

Chapter 16 : Incognito in Paris (II) (1811-1823).

Women born in the 18th century are no longer comprehensible.

In 1810, Desirée was a General's wife & Princess of Ponte-Corvo. This implied glory, respect, money & influence but few duties. She seems to have used her influence for charitable purposes, such as pushing for the appointment of a suitable hospital director in her home city of Marseille.¹ She seems to have believed that the offer to Jean to become Swedish heir to the throne did not amount to more than an honorary title or a post similar to that held by her brother-in-law Joseph as puppet king of Naples 1806-1808 & Spain 1808-13 or her brother-in-law Louis as puppet king of Holland 1806-10. Jean did nothing in his letters to take her out of that delusion but perhaps told her different in private. There are indications to that effect. During the negotiations, Desirée visited Plombière, Belgium, for a water cure against her "rheumatism" (the meaning is unclear, perhaps a slight mental insufficiency or inadequacy). When the breadth of Jean's plans dawned on her, she started worrying for how it would end. At the end of August she met Napoleon at a court party. Swedish Minister Lagerbielke reported home that: "The Emperor held long talks with the princess of Ponte Corvo, while he held her hand in friendship between his." Desirée was not very reassured by the conversation. Afterwards, she wrote a troubled letter to Foreign Minister Talleyrand, who rather indifferently wrote back: "Undoubtedly [the post carries risks] madame, but it is not bad [going] for a novice."

The couple spent the last days of September on farewell visits. There is a sarcastic description: "Madame de Ponte Corvo looked like a badly wrapped package; she had bad teeth and a dog physiognomy surrounded by curly red hair; She wore a hat with roses and a scarf and looked unattractive. She was constantly crying because of the cruel fate that would force her to leave Paris. ... she shivered at the *terrible* thought of being buried alive in Sweden, etc., etc."² Hard to take a position on what surely was malice. She had bundled up in warm clothes and looked plumper than she was. In portraits from this time, she is no longer young girl lithe but in no way portly. Her teeth had long been a problem though. Desirée liked sweets, skimmed on oral hygiene and complained of toothache. She also had problems with her skin that was reddish and which she treated with tobacco juice, compacts, fruit diet, etc.

Jean arrived in Stockholm on November 2. Desirée was delayed by practicalities - she had business affairs in Holland - and arrived only on January 6. She was accompanied by her son Oscar, two young officers and a companion – her schoolmate Elise La Flotte (1779-1815; b. Reboul) – who doubled as Oscar's governess. In addition, she brought her staff of 30-40 people: hairdresser, chambermaid, dentist, doctor, servants, coaches, couriers, secretary, the son's tutor Lemoine, etc. It was cold, 24 degrees below zero, and none of them was dressed for the weather. The welcome ceremony was cut short but included 256 canon shots. Jean had no objections. Desirée was, according to him, in large contexts "shy and easily embarrassed". Queen Charlotte subsequently had unflattering comments: "The Crown Princess is small in stature, by no means beautiful and lacks style. As a result of her shyness she seems rude, impolite and aloof. She behaves like a spoiled child and only does what she feels like."³

¹ Grille 1853: volym 2, sida 83-85.

² Turquan, J & Ellis, L. La belle Pamela (Lady Edward Fitzgerald) 1773-1831, d'après des correspondances et memoires inedits. (1923: s. 234-235.) I: Girod de l'Ain 1960: ss. 140-141; Lindqvist 2009: s. 336.

³ Drottning H E Charlotta 1939: ss. 636-637.

Charlotte's diary is full of similar comments. Since this is the only source to Desirée's stay in Stockholm, it is difficult to determine what is true, false or exaggerated. I'll try:

The relationship between Queen Charlotte and Desirée went bad from the start. She and Desirée were to share her court, which meant that Charlotte kept the maids of honour who had the higher rank, while Desirée got the ladies-in-waiting, who had the lower rank.⁴ Charles XIII appointed Countess Caroline Lewenhaupt (1754-1826) as Desirée's chief maid, who consequently lost her position as maid of honour. Both Jean, Desirée and Lewenhaupt felt insulted. However, Jean remained silent since he was dependent on the goodwill of Charles XIII. Similar conflicts occurred. Desirée was not lodged in the castle and not invited to certain ceremonies. It was quite clear that Sweden welcomed Jean & son Oscar but considered Desirée redundant.

