughter of William Temple, the British Ambassador in the Dutch
Republic during the days of Jan de Witt and Admiral De Ruyter.
Bentinck van Rhoon had lived most of his life in England, but he had
studied in Leyden and he was also the foremost nobleman in the
province of Holland. The count had a marked tendency to place the
domestic affairs of the Dutch state in the perspective of international
politics. His foremost objective was the revival of the close alliance
that had existed between the Dutch Republic and England during the
reign of Stadholder-King William III and, in a wider sense, of the
‘Grand Alliance’ against France that also included Austria. For that
reason Bentinck received the enthusiastic support of the British
government, which considered the new Stadholder to be a reliable
ally because of his marriage with Anne of Hanover, a daughter of the
British king.¹³

In the long run, the restoration of the Stadholderate proved a less
efficient tool of British foreign policy than had been expected in
1747, the year that it was brought about. First of all, Prince William
IV, surrounding himself with adherents from his native province of
Frisia, did very little to strengthen his power base in Holland: by far
the most important province of the Republic. Secondly, too little was
done to improve the complicated machinery of the Dutch state. The
important role played by the states-general in foreign policy was the
main problem, because nothing was decided there without first
consulting the states-provincial in each province and the most
important town councils. This meant that in the Dutch Republic
more people were involved in the making of foreign policy than
anywhere else in the world. In the past, total paralysis had been
avoided by the formation of small committees for foreign or secret
affairs, presided over by the Greffier of the states-general: its
principal minister. The day-to-day conduct of foreign policy was left
to the Greffier personally, together with the Grand Pensionary of
Holland, the principal minister of the states-provincial and its
political leader. Both would use their influence in private
conversations with foreign ministers in The Hague or private
correspondences with Dutch ministers abroad. This all happened in
close collaboration with the Stadholder and, above all, with the
consent of the political elite as long as everything went well. The
main flaws of the system, however, were that it left too many responsibilities undefined and that it was a cause for paranoia in times of crises.\(^{14}\)

In 1750 the Dutch political system was slightly improved through the introduction of the so-called ‘Regency Council’, an advisory body to the Stadholder consisting of the Greffier, the Grand Pensionary, the military adviser of the Stadholder, Duke Louis of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, the private secretary of the Stadholder, De Larrey, Count Willem Bentinck van Rhoon, of course, and his brother Charles and one or two other members of the Dutch nobility. The whole idea originated with Bentinck van Rhoon and was vaguely inspired by the role played by the cabinet in the British parliamentary system.

The Regency Council had no powers of its own, but it acquired an unexpected significance after the untimely demise of Stadholder William IV in October 1751 that left Princess Anne acting as governess on behalf of her small son, Stadholder William V. Increasingly the council became the theatre of competition between Bentinck van Rhoon and Brunswick for influence over the princess-governess and between those in favour of a close collaboration with Britain and those against. In the last respect only Bentinck and Greffier Hendrik Fagel proved to be enthusiastic advocates of the close tie with England. Grand Pensionary Steyn took a more cautious attitude, as did Brunswick, who was an admirer of Prussia rather than England, notwithstanding the fact that he could show an impeccable service record as a general in the Austrian army during the War of the Austrian Succession. As a matter of fact, not even the princess-governess could be fully trusted, because she felt ill treated by her father during her years of marriage in Leeuwarden and she deeply resented her brother, the Duke of Cumberland, for the contempt he had shown for the military abilities of her husband during his campaign in the Low Countries.\(^{15}\) The main consequence for the British was that they increasingly had to monitor closely any developments in the Dutch domestic field and that they had to be willing to interfere whenever needed.

Count Bentinck van Rhoon’s world was smashed to smithereens by the ‘diplomatic revolution’ of 1756. The new alliance between France and Austria was intended to untie the hands of Austria against
Prussia in eastern Europe and to cover France in the rear in the case of an open war with England over territorial claims in the new world. It was not directed against Dutch interests as such, but it left the Dutch Republic without natural allies. From one day to the next it became visible to all that the idea of a balance of power had lost its effect on British foreign policy.

This change affected the strategic position of the Dutch state immediately. The Dutch barrier in the Austrian Netherlands no longer served any rational purpose; the fortresses could easily be captured by a joint Austrian–French operation. To make things worse, the Dutch stood the chance of getting involved in the conflict involuntarily because of their obligation by treaty to send 6,000 troops to England in case the French should land an army on the British coast.

This new development was anticipated well in advance, mainly as a consequence of the continuing fighting between French and British troops in America without any formal declaration of war and the increasing efforts to reinforce both armies. Already in the summer of 1755 the Dutch government reached the conclusion that it would be best for the republic to stay out of the conflict, even if the shipment of troops to England could not be avoided. The driving force behind this decision was Grand Pensionary Steyn, but it was reluctantly supported by most other members of the Regency Council, including the princess-governess.

Not surprisingly, this development severely weakened the position of the anglophiles in the government, such as Hendrik Fagel. There was very little left for them to do, apart from defending the status quo. Moreover, the mood in the Dutch mercantile community became vehemently anti-British. As a consequence of the British blockade of French ports, the French had to rely on neutral shipping for the transportation of colonial goods and for the armament of their colonies. The British reacted by declaring all cargo carried by neutral merchantmen and intended for, or originating from, the French colonies 'contraband'. This resulted from 1756 onwards in a continuous harassment of Dutch ships by the British navy and after several incidents it brought both countries to the brink of war.

