INFORMATION, INTELLIGENCE AND NEGOTIATION
IN THE WEST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC WORLD,
1558-1588

Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the Reformation world that helped to create and solidify many of our modern diplomatic institutions, including concepts concerning resident embassies, ambassadors’ duties, and internationally recognized diplomatic privileges. In the early sixteenth century, Western European governments took hesitant steps toward implementing Italian models of diplomatic discourse developed in the previous century. The advent of the Reformation halted this progression and ultimately caused the early Reformation monarchs to abandon this experiment. Their successors revived the practice the middle of the sixteenth century because of financial constraints; the medieval preference for war instead of diplomacy could no longer be indulged because the key states of Western Europe—England, France and Spain—all verged on bankruptcy and faced internal turmoil caused in large part by the Reformation.

The resurgence of diplomacy in Europe after the ratification of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559 demonstrated the vital importance of information to the nascent diplomatic system. The need to control all stages of the information cycle—its acquisition, dissemination and utilization—crossed national, religious, political, social and cultural lines. Without accurate and reliable information, governments could not succeed at international negotiations and protect national interests. The logistical limitations of the new practice virtually guaranteed that each nation developed strikingly
similar methods of accomplishing their goals, regardless of their political structures or religious position. Ambassadors and governments collected information from their sources, dispatched it through networks of couriers, and utilized it to the best extent possible in their negotiations. This dissertation explores the logistics and processes used to accomplish these goals from a multi-national perspective. It argues that these governments engaged in vital and increasingly prominent forms of diplomatic discourse, and that they endured despite the polarizing impact of the Reformation.
DEDICATION

To Adam

With whom every day is an adventure
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Out of necessity, anyone writing a history of Reformation Europe encounters the diverse and scattered sources found in multiple archives across the continent. This work would not have been possible without the generous support of many individuals and institutions. Several research trips were required to assemble the materials for this project. Grants from the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, the Department of History, and the Office of International Affairs at The Ohio State University, combined with a Presidential Fellowship and two fellowships from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, provided the support required to undertake the research and writing for this work.

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<td>AGS Estado</td>
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<td>AHN</td>
<td>Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Spain</td>
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<td>British Library, Additional Manuscripts</td>
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<td>BL Cotton</td>
<td>British Library, Cotton Collection</td>
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<td>BNF FF</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds français</td>
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<td>BNM</td>
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<td>CUL</td>
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Digges  Dudley Digges, ed. The Compleat Ambassador: or two Treaties of the Intended Marriage of Queen Elizabeth of Glorious Memory: Comprised in Letters of Negotiation of Sir Francis Walsingham, her Resident in France... London: Thomas Newcomb, 1655.

Forbes  Patrick Forbes, ed. A Full View of the Public Transactions of Queen Elizabeth, or a Particular Account of all the Memorable Affairs of that Queen. 2 vols. London: J. Bettenham, 1740-1.

IDAN  Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais, Lisbon, Portugal


NA  National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom


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A NOTE ON DATES, NAMES AND PLACES

All names, regardless of their origin, are given in the English style; thus, “Henri II” is “Henry II,” and “Felipe II” is “Philip II,” unless the original name has translated into common English usage, such as “Don Carlos.” Their titles are also rendered in English. Likewise, I have used the established English version of a foreign place name, such as Vienna or Brussels, unless the original language name is accepted in common use.

All dates are rendered according to the old-style Gregorian Calendar, to which most of Europe subscribed until the early 1580s, rather than the Julian version followed by the English. Thus, all years are assumed to begin on 1 January rather than 25 March, as in England at the time. Dates are rendered according to the new-style Gregorian calendar after the national (or regional) adoption of the model in October 1582.
Introduction: Far-Reaching plans and Fiscal Realities

In his 1955 landmark work *Renaissance Diplomacy* Garrett Mattingly argued that, “the religious wars nearly wrecked the diplomatic institutions with which Europe had been trying to adjust its quarrels. As long as conflicts between states are about prestige or profit or power, grounds of agreement are always accessible to sane men. But the clash of ideological absolutes drives diplomacy from the field.”¹ In a later article, Mattingly added that “throughout the second half of the sixteenth century diplomacy declined because an ideological issue, the difference between Catholic and Protestants, divided into two camps more bitterly irreconcilable and more firmly aligned than any that had ever rallied between Habsburg and Valois.”²

Is this true? In his 1974 article “French Diplomacy and the Wars of Religion,” De Lamar Jensen demonstrated that, contrary to Mattingly’s argument, during Catherine de Medici’s regency French diplomatic activity with Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims steadily increased between 1559 and 1589.³ During Catherine de Medici’s regency, the French maintained, on average, at least a dozen resident ambassadors. The French government even bowed to the religious issue when selecting representatives; Catherine’s ambassador to the Swiss, Jean Hotman, who served in a variety of capacities for both her

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and Henry IV, was an avowed and public Calvinist.\textsuperscript{4} Surveys of the surviving English primary sources prove that the volume of diplomatic correspondence between the government and its representatives increased dramatically under Elizabeth I.\textsuperscript{5} Philip II utilized many of the networks established by his father Charles V and maintained steady representation at more than half a dozen different courts. These governments reciprocated by sending their own representatives, and there were at least ten ambassadors stationed in Madrid at any given time during Philip’s reign. At first glance Mattingly’s argument holds true for England, as by 1559 London lacked an ambassador from both Rome and Venice, and Elizabeth refused to send a resident ambassador to either city. However, despite their obvious religious differences, all three parties made several separate overtures about resuming diplomatic relations. Nor did the absence of an ambassador indicate the absence of diplomacy, as these religious differences did not prevent diplomatic negotiations from taking place between these states in a third location. The English ambassador in France conducted negotiations with representatives from several Italian states, including Florence and Venice, in addition to his primary duties, and maintained contact with the papal nuncio.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{5} In R. B. Wernham’s \textit{The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1558-1603}, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 1, Wernham noted that while he hesitated to describe the remarkable shifts in Elizabethan foreign policy as a “diplomatic revolution,” because “historians have invented more than enough Tudor revolutions anyway,” he acknowledged that there was some value in the term, for the Elizabethan practice of diplomacy not only reversed a standing alliance (that with Spain against France) but reflected an increasing reliance on diplomacy rather than war to handle matters of foreign policy.
\textsuperscript{6} The English ambassador in France also met with the diplomats from Rome and Venice—both states had withdrawn their ambassadors in London at the start of Elizabeth I’s reign in 1558. The English reciprocated, and for the remainder of Elizabeth’s reign all negotiations between them took place either through special envoys or in a third location, despite repeated overtures about reopening diplomatic relations. Sir Francis Walsingham’s remarkable journal recorded his meetings with diverse individuals, including the ambassadors from Venice and Rome. The original document in the hand of Walsingham’s secretary is preserved in the National Archives, Kew, as part of the Carew Papers: PRO 30/5/4 and PRO 30/5/5. Charles T. Martin published an edition of the manuscript in \textit{The Camden Miscellany}, vol. 6.
Both France and Spain, two of the greatest Catholic powers in Europe, maintained a steady stream of representatives at the English court. King Henry II dispatched an ambassador to London immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, and the French embassy stayed open through the entirety of Elizabeth's reign. Philip II only closed the Spanish embassy after his final ambassador was expelled from England in 1584 for his involvement in several plots against the government. The French maintained intermittent diplomatic contact with the Scottish government after Mary Stuart’s abdication despite the reforming trends of the regency government. The French, Spanish and English all sent diplomatic envoys to the Ottomans; after the initial successes of the Muscovy Company, Elizabeth also authorized an agent to open negotiations with the Russian tsar.

The spread of the Reformation after 1520 irrevocably altered the diplomatic stage on which the leaders of Western Europe played. It transformed, but did not destroy, the new initiatives of international discourse imported from Italy. Most Renaissance monarchs had relied on wars primarily to settle conflicts: normally, they used diplomacy to end wars, not to prevent them. In the first decades of the sixteenth century, these monarchs took hesitant steps toward implementing the Italian models by opening embassies and maintaining resident ambassadors at different courts. The spread of the Reformation, however, changed this: Charles V, Francis I and Henry VIII, and their contemporaries reverted to what Mattingly termed the “personal diplomacy of

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7 Although there were breaks in the presence of a resident ambassador (such as the periods after the death of Alvaro de Quadra, Bishop of Aquila, in 1563 or the expulsion of Don Guerau de Spes in 1571), both France and Spain maintained an embassy with a staff and a chargé d’affaires. The English used several semi-official agents in Madrid to handle trade and other issues after the expulsion of Dr. John Man in 1568, and dispatched several special ambassadors to Madrid.
sovereigns,” characterized by summits between the rulers themselves rather than relying on the services of career diplomats. Yet by the mid-sixteenth century, with Protestants controlling much of the British Isles, northern Germany, Sweden, and portions of Switzerland, and significant minorities in much of the Holy Roman Empire and France, both Catholic and Protestant rulers turned to diplomacy instead of war or personal summits as a way of handling conflicts. The later half of the sixteenth century saw far fewer meetings between royalty, and none matching the scope and grandeur of earlier summits such as the famed Field of the Cloth of Gold conference between Henry VIII and Francis I in 1520.

The brutal financial truths of the mid-sixteenth century helped to spark this transformation. When speaking as Peace in his celebrated work The Complaint of Peace, in 1517 Erasmus challenged early modern rulers to “consider then what you would expend on war and if you find that peace would have cost you more than a tenth of that expense, then I will willingly allow you to do away with me wherever you will.” Early Reformation monarchs, to whom Erasmus had dedicated his work, ignored this advice in favor of pursuing the medieval ideals of glory, honor and prestige won on the field of battle. Unfortunately for Charles V, Francis I and Henry VIII, this overwhelming desire came at a crippling price. Rapid changes in the Art of War (a military revolution or revolutions, depending on the source) guaranteed that sixteenth-century wars would cost

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9 One of the most prominent meetings occurred in the summer of 1565 between the French and Spanish at Bayonne, although Philip II did not attend. He sent his wife Elisabeth de Valois, who met with her mother Catherine de Medici. The Duke of Alba handled most of the discussions with the French in Philip’s place.
much more than their medieval predecessors.¹¹ More than two hundred fifty years later, Samuel Johnson suggested that, “whatever you have, spend less,” and early Reformation rulers would have benefited from following this paradigm.¹² Unfortunately, they did not. Charles V exercised all open avenues—and developed new ones—to finance his incessant wars with Francis I; as a result, when he abdicated in 1556 he left his son Philip II verging on bankruptcy.¹³ The treasuries of France and England lay as bare, ravaged by war and a succession of poor harvests.

**Wars of Words**

When peace did return to Western Europe with the ratification of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, it came not because of higher goals or lofty ideals, but largely because of finance; something that Erasmus had recognized fully more than forty years before Philip II, Henry II and Elizabeth I ratified the treaty. England, France and Spain had fought themselves to a standstill, and now needed another means of interaction. In the temporary, forced absence of war, they looked toward embassies, staffed by resident ambassadors, rather than personal diplomacy or “summits” to control international relations. Financial exhaustion after more than a generation of war left the governments

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of the mid-sixteenth century paralyzed, and limited the options of later sixteenth century
monarchs to deal with the ramifications of the Reformation. Without funds to pay their
armies and navies, for the moment, war was no longer a viable policy option for
international relations. Rulers simply could not afford to wage war on the scale of their
predecessors.

Each of these three countries—the premier powers of Western Europe—faced
internal and external conflicts that further undermined any intentions of waging war
against one another. Spain’s conflicts with the Ottoman Empire preoccupied Philip II,
and while he could fund one war, he could not finance two—especially not once revolt
broke out in the Low Countries in 1566. In France, the advent of religious civil war
shattered its wealth and stability for more than a generation. Under Elizabeth, England
could not afford to wage war on the level of its continental neighbors since the military
efforts of her predecessors had weakened both the English economy and the state’s
finances. Philip II’s top priority remained suppressing the Dutch Revolt and defeating the
Turks in the Mediterranean; Elizabeth concentrated on preserving her throne; successive
Valois monarchs stumbled from one civil war to another for more than three decades.
Nevertheless, war between the three countries remained a constant threat: these
governments came to the brink of war a half dozen times between 1559 and 1588.

For many monarchs, diplomacy served as a court of last resort, one to be used
only when traditional medieval methods of interaction failed, and one characterized by
wars of words rather than ones of arms. The weapons employed to engage in this new
combat transformed from longbows, arquebuses and pikes into quiet conversations,
audiences, memoranda, dispatches, and letters. Battles were waged at court, in embassies,
presence chambers, darkened hallways, taverns, on the roads and innumerable secret locations, rather than on the field between two armies. The wars were fought all across Europe and between people of different religions, classes, nationalities and genders. Traditional alliances, new religious allegiances, and current political aims all meshed together as governments fought to use diplomatic interactions to protect and further national interests. Conducted simultaneously on multiple social and political levels, the practice was at once loathed and desired because of the multitude of unforeseeable and uncontrollable variables that could produce all sorts of outcomes. These governments viewed diplomacy as a series of continual negotiations that evolved constantly to accommodate new situations and new needs, rather than as a set practice. Hopefully, they would serve as methods of resolving particular issues of contention, and as a way of maintaining constant contact, rather than devolving into a required and formulaic exchange. On the whole, the practice remained experimental throughout the mid- to late-sixteenth century, but even the recall or expulsion of an ambassador (such as that in 1568, 1571, or 1584) did not preclude negotiations from continuing through special envoys or in a different location.14

For early modern governments, just as their modern counterparts, controlling words—whether spoken or written—gave control over diplomacy. It is important to note that even the modern use of the term “diplomacy” to describe what sixteenth-century governments viewed as a fluid series of negotiations is anachronistic. Defined as “the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these

14 See for instance the documentation concerning Henry Cobham’s missions to Spain in 1571 and 1575, and the discussions taking place between English and Spanish representatives in France after the recall of the last English resident in Spain in 1568 and the expulsion of the last Spanish envoy to England in 1584.
relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys,” the first recorded use of
the terms “diplomat” and “diplomacy” in English occurred in the end of the eighteenth
and the beginning of the nineteenth century.15 The first fifteenth-century practitioners and
theorists preferred the language of the church to the vernacular, and adopted the terms
“legat” and “nuncio” to refer to the first resident diplomats, although at least one
prominent medieval theorist acknowledged that “legat” and “ambaxiator” were two
words for the same office.16 Variations of the term “ambassador” had crept into common
usage in English, French and Spanish by the conclusion of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559.
Throughout the second half of the sixteenth century it was the word used to describe most
diplomats in dispatches, letters of introduction and other memoranda, while eventually
the terms “legat” and “nuncio” were restricted to describing the Church’s diplomatic
corps. Special ambassadors were accorded different status than their counterparts, who
were described universally as “residents;” often, letters of introduction would drop the
term “ambassador” in preference for “resident.”

Both ambassadors and governments referred to the process of interactions now
termed “diplomacy,” as “negotiations.” The English “negotiations,” translated into
French as “négociations,” and Spanish as “negociacións,” became the preferred term in
all three tongues to describe diplomatic discourse. Letters of introduction presented
ambassadors to serve as the “resident” at court; written orders focused on the current
opportunity to “treat” or “negotiate.” Each series of negotiations focused on a specific
topic or set of issues, about which an ambassador would be sent instructions. Nearly
every ambassador’s initial instructions included general commands and vague language

15 Oxford English Dictionary Online.
16 See Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, 29.
ordering the envoy to preserve and further a sense of amity, providing the justification for maintaining a continual presence at neighboring courts, rather than employing a series of special ambassadors as had been the practice in medieval diplomatic discourse.

Issues of language presented innumerable obstacles—and opportunities—as the use of Latin declined gradually in favor of the vernacular in verbal diplomatic discourse and documents.\textsuperscript{17} Most monarchs had at least a basic command of Latin, and at times relied on the language of the church for initial meetings or formal negotiations; Queen Elizabeth’s famous extemporaneous speech to the Polish ambassador in 1597 is merely one example.\textsuperscript{18} Formal letters between monarchs still employed Latin on a regular basis, but French grew in popularity, and some monarchs began to dispatch letters in French rather than in Latin.

The replacement of Latin with the vernacular tongues opened new windows in communications, as early modern courts grew as hubs of international communications, commerce and diplomacy. Fifteenth-century advice literature recommended that a resident ambassador have at least a rudimentary comprehension of the language spoken at his host court, in order to better discharge his duties.\textsuperscript{19} Unfortunately, many ambassadors failed to heed this counsel. Few French or Spanish residents in England ever mastered the English tongue, and often relied on members of the embassy staff who resided there

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{17} See Anthony Grafton, \textit{Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West}, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), chs. 1-2, for a treatment of the scholarly use of Latin in the early modern period.  
\textsuperscript{18} For information on Elizabeth’s speech to the Polish ambassador, see Janet M. Green, “Queen Elizabeth I’s Latin Reply to the Polish Ambassador,” in \textit{The Sixteenth Century Journal}, vol. 31, no 4 (Winter, 2000), 987-1008.  
\textsuperscript{19} See Mattingly’s discussion of Bernard du Rosier’s textbook “Short Treatise About Ambassadors,” in \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy}, 28-30.}
permanently to handle routine matters, or else employed a translator. French and Latin functioned as common languages for most ambassadors, especially when two foreign envoys met at court or to discuss a particular issue.

For diplomats sent to France, meeting the language requirement was often easier than most, although in some cases ambassadors failed to have the required facility in French to use it in discourse with their hosts, or some government officials wanted to have a native speaker in residence. In a February 1563 letter to the new resident ambassador Sir Thomas Smith, Queen Elizabeth’s Secretary of State Sir William Cecil addressed the matter of language. In order to better negotiate with the French representatives at Elizabeth’s court, Cecil wrote that while he “hath lerned to understand French very well, I am desyrous to have some honest qualefyed French mā[n], to attend uppō[n] them for the exercise and speche of y[r] tong[ue]. Yow can judg of my meanīg [meaning].” If possible, the new employee should be “honest in religion, cyvill in maners, lerned in some science, not unp[er]sonable,” and hopefully easy to train.21

Cecil returned to the issue of language in a letter to Smith in December 1563, when he wrote to advise Smith of the contents of the Queen’s letter of the same date. The Queen had informed Smith that, because she believed that “your knowledge in the French language doth not serve yow so well,” the Queen preferred that Smith speak “as matter of

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20 For instance, when Philip II’s ambassador Don Diego Guzmán de Silva presented his letters of introduction to Queen Elizabeth I in June 1564, the Queen, “addressing me in the Italian language said that she did not know in what tongue to speak to me.” After Guzmán replied in Latin, the two had a brief exchange, which Guzmán recorded in Latin in his dispatch to the King’s secretary Gonzalo Perez. See Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 27 June 1564, in Calendar of State Papers Spanish, 1558-1567, 364. Whenever possible, Spanish ambassadors tracked both the languages used by the Queen and her councilors and those employed by envoys sent to treat with the English. Their French and English counterparts did the same.

21 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 2 February 1563. London, the United Kingdom. The British Library (hereafter denoted as BL) : Lansdowne 102, f. 61.
treaty in the Latin tongue and not in the French tongue.”22 In his letter to Smith, Cecil confessed that while he thought “this alteratiō[n] of yowr speche…very strā[n]g,” both he and Smith had no choice but to conform with the Queen’s wishes, as the Queen believed it to be advantageous to the current negotiations with the French over the Treaty of Troyes.23

The meshing of languages—and resulting wars of words in multiple tongues—reflected the growing use of diplomacy at multiple courts across Europe. The rise in prominence did not necessarily reflect the monarch’s personal inclinations and Protestant and Catholic councilors alike did not hesitate to suggest declaring war as a way of settling their differences, but in the absence of effective ways to finance them, the “peace party” at each court prevailed. This forced governments to maintain contact with one another to reach their international goals without armed conflict.24 Despite all the obstacles to the increased use of the new diplomacy, governments persisted—with varying rates of dedication, and also of success—in using negotiations as an active form of interaction and conflict management. Thankfully for the proponents of diplomacy at sixteenth-century courts, the creation of a new type of international discourse had its advantages: when utilized properly, this could handle matters as diverse as territory disputes in the Caribbean, trade discussions, religious matters great and small, and prevent the outbreak of ruinously expensive warfare.

22 Queen Elizabeth I to Sir Thomas Smith, 17 December 1563. Kew, the United Kingdom. National Archives (hereafter denoted as NA): SP 70/66/73.
23 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 16 December 1563. BL: Lansdowne 102, f. 46.
In the mid-sixteenth century governments’ primary response to the need for a new method of interaction lay in a growing network of diplomatic relations maintained by resident ambassadors at foreign courts, as a simultaneous method of influencing politics, preserving communications, and as a source of information about neighboring countries. Ultimately, logistics dictated the form and nature of the new diplomacy to Catholics and Protestants alike. At the heart of the system lay the government, making policy decisions; its agents abroad served as its eyes, ears, voice, and limbs on the international stage. An extensive network of royal and independent couriers functioned as the nerves, carrying the news collected in far-flung locations back to the heart and directives based on that information to the limbs. The temporary success of peace engendered by the ratification of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis allowed this method of interaction a short period in which it could flourish. The return of war to Western Europe in the end of the sixteenth century challenged the success of this system—the origin of the modern diplomatic system. Although the principal financial and policy obstacles to war persisted, by 1584-5 the will to resolve outstanding issues by diplomatic means had disappeared. Religious and political differences had hardened to the extent that diplomacy could not manage them. Governments made half-hearted efforts to maintain diplomatic contact in the years leading to the famed Armada, but these failed to prevent the return of war.

The absolute necessity of developing other methods of responding to points of conflict reinforced the vital importance of intelligence to the entire process. Without accurate, reliable sources of information and secure methods of transmission, the respective governments of England, France and Spain could not implement foreign policy decisions and maintain the delicate balancing acts required to protect national interests
during their thirty-year experiment with diplomacy. In the early modern world, information flows governed the series of negotiations that comprised international relations between the three countries, and also with their neighbors in the Holy Roman Empire, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Scotland. Unless they succeeded in the vital task of managing information—its acquisition, dissemination and utilization—governments had little chance of effectively implementing policy and achieving their goals. An efficient transmission network proved useless without news to send; similarly, an effective ambassador who collected all types of high-level of intelligence did little good for his monarch if he could not inform his government of what he had learned. The two systems were intertwined; when they functioned properly they permitted the success of the third aspect of the cycle of information—that of utilization.

A thematic study following the cycle of information through its phases—its acquisition, dissemination and utilization—allows for the exploration of this phenomenon in the world of negotiation. Each of the following chapters explores an aspect of the information cycle: chapters one, two and three focus on the primary worlds in which individuals could find intelligence: that of the ambassador, the courier, and paper. The fourth chapter, Messages, examines the medium of communication: how people at court or abroad chose to send their information. The fifth chapter, Messengers, considers how the selection and mission of the early modern courier shaped communications, with particular regard to the fundamental instability of sixteenth-century travel. The sixth chapter is a case study that examines all these phenomena in one key moment in European history. The first stages of the Dutch crisis in 1566-8 have drawn the attention of many celebrated scholars, but by examining the role of information in this period we
can see how these diverse ideas are interdependent. The study focuses not on the chain of events leading to war, but rather on how individuals from multiple countries and scattered across Europe from the North Sea to the Mediterranean accessed information, what they learned, and what use they made of their intelligence.

The importance of information in negotiations led to the creation of a new culture that crossed national, social, political and religious lines. The nature of the early modern court brought hundreds of people of all social stations together on a regular basis, facilitating the transmission of news of all kinds. In this world, those with valuable intelligence could sit at the pinnacle of the social order, or they could occupy its bottom rungs. For governments, maintaining a resident ambassador at neighboring courts offered a way to tap into this network, for he and his staff could develop all sorts of connections. Those in search of news quickly learned that an unscrupulous courier or drunken servant could be as valuable a source as a high-ranking councilor, or even a member of the royal family, and did not hesitate to cultivate these individuals as contacts. The constant pursuit of intelligence fostered relationships between individuals of all social and economic levels. National lines became blurred as the early modern court became characterized by a variety of international economic, political, religious, and social connections fostered by the new diplomatic system. A Catholic Florentine independent courier (as opposed to a royal courier working solely for one government) might know courtiers in Madrid, London, Lisbon, Rome, Edinburgh, Paris, Brussels and Venice, and carry dispatches for individuals based in still other locations.

Information became a form of currency in its own right, one that could be offered, traded or withheld for a variety of reasons. The polarizing impact of the Reformation
guaranteed that many individuals proffered their intelligence out of a sense of religious affinity, especially in states such as England, France, and Scotland in which religion became a hotly debated political issue. Catholic ambassadors from Spain and France benefited from the religious dissension in England, as did the Protestant English ambassadors in France. Other informants exchanged their intelligence out of greed; these sources could be as high as a resident ambassador trading his information for hefty sums, or as common as a freelance courier selling access to the dispatches he carried for a pittance. Motivations for the exchange of information remained as diverse as the individuals engaged in the process. Despite efforts to systematize the process of acquiring information, no government could control or predict how, where or when its agents would learn vital intelligence.25

Disseminating information further complicated the process of negotiation. Despite their best efforts, none of the states could completely control when or how they might learn new information from agents abroad. Similarly, those agents could never predict when they might receive instructions from their government. Dispatches and verbal messages carried by couriers offered the only way of maintaining contact, and had an undeniable impact on the practice of diplomacy. As Harold A. Innis noted in his 1951 work *The Bias of Communication*, “a medium of communication has an important

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influence on the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence." Inns, of course, referred to the impact of communication on the evolution of various cultural traits, but his observation is equally useful in understanding the impact of logistics and communications on early modern diplomacy.

None of the governments engaged in diplomatic negotiations could control their communications. The postal system created by the Taxis family in the early sixteenth century could not handle the rising volume of traffic caused in part by the increase of diplomatic correspondence, leading to the rise of an independent network of couriers who worked for multiple governments. Even Philip II, who inherited one of the best organized and most extensive postal networks in Europe, could not manage his communications to his satisfaction. When analyzing early modern communications Fernand Braudel memorably noted that distance is “the first enemy,” and this proved especially true when individuals tried to control or predict the flow of information in early modern diplomacy.27 One could not predict whether a letter traveling from London to Madrid would take two weeks or three months to make the voyage, or if it would ever arrive. A letter written by a king could be delayed by something as relatively minor as a courier who overslept and missed the departure of his ship, or as major as the outbreak of war. For all governments, the chronic instability of the postal system introduced another element of uncertainty in the communications process.

Ultimately, these uncertainties caused by the processes of information acquisition and dissemination could cause negotiations to falter or even fail. Policies that seemed to be an ideal response when formulated proved impossible to implement because of the complications of time and space. Quickly, governments learned that conducting steady diplomatic relations required them to deal in probabilities rather than certainties, something that came to be regarded as universally true yet undeniably despised. All policy was therefore based on the information available at hand, and whatever logical deductions one could make. Government actions were based on a mix of hard information, suppositions, and wild guesses—hopefully, using former rather than the latter. No one could overcome this problem, no matter how much money was flung in its direction.

The financial side of the equation loomed in the background of every diplomatic decision. Maintaining resident ambassadors and the ensuing increase of communications was far from cheap; governments spent thousands of pounds, francs and ducats on a growing network of ambassadors, embassies and couriers. Ambassadors required a diet commensurate with their social status; embassies needed employees, consumables and other items to operate; independent and royal couriers conveyed letters to and fro for a healthy price. In a thirty year period (1572-1602) Elizabeth I’s government spent nearly £120,000 sterling, which averaged to roughly £4,000 annually on her ambassadors.28 Philip II spent tens of thousands of ducats annually on his postal system, which did not include the additional costs of the ambassadors themselves. One express courier dispatched from London to Madrid could cost more than a sixth of an ambassador’s

extraordinary expenses.\textsuperscript{29} With a government verging on bankruptcy, Catherine de Medici struggled constantly to find the funds for her increasing network of diplomatic representatives and for the couriers who linked them.

The rise in diplomatic contact fostered the expansion of communications networks dedicated to transmitting foreign and diplomatic news. Ambassadors and agents maintained connections with their government, friends, allies, and families while abroad. During his tenure, every ambassador developed a circle of correspondents for both official and personal purposes. Although the information transmitted through these circles differed, in many respects they paralleled the medieval manuscript news networks of the fifteenth century and served as yet another forerunner to the Enlightenment’s Republic of Letters.\textsuperscript{30} Though undeniably smaller than the burgeoning world of sixteenth-century scholarly, commercial and print news networks, this diplomatic communications system still possessed undeniable features that tied it to its brethren.\textsuperscript{31} Just as medieval and early modern scholars needed to develop new types of information to disseminate among their fellows, so agents abroad needed to exploit their networks of sources to

\textsuperscript{29} See the “gastos extraordinarios” of Don Guerau de Spes, for the year 1571. One packet sent to Spain by express courier cost more than ninety pounds. Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS): Direccion General del Tesoro (hereafter DGT), inventario 24, legajo 567, unfoliated.


\textsuperscript{31} Victor Klarwill’s edited volumes of the Fugger news-letters are a valuable example of an extensive commercial network transmitting all types of information and intelligence collected at key locations throughout Europe. See Victor Klarwill, ed. \textit{The Fugger News-Letters, being a selection of unpublished letters from the correspondents of the house of Fugger during the years 1568-1605}, trans Pauline de Chary. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s sons, 1924); Victor Klarwill, ed. \textit{The Fugger News-Letters, being a further selection from the Fugger papers, specially referring to Queen Elizabeth and matters relating to England during the years 1568-1605}, trans L. S. R. Byrne. (London: John Lane, 1926). George Tennyson Matthews’s \textit{News and Rumor in Renaissance Europe: The Fugger Newsletters}, (Capricorn Books, 1959), is an updated version similar to Klarwill’s work. See also F. Ruiz Martin, ed. \textit{Lettres Marchandes Échangées entre Florence et Medina del Campo}. (Paris: S. E. V. P. E. N., 1965), for the correspondence of the Simon Ruiz Company in the sixteenth century.
collect intelligence to send to their government or other interested parties. This need fostered a new system that crossed national and religious boundaries. Both Catholic and Protestant governments developed strikingly similar (in many cases, virtually identical) methods for achieving their goals. By synchronizing the varied sources from multiple countries into a single harmony, we hear a voice that sings a tune of interaction among a vibrant and diverse group of individuals.

Governments and their agents sought all sorts of information, whether it existed in the form of confirmed facts or nebulous rumors, from a variety of different people and sources. Demand dictated the types of news provided in letters, dispatches, directives, journals and other sources: an inattentive ambassador, lazy courier, or careless agent could find himself on the receiving end of a scathing rebuke from his government for failing to provide the information sought. Though unwritten, the rules governing the types of intelligence most valued remained in full force. Agents regularly included routine information concerning the health of the royal family and key members of the government, and the location and travel plans of the court; such news proved easy to access and normally trustworthy. Ambassadors also tracked the meetings and audiences of the monarch and government bodies; at times this task could be readily available, or extremely difficult should the monarch or councilor choose to engage in secret meetings. Learning the contents of these meetings proved to be still more difficult, especially with a small number of individuals in attendance. When creating a dispatch, an ambassador had to anticipate the types of intelligence his government desired, provide enough information to be useful, and remain oblique enough to protect the provenance of his information should it be of a clandestine nature. He also had to evaluate the veracity of
his news and indicate whether he believed his unconfirmed intelligence to be true. In many respects, the creation of dispatches and letters provides a window into the nature of a newly developing news network.

Research into the communications networks that operated all across early modern Europe is not new, but has centered mainly on Italy. The work of Pierre Sardella and Francesco Senatore laid the groundwork for exploring the connected ideas of news, politics and diplomacy in early modern Italy. The work of Fernand Braudel explored the logistics of communication in early modern Europe with particular regard to the Mediterranean, and Kenneth J. Banks’s *Chasing empire across the sea: communications and the state in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* broadens the issue to include European expansion into the Atlantic, and examines the ways in which the French government maintained communications with its colonial holdings. Following Senatore’s model, the 2007 work *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, by Filippo de Vivo explores the means through which individuals in Venice learned all types of information, including political, economic and diplomatic intelligence. His study follows information through governmental, social and economic channels to forcefully demonstrate the truth of Paolo Sarpi’s 1613 assessment that “words and opinions were considerable, even dangerous, elements of political life.” In Sarpi’s estimation, this in turn justified an active press censorship, since “from those words come

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the opinions of the world, giving rise to factions, seditions and ultimately to war.”

Although Sarpi’s comments focused on the need for a government censorship of the press, they apply equally to information in diplomacy. The information contained in an ambassador’s dispatches could take two countries to the brink of war. Such was the case in 1568-9, when, in a preemptive strike, the Spanish ambassador Don Guerau de Spes recommended that the Duke of Alba seize all English shipping in the Low Countries and nearly led Philip II’s empire into war with England. De Vivo, Sardella and Senatore leave open room for exploration of these phenomena on a European scale, rather than focusing on Italy.

Early modern diplomacy also became tied inextricably to the spread of news. The expanding print culture of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries benefited from an expanding diplomatic news network, as many of the earliest print publications featured news of a diplomatic nature. Concepts about the spread of news in a developing print culture are inexorably tied to the spread of news, intelligence and information through the personal networks of the diplomatic world. Oral and manuscript news networks transmitted information of all kinds, and expanded into print. Diplomacy provided both the medium as well as the message for a developing audience; printers in search of the latest bit of foreign rumors or news could find it in the existing networks of diplomats and representatives based across Europe.

Just as it changed the religious, political, diplomatic, social and military landscape of Europe permanently, so the Reformation also impacted the spread of news. Protestants

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across Europe thirsted for news concerning the fates of their co-religionists in contested places such as the Netherlands and France, especially after the outbreak of war in both countries in the 1560s. The rapidly growing publication centers in the Low Countries and England expanded to meet this growing demand, and provided the same sorts of information sought by governments. Much of this information came through the same networks that carried the intelligence to the government itself.

In *Elizabethan News Pamphlets* Paul Voss argues that while the printing of war news in England was certainly nothing new (dating back at least to 1513), the French Wars of Religion increased the publication of news pamphlets to a semi-regular manner. A subject of endless political and diplomatic debate, news about the Wars of Religion crossed into a matter of public interest and consumption in late Elizabethan England. As Voss notes, the primary source of information for these news pamphlets came from official and private letters: normally, the types of letters used to convey political and diplomatic concerns. A diplomatic network aided in the rise of a print news culture in late Elizabethan England. Without a developing network of diplomatic connections collecting information across Europe, it would have been much more difficult to satisfy the growing demand for news.

In their edited work *The Politics of Information in the Early Modern World*, Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron tie together the dissemination of information with politics, news and print culture and explore these phenomena with cases from England, Spain, France, the Holy Roman Empire and Scandinavia. Many of the articles focus on the developing print culture of the early- to mid-seventeenth century with particular regard to the concept of a public sphere first proposed by Jürgen Habermas. The
dissemination of political information plays a central role in many of these tales, from the perspectives of news and print culture and the concept of government censorship. In his article, “The politics of information in seventeenth-century Scandinavia,” Paul Ries demonstrates that by the late seventeenth century diplomatic news disseminated in printed materials played a vital role in shaping Danes’ perspectives of their European neighbors. Ries also links the dissemination of military and diplomatic news with the creation of a new image for the head of state, associating them personally with the successes and defeats of the state.36 Certainly, the development of an extensive diplomatic network in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries aided in the dissemination of such information and enabled printers to provide the types of news demanded by their audiences by the last half of the seventeenth century. The networks of the seventeenth century depended on the innovations of the previous century.

