

Candidate evidence

Does Prince Charles
Edward Stuart bear
the chief
responsibility for the
failure of the '45?

Introduction

At the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the Jacobite cause came to a bloody and absolute end under the leadership of Charles Edward Stuart. The cause had fought to defeat the Hanoverian Government and reinstate the Stuarts to the throne. The rising had initially appeared to be building momentum, securing a certain degree of success, such as military victories at Preston Pans and Falkirk where they demonstrated that they could work tactically despite limited men and resources. Notable historians such as Devine, Prebble and Mackie have debated whether it was the leadership efforts of Charles Edward Stuart that was solely responsible for the failure of the rising. There are some who argue that the charming Charles Edward Stuart's determination to lead the cause to success inspired many others to support him. Yet there are also suggestions that his lack of military leadership, knowledge and experience hindered the cause and was detrimental to victory. A headstrong commander he ignored the offered advice from senior officials such as Lord Murray.

However, there are others who suggest that the '45 rebellion failed due to the Hanoverians ultimately mustering their better equipped and skilled war machine to systematically defeat the Jacobites. Moreover, the Jacobites could no longer count on support from their European allies as they had done in 1715. This has been a topic of historical debate for a number of years and in order to fully determine if Charles

Edward Stuart really does bear the chief responsibility for the failure of the '45 we must first analyse and assess the evidence presented for each factor individually.

Chapter One - The leadership of Charles Edward Stuart

Charles Edward Stuart; perhaps the most significant figure to emerge from the Jacobite rebellion. Indeed, many would argue that this young prince was the driving force behind the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. The son of Prince James; the Old Pretender, Charles had made the journey to Scotland from France in the belief that it was his right to become Scotland's next monarch. The arrival of Charles offered the Jacobites a fresh and vibrant face. Initially his impactive charisma and confidence led many to believe he would lead the cause to greatness, with historians such as Devine stating; "incredibly only weeks after his arrival from France, Charles was the master of Scotland."¹ However he could not maintain this initial momentum, which was to result in important Jacobite figures questioning his abilities. For instance, Prebble plays devil's advocate to the fact that he even brought anything of worth to the cause when stating; "Handsome self- centred and tragically reckless... he brought little but the innocent appeal of his personality."² Indeed Charles certainly lacked any great military experience, with his most notable encounter being at Gaeta in 1745. Faced with the prospect of challenging military encounters, Charles became overbearing and his lack of military experience shone through. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that this lack of military awareness put his army in a weak

¹ The Scottish Nation 1700-2000, T.M. Devine, Page 43

² The Lion in the North, John Prebble, Page 298

perceived strongholds of Jacobitism would not provide him with the additional resources that he had banked upon, with as little as 200 men joining the cause in Manchester. As the Jacobites moved further south, he received no additional support and indeed Mackie states; "his officers were delusional and despondent. Some of the highlanders had deserted when the border was crossed."³ Despite this he managed to get his army to within 100 miles of London but he could no longer fully rely upon his personality and popularity to continue the push south and at Derby the decision was made to retreat. At this point Charles failed to seize upon the opportunity to turn to Lord George Murray for advice and support. Murray was an experienced soldier and master tactician. Charles and Murray favoured different strategies with their relationship deteriorating further when Charles decided to dissolve to War Council as they retreated from Derby. Murray and other senior figures had been ardently against this decision. Murray however had initially been reluctant to invade England in the first place, Szechi states; "Lord George Murray, the military genius of the '45, favoured a more cautious, defensive strategy, whereby the Jacobites would concentrate on consolidating their hold on Scotland"⁴, a very different outlook to the

³ A History of Scotland, J. D Mackie, Page 277

⁴ The Jacobites- Britain and Europe 1688-1788, Daniel Szechi, Page 100

inexperienced Prince. Whilst Charles may have been the man leading the Jacobite army to these initial victories and fore fronted the Causes' advance further south, it is unquestionable that it was the military experience of Lord George Murray that led the army out unwanted situations and attempted to capitalize on their victories to make military gain, despite condemning the original events. Szechi reinforces this with; "it is highly ironic that the man most vehemently opposed to the whole expedition was the man who saved the army from envelopment and almost certain annihilation on several occasions"⁵, adding to the suggestion that Murray played more of a role in the successes of the Cause than Charles Edward.