In the end, the outbreak of hostilities was avoided, but the whole matter made it clear that the Dutch Republic had much to fear from...
England as well as France, and it sparked off a public debate that would dominate Dutch public affairs for the next 30 years.\textsuperscript{19} The Dutch position became increasingly one of non-alignment, a defensive posture that did not change after the end of the Seven Years’ War and that, worse still, did not exclude any outside interference with Dutch domestic affairs either.\textsuperscript{20}

The Disparate Roots

The Dutch Republic had made good use of the services of code-breakers before, although not on a very grand scale. This was the case, for instance, during the revolt against Spain in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{21} Roughly 100 years later, during the War of the Spanish Succession, the Dutch Republic had even possessed a Black Chamber, directed by the private secretary of Grand Pensionary Heinsius, Abel Tasien d’Alonne, \textit{presumably} an illegitimate brother of Stadholder-King William III. There is no indication, however, that the interception of diplomatic mail \textit{in peace time} was ever considered a useful tool for the conduct of foreign policy. \textsuperscript{22}

This all changed in October 1751. Unfortunately, there are no documents indicating what made the Dutch change their minds. This can only be derived indirectly from the course of the events, with all the ‘buts’, ‘maybes’ and ‘ifs’ that go with it. Without any doubt the decision was facilitated by the gradual centralization of the Dutch Post Office between 1747 and 1752. Before that, every city had its own privately owned, and highly profitable, post office that exploited only part of the network and often had ‘deals’ of its own with post offices abroad, when considered necessary. The transfer of the Dutch post offices to the states-provincial brought them under direct control of the Grand Pensionary and seemed to have been part of an effort to limit the influence of the town councils after the restoration of the Stadholderate in 1747.\textsuperscript{23}

It seems likely that the very idea of intercepting the mail of foreign diplomats occurred somewhat later, as a consequence only of the strained relation with Prussia. Prussia was a formidable threat to all of its neighbours because of its large standing army, by far exceeding any other in Europe. During the previous war its devastating capabilities had become clear to everyone and there was no doubt
that Frederick the Great could catch any neighbour by surprise, although not all of them at the same time.\textsuperscript{24} The Dutch Republic had particular reason to worry. Frederick had a valid claim to the heritage of Stadholder-King William III that still was not fully settled. He already had in his possession a number of houses and estates in the Dutch Republic and he might even have wanted to extend his claims to the hereditary Stadholderate in case anything happened to Prince William IV.\textsuperscript{25} Although explicitly ruled out in 1747 when the Stadholderate was declared hereditary, this possibility still lingered on in the minds of the Dutch authorities, probably because they themselves had offered this office to Frederick in a moment of desperation during the last war.\textsuperscript{26} During the summer of 1751 Greffier Hendrik Fagel managed to get hold of a great many copies of documents belonging to the Prussian legation. These copies were provided by the legation’s secretary, Du Commun, who acted as a caretaker in the absence of a new envoy. Du Commun offered his services to the Dutch because he was heavily in debt and he probably knew or suspected that the Dutch were extremely anxious to know what his master, Frederick the Great, had in mind.\textsuperscript{27}

One of the items handed over by Du Commun was a copy of the code-book that had been used by the departing envoy, D’Ammon. The Dutch expected that this code-book would also be used by his successor, De Hellen, and apparently they believed it worthwhile to be informed on a daily basis about his reports, judgements of the situation and, particularly, his orders from the king. In the beginning of November 1751 they made their first catch. They managed to get hold of a packet sent by the Prussian legation to the Prussian post master in Cleves, Evertsmann, that was going to be passed on to Berlin. The packet was opened in Leyden by, or with approval of, the post master in that city and it consisted of a great number of letters, among them some written by the Prussian envoy in London, Michel. They also tried to get hold of the replies. This was more difficult to achieve, however, because, as a rule, De Hellen had his servant waiting at the post office for the mail to arrive.\textsuperscript{28}

This whole operation, carefully prepared as it was, did not take into account that the Prussians changed their code-books every now and then. The intercepted codd material could not, therefore, be deciphered with the help of the code-book at their disposal and
something different had to be tried. The next thing they could think of was to lure De Hellen and his servants away to Amsterdam and then break into his house with the help of a locksmith, with Du Commun acting as a bloodhound to look for the new code-book. This strategy failed because De Hellen’s private quarters were barricaded somehow with a bolt from within and Du Commun was too fat to get through the window. This incident is important because it shows that, at this point, there was no intention of using the services of a code breaker and one may wonder how it occurred to the Regency Council that this was the way to proceed.

The next step in the chain of events can only be guessed at. Probably one or several members of the Regency Council took the decision to contact the new British Ambassador, Joseph Yorke. He had only recently arrived in the Dutch Republic, but he was already well known to both Fagel and Bentinck because of his role as an officer and negotiator in the Southern Netherlands during the War of the Austrian Succession and its aftermath. On 24 December 1751 Yorke reported to the Duke of Newcastle that he had received a number of intercepted letters to and from Berlin from the hands of T.I. de Larrey, the private secretary of Princess Anne, but also acting as secretary to the Regency Council in general. De Larrey stated that they originally had been in the possession of the Grand Pensionary, but he did not explain how they were obtained. However, he did ask Yorke to send them to London with the request to have them deciphered there, because in Holland nobody could do it and it might be of interest to both the British and the Dutch to know what was contained in them. Yorke’s report shows his surprise, notwithstanding the fact that he already suspected that letters were being opened in the Dutch Republic. In fact, it had been nobody less than Newcastle in person who had warned him to be on his guard in this respect before he left England. There is no direct reply or statement by Newcastle related to this matter, but there can be no doubt that the request was honoured and that the Black Chamber in London was able to break the code, because some time later the intercepted coded material was sent back to The Hague with its solution. This development was contrary to normal procedure. The British government did everything in its power to limit as far possible the number of people who knew about the Black Chamber’s activities in
London. It was even a clear matter of policy not to offer any assistance to other countries in this respect because it would only entail the risk of exposure.\textsuperscript{33}

The Duke of Newcastle, however, had good reason to make an exception. His main concern at that particular moment was to achieve the election of Empress Maria Theresia’s son Arch-Duke Joseph as ‘King of the Romans’, that is, future German Emperor, by the electoral body. This had to be done primarily by granting subsidies to those electorates that still could go both ways, in particular Saxony-Poland, Cologne and Bavaria.\textsuperscript{34} The Dutch had always been enthusiastic supporters of this scheme. The idea was first advocated by Stadholder William IV during the peace negotiations at Aix-la-Chapelle and they also were the originators of the idea that the support of some electorates could be bought with money.\textsuperscript{35}

Prussia was firmly on the side of the French, and Frederick, of course, was not a man to be bribed, but he was seen as the main opponent, inside the empire, to the election plan.\textsuperscript{36} The interception of the letters by, or addressed to, the Prussian envoy in The Hague could well be a valuable, additional source of information, alongside with intelligence reports gathered by Yorke directly from Germany.\textsuperscript{37} Apparently there was no explicit ‘deal’ between Newcastle or Yorke and the Dutch, but they were right in counting on the willingness of Hendrik Fagel to communicate to them what seemed of interest.\textsuperscript{38}

