

SUMMARY: The letter below dated 27 September 1581 was written by Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604) to King Philip II. It mentions the return of 'Lord Harry', the envoy whom Queen Elizabeth had sent to her suitor, Francois (1554-1584), Duke of Alencon and Anjou, after Sir Francis Walsingham's interview with Alencon on 3 August 1581. The background to the interview between Walsingham and Alencon is provided in the entry for Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590) in *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

On 22 July [1581], however, Walsingham was sent on an embassy to France that lasted until 21 September. Just after the marriage treaty was signed Henri had informed Elizabeth that he was prepared to consider a full alliance after the marriage was concluded, yet at the same time it was obvious that he was trying to obstruct his brother's Netherlands plans. The basic purpose of the embassy was to discover what he was up to and to keep Anjou's enterprise alive. The complex instructions Walsingham was given reflect the genuine English puzzlement over Henri's intentions. Walsingham tried to escape the embassy, fearing a repetition of 1578, but without success. There was, however, a challenge for him. During the spring he had become increasingly interested in plans for a naval expedition to aid the Portuguese pretender, Dom Antonio, and invested in it himself. In May Dom Antonio had sent an envoy to Elizabeth, who claimed that Henri had promised him assistance. When Elizabeth offered to share the costs the French king replied that he would do so only after the marriage. Walsingham observed to Huntingdon on 29 June, 'yt is to be gathered by this could [cold] answer that yf the mariadge take not place, the portugalls can look for no relefe out of France and that the French King will come some other coorse' (Hunt. L., Hastings MS 13070).

Once in France, Walsingham went first to see Anjou at his crowded headquarters at La Fère-en-Tardenois on 3 August 1581, where they had to retire to the latter's bedchamber to escape the noise of the courtiers in the adjoining apartment. Here he expressed Elizabeth's concern that the marriage would commit her to an open war with Spain, though she was willing to ally with France and would aid him discreetly. Anjou replied that his brother would do nothing until the marriage was concluded. However, he responded to her promise of assistance by requesting a loan to keep his forces in the field. Walsingham thought this a good way of retaining control of him. Shortly afterwards Walsingham encountered Catherine, who had come to dissuade Anjou from the enterprise and to agree to a Spanish marriage, but he apparently managed to persuade her to support an English alliance. He then went to Paris, where he had his first audience with Henri on 10 August. He found him difficult to pin down, but concluded that without the marriage Henri would not agree to an alliance. On 24 August Elizabeth followed Walsingham's advice by agreeing quickly to the loan Anjou had requested. However, at the same time Walsingham discovered that his negotiations with Henri were being sabotaged by reports from Mauvissière and Anjou's agent Pierre Clause, sieur de Marchaumont, that Elizabeth would ultimately proceed with the marriage. With this stalemate his embassy came to an end.

Mendoza states in his letter of 12 August 1581 that after the Queen received news of Walsingham's interview of 3 August 1581 with Alencon, she 'wept like a child', and 'sent Lord Howard to Alencon to mollify him, writing most sweetly, so as not to lose him altogether'. Mendoza's letter of 27 September 1581 below reports the envoy's return a month later:

Lord Harry, whom this Queen sent to Alencon, has returned. He reports that Alencon was marching along the French frontier towards Boulogne, saying that he was going to Dunkirk for greater facility for his coming hither.

Historians have identified the 'Lord Howard' and 'Lord Harry' referred to in these letters as Oxford's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614). Howard and Charles Arundel had both been arrested after fleeing to the house of the Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, at midnight on 25 December 1580. In a letter endorsed 20 July 1581 (see CP 98/129) Howard still refers to himself as a 'prisoner', and complains that 'when my liberty is spoken of, her Majesty begins to speak of trial face to face'. Moreover on 27 October 1581 Howard wrote a sycophantic letter to Leicester (see TNA SP 12/150/51, ff. 97-8) in which he speaks of himself as being under 'restraint':

But now that doubts and jealousies are happily provided for, and that it pleaseth God upon compassion of my wrongs to soften and incline the princely mind of my most gracious Sovereign to pity my restraint, mine humble suit unto your Lordship is to banish all the relics of your former misconceit and, according to the discipline of Athens, to begin a fresh account of my well deserving.