As the Jacobite rising of 1745 reached its climatic encounter with Hanoverian troops, the detrimental effects of Charles' military decisions became the hindrance of the cause. Perhaps the most significant of examples, was the crushing defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden. He had insisted that they fight a set battle at Culloden, to avoid engaging in skirmishes and guerrilla warfare- in turn ignoring the advice of senior officers. With no military training Charles opted for the sparse flatland of Culloden Moor, which was to play into the hands of the Hanoverians and their

⁵ The Jacobites- Britain and Europe 1688-1788, Daniel Szechi, Page 100

artillery, yet again Charles had insisted that he knew better than his more experienced officials. Lord George Murray recalled the Moor afterwards in his journal; "I did not like the ground, it certainly was not proper for the Highlanders."⁶ Added to this poor decision made by Charles, many Jacobite soldiers were weak and hungry, as Charles had failed to secure an adequate food source supply throughout the campaign. Indeed Prebble emphasises this downfall when stating; "at dawn on Wednesday April 16th 1746, fewer than 5000 hungry and exhausted men limped into their battle line."⁷ Charles' poor leadership and preparation had seen him hinder the chances of his own troops. The Jacobites proved to be no match for the Government forces. Maclean allows us to see the sheer contrast in the force's ability when describing the Government troops as; "well-armed, well-trained and above all, a well-fed army, twice the size of his (Charles') own"⁸ The complete defeat of the Jacobite army at Culloden was the sole responsibility of Charles Edward Stuart and brought the rising of 1745 to a bitter end, Smout adds; "the victory of the Duke of Cumberland at Culloden in 1746 was bloody, bitter and complete."⁹ His lack of military awareness gave the battle no direction and his repeated poor decisions put not only the battle but also the whole rising in jeopardy. Had

⁶ Extract from Lord George Murray's Diary, Culloden, John Prebble, Page 56

⁷ The Lion in the North, John Prebble, Page 300

⁸ A Concise History of Scotland, Fitzroy Maclean, Page 176

⁹ A history of the Scottish people 1560-1830, T.C. Smout, Page 321

Charles listened to the advice of his highly experienced and able officials and shown some leadership to see a plan through successfully, he may have been able to lead a more effective, threatening Jacobite force both at Culloden and throughout the 1745 rising. Therefore, it was his leadership that was to a substantially large degree, the reason for the rising's failure.

Chapter two - The Hanoverian Response

The response on behalf of the Hanoverians undoubtedly played a prominent role in the failure of the rising and to a certain extent it not only exposed the weakness of Charles as a military leader but also hindered the opportunity for Jacobite support from elsewhere in Europe as it forged strengths behind its own lines.

However, it cannot be disputed that the initial response of the Hanoverians lacked drive and purpose and as a result presented the Jacobites with their initial successes. Indeed Devine states "Charles' successes were made possible by the absence of an effective military response,"¹⁰ therefore suggesting that the role of Charles' leadership on such success was somewhat limited. The army had become ineffective, as there was a considerable lack of Hanoverian soldiers in Scotland, with many swallowed up by European wars in light of the Austrian Succession. The abolition of the Privy Council in 1708 created a power vacuum in Scotland and made it increasingly taxing for the Government to gather intelligence on the whereabouts of the young prince and his intended course of action. Devine goes on to argue that,

¹⁰ The Scottish Nation 1700-2000, T.M. Devine, Page 43

“The unopposed march of the Jacobite army from Glenfinnan to Edinburgh exposed the military weakness of the Scottish state.”¹¹ With almost all of the Hanoverians most experienced soldiers off defending the front lines in Europe, General Cope was only able to mobilise an army of “3000 men, mainly raw,”¹² according to Mackie. This suggests that the men stationed in Scotland at the time lacked basic military participation. To further this, the poor planning on behalf of Cope left the Jacobites with a tactical advantage. The Scots had been able to evade the Hanoverian forces after Cope led his army to the wrong side of Scotland, giving them more time to march south and capture Edinburgh and prepare for the arrival of the Hanoverians. The two forces finally met at Prestonpans and it was evident that the Hanoverians were very poorly equipped, fed and trained- with many of them far too young to be fighting. Defeat came to them in the early morning with a Jacobite ambush.

