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1564-1568**

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DON DIEGO GUZMAN DE SILVA: SPANISH AMBASSADOR  
IN ENGLAND, 1564-1568

A Thesis

Presented to the  
Department of History  
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by

Jack K. Nielsen

August 1979

This thesis, by Jack K. Nielsen, is accepted in its present form by the Department of History of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

K. Michael Seibt,

Member

6-20-79  
Date

Louis B. Cardon, Acting Department Chairman

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .		iii
Chapter		
1. INTRODUCTION: THE DUTIES AND CHALLENGES OF DE SILVA'S EMBASSY TO ENGLAND . . . . .		1
2. GATHERING INFORMATION FROM THE ENGLISH COURT: ELIZABETH AND CECIL . . . . .		12
3. GATHERING INFORMATION: MINOR MEMBERS OF THE COURT AND OTHERS . . . . .		43
4. THE TRANSMISSION AND EVALUATION OF INFORMATION . . . . .		79
5. DE SILVA AND ELIZABETHAN PIRACY . . . . .		97
6. PROBLEMS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES . . . . .		134
7. CALMING TROUBLED WATERS . . . . .		157
8. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .		173
. . . . .		
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .		177

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: THE DUTIES AND CHALLENGES OF DE SILVA'S EMBASSY TO ENGLAND

The Spanish resident ambassadors to Queen Elizabeth's court immediately before and after Don Diego Guzman de Silva, both lost their effectiveness at court. One died in office, and the other, expelled from the English court, returned to Spain much earlier than had been planned. But De Silva spent four years in England during some of the most trying times and, at the end of his mission, was praised by both King Phillip II and Elizabeth. What were the responsibilities and challenges he faced while in England? How successful was he in carrying out these responsibilities during his mission? Was he truly as effective and successful in meeting the challenges he faced as it seems? This thesis will study the duties and challenges Don Diego Guzman de Silva faced while in England from 1564 to 1568, and try to determine the extent and cause of his success or failure by carefully examining the diplomat's correspondance and that of his associates and peers.

The foremost duty of a sixteenth-century Spanish resident ambassador in England was to gather, evaluate, and supply information to the king. The acquisition, verification, and dissemination of information was the raison de' etre of a resident ambassador. Collecting pertinent information, however, was not easy; it required considerable skill particularly for a Catholic ambassador in a primarily Protestant court. Since the court could supply official state information as well as important general knowledge, it was imperative that the resident build and maintain good personal relations with the queen, members of her privy council, and other nobles at the English court. Obviously care had to be taken not to destroy personal relations since imprudence with the courtiers or the queen could lessen the effectiveness of an ambassador. Although a resident who found himself out of harmony with court officials often remained the avenue of official correspondence between governments and a limited source of information until he was officially released, he was of little use to the king. On the other hand, a resident possessed of personal tact and charm could open up many sources of important information unavailable to one not so prudent.

The three resident Spanish ambassadors in England from 1559 to 1571 are good examples of

residents either destroying or building their influence. Don Alvaro de la Quadra, Bishop of Aquila, served Philip in England from 1559 until his death in 1563. Quadra was a staunch Catholic bishop who desired to see Queen Elizabeth and England return to the Catholic fold. He served effectively for some three years. Gradually, however, he became a source of consolation to many English Catholics who were dissatisfied with the religious situation in England. Because his constant encouragement to these English Catholics became an affront to the queen, her principal secretary, Sir William Cecil, and others at court, his couriers were detained, his letters were read, and spies were placed around him in constant vigilance. Even Quadra's most confidential secretary testified that he had been involved in plots against the queen and the English government. The accusations, true or not, completely destroyed his effectiveness at court.

Quadra had also been deeply in debt. Money came from Spain in a scarce and spotty manner, making his situation rather precarious since he was not a man of great personal means. For a year and a half after his death his body remained in England, unburied, because his creditors demanded payment before they would allow the body to be removed from England. Finally in March, 1565, King Philip II sent enough



money to satisfy the demands of the most pressing creditors, thus allowing the new resident to secretly remove Quadra's body and send it back to Spain.

Quadra's replacement was Don Diego Guzman de Silva, Canon of Toledo. De Silva was no less an orthodox Catholic, having at one time been nominated for the Cardinal's hat. It was a difficult time for a Spanish ambassador in England. The strained relations resulting from Quadra's residency added to the difficulty of De Silva's mission. Moreover, English piracy continued to exasperate Philip as it had during Quadra's mission. English pirates and privateers delighted in plundering the ships of Spain and the Low Countries. To make matters worse, England and the Low Countries had also entered into a series of proclamations and counter-proclamations which brought commercial relations between England and the Netherlands to an abrupt halt. And persecution of the Catholics in England was on the upswing--many Catholic bishops were imprisoned by the Protestant court.

Despite all this, and the fact that De Silva was also faced with the extremely difficult John Man affair, which threatened to completely destroy any existing friendship between England and Spain, he was able to work effectively for over four years in England. In fact, when he left of his own request, he received gifts and accolades seldom given to a

Spanish ambassador. What made the difference? At least in part it was due to De Silva's personal tact, charm, and common sense. He knew when to press an issue and when not to force his hand. He won the respect and admiration of the queen, Cecil, and other courtiers, which allowed him to open up many avenues of information at court previously closed to Quadra. The result: he became a more effective diplomat.

The third envoy was Don Guerau de Spes, a knight of the order of Calatrava, also conspicuous because of his strong Catholic views. De Spes did not waste any time in getting himself in trouble with the English government. He surely was aware of the charged atmosphere that existed in England because of Philip's expulsion of John Man from the court at Madrid, yet he did not use good judgment in his actions. The English seemed to be waiting like vultures for the slightest provocation that would allow them to pounce upon a Spanish ambassador in revenge for the Man affair. It took merely four months of his presence in England before Sir William Cecil accused him of practices unbecoming an ambassador. Then in January, 1569, he was arrested. A letter he had sent to an official in the Netherlands had been seized by the English and then used against him.<sup>1</sup> Despite his own

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<sup>1</sup>Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar

protests and those of Philip, his professional effectiveness had been curtailed. Although he remained in England for two more years, he had completely lost the trust of the council and queen, and finally, in the wake of some involvement in the Ridolfi plot to overthrow Elizabeth, he was expelled from the country.

The experiences of these three ambassadors are very instructive in regards to the challenges that Philip's resident ambassadors faced in carrying out their paramount duty of collecting, evaluating, and sending information. The contrast between De Silva and the other two residents causes one to wonder what led to De Silva's success in carrying out his responsibilities and meeting his challenges. But, although the English court was an important source of information, it was not the only source, and it seldom told Philip all that he desired to know. Consequently, the residents were able to find sources within England that gave them important, but non-official, information. Some of the residents turned to residents of other countries who could produce vital quantities of information regarding foreign relations. For example, the Spanish resident often received much information

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of State Papers, Spanish, Elizabeth, 1568-1579, Vol. 2 (1894): xxiii. Hereafter cited as CSPS. The introduction is by Martin A. S. Hume.

information. Philip's kingdom was vast, and he never had the time to travel extensively, nor was it his disposition to do so, for he never even traveled to the Low Countries where many felt that his presence was necessary for the survival of Spanish rule. Since the king never met personally the people his residents worked with, he had to rely on their judgment. Spanish ambassadors in England were given the responsibility to judge the character of those they met and report their evaluations to the king. In this way, the king could get a feel for the situation in England. And the ambassador's evaluation of a source of information also influenced the report he forwarded to Philip.

Generally, residents had the task of evaluating not only the sources, but also the information sent to Philip. Some were completely gullible, forwarding any and all information they received with no attempt at discernment. Others would carefully evaluate the information received and pass it along, warning the king that he should accept it with caution. The volume of correspondence was important, but the quality of the correspondence was even more vital. The challenge was to send correct information quickly, since it helped determine foreign policy. Because Philip needed a good overall picture, it frustrated him to have a resident who habitually sent information that was often contradicted by other reports.

At times Philip required his residents in England to help solve the difficulties that arose between England and Spain. Though this was not the ambassador's most important function, they were called upon to treat matters of grave importance to Spain. One has only to consider trade from the Low Countries, an extremely valuable enterprise to Philip, which was constantly being disrupted by the pirates of England and Ireland. The majority of Philip's trouble came from the English pirates and privateers in the channel and along the west coast of France and Spain. Philip insisted that his subjects, who were being victimized by the pirates, receive justice, but he received little satisfaction. He constantly reminded his resident ambassadors to seek some way, through negotiation, to bring piracy to a standstill. But the problem persisted throughout his reign despite attempts by the ambassadors to alleviate the problem. Moreover, the king did not care for the slaving voyages of John Hawkins, whom Philip considered a pirate. The king declared the Indies off limits to non-Spanish traders except by his special consent. If one man was successful in his slaving enterprises, many others would follow his example to the chagrin of the king. These touchy matters in regards to piracy required delicate negotiations on the part of the resident ambassador.

Commerce and trade were other matters that greatly concerned the king. Occasionally he required his resident to follow specific dictates in these matters. In this regard and others, the Catholic King desired to be well-informed and to make all major decisions himself. This caused him to become inundated by mountains of correspondence which he felt personally responsible to read, correct, annotate, and answer. His diplomats often had to wait for months to receive word from Spain, which, in some cases, caused them to make quick policy decisions and to take important actions without the consent of the king. They had to rely upon their own initiative and their understanding of the dynamics of the king's policy. Some ambassadors, of course, were more effective than others in carrying out spontaneous decisions.

Generally, negotiating did not take up the bulk of a resident's time, nor was it of highest priority. An ambassador was sometimes called upon to smooth over threatened disputes between Spain and England. Since England was so strategically situated along the sea route to Spain, Philip saw her as an important and necessary friend. Neither Philip nor Elizabeth desired overt war during the first years of their reigns, and because of this desire to maintain the status quo, an overzealous ambassador or courtier could do more harm than good.

Since Philip felt that he had been called of God to preserve the Catholic religion, the religious affairs in England greatly interested him. He was not unmindful of the fact that the English were once his subjects. Nor did he ignore the possibility that some day they again could become his subjects. He instructed his residents to aid and encourage the Catholic party in England at every possible opportunity. This policy, along with some zealousness on the part of some ambassadors, led to some very uncomfortable situations for Philip.

Of all the responsibilities facing Philip's ambassadors to England, that of gathering, evaluating, and forwarding correct information was the most important. The success of a resident may be measured by how well he carried out this duty, plus how well he met the other challenges he faced. The challenges facing De Silva were piracy, poor trade relations between Spain and the Low Countries, religious affairs, and the ticklish John Man affair. This duty and these challenges will be investigated thoroughly in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 2

### GATHERING INFORMATION FROM THE ENGLISH COURT:

#### ELIZABETH AND CECIL

Don Diego Guzman de Silva was charged by King Philip II to supply him with information from England. However, a staunch Catholic like De Silva faced an enormous challenge: how to obtain information from a primarily Protestant court in a Protestant country. In a time of religious dogmatism, the matter of faith added to the problems, yet, the information coming from the English court was most important to Philip. In order to send reliable information to the king, De Silva had to obtain reliable contacts at court.

Because of the religious differences and recent occurrences, it would seem that De Silva would have had a difficult time winning the confidence of Queen Elizabeth of England. Shortly before his arrival, Elizabeth had joined with her council in discrediting Quadra. But the new Spanish ambassador was not as dogmatic as Quadra, and he had determined before landing in London to go slowly and gently ease into the situation in England. He wrote to Margaret, the duchess of Parma, Philip's regent in the Low Countries, to



express his determination to enjoy the embassy much more than his predecessor.<sup>2</sup> His constant reminder of the need to move slowly in diplomatic affairs suggests that his personality would have been less offensive to Elizabeth. Certainly less offensive than was Quadra's.

Even so, it is difficult to understand why Elizabeth welcomed De Silva so enthusiastically. In his own account of their first audience, he described how she embraced him and addressed him in Italian, not knowing which language to speak. Elizabeth expressed love and concern for Philip's family and welcomed him as the king's resident.<sup>3</sup> It was a gracious meeting, according to the customs and court protocol of the times. De Silva also quoted the queen as saying that there were two reasons why she was especially pleased that he had come: first, because she desired news of Philip, and second, because some "friendly countries" had been attempting to make her believe that Philip

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<sup>2</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, Relations Politiques des Pas-Bas et de l'Angleterre, sous le Regne de Philippe II, (Bruxelles, F. Hayez, Imprimeur de L'Academie de Belgique 1885), vol. 4 (1886): 10 July 1564, De Silva to the Duchess of Parma, p. 48. In many of the letters that followed, De Silva urged care in working with the English. He seemed to sense that pushing too hard allowed the English advantages they otherwise would not have had.

<sup>3</sup>Academia de la Historia, Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España, (Madrid, Miguel Genesta, Impresor de la Real Casa, 1887), vol. 89 (1887): 27 June 1564, De Silva to Philip, pp. 15-16. Hereafter cited as CDI.

would never again send a resident to England. But other factors might have secretly added to Elizabeth's desire to give the new ambassador a warm welcome. She had received information of a proposed meeting between the King of Spain and his mother-in-law, the Queen Mother of France, Catherine de Medici.<sup>4</sup> This information, combined with the persistent rumors of a league of Catholic powers in opposition to Protestants, seems to have led her to desire the friendship of the principle Catholic power, Spain.<sup>5</sup> These concerns by themselves may have spurred her enthusiasm, but there were other factors (England's financial situation, Elizabeth's inherent dislike of war, France's increasing solidification into a powerful state, and the conclusion of the council of Trent) which made it extremely advisable for England to win the friendship of Spain. It seems very probable, then, that Elizabeth's friendly acceptance of De Silva may have been strategically motivated.

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<sup>4</sup>Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1564-65, vol. 7 (1870): 22 January 1564, Guido Gianetti to Elizabeth, p. 26. Hereafter cited as CSPF. Giannetti had heard rumors that this meeting was to be at Nizza, in Savoy. The rumors, though wrong, were common until the meeting at Bayonne in the following year.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 15. These are letters from Italy and France about the rumored league. Thomas Smith, Elizabeth's resident ambassador to France, wrote shortly

Whatever her legitimate reasons, she apparently grew to like the man personally. De Silva understood that it was necessary for him to join in the party atmosphere of court life in England, so during his stay he attended many jousts, tournaments, hunts, dances, dramatic productions, and parties, always making sure that he communicated with the queen. Shortly after his first audience with her, she favored the ambassador by inviting him to festivities at the palace where he found her walking with her ladies in the garden. When she saw him, she acted very pleased and engaged him in a conversation about Philip and Spanish affairs. Later, after a fine supper when De Silva was about to return to his quarters, Elizabeth asked him to stay on and see a comedy that had been planned for the evening. In further conversation the queen discussed rumors of a marriage between Don Carlos, Philip's son, and Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scotland. Following a customary feast of preserves and candied fruit, the ambassador returned to his lodgings, having spent a very productive evening with the queen.<sup>6</sup>

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thereafter denying that there had ever been a league of Catholic powers against England. See *ibid.*, p. 33, Smith to Cecil, 25 January 1564.

<sup>6</sup>Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Spanish, Elizabeth 1558-1567, vol. 1 (1892): 10 July 1564, De Silva to Philip, p. 367. Hereafter cited as CSPS.

On another occasion, though he fell into a friendly "trap," De Silva used the situation to further his friendship with Elizabeth. Wishing, for information purposes, to obtain the goodwill of the marchioness of Northampton, the sister of Lord Cobham of the Privy Council, he made arrangements to visit her at her home in Westminster. He had been told that the visit would be with the marchioness in private, but upon his arrival he discovered that the queen was with her. After laughing at the embarrassment of the ambassador, the three engaged in trivial conversation until well into the evening.<sup>7</sup> The ambassador seemed to have the ability to use occasions such as these to build friendly relationships.

De Silva attended jousts, parties, and hunts throughout his entire mission. He used these occasions to win the confidence of the queen and to communicate directly with her. In the last year of his assignment, when the Protestants were rebelling in both France and Flanders, he made certain that he was with the queen on one of her many hunting expeditions. He wrote, "The queen went out hunting yesterday and I accompanied her, so as not to lose any chance that might occur of urging

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<sup>7</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:112. From a letter to the duchess of Parma, 23 September 1564.

her to stand firm in her good intentions with regard to these disturbances in Flanders and France."<sup>8</sup>

De Silva was able to win the friendship and confidence of the queen. On one occasion Philip asked him to go to the Low Countries to attend some marriage celebrations. When Elizabeth learned of the assignment, she wrote to the duchess of Parma requesting that De Silva be allowed to return to England as soon as the ceremony was performed.<sup>9</sup> Her anxiety increased, however, as she heard from Spain that he was to continue on to Spain from Flanders and not return to England.<sup>10</sup> The queen's eagerness reflects her personal interest in his person. Also, when De Silva's mission had come to an end, and as he bid farewell to the court, Secretary Cecil confided in him that Elizabeth knew of no one whose opinion coincided with hers as well as De Silva's. He went on to mention that she

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<sup>8</sup> CDI, 90:19. From a letter to the king, dated 2 February 1568. On another hunt De Silva related that the queen rode so hard that she tired out everyone but herself.

<sup>9</sup> CSPF, 7:501. Elizabeth to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, dated 25 October 1565. De Silva did not return immediately to England, but stayed for a period of nearly two months trying to discover the source of Flemish difficulties.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 487. In a letter dated 12 October 1565 from William Phayre to Sir William Cecil. Phayre was an English man who was left in Madrid as a temporary ambassador by Thomas Challoner when he was released as resident ambassador in Spain.

had avoided praising him openly in her Privy Council because of her fear that ill feelings might arise.<sup>11</sup> De Silva wrote Philip and described Elizabeth's reaction to his transfer:

She showed more sorrow than I expected, and, changing colour, told me that she was grieved from the bottom of her heart that your Majesty should make any change, as she was so greatly pleased with my mode of procedure in affairs. She had, she said, always shown how pleased she was, and she hoped to God that there was no mystery behind this change. She dwelt so much upon this that, in order to banish suspicion, I threw the blame upon myself, assuring her that your Majesty had decided to give me leave at my own supplication and importunity, my sole reason being my poor health, which I was sure this climate did not suit. I said she knew this herself, and there was no other mystery behind it. She was somewhat quieter at this, but complained greatly of me for wanting to leave her.<sup>12</sup>

Elizabeth sent a letter with the ambassador praising him for his zeal in fulfilling the duties of his office and for preserving the mutual friendship of the two countries.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> CDI, 90:121. De Silva to Philip, 9 August 1568.

<sup>12</sup> CSPS, 2:64. From a letter dated 9 August 1568 from De Silva to the king. This account is the only one we have of the meeting, and, since it comes from the pen of the ambassador himself, should be taken with caution. He was prone to exaggerate, yet there is no reason to suppose that the queen was not shocked to see him leave.

<sup>13</sup> CSPF, 8:547. In a letter from Elizabeth to Philip dated September 13, 1568. This letter was sent shortly after the John Man affair in which Philip had expelled the English resident from his court. These

Elizabeth's personal interest in the ambassador was also evident in the concern she expressed for his comfort. An occasion arose when De Silva was asked to join the queen and her entourage some distance from London. Without telling the queen, he graciously offered to share his room with an envoy from Austria. On seeing the envoy's possessions, Elizabeth mistakenly assumed that her people had not prepared a room for De Silva and exploded in anger: "What! have they not given you a lodging? My people shall learn in a way they will not forget how you are to be treated. You shall occupy my own chamber and I will give you my key."<sup>14</sup> De Silva calmed her by explaining the situation.

There were also troubled times between De Silva and Elizabeth. Perhaps the most threatening was the occasion on which she received word that he had joined with Margaret, regent of the Low Countries, and Anthony Perrenot, the Cardinal of Granvelle, in providing Mary, Queen of Scots, with money to oppose Elizabeth. The account is taken from a letter of De Silva to Philip in September, 1565.

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circumstances add to the importance of a letter praising the Spanish ambassador for preserving friendship.

<sup>14</sup>CDI, 89:169. Taken from a letter dated 13 August 1565 from De Silva to the king.

She Elizabeth said: "I cannot prevail upon myself to keep silent on a thing that has been told me and which has greatly surprised me. My own affection for you and that which you appear to feel for me have made me consider you almost as much my Ambassador as that of my brother the King, and I am astonished you should act against me for the sake of another sovereign." I told her I did not understand her, and asked her to explain what she meant. She said she would, although she would prefer to conceal it from me. She had been assured that the duchess of Parma, Cardinal de Granvelle, and I together had arranged to send munitions, arms, and other things to the queen of Scotland, well knowing how things stood between them. I satisfied her on the subject, which I could well do, as what she had told me was not true, and she appeared to believe what I said.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the ambassador was often exasperated by Elizabeth's slowness. He discovered that he could get much more done, and get it done faster, if he went to Secretary Cecil.<sup>16</sup>

The information that Elizabeth supplied was varied and interesting, but not always extremely valuable. Some of it consisted merely of flattery and praise. In the first meeting with De Silva, Elizabeth talked of her love for Philip and showed interest in

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<sup>15</sup>CSPS, 1:476. See also CDI, 89:186-87. There is another account of the same incident in De Silva's letter dated 8 October 1565 to Margaret found in Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:251.

<sup>16</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:124. In this letter from the Spanish ambassador to the duchess of Parma, dated 22 October 1564, De Silva related an incident in which the queen flatly refused to do anything for him, in regard to trade and the lowering of customs, because it threatened her "honor." Frustrated by his inability



the possible marriage of his son, Don Carlos with Mary Stuart. Then she raved about Philip's gallantry in defending Christendom against the infidel Turk. In spite of her words and with little regard for De Silva's pleadings, she refused to lend aid when the Holy Roman Emperor asked her for money to fight the Turk.

Elizabeth feared a journey by Philip to the Low Countries. Although she told De Silva that she wanted the king to stop in England so that she could entertain him, her sincerity was questionable. Her preparations and constant reference to the matter indicated that she was anxious about it. Late in 1567, when she heard that Philip was finally on his way, she wrote to her Lord Treasurer and others giving them specific orders concerning their actions should the king happen to land on English soil.<sup>17</sup> Shortly thereafter she was alarmed by rumors that the king planned to attack England while he was in the vicinity. In November she approached De Silva, who showed considerable skill in

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to move the queen to action, he turned to Cecil. He wrote that he realized that if anything was done it would be by the secretary and not the queen.

<sup>17</sup> Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth I, James I, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1866) 1:298. Hereafter cited as CSPD. Two letters both dated August 27, 1567, from the queen to the Lord Treasurer Winchester and Viscount Montague indicate that Elizabeth desired to be minutely informed of the King's progress and possible landings in England.

convincing her that what she had heard were mere rumors:

"She said that they had given her to understand that when your Majesty's voyage was spoken of it was with the intention of invading this country which she did not believe. I said it was only an invention of people who wished to deceive her and alienate her from your Majesty's friendship for her own undoing. I said your Majesty had so many kingdoms of your own that you had no need to invade others, and much less those of your friends, and warned her not to allow herself to be led astray by such suspicions as the only object of them was to unsettle her."<sup>18</sup>

Now, Elizabeth was the principal source of knowledge concerning the progress of her own marriage negotiations. Her marriage proposals were the talk of European courts of the day; everyone was interested to see the outcome of the offers she received. She first told De Silva that she would never marry, only later to give him the distinct impression that she did indeed desire to be married. Since the ambassador was especially interested in the queen's match with the Archduke Charles, she told him often of the progress in the negotiations. He apparently handled himself

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<sup>18</sup>CSPS, 1:683. This letter dated November 8, 1567 from De Silva to Philip was received by the king on January 26, 1568. He heartily approved of the ambassador's answer to the queen saying: "You answered so exactly in accordance with my wishes that if I had instructed you you could not have done better. The fact is that what you said was the simple truth, and it will be well in any future conversations on the subject to entirely dissipate the shadow and leave the Queen thoroughly assured that, for my part, friendship and kindness shall always be maintained towards her.: See Ibid., 2:3. For further references to the same letter see CDI, 89:559 and 90:15.

well, because Elizabeth expressed her gratitude to him often for his interest in the marriage affairs.<sup>19</sup> Because of this, De Silva was able to give Philip one of the clearest pictures of Elizabeth's feelings on marriage.

Marriage was suggested to me with the King my brother-in-law; the king of France has proposed as well as the kings of Sweden and Denmark and I understand the Archduke Charles also: the only person who has not been mentioned to me is your Prince.