In her diary, Queen Charlotte believed that Desirée should have accepted the situation and like Jean, done her best to be liked. "But right from the start, she antagonized the Swedes by complaining about the climate, her lodging and the food and expressing dissatisfaction with everything in an extremely contemptuous tone and with the greatest impatience, all testifying to a bad opinion about Sweden and the Swedes." It is difficult to assess the gravity of Desirée's breach of etiquette. The court etiquette amounts to accepting your rank, smile at insults & to wrap your criticism in so many layers that it is barely comprehensible. All this was deeply alien to Desirée. She was used to the salons where everything was bandied about. The Queen: "Some moments, when it pleases her, she can nevertheless be very polite, even friendly, saying nothing but affections and pleasantries to all in her vicinity. This capriciousness clearly shows that she lacks education and guidance. ... While I am with her on a one-to-one basis, in intimacy, she can nevertheless be both confidential, friendly and happy, quite witty and intelligent and certainly not lacking in education."

Desirée's companion, Elise La Flotte, copied her employer and she too was a source of conflict. Desirée did her best (or rather worst) to replace Lewenhaupt. At one point, La Flotte was actually ordered by Jean to return to France, but this was cancelled after an argument with Desirée. The Queen: "One argument is supposed to have ended in such a shouting match, that the Crown Princess' nerves took a beating and she was nauseous for several days." This ended in the compromise that La Flotte was appointed chief lady (an intermediate position) and Desirée managing to replace Lewenhaupt with her own favourite, the French-born Countess Adine de Bréant (1788-1827; m. af Fogelvik & Posse). Desirée is often portrayed as childish but one should not underestimate her ability to get her way, by confrontation or by wiles. She also socialized with the dowager queen Sophia Magdalena (1746-1813), who disliked this "court of usurpers" even more than herself.

One of the arguments for electing Jean as Crown Prince had been his fabulous wealth. Jean arrived deeply in debt, however, and the situation grew worse. When he was elected, Jean lost his marshal's dignity and with it his fiefs in Italy & Germany. Napoleon had promised him financial compensation but this was not forthcoming. Desirée feared that the home at rue d'Anjou and the summer estate La Grange would be seized as well. This Swedish adventure could well end in total ruin. She entered into negotiations with her brother Nicolas to sell or mortgage La Grange to at least secure the capital.

⁴ Sandin 2011: s. 63.

Either Desirée didn't understand the scope of the etiquette or she didn't care. The latter is more likely. The Queen: "It is offensive that she goes out without any of her ladies, only accompanied by the crown prince's adjutant, as if she was just another private person. ... Admittedly, she was not born to her present position, but she should try to face up to the duties now incumbent upon her." On her home journey, Desirée had the ladies-in-waiting but no aides, which was wrong too.

Desirée had from the beginning announced that her visit to Sweden was temporary and that she, like her sister Josephine (Queen of Naples and Spain) and her sister-in-law Hortense (Queen of Holland) would reside in Paris. In May, she prepared her departure by sending her baggage in advance and requesting a French visa. Napoleon, through the French minister, had it conveyed that she was now actually Swedish, so she could not come and go as she liked. Desirée did therefore not officially travel as Swedish Crown Princess, but as countess of Gotland and Jean's personal diplomatic envoy. Desirée was happy to leave the country. "The last evening before the king's departure, the princess' joy was almost offensive. She showed unreservedly how happy she felt to return to France. Proof of her extreme thoughtlessness is as follows. Asked by the king when she intended to come back, she said: 'In the autumn, I hope,' and added laughing, "but I may come alone, for none of my servants can suffer the winter."