There is certainly room to argue that as the rebellion continued on, the Hanoverians finally found themselves in a position where they were able to fully deploy their military power, experience and skill. The Jacobite army was now met by a much stronger Hanoverian force that used a number of successful tactics to hamper the

¹¹ The Scottish Nation 1700-2000, T.M. Devine, Page 43

¹² A History of Scotland, J.D Mackie, Page 275

cause. One such method was their use of naval blockades on foreign aid intended for the Jacobite cause, which hindered Charles and his army both financially and militarily. When Charles had first left France on his way to Scotland, he has set sail with a mere two ships, one of which was packed with artillery, muskets and around 700 mercenaries, the other was used by Charles and the "seven men of Moidart". Upon their arrival in British waters the two ships came under attack from naval forces and the first ship was damaged so significantly that it was forced to turn back to France, seriously hampering the cause from the very beginning. Furthermore, as the rising to restore the Stuart dynasty continued to unfold and the need for arms and men became more apparent allies of Charles, notably the French, made efforts to send aid. Yet the quick response of the Hanoverians saw naval blockades intercept this aid on almost every occasion. Mackie emphasises the impact that these naval blockades in hindering the success of the rebellion by stating; "A French attempt to convey a large sum of money to the Prince had been foiled by the Royal Navy just before Culloden,"¹³ illustrating that by cutting their ties with external benefactors, the Hanoverians were able to limit the actions of the Jacobite's

In addition, the Hanoverians were able to seriously jeopardise Charles support

¹³ A History of Scotland, J.D Mackie, Page 278

network through their use of propaganda, depicting Charles as something very unlike the war hero he wanted to be. Government forces distributed volumes of propaganda across the country in the form of posters, leaflets and pamphlets. A recurring image portrayed Charles as “the puppet of the Pope”; something that in a country that was predominately of Protestant faith, did not bode well. While many would argue that it did not play a prominent role in the Hanoverian response, it is clear that with many people prospering under the rule of King George, few were keen to reinstate a Catholic monarch to the throne.

The Hanoverians did not spend long licking their wounds from early defeats at the hands of the Jacobites, instead they mobilised a response system that would shake them up. Cabinet ministers insisted that military troops were recalled from abroad to help bolster the Hanoverian response. Sir John Ligonier and around ten of Cumberland’s most efficient battalions were ordered home from conflict in Flanders. With the death of Ligonier in the October, Cumberland was named Commander of the army and the Hanoverians began to close in on the Jacobites. Prebble successfully conveys the reality of the situation when saying; “He (Charles) reached Derby on December 5th, where it was learnt that Wade was now at Wetherby

across the Penines, Cumberland was 24 miles to the south-west at Lichfield and a third army was assembling on Finchley Common for the defence of London.”¹⁴ The now reinstated Hanoverian army and its experience of strategic military encounters was beginning to restrict Charles’ advance on Government strongholds.

Furthermore, the Government’s use of double agents and deployment of spies proved effective at dismantling any sense of a strong military force in the Jacobites.

Clearly this amalgam of increased military presence and the infiltration of enemy forces played a vital role in knocking the confidence of the rebel forces and led to the eventual disintegration of Jacobite forces through false communication.

