

SUMMARY: The document below is an extract from a letter dated 11 May 1586 (1 May 1586 Old Style) written by Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604) to King Philip II. In the letter Mendoza reports that earlier, while he was in Paris, Charles Arundel was constantly at the house of the English ambassador, Sir Edward Stafford (1552-1605). At the time of the writing of the letter, Arundel, who had been granted a pension of 80 crowns by King Philip, was at the Spanish court, and Mendoza suspected that he was spying for England, and urged the King to send him away (see also K.1564.81). By early 1587, however, Charles Arundel was acting as a mediator between Mendoza and the English ambassador in France, Sir Edward Stafford (1552-1605), who wished to offer his services as a spy for Spain. The entry for Stafford in *The Dictionary of National Biography* provides a detailed analysis of Stafford's actions:

*In 1583 Stafford was knighted and chosen to replace Lord Cobham as ambassador to Paris . . . . He took this occasion to spurn Francis Walsingham's previously friendly advances, possibly because of the principal secretary's growing identification with the Leicester party at court, and place himself entirely under Burghley's political patronage, thus creating a dislocation of loyalties at the heart of Walsingham's sphere of interest—his intelligence network. Stafford soon experienced the repercussions of his decision. Cobham was actively unhelpful in handing over the reins of his office; correspondence between Stafford, his own mother, and the queen was intercepted by Walsingham's agents; and Walsingham himself warned Stafford not to write to the queen too regularly, for the rather unconvincing reason that she objected to the postal charges. More seriously, Walsingham took notice of, and began to report, Stafford's heavy gambling in Paris and his increasingly desperate financial situation. In turn, Stafford deliberately bypassed Walsingham when sending intelligences from Paris. Dangerously, he also intruded upon existing operations supervised by Walsingham in Paris, and initiated his own subterfuges with a heavy and obvious hand. His subsequent drafting of intentionally inaccurate reports, in the hope of misleading Spanish agents, was hardly a novel device; it was, however, to blur the degree to which his actions were degenerating gradually into outright treachery. To meet some of his debts he accepted 3000 crowns from the duc de Guise for allowing him to see English diplomatic letters, and was in close communication with an English Catholic conspirator in Paris, Charles Arundel. With increasing forcefulness he also expressed his opinion that Mary Stewart should be made Elizabeth's heir, and there is at least one contemporary reference to him as a 'friend' to Mary.*

*By spring 1586 Walsingham had been fully apprised of Stafford's actions by his spies in Paris; yet he did not move to impeach him, possibly because his own position at court had become less secure. Burghley, who remained Stafford's friend (though warning him of rumours of his actions), was a powerful guardian, and the absence from court of Leicester, failing abjectly in his Netherlands campaign, removed Walsingham's closest ally in the council. In October 1586 the death of Walsingham's heir, Sir Philip Sidney, seems to have been a personally traumatic event, which excited Burghley's sympathy and support, and encouraged a complete reconciliation between the two men. This may have*

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*benefited Stafford also. Walsingham and he exchanged letters during April 1587 which professed their desire for mutual harmony.*

*The timing of this rapprochement was fateful. Three months earlier Arundel had secretly acted as a mediator between Stafford and Bernadino de Mendoza, Philip II's ambassador in Paris, to offer Stafford's services as a spy. Money was certainly a motive; but so too, apparently, was Stafford's wish to be revenged for the perceived slights of Walsingham and Leicester. Arundel was given 2000 crowns to pass on to Stafford, and a clandestine—and certainly an opaque—relationship commenced.*

*Commentators have since expended much attention on the question of whether Mendoza's three pseudonyms for his English informers in Paris were references to three men, or to the same person: Sir Edward Stafford. Recently the latter case has been argued strongly, contradicting more venerable defences of the English ambassador's integrity. Certain facts are indisputable. Between April 1587 and October 1588, during the Anglo-Spanish war's most desperate phase, a stream of intelligences from Mendoza's English spy or spies gave advance warning of Drake's raid on Cadiz, of instructions for the concentration of the English fleet, and dozens of smaller, though useful, details of English diplomatic activity in Europe. Stafford definitely underplayed to London the scale of Spanish preparations against England in the months before the Armada sailed, though, equally, much information he passed to the Spaniards was partly or wholly inaccurate—either intentionally so, or because Walsingham and others were tainting its flow. Stafford's inaccuracies may indicate simply that he was a poor intelligencer, and that Mendoza—a very good one—played him brilliantly. However, some of the information he is suspected to have supplied to his Spanish paymaster was undoubtedly damaging to English interests.*

*Following the Armada campaign Stafford gradually ceased to pass on information to Mendoza. It has been suggested that the cancelling of his large debts by the queen undermined his primary financial motive, while the deaths of both Leicester and Walsingham in 1588 and 1590 removed the principal sources of his rancour. He continued as ambassador in Paris until November 1590, when he was recalled.*

The foregoing analysis suggests that when Charles Arundel was constantly at the house of the English ambassador in 1585/6, as noted in Mendoza's letter below, he was acting as a mediator between Stafford and the Duke of Guise, who gave Stafford 3000 crowns in exchange for being permitted to see English diplomatic letters. Mendoza also suspected that Arundel was spying for England at the Spanish court in May 1586, and urged the King to send him away (see also Paris Archives K.1564.81). By early 1587, Arundel was again acting as a mediator, this time in assisting Sir Edward Stafford's to become a spy for Spain. It thus seems clear that Arundel helped both Spain and France to spy on England. Moreover he may, for a time, have been a double agent, attempting to spy for England at the Spanish court. Charles Arundel's manifest talent for duplicity should be taken into consideration in evaluating his allegations against Oxford in 1580/1. For the roles played by 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

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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. 574-7.