The interception of letters was soon reorganized. If it was to be of any use at all, it had to done on a regular basis. This implied that it all had to take place without attracting any attention or causing any delay. This part of the job belonged to the domain of Grand Pensionary Steyn, who had secret funds at his disposal to pay for covert actions and who could give any orders he wanted to the staff of the post office. For practical purposes it was decided to concentrate on the outgoing mail and to do the actual copying in The Hague rather than Leyden, that is, before the mailbags were closed and sealed. The work was done by two of the three administrators in a separate room of the post office that no one was allowed to enter. The administrators were the right people to work with because they had to, in any case, be ‘in the know’ and they could delay the departure of any postillion at will.\textsuperscript{39}

Whenever a document was coded, it was handed to Pierre Lyonet
to be dealt with. Lyonet was in the service of the Greffier as a translator, a so-called ‘patent meester’ or administrator of military expenses and as ‘cipher clerk’. In this last capacity he was responsible for the encoding and decoding of all diplomatic dispatches of the states general and for the supply of code-books to the Dutch embassies and ministers abroad. Lyonet had been asked to take this job in 1738 by the old Greffier Hendrik Fagel’s uncle François, who had shared Lyonet’s broad and vivid interest in the arts and the sciences. At that time Lyonet was already somewhat of a celebrity. In his generation he was unsurpassed as a microscopist and from 1742 onwards he acquired fame as a particularly talented engraver of insects with a number of illustrations he made for books written by himself and by others. He was a member of scientific academies all over Europe and he enjoyed being invited to the dinner table of the Russian and French ambassadors, who were as fond of the minutiae of nature as he was. His fame also extended to Dutch government circles. In 1751 he sold an entire cabinet of butterflies to Anne of Hanover and it was Abraham Trembley, the private secretary of Willem Bentinck, who had introduced him to the Royal Society in London.

He was not the sort of man not to ask questions and he somehow found out where the coded material went and what happened to it. Perhaps he was told from the outset, perhaps later, but it is beyond any doubt that he could not resist the challenge to see how far he could get on his own. He had always been interested in languages. As a youngster, while at his parent’s home in Heusden, he had taught himself Italian without a grammar or a dictionary by ‘deciphering’ an edition of the adventures of Télémaque, using only his sense of logic.

Of course, he did not have to start from scratch. He already had in his possession the Prussian code-book that was used by the previous envoy D’Ammon. This told him what vocabulary was used and how the Prussian codes were organized in general. Moreover, he had received copies of the solutions by the Black Chamber in London. These solutions were not complete; in every letter several words were left out and Lyonet started by filling in the blanks. At the same time, he began working on the letters that were intercepted alongside those of De Hellen written by the Prussian envoy in London, Michel. In this case, there were no other solutions at hand,
but he did have all intercepted code material at his disposal. It took him 18 months to solve both code-books.46

It is not entirely clear whether he acted with the consent of his masters, the Grand Pensionary and the Greffier. He was paid by Steyn 600 guilders a year for his efforts, but this may have been only for his work as a copier and keeper of intercepted code material. A better indicator is the fact that he was allowed to take on his cousin, Samuel Egbert Croiset, as an assistant, at first at his own expense, but from 31 March 1753 onwards at public expense, at 600 guilders a year.47 This very moment suggests that there was some sort of connection with his work as a code breaker, because at about the same time he finished his work on the codes of De Hellen and Michel. It is likely, therefore, that he acted on his own initiative, but not without the consent of Steyn, who seemingly wanted to wait and see what he would achieve.

The advantages of Lyonet’s contribution were, of course, undeniable. It made the Dutch less dependent on the British for their information on Prussia, then and in the future, and it opened the prospects of new initiatives in this field as well, with or without the approval of their British allies. This was not been part of a preconceived plan, however, and the important role Lyonet now assumed in the running of this intelligence operation had not been anticipated. Hendrik Fagel in particular resented the fact that he no longer had full control over the operation because of his excellent understanding with Yorke and Newcastle.

It seems likely, however, that Lyonet was not sufficiently aware of this. In a letter written to the Greffier shortly after his initial successes on 18 April 1753, he made clear that he expected some public mark of esteem, preferably from the states-general. This demand was inspired by the fact that the English principal code breaker, the reverend Edward Willes, had received, for all his efforts, the bishopric of Bath and Wells.48 It was clear to Lyonet from the start that in the Dutch Republic nothing similar could be expected, but there were various other possibilities, such as ‘Secret Councillor of the Princess Governess’, ‘Secretary of the Regency Council’ or ‘Cipher Secretary of the States General’.49 The last title was clearly preferred by Lyonet, but it was the most difficult to achieve because it could not be granted to him without public debate about the
content of his work. Fagel’s reaction, as reflected in Lyonet’s letters and his notes, shows the Greffier’s deep discontent with the turn the events had taken. In his opinion, Lyonet’s work was both superfluous and dangerous; firstly because the code breaking could be done just as well in London and, secondly, because Lyonet, a regular guest at both the French and the Russian ambassadors’ residences, could easily spill the beans. To make things worse, Lyonet had made clear on several occasions that he had political views of his own. He was a typical exponent of the ‘republican’ opposition party, favoured by the merchant class in the Dutch towns, that felt increasingly threatened by the British domination of international trade and shipping. Fagel’s worries indicate that Lyonet had, perhaps unintentionally, shifted the political equilibrium between opponents and supporters of the close collaboration with England within the government. In other words, Lyonet’s activities implied, to say the least, that the interception of letters no longer was an asset exclusively at the disposal of the anglophiles.