Where the Jacobites fell short, the Hanoverians made up for it with the appointment of the Duke of Cumberland as Military Commander. Cumberland was quite the military force and had experience fighting in many conflicts both at home and overseas. It was no secret that Cumberland had both the skills and experience to out-master Charles and Speck clarifies the Hanoverian desire for him to do so when stating, “After the rebellion began his return to head an army against the rebels was

¹⁴ The Lion in the North, John Prebble, Page 300

widely demanded.”¹⁵ At the mercy of the Government’s agent provocateurs, the Jacobites had retreated to Scotland, with Cumberland and his army advancing on them all the way. Jacobite supporters were now beginning to flee from strongholds and Cumberland was able to retake places like Carlisle where around 200 English Jacobites put up no resistance. Cumberland and his army knew that they had neither the men nor the resources to confront Charles so headed back to London where General Hawley took command of the troops, consequently leading them to defeat at Falkirk. After Cumberland was recalled as Commander, he headed for the Highlands with his troops, where they based themselves in Aberdeen. Their barracks in Aberdeen were far more equipped and tactical than the Jacobites who made do with the heather on the hills. This was a good military base for their training and as a result, both he and his troops were confident of their success. Duffy illustrates this through, “he knew he could rely on the firepower of his foot soldiers, and his recent programme of training had given them the confidence on the use of bayonets.”¹⁶ Cumberland was notorious for his innovative methods and his bayonets drills proved that the Jacobites were no match for the well-trained and well-equipped Hanoverians. Cumberland was confident that his troops would

¹⁵ W. A Speck, *The Butcher*, Page 82

¹⁶ *The '45*, Christopher Duffy, Page 511

outnumber the rebels, stating in a letter for Newcastle that “all accounts agree that they cannot assemble all their clans,”¹⁷ not only highlighting the superior Hanoverian numbers but also the dwindling Jacobite followers as a result. There can be no doubt that the leadership and tactical genius in Cumberland partnered with his experienced garnered from conflicts in Europe was a significant player in the crushing of the rebel cause in 1745.

Culloden was unlike anything the Jacobites had encountered before; it was a bloodbath of confusion and fear, as Prebble points out that, “within an hour of noon the battle was over.”¹⁸ The Hanoverians capitalised on the poor leadership of Charles and around 1000 Jacobites died in comparison to just 50 Hanoverians. The Battle ended in a resounding victory for the Hanoverians and ended the Jacobite hopes of a Stuart restoration. Speck agrees when stating, “The forty five had not seriously threatened to remove George from the throne. Instead of revealing that the dynasty was essentially unstable, it demonstrated as nothing else could have done just how firmly established the Hanoverian regime was.”¹⁹ This helps to

¹⁷ An Account from the battle of Culloden, Culloden, John Prebble, Page 99

¹⁸ The Lion in the North, John Prebble, Page 301

¹⁹ The Butcher, W.A. Speck, Page 203

emphasise just how stable the Hanoverian government was and confirms the prominence that its response played in the failure of the '45.

Chapter Three - Lack of European Support

Perhaps one of the most fundamental flaws in the Jacobite rising of 1745 was the level of support Charles Edward was able to garner from other European countries. There is no doubt that Charles Edward's exaggeration of proposed assistance for the cause played a vital role in the failure of the cause. Devine would go as far as to suggest that the support the rising received was; "little more than a token gesture,"²⁰ illustrating how little support they actually had.

Most prominently the French made several promises of military and financial support but in reality, very little of this was ever received. In 1744 an invasion fleet carrying more than 10,000 French troops was to land on England's south coast, yet the invasion was hastily cancelled after it was believed that an English spy discovered the plans and alerted the royal navy who took pre-emptive action. With depleting troops in desperate need of resources, Charles began to mis-inform his supporters of help and used it as a way to bolster his forces. Indeed as Mclynn puts it "Louis XV genuinely had a soft spot for the Pretenders and would have liked to have seen them on the throne of the United Kingdom- but restoration of the exiles

²⁰ The Scottish Nation 1700-2000, T.M. Devine, Page 43

required a unique concatenation of contingent circumstances from a major power like France which never happened,"²¹ thus illustrating that whilst in a perfect world Europe would have seized the opportunity to assist the cause, they couldn't commit fully.