The burgeoning diplomatic world of the mid- to late-sixteenth century gave rise to the expansion of a new type of news network. Information lay at the core of both diplomacy and the news network: one could not engage in negotiations without intelligence, nor would a network have been needed without information to transmit. The first step lay in the acquisition of intelligence, whether in the form of hard facts or unconfirmed rumors. Both ambassadors and host governments used their networks of sources to divine whatever they could about their neighbors’ foreign and domestic affairs. After collecting the information, both parties needed to craft dispatches that relayed the pertinent intelligence without divulging too much information concerning its provenance.

A government relied upon its network of ambassadors to keep it informed about everything taking place in neighboring countries. Despite the theoretical inviolability of diplomatic correspondence, few governments and even fewer individuals hesitated to intercept correspondence whenever possible, which also provided another avenue through which people could collect information. No one could predict or command how long it would take a courier to carry dispatches through multiple countries and across potentially hundreds of miles. In the final step, utilization, governments had to effectively deploy strategies based on the information collected from locales all across Europe.

A breakdown in any part of the system: a failure to acquire intelligence, to transmit it, or to use available information to develop policy and send directives, could cause the process of negotiations to falter. When writing from Spain, the Elizabethan ambassador Sir Thomas Chaloner, complained that the utter lack of instructions and news from home left him incapable of performing his duty; indeed, he noted, “an ambassador at this corte restith comparable to a bodie prized of his armes.”37 His lament echoed true for both governments and representatives; when denied accurate and timely intelligence, the process of foreign policy development and implementation grew far more difficult, but not impossible. Even with the fundamental instabilities caused by the capricious nature of information collection and the omnipresent problems with transmission, governments still felt that diplomacy proved to be useful enough to outweigh these concerns. Governments and agents also dedicated considerable time to developing ways to counteract or ameliorate these problems. This new system of interaction lasted for

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37 Sir Thomas Chaloner to Sir William Cecil, 2 September 1562. British Library: Cotton Collection, (Hereafter denoted as BL: Cotton) Vespasian C vii, f. 223. For a more in-depth discussion of this letter and its implications, see Chapter 4: Messages.
nearly thirty years—long enough to prove its worth to the governments footing the bill. The importance of information in international negotiations increased as early modern governments began to place greater emphasis on diplomacy; by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the restoration of diplomatic ties formed one of the primary goals of the peace negotiations between England and Spain. In less than a century, governments recognized that diplomacy could be used to prevent wars, not only to end or forestall them.

The study of diplomatic history has long centered on the politics of international negotiations: communication between countries was viewed as a means, rather than an end.38 Scholars focused on the outcomes of these interactions rather than the interactions themselves, and thus neglected the fundamental processes that drove the entire system. The logistics of the network—the underpinnings that allowed it to flourish—remain as vitally important as the result. Information lay at the center of diplomacy, and required an extensive communications network to reach the participants in the process. By tying these ideas together—by following the cycle of information through the diplomatic world—we can recreate a previously neglected, but fundamental, aspect of sixteenth-century international negotiations. As information supported the diplomatic structure, so a study of ways in which information networks functioned allows a better understanding of the diplomatic process as a whole.

38 Generations of scholars have devoted their careers to some particular aspect of early modern diplomacy. R. A. de Maulde-la-Clavière’s three volume series La Diplomatie au Temps de Machiavel (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), first published in 1892-3, is a seminal work in the field. E. R. Adair’s 1929 work The Exterritoriality of Ambassadors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London, New York: Longmans, Green and Co.) explored the legal questions posed by the presence of a resident ambassador and embassy from both a theoretical and practical view. In Renaissance Diplomacy, Garrett Mattingly provided the history of the first decades of the new diplomatic system, in which the Italian models first came into widespread use by the governments of Western Europe.
The importance of information in international negotiations created a world in which individuals from different states needed to interact despite their religious affinity. The inability to resort to the medieval recourse of warfare forced countries to engage in negotiations with one another on a constant basis. Both Protestant and Catholic governments sought other methods of interaction but were denied by financial and political constraints. Even the withdrawal or expulsion of a resident ambassador—such as in 1559, 1568, 1572 and 1584—did not preclude governments from conducting negotiations through semi-official residents or at the capital of a third country. These governments, their ambassadors, and agents shared a common quest in their search for valued intelligence, and faced the same instability in the transmission process. Although it was a small world, it was not necessarily an elite one. On the diplomatic stage, the players often ignored issues of class and religious differences in their shared pursuit of the latest and best intelligence. In William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, the character Trinculo was forced to admit that, “misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows,” when faced with the prospect of an improbable alliance. Eventually, just as this was adapted in the nineteenth century to, “politics make strange bedfellows,” so diplomacy could make them even stranger—something that early modern diplomats would not have found strange in the least.39

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Chapter 1: The World of the Ambassador

Queen Elizabeth I’s Secretary of State William Cecil, Lord Burghley, once noted that “a man without friends at court is like a workman without tools.”¹ Those friends—whether they were high ranking courtiers, councilors, ambassadors, secretaries, or servants—proved to be invaluable assets for anyone who sought information, intelligence, gossip or rumors of any kind at an early modern court. The lamentations of the French ambassador to England, la Mothe-Fénélon, after the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, proved Burghley right. In the end of September 1572, more than a month after the massacre, la Mothe-Fénélon reported that he could make no headway on the negotiations for Elizabeth's marriage to Francis d’Alençon, because “religious matters always produce great difficulties here, but few have caused more obstacles than this one,” when no one but the Queen would speak to him.² La Mothe-Fénélon had become a social pariah, shunned by everyone at the English court for his government’s perceived role in the slaughter of thousands of Huguenots throughout France. Those who had exhibited pro-French tendencies previously now avoided him; even English Catholics at court could not approach la Mothe-Fénélon for fear of appearing to condone the massacre of

² Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon to Charles IX and Catherine de Medici, 28 and 29 September 1572, in Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon, vol. 5 (Paris and London, 1840), 133-152. (hereafter denoted as CDMF) Interestingly enough, an invitation to dinner with the Earl of Leicester in December marked the end of la Mothe-Fénélon’s social quarantine.
the Queen’s coreligionists. The unfortunate ambassador’s isolation did not end for another three months, and hampered his ability to provide King Charles IX with accurate intelligence—or indeed, just about any news—from Elizabeth's court.4

A lack of “friends at court,” as Burghley termed it, could prove just as insurmountable to other ambassadors, whether they resided in Edinburgh, Lisbon, Madrid, Paris or Rome.5 For ambassadors and governments, the early modern court served as one of the primary avenues through which individuals collected information. Governments made perpetual efforts to control information at their own court and discover the secrets of their neighbors; a constant presence at neighboring capitals could provide foreign intelligence and, if used properly, could warn councilors of leaks within their own government.

The enormous size and porous nature of the court meant that hundreds of people remained in close contact with one another on a daily basis, offering the chance to cultivate relationships and networking opportunities among a wide variety of individuals.6 It meant that resident ambassadors, maintained by their governments at quite a high expense, could learn a great deal about the intentions and inclinations not only of their host government, but that of their neighbors through other ambassadors.7 In

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3 See la Mothe-Fénélon’s reports for the months of September-December 1572 in volumes 5 and 6 of CDMF.
4 Ibid.
5 For instance, see the letters of Dr. John Man, the English ambassador to Spain, to Sir William Cecil, in which Man lamented that the enmity of one of Philip’s closest councilors, the Count of Feria, had damaged his ability to gather intelligence. Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 15 May, 24 May, and 13 June 1567. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Library, (hereafter denoted as CUL) Mm III 8, f. 73-76v, 77, 81-81v.
turn, the members of the host government and courtiers used the presence of resident
ambassadors as a means of learning the wishes and aims of the governments that
dispatched them. Among other things, an ambassador was a high-ranking intelligence
officer.⁸ Governments and ambassadors alike recognized that diplomats devoted a great
deal of attention and financial resources to developing intelligence networks and
conducting espionage.⁹ For ambassadors, the task of gathering intelligence remained
second only to their primary responsibility of serving as their masters’ personal voice at
neighboring courts.

Ambassadors and their retinues presented chances to gather news and gossip
about neighboring governments; other resident ambassadors and hosts cultivated
relationships with these individuals to gain access to the secrets they held. The itinerant
nature of the early modern court afforded excellent opportunities for clandestine meetings
while the monarch went on progress, as it was customary for ambassadors and much of
the government to remain in the capital rather than accompanying the monarch.¹⁰

Normally, an alert observer could select a likely candidate who had access to the right

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¹⁰ For information on sixteenth-century progresses and tours in England and France, see Jayne Elisabeth Archer et al, eds. The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); John Nichols, The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth (New York: B. Franklin, 1966); Victor E. Graham and W. McAllister Johnson eds. The Royal Tour of France by Charles IX and Catherine de’ Medici: Festivals and Entries, 1564-6 (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Maria Angeles Pérez Samper, “La corte itinerante. Las visitas reales”, in Ernesto Belenguer Cebriá, ed., Felipe II y el Mediterráneo, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1999), vol 3 part 1: 115-42. An effective way of tracing the monarch’s movements is by checking the location from which correspondence was dispatched, as most authors closed a letter by giving their location.
kinds of information and might be willing to divulge his or her secrets with the proper motivation.

Surviving sources—primarily correspondence, journals, working papers, financial accounts, and other memoranda—record the wide variety of ways through which individuals gained access to information, gossip and intelligence at European courts. At times ambassadors’ dispatches provide specific information, particularly about financial matters such as pensions or long-term relationships with courtiers. Ambassadors also gave details concerning the nature of the relationships with their sources and the latter’s motivation for divulging valued information, even if many diplomats chose to withhold the name of the individual in question to protect his or her identity. In other instances dispatches and letters from both ambassadors and governments prove elusive in tracing the provenance of intelligence, and do not document all the potential channels through which information networks operated. Clearly, when crafting a document, the writer had to weigh carefully the need to provide enough specific information to reassure the reader of his source’s dependability while protecting the informant.

While in Paris in the 1580s, the Spanish ambassador Don Bernardino de Mendoza suborned Elizabeth’s ambassador Sir Edward Stafford. In order to protect his source, in his letters concerning Stafford, Mendoza referred to Stafford alternatively as “the new correspondent,” “the new friend,” “the new confidant,” and “Julio.”

11 This need for security became paramount when ambassadors and councilors dispatched letters across hundreds of miles and through several foreign countries. Few individuals (and even fewer governments) hesitated to intercept and read correspondence, even when shielded by the

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theory of diplomatic privilege. Thus in many instances correspondence between
government and ambassador becomes vague—deliberately so—when discussing the
avenues through which they obtained information, making the work of the historian that
much more difficult.\footnote{Many secondary works have sifted through the mountain of papers left to try to reconstruct the intelligence networks in operation in Early Modern Europe, with varying levels of success. While not insurmountable, this is a difficult task and one that has to be undertaken with caution. Works such as John Bossy’s \textit{Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair} (Yale University Press, 1991) and \textit{Under the Molehill: an Elizabethan Spy Story}, (Yale University Press, 2001) are examples of both the advantages and potential pitfalls of such research. Bossy’s works have demonstrated that it is possible to reconstruct the shadowy networks that constituted unofficial diplomacy and intelligence operation at Elizabeth’s court and reconstruct individual careers, but also prove that it is difficult to draw many concrete conclusions from scanty evidence; rather, inevitably, many arguments are based on conjecture and deductions.}

Normally information gained from individuals at court came through several
distinct channels: high ranking courtiers or councilors, other ambassadors, or servants
and secretaries. Even when a seemingly sincere source offered valuable intelligence or
current rumors, there remained the possibility—however faint—that the source had
leaked information deliberately to achieve a desired outcome, whether for his individual
motivations or at the behest of his government. When evaluating the veracity of any
information, the recipient had to consider the source’s motivation and the reasons for
which the informant had divulged the intelligence. The reasons for such actions often
included personal aggrandizement, revenge, religious affinity, political allegiance, and
simple greed. Ambassadors had to evaluate their relationships with their sources
constantly on financial, religious, political and personal levels. Courtiers might offer
information to undermine just one government policy of which they disapproved, or
provide deliberate disinformation to a particular enemy at court. Resident ambassadors
learned quickly that they needed to determine which sources might feel some form of
amity or loyalty, whether for political, religious or financial reasons, and for how long they could benefit from this source.

Much of the intelligence gathered took the forms of rumor and gossip rather than hard information. For this reason, ambassadors and courtiers had to take special precautions to assess the authenticity of their information and sources. Many ambassadors included some form of a disclaimer when relating particularly sensitive, salacious or questionable intelligence. In 1564, when considering his intelligence, Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, Philip’s ambassador to England, commented that “their [English] changeableness and inconstancy will cause me to write things that will never happen, but the fault will not be mine or my informants”. Clearly, Guzmán trusted his sources, but recognized that even a loyal informant might provide inaccurate intelligence by mistake. In a 19 January 1568 dispatch, Dr. John Man noted “the certentie I know not” when passing along news that Philip II had arrested and confined his son and heir Don Carlos; later events would provide confirmation, but at first the news seemed too incredible to believe. By including the phrase, Man also alerted his government how far he could vouch for the authenticity of the news at that time. Beyond the obvious intention of protecting himself in case the information turned out to be incorrect, Man could use such a stipulation to indicate the level of his faith in his source and the intelligence provided.

13 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to King Philip II, 2 October 1564 in Colección de Documentos Inéditos Para La Historia de España (Madrid, 1842-95) (hereafter denoted as CODOIN) vol 89, 38-9; Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas, 1558-1567, ed. Martin Hume (London: Public Record Office, 1892) (hereafter denoted as CSPS) 382.

14 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 19 January 1568. Kew, the United Kingdom: The National Archives, SP 70/96/74. Hereafter denoted as NA.
Often ambassadors and agents purchased information for a price or used funds to lubricate the machinery of the court. In December 1559 Elizabeth's agents in France Henry Killigrew and Robert Jones urged the queen “to intertain [pay] some stranger in this court secretly; who, without note, may better learn such things as from time to time shall occur, than we shall be hable to do.”\(^{15}\) Successive English ambassadors requested funds for pensions and bribes frequently, as part of their efforts to secure reliable intelligence.

The extraordinary expense accounts of Spanish ambassadors serving in England and France document payments to a wide variety of individuals. In his accounting of extraordinary expenses, which he compiled from the safety of Brussels in February 1572 after being expelled from England, the former Spanish ambassador Don Guerau de Spes noted several payments given to “certain people for services to his Majesty,” “to the Catholics,” “certain people of the court for good services,” and “to a spy.”\(^{16}\) Some of the payments ranged as high as twenty pounds—not an insignificant sum considering that Spes’s accounting for the period totaled 771 pounds and included his travel and posting costs.\(^{17}\) He paid more than eighty-six pounds to diverse individuals for these services. If Spes’s posting costs are deducted from the total, his payments to these anonymous

\(^{15}\) Henry Killigrew and Robert Jones to Queen Elizabeth I, 27 December 1559, in Patrick Forbes, ed. *A Full View of the Public Transactions of Queen Elizabeth, or a Particular Account of all the Memorable Affairs of that Queen*, vol 1. (London: J. Bettenham, 1741), 288. (Hereafter Forbes)
\(^{16}\) “Memoria de los gastos extraordinarios,” of Don Guerau de Spes, 18 February 1572. Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter denoted as AGS): Dirección General de Tesoro (hereafter denoted as DGT) inventario 24, legajo 566, unfoliated. These expense accounts (also discussed in later chapters) documented additional expenses incurred by the ambassador. The ambassador submitted the accounts to the government for reimbursement, and needed to give detailed information about each expense to justify it.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
individuals account for nearly fifteen percent of the remaining expenditures. Similarly, the 1586 expense account of Don Bernardino de Mendoza recorded an astonishing payment of 4,000 escudos to an anonymous secret agent—nearly a quarter of his total expenses for a six-month period. Mendoza also reported smaller payments to other agents and informants. Even without specific names, and with no way to determine if the payments were made to the same individuals, the repeated references to sources at court provide clear evidence that both Spes and Mendoza believed that dispensing the money proved to be a worthy investment—enough that it accounted for a large percentage of their expenditures.

At times ambassadors distributed clandestine financial gifts among courtiers, such as those recorded by Spes in his account. Funds could also be bestowed publicly in the forms of pensions to courtiers and servants. Most monarchs maintained a network of pensioners at foreign courts as a means of developing friendships with important or well-placed individuals, and a good ambassador used pensioners as a frequent source of intelligence. Many informants were willing to sell their knowledge for cash, favors, or to develop a relationship with the ambassador. For the representative, the act of making regular payments created a situation that could work to his benefit. Once established, it could be difficult for the informant to end the relationship without jeopardizing his livelihood, freedom or ultimately his life.

**Patronage and pensions**

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18 One of the posting costs amounted to ninety-two pounds by itself, thus accounting for nearly fifteen percent of the total.
Pensions offered one of the primary ways in which an ambassador could maintain contacts among courtiers, councilors, ambassadors, servants and secretaries—those most likely to have access to, and be able to offer, good intelligence. As the anonymous seventeenth-century author of the *Embajada española* commented, “Should he [an ambassador] lack friends and ability to discover the truth and to verify his suspicions, money can help him, for it is, and always has been, the master key of the most closely locked archives.”20 These pensions offered recipients a lucrative way to increase their income and often functioned as a means of keeping them friendly to the ambassador. An ambassador had a great deal of influence over the distribution and payment of pensions; the monarch relied on the information the ambassador dispatched to decide which courtiers might be in a position to be useful or might be cultivated through financial gifts. An ambassador had to assess the potential recipient’s financial, political and religious standing in order to decide whether the pension might achieve the desired effect. Many ambassadors and agents felt it was their duty to provide such advice or suggestions for the monarch to consider, and included small mentions in dispatches concerning the subject on a regular basis; in their 27 December 1559 dispatch, Elizabeth's agents in France Sir Henry Killigrew and Robert Jones urged her to consider the distribution of pensions, else “the commodity of intelligence be lost.”21 King Charles IX’s ambassador la Mothe-Fénélon kept careful track of all domestic and foreign pensions paid to English courtiers, especially those from Spain, as a means of monitoring different influences at

21 Henry Killigrew and Robert Jones to Queen Elizabeth I, 27 December 1559, in Forbes, 289.
Elizabeth’s court. Philip’s ambassadors mentioned pensions frequently, particularly when tabulating the costs they had incurred while representing him abroad.

Ambassadors broached the subject of pensions especially when they sensed political change on the winds, whether due to the death of a monarch or councilor, shifts in the power of noteworthy individuals, or the conclusion of new alliances. These changes could be valuable opportunities to network with new individuals at court. Once peace talks recommenced at Cateau-Cambrésis in early 1559, the French raised the issue of overdue pensions with both the English and Spanish representatives. According to the French accounts presented during the peace negotiations, by December 1558 Philip II owed more than two million crowns in current and overdue pensions. In August 1559 the English ambassador Sir Nicholas Throckmorton noted that the French intended to curry favor with the lowlands Scots through the distribution of payments and rewards. The French ambassador Raymond Beccarie de Pavie, Baron de Fourquevaux, dispensed dozens of pensions to Spanish courtiers and French servants at the court of Philip II and his queen, Elizabeth de Valois.

Pensions ranged from relatively small amounts dribbled out over time to massive sums paid in one installment. Typically, the money did not come from the ambassador’s diet, but was dispatched separately by the monarch specifically for the purpose. This

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22 See la Mothe-Fénélon’s remarkable memoir of August 1574 in CDMF vol. 6, 221.
23 King Philip II to the count of Feria, 28 December 1558, in CODOIN vol 87, 101.
24 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Elizabeth I, 8 August 1559, in Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-9, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863) 457. (hereafter denoted as CSPF)
25 As described by Gary M. Bell in his article “Elizabethan Diplomatic Compensation,” among the direct rewards of service, “the diets were the most fundamental, were essentially a salary, and consisted of a per diem amount to cover personal expenses while an ambassador was abroad. The amounts of the diets depended most importantly, but not solely, upon status—a combination of position in the realm and assigned diplomatic rank,” p. 2. Funds for pensions were not included in the ambassador’s diet, although
did not preclude the use of private funds, and occasionally efforts to maintain pensions out of personal funds caused ambassadors considerable financial harm. It was one of the many reasons Philip’s ambassador Alvaro de la Quadra suffered such significant losses, and died in poverty. Normally, the government dispatched pension funds to the ambassador, who then used a variety of individuals in his service to deliver the money to the pensioner discreetly. Although in most instances monarchs did not forbid their courtiers from accepting pensions from foreigners—it could be a potential way of enriching one’s own nobility without surrendering any of the monarch’s personal assets—many pensioners did not announce openly that they had accepted such a gift. Thus, the networks of pensioners remain shadowy; letters announcing the arrival of funds to be used as pensions often included phrases instructing the ambassador to use the money as he saw fit. If the ambassador felt that divulging the name of a pensioner could jeopardize his relationship with the recipient, normally he refrained from doing so unless asked directly by his monarch.

In his very first dispatch only four days after the death of Queen Mary I and accession of Queen Elizabeth I, Philip’s ambassador the Count of Feria devoted three paragraphs to the matter of pensions. He even covered the issue before moving on to the
likelihood of a religious reformation and Elizabeth’s personal religious inclinations, matters that, for obvious reasons, commanded the highest priority. When covering the pensions, Feria noted that many of Philip’s pensioners saw themselves as dismissed without having received any formal notification, as Philip’s status in England had changed with Mary’s death; he was no longer King of England and unlikely to maintain as many pensions as when Mary was alive. In his dispatch Feria suggested that rather than dismissing his pensioners openly, Philip ought to “say nothing, but to pay those we want and some fresh ones.”

Feria related that he intended to pay the salaries and pensions owed to any of Philip’s servants who had remained in England after Philip’s departure, and that these individuals might prove useful. He also added that he had no intention of mentioning the issue of pensions to anyone, for any reminder might serve to only draw unwanted attention, and should Elizabeth decide to end the payment of foreign pensions to her courtiers, Feria could deal with the matter at that time rather than raising it himself. He also suggested that Philip consider a pension for Doctor Nicholas Wotton, one of the commissioners negotiating at the suspended talks at Cambrai.

In another dispatch three weeks later, Feria reported that Elizabeth had reversed her initial decision and would allow the payments of Spanish pensions to those who were paid before; Feria also noted that key figures such as Lord Admiral Clinton and Lord Paget, who had accepted earlier pensions secretly, would now receive them publicly. Sir James Croft, who under Queen Mary had received a pension from Philip as King of England, would also continue to receive funds. Later in the same letter, after discussing

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27 Count of Feria to Philip II, 21 November 1558, in CSPS 1558-1567, 3. As King of England, Philip had maintained extensive networks of pensioners as an effort to curry favor at the English court. With Mary’s death Philip lost his status and needed to reevaluate his financial obligations.

28 Feria to Philip, 14 December 1558, in CSPS 1558-1567, 11.
the payments of archers and troops for the late war against France, Feria again brought up
the subject of pensions; he wrote that, “it will be best to pay them to the end of this year
and afterwards to pay those who may be needful, such as Cecil, who I think should
receive 1,000 crowns, the Controller [Croft], Lord Robert and the Earl of Bedford, who
should receive a similar amount as they are necessary now.” 29 For Feria’s budget (and the
payments of Elizabeth's servants) the proposed amount of 1,000 crowns was hardly an
insubstantial sum.

The Earl of Pembroke, in Feria’s estimation, also merited a pension, for “since the
new Queen succeeded he has always been about the palace and does not leave her side.” 30
Further into the same dispatch Feria returned once more to the subject of pensions when
discussing the mission of Lord William Howard of Effingham, the Chamberlain, to
Philip’s court in Flanders. Feria had approached Howard about the funds he had received
from Philip already, and indicated that Philip would be favorably inclined to continuing
the pension. Feria added that the payments would be administered through Luis de Paz,
with whom Howard was familiar, and while it was not technically against the queen’s
wishes, “there was no necessity for anyone to know of it.” 31 Paz, who functioned in a
variety of capacities for successive ambassadors, served not only to funnel the money but
to maintain communications between Howard and Feria. 32 When asked about the
prospect of receiving a pension, Howard refrained from providing an immediate answer.

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid, 12.
32 The adventures of Luis de Paz are more fully explored in Chapter 2. Paz, although not only a courier, did
carry out several important missions for the Spanish in that capacity. He was the individual sent north to
Scotland on the orders of Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra in mid-1563 to meet with Mary Stuart concerning the
possibility of her marriage to Don Carlos, Philip’s son and heir. Paz remained in England in the household
of the Spanish ambassador until he left the country under a cloud of suspicion in 1571 after being arrested
on the orders of the Privy Council.
He later contacted Feria to indicate that since he had received approval from the Queen (who was his cousin) concerning the matter, he would be very glad to accept the money. In the same letter, Feria also enclosed a full list of all the pensioners and amounts owed to keep Philip apprised of his financial obligations.

Philip responded quickly to Feria’s suggestions and pleas for funds with which he could pay these pensions. On 23 March 1559 he wrote that he had ordered 40,000 ducats to be sent to England in addition to the 20,000 ducats already dispatched for Feria’s use, specifically for pensions and payments to loyal Catholics.³³ Philip commented that “you can employ it in the way you think advisable, either in paying the pensioners something or in gaining friends...whom you think might be useful to prevent a rupture.”³⁴ He asked to be updated regularly on the status of these pensioners, and the potential successes achieved through them, and warned Feria to spend the money wisely, for Philip found himself under tight financial constraints.

The continual mention of the issue of pensions and Feria’s subsequent recommendations indicates the importance that the ambassador placed on the matter. Feria’s selection of those individuals to receive pensions is worthy of note; he recommended many people who did not demonstrate religious affinity or any preexisting pro-Spanish sentiment, but rather selected them based on their potential to serve as sources of information and as influences on the Queen and Council. He chose several of the Queen’s closest councilors, confidantes and representatives, including her Secretary of State, favorite, Controller, Chamberlain, Lord Treasurer, Keeper of the Great Seal, and

³³ Philip II to the Count of Feria, 23 March 1559, in CSPS 1558-67, 41.
³⁴ Ibid. The idea of “preventing a rupture” proved to be one of the driving forces behind Quadra’s actions a few years later; his instructions from Philip had included similar language, and Quadra regarded this as one of his primary tasks.
other members of the Privy Council. He chose people whose personal religious preferences ran from a Puritanical Protestantism to Catholic. These choices also represented a concerted effort to surround the Queen with individuals who would hopefully promote the Spanish cause at court.

It is entirely possible that Feria recognized that without guidance from individuals receiving Spanish pensions the new queen was likely to break once more with the Catholic Church and reestablish Protestantism. Ideally, of course, one of these influences included an impeccably Catholic and pro-Spanish (Hapsburg, if possible) husband who might outweigh the voices clamoring for religious change. Feria’s dashed hopes that the pensions might help prevent a Reformation were reflected in his letters written in the spring of 1559, once Parliament had convened and begun debating the bills that would become the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. In his letter of 18 April Feria noted morosely that he would rather give the money to support the marriage with the Emperor Ferdinand’s son “instead of the pensions which were paid to these people here and which have had so little effect…I would not give another groat to the lords, as it is of no use.”35 Feria also informed Philip that he had paid the pensions and wages for all Philip’s servants who had remained in England after Philip had departed for the Low Countries in 1557. In May 1559, Philip agreed to Feria’s suggestion to end most of the pensions paid to the nobility, and to wait on the payments to those few who might be useful.36

Unfortunately, Philip’s parsimony did more harm than good. By August 1559, Feria’s replacement Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra wrote that many courtiers preferred the French ambassador to him, as the French representative had promised many pensions and many

35 Feria to Philip II, 18 April 1559, in CSPS 1558-1567, 58-59.
36 Philip to Feria, 8 May 1559, in CSPS 1558-1567, 66
courtiers resented the loss of the Spanish largesse, thus proving that pensions served as a way of buying favor.\textsuperscript{37} Evidently Philip had decided to trim the amount he bestowed upon the English nobles, but not to cancel it entirely; in an October letter to Sir William Cecil, an English agent from Antwerp (probably Sir Thomas Chaloner) noted that he had heard that “King still entertains certain of the noblemen, whose pensions are secretly paid by the Bishop of Aquila.”\textsuperscript{38} The anonymous author declined to name the specific noblemen in his letter, but indicated that he knew their identities.

Spanish pensions paid to prominent Englishmen continued even after the expulsion (or recall, depending on the source) of Philip’s final ambassador, Don Bernardino de Mendoza, in 1584. In his extraordinary expense account for 1586, after he had taken up his post in France, Mendoza recorded payments to five different Englishmen; some of these pensions were prorated on a monthly basis (roughly eighty escudos a month) and others were paid in a lump sum; these could cost more than 1,300 escudos. Mendoza recorded the identites the five in his expense accounts. Charles Paget had already gone into exile on the continent and was working for Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, as had Thomas Morgan, who worked as cipher clerk for Mary’s ambassador to France, James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow—the same ambassador in whose household Edward Stafford had once attempted to cultivate a source.\textsuperscript{39} Charles Paget’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 18 August 1559, in CSPS 1558-1567, 94. As King of England Philip had maintained an extensive network of pensioners and, upon Mary’s death, needed to reevaluate the status of those pensions. See page 000-0.
\item Letter to Sir William Cecil, October (?) 1559, in CSPF 1559-60, 3. The unsigned letter was dispatched from Antwerp, where Chaloner resided in the fall of 1559, and parts are written in Chaloner’s hand.
\item See Stafford’s letter to Sir Francis Walsingham concerning the matter, discussed on page 000-0.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
brother Thomas also drew a Spanish pension, as did Thomas Throckmorton and Charles Arundel.\textsuperscript{40}

In the world of early modern negotiations pensions proved to be one of the few ways an ambassador could give money to a councilor, courtier, or servant without appearing to offer an open bribe. In January 1582, Henry III gave his consent to a Spanish pension for la Mothe-Fénélon, his former ambassador to England and current member of two of his councils.\textsuperscript{41} The disbursement of pensions was an accepted one, practiced at all levels of society ranging from the pensions paid to the monarch of England from the monarch of France, to those offered to servants.\textsuperscript{42} Most rulers and ambassadors recognized that the payment of a pension could not guarantee that the pensioner would always promote the desired causes; when discussing a pension in a May 1580 letter to his ambassador Juan de Vargas Mexia, Philip noted that “you can give it to him…as you think best, keeping him in hand the meanwhile with fair words and making what use of him you can.”\textsuperscript{43} Pensions served as an effective means of increasing one’s influence at court; while no guarantee that the recipient would always promote the benefactor’s cause, it could be a means through which the ambassador could communicate with key individuals at court, cultivate contacts, and hopefully gain access to information from a friendly source.

**Councilors and courtiers**

\textsuperscript{40} Extraordinary expense account of Don Bernardino de Mendoza, July-December 1586. AGS Estado K, leg. 1564, f. 258, in Jensen, *Diplomacy and Dogmatism*, 128-9.

\textsuperscript{41} See note 2 in *CDMF* vol. 1, xxxvi.

\textsuperscript{42} The pension paid to the English monarch by the King of France was worded as recompense for the English monarch’s temporary renunciation of his/her claims to the crown of France. The terms were decided as part of the end of the Hundred Years’ War in the fifteenth century and reconfirmed in the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis.

\textsuperscript{43} Philip II to Juan de Vargas Mexia, 16 May 1580, in *CSPS 1580-86*, 30.
At two o’clock on the morning of 19 January 1568, a knock on the door of his residence in Madrid startled the Portuguese ambassador, Francisco Pereira, from sleep. He admitted his anonymous visitor, who came bearing incredible news of vital importance for Pereira and his master, Portugal’s King Sebastian I. One of Pereira’s informants had dispatched the visitor from the royal palace to tell Pereira that King Philip II had imprisoned his son and heir, Don Carlos, less than three hours before. This in itself is noteworthy; guards controlled the entry and exit from every royal palace very closely, so in order to leave around two o’clock in the morning Pereira’s informant must have had clearance from the highest level. But the news was sensational.

Of course, the confinement of the person a heart-beat away from the throne would interest any ambassador, and it would later excite the other representatives stationed in Madrid.44 But for the Portuguese, it was especially important. As the son of Philip and his first wife Maria of Portugal, grandson of King John III, and cousin of Sebastian I, Don Carlos occupied an important place in the Portuguese royal family; he stood as the heir presumptive to the Portuguese crown, should Sebastian die childless.45 This byproduct of generations of dynastic marriage meant that two of the greatest global empires—Spain and Portugal—could eventually be combined under a sole ruler.46 The ramifications spread far beyond the Iberian Peninsula into the colonial holdings of both countries.

44 In January 1568, Madrid housed a dozen representatives from different European states.
45 Sebastian was the son of Prince John of Portugal, who married Philip II’s sister Juana. Juana was pregnant with Sebastian when John died, thus the throne went directly from King John III to his grandson Sebastian upon King John’s death in 1557. Juana also served as Philip’s regent in Spain while Philip was in the Low Countries until August 1559.
46 Philip II made this possibility a reality when he claimed the Portuguese throne upon the death of Sebastian’s successor Henry in 1580. Temporarily, this combined the two kingdoms into one, creating one of the largest empires in the world.
Naturally, Pereira took a keen interest in any news relating to the prince and relayed it dutifully to his master in Lisbon on a regular basis.

Pereira lost no time in writing all he knew in a lengthy dispatch for his king. He reported that Philip left the Escorial, the vast monastic complex under construction north of Madrid, on January sixteenth, arriving in Madrid at the Alcázar palace two days later. On Sunday, January eighteenth, Philip heard mass with his son and spent the rest of the day in meetings. That evening, he summoned four key councilors—Ruy Gómez de Silva, the Duke of Feria, Don Antonio de Toledo, and Luis Quixada—to his bedchamber. Finally, at eleven o’clock at night, when the five men were together, the king informed them that because of the “prince’s bad ways,” he had decided to have his son confined. Philip continued to say that the confinement was “necessary to come to the rescue of the kingdom,” and that he had “not called them to give their opinion, because he was resolute in what needed to be done, but rather wanted them to accompany him.” The king then donned a coat of chain mail and his helmet. Together with two other courtiers and two servants, who brought hammers and nails, they went to the prince’s bedchamber, where Don Carlos lay asleep in his bed. When the prince awoke, he exclaimed, “Who is here? What time is it? Are you here to kill me or to arrest me?” The king answered, “This is for your own good,” and ordered the men to nail shut all the windows. Philip also found secret correspondence, a loaded arquebus, and over 30,000 escudos in the prince’s bedchamber, lending strength to current rumors that Don Carlos had planned either to murder his father or to escape from Spain. After the stormy confrontation, Philip left five men in charge of the prince, including the Count of Feria, Luis Quixada, Ruy Gómez de Silva and the Count of Lerma. Philip also demanded that all of his custodians swear
solemnly to guard Don Carlos. Pereira even included the notable tidbit that the prince had reacted “with despair” to the news of his confinement.

All this Pereira learned from his nocturnal informant; but before sealing his letter after daybreak, he went to see if any of his sources could corroborate the incredible news. His first stop was the residence of Princess Juana, King Philip’s sister and mother of the Portuguese king Sebastian. Sorrowfully, Juana confirmed the news of the confinement, but added little additional detail. After spending some time consoling her, Pereira went to Don Carlos’s apartment itself. Although it was closed to all visitors, there he met with Ruy Gómez de Silva, who had been left in charge of the Prince. Gómez mentioned that he thought that Philip would summon Pereira soon to explain personally, so that Pereira could provide more information (and hopefully, a logical reason for the confinement) to Sebastian—but Pereira did not wait; he sealed the letter and searched for a courier.