On June 4 she left Stockholm. "On that day, the unpopularity of the Crown Princess reached its peak, at least among those Swedes who witnessed her farewell of husband and son, for she left them without showing the slightest regret, not shedding a tear. The crown prince was even embarrassed by her conduct and said aloud that he would be truly angry, if she were not back in October. She promised that, despite everyone knowing, that she had taken steps to spend the winter in Paris and only return in a year's time. Among other things, the Swedish maids had been paid until the end of June with the request to return in a year's time."

The official reason for leaving Sweden was to visit the Plombière spa for yet another water cure, meet her sister Julie before she left for Spain and put the couple's financial affairs in order. "The Crown Prince still owns a great fortune in France and wishes to invest it here or elsewhere, This was not well known to the public, why her behaviour was judged to harshly. I believe that she will not be back as long as the king is alive, perhaps postponing the arrival still longer, because neither climate nor people suit her." That was the case. Jean Fournier thought she had overreacted to the atmosphere of the court – to its higher echelons:

I only hear favourable comments about the Crown Princess; She was loved and respected by everybody she met. Much individual rancour occurred, but that is to be expected at the Swedish court, in the midst of the rumour and slander, that surrounds the Queen. After some time this ceased and if the princess had had a friend or confidant better acquainted with the goings on, she would never have left Sweden.

This departure, this disregard for a nation that offered her a crown, has aroused lively discontent. Nevertheless, one knows the crown prince's affection for her and her influence upon him; It is regrettable that she is gone and I wish she might return, in the hope that her influence and presence in Sweden will

restore good relations with France. This is the view of the respectable. But Russians, Englishmen and troublemakers of all kinds spread all sorts of rumours to promote their plans, they even talk about a possible divorce...⁵

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In September 1811, Desirée was again in Paris. She kept a low profile but continued with charity work. On January 27, 1812, her situation became piquant when Napoleon attacked Swedish Pomerania. During the conflict, Desirée was an intermediary in a curious mix of politics and family affairs. The following letter is written on March 3 – the politics dictated by Napoleon's Foreign Minister Bassano, the family affairs authored of Desirée. It was delivered to Jean through his political agent Elof Signeul:

[B:] The Emperor is more powerful than ever, and it would be very unwise of you to fight against him; you are neither strong enough nor acquainted enough with your new country. I have no doubt that when you reveal your true feelings against France most of your nation - and especially the nobility - will abandon you at first adversity, as the 3rd estate did when the emperor won his first victory. ...

I have often told you in letters, that all those who are interested in you, wish to see you as King. Given this you can have yourself appointed by the Parliament, provided it is only caution that deters you and you think it serves you. This is the moment. If you do not act now, you will regret it.

...

[D:] I have extended my stay in France in the hope of meeting the Emperor and making him change his mind about you and save some flotsam of our former fortune. I am trying to get rid of the farm and the house, but it is very difficult at the moment to sell capital values. Nicolas is offered only 450,000 francs for La Grange, but he does not want to sell it under 500,000 or 480,000.

I would have liked to better manage my health, but I have had too much trouble to do so. I still have bad skin and I am plagued by rheumatism. I'm dieting, but I don't think it will help. I feel too anxious, being at six hundred lieues from you and Oscar, and yet it is only here that I can be cured, as I can only eat nourishing things, which is difficult in Sweden, where there are fruits and vegetables only two months of the year. Incidentally, I do not think my presence here is of any harm, as the emperor seems to have great confidence in me.⁶

Jean's answer of May 18, 1812 also mixes politics & family affairs:

The new proposals are no more suitable for Sweden than the previous ones. ... Even if our undertakings were to meet the greatest success, we could only hope to recover Finland, and such a result, if it were possible, would, my dear friend, have the same effect on me and Sweden as a Nessus shirt: Every ten years we would have to wage bloody wars to keep it, and in the end still lose it. ... If the emperor does not give us Norway and acknowledge our neutrality, the war [with him] is inevitable ... Let all that I have told you be the basis of your conversations both with the Duke of B[assano], if he visits you, and with members of the Imperial family.

