

SUMMARY: This letter dated 25 December 1581 from the Spanish ambassador in London, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604), to King Philip of Spain, although written a year to the day after the event, provides evidence of Howard and Arundel's actions on the night of 25 December 1580. Mendoza begins by stating his knowledge 'through some priests' that Oxford's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard, had been reconciled to the Catholic church and had been a practising Catholic 'for some years' prior to 1581 and that for this reason Howard had strongly favoured the prospective marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Alencon. Mendoza then turns to the events of the night of 25 December 1580, stating that Howard 'heard' that Oxford had accused him of being reconciled to the Catholic Church and that the Queen had secretly ordered his (Howard's) arrest. This version conflicts with Charles Arundel's account of his meeting with Oxford earlier that evening in which Arundel states that Oxford warned him, and told him that 'Southwell hath bewrayed all' (see TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2). In assessing the validity of the two different versions, it is noteworthy that Southwell did not flee to Mendoza's house with Howard and Arundel on the night of 25 December 1580, which suggests that some credence is to be placed in Charles Arundel's statement that Oxford told him that 'Southwell hath bewrayed all'. Moreover in this letter Mendoza states that Howard and Arundel told him 'that they had been warned of their danger by a Councillor, a friend of Lord Harry's', whereas, as mentioned above, in his account of his meeting with Oxford Charles Arundel states that it was Oxford who warned him.

It seems likely that someone deliberately arranged that Howard and Arundel be provided with disinformation, knowing that Howard's guilty conscience about his contact with the French ambassador Mauvissiere would provoke him into doing something rash for which he could legitimately be arrested, and this is precisely what happened. As Mendoza's letter indicates, Howard admitted to Mendoza that his concern that his contact with Mauvissiere would be revealed, and that he would for that reason be thrown into the Tower and lose his life, prompted him to flee to Mendoza's house where he and Arundel were taken in and sheltered until they received word that they would not be imprisoned in the Tower but only confined to the houses of 'gentlemen'. As Mendoza relates, upon being given this assurance, Howard and Arundel then left Mendoza's house. However once Howard and Arundel were under arrest, Leicester spread rumours to inflame people against them, and against the French, as Mendoza had stated in his letter of 9 January 1581.

Mendoza thus reveals, from Howard's own mouth, his complicity with Mauvissiere and his fear for his life, which in turn sheds light on the charade which Oxford and the Queen subsequently acted at court for Mauvissiere's benefit on January 10 or 11, and which Mauvissiere reported to King Henri III of France in his letter of 11 January 1581 (see BN 15973, ff. 387v-392). It seems very likely that the performance put on by Oxford and the Queen, and the Queen's remarks to Mauvissiere, were designed to elicit incriminating statements from Mauvissiere against himself and Howard while at the same time offering reassurance that the French marriage negotiations would not be jeopardized by these 'plots'.

Near the end of this part of the letter, Mendoza states that ‘El Milord Hari, en agradescimiento de la voluntad con que yo le acogí, no podria decir á V.M. con el cuidado que me ha advertido y advierte de quanto puede alcanzar que es del servicio de V. M.’. In the first translation below, this is rendered as ‘In his gratitude for my kindness in sheltering him, Lord Harry has expressed to me most emphatically that all that he has is at your Majesty’s service’. In the second, it is rendered as ‘Milord Harry, in gratitude for the goodwill with which I received him, and with a care which I can hardly describe, has informed and informs me of everything he hears which is of service to your Majesty’. There is a vast difference between the two translations, and the second seems to reflect Mendoza’s words more accurately. It thus seems that Howard acted as a spy for Spain from 25 December 1580 onwards. We have it on Mendoza’s own evidence that after the events of the night of 25 December 1580 Howard became Mendoza’s constant and trusted informant, and that Howard’s information was of particular value because of his friendship with the ladies of Queen Elizabeth’s privy chamber and his kinsman, the Earl of Sussex, and in fact much of the information in the letter so clearly depends on sources such as Sussex and the ladies of the Queen’s privy chamber that it can only have reached Mendoza through Lord Henry Howard. Mendoza concludes by affirming to King Philip that Howard is so eager to help him that he could not so much as wish Howard to help him more.