The reason, I said, appears clear. The King my master no doubt is convinced that your Majesty does not wish to marry since he, the greatest prince in christendom and the wisest, to whom, I am told, your Majesty owes most obligation, was offered to you and nothing came of it.

She replied, For my own part I do not think that such a conclusion is so clear as you say, although at that time I had a great idea not to marry, and I promise you, if I could to-day appoint such a successor to the Crown as would please me and the country I would not marry, as it is a thing for which I have never had any inclination. My subjects, however, press me so that I cannot help myself, but must marry or take the other course, which is a very difficult one. There is a strong idea in the world that a woman cannot live unless she is married, or at all events that if she refrains from marriage she does so for some bad reason, as they said of me that I did not marry because I was fond of the Earl of Leicester, and that I would not marry him because he had a wife already. Although he has no wife alive now I still do not marry him, notwithstanding that I was spoken to about it even on behalf of my brother the King. But what can we do? We

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<sup>19</sup>CDI, 89:155. The Letter from which this is taken was from De Silva to Philip dated July 23, 1565.

cannot cover everybody's mouth, but must content ourselves with doing our duty and trust in God, for the truth will at last be made manifest.<sup>20</sup>

On other occasions they talked of piracy. The Spanish had captured some English ships at Gibraltar, and Elizabeth and her people were greatly worried about the welfare of the English sailors in Spanish prisons. They also discussed Sir John Hawkins' voyages, and Elizabeth may have deceived him with regard to these escapades. As will be discussed later, the Spanish ambassador went to her often with requests to stop Hawkins' voyages, which she promised to do. Though she promised much, Hawkins still carried out his plans.

Elizabeth also talked often about Scotland. De Silva wrote of his attempts to encourage her to accept Mary Stuart's antics in the North--especially her marriage to Darnley. The queen was also his source of information on a strange meeting with James Stewart, the Earl of Murray, two Frenchmen, and the Privy Council. Elizabeth had Murray, the leader of the Scottish lords, on his knees begging for help against Queen Mary Stuart. In the presence of the two Frenchmen, she refused any help whatsoever. De Silva was

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<sup>20</sup>CSPS, 1:411. The letter is dated 24 March 1565. De Silva before this time had been convinced that if she married it would be to Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. See also CDI, 89:86 for the same letter in the original Spanish.

suspicious of a hoax, for he believed that Elizabeth was sending aid to the rebels in Scotland.<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth also told him much about other strange events in Scotland. When she told him of the murder of Mary Stuart's Piedmontese secretary, Rizzio, she commented that Mary's husband should also have been stabbed.<sup>22</sup> De Silva was able to supplement the queen's information with firsthand information from Scottish envoys.

There were many other things that were discussed. Elizabeth kept De Silva informed on the problems she faced over succession to the throne. She informed him of the proceedings of parliament. She told him of her feelings in regard to the return of Calais, which, according to the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis, was to be returned to her by the French. He urged her not to let Calais slip through her fingers, (he wanted England as a neighbor in Flanders rather than France).

De Silva was first impressed with the queen's mastery of languages. He found her fluent in Italian and able to speak Latin with elegance, facility and ease.<sup>23</sup> This must have been disconcerting to a man

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<sup>21</sup>CDI, 89:224-26. De Silva to Philip, 5 November 1565.

<sup>22</sup>CSPS, 1:540. De Silva to Philip, 11 April 1566.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 14. This is De Silva's first meeting with the queen as expressed in his letter to Philip dated 27 June 1564.

who was never able to learn English. He respected the queen's intellectual ability right from the start.

De Silva also quickly noticed that Elizabeth proceeded very slowly in matters confronting her. He attributed this to her skill in diplomacy rather than to indecisiveness, since he perceived how she was able to capitalize on her stalling. For this reason, he decided that it would be to his disadvantage to move too quickly in various matters, for his overanxiousness could give the English the upper hand. While many saw the queen as indecisive, De Silva saw her as shrewd.

Concerning her own religious proclivities, it appears that Elizabeth had De Silva hoodwinked. He wanted so much to have her loyal to the Catholic cause that he misinterpreted much of what she said and did. And she found it advantageous to keep him believing that she was covertly Catholic. She told him that she had had to conceal her real feelings in order to prevail with her subjects in matters of religion. De Silva quoted her as saying that "God knew her heart, which was true to His service."<sup>24</sup> The ambassador's feelings were so strong at the first of his mission

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<sup>24</sup>CSPS, 1:387. De Silva to Philip, 9 October 1564. In this same conversation Elizabeth went on to tell the ambassador that she had ordered crosses to be put into the churches, and to have stone crosses built on the towers of new or remodeled churches.

that he wrote that if Elizabeth were sure about Philip's unwavering support, she would oust the Protestants. This she could never do without absolute assurance.<sup>25</sup>

To support his belief that Elizabeth was true to the Catholic faith, De Silva joyfully forwarded an account of the queen's anger at the sight of actors in a comedy pretending to be certain Catholic bishops imprisoned in England. One represented the Bishop of London, who carried a lamb in his hands and pretended to eat it as he walked along; another represented a dog with the Host in his mouth. This direct affront to Catholic doctrine angered Elizabeth to the point that she got up and left.<sup>26</sup> On another occasion Elizabeth publicly refused to allow a Protestant preacher to speak ill of a book written by a Catholic.<sup>27</sup>

De Silva believed that the queen was just a vain woman who desired all men to be chasing after her. He wrote to Philip: "I do not think anything is more enjoyable to this Queen than treating of marriage, although she assures me herself that nothing annoys her more. She is vain, and would like all the world

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<sup>25</sup> CDI, 89:20. 22 July 1564.

<sup>26</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:87. De Silva to the Duchess of Parma, August 19, 1564. See also CSPS 1:375.

<sup>27</sup> CDI, 89:78. De Silva to Philip, 12 March 1565.

to be running after her, but it will probably end in her remaining as she is."<sup>28</sup> Even if De Silva simplified matters, the queen was conceited just as were the other monarchs of the day. She probably had petty motives also. For example, De Silva interpreted the queen's infatuation with a certain courtier named Heneage as a way to make Robert Dudley jealous enough to continue his interest in her.<sup>29</sup>

De Silva accurately assessed Elizabeth's sense of pride and honor. The marriageability of Mary Stuart in Scotland greatly threatened this pride. De Silva viewed the queen's attempts to secretly re-open marriage negotiations with Archduke Charles as a plan to thwart plans of the Queen of Scots. He theorized that the English queen desired Mary to marry beneath her or not at all.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>CSPS, 1:468. De Silva to Philip, 20 August 1565.

<sup>29</sup>CDI, 89:152. De Silva to Philip, 23 July 1565. The affair seemed to have the desired effect for soon there was a great dispute between Heneage and Dudley with the result that the latter left the court in anger, but was shortly called back by the queen, and restored to good graces.

<sup>30</sup>CSPS, 1:380. Philip to De Silva, 18 September 1564. De Silva also noted that the queen had similar motives in attempting to have Mary marry an English nobleman. But when she discovered that a marriage might increase the Scottish queen's claims to the English throne, she turned against any of Mary's plans.



her as "strange and fickle."<sup>33</sup> Because Elizabeth never really considered the offer seriously, the matter was dropped. But it was revived again and again by the French. This caused the ambassador to view the queen as strange and fickle.

De Silva certainly came to like the queen, which caused him to accept what she said too readily. For example, as he negotiated with her he felt she was always ready and willing to have his requests carried out. He accepted her promises without question and assured Philip that these promises would all be carried out to the letter.<sup>34</sup> In matters of piracy, De Silva believed that Elizabeth was doing everything possible to curb piracy, but because of matters beyond her control she was not always effective. She might have been leading the ambassador on, for she felt great pressure from Philip who kept many of her English sailors locked up in Spanish prisons for years, despite the pleadings of the English ambassador. But when piracy served her well, she was hesitant to halt it at any cost. Her

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<sup>33</sup>CSPS, 1:526. De Silva to Philip, 25 February 1566. Nothing came of the affair, and it turned out to be just as the Spanish ambassador had anticipated.

<sup>34</sup>CDI, 89:26. This is a very early letter to the king, dated 7 August 1564, when De Silva had been in the country only two months. So he picked up the pro-queen bias early in his mission, and never deviated from it.

pride entered into this matter also, for she wanted to be seen as a sovereign who was willing to bow to the just requests of her fellow sovereigns. These and many other factors had been overlooked by the ambassador, who believed the queen when she told him that she was doing everything in her power to curb piracy.

In summary, De Silva seemed to evaluate the queen quite accurately. She was a proud monarch who was always concerned with her honor, but she was much more dilatory and indecisive than the resident pictured her. He misjudged her motives, considering them more pure than they really were. Moreover, he did not discern her political or economic motives. He was also gullible in accepting almost every piece of information she offered him. Thus, he did not have clear insight in evaluating his sources of information.

Nearly all of De Silva's negotiating was channeled through Elizabeth's chief minister, Sir William Cecil. Thus he also became one of the Spanish ambassador's chief sources of important information at court. Cecil was there when the resident first met the queen and also when he took leave of her to return to Spain. It is interesting how De Silva, at first, completely rejected the secretary as an arch-heretic, but later came to see him as a truly important part of English-Spanish relations.

One of the first and most important assignments

the new ambassador was given was to arrange a conference at Bruges to remedy an extremely harmful trade situation that had developed between England and the Low Countries. This he set out to do slowly and carefully. All of the negotiations and plans for the conference went through Cecil. Elizabeth appointed the secretary and two others to be the English government's special commissioners in this matter. De Silva, in his letters to Margaret, the duchess of Parma, detailed many of the long, involved meetings he held with Cecil to make arrangements for a conference. Clearly De Silva received all of his information about the conference from the secretary. More details of the trade situation will be treated later on in this thesis.

One event perhaps best illustrates the working relationship that developed between the two men, while also shedding light on De Silva's manner of negotiating. After trade between England and the Low Countries had been restored to normal, awaiting the outcome of the drawn-out conference at Bruges, the Spanish ambassador became very upset when he discovered that some Spanish merchants were not being allowed to trade in England. These Spanish merchants had contracted to purchase some sheep hides from the English, but, because of a proclamation published in 1563, the English merchants got cold feet and refused to sell the hides. Upon hearing about it, De Silva went immediately to Cecil,

demanding that the matter be taken to council. The council met but refused to interfere without an act of parliament. De Silva then demanded an audience with the queen and threatened to inform Philip of the injustice of the matter. The queen was sick, and De Silva was refused audience. When he threatened to become hostile and throw off his usual friendly manner, he was allowed a short visit. When Elizabeth claimed that "for the good of the kingdom" she could not annul an act of Parliament, the ambassador confronted her with a report he had received. Apparently she had allowed a certain Englishman to transport sheep hides out of England contrary to the same proclamation. That was too much for the queen, who got sick and had to retire.

De Silva realized that he would have to deal with Cecil in the matter. The secretary claimed that the queen's only obligation was to open trade, which she had already done, but that she could still refuse to allow her subjects to buy or sell their goods. De Silva exploded, stating that it was not open trade at all if a merchant could ship goods to a country but could not sell them, or if he could go to England, but could not buy goods. The Spanish ambassador convinced Cecil to go back and discuss the matter with the queen. If he refused, De Silva threatened to protest loudly, which he did not care to do, in order to fulfill his

duty.<sup>35</sup> After a few days De Silva went back to the queen, with Cecil by his side as a witness. Elizabeth claimed that she had misunderstood the first time, but now that she understood, she was willing to do all that the ambassador requested. The proclamation was published shortly thereafter.<sup>36</sup>

Cecil also assisted De Silva as the latter sought to put a halt to piracy and obtain redress. The secretary was his official source for information on any action that was taken by the English court. For example, when John Hawkins was outfitting his ships for another slaving voyage, it was Cecil who assured the Spanish ambassador that Hawkins would not be allowed to offend the Catholic King by trading in the New World.<sup>37</sup> And it was to Cecil that the ambassador went to urge the capture of Thomas Stukley and other pirates.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:174-75. De Silva's letter, dated 13 February 1565.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 178. In another letter to Margaret, dated 26 February 1565, De Silva wrote that the queen's proclamation about sheep skins had been published (See *ibid.*, p. 185.) A document dated February 17, 1565, suspending certain ordinances lately made in Parliament for opening the intercourse of merchandise with the Low Countries, can be found in CSPD, 1:249.

<sup>37</sup>CDI, 89:516. De Silva to Philip, 21 July 1567.

<sup>38</sup>CSPS, 1:396. De Silva to Philip, 4 December 1564.

Cecil also supplied De Silva with information concerning marriage negotiations. For instance, he informed the ambassador of French offers to marry Elizabeth. He also kept De Silva informed on the progress of the archduke affair. At first, the Spanish ambassador thought that Cecil was opposed to any chance of a match between Elizabeth and the archduke. But later he saw that factions in the Privy council caused Cecil to favor the marriage in every way despite the fact that the archduke was Catholic. Thomas Radcliffe, the Earl of Sussex, told De Silva that Cecil never wanted the queen to marry because it would require him to subordinate himself to a king. Sussex viewed Cecil as an ambitious man who was fond of ruling and who liked everything to pass through his hands.<sup>39</sup> So although De Silva was initially unsure of Cecil's stand on the marriage question, he soon found out that Cecil did support the archduke match. And Cecil often asked the ambassador to urge Elizabeth to marry. In one instance, he told De Silva that "he knew from the queen herself that she attached so much importance to what I said that I could do more in the matter than they could."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> CDI, 89:160. De Silva to Philip, 6 August 1565. Sussex was the principal proponent of the archduke match at court, and he often sought the Spanish ambassador's help.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 260. De Silva to Philip, 4 February 1566. De Silva felt that the minister was a flatterer,

Cecil also informed the ambassador of attempts by the French to do everything possible to disturb the archduke match. And he kept De Silva well informed of the efforts of the English envoys sent to the emperor in these matters. Still the ambassador questioned Cecil's sincerity: "Cecil seems to desire this business so greatly that he does not speak about the religious point, but this may be deceit, as his wife is of a contrary opinion, and thinks great trouble may be caused to the peace of the country through it. She has great influence with her husband, and no doubt discusses the matter with him, but she appears to be a more furious heretic than he is."<sup>41</sup>

Cecil was also a source of information on affairs in Scotland. When Mary sent Sir Robert Melville to treat important matters with Elizabeth, Cecil directed him to De Silva saying that no person in England or elsewhere had done so much with Elizabeth to incline her to peace and help her obtain a good understanding of Scottish affairs as had De Silva.<sup>42</sup>

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but never hesitated to send home the compliments he received.

<sup>41</sup>CSPS, 1:580. De Silva to Philip, 14 September 1566.

<sup>42</sup>CDI, 89:284. De Silva to Philip, 18 March 1566. Melville was to negotiate the release of Lady Margaret Douglass, Mary Stuart's mother-in-law, from imprisonment caused by the marriage of her son and Mary.

Cecil went on to claim that any disagreements between the queens of England and Scotland could be most easily settled by the Spanish ambassador, therefore, Melville should be certain to take De Silva's advice.

Cecil was also one of De Silva's sources of information concerning the marriage of Mary Stuart to Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley. He also supplied much of the information concerning Darnley's murder. When the secretary told the ambassador about the murder De Silva was suspicious that he had much more information than he was willing to give.<sup>43</sup> However, De Silva received all the news Cecil would offer: the complicity of Bothwell in the affair, the marriage of Bothwell to Mary Stuart, her capture by the Scottish Lords, her escape and recapture in England.

The Spanish resident found the English secretary very concerned about any matter in the Low Countries that could have possible ill effects on England. One of the first matters they discussed was the possibility of French involvement in the disturbances in Flanders. Cecil told the ambassador that, according to his trustworthy reports, the Low Countries were very pro-Spanish, but the French were trying to get involved in the matters there. This struck Cecil

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<sup>43</sup>CDI, 89:441. De Silva to Philip, 17 February 1567. This was the first that the ambassador had heard of the murder, and the account that he passed on to his king contained some inaccuracies.



as being very wrong.<sup>44</sup> Another concern appeared more than a year later when De Silva wrote that Cecil was extremely disturbed by news of the coming of the Duke of Alva and his troops to the Low Countries. Cecil told De Silva that everyone in England was surprised at the number of men Philip had been able to raise for the expedition, for it was common knowledge that the king was deeply in debt and would have difficulty in sustaining such an expensive enterprise. Cecil felt that Alva's coming would certainly cause problems.<sup>45</sup> A month later when Alva captured and imprisoned two of the chief nobles in the Low Countries, the English secretary expressed surprise that Philip would allow this to be done to such loyal Catholic subjects.<sup>46</sup> He later told De Silva that great hatred had been aroused in Germany at the rigorous measures of repression that Alva had used in the Low Countries. It seemed to Cecil as though the Spaniards wished to expel all of the natives from the Low Countries and take possession of everything.<sup>47</sup> Cecil used the ambassador to warn the Spanish that such actions were not acceptable to the

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 89:321. De Silva to Philip, 18 May 1566.

<sup>45</sup>CSPS, 1:671. De Silva to Philip, 14 August 1567.

<sup>46</sup>CDI, 89:544. De Silva to Philip, 20 September 1567.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 90:58. De Silva to Philip, 1 May 1568.

English, and in this way kept him well informed. Cecil's role also extended into other areas. De Silva had to push him in order to get a proclamation printed against a group of Flemish exiles in England. As will be discussed later, the ambassador wanted to prevent the armed Flemish rebels from leaving England to cause trouble in the Low Countries. It was Cecil who carried the desires of the ambassador to Elizabeth before De Silva was given audience, and it was Cecil who ultimately sent a copy of the proclamation to the ambassador with assurances that it was being printed.<sup>48</sup>

Certain matters nearly soured the relationship the two men had established over the years: the harsh treatment English sailors received in Spanish prisons, and the way the Spanish Inquisition treated English merchants in Spain. Although De Silva tried to accommodate Cecil by pointing out that these were extremely delicate matters in Spain, and that Philip left the inquisitors a free hand for many reasons, surely the situation added tension to their relationship.<sup>49</sup>

Another matter, which will be treated in much more detail later, was the John Man affair. When Philip

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<sup>48</sup>CSPS, 2:54, 59. De Silva to Philip, 17 July 1568.

<sup>49</sup>CDI, 89:340. De Silva to Philip, 25 June 1566.

expelled the English resident from his court in Madrid for alleged religious improprieties, Cecil was more upset than at any other time during De Silva's mission. The ambassador related how he allowed the secretary to throw a minor tantrum and then, "I waited a little for him to recover somewhat from his rage, and then went up to him laughing and embraced him, saying that I was amused to see him fly into such a passion over what I had told him, because I knew he understood differently, and that the affair was of such a character as to be only as good or as bad as the Queen liked to make it."<sup>50</sup> Apparently this disarmed the secretary because De Silva was able to maintain his confidence. After this episode Cecil expressed great confidence in the ambassador.

One of the most interesting aspects of the relationship between De Silva and Cecil and that De Silva's radically changed opinion of the secretary. Shortly after the arrival of the ambassador in England, he was approached by a friend of Robert Dudley who recounted the enmity that existed between Dudley and Cecil. He urged De Silva to use his influence to have Cecil turned out of office, because "if Cecil were out of the way the affairs of your Majesty would be more favorably dealt with and religious questions as well,

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<sup>50</sup>CSPS, 2:38. De Silva to Philip, 24 May 1568.

because this Cecil and his friends are those who persecute the Catholics and dislike your Majesty.<sup>51</sup> Dudley's friend was apparently taking advantage of De Silva's inexperience to further Dudley's career. Unfortunately, De Silva fell for it and categorized the secretary as an arch-heretic, the cause of harm and concern for Spain. Philip responded favorably to De Silva's assessment of Cecil and encouraged him to somehow turn him out of office.<sup>52</sup>

De Silva wisely moved slowly in the matter, realizing that as long as Cecil was in power, he would need his cooperation. He wrote Philip that he would do his best to work through Cecil until he was indeed put out of power. As he worked with the secretary, he soon changed his attitude, and came to see Cecil as by far the queen's most important and effective minister, a man who did much for Spain. Six months after his arrival, the ambassador had a completely different attitude about Cecil.

When I first arrived here I had imagined Secretary Cecil, judging by the accounts given me, to be very different from what I have found him in your Majesty's affairs. He is well disposed towards them, truthful, lucid, modest and just, and, although he is zealous in serving his Queen, which is one of his best traits, yet

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<sup>51</sup>CDI, 89:16. De Silva to Philip, 27 June 1564.

<sup>52</sup>CSPS, 1:371. Philip to De Silva, 6 August 1564.

he is amenable to reason. He knows the French and, like an Englishman, is their enemy.... With regard to his religion I say nothing except that I wish he were a Catholic, but to his credit must be placed the fact that he is straightforward in affairs and shows himself well affected towards your Majesty, for which I thank him, and, with fair words that pledge me to nothing, I let him know that your Majesty looks to him to dispose matters favorably as necessity may occur, for he along it is who makes or mars business here.<sup>53</sup>

De Silva never had another occasion to alter his opinion of Cecil. He worked closely with the secretary, describing him as a just man, certainly a good minister.<sup>54</sup> It was a case of a Spanish ambassador getting to know well a man whom he first misjudged.

Queen Elizabeth and Cecil were De Silva's two main sources of official information at the English court. He was able to win the friendship of both and maintain it throughout his two years as resident. Because of this special relationship, he received and transmitted valuable information to Philip. And his evaluations of Elizabeth and Cecil were quite accurate. Philip well satisfied, praised the ambassador openly.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 401-2. De Silva to Philip, 2 January 1565.

<sup>54</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:245. De Silva to the Duchess of Parma, 17 September 1565.

## CHAPTER 3

### GATHERING INFORMATION: MINOR MEMBERS OF THE COURT AND OTHERS

De Silva was confident that Robert Dudley would be his most effective tool in England. Dudley was the son of the Earl of Northumberland and the grandson of Edmund Dudley, both of whom had been hung for treason. Nevertheless this courtier was a dignified man who became Elizabeth's main interest. But Dudley's marriage stood in the way of any possible union with the queen. However, on September 8, 1560, his wife, Amy Robsart, was found dead at the foot of the stairs of her home. In spite of the opportunity which availed itself, the queen chose not to marry him. When the Spanish ambassador arrived in London, Dudley was still Elizabeth's main prospect.

Dudley had earlier approached Philip's resident, Alvaro de la Quadra, and had convinced the ambassador of his loyalty to the Catholic faith and of his willingness to help bring England back to the Catholic fold. In January, 1561, Henry Sidney, Dudley's brother-in-law approached Quadra for the first time

with the suggestion that if Philip were to support Dudley's marriage with the queen, Dudley could easily be won over to the Spanish cause. Dudley would then serve the Catholic King like one of his vassals.<sup>55</sup> Because of Dudley's continual assertions of goodwill, Philip felt he he was one of the most important contacts in England. In his instructions to De Silva, Philip stated: "It will be necessary for the success of your operations, and for other things that may occur from day to day to secure the goodwill of Lord Robert, who is so great a favorite with the queen of England that he can influence her to the extent you have been already informed. You with your kindness will try to win him over."<sup>56</sup>

When De Silva first arrived in England, he expected Dudley to be friendly toward Spain. But to his disappointment Dudley turned out to lean more toward France and the Protestants. De Silva's first encounter with the Dudley faction at court came shortly after his arrival when a friend of the courtier approached him and tried to turn him against William Cecil.<sup>57</sup> They

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<sup>55</sup>CSPS, 1:178. Quadra to Philip, 22 January 1561. Sidney continued to meet with the ambassador to obtain the king's help. Later Dudley told the Spanish ambassador that he promised to render to Philip all the service that Sidney had previously promised "and very much more." Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>56</sup>CSPS, 1:352.

<sup>57</sup>CDI, 89:16. De Silva to Philip, 27 June 1564.

were apparently trying to take advantage of his inexperience in order to use any influence he might have against Cecil; it did not work. Nevertheless, De Silva was duly impressed by Dudley's supposed support of the Catholic party, which looked to the courtier as its only advocate at court. De Silva intended to avail himself of Dudley in every possible way, but saw the need to proceed with caution.<sup>58</sup>

The first meeting between Dudley and De Silva convinced the Spanish ambassador that Dudley was indeed all he had hoped: Dudley was held in high esteem by the queen, and promised that he would serve Philip in return for Philip's support. Dudley's friend met De Silva again and promised that a marriage between Elizabeth and Dudley would bring England back to Catholicism. This man assured De Silva that Dudley had an understanding with the Pope on the matter, and even had a man in Rome who represented him personally. Thomas Sackville, son of Sir Richard Sackville, the queen's cousin and a member of her Council could have been the man in Rome. De Silva reported that Sackville had been arrested as a spy in Rome, yet upon investigation, the Pope had released him and had talked to him about conditions in England. Sackville told the

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.