...

⁵ Fournier 1811. I: Scaevola red. 1885: ss. 613-614.

⁶ Girod de l'Ain 1960: ss. 151-154.

I would be delighted to see you with me, but your health is more important than my joy. Since [Emperor Napoleon] is gracious enough to allow you to care for your health in your homeland, I will not oppose it, and although I am convinced that it is not out of respect for me, I am nevertheless grateful.

I can't suggest anything positive about our business; You are at the scene and thus better placed to sort them out than I. My opinion is still that you sell everything you can and in particular the capitals, in *le grand-livre* or Banque de France; the safest thing at the moment is surely the American shares.⁷

On December 19, 1812, Napoleon returned to France from his Russian debacle. The enemies pressed on. Jean joined the coalition, and his brother-in-law Joseph was deposed from his Spanish throne. There is no information on what Desirée thought of Jean's "treason", but she would reasonably have felt conflicted. On May 18, 1813, she sold La Grange to her brother Nicolas to safeguard against a confiscation. She spent the summer with her sister Julie. On April 6, 1814, Napoleon abdicated. Julie and her two daughters settled at Desirée's. On April 12-30, at the time of the peace negotiations, Jean was in Paris, but in order not to compromise Desirée's neutrality (or because the house too small for him and his suite) he lived elsewhere. There are some newspaper articles about Tsar Nicholas suggesting that Jean marry a more fitting wife. Desirée took a lot of umbrage.⁸ During the 100 days she locked herself in. Afterwards, she kept a low profile. Her position was delicate. Having been Napoleon's object of affection was no merit during the Restoration & "the White Terror". She did not socialize with the court or the nobility but within her old circle. Her "diplomatic career" was over but she arranged receptions for Paris-Swedes and as Swedish representative issued Orders and commendations. The couples economy recovered through the Guadeloupe money and all loans were paid off. However, Desirée feared a turnaround and warned Jean not to invest the entire fortune in Sweden - better spread it around.

In January 1816 was passed the amnesty law through which the Bonaparte family was exiled. Desirée managed to have Julie's exile postponed until the summer, hoping to give her a safe haven in Sweden, but Jean feared the political repercussions. In 1817 Julie moved to Switzerland. Desirée remained in Paris. Jean was asked if he was preventing his wife from returning to Sweden. "Be convinced," replied the crown prince, "that I desire no more than to see my wife again. I am not in love with her, we have been for too long married, but I consider her my best friend, and she is, she has often shown that. As far as her return journey is concerned, it must be borne in mind that she is very fickle and irresolute. Because she is now far from here, she wants to come, but once she has arrived, she would surely like to return to Paris. Moreover, for political reasons, I cannot grant her request that her sister be given refuge here. You know how jealous the Swedes are. Incidentally, what position would the former Queen of Spain have?"⁹

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The description of Desirée's Paris years during the Empire and the Restoration had to wait until the archives were put in order and the memoirs of the time, posthumous or not, had been made public, which took until mid 20th century. Desirée continued her stay with the approval of Jean and Louis XVIII. In January 1817, she was invited to a reception by Louis and his

⁷ Girod de l'Ain 1960: ss. 155-157.

⁸ Söderhjelm 1939: ss. 367-368.