The Extension of the Black Chamber’s Activities

For whatever reason, in August or September 1752 the decision was taken to extend the interception of mail to the dispatches of the envoys of Cologne, Saxony-Poland and France. Unfortunately, the Prussians were not the only ones to use cryptography: the French envoy and the emissary of Saxony-Poland did so too. The French even had the most sophisticated code-books in the world, ironically giving those who had to rely on them a false sense of security. The French emissary Bonnac, who arrived in the Republic in December 1752, proudly told Yorke that he had four code-books at his disposal: one for his private correspondence to be used only on special occasions, one for his ordinary correspondence with the court, one for his correspondence with French ministers stationed in other capitals and an additional one for papers that had been communicated to him by third parties. During this conversation Bonnac expressed his firm belief that his letters could not be deciphered by anyone without stealing the key. Yorke agreed ‘cordially’, hiding the fact that the British had been breaking French codes almost continuously ever since the accession of George I.
Bonnac’s dispatches had been a matter for concern from the moment he arrived in the Dutch Republic. He had orders to prepare the ground for the conclusion of an ‘eternal peace treaty’ between Holland and France. This objective was to be reached by cultivating his contacts with the important members of the merchant elite in Amsterdam and promising them all sorts of trade benefits if they would oppose the Republic’s close alliance with England. This went further than what his predecessors, Saint Contest and Durand, had tried to achieve and the conditions had improved greatly for such a policy because of the untimely death of Stadholder William IV. Already in February 1752 the town council of Amsterdam had made clear that it no longer wanted to accept the decisions of the princess-governess with regard to the nomination and appointment of new members, and the mood in the city became increasingly hostile towards the House of Orange. This tendency culminated in January 1754 with vehemently anti-Orangist riots marking the funeral of Daniel Raep, a popular Orangist leader who had helped to restore the Stadholderate in 1748. These riots were not surpressed by the police or the militia, although present from the outset. Therefore, the riots were believed to be instigated by the town council itself, perhaps even in collaboration with the French envoy. The contacts between certain members of the merchant elite of Amsterdam and the mundane, albeit one-legged, Bonnac, who entertained them frequently at his house, had been a matter for concern and speculation almost from the day of his arrival. It was impossible, however, to verify any suspicions without reading his letters. The Dutch authorities therefore requested that Bonnac’s codes be investigated by the Black Chamber in London as well, but it is not clear exactly when this happened and why Newcastle decided favourably in this case too. The matter was entrusted to Bishop Edward Willes personally, but it took him some time to succeed. In September 1753 he reached the conclusion that he needed more code material, but it was not until the end of January 1754 that he could show a full compilation of Bonnac’s principal code-book. The other code-books that were used less frequently were never solved at all. By then, time was pressing. The riots in Amsterdam had reached their peak and Yorke’s reports show clearly that both he and his Dutch friends were in danger of losing their nerve.
Initially, there was no intention of sending a copy of the codebook to Holland. The British preferred to keep the code-book and the intercepted coded material to themselves and they wanted to transmit only the contents of each letter that had been solved. This procedure, however, proved to be highly inefficient because it took time to send all intercepts back and forth to London. Therefore, Lyonet wished to receive the coded material back from London in order to compile his own copy of the code-book. Apparently Steyn and Bentinck shared his opinion. On 23 October 1753 Bentinck wrote to Newcastle about this matter trying to convince him that Steyn had taken sufficient precautions to prevent anybody finding out. The British responded by sending a copy of their compilation of the entire code-book, which was, of course, just as good. From January 1754 onwards, all intercepted letters written by Bonnac were decoded in Holland by Lyonet himself. The Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic had been able to broaden its scope only due to the crucial support of the British. This seemed to prove, however, that although Lyonet’s activities as code clerk were indispensable, his efforts as code-breaker were superfluous and there is no indication that Lyonet was ever asked to build on his expertise as a cryptanalist.

The Black Chamber’s Breakthrough

This does not take into account, however, Lyonet’s curiosity and his independence of mind. The code-book from London provided him with the vocabulary and the general pattern of the codes used by the French at that particular time, just as had been the case with the Prussian codes a few years before. In the meantime Lyonet had learned what use he could make of this knowledge. Perhaps he already had this in mind when he had Steyn ask for the code material; perhaps it occurred to him later. Whatever the case may have been, in December 1755 the French code-books were changed once again and Lyonet tried to solve the new code, this time all on his own.

The political situation had dramatically changed by then. The outbreak of war seemed only a matter of time. The Dutch had nothing to gain and favoured neutrality, but they were still obliged, under treaty, to send troops to the British. In fact, the change of code-books on the French side was a direct consequence of this
development. The new code-books were brought by the special emissary Count d’Affry, who was sent down specially in order to find out what side, if any, the Dutch Republic would take in case of war. The answer was that they would stay out of the war, notwithstanding the fact that they would send troops to defend the British coast, if the British insisted.

Moreover, the understanding between the Dutch and the British had been gradually deteriorating since 1755. In June the British government had refused to give assistance with regard to the breaking of the new code of the Prussian envoy De Hellen, notwithstanding the fact that Yorke and Fagel had supported the request. On the Dutch side their readiness to share information was rapidly declining as well. In August of that same year the Regency Council agreed that certain information contained in a few recently intercepted letters should not be yielded to Yorke. For that reason Steyn and the Duke of Brunswick even considered not showing them to Fagel either. After some debate they agreed that they could not leave him out, but Steyn insisted that Fagel should make a solemn vow that he would not tell Yorke. In June 1756 this argument was extended to the deciphering, by Lyonet, of the new code of the Prussian envoy in London, Michel. Again, Fagel was urged not to tell Yorke, because the British and the Prussians were allies by now and Michel had an additional code-book at hand that he could use whenever he thought the current one had been compromised.

In June 1756 Lyonet, after roughly six months of work, had broken d’Affry’s code. He submitted a large number of neatly written transcripts of letters that had been written from the day of arrival to De Larrey, the private secretary of princess-governess. On 16 June 1756 they were collated with some comments by De Larrey and brought to Princess Anne, at the time staying at ‘Het Loo’, the Stadholder’s residence in the eastern part of the country.

The results were bewildering. The French emissary d’Affry had an informer at the court of the princess-governess, one of her oldest and most trusted friends from Frisia, her former private secretary De Back. A commoner from Holland by descent, De Back had risen high in the service of the Frisian nobility due to his charm and secretarial skills and had become, in the course of time, an exponent of the so-called ‘Fries Cabaal’, a group of Frisian nobles at the Stadholderian
court who wanted to exert their influence at the cost of the 'newcomers' from Holland. De Back probably acted purely from political motives. He was one of the last remnants at the court of the opposition against the alliance with England. De Back was not a member of the Regency Council, but as one of the closest confidants of Princess Anne he knew a lot, and for some time he was to D'Affry an extremely valuable source of information.  