Pope that Elizabeth feared that he would declare her illegitimate, thus depriving her of her natural right to the English throne. The Pope replied that if Elizabeth would submit to Catholicism, he and the College of Cardinals would adopt the proper measures necessary to allow her the security she desired.<sup>59</sup> It is also possible that Dudley's friend was telling De Silva a convincing story to encourage the ambassador to more readily accept Dudley's offer.

In his first meeting with the Spanish ambassador, Dudley made several offers of service to the king, telling how he was bound to serve Philip on account of the favors Philip had given him and because the king had once been his Sovereign.<sup>60</sup> De Silva transmitted all this information to Philip and indicated that all the English Catholics looked to Dudley for leadership. Philip, duly impressed, instructed his ambassador that, if Dudley promised to bring England back to the Catholic

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<sup>59</sup>CSPS, 1:390-91. De Silva to Philip, 4 November 1564. For Sackville's full statement see Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Rome (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916), vol. 1 (1916): p. 163. Hereafter cited as CSPR. The important part of the statement is as follows: "And so, if at any time the Queen shall be minded to return to the unity of the Church and the obedience of the Holy See, he promises her that he will receive her with fatherly affection and all the love that could be desired, and he will apply to the solutions of the difficulties aforesaid such remedies as shall be approved by the Queen's Parliament.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 367. De Silva to Philip, 10 July 1564.

fold, De Silva was to assure Dudley that Spain would readily help and favor him. De Silva was also asked to maintain a cordial and friendly relationship with the courtier for as long as possible. However, Philip was worried because of Dudley's French connections. He ordered his resident to discover if Dudley had any offers from the French that would prove detrimental to Spanish interests.<sup>61</sup>

Initially De Silva was sincerely convinced that Dudley would be a valuable tool in Spanish hands, but as time went on the became more and more uncertain. In October 1564, Dudley (recently made Earl of Leicester) approached De Silva and repeated his professions of desire to serve Philip. During the conversation the ambassador told of Philip's offer to support Dudley. Dudley confessed that he did not expect the queen to marry him, and completely ignored the subject of religion. This confused De Silva. He cautioned Dudley that if he ever turned against the Catholic party in England, he would lose their support.<sup>62</sup> This was the first suspicion that Dudley was not as staunch as De

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<sup>61</sup>CDI, 89:23. Philip to De Silva, 6 August 1564. The Spanish ambassador had warned the king that Dudley almost certainly had received many offers from the French. De Silva had learned that Dudley's father was a friend of the French, and suspected the same from his son. See CSPS, 1:367.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 89:50-51. De Silva to Philip, 14 October 1564.

Silva hoped. Other events shortly thereafter confirmed this suspicion. De Silva later wrote to Philip that he had heard rumors that Leicester was now considered to be more Protestant than Catholic. For evidence he cited two events: the queen had ordered a Catholic image to be placed in her chapel, but Dudley had removed it; when the queen ordered the Protestant ministers to wear certain religious vestments in their services, Dudley used his influence to have the order rescinded.<sup>63</sup> Because the ambassador was convinced that if the queen ever married, it would be to Leicester, he tried his best to maintain good relations with Dudley.

De Silva used every possible occasion to urge the earl to marry the queen. But Dudley had almost given up hope. He had even begun to push the suit of Archduke Charles. This confused De Silva, who reasoned that Dudley was merely trying to secure himself a place at court. It bothered De Silva that Dudley seemed more inclined to the Protestants than to the Catholics and that he was very attached to the French. Nevertheless, he doubled his efforts to maintain the goodwill of the earl.

In reality, De Silva received very little solid information from Dudley that he could send back to

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<sup>63</sup>CSPS, 1:401. 2 January 1565, De Silva to Philip.

Philip. For nearly four years all he recorded was how the earl went in and out of favor with the queen, how she became infatuated with two other minor subjects at court in order to make Dudley jealous, how Dudley's faction at court squabbled with factions of other courtiers, and how, through all this, he personally tried to maintain Dudley's goodwill. Even so, when the ambassador found out that Dudley was not going to be as valuable to him as he first had hoped, he visited him less frequently. Months would pass without the two men visiting each other. At one point, Elizabeth told De Silva that he needed to visit the earl and show him the friendship he had previously shown.<sup>64</sup>

Dudley must have been the biggest disappointment of De Silva's mission in England: he did not turn out to be a staunch Catholic, he did not marry the queen and bring England back to the Church, nor did he supply much information of value to Spain. Near the end of his mission, De Silva received a few tidbits of information from the earl (e.g., Bothwell had received a divorce in Scotland and was ready to marry Mary Stuart, the marriage had taken place, and Spanish policy in the Low Countries was much too harsh), but this information was also available from other sources.

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<sup>64</sup>CDI, 89:434-35. De Silva to Philip, 25 January 1567.

In only one thing did the earl please the ambassador: when Dudley became chancellor of the University of Oxford, he mitigated the harsh treatment of Catholics there.<sup>65</sup> In spite of the disappointment, De Silva sincerely attempted, right up until the end of his mission, to keep the earl friendly towards Spain.

Thomas Radcliffe, the third Earl of Sussex, returned to England after five years in Ireland, just after De Silva's arrival. He was not a Privy Councillor, but gallant and able man, a soldier by profession, and an important friend of William Cecil. De Silva first met him in connection with the archduke's suit for the hand of Queen Elizabeth. This was the first and only subject of any importance that the two men discussed.

Sussex, along with his cousin, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was the leader of the faction at court that supported the archduke affair and opposed Leicester. After negotiations with the archduke had begun, the Emperor sent an envoy to England with a list of specific demands. Sussex told the envoy that it would be well for him to take De Silva with him to meet Elizabeth.<sup>66</sup> This is the manner in which the earl used the Spanish ambassador: when he felt things were not

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 89:509. De Silva to Philip, 5 July 1567.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 164. De Silva to Philip 6 August 1565.

progressing as desired, Sussex asked the Spanish resident to add his influence.

Sussex came to De Silva in January 1566, having met with him only a few times before, and requested his help. De Silva wrote:

The earl of Sussex tells me that this affair of the archduke is on the point of being decided one way or the other, and that there are still some who maliciously say that I will not help it forward. He says it would be very advantageous if I would take the same steps with the Queen as I did at first, as it would tend greatly to your Majesty's interests and the welfare of the country if this match were to take place, so much depending upon the ancient friendship between your Majesty and their sovereign.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the remainder of De Silva's stay in England, the earl came to him often for help in the archduke affair. It is interesting to note that when the queen hesitated to send a reply to the emperor about the affair, both Cecil and Sussex came to the Spanish ambassador, urging him to encourage the queen to reply quickly.<sup>68</sup>

In May 1566, the Spanish ambassador heard rumors that Elizabeth would send Sussex to the emperor's court to give him the Order of the Garter. In November, she told De Silva that she would send Sussex. From then

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<sup>67</sup>CSPS, 1:511. De Silva to Philip, 28 January 1566.

<sup>68</sup>CDI, 89:280. De Silva to Philip, 18 March 1566.

on, De Silva included in his weekly report to the king that Sussex was awaiting orders to depart. Sussex waited and waited, then after five months, when he had given up hope of departing, the queen ordered him to be ready to leave immediately for Austria. Two months later, the earl finally left England. Nothing came of the trip because neither side was willing to compromise.

It may seem that De Silva wasted a large amount of paper writing about the archduke affair. However, information about the possible match between the archduke and Elizabeth was of prime interest in Europe. Moreover, Philip was interested! Furthermore, he had confidence in De Silva and appreciated hearing about his relationships with the English Court regarding the proposed marriage. On one occasion Philip wrote: "You did very well also in satisfying Sussex with regard to the distrust he said the queen felt as to my real desire for the Archduke's marriage. Whenever the question is raised and on any opportunity that occurs you can repeat the assurance of my goodwill towards the queen and my desire to maintain my amity with her."<sup>69</sup>

What did De Silva think of Sussex? Following one of their first meetings, the ambassador said that he was surprised that Elizabeth did not put Sussex into

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<sup>69</sup>CSPS, 1:680. Philip to De Silva, 14 October 1567.

the council, because she had so much important business, and he was so clever and experienced in affairs.<sup>70</sup>

Later, in talking with the queen about sending Sussex to the emperor, De Silva suggested that Sussex was well fitted for the job, a very capable man.<sup>71</sup> He was very impressed with the earl and held him in highest regard. The evaluation, it seems, was appropriate, for Sussex was a very able man. One thing about him had bothered De Silva, namely Sussex's reaction to Alva's harsh treatment of Flemish nobles in the Low Countries. Sussex suggested that De Silva's defense of Alva's repressive policy was naive and that he would soon see the wretchedness of that policy. His reasoning did not move De Silva who felt Alva's measures were justified.<sup>72</sup>

Elizabeth, Cecil, Dudley, and Sussex were De Silva's principal contacts at court, but this is not to say that he had no others. His letters also contain a smattering of references to information that he received from other courtiers and official representatives of the court. Special commissioners worked with him on Flemish trade and piracy. He also forwarded much court gossip to the king from unnamed sources, quoting his

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 466. De Silva to Philip, 13 August 1565.

<sup>71</sup> CDI, 89:400. De Silva to Philip, 11 November 1566.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 2:99. De Silva to Philip, 10 July 1568.



sources as "some say," "others say," "they say," "trustworthy persons," "a person in a key position to know," "on good authority," etc.

There were two French ambassadors during De Silva's mission: Paul de Foix, who served from 1562 to 1566; and Bochetel de la Forest, who served for the remainder of De Silva's mission. The girations that the Spanish and French ambassadors went through to obtain information from one another, and their struggles with precedence nearly led to the destruction of any kind of relationship.

Philip instructed De Silva to visit the French court on his way to England. He was to deliver letters and news from Spain and to assure the French monarchy that he would maintain good relations with De Foix in England.<sup>73</sup> De Silva's correspondence first mentioned a discussion with the French ambassador about trade. The trade situation between Flanders and England was of utmost concern to Philip, who feared that the French wanted to usurp Flander's place in English trade. After De Foix met with the queen to discuss trade, De Silva discovered, through an unnamed source, that the English had granted the French permission to bring certain herbs and wines into the country, though they

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<sup>73</sup> CDI, 89:4. Copy of Instructions given by His Majesty to Don Diego Guzman de Silva when he went as Ambassador to England, 19 January 1564.

had conceded nothing with regard to Flemish trade.<sup>74</sup>

A little less than a month later, De Silva talked to De Foix about French trade negotiations. De Foix denied that he had offered to establish a staple for English cloth in France, but said that when the queen asked him if cloth would be admitted into France, he answered that French ports were open to anyone. But he told De Silva that the French did not want the English cloth.<sup>75</sup> De Silva distrusted De Foix. The Spaniard was suspicious of Frenchmen, who, he felt told convenient lies.

It was not long before problems of precedence began to crop up. Ambassadors of this age were overly concerned about these matters, and De Silva was no exception. He was annoyed for example, when the French Ambassador dined with the queen the same day, but earlier than he did. He also was upset when, after a hunting expedition with the queen, De Foix was allowed audience before he was. It disturbed the ambassador on another occasion when Elizabeth sent Dudley to tell him that he would have to wait for his requested audience until after she had seen the French ambassador,

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<sup>74</sup>CSPS, 1:366. De Silva to Philip, 27 June 1564.

<sup>75</sup>CDI, 89:28. De Silva to Philip, 12 August 1564.

for the Frenchman had a courier awaiting the outcome of the meeting.<sup>76</sup>

Another incident happened a year later when Elizabeth invited De Silva to a joust. He wrote a note to De Foix informing him of the invitation. This procedure had developed between the two men so that they would not be in the queen's presence together, thereby avoiding problems. On this particular occasion, the French ambassador deliberately failed to heed the warning and attended the joust. The queen graciously invited De Silva into her special compartment, but only for a short time. She then asked him to leave so that she could entertain the French ambassador. This upset De Silva; however, when he discovered that the queen had kept De Foix waiting for a long time, he felt much better. On the other hand, the French ambassador was terribly upset over the matter.<sup>77</sup> There were other confrontations of this kind between the two ambassadors during the next year, and De Silva always seemed to come out on top. Despite these problems, the two men still communicated with each other.

The French ambassador managed to supply De Silva

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<sup>76</sup>CSPS, 1:384-85. All three incidents are contained in De Silva's letter to Philip dated 9 October 1564. So the incidents of precedence cropped up soon after De Silva's arrival.

<sup>77</sup>CDI, 89:74-75. De Silva to Philip, 8 January 1565.

with some minor but useful information. Since De Foix was especially interested in Scotland, he often supplied the Spanish ambassador with the French point of view on Scottish affairs. There were times when De Silva could not discover what the French ambassador was doing at court, and this bothered him. He resorted to a variety of ways to obtain his information. In one instance, when he could discover nothing from his contacts at court, he talked to De Foix's secretary.<sup>78</sup> He told the secretary that French secrecy caused him to consider their business at court very important. The secretary claimed that the only business being treated with the English was a French request for redress because of a robbery committed by an English pirate. De Silva told him that he believed him, but that the actions of the French were such as to cause suspicion. De Foix was concerned about De Silva's questioning. So concerned that shortly thereafter, he sent a messenger to De Silva to confirm his secretary's story.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>CSPS, 1:412. De Silva to Philip, 31 March 1565. In this letter he told of his unnamed informant at court who had observed the queen and the ambassador taking leave of each other in especially high spirits, but the only words the informant could hear were "keep it to yourself." This just added to the Spanish ambassador's curiosity.

<sup>79</sup>CDI, 89:94. De Silva to Philip, 7 April 1565. De Silva also had to add his comments on the fact that

Another method De Silva used to get information from the French ambassador was to communicate news of little importance just to make the Frenchman feel that they were really allies. Once he wrote: "Perhaps because I make a show of being very confidential with him, and take care to tell him on all occasions things that can be told without inconvenience, giving him to understand always that your Majesty has ordered me to do so."<sup>80</sup> This caused De Foix to occasionally communicate valuable information that he would have not given otherwise.<sup>81</sup> Generally the information that De Silva received was a summary of goals in England. Because he felt that Frenchmen could not be trusted, he was cautious in accepting the information as truth. But he did accept some of the information as valid.

This kind of relationship between the two ambassadors continued for the rest of De Foix's stay in England with both ambassadors supplying each other with

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he believed that the French were attempting to impede the trade conference at Bruges between the English and the Low Countries.

<sup>80</sup> CDI, 89:198-99. De Silva to Philip, 1 October 1565.

<sup>81</sup> CSPS, 1:428. De Silva to Philip, 5 May 1565. See also *ibid.*, 1:443, wherein the Spanish ambassador tells Philip that he "conveyed the news to him with my usual great professions of affection for him, and so drew him out until he told me the whole history of the business." So De Silva also used flattery to his advantage.

minor bits of interesting information, useful perhaps to their principals back home. Then in May 1566, De Foix was replaced by Bochetel de la Forest. De Silva's summary of De Foix was positive. He was a clever and serviceable person, one who would be of use to the French in other areas. However, he doubted that De Foix was as good a Catholic and as friendly toward Spain as he claimed to be.<sup>82</sup>

De Silva had a difficult time getting to know the new French ambassador. Some three months passed before the two men met and talked. From what De Silva had hear, and from what he gleaned during this first interview, the French ambassador was a good Catholic, which pleased him very much. During the first eight months of De la Forest's mission, De Silva made only one brief comment regarding the French ambassador's fear of Philip's journey to the Low Countries. In February De Silva related to Philip a conversation between himself and the French ambassador:

I understand, as I have already written, that the French Ambassador here is out of all patience at your Majesty's coming to Flanders, and especially your coming in force, although he expresses quite the contrary to me, and I make every fitting demonstration of friendship to him. I advise him frequently that I am told the French heretics are carrying on active communications with those of this country, and

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<sup>82</sup>CSPS, 1:554. De Silva to Philip, 25 May 1565.

that his King should take care not to trust them as all their aim and design is to place him in a difficult position from which it will be hard for him to extricate himself; separating him from his friends who could defend him, and so to take advantage of his need in order to force him to do exactly as they wish.

The Ambassador thinks that there is not much foundation for the statement so far as regards these people, and tries to convince me of the perfect harmony that exists in France; as if we did not understand everywhere what is going on.<sup>83</sup>

De la Forest mentioned a few things about France and Scotland when Mary Stuart's troubles increased, but, all in all, he reported little to De Silva that the Spanish ambassador felt worth relating to his king. Generally speaking, the French ambassadors were not valuable sources of information which is only understandable, considering the tension existing between the two countries. What De Silva's correspondence does do, however, is give an interesting picture of the relationship between the ambassadors and their concern for precedence. De Silva did not mention any serious precedence problems with the new ambassador. Philip was so concerned with precedence that when De Silva was sent to Venice, Philip gathered all the possible information he could on matters of precedence there.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 1:615. De Silva to Philip, 3 February 1567.

<sup>84</sup> Archivo Documental Espanol, Negociaciones con Francia, (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1951) 16:187. Philip to Alava, 15 September 1568. Hereafter cited as NCF.

The Spanish ambassador received much information from different Scottish envoys and ambassadors that was of importance to Spain. While Philip failed to give De Silva instructions concerning a Scottish policy, the ambassador, feeling a need for attention to these affairs, involved himself deeply and did his best to cause his king to become concerned about Scotland. But he was never able to induce much enthusiasm in Philip.

Lady Margaret Douglas, the wife of Matthew Stewart, Earl of Lennox, was an English Catholic with a distant claim to the English throne. When Elizabeth allowed Lady Margaret's son, Henry Stewart (Lord Darnley) to travel to Scotland to be with his father, Lady Margaret became one of De Silva's principle contacts regarding the progress of a rumored marriage between Darnley and Mary Stuart. Elizabeth had Lady Margaret imprisoned in the Tower of London when her son refused to return to England. Lady Margaret asked the ambassador to use his influence to obtain her release. Though De Silva did talk to Elizabeth, he failed to win Lady Margaret's release, however, he recorded everything that Lady Margaret told him about her son in Scotland.

William Maitland, Lord Lethington, Mary Stuart's principal secretary, was another important source of Scottish information. De Silva wanted very much to



have Spain get involved in the marriage possibilities of the Queen of Scotland. If the queen were to marry a Frenchman, the communications between Spain and the Low Countries could be effectively halted by the French powers, but if she married a Catholic, (especially Darnley) the chances that she would succeed to the English throne and return that country to Catholicism were greatly increased. De Silva felt Darnley to be an especially attractive prospect because he inherited his mother's claims to the English throne. The match would, therefore, double the chance of having Catholic ruler on the English throne. In March 1565, Mary sent a messenger to England to talk to the Spanish ambassador and ask if Philip had given De Silva authority to make promises about the marriage. De Silva was perplexed; he had received no such instructions from Philip, nor had he heard anything about the matter since he requested instructions in November of the previous year. The messenger insisted that he would not return to Scotland without an answer since Lethington was awaiting his arrival prior to Lethington's departure for England to deal with De Silva. Though De Silva told Mary's messenger truthfully that he had received no such authority from Philip, the messenger remained unsatisfied.<sup>85</sup>

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1565. <sup>85</sup>CDI, 89:87-88. De Silva to Philip, 24 March

While the messenger was awaiting another reply, De Silva received a letter from a worried Anthony Perrenot, Cardinal de Granvelle. Granvelle wrote that he wished there were less indifference in Spain about Mary's marriage. He could see grave consequences that would occur if she married Charles IX, King of France, which he believed to be a serious possibility.<sup>86</sup>

Granvelle's letter convinced De Silva of the need to write to Mary and send a message with her envoy so that Lethington would undertake his journey. This he did, hoping to receive a letter of instructions from Philip before Lethington arrived. Unfortunately Lethington arrived before any letter from Philip reached De Silva, consequently De Silva acted of his own accord. When he found that Lethington was against any proposed union of Archduke Charles and Mary, he immediately turned his support to Darnley.<sup>87</sup> He reasoned that since any marriage with the archduke was unlikely, the Catholic succession possibilities of the other marriage would definitely appeal to Philip. Lethington continued to meet with De Silva and they always discussed one subject: Mary's marriage.

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<sup>86</sup>CSPS, 1:412. De Silva to Philip, 31 March 1565.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 1:421-23. De Silva to Philip, 26 April 1565.

Other envoys from Scotland had similar interests and goals. For example, James Beaton, Bishop of Glasgow, the Scottish ambassador to France, visited De Silva to unload his frustrations after a meeting with Queen Elizabeth on the subject of Mary's marriage. He asked De Silva if he had received any information from Spain regarding Philip's policy. De Silva had received a dispatch that very day, and assured Beaton that Philip was willing to support the Darnley match if the couple would carefully follow instructions from Spain. This thrilled Beaton. He told De Silva that Mary truly wanted this promise of the Catholic King's help and protection. Beaton was personally willing to promise that Mary would not deviate even a hair's breadth from Philip's instructions. De Silva cautioned Beaton that Mary had to move very slowly in order not to endanger her claim to the English throne.<sup>88</sup> As it turned out, neither Philip nor De Silva had much influence at all on when and how Mary married Darnley. They both wanted her to proceed carefully in the matter in order to avoid Elizabeth's rage, but Mary married Darnley in haste just a little over a month after De Silva's talk with Beaton.

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<sup>88</sup>CDI, 89:131-32. De Silva to Philip, 25 June 1565.

Meanwhile, De Silva had journeyed to the Low Countries to represent Philip at the marriage of Marie, daughter of Prince Edward of Portugal, and Alexander Farnese, son of Margaret, Duchess of Parma. He stayed in the Netherlands for nearly two months, and in November met Yaxley in a clandestine evening meeting to discuss the affairs of Scotland. Yaxley then headed for Antwerp to pick up the money that Philip had promised Mary.<sup>91</sup> Then disaster struck--Yaxley's ship went down in a storm. De Silva first heard that Yaxley had drowned and all the money had been lost. Later Yaxley's body with all the money still concealed on his person washed ashore, and the money was confiscated by Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who refused to relinquish it.<sup>92</sup> Thus ended the one and only attempt of Philip to send financial aid to Mary during Don Diego's Mission. He felt the loss of the money so dearly that he requested that the ambassador use every legal means to recover it.<sup>93</sup> This proved to be an impossible task for the resident.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 1:508. De Silva to Philip, 24 November 1565.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 1:546, 557. See also A. Francis Stewart, ed., Memoirs of Sir James Melville, (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1929), p. 109, and CSPF, 8:36. This letter from Thomas Smith, English ambassador in France, to Sir William Cecil shows that the English were aware that the money was for Mary.

<sup>93</sup>CDI, 89:359. Philip to De Silva, 12 August 1566.

De Silva also communicated with a Scottish envoy named Sir Robert Melville. Melville was in England to urge Elizabeth to ease the imprisonment on Darnley's mother, Lady Margaret Douglas. He had not planned to see De Silva, but Cecil told him that he certainly would be amiss if he did not secure the Spanish ambassador's help since he had more influence with the queen than anyone else in matters concerning Lady Margaret.<sup>94</sup>

After the first visit, Melville returned to the ambassador each time he was in London. He brought news of Mary's confinement for childbirth, and other interesting bits of information about his dealings with the English. As matters became more complicated in Scotland, Melville became an important source of information. He went into great detail about the Darnley murder.<sup>95</sup> All of the information he communicated was about Scotland, and some of it was of great interest to Philip.