Pereira’s account of the confrontation gave a step-by-step rendition of the events, including even the essence of the conversation between the king and his son. This is only possible if his informant either witnessed the confinement himself, or was instructed by an eye-witness to see Pereira with the news. All of the men who attended the confinement personally were high ranking courtiers, and five of them had been left to guard the Prince, so it is unlikely that one of them paid a personal visit to the ambassador’s residence. It is equally logical to assume that Pereira’s visitor had permission to leave the palace from the same individual who instructed him to see the ambassador. Given the

Francisco Pereira to King Sebastian I of Portugal, 19 January 1568. Lisbon, Portugal: Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais, Torre do Tombo. Tribunal do Santo Oficio, Conselho Geral do Santo Oficio, (hereafter denoted as IDAN) Livro 210, f. 137. Many thanks are owed to Professor Geoffrey Parker for showing me this material and for uncovering the identity of the unnamed source.

Ibid.
course of events, only a senior courtier or councilor could have authorized someone to
leave. The Portuguese ambassador had heard this information from a source three hours
after the incident, rather than the following day, even though the event took place at one
of Philip’s palaces and when the king had surrounded himself with only his most trusted
courtiers.

By providing that type of information, without even divulging the name of his
source, Pereira demonstrated to his king that he had a source in the closest circles
surrounding Philip. He had accomplished the second key task assigned to—and expected
of—any ambassador: he had acquired vital information and had shared it with his
government. Alone amongst the dozen representatives in Madrid, Pereira managed to
learn intelligence from an unimpeachable source.

The next diplomat to learn about the confinement was the English ambassador,
Dr. John Man. He wrote to Sir William Cecil with news of Don Carlos’s imprisonment
also on 19 January. In his letter, Man reported that

yster night the 18 of this present at ten o clocke at nyght. this kyng armed under
his night gown went the prynces his sones lodging to apprehend him accompaned
with a great nomber of his gard. and comytted him unto the keeping of the
captayne of his gard to ward him theare for that night this morning I am enformed
that he gvyeth order to send him to Tordesillas or to Toledo to remayn theare in
close prison. yt is bruted that he practysed the kyng his fathers death. the certentie
I know not yet. The kyng found a pistolet hydden under the prynces bedd which
he toke a way with him…of this being so strang I thought the Quenes maistie
shold understand with all speed. As other things shall fall oute I will advertise you
with diligence.49

The similarities between the two letters reveal that Man, too, had excellent sources at
Philip’s court and could procure sensitive information in a timely manner. Both men had
learned of the incident within twenty four hours and both gave specific information

49 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 19 January 1568. NA: SP 70/96/74.
regarding the events of the night of 18 January 1568, although Pereira awoke in the
middle of the night to hear the news, while Man learned of it the following morning.50

Ultimately Pereira’s source proved to be decidedly superior to Man’s. Whereas
when informing Cecil of the events Man found it necessary to stress that “the certentie I
know not,” Pereira expressed no such concern over his information in his dispatches to
Sebastian: he had no doubts over his intelligence because he trusted his source, while
Man had either not been able to corroborate his information, or doubted its authenticity.51
Man also knew that the king had confronted his son accompanied by several other men,
but did not know who; nor did he apparently know that Philip had spent several hours
meeting with these men before they marched to Don Carlos’s quarters, and he could not
tell Cecil the names of those individuals charged with keeping Don Carlos in
confinement. Pereira’s letter had all these details contained within three lines.52

The news that Philip used force to confine his only son and heir spread quickly
throughout the kingdom, so Pereira’s report would have been unremarkable except for

50 Man’s ability to procure such intelligence casts doubt on the view of his embassy as ineffective presented
by J. E. Neale and Garrett Mattingly, and reinforces the argument set forth in Gary M. Bell, “John Man: the
last Elizabethan resident ambassador in Spain,” The Sixteenth Century Studies Journal, vol 7 no 2 (October
1976) 75-93. Bell argued that, far from being the “outstanding example of the emissary of bad-will, a
bigoted Protestant divine, without tact or breeding,” as described by Mattingly ( Renaissance Diplomacy,
202), Man was in fact an acceptable choice for a resident ambassador, and discharged his duties to the best
of his considerable ability.

51 Among other duties, an ambassador was expected to evaluate the authenticity of whatever intelligence he
dispatched in his letters, as his government would have no other means of weighing its value in developing
policy initiatives. Governments often tried to corroborate whatever information they received through other
sources, but at times an ambassador’s letter could be the only source of intelligence, making the task of
authentication vitally important. See Sir William Cecil’s letter to Sir Thomas Smith, 14 December 1562.
British Library: Lansdowne MSS 102, ff. 27, in which Cecil commented that the Privy Council had
expressed serious doubts over Smith’s methods of collecting intelligence and reporting information, as
Smith had sent incorrect information in several different letters, further complicating the tasks of the
Council.

52 Francisco Pereira to King Sebastian of Portugal, 19 January 1568. Lisbon, Portugal: Instituto dos
Arquivos Nacionais, Torre do Tombo. Tribunal do Santo Oficio, Conselho Geral do Santo Oficio, Livro
210, f. 137.
the short time in which he learned the intimate details.\textsuperscript{53} The difficulty for most ambassadors to learn exactly what happened was in large part due to Philip’s decision not to provide any news to the diplomatic corps.\textsuperscript{54} In absence of hard information, ambassadors sent their speculations along with their news. Many assumed that the king would either have to remove Don Carlos from the succession permanently or make some sort of provision for him. Two days after the confinement, the Imperial ambassador Adam Dietrichstein predicted that the King would have his son condemned, so that he could never succeed to the throne.\textsuperscript{55} The French resident ambassador Fourquevaux informed King Charles IX and Catherine de Medici of the news of the confinement in a dispatch dated 22 January, but still did not know the details of either the actual event or the arrangements to be made for Don Carlos. In his letter, the ambassador reported that “It is said that Don Carlos had an understanding with the Netherlanders, and that he wanted to kill his father. So many different stories circulate that I cannot believe the speaker.” Predictably, Fourquevaux’s primary concern lay with the issue of the succession and the place of Catherine’s grandchildren in the line.\textsuperscript{56}

Fourquevaux’s inability to learn anything specific must have been a disappointment. Normally, he was one of the best-informed ambassadors in the city,

\textsuperscript{53} News of Don Carlos’s confinement quickly became public; within days, the Spanish ambassador to Rome gave a concise reason for the decision to the Vatican, and Philip’s wife Queen Elisabeth cryptically mentioned it in a letter to the French ambassador, in Parker, \textit{Philip II}, fourth edition, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2002), 90-91.

\textsuperscript{54} For more information on Philip’s decision-making process, see Parker, \textit{Felipe II: La biografía definitara}, chapter 9, forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{55} Adam Dietrichstein to Emperor Maximilian, 21 January 1568, quoted in Parker, \textit{Felipe II}, chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{56} Raymond Beccarie de Pavie, Baron de Fourquevaux, to Catherine de Medici, 22 January 1568, in \textit{Dépêches de M. de Fourquevaux, Ambassadeur du Roi Charles IX en Espagne, 1565-1572}, ed. C. Douais (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1896) vol 1, 317-319. (Hereafter denoted as \textit{DF}) As Philip’s daughters by Elizabeth de Valois, Catalina and Isabella, followed Don Carlos in the line of succession, Catherine de Medici had a vested interest in any information on any changes to their status.
largely because of his relationship with Philip’s queen, Elizabeth, daughter of Catherine
de Medici and sister of the French King Charles IX. In most instances Elizabeth gave
Fourquevaux all types of details during their meetings; many of Fourquevaux’s letters
give intelligence and then mention having an audience with the queen or record meeting
with her before seeing a counselor or the king. In one memorable instance approximately
two years before the confinement, Fourquevaux even learned of a discussion concerning
the succession from one of the queen’s French dwarves, who happened to be in the room
when she discussed the subject with her attendants.

Unfortunately for the ambassador, in this case the Queen provided little
information. In his dispatch of 22 January to Catherine de Medici, Fourquevaux noted
that he had gone to see Elizabeth immediately after learning the news of the confinement.
Although she knew of the incident, she refused to discuss it with him. Rather than getting
additional details, the ambassador learned from her instead that the King asked his queen
to ensure that Fourquevaux held back his courier’s departure. The ambassador left his
audience with the queen empty-handed, unable to confirm or discount the wild rumors
sweeping the city, and without any idea how to get his letter out of Madrid.57

Fourquevaux and Dietrichstein were not the only diplomats to find that they were
unable to report anything other than general information and rumors. The ambassador
from the Italian state of Lucca, Giovanbattista Turchi, also reported the confinement on
22 January. His letter carried the news that Ruy Gómez de Silva, the Duke of Feria and
Don Antonio de Toledo had been present, but failed to note the presence of the other

57 Ibid.
individuals at the time of the confrontation. The representatives from Venice and Ferrara, Sigismondo Cavalli and Cristoforo Sertorio, also reported the general news in their dispatches, but, like Fourquevaux and Dietrichstein, did not have any other details to dispatch. More often than not, the ambassadors had to inform their masters of the variety of rumors sweeping through the city, such as Don Carlos’s plot to kill the king, or to escape to the Low Countries. The diplomats’ collective frustration over the lack of news had to be compounded by the security measures enacted by the government to prevent the spread of incorrect information.

Philip took steps to prevent the flow of intelligence immediately after the confinement. Rather than risk that some patently untrue (or potentially embarrassing) details of the event could reach neighboring courts, Philip chose to write to other heads of state to provide news of the confinement, which he did immediately. He dispatched his first letter to his great aunt (and former mother-in-law) Catalina on 20 January. In his letter to Queen Elizabeth I written on 22 January, Philip asked that she give audience to his ambassador Diego Guzmán de Silva, who could better explain the reasons for his decision to confine Don Carlos. He also sent dispatches to the Pope giving an explanation for his actions. On February 16, Don Francés de Álava, Philip’s ambassador in France, reported that he had delivered the king’s letters on the matter to

60 Philip II to Catalina, 20 January 1568. Lisbon, Portugal: IDAN, Torre do Tombo, Miscelaneas Manuscritas, 964/187-188.
61 Philip II to Elizabeth I, 22 January 1568, in Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, 1566-1568, 399. (Hereafter denoted as CSPF)
62 Parker, Philip II, 91.
Catherine de Medici and King Charles IX.\textsuperscript{63} Given that Don Francés sent his letter from Paris less than a month after the confinement took place, Philip must have dispatched the letter to France at the same time as those sent to Rome and London, as most couriers took approximately two weeks to complete the journey between Paris and Madrid.

Simultaneously, the king tried to prevent ambassadors from sending their dispatches, which could contain rumors of any kind. Giovanbattista Turchi’s letter of January 22\textsuperscript{nd} noted that Philip had stopped all traffic from Madrid, as did those by Pereira and Fourquevaux.\textsuperscript{64} In his letter of 22 January, Turchi sighed that “no one, either on foot or on horseback, could pass further than seven leagues from the city, so that couriers cannot carry this news, and the king has had all the horses removed from their posts.”\textsuperscript{65} Most passports issued for couriers required those messengers to travel only via the official postal routes. By removing the horses and closing the stations, in theory such a measure created an effective “news blackout” by preventing couriers from leaving the area. The King’s additional measures were also effective: by telling his wife what to say to the French ambassador, Philip recognized that Fourquevaux would undoubtedly see the Queen about the matter, and that Fourquevaux would not dare to disobey her “request” that he wait before sending his report.

Only the Portuguese and English ambassadors found alternate methods for getting their dispatches out of Madrid. Pereira got his letter out of the city by hiding it with merchant couriers, perhaps in an effort to circumvent the restrictions noted in Turchi’s

\textsuperscript{63} Don Francés de Álava to Philip II, 16 February 1568, in Negociaciones Con Francia, vol. 10, 202-3. (Hereafter denoted as NCF) Don Francés then would have had to seek an audience with Catherine and Charles immediately upon receiving his instructions, in order to present the king’s letters, and had to dispatch his report of the audience as soon as it was completed.

\textsuperscript{64} Giovanbattista Turchi to the Anziani, 22 January 1568. Lucca, Italy: Archivo de Stato di Lucca. Scritture, 251, unfoliated.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid; Parker, Felipe II, chapter 9, forthcoming.
dispatch. On the bottom of his letter, he noted that he had “sent this letter express with news of the imprisonment of the Prince on 21 January;” the express courier might have been waiting outside the restricted zone, and so carried the letter to Lisbon.66 In his next dispatch of 26 January Man wrote that he had sent the letter of the 19th “by way of France unto Quenes Maisties ambassador theare,” so evidently he managed to find someone to carry his letter into France, where Sir Henry Norris could forward it to London. Man, unfortunately for historians, failed to provide any other information on how the letter left Madrid or escaped Philip’s restrictions.67

Once he had written to his fellow rulers, Philip met with their representatives at his court to ensure that they had the correct information. In his dispatch of 19 January Pereira reported that Ruy Gómez de Silva had informed him that Philip would likely summon him soon for an audience concerning the manner. Pereira also had additional meetings with Gómez on the issue in the days following the confrontation. In his letter of 28 January John Man too reported meeting with Gómez, in which the councilor “declared to him that he had the King’s commandment to participate unto him his meaning in the imprisonment of the Prince of Spain.”68 During the course of the conversation, Gómez stressed the temporary nature of the situation and informed the representative that Philip

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66 Francisco Pereira to King Sebastian I of Portugal, 19 January 1568. IDAN, Lisbon. Livro 210, f. 136-7.
67 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 26 January 1568. NA: SP 70/94/126. In the letter of the 19th, Man also noted that he felt that the information was important enough to justify an immediate dispatch sent express, rather than waiting for the regular courier. Queen Elizabeth (and her fellow monarchs) had a tendency to reproach her ambassadors if they used express couriers too often, as the practice was prohibitively expensive. If Man had waited, it is doubtful he would have been able to get his letter out of the country.
68 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 28 January 1568, in CSPF 1566-8, 405.
hoped to restore his son’s liberty as soon as possible—both statements that he must have
known were lies.\(^6^9\)

Unfortunately for Philip, his attempt to restrict the spread of information failed. When Guzmán de Silva wrote to Philip on February 16\(^{th}\) about his audience with Queen Elizabeth concerning the matter, he noted that the English had already learned of the event from sources other than Man’s letter of January 19\(^{th}\). Two English councilors had received letters from France telling them that the king had confined Don Carlos on account of a plot against Philip, although the details differed from those of the plot reported by Man.\(^7^0\) The Spanish ambassador noted rather ruefully that he had learned more from the English than they had learned from him, because he had not received any letters giving an explanation. Don Francés de Álava also reported that the French had news of the confinement before he could discuss it with Catherine and Charles in his audience.\(^7^1\)

It is likely that Philip’s restrictions on travel only took effect after he had dispatched his own letters. Perhaps Man and Pereira, having written their letters so quickly, managed to get the news out before the orders took effect? Certainly, guards could have been instructed to watch for known couriers, and government officials would

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\(^6^9\) See Philip’s letter to his aunt Catalina of 20 January 1568, in which he revealed that the confinement would be permanent, rather than a temporary step. AGS Estado libro 16/191, quoted in Parker, *Felipe II*, chapter 9.

\(^7^0\) Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 16 February 1568, in *CSPS 1568-1579*, 6. It is interesting to note that in order for Guzmán to have learned the information in his audience with Elizabeth, Man’s letter must have traveled from Madrid to Paris and thence to London in less than a month, even though much of France was at that time embroiled in civil war.

\(^7^1\) The fact that both the French and English governments learned of the confinement before official notice arrived demonstrates that not even the Spanish could guarantee that letters dispatched through their postal network (the most efficient in Europe) would always arrive more quickly than letters dispatched through other channels. Both Guzmán and Álava had audiences concerning the matter less than a month after the confinement, yet both governments already had more information than Philip had provided either in his official letters or in his instructions to his ambassadors.
have known to deny all requests for passports. Removing all horses from the posting
stations would slow or restrict a courier’s travel. Theoretically, no courier could leave the
capital and cross the country without a passport, as they were supposed to present their
passports at postal stations. However, this did not prevent people from leaving without
them. Also, there was simply no way to halt all traffic in and out of the city, and this
presented innumerable opportunities to send a letter through other channels. In his
dispatch the Portuguese ambassador noted that he had to send his letter through a
merchant, rather than a courier. Each of the ambassadors stationed in Madrid knew that
his government needed the information in order to develop policies and conduct
negotiations, and they used all available resources to accomplish their tasks, in spite of
the security measures.

The entire episode begs an obvious question: who leaked the information to
Pereira, and why? Clearly, Philip wanted to keep it as quiet as possible. He forbade any
mention of the prince in conversation or even prayer, and ordered his half-brother Don
John of Austria to remove his mourning attire.72 Such exact intelligence could only have
been gained from one of the witnesses, all of whom held high offices in Philip’s
household and government. The Duke of Feria, Don Antonio de Toledo (Philip’s
_Caballerizo Mayor_), Luis Quixada, Don Pedro Manuel, the Count of Lerma, and Don
Diego de Acuña had little motivation and even less reason to leak such intelligence to the
Portuguese ambassador; doing so would have risked Philip’s wrath and upset their place
at court.

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72 Parker, _Philip II_, 91.
Ruy Gómez de Silva, by contrast, had a motive for such an action.\(^{73}\) As Philip’s sumiller de corps, by custom he never let the king out of his sight. He had been present for the meeting in Philip’s bedchamber, attended the confinement, and was placed in charge of the prince, and so knew all the intimate details preserved in Pereira’s letter. He was also Philip’s favorite, a trusted minister and councilor. He was not only Portuguese, but also the nephew of Francisco Pereira. Ruy Gómez may have felt that although Philip intended to restrict any information about the prince’s imprisonment, the Portuguese government needed the information about the events immediately, and Pereira presented both the quickest and most secure method of conveying the news. In his dispatch of 21 January, Pereira informed Sebastian that on the 19\(^{th}\) he had met with Juana (the mother of King Sebastian I and sister of Philip) and Ruy Gómez, but these meetings happened after someone had woken him with the news earlier that night. Someone with the power to grant permission to leave and enter the palace at night had sent the anonymous visitor: the source could only have been Ruy Gómez.\(^{74}\) It follows that Gómez served as one of Pereira’s most highly placed sources at Philip’s court, through whom Pereira could learn other valuable intelligence.\(^{75}\)

Councilors and courtiers such as Ruy Gómez de Silva occupied the highest echelons of the government and courtly world. The French had recognized Gómez’s role as a source and as a moderate voice at Philip’s court as early as 1562, when the French ambassador Jean d’Ébrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice deliberately set out to cultivate a

\(^{73}\) See James M. Boyden, *The Courtier and the King: Ruy Gómez de Silva, Philip II and the Court of Spain*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), for a full-length treatment of the relationship between Philip and his favorite.

\(^{74}\) Francisco Pereira to King Sebastian of Portugal, 19 January 1568. IDAN, Lisbon. Livro 210, f. 136-7.

\(^{75}\) In an interesting coincidence, in his letter of 28 January 1568 Dr. Man informed Cecil that Ruy Gómez had discussed the Prince’s confinement at length with him on Philip’s orders.
relationship with him.  

Gómez, and others like him, could gain access to the monarch or fellow members of their elite circle, and learn information through these means. Those individuals closest to the monarch, either physically or in spirit, could conceivably offer some of the best opportunities for a skilled negotiator to gather intelligence. An ambassador might even find such sources within the royal household itself; Pereria noted that he had confirmed his intelligence in a meeting with Princess Juana. The French ambassador Fourquevaux used his relationship with Philip’s queen Elizabeth de Valois to gather information on a regular basis. A councilor or courtier close to the monarch or other powerful government officials could offer an ambassador inside information about closed meetings, policy initiatives, official correspondence, and the monarch’s personal inclinations on a wide variety of issues. Councilors saw all manner of documents, including the rough and final drafts of correspondence, policy papers, minutes of meetings and other material. They heard and witnessed various interactions and conversations between all members of the court, even those that were intended to remain private.

Even those meetings between the highest members of the court were not safe from eavesdroppers, as Guzmán de Silva indicated in a March 1565 letter to Philip. He gave information about a clandestine conversation held between Queen Elizabeth and William Maitland, Mary Stuart’s representative. “The only thing my informant could hear of the conversation between them [Elizabeth and Maitland] were the words ‘keep it to yourself.’ I cannot understand what they are about although I have made and am

76 See Edmond Cabié’s introduction to Saint-Sulpice, 2-7, 406-8; discussed in Sutherland, Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 39.
77 See Fourquevaux’s dispatches for the years 1567-68 in DF vol. 1, particularly with regard to Philip’s plans to travel to the Low Countries and his confinement of Don Carlos.
making every effort to find out.” In October 1579, Bernardino de Mendoza reported similar leaks when he gave Philip details of the discussions of the Privy Council, in which the councilors had met several times without the clerks in the room. By giving specific intelligence, Mendoza’s source must have learned his information from a Privy Councilor or been a Councilor himself. Councilors and courtiers kept close watch on the actions and inclinations of their colleagues out of a sense of self preservation and in order to remain informed. A knowledgeable observer could deduce much from monitoring the interactions among the monarch’s closest councilors, especially when a monarch’s intentions could be reflected in his or her choice of companions or advisors at any moment. A monarch’s open approval of and frequent interactions with a councilor who passionately espoused a particular stance could indicate policy shifts and the changing balance of power.

An astute ambassador tracked the movements and interactions of courtiers to watch for such changes in government policy. A potential shift in the balance of power at the Spanish court proved to be enough to alarm the French shortly after the conclusion of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis. In February 1560 the French resident ambassador Sebastien de l’Aubespine felt able to report to Queen Mother Catherine de Medici that Philip, who had married Catherine’s eldest daughter Elizabeth less than a year before, felt a great sense of affection towards his brother-in-law Francis II. L’Aubespine also wrote about the subsequent coldness of two of Philip’s principal advisors, Fernando Álvarez de

78 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 31 March 1565, in CSPS 1558-1567, 412-413.
79 Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 16 October 1579, in CSPS 1568-1579, 702. Mendoza’s letter, dated 16 October, recounted several meetings of the Privy Council eight days before. Mendoza included specifics concerning the topics discussed and the ultimate decision reached about the Alençon marriage proposal currently tabled. It is possible that either Sir James Croft or Lord Henry Howard provided Mendoza with the intelligence, as both later became Mendoza’s sources at court.
Toledo y Pimentel, Duke of Alba, and Antoine Perrenot (later Cardinal Granvelle) towards Philip’s pro-French policy. When he wrote these letters, l’Aubespine did so using information gained from someone who had witnessed these interactions or knew each individual well enough to give information about their dispositions.\(^80\) The ambassador provided details not only about Philip’s personal feelings toward the French, but also informed Catherine that Philip’s pro-French inclinations squarely contradicted the sentiments of two of his closest advisors. Evidently, Philip had every intention of honoring the terms of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, which included surrendering the captured town of St. Quentin. Both Alba and Perrenot disagreed with this decision, and their sentiments were reflected in their interactions with the king.\(^81\) To the French, l’Aubespine’s reports that Philip felt an affinity for them provided a sense of security in their relations. The additional fact that two of Philip’s closest councilors disagreed with this sentiment strongly enough to voice their opinions and risk royal displeasure proved to be troubling, as the development of a powerful court faction could influence a monarch’s decisions. Although the terms of the treaty would have been common knowledge at court, any discussions or intentions to break that agreement should have been a tightly held secret, as this could have led to war. In order to learn such confidential

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\(^81\) For more information on the factional nature of Philip’s court, see David Lagomarsino, “Court factions and the formation of Spanish policy toward the Netherlands 1559-1567,” (PhD diss, Cambridge University 1973).
intelligence, l’Aubespine’s source must have had privileged access to either the councilors or their correspondence.  

In many of his dispatches, l’Aubespine mentioned Don Antonio de Toledo as a friend of the French and a valuable source of information. Apparently, Don Antonio provided l’Aubespine with news of Philip’s meetings, rumors circulating among courtiers, and general indications of the Spanish government’s position on a variety of issues. As Philip’s Master of the Horse, Don Antonio was in constant attendance on the king, and was in a position to learn valued intelligence. L’Aubespine met with Don Antonio frequently, often either before or after an audience with Philip. Don Antonio also served as a way by which l’Aubespine could gather more detailed information about the topics of those meetings. When in July 1559 l’Aubespine had an audience with Philip over the restitution of St. Quentin, which by the terms of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis must be returned to the French, Don Antonio spoke at length with l’Aubespine about the matter after he saw Philip.  

When Philip dispatched Don Antonio on a special mission to France, l’Aubespine sent letters ahead recommending that Catherine, the Duke of Guise, and the Cardinal of Lorraine all receive him well due to his value to the French as a source. Although when giving information of the greatest secrecy such as the differences between Alba and Philip, l’Aubespine never mentioned the name of his source, Don Antonio remains the

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82 At the time, Perrenot was serving in the regency government in Brussels, and to gather information from him, l’Aubespine’s source must have read his correspondence.
84 Sebastien de l’Aubespine to King Francis II, 31 July 1559, in Négociations, 54.
85 Sebastien de l’Aubespine to Catherine de Medici; Francis, Duke of Guise; Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine; in Négociations, 54-60.
most probable candidate as the leak. Like Ruy Gómez de Silva, Don Antonio had the access and connections to learn information that would be useful to the French; he had established himself as a pro-French member of Philip’s council and as an open friend to l’Aubespine.

In many instances, an ambassador had to make the active cultivation and development of contacts one of his primary activities at court. In rare cases, such sources presented themselves to him. Normally, sources had specific motivations for their decision to divulge confidential information, such as a desire for money, influence, or foreign support. In such a religiously charged environment, it was inevitable that some individuals provided intelligence out of a sense of religious affinity. In a February 1563 dispatch written entirely in cipher, Alvaro de la Quadra discussed his newfound relationship with just such a source. He related how a “well-known Catholic gentleman, a member of Parliament” had approached him about the possibility of Philip supporting the claim of Mary Stuart to the English Crown and assenting to Mary’s marriage with Philip’s son Don Carlos. Quadra was careful not to mention any specific names, even though the message was enciphered—he himself had experience with breaking ciphers and knew that they only offered a modicum of protection. Rather than divulge the name of the individual who came to visit, he instead described him as “a gentleman and a Christian and favorably known to friends of my own,” which gave a clear indication that the man in question was not only known as a good Catholic, but also had connections to

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86 Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 7 February 1563, in CSPS 1558-1567, 297. As Quadra only enciphered those portions of his messages he deemed to be most sensitive, it is important to note that this dispatch was written entirely in cipher.
members of the pro-Spanish contingent at the English court. The gentleman gave the names of “five persons of position,” who dispatched him to treat with Quadra, and agreed to try to arrange a meeting with these five gentlemen at Quadra’s request. As evidence of his good faith, the source provided information about the general sentiments of Parliament regarding the questions of the succession and religious settlement, including that, with the support of Philip, many nobles wanted to set aside inferior claimants in favor of the claim of Mary Stuart.

Quadra felt optimistic about the proposal of the anonymous gentleman, but restrained his enthusiasm with well-advised caution. The possibility of a Catholic succession—secured by a forcible removal of the current protestant queen—was the subject of many of his dispatches. Quadra lost all hope of Elizabeth’s conversion very early in his tenure at the English court. By the winter of 1563 he believed that the only way Catholicism could be restored was through the Stuart succession: “I clearly discern that matters here have reached such a position now that no other remedy is possible than the one proposed by him [the source]. There is not a single one of these pretenders who is strong enough to withstand the others and master the whole of them.”

Evidently, while the anonymous visitor proposed something that could make Quadra’s dreams come true—England secure in the Catholic fold, either ruled by a Spaniard (if Don Carlos married Mary Stuart) or at least by a pro-Spanish monarch—Quadra remained cautious. As he assured Philip repeatedly, he offered no commitments

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid. Quadra passed along the source’s request that Philip consider financial and potentially martial aid for any rebellion; although optimistic about the proposal, Quadra recognized that without military support a revolt would likely fail. This plot, and others like it, remained one of the principal topics of Quadra’s dispatches until his death in July 1563.
89 Ibid.
about Spanish support and did not even promise to contact Philip about the informant’s proposal. As Quadra noted, “I have been very wary about this man’s possibly being an agent of Cecil, and have taken every step to satisfy myself about him without finding any reason for suspicion.” Quadra used his contacts to reassure himself that the gentleman had a reputation as a good Catholic and friend to Spain. Several of Quadra’s letters carried specific news about negotiations in Parliament, including details concerning the debates over a new bill and Cecil’s appearance before the Upper House on the matter. When giving information on Parliamentary debates in succeeding letters, Quadra wrote that “they tell me” and added “as I have already informed your Majesty,” giving an indication that the information about both the negotiations in Parliament and general sentiment among the landed gentry regarding the succession question came from the same individual who had met with him two weeks earlier. Quadra continued to provide valuable intelligence concerning Parliamentary debates, amongst other matters, until his death in July 1563.

Religious affinity provided one of the most valuable sources for Philip’s ambassador two decades later. In March 1582 Don Bernardino de Mendoza, then ambassador in England, wrote to Philip to encourage him to consider a pension for Lord Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, one of Elizabeth's councilors and the great-nephew of Lord William Howard, whom Mendoza’s predecessor Feria had pensioned in early 1559. As Mendoza noted, forming a close relationship with the head of the Howard family, who were cousins of the queen, and “the richest in kinsmen and followers in the

90 Ibid.
91 Quadra to Philip II, 20 February 1563, in CSPS 1558-1567, 304.
north of England”—offered intelligence, martial and religious benefits.\(^92\) As Mendoza explained, Lord Henry had already been providing him with valuable intelligence, and had close ties with prominent Catholics across the kingdom. Mendoza described Howard as

> his information being prompt and valuable, not a point ever being missed, as he writes to me twice every week minute details of all that passes touching France, Flanders, Scotland, and Don Antonio [Don Antonio, Prior of Crato, claimant to the Portuguese throne]. He also lets me know everything that happens inside the palace, which he is well able to do.\(^93\)

Mendoza recommended a quarterly pension and noted that the funds not only secured Lord Henry, but also the entire house of Howard, to the Spanish cause. Mendoza justified the expense when he wrote that “I should give him many ducats every year in return for the information with which he furnishes me, and which I should have to purchase from others for more than its weight in gold, even if I could get it at all.”\(^94\) As a high-ranking courtier and councilor, Howard provided intelligence for Mendoza for more than two years and proved to be one of his most trusted sources at Elizabeth’s court.\(^95\)

Few ambassadors found a source as dependable and accurate as Howard: instead, they had to monitor their sources carefully for signs of deception. While some of the information proffered might indeed be meant for genuine purposes, the ambassador had to constantly question the source’s motivation and expectations. The monarch’s closest councilors interacted with their sovereign on a frequent basis, and as a result, knew the most reliable intelligence; they also had the most to lose if their actions were discovered

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\(^92\) Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 6 March 1582, in \textit{CSPS 1580-86}, 315.

\(^93\) Ibid.

\(^94\) Ibid, 315-316.

\(^95\) For more information on Mendoza’s intrigues while he served as Philip’s ambassador in France, see De Lamar Jensen, \textit{Diplomacy and Dogmatism}, chapters 5-6.
and incurred the monarch’s displeasure. Consequently, the councilor had to play a
cautious game, and balance the potential benefits against the risks.

In the case of Francisco Pereira’s source, Ruy Gómez de Silva, Pereira could
exploit shared nationality and familial bonds to secure a steady stream of news. Don
Antonio de Toledo promoted a pro-French policy at the Spanish court, which was
reflected in his selection as Philip’s special ambassador to the coronation of King Francis
II in the fall of 1559, and shared relevant details with the French ambassador. Alvaro de
la Quadra developed a tight network of sources at the English court largely based on
religious affinity; among all the Catholic ambassadors at Elizabeth's court, he worked
hardest to maintain solidarity and connections among English recusants, tirelessly
promoting their cause at both courts, and won friends among the Catholic nobility and
gentry as a result. Mendoza target Catholic courtiers such as Henry Howard.

Secretaries

If ambassadors could not learn intelligence from a councilor, the next logical step
led directly to the councilor’s confidantes and personal servants. In his 1564 treatise Del
secretario libri quattro, the Italian scholar Francesco Sansovino affirmed the hallowed
nature of the role of the secretary in keeping vital information confidential when he noted
that “secretaries derive their name from secrecy.”96 He reflected on the importance placed
on secretaries in the Venetian record system, in which the secretaries were placed in
charge of the records of the Cancelleria Secreta, the main archive of the Venetian
government.97 His statement is just as useful when evaluating the role and position of

96 Francesco Sansovino, Del secretario libri quattro, 1, in Filippo de Vivo, Information and
97 Vivo, 51-3.
secretaries in high-ranking positions elsewhere, whether they served monarchs, courtiers, councilors, or ambassadors, for although they might not have had the charge of government archives, they had access to valuable information. Most secretaries, particularly those maintained by ambassadors and councilors, possessed valuable intelligence and could gain access to more. At times, even secretaries themselves had servants who could access documents and information. In an April 1566 dispatch to Cecil, William Phayre, the chargé d’affaires in Spain, noted that “The King has lately taken an order that no secretary’s man shall have the writing of any paper of importance, to the intent that the secret should be more kept. Erasso [Francisco de Erasso, secretary and councilor of Philip II] sleeps with his papers under his head.”

The Venetians also tried to restrict the flow of information; it was an ancient custom to select illiterate men as the custodians of the Secreta, lest they submit to the temptation of copying and selling documents. Unfortunately, few followed this wise precept, to the degree that it became a subject of humor. One contemporary joke went: A custodian caught in the archive scribbling on a piece of paper was challenged, “So you can write!” The custodian replied, “No, Your Excellency, I am drawing.”

Most secretaries, save for those who served the monarch personally, tended to be lower-ranking individuals on the social scale, but literate. As his master’s combined clerk and confidante, the secretary saw all but the most closely held correspondence. Responsible for enciphering and deciphering encoded messages and dispatches, he carried messages to and from the court (especially while the court went on progress), and

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98 William Phayre to Sir William Cecil, 2 April 1566, in CSPF 1566-1568, 44.
99 Vivo, 51.
saw to his master’s personal needs. Some even undertook negotiations on behalf of his master; while in England in 1573, la Mothe-Fénélon used his secretary Sr. de Vassal to conduct several high-level negotiations with Cecil and other members of the Privy Council. 101

Most councilors, courtiers and resident ambassadors maintained at least one private secretary, and many employed multiple secretaries: for the period 1572-1580 Lord Treasurer William Cecil employed two or three, and as many as four in the final years leading to his death in 1598. 102 In order to cope with his increasing workload, in 1576 Philip’s private secretary Mateo Vázquez hired a third secretary, and a fourth the following year. 103 During his tenure as Secretary of State in the 1570s and 1580s Sir Francis Walsingham retained so many secretaries and clerks as to warrant comment. In 1590, a year after Walsingham’s death, one of his former secretaries advised Walsingham’s replacement not to use “too many clerks or servants as Sir Francis Walsingham did.” 104 An increased secretariat represented an increased security risk, even if it helped the councilor or courtier to operate more efficiently.