It should be noted that in the original Spanish Mendoza mistakenly wrote ‘francés Arundel’, thereby conflating Francis Southwell and Charles Arundel. It was Charles Arundel who fled with Lord Henry Howard to Mendoza’s house on the night of 25 December 1580.

The transcript in Spanish below of the portion of the letter dealing with Lord Henry Howard is taken from *Coleccion de Documentos Ineditos para la Historia de España por El Marques de la Fuensanta del Valle, D. José Sancho Rayon y D. Francisco de Zabalburu*, Tomo XCII (Madrid: M. Ginesta Hermanos, Impresores de la Real Casa, 1888, reprinted Kraus Reprint Ltd., Vadux, 1966), pp. 216-221. The first translation below, of the entire letter, is taken from Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs*, Vol. III, 1580-1586, pp. 242-6. The second translation below, of the portion of the letter dealing with Lord Henry Howard only, is taken from Pollen, John Hungerford, and William MacMahon (eds.) (1919), *The Venerable Philip Howard Earl of Arundel, 1557-95*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 21, pp. 30-1.

Milord Harihabart, hermano del Duque de Norfolch ha años que yo sé por via de clérigos ser muy católico, haciendo de ordinario, despues que se reconcilió á la Santa Iglesia, el ejercicio como tal, y por este respecto deseaba se efectuase el casamiento, creyendo como otros muchos católicos que por este medio vinieran á tener libremente la Religion, y entendiendo que el Conde de Asfor le habia acusado y á un francés Arundel de haberse reconciliado á la Santa Iglesia Romana, por lo cual habia mandado la Reina en secreto los prendiesen otro dia, de que fueron advertidos por un Consejero amigo de Milord Hari, y

tras tener estrecha comunicacion con el Embajador de Francia y temer no los metiesen en la Torre, perdiendo sus vidas, no osaron en aquella conyuntura fiarse dél ni ir á su casa, viniéndose á las doce de la noche á la mia sin haberles hablado jamás; me dijeron la necesidad en que se hallaban de perder las vidas sino les escondia; yo por ser católicos los entretuve sin que persona de mi casa lo entendiese, sino un solo criado, hasta en tanto que su amigo el Consejero los avisó que su prision no sería sino en casa de un caballero, por cuyo respecto salieron luégo en público. El Milord Hari, en agradescimiento de la voluntad con que yo le acogí, no podria decir á V.M. con el cuidado que me ha advertido y advierte de cuanto puede alcanzar que es del servicio de V. M. reconociendo la buena obra que no es pequeña novedad hacello inglés. Tiene muy buenas partes y entendimiento y mucha amistad con damas de la Cámara privada, que le advierten puntualmente cuanto pasa de puertas á dentro y con el de Sussex, que es uña y carne, y por tocar con cuanta afición trata de ocuparse en el servicio de V. M., que ha sido siempre su deseo, es ocasion representarlo yo aquí á V. M., cosa que de ninguna manera quiere que entienda aún su propio brazo por asistirme mejor.

From Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs*, Vol. III, 1580-1586, pp. 242-6:

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> the barges were ready for Alencon's departure, some of the Frenchmen and the baggage having already started. The supper for the Queen and him was all prepared at Cobham, when a strong north-east gale sprang up, and has been blowing ever since. This being against the crossing, he has been delayed, and in the meanwhile letters came to him from France, about which he has conferred with the Queen, who had been anxious to expedite his departure in view of Flemish affairs. Although she displayed grief publicly at his departure, I understand that in her own chamber she danced for very joy at getting rid of him, as she desired of all things to get him away from here.

Whilst he was being detained by contrary weather he told the Queen that he could not help feeling hurt that she had been so ready to let him go, knowing as she must how much he was attached to her, but he could see by this how luke-warm was her love for him, and that his presence tired her, since she was ready to send him away rather in public disgrace than private satisfaction. The Queen with a hundred thousand false words and oaths assured him of her affection for him, and said that she had only been brought to allow his departure in order to give him pleasure, and not for her own gratification, since his departure was unnecessarily hasty. Alencon replied to this, 'No, no, Madam, you are mine, as I can prove by letters and words you have written to me, confirmed by the gift of the ring, of which I have sent intelligence to the King my brother, my mother, and the Princes of France, all those who were present at our interviews being ready to bear testimony. If I cannot get you for my wife by fair means and affection I must do so by force, for I will not leave this country without you.' The Queen was perturbed at these words, and replied that she had never written anything that she could not justify, and she did not care what interpretation people chose to put upon her letters as she knew her own intention better than anyone else could, and as for the ring, it was only a pledge of