These documents thus suggest that Howard was continuously a prisoner, or under house arrest at least, from 27 December 1580 until 27 October 1581, and that, moreover, he was not released until he had asked forgiveness of Leicester, whom he had blamed for the execution in 1572 of his brother, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk.

In view of these documents, it seems unlikely that the 'Lord Howard' and 'Lord Harry' who was sent to Alencon in August 1581 was Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614). On the other hand, Lord Henry Howard was one of the strongest proponents of the French marriage, and it is possible that Queen Elizabeth liberated him from house arrest and sent him on this mission to Alencon in August, confining him to house arrest again on his return to England in September.

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. 173-5.

I wrote on the 7th and 10th that Don Antonio was about to leave, but he has delayed up to the present, although saying that he was going every day. The day following my last letter they raised the stop placed upon his ships, although they had made a show of taking out the sails and crew, on the ground that they would not allow them to leave without an undertaking being given that no damage should be done to the subjects of princes with whom the Queen was at peace, and also to secure debts which Don Antonio was leaving here, in respect of the purchase of ships and other things to be paid for in six or eight months. The object of this was evidently to drive him to borrow more money on the jewels he has here, which, the pledge being increased, the Queen would eventually keep. He has had to do this, Leicester having seen him, and promised him that he would find some merchants to lend him £12,000 more on the jewels, with which he could pay what he owed her and complete the preparations on his ships, in which case the Queen would give him leave to depart. Don Antonio agreed to this, and the Treasurer called together the richest aldermen and merchants of London, telling them in the name of the Queen that they knew how the injustice and extortion to which they were exposed in Spain were reducing their trade, that Don Antonio had a better right than your Majesty to the crown of Portugal, and that the Queen wished to help him. In order that their business might benefit by his obtaining possession of his country, she requested them to lend him some money on good pledges, and the Queen would make herself responsible for the repayment. The sums to be given were £1000 each by those of the grand-jury, as they call it, and £500 by those of the petty-jury, which she knew they could easily afford without detriment to their business. They have lent the money ostensibly to Leicester and Walsingham on the jewels in their possession, and, if they be not redeemed within a certain time, they are to be forfeited. This trick of getting private merchants to find the money has been adopted so that if at any time the restitution of the jewels should be demanded, as belonging to the Portuguese crown, the merchants may claim their principal and interest, which will have grown to a very large sum. Don Antonio sent part of this money to enable three pirate ships to sail from Bristol, one large and two small, and three more from Plymouth, whither Drake is going to expedite them. The ships here are only waiting for a fair wind, and none of them take victuals for more than two months.

Don Antonio has been hunting with Leicester, and on the 13th went to see the Queen, when she gave him a signed document binding herself to help and support him in the same way that the King of France and the Duke of Alencon may do. With this Don Antonio is determined to go to France, the intention being for him to cross in one of his own ships, as I am informed, not for greater safety, but as a means of getting the ships away, in the fear that, once his back was turned, these people would find some fresh pretext to detain them and keep them altogether. I send you Majesty a drawing of the diamonds that Don Antonio brought hither. I have not been able to discover whether they are all in the Queen's possession.

The Company of Merchants trading with Spain insisted upon Don Antonio's ships being stopped, for fear, as I wrote, that the two Spanish ships in the Downs might fall into his hands, and although the Queen has given them leave to send their ships to Spain, they are afraid to do so now that Don Antonio's ships are released. They have tried to induce me

to give them passports, but I have refused, because, although it may not have the effect of stopping the ships from sailing, the keeping of the merchants in a state of alarm will cause them to continue to place obstacles in the way of the departure of Don Antonio's ships and the pirate ships. These people are so changeable, and their minds so distorted, that I can do nothing more advantageous to your Majesty's interests than to delay somewhat the projects they have in hand.

Lord Harry, whom this Queen sent to Alencon, has returned. He reports that Alencon was marching along the French frontier towards Boulogne, saying that he was going to Dunkirk for greater facility for his coming hither.

Walsingham has written that he had taken leave of the King and would see Alencon before he returned to England. Although they had discussed at great length the conditions of the alliance, nothing had been concluded, notwithstanding that he had dealt both with Catholics and Protestants for its conclusion, but that the French had refused to settle anything until the marriage was decided upon. London, 27th September 1581.