Any secretary could be considered a target, regardless of his service or rank; as Sir Thomas Hoby reported to William Cecil in 1566, the French ambassador had gathered intelligence from one of the clerks of the Privy Council. 105 After Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra’s death in July 1563 his secretary Luis Román reported a meeting with the

101 Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon to Charles IX, 23 May 1573, in CDMF vol. 5, 330.
104 Ibid.
105 Sir Thomas Hoby to Sir William Cecil, 11 June 1566, in CSPF 1566-1568, 84-5. For bodies such as the Privy Council, a clerk functioned in much the same capacity as a secretary for a councilor.
secretary of Elizabeth’s Lord Treasurer, the Catholic Marquis of Winchester. Román described the secretary as “a good Catholic and close confidante” of the late Bishop, and so a trustworthy source of intelligence. In his 11 May 1567 dispatch to Philip from Paris, ambassador Don Francés de Álava reported that he had gathered secret intelligence from an individual close to the secretary of the Count of Hornes concerning the secretary’s meeting with Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, who with Louis, Prince of Condé, was one of the primary leaders of the Huguenot faction and commanders of the Huguenots during the Wars of Religion in France. In February 1579 the Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza wrote from London that he would experience a loss in intelligence because of the death of one of the clerks in Sir Francis Walsingham’s office, who kept Mendoza informed of all that went on; Mendoza added that he had trusted his source because the man was a good Catholic.

Many ambassadors tried to restrict who could access their letters because they feared information could leak, even if they had complete faith in their own personal secretary. In 1560 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, then the resident ambassador in France, left a small part of his letter to the Queen in clear text but transcribed the remainder in his personal cipher himself. The first portion (in clear text) requested that the Queen instruct “Mr Secretary” to decipher the letter personally, in order to better protect the integrity of the information. The original letter now bears Cecil’s writing in the margins with the

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106 Luis Roman to Cardinal Granvelle, 20 January 1564, in CSPS 1558-1567, 354.
107 Don Francés de Álava to Philip II, 11 May 1567, in Negociaciones Con Francia. (Madrid, 1952) vol 9, 301. (hereafter denoted as NCF)
108 Bernardino de Mendoza to Gabriel de Zayas, 26 February 1579, in CSPS 1568-1579, 653-4.
clear text of the remainder of the message, proving that both Queen and Secretary respected Throckmorton’s wishes. ¹⁰⁹

When in England in April 1566, Don Diego Guzmán de Silva reported to Philip that, “these people have intelligence from everywhere, and are watching religious affairs closely, but it is difficult to understand what they are about, and with whom they correspond, as Cecil does it all himself, and does not even trust his own secretary,” he revealed a great deal about the role and position of secretaries, and of the potential value of the secretary as a source of information. Guzmán had learned enough—either from one of Cecil’s secretaries or one who knew their work habits—to deduce that Cecil refused to trust his secretary with valuable information. Rather, he chose to compose, encipher, decipher or copy much of his correspondence himself. Cecil’s work habits were legendary even among his contemporaries: one of his biographers later wrote that Cecil read up to a hundred petitions a day and only turned to his secretaries when unable to write. ¹¹⁰ The observation also suggests that Guzmán made at least a passing attempt to cultivate a relationship with Cecil’s secretary, enough so that he learned about the secretary’s work habits. Had he cultivated the secretary as a source successfully, Guzmán could conceivably have gained access to some of the most intimate secrets held by the English government.

In a May 1567 dispatch to Elizabeth, resident ambassador Sir Henry Norris wrote from Paris that “A secretary of the Spanish ambassador was lately practised with by the

¹⁰⁹ Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Queen Elizabeth, 25 April 1560, in CSPF 1559-1560, 581.
¹¹⁰ Smith, Hickes, 39. As Smith notes, anyone who has spent time in the English state papers has grown to recognize Cecil’s distinctive writing on a very large number of documents, including letters, memoranda, working papers and drafts. Many initial drafts are entirely in Cecil’s holograph, with markings showing the changes to be made. Others documents carry his notations in margins.
Admiral and those of the religion, who found means by him to discover much of his master’s doings and to get a copy of his cipher. The said ambassador having knowledge thereof has most cruelly tormented his said secretary and keeps him close prisoner in his house.” ¹¹¹ The “Admiral” in Norris’s message was Admiral Gaspard de Coligny. As the Huguenots counted on Protestant England as one of their greatest supporters (and source of both funds and weapons) both Condé and Coligny passed different types of intelligence to the English ambassador or English agents in France frequently. The secretary served Don Francés de Álava. In December 1566, Norris had obtained a copy of a packet of letters dispatched from Álava to the Duchess of Parma. As later letters between the two verify the Duchess’s receipt of the packet, do not carry any notices of letters gone missing, or of couriers being attacked, it is entirely possible that the letters came to Norris through the corrupted secretary. ¹¹² The packet contained letters Álava received from Spain and Álava’s position on the unrest in the Low Countries. In a somewhat ironic twist, Álava concluded his letter with a tale about how Queen Mother Catherine de Medici dispatched a servant to Álava frequently, with the intention of gaining his trust and thereby learning confidential information. Álava boasted that he “gets more from then than they do from him,” and that he “will take care that they shall not boast of outwitting a Spaniard.” ¹¹³ Unfortunately for Álava, efforts to outwit a Spaniard apparently did not come only from the Queen Mother. ¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Sir Henry Norris to Queen Elizabeth I, 24 May 1567. CSPF 1566-1568, 236.
¹¹² See the letters preserved between Álava and Margaret in Correspondance de Marguerite d’Autriche duchesse de Parme ed. M. Gachard (Brussels: C. Muguardt, 1867-81), vol 3 (hereafter denoted as CMP) and NCF.
¹¹³ Don Francés de Álava to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, December 1566, in CSPF 1566-1568, 160.
¹¹⁴ An element of caution is in order when evaluating the contents of the intercepted letters, as they may have been forgeries; others “captured” by the English or Huguenots during the period have been proven to be forged.
Members of all three governments continued to try to penetrate their neighbor’s communications through the person of the secretary. In November 1583 Sir Edward Stafford (whose own connections and role as a source is discussed on pages 88-90 below) sent a long letter to Sir Francis Walsingham detailing his efforts to cultivate connections in a variety of locations; he reported that he had done all he could to try to plant an agent in the Spanish ambassador’s residence without success. Stafford had pondered the possibility of bribing a Flemish banker with whom the ambassador had extensive financial dealings: that information could help unveil the financial transactions of the ambassador and his household. In Stafford’s view, his last opportunity to plant a source directly in the ambassador’s residence lay with the ambassador’s secretary, Diego Maldonado. In his letter, Stafford assured Walsingham that although “it will cost well,” any efforts to purchase Maldonado’s allegiance would be worth the cost. Stafford also detailed the efforts he had taken to gain agents in the houses of the Bishop of Glasgow, Mary Stuart’s representative at the French court, and the Duke of Guise, although he had not yet met with success in these ventures.

One of the most infamous incidents in which a secretary betrayed his master happened in 1562-6, when Borghese Venturini, an Italian secretary to Alvaro de la Quadra, Bishop of Aquila and Philip’s resident ambassador in England, surrendered Quadra’s secrets to the English and offered Queen Elizabeth his services. According to the surviving English sources, Venturini was approached by William Cecil in the spring of 1562. In exchange for a promise of a lucrative position in service to Queen Elizabeth and sanctuary in England, Venturini willingly offered to William Cecil access to all the

115 Sir Edward Stafford to Sir Francis Walsingham, 7 November 1583, in CSPF 1583-4, 198.
116 Ibid.
information he had about the Bishop’s activities. The fallout of the Venturini scandal is splashed across the dispatches sent to and fro in the summer and early winter of 1562, and only emerges when the sources from both sides are combined. Quadra filled several letters to Philip and to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, Philip’s regent in the Low Countries, with angry statements and pleas for aid to force the English to surrender his wayward secretary. The English, recognizing the value of the information in their hands, took full advantage of Venturini’s statements to advance their persecutions of the Spanish ambassador on a variety of issues.

The first surviving connections between Cecil and Venturini appear in April 1562, when Venturini proffered a seven page document relating a veritable laundry list of offenses committed by Quadra and Quadra’s personal feelings on important matters. The surviving paper endorsed by Cecil’s pen entitled “Statements by Borghese Venturini” addresses issues as diverse as English predations on Spanish shipping in the Indies, Spanish support for different Catholic claimants to the English throne, and Elizabeth's supposed hostility toward the Spanish in the Low Countries.117 A great deal of attention is devoted to the relationship between both England and Scotland, and the personal one between Elizabeth and Mary Stuart.118 For Venturini, surrendering this document to the English marked the point of no return. He had entrusted this information to Cecil and the Queen, both to use it against Quadra and to protect him from the ambassador’s inevitable fury.

By the end of May 1562, Venturini had broken ties with the ambassador publicly, because Quadra “was aware of all that I [Venturini] had been doing with Lord Robert and

118 Ibid.
Cecil.” He had entered Elizabeth's service, thus ending any chances of obtaining further information on the Bishop’s activities. Quadra’s letter to Philip dated 6 June 1562 related the ambassador’s side of the story in great detail, revealing not only the depths of Venturini’s treachery but also specific information about Quadra’s own networks at the English court:

They have lately adopted a means that had succeeded better than the others, that of seducing one of my servants. He frequently went from me to Cecil on business, and the devil has prevailed in him to such an extent, or the secretary’s promises have induced him…to leave my service and enter that of the Queen. This being arranged, and needing to find some colourable excuse for the change he picked a quarrel with another of my servants…and on the following day…went and gave himself up to the palace people. After they had interrogated him at length they found he would be more useful to them in my house than out of it, so they sent him to try to re-enter my service until there was something of importance to tell them. On the day he came back I was informed of all that happened by B, a spy who was placed in his lodgings, and also by other servants of the Queen and of Cecil and by Henry Sidney. Sidney informed me of the arrangement…although I was convinced that he told me in all sincerity as my friend…I feared that others might have informed him knowing he would convey it to me in order to see if I took any action.

In his letter Quadra continued to detail how he had concluded that Venturini had indeed switched sides, as Sidney and others had said. Within days of Venturini’s return, the English arrested three individuals known to associate with the ambassador, and “bandits” kidnapped and searched a courier on a mission from Quadra to the Duchess of Parma in the Low Countries. Quadra could only conclude that the English had taken these actions on the basis of information provided to them by Venturini. He responded by

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119 CSPF 1562, 42-3. In a later statement Venturini confirmed that he did leave the ambassador’s residence on the evening of 23 May 1562.
120 Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 6 June 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 241-2; also in CODOIN vol. 87, 407.
121 For the complete tale of the unfortunate Pierre de Springer, see chapter 3: “The World of Paper,” 000-0.
dispatching conciliatory letters to both the secretary and Cecil.\textsuperscript{122} When he received no response from Cecil, on 2 June Quadra dispatched Luis de Paz (the same individual who funneled pension money to Lord Howard in 1559) to Venturini with instructions to beg Venturini to return to the ambassador’s house.\textsuperscript{123}

Even though he had conclusive evidence of his secretary’s treachery before Venturini left his house in the end of May Quadra still hesitated to tip his hand by openly sending him under arrest to Flanders. Rather, the ambassador tried to get him out of the country by dispatching him on a mission to Brussels. When Venturini refused to go either to Brussels or to return to his own house in London, Quadra dismissed him. He sought an audience with Elizabeth about the whole matter with the intentions of exonerating himself of any charges and to seek the return of his wayward servant. Elizabeth declined either to expel Venturini from the country or to return him to the ambassador’s house, but rather offered to arrest him and make him available for interrogation. Once the English had a better chance to interrogate Venturini, the Queen’s attitude toward Quadra cooled rapidly. The English never arrested Venturini; he remained within the palace, available for their daily interrogations.

Ultimately Venturini provided the English with extensive and valuable information about Quadra’s actions, networks, sources, and intentions toward them, for the alleged price of “400 ducats and a good marriage.”\textsuperscript{124} On 8 June Cecil dispatched a letter concerning the matter to Sir Thomas Chaloner, Elizabeth’s ambassador to Spain. In it, he informed Chaloner that the Queen had been counseled to demand Quadra’s

\textsuperscript{122} CSPF 1562, 48-9.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 71.
\textsuperscript{124} Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 20 June 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 246.
revocation on the grounds that Quadra had engaged in “negociations to the dishonour of the Queen, the breaking of the amity betwixt her and the King, the procuring of tumult in this realm, provoking the King to war against England, and other foul things” not fit for an ambassador.\footnote{CSPF 1562, 83.} In a series of interviews with Quadra in the weeks and months following Venturini’s betrayal, the English accused Quadra of a long list of crimes that he had committed which fell outside the boundaries of his office.\footnote{The host government’s right to place limitations on an ambassador’s actions had been a point of contention between West European monarchs for decades. Philip II later expelled Dr. John Man for unseemly behavior, and the English confined or interrogated several Scottish and Spanish representatives.} Unfortunately for Quadra, as a longtime servant Venturini had gathered a great deal of information that proved extremely damaging. In a 20 June 1562 dispatch to Philip, Quadra admitted that the orders for the arrest of the Irish rebel Shane O’Neil devolved directly from Venturini’s statements concerning O’Neil’s involvement with the Spanish.\footnote{Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 20 June 1562, CSPS 1558-1567, 246. Quadra had provided material and spiritual support for O’Neill, a fellow Catholic, and actively encouraged an Irish Catholic rebellion against Elizabeth.} Other charges included Quadra’s involvement with the Arthur Pole plot, Spanish relations with Mary Stuart, and communications between the ambassador and Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox.\footnote{Quadra kept careful track of the fate of the Poles and Margaret Lennox; see his letters in CSPS 1558-1567, and also in AGS Estado 8340. In a February letter to Philip, Quadra informed him that the Poles had been charged with treason and condemned to death before the charges had been made public. Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 27 February 1563, AGS, Estado leg. 8340 f. 167.}

Venturini left England briefly for the Continent in the fall of 1562, only to return in early 1563 in order to help the English press their case against Quadra for his involvement in a botched assassination attempt on one of Elizabeth’s courtiers. Venturini’s information on Quadra—payment for which he reminded Cecil continually—provided the English with enough to accelerate their actions against Shane O’Neill and
led directly to the multiple raids at Durham Place searching for recusant Catholics attending Mass illegally. The matter continued to influence relations between the English and Spanish even after Quadra’s death in July 1563; his successor Don Diego Guzmán de Silva noted in a dispatch that “Luis de Paz has an understanding with a person with whom he can talk and who only trusts him. These are so suspicious and reserved since the Bishop’s secretary played him that wicked trick that it is impossible to deal with them except by the intermediation of certain persons.” Venturini appeared again in the English records involved with intrigue later in the 1560s—strangely enough, once more in the service of the Spanish ambassador.

It is clear why the English would have wanted to gain access to Venturini’s information. As a long-time confidante and servant of Quadra, Venturini knew many intimate secrets about both his master and others in his household. He provided information about meetings between Quadra’s servants and recusant Catholics, Irish rebels, Scottish representatives, and other disaffected individuals. Venturini had read or written much of Quadra’s correspondence, and knew the extent of his contacts and what policies he recommended. He also provided the English with a copy of the Spanish general cipher, so the English could decode letters between the Spanish government and its representatives across Europe. Cecil was fortunate that Venturini was apparently of flexible enough loyalties—both political and religious—that he was willing to consider changing sides for the right price. Born “in the pope’s dominions,” holder of several church offices, and indisputably Catholic, Venturini nevertheless proved willing to ally

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129 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 4 September 1564 in CODOIN vol 89, 34; CSPS 1558-1567, 379.
130 Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay to Philip, 13 July 1562, in NCF vol. 4, 185.
with Protestants.¹³¹ No one held any illusions about Venturini’s motivations; Cecil in his 8 June 1562 letter to Chaloner noted that Venturini only pretended to be moved by conscience to break the ambassador’s confidences, and Venturini asked Cecil for financial consideration.¹³²

The means through which Cecil and Venturini made contact demonstrate the nature of informal personal contact in the early modern court. Many ambassadors eschewed the prospect of visiting courtiers and councilors personally on a regular basis; they risked slights from being refused access, and found it much more difficult to deny the substance of a conversation for which they had been present. Most ambassadors and courtiers relied on the services of secretaries, couriers and personal servants to work as messengers at court.¹³³ A visit from the ambassador’s secretary was far more discreet than one from an ambassador. While the ambassador had to follow strict protocols and declare the intentions of his visit publicly, a secretary did not and could hide clandestine negotiations behind the guise of delivering a message. Courtiers and ambassadors alike monitored the frequency and nature of contact between prominent individuals, and reported them in their dispatches and correspondence. It was a way of tracking contact and potentially determining any change in the political tides at court. By using Venturini for such tasks, Quadra placed him in communication with Cecil in a situation that Quadra could not hope to monitor personally, and gave Cecil the opportunity to determine how Venturini might respond to any offer. If Cecil controlled access to that meeting carefully, ¹³¹ CSPF 1562, 49.

¹³² Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Chaloner, 8 June 1562, in CSPF 1562; Borghese Venturini to Sir William Cecil, 23 May 1562, in CSPF 1562, 49; 23 June 1562, in CSPF 1562, 89.

¹³³ The pages of diplomatic correspondence are filled with examples in which couriers, secretaries and servants performed messenger services for their master, whether he was an ambassador or courtier, such as that of Luis de Paz for Feria and Quadra. The roles of Luis de Paz, Guido Cavalcanti, and Antonio Almeida are examined more fully in chapter 2, “The World of the Courier.”
he could have prevented other spies from listening to the content of the conversation and reporting it to Quadra.

Although he failed to learn of the first English overtures to his servant, Quadra discovered the nature of Venturini’s perfidy from well informed sources eventually. The ambassador’s first letter to Philip on the matter reveals that Quadra had an effective intelligence network in operation at the time the scandal broke. Informants had leaked the news of the arrangement between Venturini and the English when Venturini left Quadra’s service initially and then attempted to reenter it days later. The ambassador even named one of his sources: Sir Henry Sidney. Sidney had married Mary Dudley, sister of Robert Dudley; his niece was Jane Suárez de Figueroa (née Dormer), Countess of Feria and wife of Philip’s first Elizabethan ambassador; Henry had even asked King Philip to serve as godfather to his son Philip Sidney. Through the Dudley connection, Sidney had access to the highest information at court. Sidney himself had a lengthy relationship with Quadra and his predecessor Feria; as early as 1559 Dudley had used Sidney as his go-between to press for an Austrian marriage, and upon the death of Dudley’s wife Amy had begun negotiating for Spanish support of Dudley’s plans to marry the queen. Sidney had little compunction over divulging confidential information to the Spanish ambassador, whether or not it was directly at the behest of his brother-in-law.

Quadra’s mention of additional sources offering confirmation of the intelligence, combined with his own actions after receiving the information, raises both the issues of multiple sources and misinformation. Confidence in the information came with corroboration from different sources; the spy “B” whom Quadra had placed in Venturini’s lodgings verified the arrangement between the secretary and Cecil, as did the
other servants in the service of both Cecil and the Queen. It would have been very
difficult, if not impossible, for Cecil to have coordinated the leaks from all four (or more)
of these individuals. Theoretically, Cecil and Dudley could have instructed Sidney to
have a quiet conversation about the matter with Quadra, and Venturini could have let slip
something to his servant deliberately, but for Cecil to have identified servants both in his
service and that of the Queen accurately, and given them similar instructions, stretches
the bounds of credulity. In his letter Quadra confirmed that he believed that Sidney
offered the information “in all sincerity as my friend” but recognized that the news might
have been planted for Sidney to reveal deliberately.\textsuperscript{134} The deliberate leak could have
been designed to gauge Quadra’s reaction to the news; a guilty man would have taken
action immediately to protect him from further harm.

Secretaries performed vital services at the early modern court and in the world of
negotiation. They served not only as their master’s clerks, but also as their confidantes,
messengers, and negotiators. As a constant presence in their master’s household,
secretaries occupied a position of great trust, thus making them ideal targets as a source
of information. Properly cultivated, a well-placed secretary could provide information on
matters as diverse as his master’s personal work habits, to his daily visitors and
correspondence.

\textbf{Servants}

Opportunities to gather intelligence filled a courtier’s or ambassador’s household;
while developing relationships with secretaries could offer some of the most closely held
secrets, there were other avenues available. Any servant who lived with his master might

\textsuperscript{134} Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 6 June 1562, in \textit{CODOIN} vol. 87, 407.
be able to provide valuable information, for a keen observer tracking movements, visitors, and documents in his employer’s household could reveal a great deal even if he had not read the official correspondence. An attentive courtier or ambassador kept a close watch on his servants for any signs of treachery or double-dealing. Although it was difficult to monitor a servant’s every move, once under suspicion a courtier might use the services of his other servants to watch the suspect. When questionable behavior was observed, the master was perfectly within his rights to interrogate the servant; as Sir Amias Paulet, the English ambassador to France in 1577, noted, “George Ascott, that once served Mr. Dale [Paulet’s predecessor] is grown to be a messenger in England, and when in Paris is continually with the Ambassador of Scotland, it may seem good to cause him to be examined.”\textsuperscript{135} Although Paulet lacked conclusive evidence of Ascott’s guilt, the mere connections between Ascott and other parties warranted interrogation.

Courtiers could also plant servants in locations in which they might obtain intelligence. Sir William Cecil did so during the investigation of Mary Stuart’s ambassador John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, when Leslie’s involvement in the Ridolfi plot came to English attention.\textsuperscript{136} In other instances servants could be questioned concerning the activities of their masters. In January 1560 Sir Thomas Chaloner sent a letter to Elizabeth that included information obtained when Chaloner got a servant of a prominent

\textsuperscript{135} Sir Amias Paulet to Sir Francis Walsingham, 9 May 1577, in CSPF 1575-77, 577.

\textsuperscript{136} William Cecil used the services of one William Herle to gather evidence against the members of the Ridolfi Plot, which included Leslie and Philip’s ambassador Don Guerau de Spes, among others. See http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/herle/index.html for a short biography of Herle and transcriptions of all his known letters.
French courtier drunk and gathered intelligence about the courtier’s plans concerning his potential voyage to Scotland.137

In June 1562 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, then the English resident ambassador in France, sent a letter to Sir William Cecil about the possibility of placing a source with the Cardinal of Ferrara, the papal nuncio to France. The Cardinal, Francisco d’Este, had connections at both the French and Spanish courts, and a source within his household could tell much about his contacts. Throckmorton suggested that:

if Mr Shakerley who lately dwelt wt the Cardinal of Ferrare be…not too well employed I wold it might please hir Qu Ma\textsuperscript{lie} [Majesty] to give him som present, and to recommend him favorablie to sayd Cardinall agayn. Fr I do believe wth good instruction from I cold have hym to do hir Ma\textsuperscript{lie} [Majesty] some necessarie service as the word standeth.138

Thomas Shakerley had served the Cardinal as a personal servant previously; Throckmorton aimed to return him, after receiving a gift from Elizabeth, with the hope of planting him as a source. A month later, Throckmorton reported that Shakerley, after returning from a visit to England, now seemed less willing to perform any services for the English. Evidently Cecil did not share Throckmorton’s hopes for Shakerley and had not given him a gift. Shakerley took offense, as apparently he “thought to have had there better consideration than fair words.”139 In a later letter Throckmorton rebuked Cecil for his parsimony by writing “it would not have been much to have bestowed upon him 100 crowns.”140 Clearly, both Cecil and Throckmorton recognized that Shakerley’s allegiance to the English came not out of a sense of loyalty or duty, but rather out of regard for his

137 Sir Thomas Chaloner to Queen Elizabeth I, 6 January 1560, in CSPF 1559-1560, 269-270.
139 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Sir William Cecil, 9 July 1562, in CSPF 1562, 150.
140 Ibid.
pocketbook, but while Throckmorton felt that the potential information to be gained outweighed the risks of losing 100 crowns, Cecil thought the opposite.

Mistakenly, Throckmorton thought he succeeded in gaining a source when Shakerley entered Ferrara’s service. In an 8 November 1562 letter from Throckmorton’s successor Sir Thomas Smith to Cecil, Smith described a message he had received from the Cardinal of Ferrara by “his man Shakerley.”[^141] The matter of Shakerley remained a contentious one between Throckmorton, then traveling with the Huguenot camp during the First War of Religion after having been captured on his return to England, and Sir Thomas Smith. Faced with the facts, Throckmorton had to admit defeat; in a 22 November 1562 letter to Smith, Throckmorton described Shakerley not as a servant of the Queen, but rather as “the spy of the Queen Mother and the Legate.”[^142] Shakerley was later recorded as having carried messages for both the Cardinal and Queen Mother Catherine de Medici to Throckmorton and Smith. As the Papal Nuncio in France, Ferrara had access to an extensive diplomatic network across Europe and sources within the French government. Had Shakerley turned to the English, Throckmorton (and his successor Smith) could have learned information about correspondence between agents of the papacy, information on the Cardinal’s contacts, meetings and other intelligence.

Servants, like secretaries, filled an important role in a variety of prominent households, including those of councilors and courtiers. Frequently, they carried messages and served as unofficial couriers when necessary. Servants could provide detailed information concerning correspondence and documents, but perhaps most

[^141]: Sir Thomas Smith to Sir William Cecil, 7 November 1562, in CSPF 1562, 432.
[^142]: Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Sir Thomas Smith, 22 November 1562, in CSPF 1562, 487.
importantly, they had the opportunity to witness interactions and monitor the movements of their master.

**Ambassadors**

Surviving diplomatic correspondence is full of efforts to plant or bribe sources within an ambassador’s household, because ambassadors themselves could offer some of the best information of all. In many instances resident ambassadors at foreign courts developed friendships with their fellow diplomats, born out of religious, political, or personal preference. In England, the successive French and Spanish ambassadors often maintained a close working relationship in which information changed hands frequently; despite religious differences, the English ambassadors in Spain made every effort to befriend the Portuguese, Spanish and Venetian representatives at Philip’s court.

Paris, as the locus of early modern communications and diplomatic intercourse, proved to be very fruitful for representatives attempting to collect information from other resident ambassadors.\(^{143}\) During his tenure in France, Bernardino de Mendoza developed a close relationship with the Mary Stuart’s ambassador James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow, who remained in Paris even after Mary’s execution in 1587. In a letter to Philip, Mendoza affirmed the importance of Beaton to his work when he wrote, “he [Beaton] has promised, with the same diligence which he always displays in Your Majesty’s interests…he sends me instant advice of everything, sometimes even at midnight. In acknowledgement of this, I did not think it too extravagant to give him a

\(^{143}\) See De Lamar Jensen, “French Diplomacy and the Wars of Religion,” in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* Vol 5 No 2 (Oct 1974) 23-46 for an overview of the French diplomatic system in service during the period. At any given time during the period in question, Paris had as many, or more, visiting ambassadors than any other city in Western Europe, and the French government maintained an extensive network of diplomats that surpassed that of the English.
little present.”\textsuperscript{144} Beaton also made the arrangements for every meeting between Henry, Duke of Guise and Mendoza and Philip’s special envoy, Juan Iníñez. As unofficial payment for these services, Mendoza gave Beaton several gifts, which, he explained to Philip, served to “signify your approval of his services.”\textsuperscript{145} Payments included pensions for several of Beaton’s servants, including Thomas Morgan, an English Catholic exile. Mendoza also maintained close ties with the papal nuncio until the nuncio’s death in March 1587.

During times of peace, ambassadors could utilize close relationships with their fellow expatriates. This also gave governments another means through which they could communicate, and ensure that each received the proper messages. Elizabeth’s ambassador Sir Nicholas Throckmorton heartily approved of Philip’s resident ambassador Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay when both served at the French court in the early 1560s. The two paid frequent visits to each other’s residences, shared courier services (which in itself could be a dangerous practice) and exchanged intelligence. At one point Throckmorton even recommended that Elizabeth give Chantonnay some present for Christmas as he had saved her so much money in postal costs by allowing the English to use his couriers.\textsuperscript{146}

In a March 1560 dispatch to the Queen concerning the potential for a Spanish intervention on the side of the French in the current conflict in Scotland, Throckmorton suggested that the Queen attempt to verify information gathered from Chantonnay in Paris through Quadra in England. In order to protect the integrity of his relationship with

\textsuperscript{144} Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, quoted in De Lamar Jensen, \textit{Diplomacy and Dogmatism}, 99.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} CSPF 1559-60, 353. While the practice of sharing posts remained fairly common between ambassadors, it could prove to be a dangerous practice. However, most governments seem to have accepted the risks in light of the cost-savings that could be had.
Chantonnay (and prevent the loss of the intelligence) Throckmorton begged the Queen not only to be discreet, but to avoid mentioning Chantonnay’s name altogether; as Throckmorton noted, “Chantonnay has already laid to my charge that the French learn from England what he has said to me.”\(^{147}\) Such a remark not only indicated the value of the intelligence gathered from Chantonnay, but confirmed that the French representative the Chevalier de Seurre remained very interested in any news that the English obtained through him. The fruitful relationship lasted as long as Throckmorton remained at his post, and continued after Throckmorton’s departure (or rather repeated departures) from France in 1562-3. In a December 1563 letter to Throckmorton’s replacement Sir Thomas Smith, Sir William Cecil advised, “You maye take occasion to speke of this matter to y\(^c\) [the] Span[ish] embasador there so as if he shuld here any thyg[n]g hereof he might by you know the truth.”\(^{148}\) As Smith had already encountered criticisms for his relationships with fellow ambassadors in France, hopefully Cecil’s note provided him the level of reassurance and direction he needed.

Many of Chantonnay’s dispatches to Philip contain similar sentiments concerning the successive English ambassadors. Frequently, he noted meetings and discussions with Throckmorton, and appeared to have obtained valuable intelligence through these encounters. Throckmorton often approached Chantonnay concerning official matters, as the English found dealing with Philip’s ambassador Alvaro de la Quadra difficult, and Elizabeth's ambassadors had made little headway in networking at the Spanish court. The two representatives shared news about their audiences with the King and Queen Mother, to see if the topics discussed in these meetings were the same or different. Chantonnay

\(^{147}\) Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Queen Elizabeth, 29 March 1560, in \textit{CSPF 1559-60}, 488.

\(^{148}\) Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 16 December 1563. BL: Lansdowne 102, f. 46.
maintained a close relationship with Throckmorton, and developed a cordial working one with Smith. Although at times the information passed by Chantonnay to Throckmorton had a regrettable habit of being heard by the wrong individuals, this failed to derail the friendship.

Sometimes the relationships between ambassadors could become too close for their respective governments. In November 1562, Sir William Cecil felt compelled to pass along some of the Council’s misgivings concerning Smith’s relationships with other ambassadors at the French court. Unlike Throckmorton, who had had several years in which to develop effective intelligence networks, at the beginning of his tenure Smith found himself alone at the French court, bereft of friends who could provide the latest news. He sought it from what seemed to be the only source, the papal nuncio Francisco d’Este, the Cardinal of Ferrara—the same representative on whom Throckmorton had tried to plant an informant. In his letter, Cecil noted that he tried to “wryte playnely and friendly to yow” but that “most here have mislyked that yow have treated with the legate, and seme willyng that yow shold have bene reprimaded therefore.”

Cecil continued to explain the cause for concern in London, because “Here be amongst us dyvers very suspicious of dealyng with the popes ministers and therefore I wish yow to forebeare yr [the] cardinall in these affayres…I must also praye yow take hede of monsr de Serre, for he is very fine and nemble in all his practiques.”

Clearly, the Queen and Council (Cecil added a note passing along the Queen’s misgivings as well) feared that the papal nuncio and French courtier might prove able to extract more intelligence from Smith than

149 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 17 November 1562. BL: Lansdowne 102, f. 40.
150 Ibid.
he could gain, and thought it necessary to caution him against any dealings with these individuals.

Many ambassadors maintained relationships outside formal contact at the host court through visits and correspondence. These networks enabled them to trade information and share their news without interacting in full view of the entire court. During his mission to France in 1562-3, Philip’s special ambassador Garcilasso de la Vega maintained an extensive correspondence with Francis, Duke of Guise and his brother Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine. Vega even sent them virtual copies of every dispatch he sent back to Madrid concerning his meetings and negotiations.\(^\text{151}\) The French ambassador Fourquevaux made extensive use of his fellow diplomats during his seven-year tenure in Madrid as the French ambassador, in large part because it was the primary way he could gather information before seeing Philip in audiences. As he noted in a dispatch sent to Charles on 3 September 1566, Fourquevaux held a series of meetings with individuals before his audience with the king on his war in the Mediterranean and the impact it might have on his troublesome situation in the Low Countries. In these conferences Fourquevaux learned of differing opinions: those espoused by the papal nuncio; Francisco Pereira, the Portuguese ambassador; and those fronted by “other ambassadors or agents, or my secret friends.”\(^\text{152}\) Fourquevaux’s contacts amongst other ambassadors proved useful in determining both court gossip and the contents of others’ meetings with Philip.

\(^{151}\) Philip sent Garcilasso de la Vega to France to try to negotiate between the English and the French concerning the English capture of Havre de Grace. Vega’s letters to Guise and Lorraine are preserved in BNF FF 15874, f. 10-14, 20-24, etc. They are virtually identical, and dated the same, to those letters Vega dispatched to Philip and the Duke of Alba.

\(^{152}\) Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 3 September 1566, in DF vol. 1, 120, cited in Parker, Grand Strategy, 219.
In England, the French and Spanish resident ambassadors often developed close working relationships based partly on their shared religion. As two Catholic representatives in a Protestant country, they shared the common goal of fostering some sense of unity among Catholics and promoting the Catholic cause in general. One of their greatest points of contact arose because of Mary Stuart, the strongest Catholic candidate for the English throne. Half French, Mary had been raised in France and, however briefly, had been Queen of France through her first marriage to Francis II. The Spanish hoped to counter Mary’s undeniable French ties by arranging a Hapsburg marriage for her after the Francis’s death in December 1560. Although Mary’s French relatives, the ultra-Catholic Guise family, wanted Mary to marry another Frenchman, Queen Mother Catherine de Medici instructed her ambassadors in England and Scotland to encourage a Hapsburg marriage for Mary as a way of weakening the power of her upstart family. Frequently, the respective ambassadors discussed the Stuart marriage, especially following Mary’s return to Scotland in 1561. They also conducted informal negotiations with the hope of proposing a deal acceptable to Mary, the Hapsburgs and Catherine.\textsuperscript{153} Their information exchanges were not limited to intelligence concerning Mary Stuart. When Quadra became entangled in the ill-starred Arthur Pole plot in 1562-3, he learned of Pole’s approaches to the French from Paul de Foix, Catherine’s resident ambassador.\textsuperscript{154} De Foix also offered information about his meetings with Elizabeth concerning the negotiations surrounding English intervention in the First War of Religion. Ultimately, although at times their missions clashed, the French and Spanish diplomats in England developed a closer working relationship than anywhere else.

\textsuperscript{153} Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 28 March 1563, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 312.
\textsuperscript{154} Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 15 September 1562, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 260.
In his remarkable journal maintained during his tenure in France as a resident ambassador in 1571, Sir Francis Walsingham recorded his meetings and correspondence with other ambassadors at the French court. He received numerous visits from a variety of ambassadors, including the representatives from Spain, Scotland, Venice, Florence, Saxony and Tuscany. Although Walsingham failed to record the contents of these meetings in his journal, he often noted them in his dispatches to London. These meetings, dinners and interviews ranged from the perfunctory compliments paid to new residents at court to discussions over serious issues, such as the proposed marriage between Elizabeth and Henry d’Anjou or Philip’s recent successes against the Ottomans in the Mediterranean. The frequency of Walsingham’s meetings with fellow ambassadors often equaled—and occasionally outnumbered—those with members of the French government. These connections proved of vital importance for the English government, for London hosted far fewer resident ambassadors when compared to Paris and Madrid, and none from any of the Italian states. Meetings between ambassadors—such as the representatives from Venice, Florence, Savoy, and the Holy Roman Empire—in France represented the only official line of communication open between the governments.