perpetual friendship and of a conditional contract, dependent upon his brother the King acceding to her conditions, which she was quite sure he never would do. She protested, finally, that she was entirely free from any matrimonial engagements, and, on the contrary, was desirous of remaining in her present state, until she could at all events overcome her natural hatred to marriage, but she assured him, notwithstanding this, that there was nothing that she desired more than that he should stay in this country as her brother and friend, for mutual good companionship, but not as her husband. Many words passed about this, the end of which was that after the holidays they would discuss what money should be given to him.

As the Queen saw this unexpected change in Alencon, and at the same time received news from the Ambassador Cobham that the King of France would not be sorry for his brother to be delayed here, she called the Lord Treasurer and repeated to him what had passed, directing him to endeavour, with the greatest discretion and moderation, to represent to Alencon how important his presence was in Flanders, and how evident was the danger that they (the States) would submit to your Majesty unless he were there to prevent it. Cecil, by this means, was to urge him to depart, whilst she undertook to feed him with hopes that he should take some money with him.

When the Queen had done this, she sent secretly for Simier, who apparently for a long time she has had in her interest, and had been entertaining here. To him she complained greatly of the annoyance she felt at Alencon's pressing her so closely, saying that she could not get rid of him without danger, or entertain him further without inconvenience. Simier advised her that if she was not willing to marry, she should stand firm in the conditions which she was demanding from the King of France, and that she should insist upon their being granted before the settlement of the marriage. The Queen repeated to him the conditions she had proposed, (which I have already written to your Majesty), and said that it was not to be imagined that the King would consent to declare war against your Majesty, unless she undertook to contribute to the cost. This would give her an excuse to publicly negotiate for a confirmation of her old alliance with the House of Burgundy, whereupon she doubted not that the King would break off the negotiations, and recall Alencon.

Simier replied that she must not depend upon this, because the King of France well knew the evil inclination of his brother, his inconstancy in religion, and his readiness to encourage faction, and he might well grant her terms in order to get rid of his brother out of the country, and set him free to encourage sedition elsewhere rather than in France, and thus put a stop to the civil war which England had kept alive for so many years.

The Queen replied, 'Do not think that the King will grant these terms, but even if he do, I shall find a road out of it. You may see how Alencon loves me by a very good thing I will tell you in strict secrecy. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he asked me at least to let him have some money to maintain the war in Flanders, which he said he had begun for my sake, and that I should thus recompense him for the affront of my refusing to marry him. As I found no other convenient way of getting rid of him, I offered him a considerable sum per month, the first payment of which I promised to assure at once. This has so much brightened

him up that you would not know him, if you saw him, but as soon as he is across the sea, I will assure him that my Council will not agree to the arrangement, on the ground that my country cannot, without unduly weakening itself, contribute so large a sum and the people would not allow it.'

This was the more evident as it might be inferred that Alencon's object in getting so much treasure from England was to reduce the country to impotence (this being one of the reasons which were set forth in the Council when Alencon arrived) and that there was no better way for Alencon to attenuate the strength of England than to get money under cover of its being to the advantage of this country to maintain the war in the Netherlands. She said that money was the sinew of warfare, for it was certain, as the world went now, that no one need want soldiers who had money to pay for them. Cecil is of opinion, therefore, that if any money is given to Alencon it should be very little, and that the Queen should not divest herself of what she has. She dwelt at length with Simier on the point, and the colloquy ended with great merriment as they said that Alencon was a fine gallant to sell his lady for money.

I am informed that since the return of Beale from the Queen of Scotland with his report of her good reception of him, the Queen discussed the matter with Alencon, complaining of the Guises, of whom Alencon used the most shameful and dishonourable language, so much so that the Queen showed him a letter she had written to his brother the King, complaining of them (the Guises) in the most vituperative and abusive words. Alencon wanted the Queen to moderate it somewhat, in order that the Guises might not think that he had incited her to write thus, but he did not dare to press the matter upon her, for fear that she might think that his own expressions were feigned. And so the letter was sent to the King.