In his report on the intercepted letters, De Larrey had made clear that Lyonet could not be expected to carry on without some mark of esteem from the princess-governess personally. The elevation of Lyonet to the rank of 'Secret Councillor' was still a possibility. First of all, it had the advantage that the princess could take the decision without the consent of the states-general and, secondly, that it was not expensive. De Larrey had already mentioned this idea in a private interview with Lyonet, but Anne could not be moved. Of course her attitude was totally irrational. A possible explanation could be that she utterly disliked Lyonet for his uncompromising attitude and his blunt behaviour. Perhaps she resented him also for the fact that he was the bringer of bad news. De Back was not even really punished; he was only reluctantly sent away. The princess' stubbornness prevented the problem being solved. The only thing the desperate De Larrey could do was to try to hide the reality from Lyonet. For a while this sufficed and during the remainder of that year and the following one Lyonet broke two more Prussian codes and two more French ones, belonging to Bonnac and D'Affry. Once again, the intercepted French material proved to be of the utmost importance. It showed that the Austrians were considering yielding the control of some ports and fortresses in the Southern Netherlands to the French. This was meant as a purely defensive measure against a possible British invasion the Austrians felt unable to resist on their own, but the reshuffle formed a menace to the Dutch garrisons in the barrier towns and could easily be interpreted as a prelude to a frontal attack on the Dutch Republic. D'Affry's letters, however, showed that such an attack was not planned and a crisis between the French and the Austrians on the one side and the Dutch on the other could be avoided.

These repeated successes clearly showed that the Black Chamber was indispensable. This did not mean, however, that the Dutch authorities were ready to admit this, and Lyonet was forced to resort
to blackmail. Basically, the conditions had already been created in the spring of 1757 when the Prussians once more changed their code-books. They may have been warned that their codes had been broken frequently in Holland, or maybe it was only part of a general effort to improve their standards. Whatever the causes, Lyonet was able to break neither the code of De Hellen nor the code of Michel. The British were asked for assistance once more, again to very little avail, because of potential damage to the interests of their Prussian ally, in particular regarding their desperate efforts to bring the Dutch over to their side.  

Lyonet did not know the background, of course, but he did notice that the Black Chamber in London returned the intercepted Prussian code material after several months without any solutions or comments. He understood, too, that his masters found themselves in a very difficult position and that they had by now become fully dependent on him. He suddenly pretended to have lost all interest in his work as a code-breaker, and that he had decided that his scientific work could no longer wait. He still had to finish his extremely important treatise on the anatomy of the snail, a work he had neglected for seven years and that simply screamed to be completed.

In December 1758 the princess-governess finally now offered him 1,000 guilders a year, on top of the 600 guilders a year he already received from the Grand Pensionary and the 600 guilders for each code he broke, provided that he would go back to work at once and report everything he had found without delay. Lyonet agreed immediately. The same day he drew up a contract, to be signed by De Larrey on behalf of Her Royal Highness. Fagel had to pay his tribute too. From 1762 onwards, Lyonet was allowed to call himself, unofficially, ‘Cipher Secretary of the States General’. With characteristic lack of consistency this title was granted to him without the formal approval of the states-general in order to avoid a public debate about the nature of his work. However, this did not prevent Lyonet from carrying this title, and printing it, in capitals, on the title page of his book on the anatomy of the snail, published finally during that same year. Thus, with some exaggeration, it can be said that the Black Chamber had established its position only as a consequence of the tenacity of one man and a growing political isolation which the Dutch government was reluctant to face.
The Black Chamber’s Scope and Limits

The focus of Lyonet’s activities remained much the same during the following years. According to an estimate made by Lyonet and Croiset themselves in 1778 they had by then broken some 30 codes, almost all of them Prussian or French.\(^7\) The work on the Prussian codes was resumed in 1763 and lasted until 1803, the last year of the Black Chamber’s existence. The Prussians continued to change their code-books every few years, but apparently there was no clear rule that fixed the time. Some codes would be used for eight years, others for no more than two.\(^7\) Generally, it took the French only a year or so to change their code-books, although there had been some exceptions and there had also been situations where two or three codes had been used at the same time for a somewhat longer period.\(^7\) The interception of the mail of the emissary of Cologne and the Palatinate continued until 1782, with interruptions between 1756 and 1759 and between 1772 and 1775.\(^8\) It is not clear, however, whether Croiset and/or Lyonet had anything to do with this, because there is no indication that the original intercepts had been in code.

The interception of the mail of the emissary of Saxony-Poland, Kauderbach, lasted roughly until the Prussians had brutally occupied Dresden in 1756, leaving not much for Kauderbach to do. It was resumed only for a short space of time between 22 July and 19 August 1763, during the talks that were to end the war.\(^9\) Apparently the Dutch lost interest when the Polish crown went to Catharine the Great’s candidate, Stanislaus Poniatowsky. Unlike the British, the Dutch did not know how to deal with the Saxonian codes.\(^10\)

Occasionally other intercepts were made as well. In 1756 some letters were intercepted written by an agent of Hamburg, the Baron De Hatzel to French ministers and generals and by the Bavarian Ambassador in London, Count Haslang.\(^11\) Between 1767 and 1769 letters were intercepted of an Austrian agent or spy named Kreuningen.\(^12\) In 1780 or 1781 a letter was intercepted written by a Mr Normandez to Spanish Ambassador De Liano.\(^13\) At roughly the same time a coded letter was intercepted written by the American General Amherst to the Cabinet Council. Together with other intercepted material from the ‘rebels’, the letter was put at the disposal of the British and was solved either in The Hague or in
London. Finally, in 1791 the secretary of the Russian legation in The Hague, Pawloff, was victimized, but it seems unlikely that Croiset was able to break the code.

It is a little bit of an enigma how, and to what end, all this intelligence was used, but there should be some relation, of one kind or another, with Dutch diplomatic efforts on the eve and during the War of the American Independence. The increase and the sheer volume of Lyonet's work during that period seems to point in the direction of a high-tide of Dutch 'secret diplomacy'. However, there is no way of knowing for sure without additional research that lies beyond the scope of this article.