James Stewart, Earl of Murray and the half-brother to Mary, also supplied the ambassador with information. Murray was not well liked by his half-sister after the Darnley murder; since he sought

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<sup>94</sup>CSPS, 1:532. De Silva to Philip, 18 March 1566.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 1:619-20. De Silva to Philip, 22 February 1567.

the punishment of James Hepborn, Earl of Bothwell, whom he considered to be Darnley's murderer. When things got uncomfortable for him in Scotland, he traveled to England where he told De Silva that he believed Bothwell had masterminded Darnley's murder. He also informed the ambassador that Bothwell was obtaining a divorce from his wife in order to be in a position to marry Mary.<sup>96</sup> Before Murray returned to Scotland in August 1567, he talked for a long time with De Silva about the state of affairs in Scotland. Of this conversation De Silva wrote: "I expressed great attachment to him and told him to take great care of himself and be cautious as he no doubt had enemies, and with this he opened out somewhat, saying that my good will towards him prompted him to tell me something that he had not even told this Queen, although she had given him many remote hints upon the subject."<sup>97</sup> Murray then told De

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<sup>96</sup> CDI, 89:470. De Silva to Philip, 21 April 1567. De Silva also heard from another unnamed source the rumors that Mary would marry Bothwell. He wrote: "The person who tells me this says he has had the letter in his own hands and has read it. He is a person of credit, but it seems impossible." See CSPS, 1:640. De Silva to Philip, 10 May 1567. See also ibid., 17 May 1567, where De Silva wrote: "A Catholic person who has a close friendship and understanding with the brother of the English Queen's agent in Scotland says that he is sure the news about the marriage with Bothwell and the other things against that Queen are not true." He thus received contradictory information from two unnamed sources.

<sup>97</sup> CSPS, 1:664-65. De Silva to Philip, 2 August 1567.

Silva of the existence of the so-called Casket letters which he felt proved beyond any doubt that Mary was an accomplice to Bothwell in the murder of her husband. The exchanges between Murray and De Silva ended when the Scot returned home to assume the regency in behalf of the infant, James Stuart, following Mary's forced abdication.

Because De Silva was so interested in the possible marriage of Queen Elizabeth with Archduke Charles, it was only natural that the Austrian envoys would gravitate to him. The first such envoy was Adam Zwetkovich, who Emperor Maximilian sent to England in March 1565, ostensibly to return the insignia of the Order of the Garter belonging to the dead emperor. In reality he came secretly to discover if Elizabeth was willing to marry the archduke.<sup>98</sup>

Zwetkovich arrived in London in May and immediately made contact with De Silva. After a short time, he wrote to Maximilian that the English were urging Elizabeth to marry more than ever before. He mentioned the following reasons for the increased pressure on the queen: the Spanish ambassador was favorable toward the marriage; Elizabeth held Philip in such high esteem; she

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<sup>98</sup>Victor Von Klarwill, Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners, (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1928), pp. 205-07. Instructions from Maximilian to Zwetkovich, 15 March 1565.

desired to maintain a good relationship with Spain.<sup>99</sup> When rumors were being spread around court that Philip did not desire to see Elizabeth marry the archduke, Zwetkovich used De Silva to his advantage by having him go to the English council to assure them that Philip did indeed desire to see the marriage carried out.<sup>100</sup> Of his relationship with Zwetkovich, De Silva wrote: "With regard to the Archduke's affair I have proceeded in the way that I have continued to write to your Majesty, showing the Emperor's envoy all possible goodwill, and to the people who help him the same, and he appears now to be quite satisfied and communicates frankly with me. I have also contributed to this confidence by giving him information of the way the French Ambassador was trying to hinder his business, my information being subsequently confirmed by his own intimates."<sup>101</sup> This relationship continued during Zwetkovich's stay in England. When it seemed that Elizabeth was losing interest in the affair, Zwetkovich would go to De Silva for help. Zwetkovich also supplied the ambassador with the demands of both England and Austria.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 208-210.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 213-14. See also CSPS, De Silva to Philip, 9 June 1565, 1:435-36.

<sup>101</sup> CSPS, 1:439. De Silva to Philip. 25 June 1565.



Zwetkovich left London on August 14, 1565, and two years later the emperor decided to send two more envoys. These new envoys had a different mission: to ask the queen for aid against the Turk. The English, being so interested in the proposed marriage, incessantly quizzed one of the envoys about the match, forcing him to turn to De Silva for advice. The ambassador advised him to act without orders and discuss the subject of marriage with Elizabeth. De Silva also told him to send a courier to the emperor seeking authority to proceed.<sup>102</sup> The queen's abrupt refusal to give any aid whatsoever to repel the Turk hastened the departure of the two envoys, ending the communication between the Spanish ambassador and the Austrian envoys. All the information De Silva received concerned only the marriage proposals. Even so, with all Europe interested in Elizabeth's marriage, Philip was pleased with the reports.

De Silva mentioned only a few of his other sources of information by name. One of those named was the secretary of the former Spanish ambassador, Luis Roman. Roman had kept the king informed since the death of Quadra. Philip, realizing the secretary's importance to the new ambassador, told De Silva that

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<sup>102</sup>CSPS, 1:645. De Silva to Philip, 14 June 1567.

Roman had in his care copies of all the important treaties, and in order for De Silva to be successful and be forewarned of any danger spots, Roman would thoroughly explain the treaties to him. Roman would also acquaint De Silva with the personalities at court and Quadra's sources of information. He would also provide the new ambassador with access to all of Quadra's papers.<sup>103</sup>

The first information that Don Diego received from Roman was a letter concerning the appalling state of Quadra's finances. The man's body was lying unburied in England, and his creditors refused to allow the body to be sent to Spain until they had received part of the money he owed them. So Roman explained the entire situation and included a memo detailing the money that the former ambassador owed to his creditors and even to his own household.<sup>104</sup>

De Silva was not able to get all of Quadra's papers; some had been burned at his death.<sup>105</sup> The new ambassador did not make much mention of Roman, but there is no doubt that Roman was a very valuable asset to him

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<sup>103</sup> CDI, 89:7-8. Instructions from Philip to De Silva, 19 January 1564.

<sup>104</sup> CSPS, 1:360-63. De Silva to Philip, 8 June 1564. It was many more months before Philip allowed the money to be sent to England. When it arrived, some of the creditors were paid and the body was secretly sailed out of England.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 1:378. De Silva to Philip, 4 September 1564.

during the first year of his mission. Roman returned to Spain in March 1565.<sup>106</sup>

Another minor source of information was Benedict Spinola, a representative of the Genoese bankers in London, and Dudley's friend. In July 1564, he came to the Spanish ambassador to discuss the commercial relations between England and the Low Countries. De Silva was reluctant to trust a man whom he did not know well, consequently he supplied Spinola with only the information he wanted disseminated. For example, he told the banker that Philip was often on the verge of issuing letters of marque and reprisal to his sailors in retaliation for English piracy.<sup>107</sup> On another occasion Spinola told De Silva that he considered the French ambassador a bad man who flattered the queen, and who would probably betray her.<sup>108</sup> Spinola also related that he, other merchants, and some members of the council had a financial interest in the slaving voyages of Sir John Hawkins.<sup>109</sup> This kind of information made the Spanish ambassador very suspicious of English efforts to stop

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 1:408. De Silva to Philip, 17 March 1565.

<sup>107</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:42-45. De Silva to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, 2 July 1564.

<sup>108</sup> CSPS, 1:414. De Silva to Philip, 31 March 1565.

<sup>109</sup> CDI, 89:230. De Silva to Philip, 5 November 1565.

piracy. This is the type of information that Spinola supplied the Spanish ambassador. Then he became too Protestant for the Catholic ambassador, and De Silva, who always had a difficult time accepting anything coming from heretics, as he called them, trusted him no longer.

There were two Spanish subjects living in England, one of which was especially important to De Silva. Philip instructed the new ambassador to make contact with these two men when he arrived in London.

I am also pleased with Antonio de Guaras and Luis de Paz, who reside in London, and I understand that they have done all they could in forwarding my interests there as good subjects of mine. You will give them my letters and thank them from me. I order them to keep up their relations with you and to advise you of the feelings of the people in England where such advice may be necessary for my service, as they are experienced and well informed about the country. You will take advantage of their knowledge as persons of entire trust.<sup>110</sup>

De Silva mentioned only one time when he used Antonio de Guaras. He sent him to Dudley concerning some minor questions of precedence. This is not to say that he did not use him on many other occasions. He used Luis de Paz's services much more. De Silva asked Paz secretly to discover the state of Flemish businesses, on the pretense of delivering letters to Cecil, Elizabeth and Dudley. Since the ambassador had

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<sup>110</sup> CSPS, 1:352. Instructions from Philip to De Silva, 19 January 1564.

been waiting patiently for the English to set up a trade conference at Bruges, he was disappointed to discover from Paz that he would have to continue to wait.<sup>111</sup> Paz seemed to be De Silva's main source in trying to discover what he did not know, and in confirming gossip. De Silva once sent him to Scotland disguised as a merchant. On another occasion he instructed Paz to follow some Frenchmen to Windsor in order to discover what business they had with the queen. He also sent him to the coast to discover if it was true that Francis Yaxley had been drowned. Paz confirmed the truth of the rumors. On another occasion, the Spanish ambassador sent him to Windsor to find out if the Spanish insignia had indeed been replaced by the French insignia (a matter of pride and honor for Spain): Paz reported that it had been moved. The ambassador intended to send him to Scotland on the pretext of taking care of his own personal affairs, but to secretly obtain information on the Bothwell and Mary affairs. Instead, he decided that he would wait until the troubles quieted down.<sup>112</sup> Paz was one of the Spanish ambassador's chief diplomatic tools, and could have been the unnamed source of much of the information De Silva supplied the king.

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<sup>111</sup>CDI, 89:34-35. De Silva to Philip, 4 September 1564.

<sup>112</sup>CSPS, 1:399, 472, 516, 523, 634.

English Catholics were another source of information De Silva used. He often used the following criterion for judging the truthfulness of what a man said: Was he a good Catholic? If so, the ambassador unquestioningly accepted his word and forwarded it to Philip; but if not, the ambassador was reluctant to believe the information. De Silva also generally reported what interested him the most. He received and transmitted exaggerated reports of the growth of the Catholic party in England. He wanted Philip to believe that the number of Catholics was growing by leaps and bounds, and Catholics only needed a leader to assure them victory. The Catholics were concerned about succession to the English throne, and so they kept De Silva informed about succession problems and possibilities. They also kept him informed on the condition of the Catholic bishops that Elizabeth's council had imprisoned. In one instance, he heard rumors that some English Protestants were posing as Catholics in order to spy on the Catholic party. This made him extremely cautious in how he dealt with those unfamiliar Catholics.<sup>113</sup> The Catholics were the source of some of the incorrect information that De Silva transmitted,

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 1:393. De Silva to Philip, 21 November 1564.

because he accepted their word so readily that he failed to verify it.

De Silva also received letters and correspondence from people outside of England, who provided him with added useful information. Those with whom he corresponded most were Margaret, Duchess of Parma, and Don Francés de Alava, the Spanish resident in France. De Silva and Margaret corresponded on the average of once each week while she was in power in the Low Countries. Their principal concerns were trade relations between England and the Low Countries, the trade conference at Bruges, and piracy. De Silva wrote often to Alava in France, in accordance with Philip's instructions. Both men were concerned about matters in France and England and how they affected Spain. Alava stated that he always advised De Silva about matters pertaining to the King of France's suit for marriage with Elizabeth.<sup>114</sup>

De Silva also wrote to and received letters from the Spanish ambassador in Austria concerning the archduke and Elizabeth match. He received communication from Cardinal Granvelle in the Low Countries, and letters from Don Juan de Zuñiga, the Spanish ambassador in Rome, who complimented the ambassador in England on

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<sup>114</sup>NCF, 6:379. Alava to Philip, 4 June 1565.

his good work and expressed to him the Pope's gratitude.<sup>115</sup>

In summary, the Spanish ambassador seemed to have a complete network of sources of information. He certainly had many other sources than those he mentioned by name. Many times he quoted reliable, faithful, trustworthy, knowledgeable, or dubious sources, but he failed to include their names. This was to maintain security, since the ambassador's couriers were always subject to attack.

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<sup>115</sup>CDI, 97:447. Don Juan de Zuñiga to De Silva, 24 April 1568.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE TRANSMISSION AND EVALUATION OF INFORMATION

Gathering information was only half of the Spanish ambassador's important duty. If the information failed to reach the king's hands in Madrid, then it was of little value to Spain. So the transmission of the information became critical to the Spanish ambassador, and it included both sending and receiving correspondence. Generally, De Silva used one of three routes to the king in Madrid.<sup>116</sup> The first route was through the Low Countries overland to Spain. In his instructions to his new ambassador, Philip told De Silva to continue to keep Margaret, Duchess of Parma, fully informed about matters that concerned her after his arrival in England. He was also to send her copies of all the letters written to the king. This allowed her to give Philip her own opinion on English matters, and also to instruct the Spanish ambassador if necessary. Philip was concerned that Madrid was so much farther

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<sup>116</sup>For an excellent book on the subject, see E. John B. Allen, Post and Courier Service in the Diplomacy of Early Modern Europe, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), Allen has one chapter devoted to Spanish diplomatic couriers.

away from England than Brussels that his instructions would arrive too late to be of value to the ambassador.<sup>117</sup>

A second route was from London to France and then overland to Madrid. De Silva used this route often in keeping Alava informed, but the most popular route, because of all the trouble in France, was from London to Bilbao by sea and then overland to Madrid. When Philip gave De Silva his written instructions, this is one route that he suggested: "If you have to send me any despatch or other matter concerning my service by sea you may remit it to my servant Juan Martinez de Recalde who lives in Bilboa, and he will receive and forward it with the despatch that you will inform him is necessary."<sup>118</sup>

Information from De Silva to Margaret in the Low Countries took from five to seven days to arrive, and was usually sent by ordinary courier. Often the Spanish ambassador would write that he detained the courier (whom he never named in his correspondence) in order to finish a bit of important intelligence that he wanted Margaret to receive. Well aware that danger lurked along the courier route, he counseled Margaret:

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<sup>117</sup> CSPS, 1:350. Instructions from Philip to De Silva, 19 January 1564.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

"These matters, as in all others, require secrecy, as you know, because this people could seize any courier. We must always use the cipher in resolutions and announcements."<sup>119</sup>

De Silva also understood some of the pitfalls that awaited a courier to the Low Countries, and also the danger of sending confidential messages through the ordinary post. He wrote that one certain courier took a long time to reach London after leaving Flanders because he was held up by a contrary wind that forced him to wait to cross the channel. Because he had some information he wanted to get to Margaret, he wrote by way of the post, and therefore he could not write all that he wished.<sup>120</sup> Weather was not the only problem a courier faced when going to the Low Countries from England. The French hated Spanish couriers, as did many of the Flemish. Rebel uprisings in the Low Countries also caused great disruptions.<sup>121</sup>

The overland route through France was fraught with even more dangers. The servant of the Spanish ambassador in France, Don Francés de Alava, was robbed

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<sup>119</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:87. De Silva to the Duchess of Parma, 19 August 1564.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 4:96. De Silva to Margaret, 4 September 1564.

<sup>121</sup>Allen, p. 95.

of the Spanish general cipher. Of this Philip wrote the ambassador:

As regards the cipher they stole in France from Don Frances de Alava's servant, as soon as my sister heard of it she sent me a private cipher informing me that she had sent you and Don Frances several copies which was a very good precaution to take, although directly I received news of the robbery I ordered the general cipher to be changed in accordance with a copy thereof which I enclose with this. You may write in this cipher to me or to the Ministers whose names are written upon it as also to Cardinals de Granvelle and Pacheco, to whom copies have been sent. Advise receipt of it as it will not be used in writing to you until we know it has come to hand. It may be well to mention that my annoyance about the matter has been duly manifested.<sup>122</sup>

Margaret had issued De Silva a cipher, knowing that Quadra had died before receiving the cipher she sent him. The English had a hand in the cipher robbery, for in July, 1564, Thomas Smith, the English resident in France, wrote to William Cecil to ask whether the stealing of the Spanish cipher had allowed them to discover what the Spanish plans were against the Huguenots in France.<sup>123</sup> This obviously meant that the English were diligently trying to get their hands on any Spanish correspondence. De Silva was certainly right in thinking that a courier was subject at any time to being detained and robbed.

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<sup>122</sup>CSPS, 7:174. Philip to De Silva, 6 August 1564.

<sup>123</sup>CSPF, 7:174. Smith to Cecil, 12 July 1564.

An incident in which the French detained an English courier on the route between London and Paris happened near the end of De Silva's mission. The Venetian ambassador in France wrote that an English courier had been detained at Dieppe. A packet of letters in his possession was taken from him and sent to the King of France. After reading the contents, the French king returned the papers to the courier at Dieppe. The French did not deny that this incident had happened, but excused it on the ground that it took place without the consent of the king.<sup>124</sup> If this happened to the English courier, it certainly could happen to Spanish couriers.

In July 1568, while De Silva was still in England, Frenchmen attacked and killed a Spanish and an English courier south of Poitiers, France. After opening their packets, the Frenchmen dumped the contents out, allowing the wind to scatter the letters in the nearby woods.<sup>125</sup> Because of such difficulties, De Silva and Philip used mainly the sea route to Bilbao. Racaalde then forwarded the correspondence by way of the

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<sup>124</sup>Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, 1558-1580, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1897) 7:394. 30 May 1567, Giovanni Correr, Venetian Ambassador in France, to the Signory. Hereafter cited as CSPV. See also CSPS, 1:642.

<sup>125</sup>Allen, p. 79-80.

Spanish correo mayor to Madrid. This route was usually much safer than the overland route through war-torn France.

Thomas Challoner, the English resident ambassador in Spain used a combination of two routes. He ordered his courier, James Coldwell, to go by way of post through France to London, and then return by sea to Bilbao.<sup>126</sup> It was a matter of the safest, fastest, and cheapest way to get information back and forth, but these desirable characteristics were nearly always in opposition to one another. For example, when Philip was concerned about the repercussions that his actions against John Man would have in England, he sent a special courier by sea in a smack with special orders to wait in the English port until receiving a reply from De Silva and then to return to Spain in the same smack. He ordered De Silva to dispatch the courier as quickly as possible.<sup>127</sup> Well over a month later, the smack sailed into London and the courier relayed the message to the Spanish ambassador. The delay was caused by bad weather that had driven the ship into an Irish port.<sup>128</sup> Normal correspondence took an average

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<sup>126</sup> CSPF, 7:186. Challoner's Instructions to James Coldwell, 8 August 1564.

<sup>127</sup> CSPS, 2:21. Philip to De Silva, 10 April 1568.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 2:31. De Silva to Philip, 14 May 1568.

of from twenty-five to thirty days between London and Madrid.

The regularity of the dispatches was important also. De Silva averaged over a letter a week to Spain during his entire four-year mission. He also averaged almost a letter a week to the Low Countries, and Alava, Philip's resident in France, reported receiving several letters a month from De Silva. Thomas Challoner complained that he received no mail, while at the same time packets of letters were arriving from De Silva with great regularity. In September and October 1564, De Silva had written three or four times, while for six months not a single letter had arrived from England for Challoner.<sup>129</sup>

Philip was not diligent in writing to his ambassador. Since he felt that he had to personally read and answer every piece of correspondence, he became inundated with letters that he did not have time to answer. At times De Silva went for months without receiving a reply to his letters. But he was not alone, for Alava in France did not receive a single letter from Philip for over three months.<sup>130</sup> This lack of correspondence required the Spanish ambassador to make difficult decisions on his own, which he usually did quite well.

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<sup>129</sup>CSPF, 7:212, 221. Challoner to Cecil and Elizabeth.

With regard to ciphers, the Spanish ambassador supplied Francis Yaxley with a special cipher as he journeyed back to Scotland so that they could communicate in secret. He also supplied Mary Stuart in Scotland with a special cipher for the same reason.<sup>131</sup> Yaxley drowned before he had a chance to use the cipher and there is no evidence that Mary ever used, or even received, De Silva's cipher.

Evidently, De Silva did an adequate job of transmitting information to Spain. He never mentioned great problems with the courier service. Perhaps because he mainly used the sea route, he seemed to have fewer problems than others who did not have this route available to them. His letters seemed to get through very well. Generally, when De Silva experienced something first-hand, his reports to Philip were very accurate. In this category of information was all of his dealings with Elizabeth and Cecil, including negotiations about trade and piracy, and all of his eyewitness accounts of the happenings at court. But when he received second-hand information, he forwarded much more incorrect information.

How discriminating was De Silva? He had a personal set of criteria by which he judged the

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<sup>131</sup>CSPS, 1:560. De Silva to Philip, 23 June 1566.



correctness of the information he received. He was prejudiced against Frenchmen and Protestants. He felt that information from a Frenchman was questionable and could not be taken without further verification. He generally felt that information from Protestants was useless, but in spite of this bias, he believed Elizabeth and Cecil without question. On the other hand, he spoke of Flemish Protestants when he said: "no notice should be taken of the word of people who never tell the truth."<sup>132</sup> He also felt that Englishmen were so fickle that they could seldom be believed, and that changes were so frequent that it pained those who wished to report the truth.<sup>133</sup> On another occasion, he again expressed his anxiety by writing: "Their changeableness and inconsistency will cause me to write things that will never happen, but the fault will not be mine or my informants."<sup>134</sup>

De Silva's great love for the Catholics caused him to believe almost without question anything that a

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<sup>132</sup>CDI, 89:480. De Silva to Philip, 17 May 1567.

<sup>133</sup>CSPS, 1:368. De Silva to Philip, 22 July 1564.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 1:382. De Silva to Philip, 2 October 1564. De Silva expressed this same fear in another letter to Philip in November 1565: "I always write in fear about things that are not actually past as changes are so continual, and I am grieved to communicate things which do not happen, even though the fault be not mine." See *ibid.*, 1:505.

Catholic told him. But he even questioned some Catholics on occasion. For instance, although he heard from those whom he considered to be well-informed and trustworthy that Dudley was supporting the match between Elizabeth and the archduke, he wrote: "I have been unable to confirm this in a way that allows me to assert it or to find other certain presumption of it except the good quarter whence I hear it and Robert's evident leaning towards it."<sup>135</sup> And on another occasion when he actually did transmit false information supplied by Catholics, he cautiously added that he would not consider the information factual until he had more trustworthy information.<sup>136</sup> Thus De Silva tended to be somewhat discriminating which allowed him to transmit much solid information, but he did make some mistakes.

Interested in the state of the queen's finances, Philip instructed De Silva to find out how indebted to Flemish bankers she was. The ambassador went to work and found a trustworthy source to supply the information. He wrote that Elizabeth owed Flemish bankers 240,000 crowns. Later, in order to correct the false information, he wrote: "The person who informed me (although he is in a position to know) made a mistake,

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<sup>135</sup>CDI, 89:82. De Silva to Philip, 15 March 1565.

<sup>136</sup>CSPS, 1:469. De Silva to Philip, 27 August 1565.

and has now sent to say that the sum is 370,000 crowns. He obtained fresher information as new obligations have been entered into."<sup>137</sup> The false information did not cause Philip any great problems, and it came only two weeks before De Silva sent the correct information.

The English were very interested in the outcome of the journey of Lord Darnley to Scotland, ostensibly to be with his father. When Elizabeth realized how many problems a match between Darnley and Mary Stuart could create for her, she immediately opposed a marriage. De Silva was very much in favor of a marriage which would unite two strong claims to the throne, and in April 1565 he began reporting that the marriage had already taken place.<sup>138</sup> At first he doubted the information, but after hearing it time and time again, he began to believe it. In August he was able to report correctly that the marriage actually had taken place the last of July.<sup>139</sup> This was not vital information to Spain, and it was commonly believed throughout Europe that the marriage had taken place much earlier than July. Even Charles IX, King of France, had sent a note to Elizabeth one

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 1:380. De Silva to Philip, 18 September 1564.

<sup>138</sup> CDI, 89:108. De Silva to Philip, 26 April 1565.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 167. De Silva to Philip, 26 August 1565.

month before the marriage, stating that he had heard of the marriage and had given his approval, hoping that Elizabeth would do the same.<sup>140</sup>

De Silva wrote that Elizabeth had helped the Scottish rebels by secretly sending them two thousand ducats in gold.<sup>141</sup> It is difficult to determine if this figure was correct. From further evidence it seems that it was double the amount that was actually given. Elizabeth sent three thousand ducats to Francis Russell Bedford, Governor of Berwick, with orders that one thousand of it was to go to James Stewart, Earl of Murray.<sup>142</sup> Bedford later reported that he had given the one thousand ducats to the leaders of the Lords of the Congregation.<sup>143</sup> This might have been important information to Philip, for it was during this time that he was considering sending aid to Mary Stuart. It is not known if De Silva's exaggeration would have had any influence on the matter. It seems that the most important information De Silva relayed was that Elizabeth was indeed helping the Scottish Protestants.

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<sup>140</sup>CSPF, 7:399. Charles IX to Elizabeth, 30 June 1565.

<sup>141</sup>CSPS, 1:478. De Silva to Philip, 17 September 1565.

<sup>142</sup>CSPF, 7:458. Elizabeth to Bedford. 12 September 1565.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 473. Bedford to Cecil, 28 September 1565.