The presence of Scottish envoys in both London and Paris gave the Spanish an opportunity to conduct informal negotiations and maintain close communications without having to maintain a representative in Edinburgh. Both the Spanish and Scottish (royal) ambassadors had dreams of a Catholic restoration, and often cooperated in the

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furtherance of these goals. In January 1569, in an effort to promote the interests of his mistress Mary Stuart, resident ambassador John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, approached Don Guerau de Spes in a midnight meeting about the possibility of planting a friendly source on one Alleyn, Cecil’s servant and secretary. According to the informal arrangement, both ambassadors would share equally in any information provided through the source, but subsequent letters do not document the success of this endeavor. Leslie and Spes shared valuable intelligence as both became deeply intertwined with the successive Norfolk and Ridolfi plots. In the account records Spes penned after leaving England, he noted that he had provided Leslie with ten pounds for “services to His Majesty” in October 1571.\(^\text{156}\)

Perhaps the most spectacular case of an ambassador serving as a source of information happened in Paris, when by 1587 the Spanish had suborned Sir Edward Stafford, Elizabeth's ambassador to France. Although generations of scholars have deliberated over the “treason of Sir Edward Stafford,” an article by Mitchell Leimon and Geoffrey Parker puts to rest any doubt that Stafford was indeed on the Spanish payroll, and to earn his pay provided them with all types of military, political and diplomatic intelligence.\(^\text{157}\) Dispatched to France as resident ambassador in 1583, by early 1587 Stafford’s endemic poverty made him an ideal candidate for the Spanish ambassador Don Bernardino de Mendoza (who had been expelled from England in 1584) to negotiate terms for payment in exchange for information. Although driven in part because of long-

\(^\text{156}\) “Memoria de los gastos extraordinarios,” of Don Guerau de Spes, 18 February 1572. AGS: DGT inventario 24, libro 566, unfoliated. It is interesting to note that while Mary regularly used funds from Spain to support Leslie, these monies are not recorded under the extraordinary expense account, and are likely different from the funds Spes gave to the Bishop of Ross.

standing differences with Elizabeth's Secretary of State Sir Francis Walsingham, Stafford’s incentive was clearly born out of his need for money.

The Spanish ambassadors Don Bernardino de Mendoza and his predecessor Juan Bautista de Tassis had long pondered the possibility of bribing Stafford; Tassis had suggested the possibility in a letter in October 1584. By early 1587 Stafford had accepted a payment of 2,000 crowns from Mendoza, and had supplied him with high-grade intelligence on issues as diverse as the Queen’s instructions to the commissioners at Bourbourg, details of diplomatic relations with the Dutch and French, news about the preparations of Sir Francis Drake’s expedition, and most alarmingly, information about the state of the Queen’s fleet. Correctly, Leimon and Parker reject the argument that Stafford had been primed to pass misinformation to Mendoza, as Stafford’s actions regarding the plans to sack Cadiz overturn this hypothesis. Ultimately, Stafford provided Mendoza with some of the richest intelligence gathered in the period by any French, English or Spanish agent. As Leimon and Parker noted, such actions not only constituted treason, but “at 5,200 crowns, Stafford surely represented the intelligence bargain of the century.”

Certainly Stafford’s treason is one of the clearest cases of an ambassador serving as a source for another country, and did indeed unequivocally fall in the category of treason. Sharing information, by itself, did not necessarily constitute a betrayal of one’s country; in many instances, ambassadors received encouragement to share intelligence

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158 Ibid., 1148.
159 Ibid., 1151. Stafford passed a warning to Mendoza about the planned raid on Cadiz as soon as he received the news. Mendoza’s letter carrying the warning arrived in Madrid the day after Drake’s attack on Cadiz. It is impossible to argue that the English would have wanted intelligence about their planned operations to be leaked to the Spanish, as Stafford could not guarantee that Mendoza’s courier would not arrive in time.
160 Ibid., 1156.
and develop networks amongst his fellow representatives. In his 1564 instructions to his new ambassador Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, Philip ordered his representative to cultivate a relationship with the French diplomat for the purposes of exchanging information.\textsuperscript{161} Similar notes abounded in the new instructions for representatives being dispatched by all three governments. In extreme cases, such cooperation amounted to plotting against their host government, such as that between Leslie and Spes; the French ambassador la Mothe-Fénélon hovered on the edges of the successive conspiracies, under orders from Catherine de Medici to not become too deeply involved. In many instances it amounted to friendship and a close working relationship between fellow expatriates, even those representing countries across confessional lines.

\textbf{Conclusion: walking the line between politics and treason}

Connections at court provided some of the most sensitive information an ambassador or courtier could hope to collect. However, the challenges of developing and using these networks could prove to be difficult indeed; as noted by la Mothe-Fénélon, “it is not some little thing to succeed” at the task of gathering intelligence.\textsuperscript{162} The intelligence ranged from hard information, such as Francisco Pereira’s detailed account of the arrest of Don Carlos, to rumors and gossip concerning a variety of individuals. Even general sentiments could prove valuable in illuminating the monarch’s temperament on subjects; reports detailing conflicts of opinion between a sovereign and councilors gave the writer intelligence not only of the monarch’s personal dispositions but information on divisions among the highest echelons of government.

\textsuperscript{161} Philip II to Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, 19 January 1564, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 349-354.
\textsuperscript{162} Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon to Charles IX, in \textit{CDMF} vol. 5, 134.
Despite the potential for misinformation, ambassadors recorded almost everything of significance that they learned; a scrupulous ambassador listed not only what he had discovered, but his personal thoughts on both the source and intelligence. As the recipient only rarely knew the source personally, he had to rely on the ambassador’s report to provide enough information to decide whether the government should give credence to the intelligence, and if it should be used in formulating policy. Suborning individuals who could access these secrets—secretaries and servants—proffered additional intelligence opportunities. As high-profile individuals, both councilors and ambassadors found it difficult to arrange clandestine meeting with someone of an equally high position without attracted unwanted attention. It often proved easier—and nearly as fruitful—to cultivate relationships with those who served for the most sensitive information.

All parties had to contend with the fact that such behavior, if discovered, could be considered treason. As Sir John Harington quipped in his *Epigrams*,

> Treason doth never prosper, what’s the reason?  
> For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.\(^\text{163}\)

As defined by early modern governments and noted by Sir John, the meaning of treason proved to be vague and nebulous when compared with simple politics—no doubt done deliberately, to give governments maneuvering room when investigating questionable actions and determining whether charges of treason applied. Virtually identical actions might merit charges of treason in one instance, and when applied to another, be dismissed for political, religious, diplomatic, personal or other considerations. Without concrete

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definitions to guide their actions, councilors, courtiers, ambassadors, secretaries and servants alike had to weigh the potential consequences of their actions against the perceived benefits every time they chose to divulge sensitive information or engage in intelligence exchanges.

Certainly, ambassadors had the most protection from persecution, with the theoretical shield of diplomatic immunity to protect them from the blows of their host government, but this immunity, as shown in several instances, was not complete. Ambassadors could be jailed, expelled or recalled for behavior that easily fit the definition of treason. Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, Don Guerau de Spes, Bishop John Leslie, and Don Bernardino de Mendoza all spent time under house arrest or in prison, and all were expelled from their host country for behavior that, had they been private citizens, often led to execution. As John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, noted rather ruefully, “the office of ambassador has many dangers and perils.”164 Leslie knew these perils intimately—he had spent months under house arrest in England, and even landed in the Tower of London for his part in the Ridolfi Plot, and was later expelled from the country for his actions.

In most instances, the host government would leave any sort of punishment (and usually there was none) up to the ambassador’s government. It was an easy way to ensure that theoretically, the ambassador would be punished for his actions, and allow the host government to demonstrate publicly that such behavior would not be tolerated, without going so far as to discipline another monarch’s subject. None of the ambassadors who were expelled faced any serious punishment from their governments for their actions;

rather, in most instances, those treasonous actions had been undertaken at the government’s direction, or at least with their knowledge. Despite the fact that host governments often threatened to charge ambassadors with laundry lists of crimes and have them executed, no one followed through on their promises.

Councilors and courtiers had to be much more careful, for they did not have the same protections as diplomatic envoys. Their position, wealth, livelihood, and lives rested upon their place in the constellations of individuals surrounding the monarch. They could reap the benefits of a fruitful information exchange with an ambassador, but they could also suffer far worse consequences than any diplomat. In most cases, the monarch overlooked the exchange of information in those relationships, for they could prove as beneficial to the host government as to the ambassador. Also, quite simply, there was no way to control all interactions in the courtly environment. Even councilors like Ruy Gómez de Silva could provide information of the highest importance (which he did on a regular basis) without being charged with a crime. In one memorable instance in 1567 Gómez even informed Dr. John Man that several members of the King’s council were trying to persuade Philip to mount an invasion of England after pacifying the Low Countries.165 If true, such a revelation of the king’s military plans constituted treason, yet Gómez was never charged with a crime.

In some instances, governments were forced to take actions when such behavior could not be ignored; the execution of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk in 1572

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165 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 26 September 1567, CUL, Mm III 8, f. 95-95v. In Man’s letter he described his source as “the gretist of the council,” which at the time was Ruy Gómez. The source could not have been the Duke of Alba, for although he was the only other candidate as the “gretist of the council,” he had already departed for the Low Countries. Additionally, the remainder of the ciphered portion of the letter cautioned Man not to trust Alba and described him as a “deep dissembler.”
represented the failure of (amongst others) his relationships with foreign representatives. After a lengthy investigation, in 1585 Philip had one of his ministers, Don Martín de Acuña, arrested and charged with treason. The charges were based on the accusation that he had sold state secrets to the Turks, with whom Acuña had negotiated the first Spanish-Ottoman truce. Although he confessed to the charge, the government never learned of Acuña’s other activities; the dispatches of the French resident Longlée record that Acuña had sold secrets to the French as well as the Ottomans. Acuña was convicted of treason and eventually strangled in his cell.166

Servants and secretaries such as Borghese Venturini and Thomas Shakerley had the fewest protections of all, for they could be removed and replaced easily. Servants working in a foreign embassy occupied a gray area international law and custom. While custom recognized that the person of ambassador was inviolable, the security afforded to the embassy personnel grew increasingly vague depending on the type of protection and offense involved. Their punishment often depended on the severity and type of crime committed. In most instances the host government relinquished the responsibility of punishment to the servant’s government, as they did with ambassadors. In extraordinary circumstances (such as those found in an early seventeenth-century incident with the French embassy to England) the servant’s government would subject the servant to the host government’s punishment voluntarily, as a gesture of goodwill.167 A servant or

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167 In 1603, a member of the French ambassador’s entourage killed an Englishman following a quarrel in a brothel. The Duc de Sully, who was in England as Henry IV’s special ambassador, initially condemned the culprit to death and asked the Mayor of London to see to the execution arrangements. After the Mayor commented on the severity of the punishment, the Duc surrendered the culprit to the English, to face
secretary had to be careful indeed if he chose to engage in an information relationship with a member of a foreign embassy. Governments found it easier to punish their own subjects for treasonous behavior rather than attempting to prosecute the exact same actions in diplomats or their entourage.

Governments both tolerated and benefited from these gray areas in interactions between foreigners and members of the court. Yet another inevitability of the presence of a resident ambassador was that such relationships were impossible to prevent; ambassadors could live for more than a decade (and in rare instances, more than two decades) at the host court and developed unavoidable relationships with a wide variety of individuals. For host governments, if cultivated properly, these relationships could provide invaluable information; if uncontrolled, they could also damage the policy initiatives, prestige, and domestic security of a regime. These associations often proved to be very difficult to document, both for contemporaries and historians alike, for such interactions often took place out of sight in quiet halls, midnight meetings and in correspondence subsequently destroyed. Still, despite the challenge and risks, governments continued to entertain resident ambassadors at court and to use their networks as sources of valuable information.

\[\text{whatever penalty they deemed appropriate. The murderer was later pardoned and returned to France. See Adair, } \textit{Exterritorality of Ambassadors}, 134-5.\]
Chapter 2: The World of the Courier

Couriers have long occupied an obscure role in the process of international communications. Even in a world governed by the rules of modern diplomacy and supported by the most advanced technologies, embassies still have a courier in residence to handle transporting the most sensitive documents. Couriers performed critical functions in early modern diplomacy, since they served as the vital—and often only—link between a government and its representatives. Their role remained unchanged on a fundamental level from the Reformation to the start of World War I, when the advent of the telegraph and other nineteenth-century technologies largely supplanted them.¹ Their primary occupation, of course, was to transport letters, dispatches and packets all throughout Europe. However, many couriers performed essential services far beyond their principal role. By using their personal contacts, they could navigate through the gaps in the stratified world of diplomatic discourse and conduct informal negotiations or collect intelligence in locales too public or too sensitive for the ambassador himself. For governments, these secondary services became vital in moments of intense negotiation or international crisis by offering unofficial methods of accomplishing critical tasks. The increasing prominence of resident ambassadors and prevalence of resident embassies in the sixteenth century offered governments a means of maintaining constant

¹ For an analysis of the impact of new technologies on crossing time and space, see Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918*, second edition, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See especially the introduction and chapter 10, which is a case study examining how new technologies changed the ideas of information crossing time and space during the July crisis of 1914.
communication; however, when using an ambassador, that communication necessitated a high level of ceremony and publicity. As seen with secretaries such as Borghese Venturini, servants and other individuals, including couriers, could move through different court circles without attracting the same level of attention as their masters.

Governments, courtiers and ambassadors alike employed the services of royal and independent couriers on a regular basis, both at court and for international communications. Using the services of these men to carry messages, engage in negotiations, and as sources of intelligence offered early modern governments discrete, effective and potentially deniable means of conducting unofficial diplomacy and obtaining information through informal negotiators. Diplomacy could not function without them; couriers served as the proverbial lifelines linking governments to their far-flung representatives across Europe.

To date, E. John B. Allen’s *Post and Courier Service in the Diplomacy of Early Modern Europe* is the only monograph to examine the role of couriers in early modern European diplomatic communications.2 In his work, Allen explored topics such as the courier’s load, payment, routes, and other logistical aspects of the profession. Other works, such as Fernand Braudel’s *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* and Pierre Sardella’s *Nouvelles et speculations à Venise au début du XVI siècle* have examined aspects of the courier’s mission, with particular regard to travel methods, times, and their impact on

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communications. Still others have covered a courier’s role in a particular incident or event. None of these works, however, have discussed at length the courier’s role as a source of information, whether he operated as a negotiator, observer, or sold the contents of the documents he carried. Although these activities did not always constitute the courier’s primary role, they provided extra tasks that could be performed for payment, in addition to supplying vital sources of intelligence for governments and ambassadors alike.

Governments relied on couriers to maintain contact with representatives in a variety of locations across Europe. During the Reformation, regular diplomatic contact expanded to include Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and so increased the scope of a courier’s travels. Usually, most embassies in the latter half of the sixteenth century included at least one royal courier on the staff, maintained by the government, but ambassadors also relied on the services of independent couriers who could serve multiple individuals. Independent couriers were not attached to any particular embassy, nor were they given the protections, pay and privileges of embassy personnel. Many independent couriers worked for multiple governments throughout their careers; at times, they worked for multiple governments simultaneously. Independent couriers became even more vital to the system with the increase in communications and the volume of correspondence sent between governments and representatives; the number of royal couriers in the

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4 In *Renaissance Diplomacy* and “International Diplomacy and International Law” Garrett Mattingly argued that the Reformation severely attenuated the range and scope of European diplomatic interactions. De Lamar Jensen and others have demonstrated that contrary to this argument, most West European nations expanded their diplomatic interactions to regularly maintain contact in include new areas, such as Russia and the Ottoman Empire.
employ of any government remained incapable of handling the amount of materials dispatched.

In a world without modern communications and electronic sources of intelligence, independent and royal couriers served as the conduits for information and as a source of intelligence between multiple parties. At times they simply carried dispatches, correspondence and instructions between groups. In other instances, they themselves possessed portions of a message too sensitive to commit to paper, even in cipher, or they were authorized to undertake unofficial negotiations. Many couriers lacked the protections offered to ambassadors and other accredited diplomats. Governments did not recognize independent couriers as part of a diplomatic entourage, and could refuse to grant passage or permission to cross territory. Their dubious status, combined with the vague and often malleable views of international law, meant that couriers had far fewer guarantees of safety and little recourse in the event that they were accosted during their travels.

Couriers occupied a prominent place in the world of intelligence-gathering at the early modern court due to the value of information they carried. They had a lower status than that of a councilor or ambassador; most couriers, even those on the royal payroll, most often had no title or high social position. The independent courier depended on his reputation and active cultivation of clients in multiple locations to remain solvent, for without employment on missions he would not be paid. Anyone using the services of an

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5 Some high-ranking individuals did operate occasionally as couriers or secretaries, often as a part of their informal training before assuming the role of ambassador. Sir Edward Stafford, for instance, carried messages for Sir Francis Walsingham and Sir Amias Paulet before being selected to head the English embassy in Paris, as did Sir Henry Cobham. Bertrand Safignac de la Mothe-Fénélon served as the secretary for his cousin Sebastien de l’Aubespine in Spain before heading the French embassy to England and also carried dispatches. Pierre de Segusson, Sieur de Longlée, also served as a courier from Madrid to Paris before becoming Henry III’s resident agent in Madrid in 1582.
independent courier took a necessary risk of entrusting potentially very valuable information to a man whose services were for hire—a risk that all parties recognized, but could not avoid. As Don Bernardino de Mendoza commented from London in a November 1581 letter, maintaining security for the King’s correspondence was difficult at best, because, “it is almost impossible to prevent them from falling into the hands of enemies or false friends, as they are carried by couriers of various nationalities and are handled by postmasters owing no allegiance to your Majesty.”⁶ He later added that dispatches, correspondence and instructions proved most vulnerable because of the issues of transportation. When unable to find employment in their primary profession of carrying messages, many independent couriers sold their services as sources of information. Many spies sent on clandestine missions used the cover of an independent courier in order to move discreetly from one location to another.

The inability to maintain confidential and reliable lines of communication plagued early modern governments. Many government officials believed independent couriers to be akin to mercenaries, willing to sell their services—and often the contents of secret dispatches—to any interested party for the right price. Tradition held the loyalty and honor of royal courier above such concerns, but independent couriers who carried dispatches between any groups were often believed to be susceptible to bribes and other incentives. It was not unknown for a message to be discovered by multiple groups during its journey to the recipient, even when entrusted to the courier verbally and not committed to paper. However, not all couriers offered their services to the highest bidder, nor would they sell the contents of their packets to any interested parties. Many

⁶ Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 11 November 1581, in CSPS 1580-6, 218.
successful independent couriers developed close working relationships with select groups of individuals, and preferred to work for only one government when possible. Many couriers endured physical hardship rather than divulge the contents of their parcels, when governments stopped couriers en route to prevent communications for a variety of reasons. At times, violence could be used to prevent a courier from continuing on his journey. In rare instances, couriers could be assaulted or even murdered.

When examining the world of the courier and his role in the process of gathering information, it is important to recognize that most of the individuals plying the international postal routes tended to be independent couriers or servants working as couriers temporarily. Governments expected all resident ambassadors to use members of their own retinue and employees of the embassy (such as their secretaries) in addition to the appointed royal couriers, and also hire outside couriers when warranted. For governments, using an ambassador’s servants offered additional cost-savings over employing independent couriers. Most messengers in the early modern period fell into the latter categories, rather than being employed as a royal courier. Very few men ever earned appointment as a royal courier; it was far more common to employ available individuals intermittently (and at a lower pay rate) than to offer a position with an embassy.7

Most embassies maintained at least one royal courier but needed the services of several others to sustain some form of efficient communication. A royal courier drew a stipend from his government whether he carried one packet a month or made several

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7 The rates of royal versus independent couriers vary between governments. However, even the Spanish, who enjoyed the most organized postal system among all West European nations, relied heavily on independent couriers and servants to maintain regular contact between ambassadors and their government.
trips; it often proved most efficient to station a royal courier in a busy embassy, such as one in Paris, and employ independent couriers for communications with less important posts. In many instances, independent couriers would carry dispatches to a prominent embassy, where they would be included with other packets and transported by a royal courier to the court, rather than being sent directly to the capital. The practice meant that communications would often take longer, but cost less. In a memorandum by William Cecil concerning the materials to be sent into Spain with the Viscount Montague and Sir Thomas Chamberlain, only one courier (unnamed) is listed on the document. Additional instructions to Chamberlain instructed him to use the royal courier in instances in which Chamberlain needed to communicate important information concerning Philip or his court. An undated document concerning the French ambassador in Rome noted that the ambassador could have twelve couriers, of which ten would be hired locally in Italy. The remaining two, who accompanied the ambassador to his station in Rome, would carry packets along the major routes between Paris and Rome. In 1577, when the Venetian ambassador Giovanni Michiel departed Paris, his total retinue of twenty-three contained two couriers; in the late sixteenth century, the Archduke of Austria’s more voluminous party of 480 also recorded only two official couriers. During his tenure as ambassador in France, Bernardino de Mendoza employed three official couriers to carry messages to Spain and used the services of dozens of independent couriers on a regular basis.

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8 CSPF 1559-60, 321.
9 CSPF 1559-1560, 317.
10 Allen, 25.
11 Ibid, 25.
12 Allen, 77; “Gastos Extraordinarios” of Bernardino de Mendoza. AGS: DGT inventario 24, legs. 569-571, unfoliated.
If the courier carried packets in government service—if they contained letters, dispatches and communiqués of an official nature—the government covered his costs. Normally, continental systems and rates of transport were far better organized than those found in the British Isles, particularly the network established by Charles V in the early sixteenth century. Typically, the English preferred to use the services of independent couriers at a higher rate their other governments, or sent their packets with the servants and couriers of other foreign nationals living at court. The French system that proved so highly organized in the early sixteenth century suffered from the debilitating effects of civil war; Catherine de Medici was forced to develop an ad-hoc system to supplement official posts. Rates for transport varied according to the duration of the route and the means of travel, along with the potential use of the national post system in place. Many couriers did use pre-existing post systems whenever possible, changing horses and spending nights at specific locations along a route.

In order to serve as a source of information, independent couriers needed contacts in multiple governments and several different locations. A successful independent courier developed his own networks of courtiers, councilors and other important individuals at many courts. He used these not only to gain employment, but to provide a variety of services for his current employer. While in the pay of a government or individual, independent couriers often carried messages between parties at court, which offered discreet methods of communication far less noticeable than personal meetings. By developing these networks the courier could offer his employer something much greater than a means of transporting his letters securely; he could learn information from his

13 Allen, 42. Of course, the government did always pay as promptly or as much as it should, and independent couriers had little means of forcing the government to provide payment for services rendered.
connections, engage in informal discourse, and even on occasion perform unofficial diplomatic services.

Servants also doubled as couriers and negotiators on a semi-regular basis, especially when they served an ambassador. At times, as much as a third to a half of an ambassador’s dispatches might be transported by his servants, either because there were no couriers available, it was cheaper, or the information contained within them was too sensitive to be entrusted to an outsider. Many of these servants remained with an embassy during the tenure of several different ambassador which offered several different advantages. Servants could learn the language of the host court, and develop their own networks and contacts within the host community. These contacts could range from something as simple as purchasing food and supplies to establishing relationships with high-level councilors.

**Well-connected men: independent couriers as sources**

An alert courier, even one who lacked extensive high-level connections, could learn a great deal of information through simple observation. Many tidbits of information supplementing other reports came from couriers, who observed individuals while at court and during their travels. Ambassadors found themselves dependent on the latest updates carried by other governments’ couriers when they lacked frequent dispatches containing information from their own government. In 1562-3, in the midst of the Anglo-French crisis over the English seizure of Le Havre, Sir Thomas Chaloner learned most of his news about events from couriers passing south with letters either for Philip or the French ambassador Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice. He often had to write either to the Queen, Sir William Cecil, or Sir Nicholas Throckmorton asking for confirmation of these
tidbits, as surely such news reached London long before it arrived in Madrid.

Occasionally Chaloner could offer his government some new information gathered from couriers passing out of Italy or France, but more often complained of his lack of intelligence. In September 1566, Philip II learned many of the details of the Iconoclastic Fury from the express courier dispatched from Brussels by his half-sister Margaret. The courier, who had witnessed the extent of the destruction firsthand during his journey to Madrid, provided the king with much more specific information than Margaret could in her letter.

One such independent courier who enjoyed a lengthy and well-connected career was Guido Cavalcanti, a Florentine who served both the English and French for nearly two decades. As part of the Cavalcanti banking and merchant family, Guido had family connections in several major European cities in addition to his own contacts. Cavalcanti made his entrée into the diplomatic world during the peace talks conducted between the English, French and Spanish at Cateau-Cambrésis, when he was dispatched to London bearing messages for Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre and Marquis de Vendôme. Cavalcanti cultivated contacts in the highest echelons of the government and nobility, and used those sources to perform the functions of an intelligencer, courier and unofficial diplomat for the French and English governments. He also provided valuable information for the English government concerning activities in France and Italy through his own network of sources.

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14 Sir Thomas Chaloner to Sir William Cecil, 5 March 1563, in CSPF 1563, 183-4.
Normally, the intermittent focus devoted to Guido Cavalcanti’s career centers on his role in the French marriage negotiations of the early 1570s.\textsuperscript{15} F. J. Levy’s brief appraisal, “A Semi-Professional Diplomat: Guido Cavalcanti and the Marriage Negotiations of 1571,” labels Cavalcanti a “negotiator” using the diplomatic terminology of an eighteenth-century text, as Cavalcanti lacked any sort of official title or diplomatic privilege, and was never accorded the same status as an ambassador.\textsuperscript{16} In *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the European Conflict 1559-1572*, N. M. Sutherland described Cavalcanti as a “Florentine pensioner of both England and France like his compatriot Ridolphi, but less well-connected and better trusted.”\textsuperscript{17} In “Dialogue and Discretion: Thomas Sackville, Catherine de Medici and the Anjou Marriage Proposal 1571,” Rivkah Zim describes Cavalcanti a “Florentine, non-official agent of Catherine de Medici.”\textsuperscript{18} While this assessment is true in that Cavalcanti did serve Catherine intermittently, he had also worked for the English as a courier, negotiator, unofficial diplomat and intelligencer for more than a decade before the Anjou negotiations commenced in early 1571, and had been identified with pro-English leanings as early as 1561.

On 3 December 1558, Antoine de Bourbon concluded a letter to the Earl of Pembroke by writing that the “courier Messire Guido Cavalcante…is well informed and will tell you everything.”\textsuperscript{19} He declined to commit specific information to paper, because


\textsuperscript{16} Levy, “Semi-Professional Diplomat,” 211.

\textsuperscript{17} N. M. Sutherland, *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the European Conflict 1559-1572*, 141 n. 3.

\textsuperscript{18} Zim, “Dialogue and Discretion,” 298 n. 33.

\textsuperscript{19} Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre to the Earl of Pembroke, 3 December 1558. NA: SP70/1/46.
the matter entrusted to Cavalcanti required “all diligence and secrecy.”²⁰ By doing so, Navarre entrusted sensitive information to the courier transporting his letter north from the recently seized city of Calais to the new government in London.²¹ In his role as a secret negotiator and courier during the negotiations at Cateau-Cambrésis for both Henry II and Elizabeth I, Cavalcanti carried messages to and fro between members of the highest echelons of government. The verbal message entrusted to Cavalcanti by Navarre in December 1558 must have met with a favorable response from the English; less than one month later King Henry II dispatched Cavalcanti from Paris to London bearing messages addressed directly to Queen Elizabeth concerning the peace talks.²² The letters contained, among other platitudes, hints about opening independent peace negotiations between the two countries. Henry hoped to break the Anglo-Spanish alliance and independently conclude peace with one party, thereby freeing him to attack the other with all his resources and without fear of reprisal. Both the English and Spanish governments recognized the potential threat posed by being left out of any negotiations, and publicly professed every intention of standing fast in face of French offers. Henry concluded that England, under the new government, would be far more likely to abandon its erstwhile ally whose war had cost them Calais. With this in mind, on December 30, 1558, Henry sent Cavalcanti north with letters of introduction and instructions to sound out English intentions concerning an independent treaty and to ensure that any discussions remained

²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Navarre was Antoine de Bourbon, husband of Jeanne d’Albret, Queen of Navarre. Antoine de Bourbon proved especially fickle in religious matters; in 1559 he professed Protestantism, but by the beginning of the First War of Religion in 1562 he served the Catholic government as one of the three principal men controlling the war effort. See the following case study concerning Antonio Almeida for further information on Navarre’s religious reversals.
²² King Henry II to Queen Elizabeth, 30 December 1558, in Forbes, vol. 1, 9. Forbes’ transcription is the only surviving complete transcription of the text, as the original was included in the Cotton Collection that burned in the eighteenth century. Only fragments of the original survive.
secret. In his first letter Henry specified Cavalcanti by name, perhaps as a security measure to ensure that the courier had not been attacked and replaced en route. His letter also indicated that any reply ought to be sent back with Cavalcanti, who had proven himself trustworthy with Navarre’s message, which was also mentioned.

During the clandestine negotiations, Cavalcanti played a much larger role than that of a courier. He was a respected and dependable individual at both courts; Navarre and Henry II evidently felt that Cavalcanti could be trusted with secret and potentially very valuable information, as the Spanish undoubtedly would have paid to learn of his mission. The nature of the communications precluded the use of written letters and instructions giving specifics, for if they had been intercepted by the Spanish it would have exposed the negotiations. Both sides relied on Cavalcanti to convey the most important and delicate issues. The English government used Cavalcanti’s services repeatedly during the secret negotiations of 1558-9; although Henry offered to establish a clandestine location to which Elizabeth could dispatch representatives of her choice and encouraged her to immediately name such individuals, she demurred. In a return letter couriered by Cavalcanti, dated 8 January 1559, she explained that she preferred to continue informal negotiations through Cavalcanti. Had Elizabeth dispatched representatives with an independent commission to treat for peace with only the French,

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23 The likelihood of resuming the war remained slim; both the French and Spanish, by this point, verged on bankruptcy. Neither could afford to continue waging war, but proclaimed every intention of doing so if agreeable peace terms could not be reached.
24 King Henry II to Queen Elizabeth, December 30, 1558, in Forbes, 9.
25 Bribing couriers, particularly independent couriers, remained a quick and relatively easy way to gain access to the private correspondence and documents of other governments.
26 Queen Elizabeth to Henry II, 8 January 1559. NA: SP 70/2/32-33v
their presence could have been used by the French as evidence of bad faith, and could potentially break the Anglo-Spanish alliance in the event the negotiations failed.27

The instructions Elizabeth provided for Cavalcanti authorized him to discuss fully the reasons for this decision with the French. It was not a lack of trust on the part of the English; Cavalcanti was to stress that

"the principall circumstance is secrecy; which cannot be observed if the manner devised by the French King be followed: for neither can any mete persons, being of honor and trust, be sent hence, but the same shal be easily missed here; especially the ministers of the King of Spain and their dependants being so nigh this court."28

The absence of any person of high enough rank to conduct the negotiations would be noticed by the Spanish, who, represented by the Count of Feria, learned of the discussions eventually. Conceivably Cavalcanti, as an independent courier, could travel to and fro without drawing the same sort of attention often accorded to a Privy Councilor or a high-ranking noble. Ultimately he made five trips between the two countries during the negotiations.

In February Cavalcanti gave William Cecil a written report of his instructions from Henry and a further rationalization of his usefulness to the English. As a Florentine, he remained sufficiently neutral to gain access to key individuals at both courts; his service continued to be exemplary, as well as his ability to secure valuable information:

"He [Henry] is satisfied with me, as is the Queen, in consequence she does not desire to have any change made in maintaining me in the negotiations, no one can

27 Although there is no direct evidence to support the argument, there is the possibility that Henry wanted to lure the English into sending representatives to separate negotiations and then reveal their presence to Philip, as a pretext for forming a Franco-Spanish alliance against the English. It would have served Henry’s purposes of breaking the Anglo-Spanish alliance and promoted the claims of his daughter-in-law, Mary Stuart, to the English crown. Henry had even approached the pope for his blessing for a Franco-Spanish Catholic alliance designed to replace Elizabeth with Mary.

28 Queen Elizabeth’s instructions to Guido Cavalcanti, 8 January 1559, SP 70/2/36-37; Forbes, 14-15.
doubt that the Queen can believe she will always be better served by me than by a Frenchman. I shall always be able to send more news than a Frenchman.\textsuperscript{29} Cavalcanti believed he remained a better choice for these negotiations than either a French or English noble and wanted to justify his selection to the English. In a later letter Cavalcanti (either from a genuine desire to aid the negotiations or to protect his source of income) questioned the wisdom of the decision to use Monsieur la Marque—who was a member of Henry’s court—to send messages, noting that Monsieur would be far more noticeable.\textsuperscript{30} Although eventually the private negotiations collapsed over a multitude of different points, the possibility of an independent Anglo-French treaty was enough to seriously alarm Spanish ministers and Philip’s ambassador in England, the Count of Feria.

Messages between King Philip II and Feria reflect the ease with which international custom might be brushed aside in favor of political necessity. Cavalcanti’s mission, though supposedly clandestine, leaked to Spanish ears quickly. Feria learned of a secret messenger hidden in unused rooms at the palace and reported his presence to Philip less than a month after Cavalcanti first arrived with Henry’s messages.\textsuperscript{31} Similarly, Giovanni Michiel, the Venetian resident ambassador in France, reported on 20 January 1559 that he had been “told in secret by a trustworthy person…that a few days ago a person was sent clandestinely from England…after having spoken in secret with the King…was then accompanied to the seaside, in great haste, and he seems to have said he

\textsuperscript{29} A report of Guido Cavalcanti’s Negotiations, February 19? 1559, NA: SP 70/2/169.
\textsuperscript{30} CSPF, 1558-9, 171.
was to return in ten or twelve days.” Michiel added that the French seemed pleased with
the contents of the secret messenger’s letters; they awaited his return eagerly and
intended to keep open communications through this messenger. In a later dispatch dated
14 February 1559 Michiel reported that Cavalcanti accompanied the Vidame to Paris
with letters from Queen Elizabeth. Michiel added that he was informed by a “person
through whose hands the whole of this business passes” that the letters between Elizabeth
and Henry referred to a separate conference between French and English commissioners,
separate from the current meetings at Cateau-Cambrésis, and without any representative
from Spain.

The presence of a clandestine messenger alarmed the Spanish; they relied on the
English not to conclude a separate peace with the French and abandon their ally. The
arrival and reception of a secret courier, even without knowledge of the exact contents of
his message and the English reply, warranted extreme measures. In a January 31, 1559,
letter to Philip, Feria reported that

The person that I wrote to your Majesty that was hidden in the Treasurer’s
chambers at the palace, I know now to have been Guido Cavalcanti. I believe that
the departure of the Chamberlain was delayed to await the answer that this man
would bring out of France, but he has not yet returned. I am having him well
watched so that as soon as he puts foot on shore I will be notified, and if your
Majesty wishes that some trick might be played on him it can be done.

Feria’s use of the phrase “some trick” can be taken to mean assassination at worst, or
assault at best, with the goal of intercepting his parcels, learning the content of his
messages, and preventing him from carrying any more. Clearly, the Spanish needed to

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32 Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and
Collections of Venice, and in other libraries of Northern Italy, 1558-1580, Eds. Rawdon Brown and G.
Cavendish Bentinck. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890) 11. (Hereafter denoted as CSPV)
33 CSPV, 31-2.
34 The Count of Feria to King Philip II, 31 January 1559, in Lettenhove, 414; CSPS 1558-67, 26.
know the contents of Cavalcanti’s messages and to discourage both the French and
English from engaging in clandestine negotiations. The English later admitted to
Cavalcanti’s presence and mission—in February Elizabeth protected herself by
dispatching a special ambassador to Philip’s delegation at Cercamp quietly, with
instructions to inform the senior delegate privately of Henry’s overtures for peace and to
assure the Spanish that Elizabeth had no intentions of abandoning her ally, only that she
felt it unwise to rebuff the proposal openly. Yet despite these reassurances, the Spanish
felt it necessary to monitor Cavalcanti’s movements while in England as closely as
possible. Elizabeth also admitted to Cavalcanti’s presence in a later meeting with Feria
in the spring of 1559, in which she specified that he had traveled with dispatches from
Henry three times.