The long period of time – almost 50 years – that the Dutch Black Chamber was able to operate raises the question of how many people knew that it existed. The staff at the post office in all likelihood knew something, and some of the Dutch ministers, of course, but what of the victims – the foreign ministers in the Dutch Republic – did they know or suspect something? The answer is most illuminating. Both the Prussian envoy, De Hellen, and the emissary of Saxony-Poland, Kauderbach, could tell at an early stage, because of the clumsy way in which it was done, that their envelopes had been damaged and their seals had been forged. Kauderbach complained to the officials in The Hague, De Hellen only sent a friendly note to Prussian Post Master Evertsman in Emmerik asking him to keep an eye on any unaccounted delays in the post boy arriving from The Hague. He was not too worried, however, because he was confident that his cipher could not be broken by the Dutch. The French took a similar position. They, too, had reason to believe that their mail was being opened, but did not suspect that the Dutch had broken their codes. Apparently, it took the French some 30 years to realize the truth. In an angry meeting with Dutch Post Master Bouwens, not too long before the outbreak of the war with England, the French envoy De la Vauguyon shouted that he was all too well aware that his letters were being copied at the post office and taken to Lyonet and Croiset to be deciphered. The matter was even echoed in a newspaper which believed, with a paranoia so characteristic of the times, that the domestic mail was occasionally being opened and read, but it did not lament the opening of letters of foreign ministers. Of course, De la Vauguyon’s accusations were stongly denied, but the harm had been
done. From that time onwards, the French started to use several
codes at the same time and they used couriers more frequently than
before.

To sum up, the Dutch Black Chamber owed much of its success to
the fact that its existence was extremely unlikely. The Dutch had
always been the laughing-stock of the diplomatic world in matters of
secrecy and security. That the Dutch, of all people, should be able to
accomplish anything at all in that field was beyond the
comprehension of those haughty noblemen in charge of the
international affairs of the day.

Conclusion

The emergence of a Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic on the eve
of the Seven Years' War was not part of a preconceived plan. On the
contrary, in November 1751, when the Regency Council made for
the first time an effort to intercept the mail of the Prussian envoy De
Hellen, the Dutch authorities expected to be able to read it without
much difficulty, because they had obtained a copy of a Prussian code-
book by bribing the former legation's secretary, Du Commun. They
were surprised to find out that the Prussians changed their code-
books every few years, in particular when an envoy was replaced.
The whole intelligence operation would have failed if the British had
not offered to have the intercepted letters examined in London. The
British Black Chamber had been breaking the codes of all the major
European courts, including that of Prussia, ever since the accession of
George I, but as a matter of principle it never worked on behalf of
foreign governments. In this case, the British government was ready
to make an exception, however, because of the excellent
understanding that existed between the governments of the
countries, who were at that time engaged in an mutual effort to
promote the election of Archduke Joseph as King of the Romans,
perceived as a way to preserve the balance of power. Apparently, this
motive became more dominant over time. In September 1752 the
decision was taken to open the letters of the emissaries of France,
Saxony-Poland and Cologne. These countries had in common that
they were to play a role in the election, either as vigorous opponents
or as undecided electorates. In the case of the French envoy it should
be noted, however, that domestic motives played a role as well. Bonnac seemed to be able to foster the opposition among the merchant class of Amsterdam against the alliance with England and the reading of his letters appeared to be the only way to find out what he was aiming at.

At this stage, the Dutch authorities, with the possible exception of Grand Pensionary Steyn, saw no need for a Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic proper. This did not stop the Dutch code-clerk and natural scientist Pierre Lyonet compiling a code-list based on the solutions that came from London and filling in the gaps. After 18 months he had taught himself the trade. He solved a Prussian code on his own and there were more to follow. In June 1756 he had solved his first French code, after carefully collecting everything that had been done in London. The Dutch authorities were divided on this new development. Greffier Fagel, a close friend of British Ambassador Yorke, saw no need for it and disliked the idea that Lyonet, whom he considered to be politically unreliable, had taken over the business. The Anglomane Bentinck van Rhoon and Grand Pensionary Steyn took a more positive attitude.

However, the ‘diplomatic revolution’ made Lyonet indispensable. The war that followed left the Dutch with no alternative except neutrality. The country was permanently under pressure from all parties to take sides and the foreign residents were ready to use all means to reach their objectives. This meant that the Dutch Black Chamber acquired an unprecedented role in the field of counter-espionage. This was already the case from the summer of 1755 onwards, but it took the Dutch authorities until December 1758 to come to terms with this new reality. Their strong dislike for Lyonet’s political views and, in particular, for his independence of mind, prevented them from acting any sooner. Lyonet had to go ‘on strike’ for a while to make it clear that the cards had been reshuffled.

The end of the war did not bring a fundamental change in the position of the Dutch Republic. Therefore the contribution of the Dutch Black Chamber remained as indispensable as during the war, and the political differences that had existed in the past between Lyonet and his masters seemed to have lost much of their significance.

To sum up, the Dutch Black Chamber owed its existence to an
unlikely combination of two conflicting factors. First of all, there were the strong ties with England that brought the Dutch in touch with another Black Chamber to supply examples and results. Secondly, there was the initiative of a scientist who was able to teach himself the trade. That he got his way in the end had something to do with the change in the political climate after the ‘diplomatic revolution’, and proves that a country with a truly independent foreign policy could not do without a Black Chamber at that particular time. This does not mean, however, that all countries with some political ambition in fact had one. The existence of a scientific community and a good understanding between men of science and those in power also seemed to have been prerequisites, as was the presence of a well-organized state bureaucracy that could keep things to itself. In the Dutch Republic this last condition, however, appeared to be lacking. That the Black Chamber could nonetheless remain a success for so many years can be explained only by the fact that its existence was so improbable.

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**NOTES**

The author would like to express his gratitude to her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands for allowing him to do research in the Royal Archives and to Prof. J.A. Bergstra, Prof. N.C.F. van Sas and Dr H. van der Meer for their advice.