De Silva reported incorrectly another incident of minor significance. When Elizabeth found out that Mary was seriously considering marrying Darnley, she sent an envoy named John Thomworth to Scotland to stop the marriage. De Silva reported that Thomworth, unable to see Mary, had seized an opportunity of joining the Scottish rebels to fight against the monarchy.<sup>144</sup> The ambassador was surprised when Thomworth arrived in London and explained the situation. Since Thomworth had not been able to negotiate with Mary, he requested a passport to return to England. He was given one, but because it was signed by both Darnley and Mary, he refused to accept it. While attempting to leave secretly, he was detained by guards who would not let him go further without accepting the passport he had originally refused. Upon receiving orders from England, he accepted the passport and journeyed home.<sup>145</sup> This small piece of false information was corrected so quickly that it certainly had no adverse effect on Spanish policy.

De Silva also had trouble keeping straight the progress of the fighting in Scotland between the monarchy and the nobles. He falsely reported that Mary

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<sup>144</sup>CDI, 89:176-77. De Silva to Philip, 27 August 1565.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 178-79. De Silva to Philip, 3 September 1565.

had captured and killed some of the rebels. In order to correct this information, he wrote: "This was not true, although I received the news from two persons, both of whom I considered trustworthy, as they are members of this Queen's Council and do not bear any ill will to the other Queen. Since then a steward of the queen of Scotland, a Frenchman, has passed here on his way to France, and he assures me it is not true."<sup>146</sup> On this occasion he believed a Frenchman more than an Englishman. He was able to correct this small mistake in less than two weeks, depending on the time the couriers arrived in Madrid.

Of interest is the information about the strange murders in Scotland that De Silva relayed to Spain. In March 1566, David Rizzio, Mary Stuart's Piedmontese secretary, was murdered by being dragged from her presence at the dinner table and stabbed to death. De Silva first wrote of the incident about nine days after it happened, rightly stating that Rizzio had been murdered with Darnley's consent.<sup>147</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Spanish ambassador added the name of Frair Black, the queen's confessor, as a second victim.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>CSPS, 1:495. De Silva to Philip, 22 October 1565.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 1:532. De Silva to Philip, 18 March 1566.

<sup>148</sup>The Earl of Bedford and Thomas Randolph, the

He also included the rumor that these men had been killed at night near Mary's chamber.<sup>149</sup> More information arrived before De Silva closed his letter. He added that Rizzio had been stabbed to death in a gallery adjoining the queen's chamber, and that the confessor had died the same night of natural causes.<sup>150</sup> De Silva rightly believed the motive of the murder to be Darnley's jealousy. De Silva's information turned out to be of little value to Spain. Nevertheless, Philip needed such information to be kept well informed.

Darnley's murder was the next exciting event of like caliber to be treated by the ambassador. De Silva first heard of the murder from Secretary Cecil thirteen days after it happened. He first believed that both Darnley and a servant were found murdered without a wound. Then he reported that Darnley had been very ill of smallpox prior to his murder, and had been murdered in Edinburgh shortly after a visit from

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English envoy to Scotland, both wrote to Cecil on March 13, stating that Black had also been slain. See CSPF, 7:32.

<sup>149</sup>CSPS, 1:534. De Silva to Philip, 23 March 1566. The French ambassador, De Foix, carried the rumors even further. In a letter to Cecil he wrote that he was horrified to hear that a "deformed and base menial should be caught in the act of adultery with the Queen and slain by her husband, who then should have secretly deserted his friends." See CSPF, 7:37.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 535.

Mary.<sup>151</sup> James Melville arrived in England and supplied many of the missing details of the story. De Silva was thus able to add to his story that Mary had visited Darnley every day since his arrival in Edinburgh, including the day of the murder. On the night of the murder, she had played games with him for three hours, and then at 2:00 a.m. his quarters were blown up. The next morning Darnley and a servant were found dead in the garden without any apparent wounds.<sup>152</sup>

It was immediately rumored around England that Mary had had her husband murdered. In March De Silva described placards being hung in Scotland blaming the murder on Mary and her lover, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell.<sup>153</sup> But it was not until Murray traveled to England and spoke with De Silva about the existence of the Casket letters that De Silva felt convinced that Mary and Bothwell were involved together in the murder.<sup>154</sup> In this instance of reporting, the Spanish ambassador was very nearly correct at first, but as he

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<sup>151</sup> CDI, 89:441. De Silva to Philip, 17 February 1567.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 443. De Silva to Philip, 22 February 1567.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 446. De Silva to Philip, 1 March 1567.

<sup>154</sup> CSPS, 1:665. De Silva to Philip, 2 August 1567.



gained more information, he was able to correct small mistakes to keep Philip more accurately informed.

De Silva went on to report accurately the events in Scotland, and he seemed to have very trustworthy and knowledgeable sources for that information. There was one event in which the English might have deceived him. He seemed to be very gullible once someone had won his confidence. Perhaps this is what Thomas Challoner, the English resident in Spain, meant when he wrote: "He is a grave and a courteous man, much dissemblable to his predecessor."<sup>155</sup> The occasion occurred in regard to the third slaving voyage of Sir John Hawkins and will be discussed in much more detail later. But the essence of the matter was that the Spanish ambassador could see that Hawkins was preparing for another voyage. His protestations to Elizabeth and Cecil elicited promises that Hawkins would not illegally trade in the West Indies. De Silva, convinced of Elizabeth's sincerity, felt sure that Hawkins would not dare undertake another slaving voyage to the Indies. Nevertheless, Hawkins did make the voyage. It is possible that Elizabeth and Cecil had known all along that Hawkins would undertake a slaving voyage, but had duped the Spanish ambassador about the matter.

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<sup>155</sup> CSPF, 7:27. Challoner to Elizabeth, 22 January 1564.

De Silva seems to have done a very adequate job of forwarding accurate information to the king, although he made some mistakes. It is interesting to compare his reports with reports on English and Scottish affairs by the Venetian ambassador in France, Giovanni Correr, who was much less accurate than De Silva.<sup>156</sup> The Spanish ambassador did have the advantage of being much closer to the source of English events. He included what seems to be much trivial information that could not have been of much use to Philip, but Philip never seemed to complain. Instead, he praised De Silva for keeping him so well informed.<sup>157</sup> Information that seems trivial and of no value today, perhaps was of great value in the sixteenth century. De Silva had an interesting philosophy about sending information: an ambassador should include information about everything including seemingly trivial matters, for these pieces of information took on much greater significance when amplified by information from all over the world.<sup>158</sup> He carried out this philosophy in his correspondence.

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<sup>156</sup>CSPV, 7:388-390.

<sup>157</sup>CSPS, 1:404. Philip wrote: "I am highly satisfied with your care, diligence and tact." Later he added: "I have been pleased to see the full detail with which you report affairs to me." See *ibid.*, p. 432. There are many other like references.

<sup>158</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:102. De Silva to Margaret, 9 September 1564.

## CHAPTER 5

### DE SILVA AND ELIZABETHAN PIRACY

English piracy and privateering existed in the Atlantic Ocean and English Channel long before the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The difference between piracy, privateering, and semi-official enterprises of the sea was small. A privateer had a legal commission, which took the form of a formal declaration of war, letters of marque, passports, or instructions, from a recognized authority to take action against a designated enemy. He could either sell letters of marque to others, or they could become part of his estate to be passed on at his death; but as long as he had a legal commission, he could depend on it on legal grounds for defense if he were ever brought to court. A pirate, on the other hand, had no such commission, but roamed the seas attacking any likely victim. Semi-official enterprises were national undertakings in which the queen's interest was a major one, though her financial interest might be small.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Kenneth R. Andrews, Elizabethan Privateering, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 4-5. See also Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the

Privateers were not extremely careful in choosing their victims and, in many cases, they became no more than pirates. And many times pirates who roved the English Channel were called into the service of the crown. For example, the Carews, Killigrews, Tremaynes, Strangways, Throckmortons, Horseys, and Cobhams, examples of men belonging to some of the best families in England, were Channel rovers during the reign of Mary Tudor and captains in Elizabeth's navy.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, the difference between pirates and privateers was one of point-of-view, for what Philip might call piracy, Elizabeth called privateering.

Piracy took place principally in the English Channel and along the Atlantic Coast. Spain's great commercial interest in the rich cities of the Low Countries made easy access to them a necessity. The sea route from Spain to the Netherlands through the English Channel was much easier, faster, and safer than the overland route. Therefore, because Spain used the

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Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II, 2 Vols., (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), 2:866. Andrews asserts that privateering was beneficial to the English economy. He also puts privateering into its proper context of the war with Spain and the economics and social life of late Elizabethian England.

<sup>160</sup> James Anthony Froude, History of England, 12 Vols., (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871), 8:448. For a more up-to-date view of the complicity of the English nobility in piracy, see David Matthew, "Cornish and Welsh Pirates in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth," English Historical Review, 39 (1924): 337-48.

sea route almost exclusively, pirates made the channel their chief hunting grounds. The rivers and bays of France, England, and Ireland became ideal places of refuge for pirates. An open sea attack on Spain by England would have led to all-out war, which neither Philip nor Elizabeth desired, but piracy allowed England to obtain substantial profits and to weaken its Catholic competitor; at the same time, Elizabeth and her council could easily officially disavow pirates.<sup>161</sup> Thus England obtained profit without overt war.

The extent of piracy during Elizabeth's reign is difficult to determine. Thomas Chaloner, the English resident ambassador at Madrid, estimated that in 1564 over four hundred English privateers commanded from 25,000 to 30,000 sailors and soldiers.<sup>162</sup> The Venetian ambassador in France estimated in 1563 that thousands of acts of piracy were committed in the seas around Flanders, France and England.<sup>163</sup> In 1559, Philip showed

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<sup>161</sup> John Lynch, Spain Under the Habsburgs, 2 Vols., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 1:292. Lynch felt that Elizabeth used piracy to her advantage. He also felt that Philip's failure to be tough in regard to piracy allowed piracy to continue. Philip was too anxious to avoid offending Elizabeth.

<sup>162</sup> CSPF, 7:150. Chaloner to Elizabeth, 9 June 1564. He did not reveal the source of his figures, and they must be accepted cautiously.

<sup>163</sup> CSPV, 7:370. Marc Antonio Barbaro, Venetian Ambassador in France, to the Signory. 18 November 1563.

his concern in a letter to his resident in England, the Count of Feria, by writing that the English pirates had stolen from many Spanish subjects.<sup>164</sup> Although we cannot determine the exact amount of piracy, this evidence leads to the conclusion that there was sufficient piracy to be very detrimental to trade between Spain and the Low Countries. Piracy had existed long before De Silva arrived in London. In 1559, Philip had sought the capture of two pirates, Henry Strangways and William Wilford.<sup>165</sup> Philip's first resident in England, Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, Count of Feria, had failed to get them captured; his replacement, Don Alvaro de la Quadra, pushed the matter further. Quadra reported that in June 1559, Elizabeth had outfitted certain ships to capture these pirates.<sup>166</sup> But the ambassador soon became discouraged and felt that it was useless for him to continue his suit, for Strangways and Wilford were pirates, and as pirates they were not under the control of the council as privateers would have been. Furthermore, Edward Fiennes de Clinton, the English admiral, and his companions were greedy. Even after capturing

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<sup>164</sup>CSPS, 1:24-25. Philip to the Count of Feria, 28 January 1559.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., pp. 61, 63, 65.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 1:79. Quadra to Philip, 27 June 1559.

the pirates, the Spanish ambassador saw it was impossible to obtain redress, for the admiral and his companions divided the spoils between themselves.<sup>167</sup>

Before De Silva arrived in England, Elizabeth and the council had taken some action against pirates. They not only sent out ships in 1559 to capture Strangways and Wilford, but on July 30, 1564, they also sent a directive to Lord Admiral Clinton to outfit four more ships to clear the channel of pirates.<sup>168</sup> And on July 21, 1561, Elizabeth issued a proclamation prohibiting acts of piracy against Spain.<sup>169</sup> Again on February 8, 1563, she issued a proclamation ordering the arrest of any English subjects aiding French pirates who plundered Spanish ships.<sup>170</sup> This shows that Elizabeth was willing to take some action against piracy, but it remains to be seen how the new Spanish ambassador fared in his quest to put a halt to the annoying and harmful practice.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 1:92. 18 August 1559

<sup>168</sup> CSPD, 1:203. Elizabeth to Lord Admiral Clynton, 30 July 1562.

<sup>169</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., Tudor Royal Proclamations, 3 Vols., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 2:171.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 208. See also CSPD, 1:219. Sir Wm. Keyllwey to Cecil. 10 February 1563.

In January 1564, Philip included the following vital information about piracy in his instructions to De Silva:

You will have seen by the letters which have been shown you here from Luis Roman, Secretary of the late bishop Quadra, who has been and is conducting affairs in England since the death of his master, the great injury, damage and depredations which the English continue daily to commit on the seas against our subjects both Spanish and Flemish, and the fruitlessness of all the efforts and remonstrances made in my name and at the instance of my sister, begging that Queen to redress these wrongs notwithstanding the numerous promises given by her that she would do so.

...In accordance with this information and the instructions you may receive from my sister you will address the queen of England and her Council a very vigorous representation on my behalf asking them to take such steps as will provide redress to those of my subjects who have been plundered in the past and will ensure the safety of navigation for the future, and that the English shall cease this course of robbery and violence so alien to the peace and friendship that exist between them and us. You must not let this business out of your hand nor allow yourself to be put off with any sort of excuse that they may wish to palm upon you, until you yourself are convinced that the matter has been duly attended to and remedied as justice demand and you will give me full information of the steps they may take with this object.<sup>171</sup>

With these and other instructions, De Silva commenced his four years as resident ambassador in England, during which time two of his responsibilities were stopping English piracy and obtaining redress.

The queen was gracious in her reception of De Silva, who apparently used much more tact and skill in

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<sup>171</sup>CSPS, 1:349-5.



negotiating than his predecessor Quadra. He always worried about seeming overanxious about a matter, for he felt that it allowed the English an advantage, so he took his time to bring up the subject of piracy with Elizabeth. Although Elizabeth received De Silva for the first time on June 22, 1564, it was not until over a month later, on July 24, that he brought up this delicate subject. In his July audience he begged her to adopt measures to prevent the sailing of armed ships in peacetime. The ambassador had also heard rumors of a voyage of Sir John Hawkins, whom Philip viewed as a pirate, and pleaded with the queen to require security from Hawkins to the effect that he would not plunder Spanish ships. Elizabeth replied that she would do as De Silva asked on all these points, and he was determined to see that she carried out her promises.<sup>172</sup>

It seems that Elizabeth was not serious in her promises. She felt the pressure that Philip had applied by capturing her ships and sailors in Spain; and she probably felt the need to make some show of good faith. But the promises meant little. Nevertheless, she did issue a proclamation dated July 31, 1564, ordering her subjects to keep peace on the seas by arresting English

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<sup>172</sup> CDI, 89:371. De Silva to Philip, 31 July 1564.

pirates.<sup>173</sup> Her proclamation stated that because the war with France had ended, all ships armed for war were to return to be disarmed, but stipulated that those who had already given sufficient surety not to plunder any subject of kings and princes at peace with the queen were exempt from this command. This proclamation actually allowed her to keep her privateers active in the piracy business. The proclamation went on to say that no ships were to leave port henceforth without giving sufficient surety to the Court of the Admiralty or to the principal officers of the ports that they would not plunder Spanish ships. Well knows merchants and commissioned pirate hunters were exempt from this command. Was this another way out for Elizabeth? The proclamation further stated that no one was to help pirates with food, money, clothes, etc., retain stolen goods, sell or disperse abroad any pirate's plunder.

The proclamation sounded good, but there is no evidence that the queen was serious about its enforcement. Ships were outfitted and dispatched in October with commissions as pirate hunters, but they had very limited success. There seems to be no records of captains giving security that they would not plunder Spanish ships or of ships returning to disarm, or of convicted

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<sup>173</sup>Hughes and Larkin, 2:253-55. See also CSPD, 1:242, and CSPS, 1:373.

accomplices during this time. It seems that the queen was simply satisfying a Spanish ambassador with vain promises.

Despite the queen's outward show of good faith, De Silva felt only limited success because of two problems that he observed: English judges were very reluctant to prosecute English pirates, and false witnesses made it even more difficult for the judges to condemn their own countrymen. De Silva warned Elizabeth that Philip's subjects had sought letters of marque and reprisal against the English, but the king had hesitated because he did not want all-out war with England. De Silva warned the queen that if she hesitated too much, Philip would be forced to issue such letters.<sup>174</sup> De Silva felt that her royal highness had done well by issuing the July proclamation, but he still doubted that she would grant all of his requests and send out ships piloted by trustworthy men to clear the seas of pirates.<sup>175</sup> So perhaps Elizabeth had not deceived him as much as she desired. He was certainly ready to stick with the matter of piracy until the king was satisfied.

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<sup>174</sup>CSPS, 1:373. De Silva to Philip, 7 August 1564. See also Lettenhove, 4:45. De Silva to Margaret, 2 July 1564. De Silva used this threat immediately after arriving in England. It seemed a good one to him.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

It was difficult for De Silva to obtain the redress he sought. To do this, he had to go through the Admiralty court, and he mistakenly supposed that the queen had appointed commissioners from that court to judge and settle piracy cases.<sup>176</sup> And he also heard that the commissioners would not hear any of his cases until after the last of September. He did not want to wait that long, so he had the queen refer the cases to a Dr. Valentine Dale, the same man she had sent earlier to negotiate with the duchess of Parma in Flanders. De Silva had confidence in this man, and felt that he would meet with some success. Nevertheless, he despaired of much success in the matter, since most pirates were simply poor rogues who quickly spent all they had stolen. The English hesitated to bring pirates to trial at great expense and trouble, only to discover the pirates' inability to pay back what they had stolen. Victims of these pirates would also lose hope of obtaining redress through the courts, so they would settle out of court to get at least some redress. Though somewhat discouraged by these proceedings, the Spanish ambassador vowed to continue his relentless pleadings before the English court.<sup>177</sup> De Silva could easily tell that this

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<sup>176</sup>CDI, 89:29. De Silva to Philip, 28 August 1564. Actually the commissioners were not appointed until November. See CSPD, 1:246.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid.

matter was a very complicated one, but he hoped to be partially successful in the difficult business.

On September 18, 1564, Elizabeth decided to send out a force to capture pirates in the English Channel along the coasts of Devonshire and Cornwall. De Silva was pleased with her apparent determination to punish these pirates, who annoyed her by their continual depredations.<sup>178</sup> But neither her annoyance nor the Spanish ambassador's pleadings were the only forces that moved the queen to action. Philip still had English sailors in prison in Spain. England had also been hurt earlier because of the depredations of French privateers, and if the English kept attacking French ships, the French were likely to retaliate.<sup>179</sup> English pirates could not always be counted on to avoid attacking English ships. On September 29, 1564, the queen ordered Sir Peter Carew, a captain in her service, immediately to outfit two vessels to clear the coasts

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 1:379. De Silva to Philip, 18 September 1564.

<sup>179</sup>One of the reasons mentioned in English documents concerning peace with France was to prevent the issuing of letters of marque and reprisal that led to such serious consequences. See CSPD, 1:75. Reasons for a Peace with France, 10 March 1564. 1:80. Articles of the General Peace between England and France, 16 March 1564, and 1:122, Elizabeth to Throckmorton. The French were constantly complaining of English depredations. See *ibid.*, 1:203, 211, 214, 222.

of Devonshire and Cornwall of pirates.<sup>180</sup> She gave him authority to act according to his own disposition and provided him ships with food, but no pay, since he and his men were to get their pay from captured booty.<sup>181</sup> Carew set sail in October 1564, and by April 17, 1565, he was able to report his proceedings to the council.<sup>182</sup> He had captured one ship from the pirate Thomas Stukley, but all other pirates had escaped his grasp. This does not seem like a very successful venture.

The Spanish ambassador still pushed for a commission from the Admiralty court to process his suits for redress. On November 6, he requested that the English appoint a commission to try the cause of merchants robbed of their goods. He desired that from the decision of this commission there be no appeal. His other suggestions included that the judges sit for three weeks in session, that a reasonable time be given for the collection of evidence, and that after the session started no adjournment be allowed. He desired that the decisions of the commission be enforced by letters from the Privy Council, with fines for those

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 1:245. Elizabeth to Carew, 29 September 1564.

<sup>181</sup>Froude, 8:474. See also CSPD, 1:245-46.

<sup>182</sup>CSPD, 1:251.

pirates who were convicted but who refused to pay. Not only pirates, but also their abettors were to be punished. Officers who refused to carry out the decisions of the court were to be punished.<sup>183</sup> This was quite a series of requests, and there is no evidence that the queen granted De Silva his desire. But she did appoint special commissioners two days later. These commissioners included Dr. David Lewis, Judge of the Admiralty Court, Dr. Robert Weston, Dean of Arches, and others.<sup>184</sup>

Still there is little evidence that this commission did what the ambassador desired it to do. Eighteen months later the queen appointed another commission to prosecute pirates. It is not know if this commission had any connection with the former commission, but the second commission did achieve results. The commission, appointed on May 28, 1566, made a report in December 1566.<sup>185</sup> The report is very interesting in

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<sup>183</sup>CSPF, 7:239. Requests of the Spanish Ambassador, 6 November 1564.

<sup>184</sup>CSPF, 1:246. Elizabeth to Dr. David Lewis, Judge of the Admiralty Court, Dr. Robert Weston, Dean of Arches, and others, Constituting them Commissioners to enquire into complaints of Piratical Depredations committed at sea on the subjects of the king of Spain.

<sup>185</sup>CSPD, 6:8. Patent constituting Francis Chamberlain, Captain, Thomas Compton, baliff, John Aster, Dean of Guernsey, and others commissioners for the trial of Owen Dowin, Anthony Anderson, Jermi Johnson, and 14 others accused of piracies, and committed to custody in the Island of Guernsey, with power of life and death.

light of De Silva's desire that pirates suffer exemplary punishments.

By virtue of our commission, 28 May 1566, we have made inquisition of piracies committed by Owen Dowin, Anthony Anderson, and others, who have confessed that in the John of Sandwich, belonging to Thos. Bower, merchant of London, under government of Cpt. Heidon and Rich. Deigle, they spoiled ships in the north and on the coasts of Spain, took a Flemish hulk laden with wines, and by help of Lord Sullivan, resisted ships to take them. Being forced into Alderney by a leak, Heidon, Deigle and others escaped. We examined the rest 11 July last and wrote you, requesting favour; but as you wished the most culpable to be executed, on 23 November we called before us Rich. Hitchins, whose past life showed him wholly given to piracy, and the same day he was executed at low-water mark, near St. Martin's point, where, for example, he remains in chains. The rest are too poor either further to sue for mercy, or put in bail.<sup>186</sup>

This enlightening report serves to confirm De Silva's idea that it was difficult to punish the extremely poor pirates. It also lends credence to his belief that the English punished only the lowly sailors and left the captains alone, thus limiting the effect of their punishment.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 6:23.

<sup>187</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:269. De Silva to Margaret, 11 February 1566. De Silva related that Elizabeth told him of the many pirates that she had already executed. When he heard this, the Spanish ambassador replied that the poor, lowly sailors were not the ones who needed to be hung, but the captains needed the punishment. Elizabeth said that the victims defeated their own cause by coming to terms with the captains before they could be hung.