The Spanish had provided the Jacobites with military support in a previous rising in 1719. Yet as the rising of 1745 really got under way, support promised by the Spanish proved to be very reluctant, with little forthcoming. As McLynn states; "In 1719 Spain, under Alberoni, was the prime mover in the Jacobite rising that year. But in 1745-46 Philip V dragged his feet, procrastinating over the supply of arms and money for Charles Edward and only deciding to send major reinforcements to Scotland when such help was already too late"²² Unfortunately for the Charles and the Jacobites, Spanish support for the '45 was too little too late and Szechi believes that this may be due to complications within their own military ranks after the 1719 rising, thus suggesting that it was not so much a lack of desire to support the Jacobites but rather a lack of ability to do so wholeheartedly.

²¹ The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 44

²² The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 40

Next to the great military powers of France and Spain, the Jacobites placed a great deal of their hopes for military support in the Swedish a leading European power at the time. However despite their previous support of the cause and their maintenance of cordial relations the required support came to nothing although they did allow the French to raise a regiment for service in Scotland during the '45.

Furthermore, the Jacobites found that they might have a possible military supporter in the emerging power of Russia. At the time Russia was only just beginning to come into the fore and their possible support for the Jacobites seemed more likely as their "expansion into Eastern Europe in the early 18th century so alarmed English Ministers."²³ The Russians under Peter the Great had previously attempted to create an axis with Sweden and Scotland to counter the British quadruple alliance.

However, the death of the Russian leader in 1725 once again saw the Jacobites bereft of European support. Yet McLynn states that this avenue had not been entirely closed and "In 1745 there was a wild rumour that the Czarina would send troops to help Charles Edward."²⁴ Unfortunately a rumour was all it was and once again the Jacobites were out in the cold

Finally, there was the Austrian Empire. As McLynn puts it, "For most of the Jacobite

²³ The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 42

²⁴ The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 43

period the Austrian Empire was firmly in the British Camp,"²⁵ thus illustrating that from the offset, there would be very little in the way of support for the Jacobite cause. Yet it is important to bear in mind that progress had been made in terms of a positive relationship between the Jacobites and the Austrians in the 1720's, with "the Emperor of Vienna defending the Ostend Company against the English."²⁶ Yet the hoped support was not forthcoming and in 1731 the Austrians committed themselves solely to the Hanoverians at the Second Treaty of Vienna.

In short, the Jacobites desperately needed financial, political and military supports if they were to stand any chance against the far more efficient and powerful Hanoverian army. Yet the level of support that they desperately needed was never fully obtained and even once support was given, McLynn believes that it was with an ulterior motive stating; "The Jacobites were used by their putative allies as political levers and pressure points, all the schemes to restore the Stuart dynasty were in vain,"²⁷ thus illustrating that an extreme lack of genuine support was a highly significant factor in the failure of the '45.

²⁵ The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 43

²⁶ The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 43

²⁷ The Jacobites, Frank McLynn, Page 44

Conclusion.

In conclusion, there is in many regards a certain degree of responsibility bestowed on each of the factors discussed in this account that relate to the failure of the '45. The Hanoverian troops moved decisively and professionally to eventually shut down the Jacobite cause, playing on the weaknesses that Charles Edward had left exposed. Furthermore, the absence of an effective support mechanism from European powers weakened the ability of the cause to prosper and stand any chance of reinstating the Stuarts to the throne- through the lack of military and financial support they received. Yet there can be no doubt that these factors can be directly related to the poor leadership of Charles Edward Stuart. Charles had failed to secure a sufficient amount of support for the cause, both at home and abroad and as a result saw both the momentum and desire in the Jacobites dwindle. Added to this, his arrogant nature created fractured relationships with his highly professional senior officers, resulting in a poor military force to oppose the Hanoverians. Although the failure of the '45 cannot be placed upon his logistical fault alone, there must be acknowledgement for what is arguably the culminating factor in all of these issues, and that is his incompetence and lack of experience as a military leader. There is no doubt that with issues already jeopardising the success of the cause, the Jacobites

needed a strong and prepared military leader, not a young man with a whimsical dream and the power to captivate, to ensure their success. It is for these reasons that Charles Edward Stuart bears the chief responsibility for the failure of the '45 to a significantly large extent.

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