4. The archives of the Fagel family can be found in the Algemeen Rijksarchief (ARA), see for the intercepted letters in particular the inventory numbers 5177-5203; the archives of Princess Anne of Hanover, Willem Bentinck van Rhoon and Stadholder Willem V
are all in the Royal Archives at The Hague (RA); the notes by Lyonet and Croiset are scattered between the Boerhavé Museum in Leiden and the ARA; not to be overlooked are some volumes of intercepted letters at the Stadhouderlijke Secretarie, also at the ARA; the Newcastle and Yorke papers are deposited in the British Library (BL); some related material is to be found among the State Papers Foreign at the Public Record Office (PRO), in particular the class numbers 84 and 107 referring to Holland and to intercepted letters.


22. For more information on this subject, see my forthcoming article: ‘The Black Chamber in the Dutch Republic during the War of the Spanish Succession and its Aftermath (1702–1715)’, *The Historical Journal* Vol.1 (1999).


29. Ibid., minutes of 8 and 12 Nov. 1751.
32. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No.5177. This volume is the first in a row with copies of intercepted letters of foreign diplomats. The first 14 items in this volume, all written by or to De Hellen between 30 October and 30 November 1751, bear the remark ‘Deciphered’ just like the numerous copies of intercepted letters in the Public Record Office. The other 19 copies of letters written to or by De Hellen between November and December 1751 in this volume lack this ‘stamp’, but they are likely to have been made by the same man according to the handwriting. It is impossible that the work was done in Holland, because a Dutchman would have used Dutch or French, not English, to make clear that his work was finished.
34. Eldon, *England’s Subsidy Policy*, pp.2–3; Kalshoven, *De diplomatieke verhouding tusschen Engeland en de Republieck*, pp.46–7, 62, 67, 71, 76–7. I should like to express my gratitude to Dr. J. Aalbers, who pointed to the possible relevance of this matter for the development as described above.
38. There is no record of a ‘deal’ in either Dutch or British archives. There are, however, examples of exchanged intercepts and of information, based on them. See, for instance, ARA, Fagel Family, inv. nr. 5177, Yorke to Fagel, The Hague, 8 December 1753, about copies of intercepted letters by Michel, and PRO, State Papers Foreign, 84 (Holland), inv. nr. 461, Yorke to Newcastle, The Hague, 19 Dec. 1752, about information based on intercepted letters by De Hellen. Miller (*Sir Joseph Yorke*, p.34), states that Yorke received copies of all intercepted letters from Fagel until an unspecified time when Fagel was no longer allowed to do so. I have not found any proof to support this thesis, but it still may be true.
41. For Lyonet’s work as an engraver and a microscopist, see, in particular, Van Seters, *Pierre Lyonet*, pp.65–84.
42. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, inv. nr. 2230, Lyonet to Hendrik Fagel, The Hague, 18 April 1753.
45. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No. 5177. The handwriting of Lyonet is clearly recognizable in the blanks that were left in the letters sent back by the Black Chamber in London.
46. Boerhave Museum Leiden, Arch 162-r, Notes by Lyonet and Croiset (transcript, ‘recit’, 3.09–3.19). The opinion, stated here, that Lyonet got the idea himself in the summer of 1751 and that he had to convince his superiors to go along with it (slavishly copied by Isings and Van Seters), is, however, too ridiculous to be true.
47. Benschop, *Secrete Regeringszorg*, p.245. The view, expressed by Lyonet and Croiset in their Notes, that Lyonet had to pay Croiset out of his own pocket until the summer of 1756 is simply a distortion of the truth (see transcript, ‘recit’, 4.19–5.03, 6.08–6.12); for the fact that Croiset had already started to work for Lyonet in April 1752, see Boerhave Museum Leiden, arch 162-r, draft for an application letter by S.E. Croiset to the Grefier for the vacancy of cipher secretary.
49. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No. 2230, Lyonet to Hendrik Fagel on 18 April 1753.
50. Lyonet was in the service of the Grefier personally as a ‘cipher clerk’, not in the service of the states general directly. This involved lower status and less pay. For this difference see: O. de Vries, ‘Klerken ter Griffie van de Staten-Generaal’, *BMGN*, 96 (1981), pp.39–40.
52. For Lyonet’s strong political opinions, see, for instance, ibid., notes by Lyonet and Croiset, (transcript, ‘recit’, 8.12–9.08; Croiset, 1, 7.24–8.19).
53. The decision to extend the interception of letters to those of the representatives of Cologne and Saxony-Poland was probably taken in August or early September 1752. The first intercepted letter by Kauderbach to the King of Saxony-Poland is dated 5 September 1752 and the first one by Cornet to the Bishop of Cologne is dated 19 September 1752. Cornet also reported to a minister in the Palatinate: his first letters to Count Wagendonk in Manheim is dated 12 September 1752. All items mentioned here are to be found in ARA, Fagel family, inv. nr. 5177. The first intercepted letter by the French envoy Durand can be found here too and is dated 26 September 1752.
56. From Yorke’s letter to Hugh Jones can be derived that it probably all happened during the first three months of 1753.
This can be derived from a marginal note by Lyonet on a letter written by Bonnac to Rouillé dated 4 July 1755, in which 'le chiffre de reserve' is used, saying: 'Nous n'avons point ce chiffre. C'est la première fois qu'il a été employé'.


Yorke's letter to Hugh Jones, 25 Jan. 1754 (see above) makes clear that at that particular time he had not received anything back, notwithstanding the fact that in London the work was almost finished. It seems more likely, therefore, that the code-book was sent, along with the transcripts, but not the original code material, as was requested by Bentinck in his letter, dated 23 Oct. 1753.

Royal Archives The Hague, Stadholder William V, No.193. Lyonet's handwriting is clearly recognizable above the lines of the intercepted letters.

Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No.5182, Bonnac to Rouillé, 9 Dec. 1755.

Royal Archives The Hague, Princess Anne of Hanover, No.431, De Larrey to the princess-governess, 30 Aug. 1755.

Ibid., De Larrey to the princess-governess, 4 June 1756.

Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No.1401, De Larrey to the princess-governess, 16 June 1756.

Carter, Seven Years' War, pp.57-8, 157; Kalshoven, De diplomatieke verhouding tusschen Engeland en de Republiek, pp.106-8.