Thomas Stukley was one of the pirates who greatly concerned De Silva during the first part of De Silva's mission, but Stukley later proved to be only a minor problem. He was a younger son of Sir Lewis Stukley of Devonshire, who had been an adherent of the Protector Somerset. When the Wyatt Rebellion broke out in 1554, Thomas Stukley sided with Sir Thomas Wyatt against Mary. After Wyatt was executed, and Stukley was compelled to leave England, he joined Peter Carew and the Killebrews (at that time notable privateers), bought a vessel, and made his first attempts at piracy. During Mary's reign he was arrested for piracy and imprisoned, but she pardoned him because of the pleadings of his friends. Later he outfitted a small squadron and obtained permission from Elizabeth to colonize Florida, but instead of going to Florida, he went to Ireland and continued his piracy. He contrived to make the Spanish ambassadors believe him to be a person of great influence in Ireland, a faithful and devoted Catholic who was loyal to Mary Stuart and to Spain. He declared that his influence would easily assure a Catholic victory in Ireland. He convinced Philip of his sincerity and ability to the extent that Philip received him, knighted him, loaded him with presents, and gave him a palace in Madrid with a splended allowance for his expenses. Stukley's first invasion of Ireland ended in failure. In 1578, he

planned a second attack on Ireland with papal aid, but upon his arrival in Portugal, he and his men were diverted to Africa on a wild crusade with the young king of Portugal. Stukley died after having both legs shot off in the battle of Alcazar.<sup>188</sup>

Stukley was engaged in piracy in the English Channel in December 1564 when Elizabeth commissioned his old acquaintance, Sir Peter Carew, to capture him and other pirates. Stukley was crafty enough to disguise himself as a merchant to allow himself greater security. Because he based his operations in Ireland, De Silva proposed to have the queen adopt measures allowing the English to capture the pirate there. The English were successful in capturing Stukley in Ireland in March 1565.<sup>189</sup> After Stukley was held there for some weeks, De Silva pressed for his removal to England for trial, which Elizabeth promised to do in July, and by July 13, Stukley was in England.<sup>190</sup> Stukley claimed he was

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<sup>188</sup> Froude, 10:524-29. See also J.E. Neale, Queen Elizabeth, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934), p. 245.

<sup>189</sup> CSPS, 1:397. De Silva to Philip, 4 December 1564. See also Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, (London: Longman, Green Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 1:258. Thomas Stukley to Cecil, 22 April 1565. Hereafter cited as CSPI, Stukley certainly had a friend in Shane O' Neill of Ireland, who wrote to Elizabeth, Cecil, and Dudley requesting that they pardon him. See *ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:441. 25 June 1564. See also CSPI, 1:264.

innocent of any crime against Spain because he had only robbed French ships in a Low Country port but had not touched anything belonging to Spain. De Silva was willing to admit that Stukley had not robbed Spanish ships nor injured Spanish subjects, but he had taken Portuguese property while robbing the two French ships. De Silva felt the case was important to Philip because of the dangerous precedent it set.<sup>191</sup> Still, despite the ambassador's wishes, charges were not sufficient to convict Stukley and he was released without punishment.<sup>192</sup>

One more short interview ended the communication between Stukley and De Silva, and this interview was nothing more than a reaffirmation by Stukley of his great desires to serve Philip. Had the Spanish ambassador been successful in effectively stopping the depredations of a pirate in this case? It is not clear that Stukley did much harm to Spain in the first place, but his bad example caused De Silva to want to squelch his enterprises. The pleadings of the ambassador did influence Elizabeth to have him captured in Ireland, but his capture ended in nothing, for he was never punished. De Silva never mentioned his return to piracy after his

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<sup>191</sup>CDI, 89:144. De Silva to Philip, 13 July 1565.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., 89:205. 8 October 1565. See also CSPI, 1:278, 287.

release from this first imprisonment, but that does not mean that he gave up piracy altogether. What did happen was that he returned to Ireland, and, seeing an opportunity to get a piece of the pie there, he threw himself upon the king of Spain as a humble servant awaiting the opportunity to conquer Ireland for Spain. His attempts to bring Ireland under Spanish control came to naught. It seems that the whole affair was a case of over-reaction by the Spanish ambassador. Stukley never was that much of a menace to Spain, and when De Silva discovered this, he quietly backed away from the affair. His influence was felt in getting the man arrested, but he failed because he made too much of a minor affair.

Thomas Cobham, another pirate with whom the Spanish had to deal, was a brother to William Brooke, Lord Cobham, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, a pro-Spanish privy counselor. Shortly before De Silva arrived in London, Luis Roman, Quadra's secretary in charge of Spanish affairs in England between Quadra's death and De Silva's arrival, complained to Elizabeth that in 1564 Cobham had attacked a Spanish ship on its way from Flanders to Spain.<sup>193</sup> At the time of the attack, De Silva was journeying to the Low Countries to receive information and instructions from Margaret of

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<sup>193</sup>CSPS, 1:354. Luis Roman to Elizabeth, February 1564.

Parma. In her specific instructions concerning the Low Countries, Margaret charged the new ambassador to urge the queen to capture Cobham and castigate him. Elizabeth had previously promised Margaret that the pirate would receive an exemplary punishment when he was caught. Because Cobham had been sighted in England shortly after Elizabeth had made this promise, De Silva knew that he had to do much to encourage her to keep her word.<sup>194</sup> And at the same time, Margaret considered Cobham's prosecution as a test of English good faith.<sup>195</sup>

Philip's new resident arrived in England and waited for a chance to put pressure on Elizabeth. The ambassador did approach her, and on July 21, 1564, in part because of De Silva's urging, she issued a proclamation ordering the arrest of Cobham. The proclamation gave anyone permission to capture him, or any of his accomplices, by sea or by land; and prohibited anyone from offering him any kind of help, on the threat of being considered accessories to piracy.<sup>196</sup> Eight months

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<sup>194</sup>Ibid., 1:359. Summary of Instructions to De Silva from Margaret of Parma, 11 June 1564.

<sup>195</sup>Hughes and Larkin, 2:252.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., This was not the first time that Elizabeth had issued orders to take Cobham. On March 27, 1564, a circular letter was sent to the officers of the ports along the south and west coasts of Ireland commanding them to apprehend Cobham. CSPI, 1:233.

later, the English captured Cobham and locked him in the tower.<sup>197</sup> De Silva's role in this event was related by the English ambassador in France, Thomas Smith, who felt that the English had taken this action specifically at the request of the Spanish ambassador.<sup>198</sup> De Silva now pressed Elizabeth to fulfil her promise by making Cobham suffer exemplary punishment. This she promised him she would do despite the pleadings of his high-ranking relatives who begged to have him released.<sup>199</sup>

Cobham was tried for the first time in July, 1565, in the Admiralty court by a jury of twelve men, who found him not guilty. In the sixteenth century, jurors were strictly controlled, for if they delivered what the judge considered to be a perverse verdict, they could be fined and imprisoned, and this case was no exception.<sup>200</sup> Since the judge of the Admiralty suspected that the jurors were biased and had been bribed, he watched them closely; and when they produced what he considered the wrong verdict, he refused to release the

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<sup>197</sup> CSPS, 1:414. De Silva to Philip, 31 March 1565.

<sup>198</sup> CDI, 89:131. De Silva to Philip, 25 June 1565.

<sup>199</sup> CSPF, 7:350. Smith to Cecil, 2 May 1565.

<sup>200</sup> George W. Keeton, English Law: The Judicial Contribution, (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974), p. 319. Keeton's book is a very clearly written concise summary of the history of English law. He is very up-to-date and quotes from the standard works Holdsworth and Marsden.

pirate and had the jury indicted for false judgment. The Spanish ambassador then made certain that Elizabeth was well aware of all the ramifications of the trial, and tried to get her to punish the jurors and re-submit Cobham's case to another jury. De Silva reported that the jurors were brought before another jury, tried for false judgment, found guilty, fined, and then "put in the pillory with papers stuck on them like a cuirass."<sup>201</sup>

Cobham was then tried again, this time by a new jury of twenty-four, but he refused to plead to the jury, or "put himself upon his country," and was sentenced to peine forte et dure, used by the English after the abolishment of the ordeal in the thirteenth century, because they were of bad repute and suspected that the jury would condemn them on that ground. Rather than take the chance of being convicted by a jury and executed for their crimes and thus losing all their property to the state, they refused to plead. If they died under peine forte et dure, they were technically unconvicted, and their families were not reduced to destitution by the forfeiture of all their goods.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>CSPS, 1:449. De Silva to Philip, 13 July 1565.

<sup>202</sup>Keeton, p. 319. See also Edward Jenks, A Short History of English Law, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1922). An old but valuable source of case studies and laws. Jenks points out that the peine forte et dure existed until the year 1772.

Cobham was then sentenced to the usual punishment under peine forte et dure.

To be taken back to the Tower, stripped entirely naked, his head shaved, and the soles of his feet beaten, and then, with his arms and legs stretched, his back resting on a sharp stone, a piece of artillery is to be placed on his stomach too heavy for him to bear, but not heavy enough to kill him outright. In this torment he is to be fed on three grains weight of barley and the filthiest water in the prison until he dies.<sup>203</sup>

The pirate's relatives sought to have him pardoned, with the exception of Lord Cobham, who, according to De Silva, considered that his brother's actions against Philip were disgraceful and took no part in the efforts for a stay of execution. But Thomas Cobham's wife and his other brothers went to the ambassador and begged him to ask the queen to suspend the execution of the sentence until they had obtained Philip's pardon. De Silva told them that this was impossible for him to do, but when they begged him to write to the Spanish monarch in behalf of Cobham, he promised to do so.<sup>204</sup> He relayed to the king all the information about Cobham but never once requested his intervention. The ambassador's work pleased Philip, but the monarch doubted that the sentence would

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<sup>203</sup> CDI, 89:146. De Silva to Philip 16 July 1565.

<sup>204</sup> CSPS, 1:454. De Silva to Philip, 23 July 1565.



ever be carried out.<sup>205</sup> Philip understood the English government better than his ambassador.

Since De Silva considered harsh punishment a deterrent to piracy, and since he considered this an exemplary case, he feared the queen would be too lenient on the pirate. If so she would encourage piracy--just the opposite of what the ambassador desired. So he handed the council a written request to have Cobham's sentence carried out quickly and effectively, but was unsuccessful in his appeals. Dr. Valentine Dale, who at this time was representing the Judge of the Admiralty, came to De Silva and told him that Cobham could not be punished because he was an "ecclesiastic."<sup>206</sup> It seems that the Spanish ambassador was getting the run-around again. The queen and council were more difficult for him to reach on this matter of piracy than on any other matter. De Silva was obviously not steeped in English law and could not have known if Dale was telling the truth. The council probably just did not want to punish a man of such high standing. So the queen apparently let him free. He was imprisoned again in 1569 because of his support of the

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<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 1:493. Philip to De Silva, 20 October 1565.

<sup>206</sup>CSPS, 1:472. De Silva to Philip, 3 September 1565.

duke of Alba in the Low Countries.<sup>207</sup> He returned to piracy against Spain, for in 1570 some Bristol merchants reported that the Spanish had detained their ships in retaliation for Cobham's capture of a Spanish vessel.<sup>208</sup> And in 1571 he was imprisoned for his involvement in the Ridolfi plot against Elizabeth. Information on his life after 1571 is very scanty.<sup>209</sup>

How successful can an ambassador be when the host government refuses to cooperate? De Silva was an influence in getting Cobham captured, as is seen by the proclamation issued by the queen and the words of Thomas Smith, but his influence ended there. He was not able to carry the project through to a successful conclusion. Cobham was not punished but was freed to roam the seas in search of Spanish plunder. This matter was of noble blood, and, whereas the queen and council could bring themselves to punish some sailors and at times even some captains of no nobility, they could not bring themselves to punish a nobleman. There is even a possibility that some of the council might have had a monetary interest in Cobham's adventures, but of this there is little evidence.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 2:136. De Spes to Philip, 12 March 1569.

<sup>208</sup> CSPD, 1:405. Report by Dr. Lewes on the petition of Robert Saxie, Geo. Higgons, and others.

<sup>209</sup> CSPS, 2:322, 340, 353, 393. See also CSPD, 1:426, for an account of how he pled on his knees that his brother would not expose his part in the plot.

Sir John Hawkins, one of the most enterprising seamen of Queen Elizabeth's reign, was perhaps the greatest sea threat to Spain. Most of his youth he spent on commercial voyages, but he later served as a sea pilot for Philip during Mary's reign. Then in 1562 he began his slave trading voyages to the Spanish colonies in America and continued this lucrative practice for years. In 1568 on his third slaving voyage, Hawkins met with disaster at the hands of the Spanish at San Juan de Uloa. But he managed to escape and was able to return to England in 1569, where he was later appointed Treasurer of the Navy. At the time of the sailing of the Spanish Armada he was appointed Admiral of the Victory, where he distinguished himself to the extent that he was knighted. He died in 1595 while sailing with Sir Francis Drake to the West Indies.

In a visit with Elizabeth, De Silva showed his concern about a voyage by Hawkins when he pleaded with her to inquire into the purpose of the rumored voyage and require Hawkins' pledge not to plunder Spanish ships.<sup>210</sup> The queen promised to carry out his request, but acted slowly, for nearly one month later the persistent Spanish resident had to renew his request in writing.<sup>211</sup> De Silva

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 1:370. De Silva to Philip, 31 July 1564.

<sup>211</sup> CSPF, 7:191. De Silva to Elizabeth, 22 August 1564.

obtained little satisfaction to his requests. Before Hawkins set sail on October 18, 1564, he promised Elizabeth that he would do nothing against Spain, but one year later De Silva discovered that Hawkins had shipped slaves to the New World. He reasoned that similar voyages would invite trouble for Spain by encouraging piracy and English attempts to usurp Spanish trade.<sup>212</sup>

When Hawkins arrived back in England, he conversed with De Silva, claiming that he had traded legally with Philip's subjects because of certain certificates he had obtained from the governors of the Indies. Therefore, he had fulfilled all of the orders the queen had given him before his departure.<sup>213</sup> Don Diego doubted his word but was cautious, because he wanted to make sure that he knew all the details of the voyage before going to Elizabeth. He asked to see the certificates, and Hawkins promised to show them to him. De Silva figured that any trade with the Indies was unauthorized, because Philip had prohibited all foreign trade, and the ambassador wanted to have the captain punished by the English as an example to discourage anyone else from making slaving voyages. If the English would not punish him, the ambassador meant to see that he was captured in the Indies if he ever repeated

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<sup>212</sup> CSPF, 7:191. De Silva to Elizabeth, 22 August 1565.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 1:496. De Silva to Philip, 22 October 1565.

his voyage.<sup>214</sup> The Spanish attack upon Hawkins at San Juan de Uloa in 1568 fulfilled De Silva's desire, but it is not known if he tipped off the Spanish. It is certain that he informed them of Hawkins' preparations and voyage in 1568, but there is no evidence that he set up any kind of a trap for him.

Hawkins met with the ambassador again and showed him the certificates. De Silva had them translated into Spanish and forwarded to the Spanish Council of the Indies so that they could consider them and take appropriate action. Upon reading these certificates, the Spanish ambassador felt that similar voyages in the future could be very dangerous to Spain; thus he needed to nip them in the bud. He felt the need to go to Elizabeth and tell her that the captain had exceeded his rights but desired more detailed instructions from the king. In the meantime, scheming to keep Hawkins coming to visit him, he assured the captain that the Catholic King was eager to have him serve with Spain in the Mediterranean against the Turks.<sup>215</sup> It is doubtful that De Silva was serious

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<sup>214</sup>CDI, 89:231. De Silva to Philip, 5 November 1565.

<sup>215</sup>CSPS, 1:525. De Silva to Philip, 11 February 1566. See also James A. Williamson, Sir John Hawkins, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970), p. 120. Williamson felt that the captain was completely fooling the ambassador in order to gain time for his preparations for another voyage.

about this proposal, but it is easy to see why Hawkins could get excited about it. If he desired recognition by Spain, service in the Mediterranean would have been a good step toward further opportunities in the Caribbean; this alone would have given him an authorized position there. On the other hand, the Spanish ambassador's proposal allowed him to prepare for another voyage.

For six months the Spanish ambassador repeated his proposal that Hawkins serve Spain, and the captain always expressed a desire to do so, especially in the event of a Turkish attack. It is difficult to believe that the captain was sincere, for while convincing De Silva that he truly was preparing to fight the Turk, he was able to complete his preparations for a third voyage. The Spanish ambassador slowly began to realize that he had been deceived, but the captain's continued claims of sincerity kept him guessing for a long time.<sup>216</sup>

Finally, in October 1566, when he received indisputable evidence that Hawkins was to sail again, the ambassador went immediately to the queen. After reviewing what he considered to be Hawkins' excesses on the second voyage, De Silva demanded that she prohibit Hawkins from trading in the Indies, where Philip had formerly

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<sup>216</sup>Ibid., 1:534, 538, 548, 551, 556, 570.

prohibited all foreign trade.<sup>217</sup> The resident knew that this was a touchy subject, because some members of the Privy Council had financial interest in Hawkins' voyages. This Elizabeth did not try to deny, but she did try to justify Hawkins' actions by stating that he had traded in the Indies only after being forced there by contrary winds. Nevertheless, she promised that if the Spanish resident would provide her with a list of the places where Philip had forbidden trade, she also would forbid her subjects to trade there.<sup>218</sup> In great haste De Silva prepared and presented this list to Cecil and was satisfied when Elizabeth ordered Hawkins and his men to be summoned and questioned.<sup>219</sup> When Hawkins appeared, the queen ordered him to take an oath not to trade in the West Indies and threatened serious consequences if he broke his oath. She also ordered the judge of the Admiralty to forbid anyone else to make similar trading voyages to the Indies. The judge later made Hawkins sign a bond for 500 pounds,

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<sup>217</sup>CSPS, 1:605. Philip to De Silva, 20 December 1566.

<sup>218</sup>CDI, 89:383-84. De Silva to Philip, 12 October 1566.

<sup>219</sup>CSPS, 1:588. De Silva to Philip, 19 October 1566. See also CSPD, 1:279. Dr. Lewes to Cecil, 13 October 1566. This document stated that Lewis had received Cecil's letters to prevent Hawkins and others from sailing armed to engage in their slaving business.

promising not to send any ships to the Spanish Indies.<sup>220</sup> Philip highly approved of De Silva's part in these matters, and this effectively stopped Hawkins from sailing that year.<sup>221</sup> Nevertheless, the ambassador's success was dimmed by the fact that others sailed in Hawkins' ships that year.

In May and June of 1567, the ambassador heard rumors of a third slaving voyage, but this time the queen's own ships were part of the fleet.<sup>222</sup> It was not until July that Elizabeth confirmed the truth of the hearsay to Don Diego, but again she promised that the excursion would not be to places prohibited by Philip.<sup>223</sup> After the Spanish ambassador returned to push the issue with Elizabeth a number of times, she and Cecil finally convinced him that Hawkins would not go to the Indies.<sup>224</sup> They had so much trouble, because the ambassador could see Hawkins' preparations, and he knew that these preparations, were similar to those of slaving voyages.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 1:593. 4 November 1566. See also Acts of the Privy Council, 1558-70, pp. 314-15, as cited in Williamson, p. 122. And also CSPD, 1:281. Dr. Lewes to the Council, 11 October 1566. This document contains the 500 pound bond signed by Hawkins, certifying that he would not trade in the Indies as prohibited by Philip.

<sup>221</sup> CSPS, 1:605. Philip to De Silva, 20 December 1566.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 1:642, 646, 651.

<sup>223</sup> CDI, 89:509-10. De Silva to Philip, 12 July 1567.

<sup>224</sup> CSPS, 1:659-61, 663.



Nevertheless, three things combined to convince him of the veracity of the English pledge: a report that three Portuguese had initiated the voyage by promising the English great profit from the Portuguese Indies, a personal visit from Hawkins, who promised with an oath not to go to the West Indies, and a statement by Elizabeth that she would have the captian's head cut off if he disobeyed her.<sup>225</sup>

Perhaps the queen and Hawkins were lying to De Silva from the start, but it seems from the captain's letter to Elizabeth that the plan up until September 16 had truly been to follow the apparently lucrative plan of the Portuguese. Hawkins wrote that the Portuguese men who were to have directed the voyage had fled from the ship, and the only other financially plausible alternative was to offer his services to undertake a slaving voyage in order not to waste his preparations.<sup>226</sup> Upon hearing of the flight of the Portuguese, the Spanish resident suspected that a slaving voyage would result, but Elizabeth continued to assure him that no illegal moves would be made. Even as late as January 1568, she told him that she would cut off Hawkins' head if he went

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<sup>225</sup> CDI, 89:527-28. De Silva to Philip, 2 August 1567.

<sup>226</sup> CSPD, 1:299. John Hawkins to the Queen. 16 September 1567. For the fulltext of the letter see Williamson, pp. 137-38.

contrary to her orders.<sup>227</sup> The last mention that the ambassador made of the slave trader was a vow to have him castigated if he disobeyed the queen's orders.<sup>228</sup>

De Silva had failed again. Even though his influence had led to the postponing of a voyage by Hawkins, the captain merely took the postponement in stride and sailed the next year. Again, these matters of the sea were too big for the Spanish ambassador. The English government was willing to go only so far. The queen realized that Philip still had some of her subjects in Spanish prisons, and he had the capability of capturing and imprisoning more. But she also knew by experience that Philip would not come to open war. She realized that it touched her honor to let piracy continue, but her feeble attempts seemed to satisfy her. When it came to really doing something about stopping piracy, she was touching the lives and pocketbooks of people other than herself. The Spanish ambassador was not able to accomplish much as he fought these unseen obstacles.

Another pirate who especially bothered the Spanish ambassador was a little known man named Charles Wilson. Elizabeth wrote to the earl of Bedford on the Scottish border that he was not to employ Wilson openly,

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<sup>227</sup>CSFS, 2:1 De Silva to Philip, 3 January 1568.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., 2:17. 27 March 1568.

because the French and Spanish ambassadors had pressed her for his apprehension more than that of any other pirate.<sup>229</sup> Bedford did use the pirate to support Bothwell and the Scottish lords, and especially to transport the expectant countess of Murray to Berwick to have her child.<sup>230</sup> Anthony Jenkinson received a commission from the council to capture the pirate but was hindered by Bedford's grant of ten days' safe conduct to Wilson. Jenkinson let the pirate alone for ten days, but when Bedford requested twenty more days of safe conduct, Jenkinson moved in and captured Wilson. Terribly upset, Bedford wrote to Cecil and the Privy Council complaining of what he considered to be improper behavior on Jenkinson's part.<sup>231</sup> It is not known if Wilson was ever brought to trial, but De Silva certainly rejoiced in his capture.<sup>232</sup> Apparently he was never convicted of piracy, for he was killed near Scotland in 1567.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>229</sup>CSPF, 7:453. Elizabeth to Bedford, 7 September 1565.

<sup>230</sup>Ibid., 7:471. Bedford to Jenkinson, 26 September 1565.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., 7:502. Bedford to Cecil, 26 October 1565. And ibid., 7:516. Bedford to the Privy Council, 12 November 1565.

<sup>232</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:256. De Silva to Margaret, 22 October 1565.

<sup>233</sup>CSPF, 8:288. Throckmorton to Elizabeth, 18 July 1567.

The whole affair shows the reluctance of the queen and her council to punish any pirate that was of use to them. Instead of punishing a useful pirate, she desired to employ him quietly and effectively. Those pirates punished were those who forgot to discriminate when it came to robbing an English vessel. This was another obstacle the ambassador faced, and he was never able to make much headway. Though he was able to prick the queen's conscience enough to influence her to capture a few pirates who were molesting the English as well as the Spanish ships, the big-name pirates always eluded punishment.

De Silva was not at all successful in stopping piracy, which continued long after his recall. In the ten years that followed Don Diego's withdrawal from London, piracy is mentioned no less than ninety times by Spanish ambassadors and other representatives. The resident had encouraged Elizabeth to pass some resolutions and capture and punish some pirates, but the pirates punished were usually sailors and not captains.<sup>234</sup> Other factors also led to his failure in this matter. He saw

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<sup>234</sup>See Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:269, 297. In these letters to Margaret, the Duchess of Parma, the Spanish ambassador related his concern that the English were punishing the wrong men. It did not seem to help to hang thousands of lowly sailors while allowing the captains to go free, enabling them to put together other crews and commit further atrocities.

clearly a few obstacles in his path, e.g., perjury on the part of witnesses, judges who did not want to punish their own countrymen, pirates and victims willing to settle out of court, and the lack of severe punishment. But the main obstacle in Spain's path was the involvement of government officials and the landed gentry in piracy, as the ambassador clearly suspected:

The day before yesterday I received a despatch from the duchess of Parma, with a letter from her to the Queen, respecting the prevention of the robberies at sea, which she continually treats with the greatest diligence, vigilance, and care, as the case demands. As I understand, the Queen desires to remedy the evil, but the Ministers do not always carry out orders, especially when they have a share in the spoil. It is necessary to keep them up to the mark, as I am doing.<sup>235</sup>

Quadra had also encountered a similar problem with his attempts to obtain redress when the English admiral concerned kept a portion of the pirate's plunder and divided the rest as he thought best.<sup>236</sup>

The landed gentry and government officials were deeply entangled in this commercial venture, for arrangements between these people and the pirates assured safety for all. The gentry were easily induced to take a financial part in the voyages, for piracy provided safe

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<sup>235</sup>*CSPS*, 1:486. De Silva to Philip, 8 October 1565. The italics are mine.