⁹ Drottning Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta 1942: s. 542.

family. She justified her stay with a still shaky health. She had difficulties in defending her rank:

Lady Sarah Lytton has described the following anecdote from an occasion when a distinguished English lady introduced her daughters to the Swedish Crown Princess - this one spent time with the ladies in the English Embassy. The English lady proudly remarked: "Your Royal Highness knows that they are the daughters of a prince of the Holy Roman Empire?" - "I know", the Crown Princess replied, "that I am the daughter of a merchant in Marseille."¹⁰

Desirée is said to have suffered from such a severe skin condition that she was reluctant to appear in public. A description:

The Queen of Sweden is a small woman, who looks to be between thirty-four and thirty-six years old, small and full-bodied (un peu rondelette). She is always very well dressed, puts a lot of effort into it and likes the theatre. Her eyes are brown, beautiful and lively, her appearance quite common. Her skin is destroyed by a skin disease, which she contracted during her year-long stay in Sweden. She is constantly wearing a veil. She's supposed to be staying in France for health reasons. ... when she visits, she does so with the veil down.¹¹

Desirée's relationship with French Foreign Minister Armand Richelieu (1766-1822) is much publicised. According to several sources, Desirée was 1818-1822 mentally disturbed and stalked him believing that he had feelings for her. Desirée had met Richelieu in May 1816 during an audience about the future of her sister Julie. However, the stalking (if so it was) does not appear to have begun until after Jean's coronation on May 11, 1818. Jean received reports - the first in June 1818 - but did not want to intervene.¹² He learned that Desirée was pursuing Richelieu during his walks and missions and also spying on his home life but that Richelieu was demonstratively dismissive. This continued until his death on May 17, 1822. Jean suspected that people around her encouraged it to cause him discomfort. For example, Desirée added two new incognito: "Mrs. Baker" after the queen dowager Sofia Augusta Ruuth (1789-1871; m. Baker) & "Mme Villeneuve" after sister Honorine Clary (1769-1843; m. Villeneuve). Additional suspects were her friend Mme Lambot (known for her many admirers), Mme Récamier (known for her intrigues) & "the friend of the house" politician Angelo-Maria Chiappe (1760-1826). In order to have any control over the whole thing, Jean arranged for her to be under surveillance. The spy was her chamberlain Count Nicolas de Montrichard.

The most detailed depictions are in the memoirs of Count Rochechouart, Mme Récamier, Countess de Boign and Paul Barra. All later depictions quote from these. The three most important arguments for the relationship being about love have been: (1) Richelieu's good looks. (2) The intensity of Desirée's feelings (see below). (3) The exclusion method: If it wasn't love, then what was it?

- Letter from Richelieu to Rochechouart: "This morning I found a bouquet of flowers in my room in the inn. Could it be possible that my crazy queen is here? She

¹⁰ I: Lindwall 1919: ss. 192-193. [Källan & dateringen är oklar. Enligt Kermina (1991: s. 282) var det Desirées överhovmästarinna grevinnan Caroline Lewenhaupt som 1811 presenterade sina döttrar som tyskromerska "riksgräverinnor".]

¹¹ d'Armaillé 1897: s. 245. I: Lindwall 1919: ss. 202-203.

¹² Girod de l'Ain 1960: ss. 186-201.

persecutes me with her insane love, and I have only to escape as fast as I can.”
(Zurich 1819-07-19) - ”My crazy queen is here, but in the strictest incognito, and hidden behind her veil; When I meet her, I'm not even sure it's really her, and proudly walk by. This is getting on my nerves.” (Spa 1819-09-25)¹³

- Récamier: She was very shy and knew that the Duke did not care about her. She did not dare to speak to him, but as long as he remained in the salon, she stared at him as if possessed. She stopped speaking and fell into a kind of ecstasy. Then she continued the conversation as if nothing had happened.¹⁴
- de Boign: She spoke with animation about once on a chance encounter even having greeted him with a curtsy and he bowing before he realized who she was. She rushed to tell this triumph to Mme Récamier, from whom I have the information. Mme Récamier had previously pointed out to the Queen that her female dignity was damaged because his rejections were as undeserved as her persecutions and that they both behaved cruelly towards each other. But it was the Queen's way of expressing her love - shy and wild at the same time (”un peu farouche”). And nothing that Mme Récamier had to say would affect her.¹⁵
- In a conversation in March 1822 with politician Paul Barras, Richelieu expressed his wonderment at the whole thing:

”Something rather strange has happened to me”, he is supposed have said, ”namely that I am persecuted by Madame Bernadotte under the guise that she has tender feelings ... From morning to evening two years going this little or great lady leaves me not a moment's rest; She does me the honour of following in my footsteps with passionate obstinacy ... But it seems to me that in this obstinacy ... there is something unrelated to emotions. Her way of placing her people in my antechamber, even in my stable, is against all nature, unless it is an expression of her desire to know everything that happens to me and what I do by virtue of my position and that may be related to the general politics of Europe. I have to the extent rejected the affections of the little queen Désirées of Marseille, that I would have thought her tired and humiliated by it all, where it not that I from various quarters have been informed that her so-called love is only a pretext and a cover for an important police task, which she is carrying out in the interest of her royal husband and at his request. Madame Bernadotte, who for some reason of her own, pretend to have strong feelings for my person, is undoubtedly an honourable and capable woman and very attached to her husband: His Majesty has wanted to give her a rest from her marital duties by giving her this trusted position. She is a little Swedish police agent, to whom the husband has assigned me as target, as he used to do in France under the imperial regime, when he wonderfully understood understood to use his little wife in his personal machinations, while the Bonapartes, for their part, believed that Madame Bernadotte was a tool of their own. Whether she from that moment deceived both camps or only her husband, it became clear that as a simple agent she was already showing quite great skill; How would it be if she were judged by the role of double agent that she seems to be playing at the

¹³ Rochechouart 1889: ss. 478-479.

¹⁴ Juliette Récamier. I: d'Armaillé 1897: ss. 246-247. I: Lindwall 1919: s. 204. [Originalt ej lokaliserat.]

¹⁵ de Boigne 1907: del 3, s. 95.

moment? She is not in fact a nullity, nor is she the ignoble person she may seem to be, this little woman Bernadotte. In particular, in her new role, she has understood to gain the trust of her high husband, and she has the nose for what may benefit him.”¹⁶

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Hypothesis 1

Given the minimal personal gain of the relationship, the act itself - to take an initiative of her own - must have been the main object. Desirée had until now been treated as a weak-willed mascot. My belief is that she there and then in Paris slowly, slowly matured into an independent woman & queen. Desirée before and after was not the same person. Richelieu appears to have been part of the process. The verdict of the Parisian society and also of Desirée's biographer Girod de l'Ain has been harsh though: Desirée was a menopausal bitch, "le cervau dérangé par les troubles que l'âge apportait à sa circulation sanguine".¹⁷ Still in 1904 Germain Babst worked himself up to a six-page long rage to that effect.¹⁸ It is difficult to understand the emotions but probably Desirée has borne the brunt of the French combined Bernadotte hatred, class loathing and misogyny.

In psychiatry, the term for Desirée's behaviour is erotomania, which according to DSM-IV is a delusional syndrome often combined with stalking and contact attempts. The syndrome is more common in women than in men. The object often has a higher social status. The trigger is unclear but in my interpretation I have taken the social aspect into account, so that the position of Queen somehow triggered it all. However, for the purely psychiatric interpretation, there were similar episodes:

- 1832-1837 she had unanswered feelings for the governor at Rosersberg Castle, Carl Erik Lagerstråle (1802-1872): "The old wife's passion has flared up again with all its former vehemence" - "Mutter is beside herself" in her new crush. - "Mother is right that her Majesty is inexplicable and fortunately one of a kind. God save us if there are more of her ilk. Life can be hard enough as it is." All according to Marshal of the court Magnus Brahe.¹⁹
- Desirée's letter romance with Napoleon can be interpreted as a fantasy that first flattered him, but which he eventually grew tired of, which seems to have been the general opinion. Mme de Rémusat of Napoleon's court believed the reason why Desirée returned to Paris in 1811 was to be in his vicinity.²⁰ Napoleon avoided her, however. Desirée's affection for Jean was also perceived by acquaintances as uncalled-for intense.