Boerhave Museum Leiden, arch 162-r, Notes by Lyonet and Croiset (transcript, rectit, 6.14-9.08, 13.04-14.08); the Keeper of the Royal Archives, Mr. Wolderink kindly informed me about the recent book by V.P.M. Baker-Smith, A Life of Anne of Hanover, Princess-Royal (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), p.170, who reports that in January 1757 Princess Anne warned Frederick the Great of a forthcoming, Russian attack (that did not happen in the end). She did so without the consent or even the knowledge of the Regency Council, and she probably based her suspicions on intercepted code material.

Ibid., transcript, 12.17-13.04.


Carter, Seven Years' War, pp.74-6.

Algemeen Rijksarchief, Croiset family, No.17, notes by S.E. Croiset (transcript, Croiset III, 6.13-6.17); the British may not have been able to break the Prussian codes either during this period. From 13 June 1758 until February 1761 there is a number of intercepted letters written by Prussian Ambassador Michel that could not be solved, to be found in British Library, Add. Mss. 32.271.

Boerhave Museum Leiden, arch 162-r, notes by Lyonet and Croiset (transcript, 'rectit', 16.09-16.15); no Prussian codes at all are broken between April 1757 and October 1763. The first French code to be broken after Lyonet's 'strike' is the code used by D'Affray for his communication with Choiseul from December 1758 onwards. The code, used by the French between July 1757 and December 1758, is not mentioned by Lyonet and Croiset, but was nevertheless solved. This could have been done in London, or else it may mean that Lyonet did not extend his 'strike' to French codes and only forgot to mention this particular success in his notes.

Boerhave Museum Leiden, arch 162-r, notes by Lyonet and Croiset (transcript, 'rectit', 16.15-16.18); Royal Archives The Hague, Anna van Hanover, No.431, Lyonet to Brunswick, 6 Dec. 1758, Brunswick to Princess Anne, 9 Dec. 1758, De Larrey to Lyonet and to Anne on the same day, Lyonet to De Larrey, 11 Dec. 1758 and De Larrey's reply on the same day, Brunswick to De Larrey, 8 Dec. 1759 and 10 Dec. 1760 about the payment of Lyonet's annual pension. I should like to express my gratitude...
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75. Boerhave Museum Leiden, arch. 162-r, notes by Lyonet and Croiset (transcript, recit, 17.08, 19.11).
76. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Stadhouderlijke Secretarie, Nos.159, 162-4; ibid., Fagel family, Nos.519-203; Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, Nos.197, 198.
77. D’Affry’s code for Choiseul, introduced in December 1758, continued to be used until June 1762. The new French emissary Prévois had a code-book of his own that was used between June 1762 and October 1763. He was succeeded by D’Havrincourt, with a code-book used by him or his secretary, between November 1763 and 14 July 1767. In March of that same year his successor Desriveaux had arrived with a code-book that remained in use until September 1768. He was followed by Breteuil with a code-book used between September 1768 and August 1769. Then l’Abbé du Prat came, with a code-book used between August 1769 and December 1770. He was followed by De Noailles and Des Noyers, with a code-book used between April 1771 and November 1776. They were succeeded by the Duke de la Vauguion and his secretary Berenger, with codes used between January 1777 and July 1782; between September 1779 and October 1783; and between January 1783 and May 1784.
78. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, Nos.5177-202 (the intercepts are scattered between others); ibid., Nos.5205 and 211; Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, No.194. The first intercepts are dated 12 Sept. 1752 (Cornet to Waghendonk in Mannheim) and 19 Sept. 1752 (Cornet to the Bishop of Cologne).
79. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, Nos.5177–86, 5195 (scattered between other intercepts) and 5207; Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, No.201.
80. For solutions of similar code material, see PRO, State Papers Foreign, 107/63, for instance Wiedmarchen to Bruhl, London, 8 April 1755 and Bruhl’s letter to Wiedmarchen from Dresden with the same date.
81. Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, No.202 for the letters by Hatzel. They were all written in January and February, most of them being directed to Mr De Langlade and Marchal de Belle Isle (further information on Louis baron von Hatzel in O. Schutte, Repertorium der buitenlandse vertegenwoordigers in Nederland, 1584-1810 (Gravenhage, 1983), pp.196, 316; Coquelle, L’Alliance Franco-Hollandaise, p.157, mentioned Hatzel as an emissary of Würtemberg, offering the French to go England in order to speak to some members of parliament he knew well, of course on the condition of sufficient pay; for the Bavarian Ambassador, see Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No.5184 (letter by Haslang, dated London, 20 Aug. 1756).
82. Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, No.200; Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No.5202.
83. Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, No.202. The letter has no date, but is likely to be related to the League of Armed Neutrality that was to be joined by the Dutch around that particular moment.
84. Royal Archives The Hague, Stadhouder Willem V, No. 204; Miller, Sir Joseph Yorke, p.45.
85. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Croiset family, No.17, Notes by Croiset (transcript, Croiset III, 3.20-4.07); Croiset mentions a Russian minister by the name of Zaktehof writing to his master in Russia, Count Klosterman, but there are no Russian dignitaries by those names to be found in any list of diplomats. It seems likely, however, that we are dealing here with Pawlov and Ostermann, as Dr O. Schutte has kindly pointed out to me during a conversation at the High Council of the Nobility.
87. Algemeen Rijksarchief, Fagel family, No.5177, De Hellen to Evertsmann, 12 Sept. 1752; ibid., No.5182, Kauderbach to the Dutch Post Master, 14 Jan. 1755.
88. Carter, Seven Years’ War, p.57, fails to see the difference; see also, Th. Bussemaker (ed.), ‘Uitreksels uit de brieven van d’Affry aan de Fransche regeering (december 1755–mei 1762)’, BMHG 27 (1906), p.367, letter 149, 3 Aug. 1759, where d’Affry states his disbelief about a warning by the Russian Ambassador in London, Gallitzin, to Kauderbach, that D’Affry’s letters were being read in The Hague.
89. Boerhave Museum arch 162-r, notes of a conversation between Roijer and Croiset that took place on 12 November 1788 (transcript, Roijer, 3.11–3.26). The periodical mentioned is ‘La Poste du Neder-Rhijn’; the relevant article is to be found in vol.3, p.1123, number 127 (29 Jan. 1783).