<sup>236</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:92. Quadra to Philip, 18 August 1559.

profits, slight risks, and the opportunity to obtain a valuable return from their otherwise idle coves. The receiver made the bulk of the profits, leaving the pirate with perhaps one-fifth of the take; nevertheless, the abundance of victims and the relative safety of the venture kept the pirates from getting discouraged. During Elizabeth's period no pirate was ever taken in the Bristol channel, and it was equally difficult to capture pirates off the coasts of Cornwall, Devon, and Southern Ireland.<sup>237</sup>

The Killigrews, a great Cornish family who were attached to the Cecils and had great influence at court, were perhaps the mainstays of piracy. Other Cornish nobles followed their example, though with much less daring and far less success. Local coastal officials, corrupt in many cases, allowed the pirates to continue their practice without noticeable hindrance.<sup>238</sup> De Silva's suggestion to the court that a very trustworthy person be placed in each port with orders not to allow pirates to be hidden or helped was not carried out.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup>For an excellent article on the subject, see David Matthew, "The Cornish and Welsh Pirates in the Reign of Elizabeth," English Historical Review, 34 (1924) pp. 337-48. Matthew maintained that there was a league between pirate and noble that hampered Elizabeth's feeble attempts to halt the practice.

<sup>238</sup>Ibid.

<sup>239</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:247. De Silva to Margaret, 24 September 1565.

These conditions made it nearly impossible to eradicate piracy during Elizabeth's reign. Even the passage of the proclamations could be attributed to the fact that the pirates at times preyed upon English vessels. Thus when it was convenient, the English government brought some to trial and punished some, but never the nobility. Nevertheless, Philip was pleased with his ambassador's work, perhaps he understood what an uphill battle it was. If De Silva had not achieved what little he did, perhaps the king would have found reason to complain or recall him earlier. Under the extremely difficult challenges the ambassador faced, it is a wonder that he accomplished anything.

## CHAPTER 6

### PROBLEMS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

The Netherlands trade was important to the English economy. England exported cloth by way of the Merchant Adventurers; approximately two-thirds of this valuable product was channeled through the chief distributing center Antwerp.<sup>240</sup> England was concerned about this export trade, for cloth-weaving had spread rapidly into the English countryside as a response to England's rapidly developing overseas market. The English peasants were depending more and more on cloth-weaving for their livelihood, and any disturbance of trade caused problems for both merchants and peasants.

But the English export trade was also important to the economy of the Netherlands, for without English wool and unfinished cloth, the Flemish manufacturing industry was hurt. Nevertheless, Margaret, the Duchess of Parma, felt that trade could be used as a weapon to

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<sup>240</sup>For an excellent article on Elizabethan trade in general, including mention of the Flanders trade, see Lawrence Stone, "Elizabethan Overseas Trade," Economic History Review, 2nd Series, Vol. 2 (1949), pp. 30-58. See also Conyers Read, Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 289.



stop English piracy. But she was reluctant to halt trade, for she realized that in doing so she would harm her own merchants, particularly those of Antwerp. The old cloth manufacturing centers like Ghent and Bruges would certainly support a trade embargo, for they had much to gain by eliminating their English competitors. Margaret leaned toward protection of the manufacturers at the expense of the merchants.

Before De Silva arrived in London, Margaret and Elizabeth had issued a series of proclamations and counter-proclamations, embargoes and counter-embargoes, until the trade between England and the merchants in the Low Countries had come to a halt. When Don Diego visited with Margaret just before crossing the channel into England, she related her side of the history of the affair and instructed him to "arrange the time, place and persons for a conference to settle the whole question, and deal with the matter in the friendly spirit anciently existing between the two countries and their rulers, and we have no doubt that your prudence and tact will arrive at a conclusion so important to His Majesty's interests."<sup>241</sup>

De Silva had the philosophy that if he rushed into any negotiation with excessive haste, the English would

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<sup>241</sup>CSPS, 1:359. Summary of Instructions to De Silva from Margaret, the Duchess of Parma, 19 January 1564.

seize upon his eagerness and use it to their advantage. In view of that, he decided to proceed slowly in the matter of trade, for he wanted the English to feel that the Netherlands were not desperate. Shortly after he arrived in England, he talked with Benedict Spinola, a Genoese banker and great friend of Robert Dudley. Because he felt that, notwithstanding Spinola's promises of secrecy, whatever he told Spinola would eventually get back to the queen, he told the Genoese just what he wanted Elizabeth to hear. In their discussion of old treaties and trade customs, the ambassador expressed his opposition to anything that placed the two countries on an unequal footing, as some treaties and customs did.<sup>242</sup> This was the Spanish ambassador's subtle way of introducing the subject in England.

Meanwhile, the merchants of Antwerp caused De Silva some uneasiness by writing letters to the English government and the Merchant Adventurers.<sup>243</sup> Elizabeth

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<sup>242</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, Relations Politiques des Pas-Bas et de l'Angleterre, sous le Regne de Philippe II, 4 Vols., (Bruxelles, F. Hayez, Imprimeur de L'Academie de Belgique, 1885), 2 July 1564 De Silva to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, 4:42-45.

<sup>243</sup>Historical Manuscripts Commission, Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honorable the Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., Preserved at Hatfield House, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1883-1970). 9:296. Hereafter cited as Cecil Papers. There are two letters from the Burgomasters and others of Antwerp and the merchants of Antwerp to the Company of Merchant Adventurers, dated 27 May 1564. The merchants of Antwerp expressed their great

decided not to do any business with them, and Cecil at first told them that he would do nothing in their behalf, but later agreed to urge Elizabeth to take some positive measures to resume trade.<sup>244</sup> Nevertheless, De Silva wanted these letters stopped, for he felt they hindered his work. He could see great advantages accruing to the English who could pit the merchants against him. So he wrote to Margaret, stating his opposition to the letters and asking her to squelch them.<sup>245</sup> Little did he know that John Fitzwilliams, Elizabeth's agent in the Low Countries, had written that the merchants and magistrates of Antwerp were willing to grant anything the English might demand.<sup>246</sup> The Spanish ambassador was working against great obstacles.

De Silva met for two hours with the council for the first time and discussed matters pertaining to piracy and the trade embargoes. The letters from Antwerp caused the council to question the ambassador's authority to

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desire to have the embargoes lifted; and vowed to use their influence with Margaret if the Merchant Adventurers would do the same with Elizabeth. They also suggested exchanging deputies to help in the negotiations. Other letters from the merchants of Antwerp to Cecil and the queen are found in Kervyn de Lettenhove, vol. 4. See summaries of these letters found in CSPF, 7:141, 149, 169, 174.

<sup>244</sup>CSPF, 7:149. Cecil to the Magistrates of Antwerp, 7 June 1564. See another letter in *Ibid.*, 7:174.

<sup>245</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:47, 49, 55, 56.

<sup>246</sup>CSPF, 7:125. Fitzwilliams to Cecil, 6 May 1564. See also *ibid.*, 7:141, 158.

conduct negotiations, but he assured them not to fear because he had full authority. After both parties explained their position, Don Diego suggested that the discussion be continued later with Sir William Cecil alone. Cecil was by far the most important privy councillor in all of these negotiations, and De Silva desired him to be both the scribe and mediator of their discussion. Following this meeting, the Spanish ambassador met with Elizabeth to discuss the same matters. But these first meetings were no more than preliminary discussions of both sides of the question.<sup>247</sup>

De Silva heard from unofficial sources that Elizabeth had appointed three men to work with him in these matters: William Petre, principal secretary under Mary Tudor; Sir John Mason, privy councillor; and Dr. Nicholas Wotton, dean of Canterbury and York.<sup>248</sup> But after waiting a week to receive official word of the appointment, he surmised that the English were either so involved in other business that they didn't have time for this matter, that they were waiting for another letter from Antwerp to allow them more advantage, or else that they were just continuing their naturally slow manner

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<sup>247</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:59-60. De Silva to Margaret, 17 July 1564.

<sup>248</sup>Ibid., 4:60.

of negotiating.<sup>249</sup> In truth, he had received incorrect information, for the commissioners had not yet been officially appointed.

In a letter to Philip, De Silva wrote that the trade negotiations were at a standstill despite England's desire to settle the difficulties, because Elizabeth would not appoint special commissioners to work with him. He indicated that he could move no faster than the queen.<sup>250</sup> The English had reduced some of their surplus cloth by exporting it to Emden in Friesland, so time seemed to be in their favor. Cecil was a conservative in these matters. In a memorandum in 1564, he revealed his thinking on the subject of commerce with the Low Countries. He felt that England had too many eggs in one basket, placing its commercial prosperity too much at the mercy of the Spanish king which made England vulnerable in case of war with Spain. He disliked unnecessary foreign luxuries like wine and fine clothing being imported into England, and he disliked the outflow of gold. The proximity of the Low Countries allowed any young adventurer to trade without much problem, which he did not like. He also favored the reduction of cloth production, because he felt England should return to

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 4:62-63.

<sup>250</sup> CSPS, 1:368. De Silva to Philip, 22 July 1564.

agriculture.<sup>251</sup> The similarities between this document and Elizabeth's proclamation against the Low Countries, dated March 23, 1564, seem to indicate that Cecil had much to do with the wording of the proclamation.<sup>252</sup>

It is not surprising that England stalled for time, since the most influential minister and some other council members were not fully committed to the resumption of trade. Besides, the English had found other outlets, inferior though they were, for their cloth. The Antwerp merchants were not quite so fortunate, for although they still had their major export markets in Spain and Portugal, they had no way to make up for the loss of English imports. Imports from Castile did increase during this time, but Antwerp seemed to be much more desperate to resume trade. Other states were hurt also, but Brabant seemed to be in the worst condition.

Because De Silva had never received personal notice of the appointment of commissioners to treat the commercial matters, he decided to request an audience with the queen. He hoped that she would bring up the subject rather than making him show his anxiety. She did broach the subject, and after a short discussion, she

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<sup>251</sup>Public Record Office, State Papers 12-35-38, as quoted in Read, pp. 295-99.

<sup>252</sup>Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., Tudor Royal Proclamations, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 2:247-49.

promised to appoint three special commissioners.<sup>253</sup> De Silva brought up the same subject later in the day with Cecil and other counselors, and he wrote that they all accepted his suggestion that matters be subjected to expert and impartial men who could grant justice in the case.<sup>254</sup> The queen, however, did not appoint the commissioners until two months later.

The first real action in the matter came in August 1564, after De Silva met with the council members. After De Silva satisfied the Englishman about his power to negotiate, he then suggested that Cecil relate all that had been decided previously. When Cecil demurred and blamed all the commercial problems on Margaret, De Silva defended her by blaming everything on the injustice of breaking ancient trade treaties as he felt England had done. Then he discussed the problems with Elizabeth, who claimed that her honor was at stake in these matters. De Silva assured her that he was talking of reason and justice, the greatest honor of rulers.<sup>255</sup> When he wrote to Margaret about the meetings, he revealed a suggestion that the English had made to him that the edicts on both

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<sup>253</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:67-70. De Silva to Margaret, July 31, 1564.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid., 4:70.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., 4:73-76. De Silva to Margaret, 7 August 1564.

sides might be lifted until after a conference.<sup>256</sup> The conference would then be held to solve the difficulties so that the edicts would be permanently abolished. If differences could not be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned, the embargoes would again be in force. De Silva's religious bias caused him to fear that things would not go well for him, for the "heretics" were wicked and devoid of feeling for the common good that Catholicism had once provided them.<sup>257</sup>

Further delays added to the ambassador's discouragement, yet he felt that he must not be too insistent. He tried to maintain patience even when the English got irritated. He felt that in this way he showed them that it was not fear nor necessity that motivated him, but true and good friendship. He described this situation as allowing the English figuratively to strike the air in order for them to see that when they did, so they only hurt themselves.<sup>258</sup>

But by September his anxiety was growing. While continuing to justify his slow methods, he also stressed his great desire to bring the matters to a close. He

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<sup>256</sup>CSPF, 7:184. Instructions to treat with the Spanish Ambassador, 1 August 1564. This document by Cecil suggested that trade be opened on both sides and all proclamations be suspended until after a conference.

<sup>257</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:77.

<sup>258</sup>Ibid.



wanted to be a success in his office, and he assured Margaret time and time again that he would not fail to carry out her instructions.<sup>259</sup> Finally on September 17, he was officially informed that the three men who had been named to work with him on the commercial matters were William Petre, Mary Tudor's principal secretary, John Mason, privy counselor, and William Cecil. By this time the queen had heard that France was eager to have the embargoes continue because of the trade advantage it allowed them.<sup>260</sup> This news would only have succeeded in adding to the anxiety of the ambassador.

On September 18, De Silva met with the three commissioners for the first time in a two-hour meeting. All agreed that the edicts should be suspended until a conference could be held at Bruges.<sup>261</sup> But further meetings were delayed when Cecil felt ill and could neither read nor write. At this time, Cecil desired that negotiations come to a speedy conclusion, for he was worried about the loss of customs revenues and widespread unemployment in England. He mentioned this to Sir Thomas

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<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:99. De Silva to Jerome de Curiel, 4 September 1564. And *ibid.*, 4:101. De Silva to Margaret, 9 September 1564.

<sup>260</sup> *CSPS*, 1:380. De Silva to Philip, 18 September 1564. See also Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:105, De Silva to Margaret, 17 September 1564.

<sup>261</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:106-110. De Silva to Margaret, 18 September 1564.

Smith, English ambassador in France, while informing him that the English considered it very necessary to resume trade with the Low Countries. The secretary viewed trade with other countries as a great benefit, but feared that England could not hold out much longer. He also mentioned that De Silva had begun the negotiations in a very pleasing manner.<sup>262</sup>

When Cecil's health improved sufficiently, he met with the Spanish ambassador. De Silva was concerned that both Margaret and Philip saw that he was doing everything possible to bring the trade matters to a successful conclusion, so he requested that Cecil keep a written record of their discussions. The ambassador never wanted to be accused of not doing his job, and he could see value in having a record of his actions that he could produce in case matters worked out unfavorably for the Low Countries. When Cecil refused to keep a written record, the ambassador requested any information that he could communicate to Margaret. Together they agreed that the trade conference would be held at Bruges after Christmas.<sup>263</sup> The Spanish ambassador wanted the conference to be held before Christmas, but he was willing to compromise with

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<sup>262</sup>Lansdowne MSS, cii: 55, Cecil to Smith, as quoted in Read, p. 293.

<sup>263</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4: 124. De Silva to Margaret, 22 October 1564.

Cecil who wanted it sometime in the spring. They also agreed that all embargoes issued by both governments would be lifted before the conference if they could get their rulers to sanction it. De Silva assured Margaret that he had followed her instructions to the letter, but fearing that the English knew of the desperation of the merchants from the Low Countries, he felt that more delay would only cause more problems.<sup>264</sup>

On November 21, De Silva again met with the three special commissioners, but little was accomplished, for Cecil had received information that Margaret was willing to let all matters be decided at Bruges.<sup>265</sup> Discussion then turned to the date of the conference. De Silva still pushed for an early date, while the English wanted to wait until the spring. They compromised by deciding that it would be held in January.<sup>266</sup>

When Cecil submitted a written copy of the agreements reached by the commissioners to the ambassador, De Silva discovered some changes. What concerned him most was the date stipulated for both countries to lift the embargoes. Cecil's document set it twenty-six days later

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<sup>264</sup>Ibid.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid., 4:131-32.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid., 4:135-36. De Silva to Margaret, 21 November 1564.

than De Silva desired. Cecil explained to him that he was experiencing opposition at court because some of the council members did not want trade re-opened at all. Hearing this, the ambassador conceded, and the date remained as it was written. The two men also agreed that the embargoes would remain out of force for three months after the end of the conference.<sup>267</sup> The outcome of the conference would then determine the status of the edicts. The Spanish ambassador urged Cecil not to delay putting the decisions into effect, and requested that Elizabeth would give him a signed copy of the agreement. When the letter was not forthcoming, he complained to Cecil that Margaret would blame him for the delay, and the merchants would think he had given up their cause. His complaint seemed to have the desired effect, for De Silva obtained the agreement, and Elizabeth also named two of her commissioners: Thomas Radcliffe, the Earl of Sussex, and Dr. Nicholas Wotton, dean of Canterbury and York.<sup>268</sup>

Elizabeth published a proclamation on December 29, 1564, declaring that trade was open. The proclamation stated that all new commercial ordinances affecting English and Flemish trade since the first year of Elizabeth's reign were thereby suspended.<sup>269</sup> The next

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 4:137-39.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 4:149. De Silva to Margaret, 18 December 1564.

<sup>269</sup> Hughes and Larkin, p. 259.

problem the ambassador faced was to encourage the English commissioners to travel to Bruges to open the conference. It did not happen in January, for Wotton was sick, and Elizabeth requested a twelve-day postponement. De Silva reluctantly granted this on Margaret's behalf. Then a squabble ensued concerning the nobility of Margaret's chief negotiator at the conference. When Margaret appointed Florent de Montmorency, the baron of Montigny, as her chief representative, Elizabeth was upset. Montigny did not have sufficiently high rank of nobility. De Silva could not argue the fact that Montigny did not have a high title, and could only stress the man's capabilities.<sup>270</sup> The English ended the matter by replacing Sussex with a man of lesser stature, Viscount Anthony B. Montague. This seemed to be satisfactory to all, especially to De Silva who heard that Montague was devout Catholic who was willing to serve Philip.<sup>271</sup>

Further delays in the conference were caused by bad weather, which prevented the English representatives from sailing. Then Wotton was sick again which further delayed the departure. At last the representatives departed England near the end of March for Bruges.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>270</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:176. De Silva to Margaret, 13 February 1565.

<sup>271</sup>Ibid., 4:189. 15 March 1565.

<sup>272</sup>CSPF, 7:318. Wotton to Cecil, 25 March 1565.

The Spanish ambassador could not just sit back and relax, for there were continuing problems. He suspected that the French, who wanted the English trade, were attempting to enter into a conspiracy with the English to upset the conference. But the French ambassador denied such a conspiracy.<sup>273</sup>

Cecil approached De Silva in August, upset at the Flemish commissioners for their unwillingness to come to an agreement. He reviewed all the concessions the English had offered and wanted De Silva to ask Philip to intervene. De Silva feigned ignorance about the concessions of the English and asked Cecil to give him a written report of all the pertinent information. This allowed him to check his own sources of information against the English sources. Meanwhile, he felt that domestic difficulties had drained away some of England's bargaining power.<sup>274</sup>

In September the English commissioners requested a recess until after Christmas, but De Silva urged Margaret not to grant it. He felt that if the commissioners returned to England they would never get them back, and the conference would end in failure.<sup>275</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>273</sup>CSPS, 1:415. De Silva to Philip, 7 April 1565.

<sup>274</sup>Ibid., 1:468-69. De Silva to Philip, 27 August 1565.

<sup>275</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:241-42. De Silva to Margaret, 10 September 1565.

the conference was adjourned on September 29.<sup>276</sup> On October 16, 1565, Elizabeth published a proclamation concerning the Bruges conference that stated that the representatives there had agreed to continue open trade until March 15, 1566, at which time the representatives would reconvene to further discuss trade relations.<sup>277</sup>

De Silva was correct in assuming that it would be difficult to get the English commissioners back to Bruges. In February, 1566, Cecil approached De Silva with a request to postpone the resumption of the conference until April.<sup>278</sup> De Silva agreed, for that was what Margaret also wanted.<sup>279</sup> Two of the commissioners later asked for another postponement because they did not want to walk during Holy Week, nor did they want to miss the Easter celebration. De Silva did not want any postponements, but he had to concede.<sup>280</sup> Margaret then requested a postponement because Philip had ordered Montigny to go to Spain, which made it impossible to him to be at the conference.<sup>281</sup> But it was too late, for the English

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<sup>276</sup>CSPF, 7:474.

<sup>277</sup>Hughes and Larkin, 2:270-71.

<sup>278</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:265. De Silva to Margaret, 4 February 1565.

<sup>279</sup>CSPF, 8:25. De Silva to Elizabeth, 28 February 1566.

<sup>280</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 4:275. 23 March 1566.

<sup>281</sup>Ibid., 4:282. 18 April 1566.

commissioners had already sailed for Bruges. They arrived there when no one expected them and had to wait a week before any Flemish representatives arrived.<sup>282</sup> Philip appointed a new commissioner, Philip de Montmorency, to act in behalf of Montigny, and the conference began.<sup>283</sup> It ended on June 17, 1566, accomplishing little more than expressions of goodwill. The normal trade that had resumed even before the start of the conference continued for over three years without hinderance.<sup>284</sup> On July 8, 1566, Elizabeth published another proclamation concerning trade with the Low Countries, stating that the open trade was to continue until either Elizabeth or Philip declared it closed, and that the seas would be kept free of pirates.<sup>285</sup>

These drawn-out, tedious affairs do not say too much for De Silva's ability as a negotiator. His philosophy to move slowly was stretched beyond reason. Had he pushed the matters with greater enthusiasm, then perhaps things would have been accomplished much faster. All he did accomplish in the affair was to make sure that Cecil knew that Margaret wanted to set up a trade conference. He worked slowly with Cecil to get the special

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<sup>282</sup>CSPE, 8:49, 50, 52.

<sup>283</sup>Ibid., 8:54, 26 April 1566.

<sup>284</sup>Read, p. 294.

<sup>285</sup>Hughes and Larkin, 2:287-88.



commissioners appointed and on their way. During these struggles normal trade resumed, but De Silva had little to do with it. The English merchants desired the trade to be opened nearly as much as the merchants of the Low Countries, and the Spanish ambassador only communicated the information to Margaret, who then acted upon it.

The trade conference at Bruges accomplished nothing. The proclamations that opened trade prior to the conference really made the difference. So De Silva's part in the matters was merely to supply Margaret and Philip with information. Had there been no ambassador in England, special envoys could have as effectively set up the useless conference, but since De Silva was there, he did get some recognition. But the affair also illustrates some of the challenges that a sixteenth-century ambassador faced. Here was an ambassador who was instructed to facilitate the return to normal trade relations, but he had to work with courtiers that had the advantage over him and knew that time was in their favor; and perhaps De Silva chose the wrong method. No doubt the situation was an extremely difficult one, beyond the ability of one lowly ambassador to handle. But he also had other challenges facing him.

In August 1566 the religious unrest of the Low Countries combined with economic problems to bring about riots, lootings of churches and monasteries, and the destruction of Catholic images in Antwerp and other

cities. In December 1566, Philip commissioned Fernando Alvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, the Duke of Alba, to take an army to the Low Countries and crush the religious and political opposition to Spain. Alba moved quickly and effectively after he arrived in August 1567 and forced many Protestants to flee to England for safety. Elizabeth allowed these rebels to stay in England, and they soon formed a group large enough and strong enough to harrass coastlines of the Netherlands. Armed and banded together, they raided the towns and cities along the coast and caused much inconvenience.

De Silva felt that even allowing the Dutch rebels asylum in England was wrong, and offering England as a base of operations against Flanders was a serious offence to Spain. When he discovered what was happening, he vowed to approach the queen immediately to get her to remedy the situation.<sup>286</sup> When he did go to the queen, she promised to issue a decree to stop the practice, and Don Diego reported in May 1568 to Philip that a decree had been issued.<sup>287</sup> But no proclamation had been published, and the conditions did not improve.

In July, De Silva spoke with Elizabeth again about the problem and followed up his visit with a letter. He

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<sup>286</sup>CSPS, 2:27-8. De Silva to Philip, 1 May 1568.

<sup>287</sup>Ibid., 2:33. 16 May 1568.

requested that she issue a proclamation, since his earlier pleas had resulted only in the issuance of certain specific orders to certain ports. As the Spanish ambassador investigated the effect of these orders, he discovered that they were not being carried out at all. In this one instance the Spanish ambassador really exerted himself, more so than at any other time during his mission. He warned Elizabeth that if she allowed matters to continue unabated, he would consider it an open declaration of war on Spain and communicate his sentiments to Philip and Alba. Since he considered silence to be tacit refusal, he required a written reply to his communication. He also requested that English Protestants not be allowed to raise funds to help the Flemish exiles.<sup>288</sup>

After sending this letter, he visited the queen to further press the issue. Elizabeth justified her action of letting the exiles stay in England: she felt pity for them because they were exiles for conscience' sake. But the Spanish diplomat was rather concerned that she forbid them to be armed and return to attack the coastal towns.<sup>289</sup> He also wrote to Cecil on July 17, urging him to publish a proclamation as soon as

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 2:52-3. De Silva to Elizabeth, 14 July 1568.