Hypothesis 2

Desirée being mentally ill does not however explain that: (1) Her symptoms took more than two years to develop - from Richelieu's first visit in May 1816 until after Karl Johan's

¹⁶ Barras 1895: del 2, s. 406 ff. I: Girod de l'Ain 1960: ss. 198-199.

¹⁷ Girod de l'Ain 1974: s. 17.

¹⁸ Babst 1904: del 3, ss. 36-42. [Det förefaller som om han lagt texten i marskalk Canroberts mun.]

¹⁹ Stensson 1986: s. 262.

²⁰ d'Armaillé 1897: s. 250. [d'Armaillé hänvisar till Mme de Rémusats memoarer 1802-1808. Uppgiften har inte kunnat lokaliseras i den källan. Inte heller i hennes brev 1804-1814.]

coronation on May 11, 1818. (2) Richelieu's strange behaviour, to put it mildly, to completely ignore a queen.

A more likely version is that Desirée & Richelieu actually socialized - perhaps Louis thought it wise policy to have an unofficial contact with Charles John through his foreign minister Richelieu in the same way as Napoleon some years earlier through his foreign minister Bassano. But that the intercourse after Karl Johan's coronation on May 11, 1818, became too politically sensitive to continue. Desirée felt rejected, tried to rekindle the relationship, but did not know how.

Above is my own alternative hypothesis, but there is some support for it. According to the politician, writer etc. François-Joseph Grill, Richelieu was a much more frequent guest of Desirée than he later admitted:

Madame Bernadotte was not beautiful; but she was friendly, homely, witty and not so keen as others to emphasize her position and fortune. She did not follow her husband to Stockholm, but stayed in Paris, in a house on the back street Saint-Fiacre. The street is now widened and the house demolished.

In the princess' house there was a magnificent apartment where she received her friends and acquaintances, not so many in number, but people that one liked to meet. During the Restoration period, the Duke of Richelieu was often there. The Duke appreciated the lovely Désirée, as he called her. He visited her in the same way that Chateaubriand visited Madame Récamier. The gatherings were happy and we were happy. We made day to night; we only left at dawn; we were tired then, but came alive when we next night met again in our intimate conversations; hours I remember with joy.²¹

Hypothesis 3

As Queen, Desirée expected to be treated as such. She wasn't, and she didn't know how to handle the situation. The French Government probably didn't know either. Richelieu was ordered to abstain.

Hypothesis 4

Perhaps it was as simple as Desirée attempting to establish a perfectly normal love affaire, but that the object of her affection was ill chosen. Richelieu had been forced by his father to marry a severely disabled woman. They had no relationship, but he remained true.

* * *

Desirée did not return to Sweden until June 13, 1823, accompanied by her daughter-in-law. There are many speculations as to why it took so long:

- According to Jean, it was due to her indecisive nature. Every winter, she wrote that she was only waiting for spring. She then blamed her absence on an unspecified illness that grew worse with sea voyages.

²¹ Grille 1853: volym 2, sida 85-86. [Min översättning.]

- According to Desirée, the business affairs and her poor health - rheumatism & skin problems - required her to stay. However, the symptoms appear psychosomatic: depression, tiredness, headache & insomnia. She gained and lost weight. Her skin was at times reddish, greyish & full of rashes. Probably the spa treatments were directly harmful.
- According to her grandson Oscar II, Desirée during her Paris years as first lady of Sweden, had a privileged position without having to do much in return. She moved to Sweden only because she was afraid of losing this position if she did not defend it. The daughter-in-law would in her absence become the first lady of the kingdom.²² According to her lady-in-waiting Sofia Jennings, "she used to jokingly state, that "it was much more fun to be ambassador in Paris than Crown Princess to Stockholm".²³
- There is also a feminist argument. As long as she lived abroad, Jean had difficulty exercising his guardianship. Once in Sweden she must have his approval for everything & her money belonged to him.
- Finally, Duke Richelieu had been dead since May 17 the year before.

²² Oscar II 1960: del 3, ss. 220-222.

²³ Brander 1923: s. 127.