Alencon has been pressing the Queen greatly to send Simier away, but she has excused herself by saying that it was not well to expel any one from the country, especially a stranger who had come hither to justify himself with regard to his behaviour in the marriage negotiations, which she could testify he had managed better than anyone else. Alencon had thereupon sent to tell Simier that, if he considered himself still in his service, he must instantly leave England. Simier replied that, although he had been his servant, he was not so now, and that until he had given a good account of himself, and all the world had acknowledged that he was innocent of the charges made against him, he would not budge from the country, whereupon Alencon became more angry than before, and again pressed the Queen to expel him.

The Treasurer continues his efforts to expedite Alencon's departure, and I understand that, as another reason for hastening him, they have represented how expensive it will be for him to stay here over New Year's Day, by reason of the presents he will have to give, according to the custom of the country. I cannot say, however, precisely, the day that he will leave, as it depends upon the instability of the Queen and Alencon, nor can I assert whether his going to Flanders will be carried through, but it is quite evident that all Englishmen were greatly rejoiced at seeing him ready to go, and they brought the ships to the mouth of the river to take him over, almost dead against the wind.

Lord Harry Howard, the brother of the Duke of Norfolk, I have known by repute for years past, by means of priests, as a good Catholic, who, since his reconciliation with the Church, has performed all his duties as such. He was therefore desirous of bringing about the marriage, as he believed, like many others, that it would result in their being allowed freedom for their faith. On hearing that the Earl of Oxford (Hertford?) had accused him and Francis Arundel of submitting to the Roman Church, and that the Queen had ordered them both secretly to be arrested, they came to my house at midnight, although I had never spoken to them, and told me that they had been warned of their danger by a Councillor, a friend of Lord Harry's. They had been in close communication with the French ambassador, but they did not dare to trust him at this juncture, and feared that they would be taken to the Tower and their lives be sacrificed. They therefore came to me in their peril, and asked me to hide them and save their lives. As they were Catholics, I detained them without anyone in the house knowing of it, excepting one servant, until their friend the Councillor informed them that they would only be placed under arrest in a gentleman's house, whereupon they immediately showed themselves in public. In his gratitude for my kindness in sheltering him, Lord Harry has expressed to me most emphatically that all that he has is at your Majesty's service, thus showing his acknowledgment for the favour I did him, which is no small novelty for an Englishman to do. He has very good parts and understanding, and is friendly with the ladies of the privy chamber, who tell him exactly what passes indoors. He is extremely intimate also with Sussex, and as he is so pressing in his desire to serve your Majesty, I have thought fit to represent it to you. London, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1581.

From Pollen, John Hungerford, and William MacMahon (eds.) (1919), *The Venerable Philip Howard Earl of Arundel, 1557-95*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 21, pp. 30-1:

Milord Henry Howard, brother of the Duke of Norfolk, has for some years, as I know through some priests, been very Catholic, practising generally, since his reconciliation to Holy Church, his duties as such. For this reason he desired that the match [with Alencon] should take place, believing like many other Catholics that by this means they would come to hold their religion in freedom. Then he heard that the Earl of Oxford had accused him and one Francis Arundel of being reconciled to the Holy Roman Church. For this the Queen had given secret order the other day for his arrest, and they were advised of this by a Councillor, a friend of milord Harry. What with their close correspondence with the ambassador of France, and their fears of being committed to the Tower, and so losing their lives, they did not dare at this juncture to trust him, nor to go to their home; but coming to my house at 12 in the night, though I had never spoken to them, they told me the danger in which they found themselves of losing their lives unless I would hide them. As they were Catholics, I so entertained them that no-one in my house knew it except one of my men, until their friend the Councillor gave them notice that they would be confined in the house of a gentleman only, and in view of that, they immediately showed themselves in public. Milord Harry, in gratitude for the goodwill with which I received him, and with a care which I can hardly describe, has informed and

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informs me of everything he hears which is of service to your Majesty, and recognizes my favour, no little novelty for an Englishman to do. He has very good qualities and intelligence, and much friendship with the ladies of the privy chamber, who inform him exactly what passes indoors. He is also as intimate with the Earl of Sussex as nail with quick. To touch of the greatness of the affection with which he occupies himself in the service of your Majesty (which is his constant desire) -- I may here say that in no wise would I wish him even to [extend] his arm to help me more.