An attack on a courier transporting such correspondence, though technically
illegal, would have likely sent the message to both the French and English that the
Spanish knew of the communications and would work to quell them. Philip responded
to Feria’s offer in his next set of instructions. In an enciphered section of the letter Philip
told Feria that “touching Guido Cavalcanti, I have only to say that you must try to find
out what he brings out of France, using all the ways you think fit.” Philip left his
instructions vague enough so that in the instance that they were intercepted and the cipher
broken, Philip could deny any involvement in an attack on Cavalcanti, but specific

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35 For a copy of the instructions to one of the delegates at the peace talks, see Forbes, 59. Elizabeth also
included a line in the instructions given to Cavalcanti on 29 January 1559 that “by this manner of dealing
the whole matter must be so ordered as to be made oppen to the King of Spayne.” Forbes, 36.
36 CSPS 1558-67, 48
37 It was not uncommon for a courier traveling illegally or carrying potentially very dangerous
 correspondence to be attacked, captured or interrogated. See “Interrogatorys to be mynistred to Rauph
 Lacy,” 3 August 1562. BL: ADD MSS 35831, f. 55; Négociations, 55.
38 Philip to Feria, 12 February 1559, in Lettenhove, 418.
enough that Feria would know he had his master’s support in whatever action he chose to undertake.³⁹

Feria’s sources at Elizabeth's court kept him well informed of Cavalcanti’s movements, despite the fact that both the English and French worked to keep them secret. The task of watching his activities in France was complicated by the fact that, because peace had not yet been formalized, Philip had not appointed an ambassador to Henry’s court. In a later series of dispatches dated February 26 and March 1, during Cavalcanti’s mid February visits, Feria was able to inform Philip and the Spanish delegates at Cateau-Cambrésis when Cavalcanti first reached England with his next series of messages, the dates of his interviews with Elizabeth, and the fact that he now brought a French messenger bearing a portrait as a gift with him.⁴⁰ In early April, Feria reported again that Cavalcanti had an audience with Elizabeth on March 31 about the peace terms and that the French had sent Cavalcanti again with another message. This time, he was accompanied by a gentleman of Henry’s chamber (Monsieur de la Marque) who gave the Marquis of Northampton 2000 crowns from Henry.⁴¹

The ability of the Spanish ambassador to provide such details to Philip, even though he does not name his sources, gives a clear indication of the porous nature of the early modern court. Although the English attempted to hide both Cavalcanti’s presence at court and the nature of mission, the Count of Feria was able to learn specifically who was being hidden and where. His sources were detailed enough to list the exact dates of

³⁹ The possibility of correspondence being intercepted and read remained likely in sixteenth-century communications; many ciphers used were very simple to promote the ease of usage, to the point of being quickly breakable. In an October 1577 letter to Antonio Guaras, Gabriel de Zayas, secretary of Philip’s Council of State, noted that he used to be able to easily break ciphers. NA: SP 94/1/17-17v. See the discussion of this letter in chapter 4, 000-0.
⁴⁰ Lettenhove, 443 and CSPS, 33.
⁴¹ Ibid., 48.
Cavalcanti’s audiences with Elizabeth, the content of these audiences, Elizabeth’s reactions to the messages he carried, and name any others present. He was also able to discover the general nature of the courier’s mission and follow Cavalcanti’s movements closely enough to know exactly when he arrived in England and when he departed for France.

In addition to carrying sensitive information between parties, Cavalcanti served as a source of intelligence himself. As a high-level courier he knew many important individuals in both the English and French governments and gained access to them on a fairly regular basis. In December 1558 Cavalcanti wrote directly (he had sent an earlier letter through Lord Grey) to the Earl of Bedford about the talks at Cercamp and his return to Court later that week. In the letter, he referred to the possibility of independent talks between the English and French, mentioning that “the impression is that Lord Grey might have some commission to negotiate indirectly.” In February 1559 he wrote a lengthy report for the members of the Privy Council on the proceedings at Cateau-Cambrésis, and gave a comprehensive recollection of his meetings with Henry II, the Duke of Guise, the Vidame of Chartres and Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre. This letter touched on the French position on many of the most sensitive issues, including Calais. He later sent a letter of intelligence back to William Cecil on March 20 concerning the negotiations at

42 The Count of Feria to Philip, 31 January 1559, in Lettenhove, 413; 12 February 1559, in Lettenhove, 416; 4 April 1559, in Lettenhove, 489. The Count of Feria to the Spanish Commissioners at Cateau-Cambrésis, 26 February 1559, in Lettenhove, 443. Although Feria did specify his source in his letters, he clearly had a well placed informant who monitored Elizabeth's visitors and watched specifically for Cavalcanti.
43 CSPF 1558-9, 43.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 140-144.
Cateau-Cambrésis and private meetings with both the Duke of Guise and Henry.\textsuperscript{46}

Cavalcanti even signed the letter with “Pro Calais [for Calais]” as a way of indicating his efforts on behalf of English demands for the return of Calais in the negotiations.\textsuperscript{47}

Ultimately, although Cavalcanti’s secret mission in the winter of 1559 amounted to nothing more than clandestine whispers—peace talks between the three countries concluded in April 1559 with the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis—his services to the English remained valuable.\textsuperscript{48} The Earl of Bedford used Cavalcanti’s services in August 1559 to send a message to Philip’s ambassador in England, Alvaro de la Quadra, Bishop of Aquila that the marriage proposal of the Archduke Charles was well received at court.\textsuperscript{49} In a letter to Philip, Aquila mentioned that Bedford seemingly sent Cavalcanti of his own accord, mirroring a message Aquila recently received from another courtier.\textsuperscript{50} Aquila openly questioned the veracity of the messages; he wondered if they had been planted by members of the Privy Council, to convince the Spanish that the Queen favored a marriage with the Archduke, and cautioned Philip against taking the messages at face value.\textsuperscript{51}

Despite his efforts to remain neutral, by 1561 Cavalcanti had been identified with pro-English leanings; dispatches from France concerning him noted that “the good affection he is deemed to bear towards her Majestie has greatly hindered his suits here”

\textsuperscript{46} Guido Cavalcanti to William Cecil, March 20, 1558/9, BL, ADD MSS 35830, ff. 39-44.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, ff. 44.
\textsuperscript{48} Elizabethan historians attributed the success of settling the Calais issue to Cavalcanti; see William Camden, \textit{A History of the Princess Elizabeth} (3rd edition, 1675), 23-4 and Sir John Hayward, \textit{Annals of the First Four Years of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth}, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Society, 1840), 34-5.
\textsuperscript{49} Alvaro de la Quadra, Bishop of Aquila, replaced Feria as Philip’s resident ambassador in May 1559. The Bishop of Aquila to Philip, 18 August 1559, in Lettenhove, 604-607.
\textsuperscript{50} Aquila recorded the courtier as the “brother of Cobham” and did not give the name of the courier carrying the message. \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 93; Lettenhove, 604-607.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
and that he was “suspected by the Guises to be too well affected towards her Majestie.”\(^{52}\) Both authors, the Earl of Bedford and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, then serving as the Queen’s ambassadors to France, recommended that the Queen give Cavalcanti a pension, for his efforts on her behalf in France had hurt his relationships with his other clients.\(^{53}\) In January 1561 Throckmorton reported that the factional nature of the French court and Cavalcanti’s known association with Queen Regent Catherine de Medici had hurt Cavalcanti’s fortunes there. The ultra-Catholic Guise family, who routinely challenged the Catherine’s power, managed to discredit Cavalcanti and have him forced out of the French Court.\(^{54}\)

Cavalcanti’s services to the English in the 1560s went far beyond serving as a courier and unofficial diplomat. Perhaps due to his extensive commercial contacts across much of Western Europe, some English councilors viewed Cavalcanti as an ideal individual to undertake intelligence missions for the English. In December 1560, Nicholas Throckmorton, with whom Cavalcanti had established an excellent working relationship, wrote to Cecil that he “has an inkling of a matter that should have heed taken to fit it in time.”\(^{55}\) He noted that it was “no matter that shall be handled by the rulers here, nor does it directly concern this State,” although his list included the heads of most of the major European states, including Scotland, the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, the Pope, and the Kings of Denmark and Sweden. Throckmorton continued,

\(^{52}\) CSPF, 1560-61, 550-552.
\(^{53}\) Ibid. Sir Nicholas Throckmorton served as Elizabeth’s resident ambassador in France from 3 May 1559 to 4 February 1563. Francis Russell, the Earl of Bedford, went to France as ambassador extraordinary in January-March 1561.
\(^{54}\) Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Queen Elizabeth, 10 January 1561. NA: SP 70/22/44.
\(^{55}\) Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Sir William Cecil, 31 December 1560. NA: SP 70/21/140-144v. The matter of Mary Stuart’s remarriage was a pressing concern for the English; Throckmorton himself mentioned her remarriage in the same letter that reported the death of Francis II.

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One of the best places to decipher it is Venice; Guido Cavalcanti is the fittest to be chosen for that purpose, if he were a time the Queen’s agent to the Signory…these matters are like to be treated with great secrecy. Cavalcanti has great means to know what shall be contrived either at Venice or Rome, and for the time the Queen has need of an instrument which shall be able to tell more than the news of the Rialto, and either Rome or Venice are the places to decipher the secret practices of Princes.  

Throckmorton’s concern rested with the likely prospects for the hand of Mary Stuart, the widow of the recently deceased Francis II. Throckmorton clearly thought it likely that the Spanish would immediately begin pressing the suit of a Habsburg candidate, either the Archduke of Austria or Philip’s son Don Carlos. Developing an intelligence network in both Rome and Venice could give the English access to valuable information; Cavalcanti, as a Florentine merchant, could conceivably develop and utilize such networks in both locations.

Approximately six weeks later, Cavalcanti sent a long message to Queen Elizabeth. In it, he referred to his mission to Italy as described by Throckmorton. Cavalcanti agreed that Venice served as an ideal location for developing intelligence sources, but differed with Throckmorton on the ostensible cover for his mission. Rather than arrive accredited as the Queen’s agent as Throckmorton had proposed, Cavalcanti suggested that “he should be dispatched nominally upon his own private affairs, and not to do harm to the Venetians. He will have no great difficulty procuring such information as will be important for her service.” By maintaining his ostensible independence from the English government, Cavalcanti could hope to cultivate contacts that were not necessarily pro-English. He already possessed some means of gathering information in Rome; in January 1561 the English received a document titled “Intelligence from Rome”

56 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Queen Elizabeth, 31 December 1560. CSPF 1560-1, 467-471.
57 Ibid., 552.
in Cavalcanti’s hand and endorsed “Advertisements by letters to Guido Cavalcanti” that gave specific information of different dealings at the papal court. The message, seemingly a mix of gossip and hard information, especially stressed any news about the Spanish and the Vatican’s efforts at dealing with Continental Protestants.\textsuperscript{58} Cavalcanti evidently succeeded at his 1561 mission to Venice. Several later dispatches between the Privy Council and various ambassadors refer to specific information gathered in Venice.\textsuperscript{59}

Cavalcanti reemerged in international politics as an unofficial negotiator between the French and English less than three years later, in the winter and spring of 1563. Unlike his role in the 1559 negotiations, he does not appear to have been acting with the full endorsement of both crowns. There are no surviving sets of instructions mirroring those given in 1558-9; he does not seem to have served as courier for formal communications between Elizabeth and Charles IX. Cavalcanti’s part in the affair was at best an informal one designed to ascertain the respective positions of both parties regarding the English seizure of Newhaven (Le Havre). There were also mentions of his potential role in securing marriage negotiations for the hand of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots.

The issue of Mary’s remarriage had complicated relations between Western European powers since the death of her first husband in December 1560. Cavalcanti, in France in February 1563, appeared to some to be involved in informal talks on behalf of the papal nuncio, the Cardinal of Ferrara, who wanted Mary to marry his nephew. Cavalcanti had served as a courier for Ferrara in the past, and Ferrara had written directly

\textsuperscript{58} CSPF 1560-61, 503-4.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 563.
to Cavalcanti the previous year to see if he would be interested in helping to advance some of Ferrara’s negotiations with Elizabeth concerning religious matters. In a letter to Philip II dated 8 February 1563, Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra reported that he thought Cavalcanti was working for the papal legate in France. He also mentioned that Cavalcanti might be serving as a go-between for the Cardinal, his contacts in England, and the French government, for all parties had a vested interest in the identity of Mary’s second husband. Two weeks later, de la Quadra added that Cavalcanti had recently departed for France, with the likely intention of hindering Mary Stuart’s marriage with a Hapsburg candidate.

Unfortunately, these informal negotiations overlapped with those concerning the English possession of Le Havre. The French were far more eager to settle the terms of the English withdrawal than they were to discuss the Scottish marriage. Catherine preferred to use Cavalcanti’s convenient presence as a means of opening another line of communication between the two parties. On 23 February 1563 Cavalcanti wrote to Cecil about several encounters with the French over his perceived role in the negotiations. He had received a message from Catherine de Medici that she understood he had been charged with a special message from the English and wished that he would write directly to her about this matter; Cavalcanti, believing that Elizabeth would likely send any formal messages through the French courtier M. de Sèvres, informed Cecil that he believed this was a ruse to gain some sort of commitment in writing. The day after receiving Catherine’s letter, her secretary Claude de l’Aubespine visited Cavalcanti and

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60 Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 8 February 1563. Simancas: Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter denoted as AGS) Estado 8340, f. 167.
discussed the need to reach some satisfactory agreement over Le Havre and Calais. Cavalcanti added that the French clearly felt that his arrival in France was “agreeable to them.”

Cavalcanti’s presence—and the possibility of simultaneous negotiations—complicated the mission of the English ambassador, Sir Thomas Smith. Just four days after Cavalcanti dispatched his letter to Cecil, Cecil wrote in turn to Smith about Cavalcanti. “I perceave en Italyan of this citie is there [France] secretly. I knew of his departure, but he had no errăd of me, nor I thynk of any belogg to this Court: but offrăng service from hym self—it is Cavalcant who I thk will not appeare to yowr sight a medler nevertheless I thynk he meaneth well and specially to get reports.” In a response dated 7 March, Smith rather dryly replied that he thought that “peace shal be conducted…better by me alone, then eyther the Quene of Scotts, or Cavalcanti…as for Cavalcantie’s doengs, I care not.” Smith preferred that all negotiations should be conducted through the official channels—in other words, him—to secure the peace, rather than needlessly complicating the situation with several simultaneous treaty talks.

Cavalcanti played a limited role at best in securing the terms of the Treaty of Troyes, signed in April 1564. As after the discussions relating to Cateau-Cambrésis, he drifted away from his role as an unofficial diplomat and contented himself to serve principally as a courier. Queen Elizabeth sent him to Florence with a letter in his favor to Cosmo I, Duke of Florence, in May 1564. He sent letters to William Cecil and Robert

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62 Ibid.
63 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 27 February 1562/3. BL: Lansdowne 102, f. 25.
64 Sir Thomas Smith to Sir William Cecil, 7 March 1563. NA: SP 70/52/80.
Dudley in November 1564, giving general news of the French court. In 1566 he evidently had a small part in some commercial negotiations with the Duchess of Parma, Philip’s regent in the Netherlands, in relation to some of his own personal commercial connections. He offered in a later letter to William Cecil to undertake a mission related to some of the Queen’s business in Flanders. In 1569, he suggested that he be dispatched to Flanders in an effort to settle trade problems caused by Elizabeth’s seizure of the Duke of Alba’s pay ships. In May 1571, Sir Francis Walsingham complimented him in a letter to Burghley; the ambassador noted that Cavalcanti “is here a very good instrument…and doth deal therein both sincerely and discreetly.”

Cavalcanti’s role as an intelligencer resurfaced in conjunction with international relations in the early 1570s. A letter from early January 1571/2 was endorsed “News out of Venice sent to Mr. Cavalcanti” containing reports “current in Rome of the Pope’s intentions with respect to different matters, also that the King of Spain has sent the Duke of Medina with a fleet to the assistance of the Duke of Norfolk.” The rumor came in response to the news that the Duke of Medinaceli stood ready with a fleet at Santander, with the intention of joining with the Duke of Alba’s army in the Low Countries to

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67 Dr. Nicholas Wotton to Sir William Cecil, 26 May 1566. NA: SP 70/84/180; Lord Montague to Sir William Cecil, 27 May 1566. SP 70/84/182; Guido Cavalcanti to Sir William Cecil. NA: SP 70/84/184-185.
69 CDMF, vol.1, 418; “Articles of redress proposed by Mr. Cavalcanti on the part of Spain,” BL Cotton, Galba c iii, f. 325-6.
71 CSPF, 1572-74, p. 8. There were rumors that the Spanish (at the behest of the current ambassador, Don Guerau de Spes, who was deeply enmeshed in the Ridolfi and Norfolk plots) would send a fleet north to support Mary Queen of Scots’ bid for the throne in the event of a popular rebellion. Philip quashed any such plans as too antagonistic and unlikely to succeed.
invade England. Although Philip’s planned invasion of England in 1572 in support of the Ridolfi Plot never materialized, the rumors were important enough that Cavalcanti sent the information to the English, who in turn immediately sent the intelligence to their representatives in France with instructions to inquire about French knowledge or involvement.

In direct response to the information sent by Cavalcanti to London and then into France, on 6 January 1572 Henry Killigrew and Sir Thomas Smith had an audience with Catherine de Medici and mentioned the news contained in Cavalcanti’s intelligence report. Catherine related that “her son had advertisement from his agent in Flanders that the Duke of Alva had hired two Italians, who were now in England, to poison the Queen, and that the Duke of Medina Celi stays his coming until that enterprise took effect.” Catherine hastened to assure Smith and Killigrew that “they had twice written to M. de la Motte [Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon, French ambassador in England] to advertise her [Elizabeth] of this vile enterprise.” Smith also repeatedly asked Catherine about the Duke of Norfolk’s communications with any Frenchmen concerning his plans to marry Mary Stuart, or his conversion to Catholicism. Catherine informed both Smith and Killigrew that while Norfolk had approached foreign representatives for support, the French had no intentions of supporting any plans to marry the Duke to Mary Stuart, or Mary’s bid for the English throne.

After the negotiations of the mid-1570s Cavalcanti faded from view. His health had long been an issue, enough so that reports about him had commented on his bouts

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73 Ibid., 9-10.
74 Ibid.
with gout and other maladies.\textsuperscript{75} He appeared rarely in dispatches as a courier in the late 1570s, and by the early 1580s he disappeared from the records. His career lasted nearly twenty years; he played an important role in some of the largest negotiations in Elizabeth's reign. His value resulted directly from his lack of official status; as a Florentine, a merchant, and without titles or position in either France or England, he could move between both courts with a level of informality inaccessible to any courtier or councilor.

Antonio Almeida (Almeyda, Almeda, known to the Spanish as “\textit{El Bermejo}”), a trusted Portuguese courier, performed similar services for the French and Spanish as Cavalcanti. Almeida made his first appearance in surviving records in the fall of 1560, when he was employed by Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre, to carry letters to the King of Spain. He also carried packets for Sebastien de l’Aubespine, the French ambassador in Spain, and Queen Mother Catherine de Medici.\textsuperscript{76} As Navarre kept extensive communications alive with both Paris and Madrid, Almeida was a busy man.\textsuperscript{77} His role in relations between Navarre, Spain and France expanded with Navarre’s accession to the co-regency upon the death of King Francis II in December 1560. Like Cavalcanti, he served as an informal negotiator and handled sensitive discussions between multiple parties in addition to his role as a courier.

\textsuperscript{75} Sir Thomas Smith to Lord Burghely, 8 February 1572. SP 70/122/197. In December 1575 Cavalcanti wrote to Burghley concerning a powder for treating gout. British Library: Lansdowne 21, n. 16.

\textsuperscript{76} Allen, 76.

\textsuperscript{77} It is worthwhile to note that King Philip II did not recognize Bourbon as King of Navarre, as he had laid a claim to the title himself. Despite the fact that Bourbon had made a treaty with Philip in 1557 and signed it as “King of Navarre,” Philip continued to refer to him (and his son Henry, the future Henry IV) as the Marquis de Vendome, rather than King. Poder to Ruy Gómez and the duke of Albuquerque, 13April 1557. AGS PR 26/143.
Almeida served in several capacities in the discussions between Navarre, the Spanish and the House of Guise in 1561-2. Temporarily, Almeida benefited from the fact that politics in France had become hopelessly muddled with the death of Henry II in July 1559; the Guise family seized the opportunity to run of the government through their niece Mary, Queen of Scots, who was married to King Francis II. The Guise family had very close connections with the Spanish, who employed Almeida on a regular basis. Unfortunately for the Guise, however, their control collapsed with Francis’s death in December 1560, and Catherine de Medici took power as co-regent with Navarre (who took the title from the Duke of Guise), ruling during the minority of her son Charles IX. The Guise brothers were not content to let their influence wane, and regularly challenged Catherine on a variety of issues, including the persistent problem of the influential and growing Huguenot minority in the country.

The Guise took up the crusade first called by Henry II (plans for a widespread campaign of persecution were in the works at the time of his death) and urged by both Philip II and Pope Pius IV. Navarre’s role as co-regent and title of lieutenant-general of the kingdom gave both the Spanish and the ultra-Catholic Guise family an ideal opportunity to advance their program of religious persecutions in France. Bourbon was known to have a famously malleable conscience, unlike his wife, Jeanne d’Albret, who was a committed Protestant. He changed his religious convictions whenever it suited his political needs, and eventually this earned him the virtual indifference and borderline contempt of prominent courtiers on both sides of the religious divide. Still, despite his infamous instability, his social rank meant that he could not be ignored.
In his relazione prepared at the end of the First War of Religion, the Venetian ambassador Marc’Antonio Barbaro described Navarre as “a man lacking in stability, who has already changed three or four times, and he never considers anything but his ulterior interests. He uses religion as a means, and if the thought he could better advance himself in the opposite [religion] would throw himself into it with all his heart.”78 In the spring of 1561, he attended Mass and Protestant services intermittently while protesting his Catholic orthodoxy.79 For the moment, Catherine de Medici appeared to have developed a working relationship with him—in the spring of 1561 she wrote to Philip that Navarre was “willing that I should command everywhere and absolutely. I have made him Lieutenant General under me, in whose hands rests the supreme authority, just as in the past.”80 However, if the Spanish and Guise could undermine that relationship, Navarre might be persuaded to join the nobles against his co-regent.

Guise’s first goal was to induce Navarre to join the Triumvirate, a cabal of prominent nobles formed in the spring of 1561 to challenge the power of Catherine de Medici. The original members were Francis, Duke of Guise, Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France, and Jacques d’Albon de Saint-André, marshal of France, although Guise’s brother Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, also played a prominent role. Philip II supported the Triumvirate in their goals of fulfilling Henry II’s plans for a national Huguenot campaign of persecutions, in large part because it forestalled any possibility of an Anglo-French alliance or a coalition between the French Protestants and those in the Low Countries. Navarre, as co-regent, controlled the military forces of the country, and

79 Roelker, 157.
80 Catherine de Medici to Philip II, 27 March 1561, in Roelker, 157.
could enable the Triumvirate to make war upon his vice-regal authority—if he could be persuaded to join.

Philip’s ambassador in France, Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay, played a large role in the negotiations between Navarre and Philip II in the winter of 1561 and spring of 1562. Their moves were prompted in part by the tolerance Catherine showed to Huguenots at court in the summer and fall of 1561; some even went so far as to say that Catherine was considering converting. The Spanish, of course, could not make a direct offer to Navarre, but did make clear that any move to join the Triumvirate would be beneficial to him. The Triumvirate also dispatched a noble, the Sieur d’Auzance, to Philip’s court, to bargain for Navarre’s terms. Chantonnay handled most of the informal discussions between the Guise, Philip and Navarre through letters. For Chantonnay, Almeida, who was already known to Philip and Navarre, seemed to be an ideal person to carry messages and handle any unofficial negotiations between them.

Chantonnay first reported Almeida’s role in any negotiations in November 1561, when he informed Philip that Almeida had arrived at the French Court recently to discuss Navarre’s business. Chantonnay also noted that he was not sure if the “intelligence sources” of the French ambassador Sebastien de l’Aubespine had discovered Philip’s reluctance to offer any sort of inducements to Navarre, as Navarre had demanded another kingdom in compensation for the potential loss of Navarre, as he held the title only through his marriage to Jeanne d’Albret.81 Chantonnay continued to report that news had come from Rome concerning Navarre at the same time as Almeida’s arrival. The Pope was applying what pressure he could to force the government (and in effect, Navarre) to

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81 Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay to Philip II, 21 November 1561, in NCF vol. 3, 100.
take a hard-line stance on heresy within the kingdom. On 3 December, Chantonnay reported that he had decided to use Almeida to carry letters Navarre once more.\textsuperscript{82}

In December, Almeida made several trips carrying letters between Madrid, Navarre and Chantonnay. In theory, Philip had already agreed (through the Sieur d’Auzance, whom Navarre dispatched to Spain) that Navarre ought to be compensated for the loss of Navarre with another kingdom, since he would lose the crown in the event of a divorce. In the first week of December Navarre sent Almeida with a letter and instructions to see the Duke of Alba concerning the discussions, and Navarre’s terms for his defection. In the letter, Navarre informed Alba that he had “expressly sent this porter” to discuss the matters with Alba and Ruy Gómez de Silva. Almeida was to assure the Spanish of Navarre’s dedication to Catholicism and the King of Spain, to ensure that there was no confusion over the terms.\textsuperscript{83} In Chantonnay’s 7 December letter to Philip, the ambassador sent a note of caution concerning Almeida’s mission. It would be best, he wrote, to look for “some way for the Duke of Alba and Prince of Eboli to negotiate with Almeida without obligating your Majesty,” since Navarre’s allies wanted to see if anything could be obtained from Philip.\textsuperscript{84} Chantonnay also cautioned that the French ambassador Sebastien de l’Aubespine might try to intervene in the negotiations, to prevent any sort of agreement.\textsuperscript{85}

On the fifth of January Chantonnay sent a lengthy letter to Philip discussing, amongst other things, the current negotiations happening at St. Germain, and that the Sieur d’Auzance had arrived on the second with the news of Philip’s agreement. Philip’s

\textsuperscript{82} Chantonnay to Philip II, 3 December 1561, in \textit{NCF} vol. 3, 140.
\textsuperscript{83} Antoine de Bourbon to the Duke of Alba, 7 December 1561, in \textit{NCF} vol. 3, 148.
\textsuperscript{84} Chantonnay to Philip II, 7 December 1561 in \textit{NCF} vol. 3, 153.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
concessions, Chantonnay wrote, had caused a celebration that was “so great and so extraordinary that everyone thought the fuss far greater than the news.” In the dispatch, Chantonnay also wrote that he had heard that Admiral Coligny and his brother the Cardinal of Châtillon were losing favor at court, but, “nevertheless, Almeida is of another opinion.” As Almeida had predicted, the Huguenots managed to convince Catherine of the wisdom of taking a moderate course, rather than the hard-line stance urged by the Guise, Spain, and the papacy. The meetings resulted in the promulgation of the Edict of St. Germain, in which the government guaranteed limited rights to the Huguenots, including the right to private worship. Navarre, Chantonnay reported, continued to waver between the two sides.

Navarre’s indecision was short-lived. By the end of January 1562, the Triumvirate seemed closer to its goals than ever before. Jeanne d’Albret’s promises of another, greater kingdom if he would convert to Calvinism failed to seduce Navarre to the Protestant side; even a desperate letter from John Calvin could not persuade Navarre of the wisdom of following his wife. Rapid negotiations continued between Navarre and the Spanish; in many of his dispatches, Chantonnay relayed Almeida’s opinion on the matter and other events at court. On the thirteenth, he reported that Almeida had come with Navarre’s positive response.

Navarre took the offer from Spain—which came with the clause that Navarre had to fulfill his end of the bargain before receiving any sort of reward—and began a systematic reversal of his religious policies. In the winter of 1562, the seduction was

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86 Chantonnay to Philip II, 5 January 1562, in NCF vol. 3, 240.
87 Ibid.
88 Roelker, 157.
complete; Navarre transferred wholly to the Catholic, Guisard, Spanish side, against Catherine de Medici and the moderates at court. Almeida remained involved for the next several months tangentially, although he reverted to his primary role as a courier. In the middle of January Chantonnay dispatched him to Madrid with letters for Alba and Philip; he also carried letters from Catherine for l’Aubespine. By the 23rd of January Alba wrote to Navarre thanking him for the letters sent via Almeida, and to Chantonnay noting Almeida’s help in the negotiations with Navarre.89

Evidently, unlike Cavalcanti’s experiences with the Spanish during the secret negotiations of 1559, the English were unaware of Almeida’s role in the negotiations between Navarre and the Spanish in 1561-2. The English ambassadors and agents failed to report (or possibly, to notice) the frequent travels of the courier. Sir Nicholas Throckmorton and Sir Thomas Chamberlain did not mention Almeida in their dispatches from Paris and Madrid, respectively. The only reference to Almeida came from the English agent Robert Hogan, in August 1562, in a letter to Sir Thomas Chaloner. In his letter, Hogan, though apparently familiar with Almeida, misidentified him as the Portuguese ambassador to Spain. Hogan wrote that he and Almeida arrived at Philip’s court on the same day, and reported news that Almeida had given to “a friend of his, one of whose familiar acquaintances met Almeida on the road hither,” concerning the war efforts in France.90

Almeida continued to work as a courier for the Spanish, French, and Navarre (until his death at Rouen in November 1562) for another eighteen months—no easy feat,

90 Robert Hogan to Sir Thomas Chaloner, 19 August 1562, in CSPF 1562.
considering that the First War of Religion that erupted in the spring made travel very dangerous. Many of the dispatches sent through him carried news about the Spanish “aid” that Philip had decided to send to King Charles. During the war, he also served as one of the primary links between Navarre and the Spanish, carrying letters and dispatches to and fro, and relaying the Spanish “suggestions” to the Triumvirate. He carried regular letters from Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice, to Navarre, Catherine, Charles IX, and Sebastien de l’Aubespine, as Saint-Sulpice had replaced de l’Aubespine as Catherine’s ambassador to Spain in the spring of 1562. Charles discussed Almeida’s missions between Navarre and Philip at length in his instructions for Saint-Sulpice in the middle of June 1562. In August, Saint-Sulpice presented Almeida at Philip’s court formally, to allow Almeida to put forward his instructions for negotiations from Navarre; evidently Philip had not yet delivered on the concessions agreed upon in January.

In January 1563, Almeida carried the news of the death of Antoine de Bourbon, who died of injuries suffered during the siege of Rouen in November 1562, to Philip II. In his letter informing Philip of the news, the Count of Escars (a member of the Guise faction at court) specifically asked the King to give credit to what Almeida had to say, as

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91 Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice to Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre, 20 June 1562, in Edmond Cabié, ed. Ambassade en Espagne de Jean Ebrard, seigneur de Saint-Sulpice, (Albii, 1903), 35 (hereafter denoted as Saint-Sulpice); Antoine de Bourbon to Saint-Sulpice, 7 August 1562, in Saint-Sulpice, 57; Catherine de Medici to Saint-Sulpice, 9 August 1562, in Saint-Sulpice, 59.

92 See “Mémoire de Messieurs de St. Sulpice et de Limoges sur la reception dudit Seigneur pour résider ambassadeur au près du Roy Chatolique du 1 Juin 1562” and “Mémoire envoyé au Roy par Monsieur de St Sulpice le 12 Juin 1562 à Madrid” in British Library King’s MS 111, f. 81-6, 87-8.

93 Jean de Saint-Sulpice to Antoine de Bourbon, 1 September 1562, in Saint-Sulpice, 66. In his dispatch, Saint-Sulpice informed Navarre that he had discussed Almeida’s mission with Philip’s queen Elizabeth de Valois.
he carried part of the message himself. In his reply to Escars, Philip mentioned Almeida by name, and gave him a recommendation for Almeida’s good service.94

Unfortunately, following his mission to Madrid, there are large gaps in the surviving documents bearing reference to the Portuguese courier. In November 1563, a letter to Saint-Sulpice noted seeing Almeida at the Portuguese court; other references indicate he continued to work as a courier.95 As with Cavalcanti, Almeida was eventually identified as primarily serving one country, although unlike Cavalcanti, in this instance the documents do not indicate clearly when this transition happened. By the end of 1565 Almeida had acquired a powerful patron in the person of Raymond Beccarie de Pavie, Baron de Fourquevaux, who replaced Saint-Sulpice as the French resident ambassador in Spain. Fourquevaux wrote to Catherine requesting an annual pension for Almeida in the amount of 2,000 livres in December 1565.96 Almeida also gave Fourquevaux intelligence on the marriage negotiations between Portugal and the Hapsburgs. Evidently Fourquevaux’s first request received no response, because he broached the subject once more in the middle of February; in his letter, he informed Catherine that the pension would be well spent because Almeida “really liked being in her [Catherine’s] service.”97 Fourquevaux also noted that Almeida has the “means of knowing things in this court and to do you service.”98

In the summer of 1566 Almeida proved his worth to the French when he informed Fourquevaux that a fellow Portuguese courier, named Borros, was also working for

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94 Philip II to the Count of Escars, 1 April 1563, in NCF vol. 5, 158; Allen, 76.
95 St. Etienne to Saint-Sulpice, 15 November 1563, in Saint-Sulpice, 176.
96 Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 25 December 1565, in DF vol. 1, 27.
97 Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 18 February 1566, in DF vol. 1, 57.
98 Ibid; Allen, 77.
Philip. As Borros had previously been one of the favored couriers of Claude de l’Aubespine, Catherine’s secretary of state, the intelligence potential for this source could prove to be virtually limitless. In September 1566, Fourquevaux wrote to Catherine on the matter; in his letter he noted that Almeida had done “great service for himself, the king and Catherine” and that Almeida would be given the 200 écus meant for Borros. In the fall of 1566 Catherine also agreed to give Almeida a pension, although he refused the 200 écus.99

Unfortunately although he continued to work for Fourquevaux, Almeida still had not received his pension more than two years after promised. His most valuable intelligence came from his sources in Portugal; through Almeida, Fourquevaux was able to keep Catherine up to date on the lengthy negotiations on the Portuguese-Hapsburg marriage. Almeida even wrote out an extensive discourse on Portugal for Catherine, of which she approved.100 He still carried letters intermittently for Fourquevaux and Catherine during the first two years of Fourquevaux’s embassy. By 1569, however, Almeida had transitioned from working as a courier to working as an intelligencer in Portugal; Fourquevaux supported his proposal that Almeida should move to Lisbon and serve the French there. In his letter to Catherine in February 1569 on the transition, Fourquevaux noted that he thought it would serve Catherine well. In the summer of 1569, Fourquevaux reported that during a visit, Ruy Gómez de Silva had praised Almeida’s

99 Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 27 September 1566, in DF vol. 1, 127; 29 November 1566, in DF vol. 1, 143-4.
service and described him as a “very humble servant.” From 1569-1571, much of Fourquevaux’s Portuguese intelligence came from Almeida. After arriving in Lisbon, Almeida learned other information concerning the Portuguese king. Fourquevaux suggested to Catherine that Almeida be sent to Rome to inform the Pope of the negotiations, but Catherine refused. In a tantalizing postscript to a letter to Fourquevaux, Catherine added, “please tell him to keep sending information; it gives me great pleasure.” Evidently, the Queen Mother found Almeida’s services too valuable to allow him to move.

