

SUMMARY: The letter below written on 9 January 1581 by the Spanish ambassador in England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604), to King Philip II of Spain reports the arrests of Lord Henry Howard, Charles Arundel and Francis Southwell, and Leicester's efforts to inflame public opinion against the three and against the French. It should be noted that the words 'recibido el Santísimo Sacramento y oído una misa, reconciliándose á la Iglesia Católica Romana; cuatro años há' have been translated in the *Calendar of Letters and State Papers* as 'of receiving the Holy Sacrament and hearing Mass as Catholics four years ago'. The phrase 'as Catholics' de-emphasizes the importance of the allegation that Howard, Arundel and Southwell had been formally reconciled to the Catholic Church, and the words might be better translated as 'of receiving the Holy Sacrament and hearing a Mass, and reconciling themselves to the Catholic Church four years ago'.

Mendoza states in his letter that Howard, Arundel and Southwell had been accused by 'a great friend of theirs'. Since Mendoza knew of Oxford, as evidenced by his letter of 8 April 1579, his failure to mention Oxford by name in his letter of 9 January 1581 suggests that at the time Howard and Arundel fled to his house, they did not tell him that Oxford had accused them to the Queen. It is true that when Mendoza wrote almost a year later to King Philip on 25 December 1581 recounting how Howard and Arundel had fled to his house on the night of 25 December 1580, he did mention Oxford by name, stating that 'On hearing that the Earl of Oxford had accused him and Francis [sic] 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'. But this account was written a year after the fact, and Oxford had, after Howard and Arundel's arrest, made certain written charges against them on or about 18 January 1581, and it may be that Mendoza's recollection was of these charges rather than of what Howard and Arundel had told him on the night of 25 December 1580.

The suggestion that the Queen's order for Howard and Arundel's arrest did not originate from charges made by Oxford is borne out in the extant documents concerning the events of the night of 25 December 1580. Charles Arundel's account of his meeting with Oxford earlier that evening indicates that, rather than being his accuser, Oxford had warned Arundel, and told him that 'Southwell hath bewrayed all' (see TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2), and in that regard it is noteworthy that Southwell did not flee to Mendoza's house with Howard and Arundel on the night of 25 December 1580. Moreover in his letter to King Philip of 25 December 1581, 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 himself states that it was Oxford who had warned him, not a Councillor. Since Oxford and Howard had had a public falling out in mid-December, it seems likely that Leicester took advantage of the situation to pit all four men against each other, and to spread rumours of the imminent arrest of Howard and Arundel which caused them to flee to the Spanish ambassador's house. Mendoza himself is clear in his letter of 9 January 1581 that Leicester spread false rumours about Howard and Arundel immediately after their arrest, which lends credibility to the suspicion that it was also

Leicester who spread the rumours on the night of 25 December 1580 which caused Howard and Arundel to flee the court for fear of arrest. By fleeing the court, Howard and Arundel created the appearance of guilt, and provided the Queen with a legitimate pretext for the issuance of an order for their arrest.

In the first paragraph of his letter, Mendoza makes reference to ‘news that the Commissioners were preparing to come hither’. These were the commissioners from France charged with negotiating the articles of marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Francois (1554-1584), Duke of Alencon. Mendoza’s reference to the coming of these commissioners and to Alencon’s ‘Flanders enterprise’ indicates the importance to England of its relationship with France at this point in time, and suggests why Queen Elizabeth was anxious to downplay the arrests of Howard and Arundel, who, along with Lord Burghley, the Earl of Sussex, and Oxford, were among the strongest proponents at court of the French marriage, which Leicester opposed. The arrests of Howard and Arundel, and the barrage of allegations against Oxford which followed, seriously weakened the court party which favoured the French marriage while strengthening Leicester’s hand in opposing the marriage. It is thus difficult not to see Leicester as the instigator of the rumours which led to Howard and Arundel’s arrest. Mendoza himself refers in his letter below to suspicions that Howard and Arundel’s arrests had more to do with undermining the court party which favoured the French marriage than with the allegation that Howard and Arundel had been reconciled to the Catholic church. Mendoza writes: ‘but it is suspected also that it may be attributed to their having been very intimate with the French ambassador, with the apparent object of forwarding the Alencon match, together with some court ladies of the same party who were favourites of the Queen’.

The transcript in Spanish below of the portion of the letter dealing with the arrest of Howard and Arundel 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 XCI (Madrid: M. Ginesta Hermanos, Impresores de la Real Casa, 1888, reprinted Kraus Reprint Ltd., Vadux, 1966), pp. 536-9. It is followed by a translation of the entire letter taken from Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs*, Vol. III, 1580-1586, pp. 76-8.

