

SUMMARY: The letter below dated 23 April 1582 was written to the Spanish ambassador in London, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604), by King Philip II. On 6 March 1582, Mendoza had written to the King recommending that he secure the services of Oxford's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614), in spying for Spain (see Simancas Leg. 836, ff. 75-7):

I am of opinion that it will be highly desirable for your Majesty to secure him at once, in order that he may not be persuaded to take the French side. The way will be for your Majesty to give him a pension commensurate to his rank, which should be paid quarterly. Two ends will be gained by this. First, we shall have won over the important house of Howard, and secondly, we shall have secured his personal co-operation. This is so valuable that, if he were a person to whom I could offer money without your Majesty's orders, I should give him many ducats every year in return for the information with which he furnishes me, and which I should have to purchase from others for more than its weight in gold, even if I could get it at all. The greatest risk we run, in the present state of Scotch affairs, is to have to pay him the pension at most for two or three years in periodical payments, and if it be treated as a pension the whole sum will not be a larger one than we should have to give such a man as this in one amount if we had to make him a present, which we shall be obliged to do in order to prevent the Howards, at any cost, from turning towards France. He assures me that, seeing the many enemies he has in England, he is greatly desirous of rendering service to your Majesty, in order that, if he is unfortunate enough to be obliged to leave this country before he sees the Queen of Scotland in the position he desires, your Majesty may receive him, and I have continued to hold out hopes of this to him. Leicester and Walsingham, finding that they have been unable, by false accusations, to discredit him with the Queen and banish him from Court, have now proposed that he will be a fitting person to be sent to Germany on the Queen's business, for the purpose of separating him from his nephews. I therefore humbly beg your Majesty, if you approve of what I say, to let me know at once what amount of pension you will grant him, as I may make this a means of preventing him from going to Germany or leaving the country. I can assure your Majesty that, without his communications, any Minister of yours here will be kept quite in the dark, as no one else will be able to do as this man does, besides which we shall not be sure of holding the Howards, as we ought to be, in view of Scotch affairs.

When Mendoza made this recommendation on 6 March 1582, Howard had already been supplying Mendoza with a steady stream of information since 25 December 1580 (see Simancas, Leg. 835, ff. 121-4):

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. . . .

However, as Mendoza says in the paragraph quoted above from his letter of 6 March 1586, Leicester and Walsingham, having been unsuccessful in driving Lord Henry Howard from court by means of 'false accusations', had now proposed that Howard be

sent on an embassy to Germany, and if this were to happen, Mendoza says that not only he, but any other Spanish ambassador, would be 'quite kept in the dark' because 'no one else will be able to do as this man does'. Mendoza therefore requests that the King grant Howard a pension.

In the letter of 23 April 1582 below, the King signifies his agreement, and requests advice from Mendoza as to the form and amount which payment to Howard should take

As you consider it necessary to oblige that gentleman who influences the house of Howard, please advise fully what should be given to him and in what form. We will then decide, and in the meanwhile you will keep him in hand as cleverly as usual.

In a letter of 23 July 1582, Mendoza advised the King that he had already given Howard 500 crowns, and promised him a pension of 1000 crowns a year, in order to prevent him from agreeing to go to Germany (see Simancas Leg. 836, f. 168):

I have continued, pending your Majesty's reply, to entertain my second confidant with hopes and fair words. The Queen has again pressed him to make ready to go to the German Diet, and it has been necessary for me to pledge him, as your Majesty commands me to do in case of need. I have therefore given him 500 crowns, promising him a pension of 1,000 crowns a year, and have induced him in this way to continue in your Majesty's service, and not to go to the Diet.

In a letter to King Philip which must have crossed the King's letter below of 23 April 1582 in transit, Mendoza writes on 26 April 1582:

Lord Harry (Howard) continues to give me information with great vigilance and care, and keeps me well posted as to what is going on. This forces me again to press upon your Majesty the importance of rewarding him, and at the same time pledging his house, by favouring him in the way I have already suggested. In order not on any account to lose him I have prevailed upon him to refuse the embassy to Germany.