Both Almeida and Cavalcanti benefited from their status as independent couriers. They moved between courts and governments with an ease that could not have been afforded to any royal courier. By developing their own contacts at multiple courts, they moved beyond the role of courier into that of negotiator. They were entrusted with sensitive information and in high-level interactions. Both had access to people at all social levels, including monarchs themselves. In both cases, they turned to one government as their primary employer. Cavalcanti remained loyal to the English and Almeida to the French, but neither abandoned his contacts in other countries completely. This proved beneficial in multiple instances. They could gain access to information which others could not.

Mercenary couriers and spies

Independent couriers realized full well that their clients often viewed them as little more than mercenaries; in truth, when dealing with many independent couriers, the reputation was not entirely undeserved. In 1566 Antonio Almeida delivered the

101 Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 9 August 1569, in DF vol. 2, 106.
102 Ibid.
unfortunate Borros to the French (no doubt in part to further his credit with French and demonstrate his usefulness) and ended Borros’s clandestine service to the Spanish. Borros, like Almeida, relied on his value to multiple governments in order to remain employed. These independent couriers walked a fine line between their employers; in many instances, they found it easier—and often more profitable—to inform one client on the activities and communications of another. This, of course, carried risks; should it be discovered, the courier would lose his contacts, employment, and potentially his freedom or even his life.

In rare instances a courier could deceive his client and escape without notice. In the end of May 1583 Robert Bowes, then serving as the English ambassador to Scotland, sent Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's Secretary of State, a packet containing several letters.103 Two of the letters included were copies of correspondence between M. de Manningville, the French ambassador to Scotland and Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de Mauvissière, the French ambassador to England dated 28 and 29 March 1583. Bowes obtained these copies from Rocco Bonnetti (or Bonetti in some of the sources), an Italian courier employed by Manningville, who had previously worked for the Earl of Leicester and Walsingham himself. The letters between the two French representatives contained news on the Scottish court and Mary, Queen of Scots; clearly, Bowes recognized the value of the intelligence gathered, and sent it to Walsingham by another courier, who had been in Bowes’s service for several years. Presumably, Bowes’s unnamed courier had proven his loyalty to be above reproach.

In the cover letter to Walsingham, Bowes explained the provenance of the letters and detailed the methods used to gain access to the correspondence. Once entrusted with the letters by Manningville to take to Castelnau, Bonnetti opened the packet. Upon examining the letters, he related their contents to his companion, Eustace the Fleming. After his discussion with Bonnetti, Eustace, whom Bowes described to Walsingham as “well known to you” approached Bowes with an offer to introduce him to Bonnetti and gain access to his packet. Bowes accepted Eustace’s offer (presumably for some sort of reward, although none is specified in the surviving material) and made an apparent deal with Bonnetti to make copies of the correspondence. Evidently, after allowing the English to copy the letters, Bonnetti resealed and delivered the letters without arousing suspicion on the part of Castelnau, Manningville, or Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon, then in England as a special ambassador.

Apparently, the French ambassadors remained unaware of Bonnetti’s perfidy. In the initial letter to Castelnau, Manningville provided a typical brief introduction giving the recipient the name and general credentials of the courier bearing the packet. In his letter, Manningville, who had misplaced his trust in Bonnetti, wrote that “I have found that the present courier, one Rocho Bonney, an Italian and a gentleman, does professional and honorable work.” Castelnau later described Bonnetti as an “old acquaintance,” indicating that he knew Bonnetti prior to receiving Manningville’s letters. By opening and selling the contents of the letters surreptitiously, Bonnetti apparently hoped both to feather his proverbial nest with English funds and keep in the good graces of the French;

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104 Robert Bowes to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28 May 1583. BL Cotton Caligula c vii, f. 182.
105 M. de Manningville to Michel de Castelnau, 28 and 29 March 1583, f. 183.
106 Michel de Castelnau to William Davison, 11 May 1583, in CSPF January-June 1583, 315.
had he been able to continue selling the dispatches on regular missions between the two
Frenchmen, he may have been able to command a sizeable fee from Walsingham for
these services.

Around the first of May 1583 Bonnetti approached Castelnau for a letter of
recommendation to William Davison. In it, Castelnau described Bonnetti as “an old
acquaintance of mine” and asked Davison to put forward this recommendation to
Walsingham and the Lords of the Council.107 Couriers approached old clients providing
letters of introduction or recommendation quite frequently; without active advertisement,
couriers had to rely either on introductions or general mentions for their name to be heard
and as proof of their dependability. By specifically referring to Walsingham, Bonnetti
may have hoped to remind the Secretary of his prior services and request employment on
this basis.

Money, however, proved to be an issue—insofar that Bonnetti lacked it. As
documented in surviving records, Bonnetti appears to have suffered extreme financial
distress at several points during his career due to a variety of personal misfortunes. As
early as March 1583 Michel de Castelnau wrote Walsingham seeking some intervention
or aid for Bonnetti, because Bonnetti was “on his return from Scotland as poor as
Job…next to God, he looks to you for support, and thinks perhaps that my
recommendation to you may be of some service to him.”108 The letter went on to describe
Bonnetti’s pitiful situation due to the perfidy of his wife and former best friend, and
ended with another request to Walsingham to find some sort of gainful employment for

107 Ibid.
108 Michel de Castelnau to Francis Walsingham 19 May 1583, CSPF 1583, 329.
the erstwhile courier. In a letter dated the following year, Bonnetti himself wrote to Walsingham, seeking consideration for his petition.

Bonnetti, for his part, had already worked for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in a variety of capacities and had experienced repeated financial troubles. He first appeared in the English records in August 1574, when Bonnetti sent a variety of intelligence reports from Italy and the Low Countries to Robert Dudley from his current location in Antwerp. The initial letter dated 9 August 1574 demonstrates a prior relationship; in the correspondence, Bonnetti complained to Leicester of a financial matter with his relations and asked for the Earl’s intervention on his behalf.\textsuperscript{109} The second letter provided general rumors and gossip current in Italy; Bonnetti also included information that, apparently, he had learned in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{110} In October 1574 Bonnetti wrote Dudley from Antwerp in order to secure a passport to England in order to vindicate his character against a variety of charges.\textsuperscript{111}

Bonnetti, exemplified those couriers who worked for a variety of employers rather than serving one government in the capacity of a royal courier. He depended on his reputation, personal contacts and availability to earn enough money to survive. Governments realized quickly that maintaining a royal courier in residence at an embassy, especially if the ambassador only used his services intermittently, proved far more expensive than using the services of independent couriers such as Bonnetti. Their decision to rely more heavily on independent couriers, while motivated by financial concerns, was not without risks. There was the constant possibility that the information

\textsuperscript{109} Rocco Bonnetti (or Rocho Bonetti) to the Earl of Leicester, 9 August 1574. BL Cotton, Galba c v, f. 37.
\textsuperscript{110} Rocco Bonnetti (or Rocho Bonetti) to the Earl of Leicester, 19 August 1574. BL Cotton, Galba c v, f. 39.
\textsuperscript{111} Same to same, 16 October 1574. BL Cotton, Titus b vii, f. 228.
contained in the packets could be traded or sold for the courier’s benefit. Most
government officials viewed independent couriers as little above mercenaries, their
services for sale to the highest bidder.

Entrusting the contents of a message to a courier in verbal form offered some
slight level of protection and deniability. Although the contents could be sold just as
easily—in less than six months during his tenure as ambassador to France in 1572-3 two
verbal messages entrusted to anonymous couriers by Francis Walsingham were passed on
to other individuals—there were no actual documents to provide incriminating evidence.
Walsingham had resorted to using the services of the untrustworthy couriers in the
aftermath of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, when he set foot outside his embassy
only rarely, and thought it far too dangerous to dispatch an Englishman with a message
through the violent countryside. His first report on the massacre was carried verbally by
an anonymous courier who was instructed to reveal its contents to only two men: Lord
Burghley and the Earl of Leicester. Both men served on the Privy Council and were
among Elizabeth's most trusted councilors. Walsingham continued to send most of his
messages in the same manner, committing only part of the dispatch to paper and the
remainder (often the most sensitive portion) to the messenger’s memory. Walsingham’s
efforts to preserve the secrecy of his dispatches proved futile. In a letter five months after
the event, Robert Dudley observed dryly that

And even upon this your last advertisement, which you committed to your
messenger, to deliver to my Lord Treasurer [William Cecil] and me, the same was
also communicated to others, being no Councillors…before we had either
imparted your Letters to her Majestie, or scarce read them at all, I assure the
Count Montgomery was advertised of the matter…besides, the like the secret
matter which you committed to be delivered to my Lord Treasurer and me upon
the slaughter when you durst not write, was likewise communicated unto others,
which came also to our knowledge, for it was in open talk within ten hours after we had it.\textsuperscript{112}

Leicester hastened to explain that he did not hold Walsingham responsible for this breach in discretion, nor had he violated Walsingham’s trust, for “upon our honour we had not delivered it to any Councillor living…wherefore you may see it is not good to trust messengers, nor to impart any of your weighty causes…for I assure you they go from friend to friend.”\textsuperscript{113} Leicester even later noted that it may have been better, in a matter of such secrecy, not to have sent anything at all until Walsingham could find a more secure method of delivering the dispatch, as the chosen courier had proved to be willing to betray Walsingham’s trust.

Selling access to a dispatch or revealing the contents of a message proved to be a short step from engaging in espionage. Couriers doubled as spies in many instances; spies also used the cover of a courier to move from country to country. Although governments fully recognized the potential for leaks when using the services of independent couriers, the maintenance of royal couriers proved too expensive and cumbersome to rely upon them fully. Men on the move through multiple countries could discover information not readily available at court, especially in times of war or civil unrest. Independent couriers might also be able to pass checkpoints that had halted the progress of royal couriers during times in which countries prevented passage or closed ports. In May 1559, when introducing the courier Richard Harrison of his current letter to Sir William Cecil, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton noted that courier/spy Richard Harrison had passed into France.

\textsuperscript{112} Robert Dudley to Francis Walsingham, 8 January 1572/3 in Dudley Digges, \textit{The Compleat Ambassador: or two Treaties of the Intended Marriage of Queen Elizabeth of Glorious Memory...} (London: Thomas Newcomb, 1655), 322-323. (hereafter denoted as Digges)

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 323.
during the previous war on instructions from Lord Admiral Clinton specifically to gather intelligence.\textsuperscript{114}

One of the many couriers plying the lucrative Paris-London-Edinburgh route was an Italian named Baptista di Favoria (also Favori/Favorys), who carried messages from Catherine de Medici to Scotland regularly, and often stopped in London on his way north. Favoria’s brief—and ultimately unsuccessful—career lasted a mere three years until his execution for espionage at the hands of the French.\textsuperscript{115} Favoria first appeared in the English records in April 1560, when Throckmorton used his services to carry letters to London because “the ports are stayed for the English” during the Anglo-Scots crisis of 1560, in which the French had attempted to intervene by sending a fleet north with provisions and troops to supplement the Scottish ranks.\textsuperscript{116} Favoria, unlike Throckmorton’s normal couriers, managed to pass through the French checkpoints and cross into England. With his recommendation included in the initial letter, Throckmorton likely recognized the utility of retaining the services of an individual who could successfully pass through the French ports when the English couriers would have had to wait; in times of international crisis, timely communications could prove invaluable.

Throckmorton also added that the bearer had important news to convey to the Queen, of which Throckmorton only gave generalities, regardless that the letter had been

\textsuperscript{114} Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Sir William Cecil, 15 May 1559, in Forbes vol 1, 91-94. Throckmorton provided the brief introduction in order to present Harrison, who served as courier for Throckmorton’s letter.

\textsuperscript{115} The French sources of the period are disappointingly silent on the incident. It is entirely possible that, given that the execution took place in the middle of the First War of Religion, that the records were lost, or that the execution was conducted by a regional commander rather than the central government. The available English records do not document the details of the execution.

\textsuperscript{116} Throckmorton to the Queen, April 25 1560, in CSPF 1559-1560, 581. Allen gives a brief description of Favoria’s career as an example of one of the period’s most unfortunate careers; he does not analyze Favoria’s role as a spy/source.
enciphered with a request for Cecil himself to decipher it. It is safe to assume that both Queen and Cecil respected Throckmorton’s request and had Cecil decipher the letter, given Cecil’s notes in the margins of Throckmorton’s dispatch. Favoria had apparently gathered valuable information of a Guise plot to poison the Queen by the services of a man named Stephano which he offered to Throckmorton as a gesture of good faith; Throckmorton’s primary suggestion, apart from the usual security measures, was to ensure that the man be taken into custody in order to serve as an example to others and confuse the Guise family about the English knowledge of the plot.117

Partly as payment for services already rendered and partly to secure future services, Throckmorton also informed the Queen that he had paid Favoria the sum of thirty crowns, and requested a pension of 300 crowns to “serve her for intelligence.”118 He also promised Favoria an additional 100 crowns on his return from Scotland.119 Although expensive, Throckmorton believed that upon Favoria’s return “to the French Court he will be in very good case for means to do her [Queen Elizabeth] service.”120 Favoria probably offered the initial Guise plot revelation as a gesture of good faith, or a sample of what services he might be able to offer. In order to further whet English appetites for intelligence, Favoria informed Throckmorton that he knew the identities of several individuals close to the Queen in the pay of the French King, and promised to reveal the names to the Queen. He also divulged information about Alvaro de la Quadra, the Spanish ambassador; apparently Quadra kept the Duke of Guise and Cardinal of Lorraine well informed about his activities, and often included the French ambassador’s

117 Ibid, 582.
118 Ibid.
119 Allen, 112.
120 CSPF 1559-1560, 582.
packets with his own passing into Flanders. With this handy tidbit, the English knew full well that anything Quadra learned or suspected would likely be common knowledge for the Guise brothers within days or weeks, and could in turn use the information to structure leaks or misinformation. Quadra’s packet inclusions could not have come as a surprise; Favoria himself passed through England on his way to Leith on a mission for Catherine de Medici. He carried letters for Throckmorton and Cecil regularly while on the France-Scotland route for the French government.

Although Throckmorton appeared to enjoy a cordial relationship with Favoria during his tenure in France, his successor Sir Thomas Smith did not. Tensions between Smith and Throckmorton likely influenced Smith’s relationships with any of Throckmorton’s friends, including Cavalcanti, Favoria, and Throckmorton’s cousin Henry Middlemore. In April 1564 Throckmorton even denounced Smith to his face as a “horeson traitor” and Smith often questioned the motives of those Throckmorton had trusted most. After arriving in November 1562 to take up the post of resident ambassador Smith quickly developed a pronounced opinion of Favoria; in March 1563 dispatches to Ambrose Dudley, the Earl of Warwick (Warwick then occupied Le Havre as the commander of the English expeditionary force sent to garrison the town against the French) and William Cecil, he accused Favoria of being a spy of Claude de l’Aubespine, Catherine de Medici’s secretary. Despite his personal misgivings, Smith admitted that such a mercenary might be turned to the Queen’s favor; although he continued to believe that Favoria worked as de l’Aubespine’s spy, he suggested to the Queen that Favoria, “if

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121 See the letters between Quadra and Chantonnay in AGS Estado 8340 and 8341, in which Quadra mentions letters he dispatched to the Guise brothers.
122 Sir Thomas Smith to Sir William Cecil, 13 April 1564. CSP Foreign, 1564-5, 103.
he do well and be well used, he may do her good service at this time.”123 A month after
fronting these allegations, in a letter to Cecil Smith requested that Cecil not use Favoria
to carry letters because of suspicions that they had been intercepted, either deliberately or
through carelessness. 124 Smith later noted that other packets had been opened and later
resealed.125

Either Smith’s predictions about Favoria’s loyalty proved false, or the French
executed him for serving two masters at once. Despite repeated difficulties with sending
and receiving letters couriered by Favoria (not entirely unexpected in a time of civil war
and international tension, when couriers traveling postal routes were likely to be
searched) the Italian had apparently not betrayed the English. In August 1563 Henry
Middlemore, Throckmorton’s cousin and secretary, wrote from Rouen that “on the 4th
inst. De Favorys was hanged here for a spy, having carried letters and intelligence out of
this country into England and Havre.”126 Typical of the period, the focus rests not on the
loss of human life, but rather a brief lament over the loss of such a source.

Mercenary couriers came in all shapes and forms. At times they sold access to the
information they carried; in other instances they worked for governments or individuals
as spies. Even a verbal message, such as that entrusted to the anonymous courier by Sir
Francis Walsingham, was not safe. Employing an independent courier carried risks,
especially when that courier was given important papers or messages. Unfortunately, the
need for communications outweighed the risks, which provided an ideal opportunity to

123 Sir Thomas Smith to Queen Elizabeth I, 19 March 1563, in CSPF 1563.
124 Sir Thomas Smith to Sir William Cecil, 13 April 1563 in CSPF 1563.
125 Ibid.
126 Henry Middlemore to Sir William Cecil, 7 August 1563, in CSPF 1563, 491.
gather intelligence as well as introducing yet another chance for valuable intelligence to be discovered.

**Servants and couriers: mixed employment**

Many ambassadors employed their personal servants as couriers. Ambassadors could entrust their servants with sensitive information and delicate tasks that were often withheld from independent couriers because of the close relationships often enjoyed between the two. An ambassador’s use of his servants as ad-hoc couriers proved to be a cheaper way of maintaining more steady communications; the government covered the servant’s travel costs, while his daily salary came either from the ambassador’s diet or his personal funds. Governments found this less expensive than maintaining several royal couriers at any post, and encouraged the use of servants when possible.

Many individuals at court often used independent couriers or servants to send messages and to carry information to other courtiers or ambassadors. The practice offered a measure of discretion that was lost with public meetings or audiences. It also minimized the amount of information that had to be committed to paper. Catherine de Medici used independent couriers to maintain contact with Don Francés de Álava, Philip’s ambassador to France. Of course, part of that might have been due to the fact that the two heartily detested one another, but neither seemed to find anything unusual about the practice. In an October 1569 letter to Álava, Catherine noted that she sent one Chavigny (originally spelled Chaviñi), a servant of her son Charles, who was “well informed about the news here and has orders from the King my son to tell you everything I could
possibly write here.” If Álava wished, he could send his reply verbally with Chaviñi. Six months later, Catherine sent Álava a reply with one of Philip’s servants, who remained unnamed. In her letter, Catherine wrote that “I understand what you have asked him to tell me about the matter. He will let you know in particular what we want to be sent back.” By using vague language in the letter, both Catherine and Álava could keep the exact nature of the discussion a secret, in the event a third party read the letters. In both instances, the servants doubled as couriers and sources of information by relaying messages between the parties.

During his tenure in France, Philip’s ambassador Don Bernardino de Mendoza used his trusted personal servant Herman Cartelegar to carry top-secret material to Flanders or Madrid, especially during times of war. Bertrand Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon used his servant, Sr. de Vassal, to handle negotiations with the English and Scots in addition to carrying letters to and fro. A primary example of a servant performing services as a courier, negotiator, intelligencer and source is Luis de Paz, who served four Spanish ambassadors and one chargé d’affaires in England over a period of more than a decade.

Luis de Paz first enters Spanish records in December 1558, when Philip’s ambassador the Count of Feria used him to funnel pension money discreetly to Lord William Howard, Elizabeth's chamberlain. By 1558 Paz had probably already spent a considerable time in England to date; when Feria discussed the pension issue with Howard, de described Paz as one “whom he [Howard] knew,” indicating that Paz had

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already established himself in court circles.\textsuperscript{130} Feria also noted that by using Paz’s services the pension issue could remain quiet; although the queen had not forbade her courtiers from accepting pensions explicitly, Feria saw no reason to raise the issue. Feria also used Paz to carry messages to Howard about his coming journey to Flanders and to offer additional funds to be sent through Paz. By employing Paz in this manner, Feria established an informal connection with a key member of Elizabeth's court; in effect, he offered Howard a discreet method in which they could communicate without drawing undue attention. By further informing Howard that Paz would always bring the pension funds, Feria ensured that the communication network would remain open as long as Howard wanted Spanish money.

Presumably Paz remained in England, performing various services for the embassy, when Philip’s representation transitioned from Feria to Alvaro de la Quadra in the summer of 1559. During the Borghese Venturini scandal three years later, Quadra sent Paz to Venturini to beg him to return to the Spanish embassy; both Quadra’s dispatch to Philip and Venturini’s letter to William Cecil record the message Paz carried from Quadra to Venturini.\textsuperscript{131} He also witnessed a deposition provided for Margaret of Parma and Philip concerning Venturini’s betrayal by another of Quadra’s servants who had been present at the initial confrontation between Quadra and Venturini. Paz witnessed the debacle in January 1563 in Durham House when locksmiths under the direction of Queen and Council arrived to turn Quadra out of his home (Durham House

\textsuperscript{130} Feria to Philip, 14 December 1558.
\textsuperscript{131} See the previous chapter for information about Borghese Venturini and Alvaro de la Quadra.
(or Place) was a royal residence that had been used as the Spanish embassy since Feria’s
tenure) and change the locks due to a series of unfortunate incidents.132

Paz’s next moment of international note as both courier and source came in the
summer of 1563, when Alvaro de la Quadra lay dying in England. In an effort to further a
clandestine series of negotiations between Quadra and a series of Scottish delegates
concerning the marriage of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, Quadra dispatched Paz north to
treat directly with Mary. Quadra had long cherished the hope of arranging a marriage
between Mary and Don Carlos, or at least a Hapsburg relative, although Philip’s own
directives on the matter remained stubbornly noncommittal. This goal paired with his
dream of overthrowing Elizabeth and replacing her with Mary; through a Hapsburg
marriage, Quadra could secure both Catholicism in England and the British Isle within
the Hapsburg fold against any French predations. Many of Quadra’s quiet discussions
with recusant English nobles concern the possibility of Spanish sponsorship for a
Catholic rebellion; often, these paired with a Spanish marriage for Mary Stuart.133 Paz’s
mission followed on the heels of a series of quiet meetings between Quadra and William
Maitland of Lethington, Mary’s secretary.

In one of his final letters to Philip dated 17 July 1563, mere days before his death,
Quadra informed Philip that due to a lack of firm instruction on what he should say to
Lethington, then in London on one of his many missions to secure Mary’s
acknowledgement as heiress presumptive, Quadra had decided to pursue a “middle

132 See the following chapter for information about the scandal, including the assassination attempt
orchestrated by the Provost of Paris, the midnight raids on both the French and Spanish embassies, and the
subsequent efforts of Quadra to deal with the debacles.
133 See the previous chapter for information about Quadra’s meetings with Catholic courtiers about a
rebellion and Mary Stuart.
course, which is to secretly send a person in whom I have entire confidence to Scotland.”134 Luis de Paz drew the task; as Quadra later explained in his letter, Quadra had delayed sending Paz until the 17th because Paz needed time to “arrange some commissions which are to serve as a pretext for his journey.”135 Covered as a merchant sent north on business matters, Paz met privately with Mary concerning the marriage negotiations. Quadra instructed Paz to request that Mary dispatch an individual south to treat directly with him, as he could not continue to meet with Lethington without attracting attention, nor could Paz make repeated trips between the two countries for the same reason. Quadra had wanted to send someone earlier, but believed that “a member of my household should go to Scotland, and I could trust no one else.” He was forced to wait for Paz to arrange his cover; else the unscheduled trip of a Spaniard to Scotland would have drawn too much attention.136

Paz returned to England within hours of the Bishop’s death, and obliquely informed Philip of the relative success of his mission in a direct dispatch; a lengthier letter to Philip by Quadra’s secretary Luis Roman confirmed the news when he wrote of an agreement for Mary to wed either Don Carlos or Don John of Austria. Paz remained in London during the lengthy transition to Quadra’s successor, Don Diego Guzmán de Silva. The few letters in the intervening period document that Luis de Paz and Quadra’s secretaries handled what little routine business remained until Guzmán’s arrival in 1564. Philip’s letter of instruction to Guzmán complimented both Luis de Paz and Antonio de

134 Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 17 July 1563, in CSPS 1558-67, 345.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
Guaras (later to serve as chargé d’affaires after Don Guerau de Spes’s expulsion) for their services, and commended them to Guzmán.\textsuperscript{137}

Paz performed similar services for the new ambassador; Guzmán quickly recognized the value of Paz’s connections at court and used them wisely. In a September dispatch he noted that Paz had couriered letters from Guzmán to Elizabeth, Cecil and Robert; while at court, Paz used the opportunity to speak with a source. Guzmán described the source as someone “I have an understanding with a person with whom he [Paz] can talk and who only trusts him.”\textsuperscript{138} The source proceeded to give Paz information about the state of matters concerning English redress of piracies committed on Flemish merchants; Guzmán reported to Philip that the effort was proceeding slowly due to members of the Council.\textsuperscript{139} In his reply a month later, Philip acknowledged Guzmán’s and Paz’s efforts to learn information, and thanked them for whatever intelligence Guzmán could send.

Paz’s role in the Scottish negotiations reemerged in December 1564 when John Beaton arrived at Guzmán’s London residence bearing letters from Don Francés de Álava, Philip’s resident ambassador in France. Beaton, brother of James Beaton, Bishop of Glasgow and Mary Stuart’s resident ambassador in France, passed through London on his return to Scotland. In his conversation with Guzmán Beaton offered to collect any letters Guzmán might want to send to Don Francés after Beaton’s audience with the Queen; in effect, announcing that Beaton intended to return to Guzmán’s residence. Paz arrived at Guzmán’s home shortly after Beaton departed with news that Beaton had sent a

\textsuperscript{137} Philip II to Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, 14 January 1564, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 352.\textsuperscript{138} Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 4 September 1564, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 376-9.\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
gentleman to court to request a meeting with Paz at Guzmán’s residence that afternoon. According to Guzmán’s dispatch, Paz waited for nearly twelve hours; assuming Beaton would never arrive, he departed shortly before one o’clock in the morning. Beaton arrived soon after Paz left, and having declined Guzmán’s offer to send someone to fetch Paz, instead went directly to Paz’s home to speak with him. Paz reported to Guzmán that Beaton, on orders from Lethington and with Mary’s compliments, wanted to ask if Paz had any answer about the business they had discussed on Paz’s mission to Scotland the previous summer. On Guzmán’s orders, Paz replied negatively, but offered to inform the Scots as soon as he heard anything. In his dispatch, Guzmán informed Philip that he felt it was best to continue the negotiations through Paz, as Guzmán had not met with the Scots about the matter, whereas Paz had established a relationship with them.\(^{140}\) In the following March, Mary sent a representative to London bearing letters with her signature and with instructions to meet with Guzmán after Paz confirmed the signature on the letters.

During his tenure in England Guzmán used Paz to discover information of all sorts at court; presumably, Paz could move comfortably among court circles because of his extensive network of contacts, but inconspicuous enough not to merit undue attention. Guzmán reported several different instances in which he used Paz to discover intelligence on matters as diverse as the contents of a meeting between Elizabeth and the French resident and special ambassadors Paul de Foix and Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de Mauvissière; the mission of the ill-fated Francis Yaxley, whom Paz encountered while

\(^{140}\) Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 18 December 1564, in CSPS 1558-1567, 399-400.
carrying letters to Brussels; and the placement of Philip’s Insignia at Windsor. In mid-
April 1567 Guzmán pondered dispatching Paz to Scotland in order to obtain hard
information about rapidly changing events, although he did not based on concerns for
appearances.

Paz remained in the service of the Spanish ambassador following Guzmán’s
replacement by Don Guerau de Spes in the beginning of September 1568. Unlike
Guzmán, Spes proved unsuited to his position; less than three months after his arrival he
earned the enmity of the queen and council because of his actions concerning the English
confiscation of gold bullion on Spanish ships that had sought safe harbor in English ports.
As early as December 21st, before his meeting with Elizabeth about the matter, Spes
wrote to Alba urging him to seize all English property and subjects in the Netherlands
and to ask him to advise Philip to do the same. This preemptory move eventually
landed Spes under house arrest, leaving him to depend on the services of intermediaries
such as Paz to communicate with the court. In August 1569 Paz accompanied a
gentleman in the service of the Duke of Norfolk to court as a way of trying to reestablish
some degree of amity with the Queen; he succeeded in speaking with Cecil about the
possibility of moving Spes to a different house.

Unfortunately for Paz, the spiraling conspiracies surrounding the Duke of
Norfolk, Bishop of Ross, Roberto Ridolfi and the Northern Earls quickly consumed the
members of the Spanish embassy. Although due to other international considerations the

141 Francis Yaxley served as a diplomat under Edward VI and Mary I, but his Catholic sympathies led to
imprisonment in the Tower of London under Elizabeth. At the time of his death in a shipwreck in
November 1565, Yaxley was serving as an envoy for Mary Stuart and had taken charge of Spanish funds
for Mary’s use to expel heretics from Scotland.
142 Don Guerau de Spes to the Duke of Alba, 21 December 1568, in CSPS 1568-79, 90.
143 Don Guerau de Spes to Philip II, 13 August 1569 in CSPS 1568-1579
English released Spes from confinement in early summer 1569, the ambassador quickly involved himself in the celebrated intrigue of the Ridolfi Plot. Other historians have covered the plot at length, and it need not be reexamined here, save to note that it marked the beginning of the end of Luis de Paz’s career in England. In October 1569 the English arrested Paz and Cristobal de Amonte (another of Spes’s servants) on suspicion of being involved in the Northern Rebellion, although they were released immediately on bail. By the fall 1571, although—or because—he had performed services enough to have warranted a reward from Philip, Paz had again attracted English attention. In October Paz had been arrested and placed under close confinement in his home. A 22 November letter from the Portuguese agent Antonio Fogaza to Ruy Gómez de Silva noted that the arrest had been on the order of the Privy Council. In an effort to protect himself and his servant, Spes immediately asked Fogaza to intervene on Paz’s behalf. Through his connections at court Fogaza managed to obtain Paz’s release on bail before being taken to the Tower; as Fogaza noted, this was the only way he managed to escape interrogation by torture. Having secured bail, Fogaza now endeavored to have the bail discharged so that Paz could leave the country immediately. Clearly, Paz had lost his utility; England was no longer safe for the trusted servant and courier.

Paz’s career is typical for that of a trusted servant doubling as courier and intelligencer. As a senior member of the Spanish ambassador’s household, Paz merited

144 Antonio Guaras to Alba, 25 October 1569, 204.
145 Don Guerau de Spes to the Duke of Alba, 31 October 1571.
146 Antonio Fogaza to Ruy Gómez de Silva, 22 November 1571. CSPS 1568-1579, 353. Interestingly, a note in the Calendar of State Papers Spanish series by editor Martin A. S. Hume beneath Fogaza’s letter to Ruy Gómez de Silva labels Fogaza as a Portuguese spy in Spanish pay, and likely a dependent of Ruy Gómez, who was also Portuguese. Hume alleges that Fogaza lived in London nominally as a Portuguese agent until denounced as a Spanish spy by Giraldi, the Portuguese envoy, who had been informed by Antonio de Guaras that Fogaza was giving information to Spain. On Giraldi’s testimony, Fogaza’s Portuguese pension ended and he lived on a Spanish pension.
attention at court; he developed his own intelligence networks and used them for Spanish benefit. His extended role in the Scottish marriage talks demonstrates the personal nature of negotiations; Paz, having met personally with Mary, was then entrusted to verify her signature on a series of letters, and later to meet personally with a representative; the representative even refused to speak with the new ambassador about the matter, preferring instead to discuss it with Paz. Paz, of course, informed Guzmán about every step of the negotiations, and acted on his instructions, but remained the main conduit for informal negotiations between the Scots and Spanish.

Conclusion

Couriers served multiple purposes in the world of international communications. They functioned as vital links between governments and representatives. Without them, it would have been impossible to maintain communications between a government and its agents abroad. Many independent couriers proved to be beyond reproach; their honesty and integrity enabled them to build successful careers serving many different individuals and several different governments. Unfortunately, the actions of unscrupulous individuals such as Rocco Bonnetti tarnished the collective reputations of these couriers, and helped build a stereotype that characterized a profession. In order to minimize the risk of employing a potentially untrustworthy courier, many ambassadors employed their own servants in this role. Ideally, the servant would maintain the secrecy required and could pass through potentially disputed territory unnoticed.

Couriers also developed their own networks and provided information to various individuals and functioned as unofficial negotiators. These additional services aided in finding and keeping employment; to be successful, a negotiator had to develop
relationships with both parties. Both Guido Cavalcanti and Antonio Almeida managed to serve multiple governments at the same time because they were trusted by their clients. Their travels could take them to several different courts in a matter of months, enabling them to cultivate relationships with courtiers across Europe. These contacts could serve as character references or sources as need required.
Chapter 3: The World of Paper

A note from Gabriel de Zayas, the secretary for Philip II’s Council of State, enclosed with a packet of letters bound for Antonio Guaras, a Spanish merchant and banker who served as the chargé d’affaires in London, informed Guaras that, “the bearers of this are the friends who I hope will do their business well…let them go about and solicit those at Court, with all diligence and favor.”¹ Zayas’s note, written in October 1577, was forwarded with a letter from Diego Maldonado, who served as secretary to Philip’s ambassador in Paris. In his cover letter, Maldonado wrote that Zayas had directed him to “send as quickly as possible” the note and another letter for Guaras about various business. A month earlier, another packet arrived for Guaras from associates in Bilbao and Plymouth, informing him that eight bronze artillery pieces purchased from the Englishman “John Ylcom [Ilcombe or Elcombe] in Plymua [Plymouth]” had been shipped to Spain, and that “Mr. Ylcom” had sent other letters with a variety of news to Guaras.²

Altogether these letters provide fascinating information about the various Spanish networks of communication and trade that operated in England and France: an Englishman Mr. “Ylcom” provided not only information to Guaras, but sold artillery to

¹ Gabriel de Zayas to Antonio Guaras, 19 October 1577. NA: SP 94/1/10
² Ochoa de Larrinaga to Antonio Guaras, 2 August 1577. NA; SP 94/1/4; Martin de Larrea to Antonio Guaras, 30 August 1577. NA: SP 94/1/6; Juanes Delechundi to Antonio Guaras, 19 September 1577. NA: SP 94/1/7; Iñigo de Valderrama to Antonio Guaras, 20 August-24 September 1577. NA: SP 94/1/8.
the Spanish; a Spanish agent in Padstow learned of the departure of Sir Francis Drake, although neither he (nor anyone else) could name Drake’s ultimate destination. Zayas, the secretary of the Spanish Council of State chose to send his letters to Guaras through the Spanish embassy in France rather than dispatching them directly to England, and ordered Guaras to support the efforts of Spanish agents at the English court. Maldonado, the embassy secretary, took the opportunity to ingratiate with the chargé d’affaires. But why are all these letters preserved in the National Archives of the United Kingdom instead of the Archivo General de Simancas?

In fact Guaras never received the letters from Zayas and Maldonado. He also never managed to satisfy Zayas’s curt request that “I have asked you before for spectacles, and I remind you again… I should like to oblige the Duke of Alva and other friends who feel the need of them.”