Estos dias ha hecho prender la Reina á Milord Hercabaert, hermano del Duque de Norfolch y á otros dos caballeros, Charles Arundel y Suduel, que eran de los más validos de su córte, y fuera de ser por caso de Religion habiéndolos acusado otro caballero, grande amigo suyo, que habian recibido el Santísimo Sacramento y oido una misa, reconciliándose á la Iglesia Católica Romana; cuatro años há que es aquí crimen lese Magestatis, se sospecha por tratar los tres con familiaridad con el Embajador de Francia y á título de desear se efectuase el casamiento de Alanzon y con damas de la córte que eran de la misma afición y favoridas de la Reina, que hay más misterio en ello con el habelles llevado á la Torre y sembrado el de Lecester que trataban de hacer un mazacre do los

protestantes empezando por la Reina para indignar más la gente contra ellos y franceses, y asimismo contra el Conde de Sussex, de quien eran estrechísimos amigos.

Stafford arrived here from France on the 26th ultimo with the ratification of the peace, of which your Majesty will have heard. He brings news that the Commissioners were preparing to come hither, and although the Queen displayed great delight at the news, she would be better pleased if some of these Commissioners were of higher rank, respecting which point she thinks of sending someone to France, but when she received news of the illness of the King she altered her mind in order not to offend Alencon, who had written that he had forced his brother to make peace solely out of regard for her and at her request. The Queen holds out hopes to the French ambassador that as soon as the Commissioners arrive she will let Alencon have two hundred thousand ducats of the money brought by Drake, to help him, in conjunction with Bearn and Conde, in his Flanders enterprise, and that at the same time she will cause Casimir to enter by way of Gueldres, in order to make sure of that State and divert your Majesty's forces, unless it be more convenient for him to join with the French in Brabant. Although such an enterprise will not be easy, the Queen is encouraging Alencon with hopes, and both she and the French imagine that they are sure of success, the wish being father to the thought.

Juan Rodriguez de Souza, who I wrote had left here in a ship belonging to the Earl of Leicester, returned on the 21st, after having arrived at the isles of Bayona, where he received news of the second defeat of Don Antonio, and, after landing two of his servants, himself returned in the same ship. One of these servants was his business man here, named Alvaro Bardinia, to whom he gave orders to return to him after he had been to Lisbon. He is a man of middle height, of dark colour, and with his beard tinged with grey. He is a native and was formerly a resident of St. Ubes, and subsequently came with his wife to live at Lisbon. It would not be bad to discover what Souza has been arranging with Leicester and other ministers here about the Indies, and Don Antonio's affairs generally, which might be done by interrogating this man on the points set forth in the enclosed memorandum. Souza's return has attracted no attention here, and was easily accomplished, as his ship was very fleet and could outstrip the ships of Don Pedro de Valdes.

The Queen received a hasty dispatch from Scotland two days since, saying that the King, in Council, had ordered Morton and four or five of the partisans of this Queen to be seized, and she at once dispatched Randolph, her Master of the Posts, with two letters, one for the King and the other for Morton, with orders that the latter letter is to be delivered into Morton's own hands, at any cost. At the same time she has ordered Lord Hunsdon, Governor of Berwick, to go to the frontier, and certain English captains who were raising troops for Flanders have been ordered to remain, and have been told that not they alone, but the English already in the Netherlands, will have to be sent to Scotland. It is feared that these arrests having been ordered by the King, and that there may be some French men with D'Aubigny, Earl of Lennox. Those who were at Nantes destined for Portugal, to the number of 1,500, embarked after they had heard of Don Antonio's second

defeat, ostensibly to sail on a plundering voyage, and the Queen fears that they may have gone to Scotland under the authority of the Duke of Guise, which may well be true, because I have news that on the 3rd instant three pirate Frenchmen arrived in the Downs, and shortly afterwards sixteen more, some of them being loaded with French wines and herrings. On the day following they left, running swiftly before a south wind, so that it appears certain that they must have gone either to Scotland or Holland, most probably the former, as the Dutchmen are not particularly wishful of welcoming Frenchmen, unless, indeed, it be a trick of Orange's to put them into possession of some fortress, and so to oblige the Dutchmen, whether they like it or not. to accept the fact.

The Queen has sent orders to the Earl of Shrewsbury to strengthen the Queen of Scotland's guard and keep her more closely.

The Queen has recently ordered the arrest of Lord Howard, brother of the Duke of Norfolk, and two other gentlemen, Charles Arundel and Southwell, who were formerly great favourites at court. The reason of this is partly religious, they having been accused by a great friend of theirs of receiving the Holy Sacrament and hearing Mass as Catholics four years ago, this being here the crime of high treason, but it is suspected also that it may be attributed to their having been very intimate with the French ambassador, with the apparent object of forwarding the Alencon match, together with some court ladies of the same party who were favourites of the Queen. What adds to the mystery of the matter is their having been taken to the Tower, and Leicester's having spread the rumour that they were plotting a massacre of the Protestants, beginning with the Queen. His object in this is to inflame people against them and against the French, as well as against the Earl of Sussex who was their close friend.

The Count de Sosa, the ambassador of the Duke of Savoy, arrived here yesterday to restore the Garter which was worn by his father the late Duke. The Queen has ordered him to be welcomed warmly, and is sending four persons of rank to receive him on the road. London, 9th January 1581.