On 20 May 1582 King Philip II wrote to Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604), stating that Mendoza could pay Howard out of the 3000 crowns which accompanied the letter:

You have been requested to advise what had better be done for Lord Harry (Howard), but if it be necessary to pledge him at once before replies can be received, you may pay him the sum you think advisable out of the money now sent you.

Several months later, in a letter dated 1 November 1582, Mendoza again confirms to King Philip the vital importance to Spain of retaining Howard's services as a spy. Mendoza makes it clear that he cannot obtain an audience with the Queen, and that no-one in court will speak with him or his servants. Moreover his other spy at court, his 'first confidant' Sir James Croft (c.1518-1590), has provided no information for the past eight months, having been 'terrified' into silence by Leicester. Thus, without Howard,

who 'is extremely zealous and gives me twice a week the most confidential and minute account of all that happens', Mendoza say he could do nothing.

I have received your Majesty's orders to communicate to the Prince of Parma the plots that are being hatched here against the Netherlands. I continue to do so with all possible minuteness, but I am unable to maintain these people in the humour your Majesty desires, as they are obdurate in their determination that I shall not have audience of the Queen, and I cannot request an audience after having received the reply which I conveyed to your Majesty on the 15th and 21st May, to the effect that until you had given her satisfaction about Ireland she could not receive me, out of consideration for her own honour, since I was your Majesty's minister. I have tried every possible means, overt and covert, to get into relations with the Queen's ministers, but they fly from me as if I were a rebel subject of hers, and things have reached such a point now that no one will speak to me or even to my servants, as Don Juan de Idiaquez will have informed your Majesty. The only way, therefore, in which I can serve your Majesty here is to communicate the information I receive from my second confidant, as I have not heard a word from the first for the last eight months. I should have lost the second if I had not cast myself at his feet and begged him not to leave Court, and gave him 500 crowns, with a promise of 1,000 crowns a year pension, which he accepted, although he said that when I went away he could not well correspond with anyone else, and must relinquish the pension when he could do nothing for it. I can assure your Majesty that he is extremely zealous and gives me twice a week the most confidential and minute account of all that happens. He may therefore be dealt with in the manner I recommended, and your Majesty commanded, and I have intimated the same to him, but I gather that he accepted the offer chiefly in order that your Majesty should bear him in mind in view of what may occur in England rather than for immediate personal gain. The first confidant must again make himself useful for some years before your Majesty can be expected to make him another grant, since he is so very silent now. I understand that his reticence is caused by Leicester, who has quite terrified him.

The documents quoted in the foregoing paragraphs provide clear evidence of the duration and extent of Lord Henry Howard's activity as a spy for Spain, of the financial gain he derived from it, and his motives for doing it.

Concerning the date of this letter, it should be noted that on 24 February 1582 a bull of Pope Gregory XIII ordered the use of a reformed calendar which cut ten days out of the year 1582, so that 15 October followed immediately upon 4 October (see *Handbook of Dates*, p. 10). However since no change was to occur until October 1582, England and Spain were still using the same calendar on 23 April 1582 when King Philip wrote this letter.

For the roles played by Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard in events involving Oxford in 1580/1 see TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2 and other documents on this website, in particular the letters of the Spanish ambassador to England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604).

The translation below is taken from Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs*, Vol. III, 1580-1586, pp. 342-4.

The present letter is especially to reply to yours of 9th February and 6th March about Scotland. I was glad to see the letter the Queen of Scotland had written to you and also the good reception which Father William Holt received from the principal councilors of the King, as well as the negotiations which were being carried on by her and the Catholics of the country with a view to its conversion. Before going further I wish signally to thank you for all your care in a matter which is especially for God's service, and is consequently looked upon by me with the greatest regard.