<sup>289</sup> CDI, 90:107. De Silva to Philip, 17 July 1568.

possible.<sup>290</sup> That same day Cecil sent him a copy of the proclamation before having it printed, and promised that it would be published without delay.<sup>291</sup> Still the ambassador worried about the delay and told Cecil's messenger, Thomas Windebank, that there were five hundred men, including some English, prepared to depart at any moment to wage war against the Low Countries. Since the proclamation could not possibly be published for three or four days, the Privy Council should issue an order prohibiting any departure from English ports until further notice.<sup>292</sup> The delay caused the Spanish ambassador to doubt the sincerity of Elizabeth and her council.<sup>293</sup>

Though De Silva pushed the matter with all his might, he felt he was accomplishing nothing. "It is the ordinary proceeding saying one thing and doing another."<sup>294</sup> Nevertheless, he felt his letter condemning the practice of gathering funds to aid the rebels had resulted in the termination of the practice, at least among members of the Council.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>290</sup>CSPF, 8:502.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid., 8:502-3. 17 July 1568.

<sup>292</sup>Kervyn de Lettenhove, 5:129. Windebank to Cecil, 18 July 1568.

<sup>293</sup>CSPS, 2:59. 17 July 1568.

<sup>294</sup>Ibid., 2:59-60. 19 July 1568.

<sup>295</sup>Ibid.

The proclamation was printed on July 18, but not published until July 22. This made the ambassador feel that the English delayed publication in order to allow time for the rebels to sail. In this proclamation Elizabeth informed the people that De Silva had informed her of the evil-disposed and rebellious Flemish exiles who returned to the Low Countries to commit many robberies, spoils, and murders. She had previously given orders to the officers of all the ports near the Low Countries to investigate the situation, and not to allow any Dutch rebels to return to cause trouble. At the Spanish ambassador's insistence, she then decided to publish the orders in a more general and more effective manner. The ambassador had been informed that many exiles were about to embark secretly to make war on the coastal town, therefore, Elizabeth prohibited any Flemish exile with "apparent suspicion of rebellion against Philip, or of the committing or intention to commit any murder or robbery" from either landing in England or leaving England, if already there. She also refused to allow anyone to leave England armed unless they gave sure evidence that they were armed to protect merchant vessels or to apprehend pirates.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>296</sup>Hughes and Larking, 2:296-97.

De Silva reported to Philip that the publication of this edict had helped cool the rebel's zeal, as did the Duke of Alba's success in Friesland and St. Valery. No longer were the exiles going to Flanders in groups or in any way in violation of the proclamation, but a few still found ways to go over. The Spanish diplomat had "pressed for this edict, but it was mainly in order that these people should not openly appear so indifferent," rather than because he thought it would be a real remedy. Although De Silva felt that public ordinances in England were often counteracted by private understandings, he had the ports watched closely and concluded that the English were being vigilant in this matter.<sup>297</sup>

Religious dogmatism added another dimension to the challenge of a sixteenth-century ambassador, and this experience illustrates that a Catholic ambassador had to ask a Protestant court to go against their natural desires to help their fellow Protestants. This seems to be one instance in which the Spanish ambassador did show that he had some skill in negotiating, and it happened to be when he became much more insistent. Perhaps if he had abandoned much earlier in his mission what he considered his "normal manner" of working, he would have been more successful.

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<sup>297</sup> CSPS, 2:62-3. De Silva to Philip, 31 July 1568.

## CHAPTER 7

### CALMING TROUBLED WATERS

Philip considered one of his most important duties to be the preservation of the Catholic faith. From the very beginning of De Silva's mission, the king was intensely interested in his former Catholic subjects in England. He instructed his ambassador:

Although, as you know, many of the English people are depraved and have abandoned our holy and only true ancient Catholic religion, still God has been pleased to preserve many who maintain it in all its purity, and are sincerely determined to die for it if necessary. These people should be encouraged and supported, and I enjoin you to do this whenever you can, and at the same time to endeavour to keep them in the good will and devotion which I understand they display towards us. This, however, must be done with such secrecy, dissimulation and dexterity as to give no cause for suspicion to the Queen or her advisers, as it is evident that much evil might follow if the contrary were the case.<sup>298</sup>

One of the monarch's major concerns was for certain Catholic prelates who had been imprisoned for religious reasons. Don Diego was told to ascertain their condition, and to endeavor to have them well treated. The king also wanted him to determine the feasibility of having Elizabeth

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<sup>298</sup>CSPS, 1:352. Instructions from Philip to De Silva, 19 January 1564.

designate one church in each town where Catholics could hear Mass. He reasoned that even the infidel Turk allowed Christians to worship God in their own way, and a Christian queen should be willing to grant as much. Philip also instructed the ambassador to approach Elizabeth with the request that English Catholics not be forced to follow Anglicanism. And he was also to obtain all possible information on heretics in England, the Low Countries, and Spain which he would forward to the Inquisitor General.<sup>299</sup>

The Spanish ambassador found Catholicism to be a very touchy subject and did not dare approach Elizabeth about it, but because of information he received from Catholics, he feared that winter would be an especially difficult time for imprisoned Catholic prelates. He reasoned that a letter from Philip might mitigate the harsh treatment they would receive. The king had an undated letter prepared and forwarded so that his diplomat could use it whenever he thought best. But as the weeks passed, the ambassador found no opportunity to use it. Finally, in November, Don Diego saw an opportunity and had the letter dated ready to be given to the queen, but before he could give it to her, the English had voluntarily eased the harsh treatment of the prelates. De Silva decided to withhold it for another opportunity.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>300</sup> CDI, 89:62. De Silva to Philip, 27 November 1564.



But he never used the letter, because he seemed to be unwilling to trouble the calm waters at court.

De Silva did not feel that the time was right to approach the queen and ask her to designate a church in each city where Catholics could celebrate Mass. So Philip ordered him to make the request at the time and juncture he considered most opportune, and not before.<sup>301</sup> The ambassador even discussed religion with the queen, but apparently did not ever dare bring up the subject of the churches.<sup>302</sup>

De Silva felt that Dudley, who had the support of the English Catholic party, would be the one to approach about the imprisoned Catholic prelates. In October, just after the English had imprisoned another prelate, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London during Mary's reign, the ambassador told Dudley that he must be careful to maintain Catholic support, for if he ever lost their support he would have none from anyone at all. He could not allow more Catholics like Bonner to be imprisoned and still expect to retain Catholic support. Though Dudley seemed favorably impressed with De Silva's words, he promised nothing. Nevertheless, he informed the Spanish diplomat that the action against Bishop Bonner had resulted from

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<sup>301</sup>CSPS, 1:384. Philip to De Silva, 7 October 1564.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid., 1:387. De Silva to Philip, 9 October 1564.

Bonner's indiscrete statements about Elizabeth. Because of this the ambassador advised all English Catholics to avoid any occasion for such accusations, and advised them to treat with moderation and reserve matters that were not against their consciences. He also sent word to Bonner offering his help as circumstances permitted.<sup>303</sup>

The Spanish ambassador then settled into a routine of reporting the great increase in the number of Catholics in England, the certain downfall of the heretics there, and the circulation of pro-Catholic books throughout the country. All of this information, though taken from questionable Catholic sources, thrilled Philip, who again admonished his ambassador to carefully strengthen and encourage the Catholic party.<sup>304</sup> However, it is difficult to see that De Silva was doing anything significant, since for over two years, the Spanish ambassador failed to describe any action he had taken in these matters. The evidence shows that he put forth no effort in these affairs.

As seen previously, the Protestant rioting that broke out in 1566 on a mass scale in the Low Countries worried De Silva. When Elizabeth asked him about the situation, he explained that the riots were of small consequence, since they would shortly be squelched, and

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<sup>303</sup>CDI, 89:50-51. De Silva to Philip, 14 October 1564.

<sup>304</sup>CSPS, 1:432. Philip to De Silva, 6 June 1565.

that all Protestants were alike, because they cared nothing for God or law. He suggested to her that all princes everywhere combine to eradicate militant Protestantism.<sup>305</sup> Again the ambassador spoke only in general terms that did not lead to any action by either side, nor did the diplomat ever suggest a specific action.

In January 1567, De Silva relayed some rumors to the effect that heretical books "by the ton" were being introduced into Spain and that they were accompanied by heretical preachers who disguised themselves as monks. Thus he fulfilled a part of his obligation to supply intelligence concerning Protestant activities in Spain.<sup>306</sup> But it was not until near the end of his mission that he came near to being involved in the Catholic cause. The English arrested a Catholic priest named Wilson, who was soliciting money in England to help English Catholic exiles in Louvain. When he was arrested, Wilson carried a list in cipher of donor's names. His torture and confession led to the arrest and punishment of two notable gentlemen, one of whom was William Roper, Sir Thomas More's son-in-law.<sup>307</sup> The Spanish ambassador was not implicated in this affair, but was surprised that Wilson had not come to him, because

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<sup>305</sup>Ibid., 1:566, 577.

<sup>306</sup>Ibid., 1:612. De Silva to Philip, 18 January 1567.

<sup>307</sup>CSPD, 1:311.

he was one of those who had recommended this activity and had promised to do his part.<sup>308</sup> In this affair it seems that De Silva was more talk than action, since his name was not on Wilson's list of donors. If he ever gave money to any Catholics, he carefully concealed record of it.

The other incident that could have led Elizabeth to demand De Silva's withdrawal occurred in November 1567. When the Spanish ambassador illegally allowed English Catholics to attend Mass in his house, some royally appointed English commissioners arrested and imprisoned six of them. The day the six were sent to prison, Cecil confronted the diplomat and accused him of inviting an estimated two thousand Englishmen to attend Mass at his residence. Don Diego admitted that many foreigners attended Mass there, and perhaps even some curious Englishmen happened along, but he denied having invited them. The situation was serious enough that he assured Cecil that he would close his chapel doors to all Englishmen and open them only to foreigners.<sup>309</sup> In such a delicate matter De Silva buckled under the pressure.

A little more than two months later, the Spanish ambassador asked that Philip withdraw him from England. He mentioned his health as one of the important reasons

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<sup>308</sup> CSPS, 2:17. De Silva to Philip, 27 March 1568.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 1:686-87. De Silva to Philip, 1 December 1567.

for his request, but his chief complaint seemed to be religious.

I do not wonder that they are discontented with me in religious matters, as I am with them, and this is a grave inconvenience for those of us who live here, on account of the danger to which it exposes our household, who are exposed for a long time to the consequences of so much freedom and bad conversation. This gives great and constant anxiety to those who are responsible for them, because the failure to attend regularly at church and perform the sacred offices and duties cools devotion and causes thereby a greater fall still, and for this reason, the long continued residence of the ministers in this country is a matter to be deeply considered. I have therefore decided humbly to pray your Majesty, if there is any other place where I could serve you, even though the care and labour be greater, you will design to send me there...<sup>310</sup>

It seems that herein lay the secret to De Silva's success in completing a four-year mission while both his predecessor and successor lost their influence at court because of religious intrigues. Even though he was a very staunch Catholic and often lamented the fact that there were so many arch-heretics in England, he did not get involved in religious matters. He kept Philip informed, but when it came to really pushing the Catholic cause, he did not do it. In effect, he did not carry out Philip's desires with regard to Catholics. He accomplished nothing substantial for the Catholics during his mission. But on the other hand, he was able to maintain good relations in England for four years.

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<sup>310</sup>Ibid., 2:10. De Silva to Philip, 21 February 1568.

In an age of religious dogmatism, an ambassador was faced with religious challenges that greatly affected the success of his mission. It is instructive to view a Catholic ambassador's work in a Protestant country, especially when others before and after him became embroiled in religious difficulties. De Silva had to face the challenge of his own feelings toward those he considered heretics. He had to continue his own devotion to the faith of his youth under adverse circumstances. And he had to try and help those he considered true brothers as they encountered difficulties. He also became the focus of the English and Spanish Catholic hope to bring England back to Catholicism; and amid all of this, he had to carry on his work as resident ambassador.

An event that threatened Philip's royal dignity occurred on January 18, 1568, when Philip and others entered into his son's chamber late at night and placed him under arrest. Elizabeth received the news by way of her resident ambassador in Madrid, John Man, who recited the event and added the rumor that Don Carlos had plotted his father's death.<sup>311</sup> Soon all Europe was engulfed in rumors about the affair. The queen received her information one month after the incident, even before De Silva had

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<sup>311</sup>CSPF, 8:399. Man to Cecil, 19 January 1568.

received instructions from his king. So when Elizabeth inquired after the incident, he could only manifest a disbelief in the rumor that Don Carlos had sought to take the life of his own father.<sup>312</sup>

Ruy Gomez de Silva, Prince of Eboli, and one of Philip's chief ministers, informed John Man that the king had come to the conclusion that he had suffered enough of the disorderly and disobedient actions of Don Carlos. The Catholic king knew he was responsible for the education and reformation of his heir, so for the sake of the Spanish throne, he had his son arrested.<sup>313</sup> Philip also wrote to the pope and justified his actions, explaining that the detention was

not the passion nor the fault of the prince, nor any intention on my part to chastise or correct him, for if this had been my motive I would have taken other measures, without going to this extreme.... But since for my sins, it has been God's will that the prince should have such great and numerous defects, partly mental, partly due to his physical condition, utterly lacking as he is in the qualifications necessary for ruling, I saw the grave risks which would arise were he to be given the succession and the obvious dangers which would accrue; and therefore, after long and careful consideration and having tried every alternative in vain, it was clear that there was little or no prospect of his condition improving in time to

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<sup>312</sup>CSPS, 2:6. De Silva to Philip, 16 February 1568.

<sup>313</sup>CSPF, 8:405. Man to Cecil, 28 January 1568.

prevent the evils which could reasonably be foreseen. In short, my decision was necessary.<sup>314</sup>

This information must have been very similar to that which De Silva was asked, in February 1568, to communicate to the queen. The ambassador requested and immediately was granted audience with Elizabeth during which he carefully explained the entire affair. Whether or not he had any great influence in the matter is difficult to determine, but when he had done his duty, the queen was satisfied with the information. She only wished that Philip had supplied more details in order to combat suspicions and gossip. The ambassador told her that no father liked to confess the excesses of his son, and Philip had written a minimal statement, proving to the world that he had not used any excessive harshness.<sup>315</sup>

The matter, which passed without further discussion, was perhaps only a minor incident. But for the king, it concerned his honor and dignity; therefore, he made certain that his side of the story was well known. When Don Carlos died in prison in June 1568, very little was said in England. De Silva's replacement, Don Guerau de Spes, reported that before De Silva left London, he had satisfactorily informed

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<sup>314</sup>Philip II to Pius V, 9 May 1568, as cited in Lynch, 1:179.

<sup>315</sup>CSPS, 2:8. De Silva to Philip, 21 February 1568.



the queen of the prince's death.<sup>316</sup> The entire affair was more of a personal matter than one of great international significance, but apparently De Silva carried out his assignment well. It was an incident that could have caused Elizabeth to lose confidence in the king.

The John Man affair, the most difficult situation of De Silva's entire mission, happened near the end of his mission. John Man, dean of Gloucester and master of Merton College, was sent to Spain by Elizabeth early in 1566 as her resident ambassador. The Earl of Arundel warned the Spanish ambassador that Man was a man of low position and small merits, a bad and unworthy ambassador.<sup>317</sup> Don Diego informed his king of Arundel's character evaluation of Man, and thus set the stage for his reception in Spain.

Man arrived in Spain in March 17, 1566, and two years later was expelled from the Spanish court. Elizabeth received the first intimations of trouble from Man's secretary in February 1568, when the secretary arrived in London with news that Philip did not allow Man to hold Protestant services in his own house, but forced the Englishman and his staff to hear Mass. So the queen and Cecil calmly approached the Spanish ambassador with a

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<sup>316</sup>Ibid., 2:70. De Spes to Philip, 6 September 1568.

<sup>317</sup>CDI, 89:271. De Silva to Philip, 11 February 1566.

request that he urge the king that Man not be mistreated or forced to hear Mass, but that he be permitted to perform his own Protestant services. If Philip refused this request, Elizabeth would have no alternative but to recall her ambassador. The Spanish ambassador promised to write the letter, which he did.<sup>318</sup>

Philip denied that Man and his household had been forced to attend Mass, but insisted instead that they had voluntarily attended a Catholic Mass, disturbed it, and had been expelled. Philip accused Man of other acts offensive to himself. When Man arrived in Madrid, Philip had warned him to walk circumspectly and make no religious innovations. But Philip claimed that Man had conspicuously and frequently overstepped his bounds: he had scoffed at a religious procession held for the queen's health; at a dinner in the presence of many Spaniards, he had upheld the French Huguenots over Philip; and he had said that the Pope was nothing but a canting little monk. Moreover, he had proselyted among the king's vassals. Philip stressed the fact that it was only out of respect for Elizabeth that he had not turned Man over to the Inquisition to be burned--a punishment Philip felt he truly deserved. The king, suspecting that Man was acting under orders from England, refused to have anything more to do with him

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<sup>318</sup> CSPS, 2:9. De Silva to Philip, 21 February 1568.

and expelled him to Barajas, a small village two leagues from Madrid. He wanted Elizabeth to send another ambassador, to assure friendly relations between England and Spain.<sup>319</sup>

Philip explained more of his feelings on the matter to his ambassador in Rome when he wrote that Man was guilty of conduct unfit for an ambassador. The English resident did not pay due respect to religion, nor did he duly venerate Rome, and he contaminated others at court with his Protestant heresy. The overwhelming influence that Catholicism held on Philip was evident when he wrote: "Nothing in the world, however great, no consideration however grave, shall ever make me waver in the slightest degree in my determination to avoid the least offence to God Almighty; whose service and the observance of whose holy faith I place before all my interests and acts, and prefer to everything in this life even my own existence."<sup>320</sup>

Elizabeth, very upset when she received the news that Man had been expelled from court, immediately called upon the Spanish ambassador to explain Man's offenses. She viewed his alleged offenses as insignificant, but De Silva informed her that such offenses were very serious

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<sup>319</sup>Ibid., 2:18-19. Philip to De Silva, 6 April 1568.

<sup>320</sup>CDI, 2:29-30. De Silva to Philip, 11 May 1568.

in Spain under the Inquisition, and the best way to handle the matter was to recall Man and send another ambassador. Elizabeth informed the diplomat that she considered Man a very fit ambassador, one more Catholic than Protestant, and she would not, therefore, condemn him without a hearing. If after a fair trial she found him guilty of any misconduct, she would replace him according to Don Diego's request.<sup>321</sup>

Nearly two weeks after Elizabeth had first approached the Spanish ambassador about the affair, Cecil, in a fit of rage, called it a pretext for international war. The diplomat described his own tact by relating how, with a hug and a smile, he had calmed the secretary and affirmed that Man's offenses were real and extraordinary. The English council believed that Man was not guilty and that Philip was simply believing lies and prejudicial reports from De Silva, Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, the Count of Feria, who was a former Spanish ambassador to England, and others.<sup>322</sup>

The queen ordered Man's recall in June, "without any meaning to condemn you or to prejudice you until we may hear your answers."<sup>323</sup> Still believing in his own

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<sup>321</sup>CSPS, 2:29-30. De Silva to Philip, 11 May 1568.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid., 2:37. De Silva to Philip, 24 May 1568.

innocence, Man, the last English resident ambassador to Spain for 35 years, left Spain upon receipt of Elizabeth's orders. Shortly after De Silva left England in September 1568, Man, though very sick, had an audience with the queen, who completely exonerated him of any blame. Later when Guerau de Spes, Don Diego's replacement, got involved in anti-English plots, Elizabeth refused to see him. Philip could say nothing because of the precedent he had set in the treatment of Man. The English again used the Man affair as a precedent when they expelled the Spanish ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza.<sup>324</sup>

This was a very important affair in foreign relations between England and Spain. De Silva's part in it was mainly one of passing on information as tactfully and convincingly as he could. It is difficult to determine what effect he had, but it is clear that open hostilities did not erupt between Spain and England while De Silva was in London.

These three events show that a sixteenth-century diplomat had to face a variety of challenges. In order to calm the troubled waters at court, he had to deal with religious differences both in England and in Spain. The

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<sup>324</sup>Gary M. Bell, "John Man: The Last Elizabethan Resident Ambassador in Spain," The Sixteenth Century Journal 7 (October 1976):91-92. Bell believes that Man was definitely not guilty and that Elizabeth had purposefully sent him to cause a diplomatic rupture between England and Spain.

difficulties were further compounded when an ambassador was expelled from the Spanish court. These things also concerned the personal honor of a king who viewed himself as somewhat responsible for the maintenance of the Catholic cause in the world. The challenges were many, varied, and difficult for any ambassador.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSIONS

The mission of Don Diego Guzman de Silva to England has been neglected by historians over the years. Other than brief mentions of his apparent success, only one-third of one book was about the ambassador. This book did not focus on the mission of De Silva, but on foreign relations between Spain and England during his embassy. There has been a need to fill this void. De Silva has always been considered very successful. Historians that mention him in passing have noted that, while other Spanish residents got into tremendous difficulties in England, De Silva did not. They concluded that he was successful as an ambassador.

This study concludes that De Silva's mission was successful in some ways but not in others. There is a need to understand the challenges he faced and how well he met them. As a gatherer and supplier of information, he was adequate. As an evaluator of both information and people, he was also adequate. He fulfilled his main responsibilities well, but in some other areas he performed not quite as well.

As he attempted to influence English policy, he met with much failure. For instance, he did influence Elizabeth and her council to stop some piracy and punish some pirates, but he did not obtain his ultimate goal of clearing the seas of pirates. He did not have any influence on Elizabeth's marriage games. He did not induce the queen to treat the Scottish affairs as he desired. These matters were all much too big for the ambassador. Piracy was too important to certain high-ranking and official English families. Elizabeth wanted no interference in her own personal affairs. And Mary Stuart got into so much difficulty that no one could prevent disaster.

De Silva was not as successful as most historians have supposed. The fact that he was able to maintain his office for four years is cited as evidence of his success. But his ability to maintain his position stems mainly from his tolerant and tactful attitude. This seems to be the factor that pleased both Philip and Elizabeth. He knew when to play his hand, which he did not do much in the four years, and when to forebear. Thus Elizabeth was not pushed and goaded by a dogmatic Spanish ambassador. Besides this, his personal charm allowed him to build and maintain friendships at court which allowed him the limited success he did have.



There were also reasons why Elizabeth wanted to maintain close contact with Spain. The value of the Netherlands trade to England, the possibility of a Catholic league against England, and the increasing strength of France all made it desirable that she not come to blows with the most powerful Catholic king. De Silva was the kind of ambassador who made it easier to maintain good relations. He was even able to smooth over some rough spots in the relations between the two countries.

It would be interesting to expand this topic by studying both the earlier and later life of the Spanish ambassador. It remains to be seen why Philip chose a canon of Toledo to assume such an important but difficult position in England. It would also be interesting to view De Silva's actions as Spanish resident in Venice. There is much more to learn about the man's life in order to increase our understanding of him.

What was De Silva's legacy? Perhaps Elizabeth expected his replacement to be as "diplomatic" as he, but in this she was disappointed. De Spes quickly embroiled himself in Catholic intrigues and lost his influence at court. A pusher like De Spes was an affront to the queen and her courtiers who had become accustomed to dealing with an easy-going diplomat for four years.

A gap in the existing knowledge of sixteenth-century diplomacy has now been partially filled. Don

Diego Guzman de Silva's greatest assets were his diplomatic personality and his ability to keep Philip well informed. But he was not as successful as he has been viewed in the past.

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DON DIEGO GUZMAN DE SILVA: SPANISH AMBASSADOR  
IN ENGLAND, 1564-1568

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ABSTRACT

A resident ambassador in the late sixteenth century faced many challenges, among which were: gathering, evaluating, and relaying useful information; performing negotiations on behalf of his principal; and calming troubled waters at the foreign court. The way in which he faced these challenges determined the extent of the ambassador's success.

Don Diego Guzman de Silva, Spanish ambassador in England from 1564-1568, faced these challenges and others because he was a staunch Catholic at a Protestant court. Although he was able to maintain his position at court for four years, he was not totally successful. He forwarded much useful and correct information to Philip II, King of Spain, and helped maintain good relations between the English and Spanish courts. Yet he was unable to accomplish anything significant while negotiating to stop piracy or to restore trade between England and the Low Countries.

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