Biron has assured some of his friends that the King is hatching a secret plot which no one has been able to fathom, although he says it must come out within the next six months, as things cannot last as they are, with the putting of an army on a war footing after treating for peace. When his (the King's) mother pressed him the other day about the marriage of the princess of Lorraine, he told her not to trouble herself further in the matter, as he had obtained what he wanted, and would now very shortly be able to overthrow some of his enemies and avenge himself upon others. There is indeed no person of judgment who doubts that the King is plotting something with Secretary Villeroy, and that Believre is in league with them. The Grand Chancellor and other Ministers complain also that for the last two months the King will not listen to business of any sort, and although he sits up nearly every night writing memoranda in his own hand until two in the morning, he burns them all the next day. They say that all he writes is about the religious orders, and the ceremonies to be observed by the monks in his monasteries. As he changes every hour, and from many other indications, Muzio (i.e. the Duke of Guise) tells me that the Chancellor assures him that the King's reason is unhinged, and it is feared he will shortly lose it altogether. They are more apprehensive of this, and its possible evil result, than of his otherwise poor health. The English ambassador in audience the other day warned him in the name of his mistress that the Guises and the Catholic princes were in close communication with your Majesty, and that if he did [+not?] prevent them by making a peace they would take his crown away from him. He replied that he knew it well, but that things had gone too far and he could not stop them now. He said there was no better remedy than for Bearn to become a Catholic, by which all his claims would be assured.

I have asked Muzio whether he had any man in Normandy who could be sent to ascertain the condition of naval armaments in England. He replied that it would not be convenient to send anyone from Normandy, but he would give me a man who should go with letters for the French ambassador (in England) on a pretext of some affair of the Queen of Scotland, and I might send anyone I liked with him in the character of a servant, who could stay some days in London and obtain information of the preparations, as it would arouse suspicion for him to go round the ports and the ambassador would not aid him to do it. Muzio thought it would be better to send an Italian than a man of any other nation, but as I cannot find any such man at present fit for the task (pressing as the matter is, in view of the armaments), I have not asked Muzio to provide me with the messenger and letters. Another reason is that I have not a groat to give them, and I am quite sure that neither Muzio's man nor the other one will be satisfied with a trifle. I therefore again humbly supplicate your Majesty to send me funds for my extraordinary expenses, as I have not been paid a single penny for the whole 10 months that I have been here.

Charles Arundel, an English gentleman, to whom your Majesty granted eighty crowns pension a month, in respect of the Queen of Scotland, was constantly in the house of the

English ambassador here, when he was in Paris, which Muzio assures me was at his instructions, as the English ambassador was needy, and he, Muzio, had given him 3000 crowns. In return for this the ambassador gave him certain information through this Charles Arundel, to whom I gave letters for your Majesty when he went to Spain. I did this at the request of Muzio, and as he took with him very much more money than he stated, I have some suspicion that he may have gone at the instance of the English ambassador, in order to discover something in your Majesty's court, by which means he would be sure of obtaining the favour of the Queen of England. This may be concluded from the extreme care with which she obtains intelligence by every possible means of your Majesty's designs, and although I have found nothing at all to inculcate Arundel, it will be advisable for your Majesty to send him and the rest of them away from your court.

The King and his mother have rejoiced extremely (and so particularly has Epernon) at Drake's action at Santo Domingo and elsewhere, about which they say a thousand absurdities. The French ambassador in England writes that the rage of the English for plunder is for ever increasing now that they see your Majesty is not arming, and that this King and his mother are blowing the flame all they can. They are also helping the Flemings so much, that, upon my asking for a passport at the request of the Prince of Parma for the salt that had been sent from Spain for Flanders, where it was much needed, and had been detained in Calais, they roundly refused me, although I promised that in case of salt being wanted here (where there is an abundance of it) I would have an equal quantity to that now detained sent hither within four months. I then asked for permission for the ships bringing salt from Spain to discharge at Calais, and send the salt overland for the three leagues to Flanders, and this they also refused with the greatest roughness in the world.

They have also influenced the English Catholics here to write to those in England on no account to trust your Majesty or depend upon your aid, which, under cover of subjecting the country to the Catholic religion, would really aim at conquering their country. It is to be believed that they (the English Catholics) will take no notice of this, as they have sent a priest to me, on behalf of the principal Catholics, to say that God has infused more courage than ever into them, and has opened their eyes to the fact that no time is so opportune as the present to shake off the oppression of the Queen and the yoke of heresy that weighs upon them, since most of the strongest heretics are now absent in Zeeland. They say that, as I have never yet deceived them, they beg me to tell them whether your Majesty had determined to help them to take up arms when they decided to do so. I replied in general terms, speaking of your Majesty's goodwill towards them, and encouraging them in their good intentions, and I sent the priest back well posted in what I thought necessary, and told him to return to me with full details, as in so important a matter we must have more than generalities. Paris, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1586.