Of the four methods proposed by the Catholics for the conversion of the country, the first, that of preaching, is certainly the mildest and surest, the rest being risky and needing much consideration. It might not be so easy for the Catholics to seize the government in a way which would allow them to utilise the King. The other suggestion of deposing him pending the arrival of his mother, unless he were to become a Catholic, offers great objections, and is also against their oath. The Queen, moreover, being absent and a prisoner, great confusion would arise as to the persons to administer the government. The last plan of deporting him out of the country to convert him will be almost the same as deposing him, and the conversion will still be in doubt. Their remark that, if none of these methods succeed, they and their families will abandon their homes and properties, if carried out will simply make amendment impossible altogether and must not be thought of, but they must dissemble and be patient, awaiting the means that God will provide. You will therefore use every effort to prevent them from despairing on the one hand, or rashly precipitating matters on the other to their own damage. Great care and caution must be exercised and zeal must not outstrip discretion until the affair be ripe, and I enjoin you for your part to keep this well in view.

From what the Queen writes to you she appears to be well alive to all this, as she strives for the conversion by reading and persuasion, and is also aware that the best time for sending foreign aid would be after the pacification of Flanders. Although she herself has sometimes hinted at conveying her son out of Scotland, you may, in your own name, point out to her the evils of this course and reply to her on my behalf on all other points. Say that I desire to see her free, and herself and her son safe, with religion restored all over the island. She will always find in me the same attachment and goodwill as hitherto, and I beg she will continue her efforts to enlighten her son and bring him to the true path. Urge her to strive to unite the efforts of all those Catholics towards gaining ground quietly, whilst things are being brought to the point when it will be possible to aid them with foreign troops, and, in the case she mentions, of the pacification of Flanders, I will not fail to furnish such aid, and even before then, if possible. It is most important, however, that she should advise me through you how her son receives her counsel and admonition as regards his conversion, upon whom she can depend in Scotland, whom she distrusts, what troops there are, what fortified places, what port of debarkation could be provided for foreign troops, what may be expected from France. From England we well

know what we may expect. In short, you may let her know that when I thoroughly understand the state of affairs, and fair and honest conditions are proposed to me, they will find me most willing to reciprocate with help and friendship, and I will use my influence with the Pope to the same end. I have no doubt that his Holiness would render assistance, at least in money, if the King were to give hopes of becoming a Catholic. This is what you will say to the Queen.

As to her suggestion that some of the principal Scotsmen should be gradually won over to my side by presents, with a view to the conversion of the country, it will be well to communicate with her on the subject and ask her whether it will be best to give them pensions as she says, or offer them rewards in accordance with the service they may render. If she thinks it will be better to give them pensions (although this course rarely turns out well), you will inform me as to the persons who should receive them and to what amount. Whilst this is being discussed and things are being prepared for a successful result, you will use your best efforts to carry forward the sending thither of preachers from England and France, with the same dissimulation as hitherto, and you may aid with money the priests who go on that errand, for which purpose a credit of 2,000 crowns was recently sent you, and more shall be provided as required. Your communications with the Scottish Catholics had better be verbal, by means of trustworthy persons, rather than by letter, the loss or miscarrying of which might cause suspicion to the French and others who might undermine the business.

With regard to your departure, as the Queen of Scotland thinks (as I hear through other channels) that it would militate much against these negotiations, and you yourself will recognise this, I beg you to reconcile yourself to staying there as long as I may consider necessary for the object in view, and attend to all my affairs with your accustomed diligence. In the meanwhile we will be on the look out here for a fitting person to send under the pretext of demanding especially the restoration of Drake's plunder as you suggest.

As you consider it necessary to oblige that gentleman who influences the house of Howard, please advise fully what should be given to him and in what form. We will then decide, and in the meanwhile you will keep him in hand as cleverly as usual. St. Ubes, 23rd April 1582.