It is possible that he read those from his friends in Bilbao and Plymouth, although he probably did not have time to respond to them. On the night of 19 October 1577, he was arrested by the Queen’s agents and held prisoner, first at the house of the Sheriff of London and later in the Tower. English agents occupied and searched his home, and intercepted any correspondence they could. By capturing these documents, the English learned not only information about Guaras’s circle of correspondents, but also that he had contacts among the English Catholic nobility, that he had a spy in Padstow; and that English merchants were selling arms to the King of Spain. This was not the first time that the English had disregarded his theoretical diplomatic privilege by confiscating all Guaras’s papers and intercepting his correspondence, and

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3 Gabriel de Zayas to Antonio Guaras, 19 October 1577. NA: SP 94/1/10v. It is worth noting that Zayas dated his letter 7 October 1577, and Maldonado dated his cover letter 19 October; Zayas’s letter had thus taken a maximum of twelve days to travel from Madrid to Paris, which was a rapid pace for a courier.

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they would continue to do so until his expulsion from the country more than a year after
his arrest. Even an effective agent and a proficient intelligence network could not prevent
the information on these letters from being discovered, and the Duke of Alba had to
suffer without his glasses.

The world of paper presented both opportunities and dangers for the actors on the
diplomatic stage. All parties involved recognized the risks of committing any type of
valuable information to paper: such intelligence could prove disastrous if it fell into the
wrong hands. Yet, it was impossible to avoid using documents to relay information and to
keep records. No ambassador could hope to send all his reports verbally, nor could
governments operate without maintaining detailed records of their activities. There was
also no way to completely control access to documents, no matter where they were kept.
Just as there was a virtual guarantee that intelligence would leak from individuals at
court, so there was a similar assurance that news kept on paper would leak as well.
Individuals driven by the need to discover the types of hard information more often found
in documents than through court gossip or other less reliable sources sought to gain
access to intelligence preserved in sensitive papers both at court and in correspondence.
Information contained within documents carried an additional sense of legitimacy that
other avenues of intelligence collection might not offer; one would be more likely to trust
information gathered from a councilor’s meeting notes, rather than a shadowy
conversation with an untrustworthy courtier or unscrupulous courier. These materials
could provide confirmation of vital interactions, plans, or negotiations, and if used
actively, shape a government’s policy initiatives. Governments, courtiers, and
ambassadors alike suffered from the interception of documents and benefited from the
information gained from captured dispatches. Both ambassadors and governments
learned valuable information from documents, either those intercepted en route or
accessed through a variety of avenues at court.

Foreign envoys played a large role in intercepting and tracking documents both at
court and in transit. An astute ambassador kept track of intelligence related to both
domestic and foreign business in order to keep his master apprised of the latest doings of
the government, and often learned of such matters from documents. Ambassadors also
devoted considerable resources to develop effective networks of court contacts in order to
learn the contents of working papers and other documents held in any number of
households, including that of the monarch. Obtaining these documents offered the
opportunity to peer not only into the correspondence between councilors, representatives
and other agents, but the private working papers of prominent members of the
government.

Document interception and confiscation happened most often while en route.
Documents in transit could be taken from a courier forcibly, or removed without the
bearer’s knowledge. Royal and independent couriers alike could be stopped, searched,
harassed or otherwise compelled to hand over any documents they carried. In rare
instances, governments could intercept hidden materials and secret messages.
Theoretically, it was easier to protect the integrity of documents at court. Any interested
party would either need to view the documents him or herself, or find someone willing to
reveal the contents of these materials. Even papers on the king’s desk were not safe from
prying eyes. In some instances, clandestine access to sensitive documents could even occur without the owner’s knowledge, such as through a spy at court or an unscrupulous servant. The period also witnessed several notable instances in which governments searched ambassadors’ and nobles’ homes specifically to find sensitive papers, and in doing so, disregarding international custom that protected diplomatic envoys and their possessions. The concept that diplomatic immunity extended to the ambassador’s residence (which often also doubled as the embassy) and all materials contained within was still disputed in the sixteenth century. Many embassies were provided for ambassadors’ use by their host governments, and those governments viewed the structure as within their judicial purview.  

The ambassador and his government could, and often did, lodge protests over such behavior, but these pro forma responses did not prevent repeated violations of theoretical diplomatic protections.

Clearly, transporting a valuable packet of letters across hundreds of miles and through multiple countries had no lack of opportunity for interception. Intercepting documents had dual benefits. It not only gave the holder the information contained within the letters, but also denied it to the intended recipient. This became important especially when the confiscated documents carried orders or instructions relating to time-sensitive events, such as trade negotiations, military dispositions and shifts in government policy. When the French cut off all English communications from within France to the garrison at Le Havre in 1563, the Earl of Warwick had no way to know if peace terms had been negotiated or if his government would continue with the war efforts. The admiral

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transporting the belated relief supplies did not know of Warwick’s capitulation until he arrived at Le Havre two days after the surrender.\(^5\) Similarly, the regular Huguenot interception of Spanish couriers journeying to and from the Low Countries prevented Philip from maintaining communications with his subordinates there, and knowing the most recent developments in the revolt. By intercepting the king’s orders, the Dutch rebels could learn the king’s instructions before his commanders. The English, Dutch and French tracked all documents traveling from the Low Countries to Spain carefully. In order to increase his chances of success, one Spanish courier was instructed to go “very cautiously, and in no wise must he dismount at the post of the \textit{correo mayor}, nor go during the daylight hours.”\(^6\)

Diplomatic custom and theory held government dispatches and letters, and the couriers who carried them, to be inviolable. It was one of the few points on which prominent medieval authors had agreed long ago, practiced by the Italian states in the first years of diplomatic exchanges, and by the mid-sixteenth century Western European governments acknowledged this—at least, in theory.\(^7\) As in many cases, however, theory bore little resemblance to actual practice. Several celebrated instances of document theft, interception or betrayal reveal the vulnerability of information en route, even when enciphered. Although many messages fell into the wrong hands because of unscrupulous couriers, those same couriers would have had nothing valuable to offer without the information in the documents they carried. Information preserved on paper, as with intelligence learned from interactions at court and from couriers, provided power. This

\(^5\) “Le Havre,” is known interchangeably as “Havre de Grace” and “Newhaven” to the English.
\(^6\) Allen, 96.
\(^7\) See Adair, chapters 7-9; and Garrett Mattingly, \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy}, 246-8.
power could be traded or used to develop or define relationships between diverse
individuals and to guide a government’s policy initiatives.

Current scholarship has focused on specific instances in which document
interception or perusal revealed vital information, such as in relation to the confinement
and eventual execution of Mary Queen of Scots, the military dispositions of the parties
involved in the Dutch Revolt, or the plans for the famed and ill-fated Spanish Armada.8
Yet, for every instance that intercepted documents provided essential and accurate
intelligence, the records abound with multiple references to failed attempts to gain access
to these materials, and lamentations that they had not provided the information so
desperately needed. Efforts to learn information from documents continued in times of
peace and war, and friendly or strained relations. Clearly, despite the fact that access to
documents could be as unpredictable as gathering information from court networks or
couriers, individuals involved in all aspects of early modern diplomacy felt that the
information contained within these papers was valuable enough to continue with their
efforts.

By the mid-sixteenth century the practice of intercepting correspondence had
become so frequent that in September 1559, Elizabeth’s representative Sir Ralph Sadler,
writing to Sir William Cecil from Scotland, asked Cecil to “mark their packet when it
comes to hand, whether any one has opened it by the way. This has been a common
custom used of late years.”9 These risks, always present in periods of peace, only
escalated in times of war or civil strife. In a January 1559 letter to his sister Juana, then

8 See John Guy, The True Life of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 384-
464; Geoffrey Parker, Grand Strategy, 219.
9 Sir Ralph Sadler to Sir William Cecil, 12 September 1559, in CSPF 1558-9, 553.
serving as regent in Spain, Philip II noted that although the terms of the temporary peace with France protected couriers’ passage technically, he chose not to write any further details because his letter would travel through France and could be captured.\(^{10}\) King Charles IX warned his ambassadors repeatedly to use cipher for anything of importance, since the letters could be intercepted.\(^{11}\) In 1586 Philip reproached Don Bernardino de Mendoza, then serving as Philip’s ambassador in Paris, for his tendency to send sensitive information in dispatches rather than entrusting a verbal message to a courier. In his letter to Don Bernardino, Philip noted that “it would be better and more secure to entrust these secret matters to persons of confidence who will handle them by word of mouth, without writing them down.”\(^{12}\) As Philip and his contemporaries recognized, a courier could deny the existence of any verbal message with ease; whereas if searched carefully, he could not prevent the confiscation of a packet of letters. In a later letter, Philip reminded Mendoza to be very careful in his information collection efforts and especially in how he chose to transmit his intelligence, “because of the great importance of the negotiation and the many dangers.”\(^{13}\)

Gaining access to an ambassador’s correspondence, whether in the ambassador’s household or while en route, presented some of the most tantalizing prospects to gather intelligence. Although frequent violations of international custom often resulted in lodging a complaint over such un-neighborly behavior with the offending government, it

\(^{10}\) Philip II to Juana, 31 January 1559, AGS, Estado leg. 137, f. 106.  
\(^{11}\) Charles IX to Fourquevaux, in Lettres de Charles IX, vol. 1, 69. See chapter 4 for a more thorough discussion of the use of cipher in correspondence.  
\(^{12}\) Philip II to Don Bernardino de Mendoza, 5 September 1586, quoted in Parker, Grand Strategy of Philip II, 216.  
\(^{13}\) Philip II to Don Bernardino de Mendoza, 29 April 1586. AGS: Estado K, 1448, fol. 42, in Jensen, Diplomacy and Dogmatism, 115.
often failed to prevent agents from using multiple means to learn the contents of the ambassador’s packet.

**Interception en route**

In February 1563, Secretary of State Sir William Cecil penned a noteworthy letter to the English ambassador in France, Sir Thomas Smith. Cecil shared a series of recent occurrences relating to Antoine du Nantouillet, the Provost of Paris, and his entourage. The Provost, in England serving as one of the four good-faith hostages required by the 1559 Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, had embroiled himself in a series of scandals including a botched assassination attempt, and found himself lodged in the Tower of London at the Queen’s pleasure in part because the English had intercepted and used his personal letters as evidence of his guilt. Smith already had been informed of the assassination attempt in earlier letters, but now discovered the depths of the English ability to penetrate the Provost’s unusual communication system.

In January 1563, in order to exact revenge on an Italian courtier named Captain Mazines, the Provost contracted an assassination to a man alternately known as “Andrea Claude” or “Andrea the Italian.” According to the testimony of the Spanish Ambassador Alvaro de la Quadra (who was also involved in the debacle) Andrea the Italian had entered England in the service of one Alphonse la Bononye, after having been exiled from his home city in northern Italy for committing two murders. As recorded in Andrea’s confession to the Privy Council, the Provost provided Andrea with a pistol and promised through his servant to pay him 100 crowns for the assassination. Unfortunately for the Provost, when it came time to fire at Mazines, Andrea missed. After the shot
Mazines drew his sword to attack his would-be murderer. Andrea, in a panic, broke into Durham House, the residence of the Spanish ambassador (and one of the Queen’s possessions), and begged for aid.

The Spanish, French and English accounts of events differ sharply after the Spanish ambassador became involved. According to his testimony, Quadra had been “at play” in his chambers with Paul de Foix, the French ambassador, when he heard the commotion, and conveniently forgot to mention that, apparently, the Provost himself was also present that evening. Upon learning the identity of the failed assassin whom he had never met begging for refuge in his home, Quadra ordered his steward immediately to turn him out onto the street. When the Queen’s men came to collect Andrea, Quadra could answer honestly that the man had gone and that he had not offered any assistance.14

According to the English version of events developed in large part from Andrea’s confession, Andrea had become a familiar face at Quadra’s home, dining regularly at his table and had in fact waited just outside the door of Durham House for the ideal opportunity to kill Captain Mazines. Quadra’s servants, far from denying any comfort or aid, had rather blocked the Queen’s officers from entering the building and given the ambassador’s porter enough time to help Andrea escape by the water gate at the rear of the residence.15 Unfortunately for Andrea, he had been captured by the English three days later while disguised as a merchant and attempting to flee to the Continent aboard a Flemish vessel.

14 CSPF 1563, 25; “A rehearsal of certain matters declared by the Spanish ambassador to the lords of the Queen’s council, touching some infringement of his privileges; and of their answer thereto,” 7 January 1563. BL Cotton Vespasian C vii, f. 258-260.
15 CSPF 1563, 25. As Andrea’s confession was exacted under torture, a measure of skepticism is certainly in order, although the general facts appear to be true from information obtained from other individuals.
In Cecil’s February letter to Smith, Cecil recounted that the Provost had been transferred initially from his original lodgings with an alderman of London to the Lord Mayor’s London residence. Though they had Andrea’s confession, the English needed additional evidence in order to build a stronger case against the Provost. Fortunately, the Provost himself gave the English the information they needed. Kept under guard and denied access both to the French ambassador and any writing implements, the Provost instead attempted to develop more creative ways of communication:

such practises wher he was as by iiii or v lres [letters], intercepted betwixt Ḿ[him] and others doth appere. And by those lres he avowed yl [that] he wold not answer but wold delaye the matter so, as nothỳg shuld be gotten at his hād [hand]. And by his owne lres it is clerly to be gathered yl [that] he is gilty. Which lres wer partly wrytten w[ith] onyens and conveyed to and fro in stoppells of bottells and some in his codpieces of his hoos sent owt to mēdỳg [mending]. But he is ignorant herof yl [that] we have yl [the] lres.¹⁶

The letters not only confirmed the English suspicions concerning the Provost’s involvement but also confirmed the story exacted from Andrea the Italian. Clearly, Cecil did not feel that any sort of diplomatic immunity protected the Provost’s correspondence.

Cecil had not hesitated to intercept the Provost’s letters, used them to confirm his guilt, and sent their contents to the English ambassador in France. By informing Smith of the debacle, Cecil gave him the information necessary to counter any arguments should the French government protest the treatment of their hostage. The letters also provided enough evidence to warrant the Provost’s transfer from the Lord Mayor’s residence to the Tower of London, where he could be guarded more carefully. The transfer also sent a deliberate message to the French: regardless of any supposed diplomatic immunity, criminal actions would not be tolerated. The intercepted letters confirmed the Provost’s

¹⁶ Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 7 February 1563. BL Lansdowne 102, f. 20-21.

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guilt, gave the English additional information with which they could interrogate Andrea the Italian, and provided evidence in the event of a formal protest from the French. Thankfully for the English, the Provost remained unaware that the English had discovered his surreptitious communication method and continued to dispatch incriminating letters in the same fashion.\textsuperscript{17}

In the space of a few short sentences Cecil demonstrated the significance of documents as a tool in the world of early modern negotiations. Not only had the English discovered the Provost’s unusual means of sending messages, but used the evidence of his guilt as justification for his imprisonment and sought to ensure that, unaware of its discovery, the Provost might continue to use the same method and thus allow the English continued access to his formerly private correspondence. When the Privy Council prepared the first lists of interrogatories for the Provost, they did so based on information either obtained through Andrea’s confession or intelligence that could have been gained through other means. Carefully, they refrained from revealing the incriminating evidence gathered from the intercepted communication until the Provost himself had unknowingly provided enough information to confirm his guilt.

Such a diplomatic debacle is noteworthy itself, and likely would have drawn greater attention from all three governments (the English later used Quadra’s supposed involvement as one of the reasons to conduct raids on the embassy, and for expelling him from Durham House) had they not been preoccupied with events in northern France. Diverted by the English occupation of Havre de Grace, the recent defeat of the Huguenot army by royal forces at Dreux in December 1562, and the presence of a large Spanish

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
army in France garrisoning Paris itself, all three governments decided deliberately to
overlook the diplomatic ramifications of the incident. During the negotiations for the
Treaty of Troyes in the spring of 1564, Elizabeth referred to the Provost’s conduct to
Michel de Castelnau, then in England as one of King Charles IX’s special ambassadors.
As Castelnau later noted in his Mémoires, initially the Queen refused to release the
Provost, but later agree to do so rather than upset the treaty negotiations.18 Theoretically,
the English could have treated the Provost as a private citizen rather than a diplomat and
charged him with a virtual laundry list of crimes. Fortunately for the Provost, the English
needed a peace treaty with the French more than a conviction. Ultimately, the Provost
returned to France without suffering anything more than temporary imprisonment for his
botched plot.

The English used similar methods to those applied to the Provost during the
troublesome confinement of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Although Mary was clearly not
an ambassador, the Scots argued that Mary’s correspondence should be viewed in the
same terms as an ambassador’s and thus inviolable.19 For security purposes, the English
believed that viewing the Queen of Scots’ communication to be justifiable. Mary herself
hardly helped her situation by repeatedly committing sensitive, decidedly anti-English
sentiments to paper, and largely alienated any support she might have hoped to receive
from France. In January 1572 special ambassador Sir Thomas Smith, in an interview with

18 Michel de Castelnau, Mémoires de Michel de Castelnau, Seigneur de Mauvissiere et de Conressaut,
Baron de Joinville, in Collection Complète des Mémoires Relatifs a l’Histoire de France, vol. 33. ed. M.
19 See John Leslie, “Opinion on his privileges as Ambassador of the Queen of Scots,” BL: ADD MSS
34216, f. 2; “Discourse relative to his privileges as an ambassador,” BL: ADD MSS 48043, ff. 11-31, 33-55b. Leslie argued that Mary, as a Queen, merited even more privileges and rights than an ambassador.
several prominent French nobles, offered to produce an enciphered letter from Mary to John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, in which Mary “had altogether become a Hispanioll.”20 Apparently, the intercepted letter confirmed that Mary had given up on the possibility of any aid from France and had instead turned completely to the Spanish for support. Had the English not intercepted these documents, they could not have used them to prove Mary’s relationship with the Spanish. Of course, their success depended on knowing that the documents were en route and capturing them.

Intercepting documents that were not carried by a courier proved difficult at best, and was one of the least reliable ways of gaining access to information on paper. One had to determine first the method of communication and monitor the parties involved in order to capture these papers and other media used for communication. For many individuals, it proved far easier to detain or assault couriers; most assumed that the dispatch of a courier meant that he was carrying something of value.

**Couriers and Interception**

Detaining couriers was the easiest and most common method of intercepting documents en route. Normally, both governments and agents abroad dispatched more than one copy of the same letter through different transportation networks, increasing the chances both that the information would reach its destination and that it could be intercepted. Although technically prevented under international custom, the interception of couriers often occurred. Most governments regarded intercepting letters as within their rights when they suspected that those letters contained treasonous or otherwise harmful information. In a frank interview with Spanish ambassador Alvaro de la Quadra, Queen

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20 Sir Thomas Smith to Lord Burghley, 17 January 1572, in CSPF 1572-74, 19.
Elizabeth informed him that despite the protections offered by international custom “if she suspected anything was being written from here against her interests she would, in such cases, not hesitate to stop the posts and examine what concerned her.” The Estates General used a similar rationale to refute Don John’s complaints in August 1577. In most instances, the courier’s passage was stopped without violence or bloodshed; at times, the courier was assaulted or threatened with physical harm. In rare instances, couriers were murdered and their packets stolen. In a remarkable occurrence in 1580, a courier was captured carrying intercepted documents himself. The documents were returned to their original owner, in addition to the other newly captured dispatches the courier had on his person.

The augmented presence of foreign ambassadors at court increased the volume and frequency of communications passing between the government and its agents abroad, and so also increased the opportunity to gather information from the documents passing between the two. At times it became so likely that a courier would be detained that actually getting a letter through intact (and unopened) proved noteworthy rather than the inverse. Natural barriers offered chances to halt a courier’s progress in his mission, whether he needed to cross a body of water or pass through a particularly difficult section of terrain. The English had the easiest time in preventing couriers’ illicit departure to the Continent, for there were a limited number of ports from which the courier could embark. They could likewise monitor those ports in order to track incoming couriers. Similarly,

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21 Alvaro de la Quadra to Margaret of Parma, 24 May 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 237.
23 For examples, see Sir Nicholas Throckmorton’s correspondence of 1562-3 (especially those letters written while under house arrest), and that of Don Françês de Álava in 1567-8.
couriers bound for the British Isles out of Spain or France needed at some point to
arrange passage out of French or Spanish ports, giving those governments a chance at
interception. Preventing a clandestine messenger crossing different territories was far
more difficult, even when aided by natural barriers such as the Pyrenees Mountains.

In May 1562 Alvaro de la Quadra reported an incident on 30 April relating to the
travels of his courier Pierre de Springer. Quadra’s secretary Borghese Venturini, who had
recently defected to the English and given them all the information he had gathered
during his employ, had identified the ambassador’s courier as possibly carrying
incriminating letters. Venturini, together with Lord William Cobham, Warden of the
Cinque Ports, was given the job of arresting the ambassador’s courier. In his letter to
Margaret of Parma, Quadra informed her that a trusted Flemish courier had been stopped
outside Gravesend while on the road to Dover by highwaymen who had followed him
from London. Quadra believed that while the men appeared to be robbers, and told the
courier they wanted the money and jewels that Quadra had dispatched with the courier,
they in fact wanted his letters. As Quadra wrote, “The highwaymen were envoys of
Secretary Cecil sent for the purpose of stopping the courier…I could swear that this is the
case although, as for proving it by evidence, that I cannot do, but I am certain of it.”

The supposed highwaymen bound, gagged and blindfolded the courier, searched his
clothing, and moved him from the location in the woods where he had been attacked to a
nearby house owned by William Cobham, where he was held for more than a day. The
delay allowed for Quadra’s letters to be sent back to London, copied, and returned to the

24 Alvaro de la Quadra to Margaret of Parma, 5 May 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 236.
courier, who was then brought to the place where he was captured and allowed to proceed on his way.  

The State Papers Foreign series contains extracts of two letters in Spanish either from or addressed to Alvaro de la Quadra, dated 30 April 1562. Both extracts are in William Cecil’s hand, and apparently come from intercepted correspondence. The letter from Quadra is likely to Margaret of Parma, Philip’s regent in the Netherlands. It contains a variety of information concerning unflattering assessments of English politics with regard to Scotland and the position of the Queen of Scots. While written confirmation of Quadra’s hostile stance toward the English government hardly helped the ambassador’s position, the second letter proved undoubtedly more troubling to Cecil and the Queen, particularly when compared to statements made earlier from Venturini. In his initial statement taken by Cecil in the end of April, Venturini alleged that the ambassador had arranged to receive sacramental oils and other accoutrements necessary for Catholic worship, with the intent of distributing them amongst English Catholics in the London area. The second letter, which remained unsigned, mentions the receipt of a variety of sacramental oils. The unnamed author also mentioned that he believed his position was dangerous. One of Quadra’s letters to Philip about the incident noted that the most damaging aspect of the incident was that Venturini had gained access to a report penned by one Dr. Turner, who later carried it personally to Margaret in Brussels. As Turner also carried verbal reports on “the real state of affairs here” from Quadra to Margaret, the

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26 CSPF 1561-2, 645
written documents which Quadra feared Venturini had copied likely contained similar sentiments about the English government and state of religion.²⁷

The unsigned letter confirmed to the English that the Spanish ambassador had engaged in smuggling contraband Catholic worship materials into the country and had distributed them among the population. Although the excerpt does not indicate clearly whether the recipient was a Spanish expatriate or an English recusant, the contents validated some of Venturini’s statements against Quadra and presumably gave stronger weight to those that remained uncorroborated. Months after Venturini’s betrayal and the subsequent assault of Quadra’s courier, the English confronted the Spanish ambassador with a long list of charges. One of the paramount allegations concerned the succor and material aid Quadra had offered to English recusants, from allowing them to attend Mass in his home to providing holy water, consecrated wafers and sacramental oils. Venturini had gathered his information not only from witnessing meetings, but also from a variety of documents he wrote, copied or viewed.

Technically, despite the regularity in practice, detaining couriers violated international custom. Governments needed to develop rationales for their behavior, especially if they chose to detain several couriers in a row. Many governments sought plausible excuses for the detention of couriers and interception of documents within their borders; it enabled them to access correspondence while appearing to follow diplomatic custom. A simple excuse was to allege that the courier did not posses proper documentation needed for passage through the country, such as a passport. In other instances, the rationales became much more creative. It was common knowledge that war

²⁷ Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 20 June 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 246.
would disrupt postal networks and cause problems in correspondence. The civil wars raging throughout France caused unending complications in maintaining communications. It also gave the French government a perfectly reasonable (and difficult to disprove) excuse for any interruptions or difficulties suffered by couriers passing through France, especially in the southwest near the Spanish border; around the city of Orléans; and in Normandy along the coast of the English Channel.

In the winter of 1562, on orders from Queen Regent Catherine de Medici, the Spanish ambassador Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay began dispatching his letters to the southwest, through the city of Orléans. Two main postal routes led south from Paris; the first traveled first to Orléans, then to Bordeaux and Bayonne. The second led first to Lyons, then to Avignon and eventually Barcelona.\(^{28}\) Ostensibly, the route through Orléans was quicker for couriers, except for the troubles with Huguenot rebels in the area. Chantonnay objected to this decision in letters to both Catherine and Philip; the brewing civil war meant that the government’s ability to guarantee security remained tenuous at best, and Chantonnay himself could see no logical rationale for insisting on this route.\(^{29}\) Later developments (particularly the seizure of the town by Huguenots in the summer of 1562) proved the accuracy of Chantonnay’s predictions about the dangers posed around Orléans. Inevitably, couriers traveling both north and south along the specified route experienced trouble; one of Philip’s couriers was detained and his dispatches opened, and several of Chantonnay’s letters never arrived in Madrid. In May 1562, the English resident ambassador Sir Thomas Chaloner wrote to Cecil from Madrid.

\(^{28}\) See the maps of sixteenth-century postal routes in Appendix A.

\(^{29}\) Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay to Philip II, in NCF, vol. 3, 475.
through an unusual route, explaining that he would have preferred to send the dispatch through Philip’s ordinary courier destined for Flanders “if he thought the conveyance safe in this King’s subject’s hands at this time of tumults passing through France, seeing some have been stopped, or that any ordinary courier for Flanders had passed hence since the 19th of last month.”30 Both the English and Spanish had troubles with their couriers around Orléans, and were compelled to continue dispatching their letters along this route because of Catherine’s orders.

During the Wars of Religion, English couriers experienced similar difficulties. In late July 1562, during a period of particularly tense Anglo-French relations, French soldiers under the command of the Baron de Cleres stopped Henry Tyrrel, servant and courier of the English ambassador Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. The report later noted that the Baron’s lieutenant ordered Tyrrel to be searched, took his money, weapons, and letters, and had him confined for over a day. Upon release, the soldiers returned his letters, opened with the seals broken, but kept his money and weapons.31 In 1563, Sir Thomas Smith’s secretary was apprehended carrying letters destined for Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, who commanded the English troops then in possession of Havre de Grace. Upon examination of the dispatches, the French Secretary of State Claude de l’Aubespine initially decided to forward them with a different courier, in order to obtain Warwick’s answer. When this plan failed, l’Aubespine kept the dispatches and

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30 Sir Thomas Chaloner to Sir William Cecil, 14 May 1562, in CSPF 1562, 34.
sent a message to Warwick in Smith’s name with a different courier, informing Warwick that he could not expect further aid from England.\textsuperscript{32}

The practice of stopping couriers in France continued through the later wars. Most major post routes from northern or southern Europe needed to pass through France, increasing the likelihood of interception in time of civil war. In an effort to avoid the problem, the Duke of Alba even created an entirely new postal route during his march from to Brussels in 1567 that skirted the French border entirely.\textsuperscript{33} The only alternative was to send letters by sea, which was known to be far less reliable, slower, and often more expensive. Instructions to representatives in both London and Madrid highlight the preference for sending messages through France, despite legitimate fears of seizure.

Groups of Huguenot rebels viewed Spanish couriers as easy targets, and disregarded any sort of international custom protecting them from molestation. For the Huguenots, targeting Spanish couriers also had the benefit of potentially disrupting Philip’s communications with his lieutenants in the Low Countries, and therefore aiding their Dutch coreligionists. In an extreme case, in 1568 a courier dispatched by French ambassador M. de Fourquevaux, together with a Spanish courier, were found murdered south of Poitiers while crossing France from Spain with dispatches destined for Don Francés de Álava and Catherine de Medici. The two ambassadors sent their letters in each other’s packets regularly; the measure saved both time and money, and allowed for more regular contact between the diplomat and his government. In his extraordinary expense

\textsuperscript{32} Castelnau, \textit{Mémoires}, 304-5; Allen, 23.

\textsuperscript{33} For more information about the famous “Spanish Road,” see Geoffrey Parker, \textit{The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars}, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
accounts for 1568, Álava recorded a payment of 110 escudos to “Fourquevaux’s couriers and other Frenchmen” to carry Álava’s messages to Philip’s court.\(^{34}\)

In response to the news, the French launched an immediate investigation and concluded that the two couriers had likely been assaulted by Huguenot highwaymen; parts of the packets were later recovered in the woods near the scene of the attack, but the investigators found no valuables on either body. Subsequently, when the packets were turned over to Don Francés, he discovered that they had been opened and read. Immediately, he filed a protest with the French government.\(^{35}\) Despite his vociferous protests to Queen Mother Catherine de Medici (with whom he had a rather contentious relationship) no one was ever apprehended or charged for the couriers’ murder, and the government remained unapologetic about the fact that the Spanish packets had been opened. In September 1582, the Spanish agent Juan Bautista de Tassis lodged a similar complaint with Catherine de Medici over the confiscation of a large packet; apparently the Spanish courier had been followed from Paris and overtaken by horsemen at the next post station. Catherine sent word through her secretary that she would satisfy his complaints as soon as she had determined the guilty parties; nothing ever came of the matter.\(^{36}\)

The tumult caused by the Wars of Religion in France, in addition to disrupting courier travel, also presented opportunities to gather intelligence from intercepting domestic letters concerning the war effort. Both Catholics and Protestants tried to track

\(^{34}\) See the “Gastos Extraordinarios de Don Francés de Álava,” AGS DGT. inventario 24, legajo 565, unfoliated.

\(^{35}\) See Allen, 92-5.

\(^{36}\) Henry Cobham to Sir Francis Walsingham, 23 September 1582, in CSPF 1582, 337.
troop movements and other military actions through captured documents. Huguenot bands targeted in particular those couriers suspected of carrying dispatches for Spanish agents and representatives, especially those bound for the Low Countries. Allies might also exchange intercepted letters when it seemed convenient or served as a show of solidarity; both the English and Huguenot leaders in France often gave one another access to intercepted correspondence.

In December 1567 Sir Henry Norris sent a packet to the Queen and Cecil containing information about troop dispositions and predictions about the course of the civil war. In his letter, Norris requested that Cecil inform him whether his last packet had arrived safely, as Norris had sent it with two Scots rather than his own servants. Norris’s original couriers remained in Rouen after being injured while carrying letters. Norris’s packet also included a copy of an intercepted letter from Queen Mother Catherine de Medici to Charles Cardinal of Lorraine, provided to him by the Prince of Condé, and information gathered from letters intercepted while en route to Philip’s court. Specifically, the letters intercepted from Sebastien de l’Aubespine (a former French ambassador to Spain and the younger brother of Catherine’s secretary Claude de l’Aubespine) assured Philip that Catherine and her son Charles would do all in their power to ensure the extermination of Protestantism in French lands. Norris viewed these letters in the presence of a gentleman of the Prince of Condé’s, who wanted to use the correspondence to convince the English of the decidedly non-conciliatory government plans and thus the need to aid the Huguenot cause.37

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37 Sir Henry Norris to Queen Elizabeth and Sir William Cecil, 15 December 1567, in CSPF 1566-68, 380-1.
In August 1568, on the eve of the eruption of the Third War, Norris referred to intercepted letters between the Cardinal of Lorraine to his sister-in-law the Duchess of Guise, in which the Huguenots appeared to be in greater danger following the promulgation of the unsatisfactory Peace of Longjumeau. In May 1569 Norris sent Cecil copies of thirteen letters from the Prince of Navarre and other Huguenot leaders to the German mercenary the Duke of Zweibrücken (Duke of Deuxponts to the French), which had been intercepted by royal agents and brought to King Charles IX. In July 1570, Jeanne d’Albret, Queen of Navarre, forwarded a packet of letters to Queen Elizabeth. As the Queen of Navarre explained in the cover letter, the packet contained “a quantity of papers and letters on a courier of the King of Spain on his return from Flanders by sea, written some in English and others in cipher, which seem greatly to touch her estate.” To ensure security, the Queen of Navarre chose to dispatch them with a gentleman under pretense of another mission, and he did not use the typical post routes on his travels north.

In a November 1581 letter to Philip II, Don Bernardino de Mendoza discussed yet another way to relieve couriers of their dispatches without a physical confrontation, threat of assault, bribe or other inducement. Mendoza wrote that “the valises of ordinary couriers could be opened at night in the hostelries, the despatches extracted and afterwards returned to them again, which is perfectly simple.” Lest Philip think that Mendoza had only heard of this idea, he continued to say that “I myself have done this...”

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38 Sir Henry Norris to Queen Elizabeth I, 7 August 1568, in CSPF 1566-68, 516.
40 Jeanne d’Albret, Queen of Navarre, to Queen Elizabeth I, 15 July 1570, in CSPF 1569-71, 492; Allen, 24.
41 Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 11 November 1581, in CSPS 1580-6, 218.
here frequently, getting hold of letters which I think will be to the interest of your Majesty to see, and in an hour, with a bone reproduction of the same seal, I make up a packet, closed in the same way, after having seen all I want to see, and the matter cannot be detected.”42 Even a careful courier might be relieved of his letters without his knowledge, and if the interloper proved skillful enough to recreate the packet’s seal, the matter might escape the attention of the letter’s recipient.

Clearly, sending sensitive information on paper presented great risks, but unfortunately there was little recourse available. Enciphering the message did prevent a casual inspection by an unscrupulous courier or other person from memorizing the contents of a dispatch, but the process of using ciphers for all messages was laborious, slow, and ultimately dangerous. Increased use of a cipher in a letter or series of letters offered greater chances to break that cipher.43 In order to learn information, governments had no choice but to use the best means of travel available, encipher only the most sensitive portions of a message, and hope that the courier might arrive at his destination unscathed.

**Countering Interception**

Normally, the interception of packets incurred more resignation and frustration than attempts to reclaim lost or stolen property, or avenge assaults on couriers. Ultimately, there was little a representative could do to force his host government to take active measures to protect his correspondence (if warranted by the situation), or else leave it alone. In order to ensure communications, ambassadors often sent more than one

42 Ibid.
43 For more information on ciphers, see chapter 4: Messages.
copy of a letter via different routes, in the hopes that at least one might arrive safely at its
destination. Most governments practiced this in an effort to protect communications; in a
May 1589 letter Philip II instructed Don Bernardino de Mendoza to send his multiple
copies through different channels for added security and to increase the chances that at
least one of the dispatches might arrive, mirroring the orders given to French and English
representatives.44

Aside from attempting to avoid any known trouble areas along courier routes and
major postal networks, using previously unknown individuals to carry messages, hiding
the message on the courier’s person, or giving the message in verbal form, the
ambassador had few options available to hide his messages. In a December 1559 letter
penned after receiving a rebuke from London concerning their lack of dispatches, Henry
Killigrew and Robert Jones outlined their alternate (and still unsuccessful) methods of
trying to send their letters. Their regular couriers could not leave the country, and

we can not cause o’ lres to be conveyd spedely nor certainly, but by through poste,
the tyme so suspicious. And as for our parte we have assaied all the waies to us
possible, both by expresse messingers, frenche couriers, and extraordinary ways,
and sending to Paris and so thens by the Bankers, and yet all this no such
success.45

In another dispatch, the two commented that they had had to resort to sending their
correspondence with the “French ambassador’s servant,” when he traveled to England,
rather than an Englishman. Although the practice of including dispatches with another
ambassador’s was fairly common, it meant that Killigrew and Jones could not send letters
without the French government’s knowledge, and probably should not have included any

44 Philip II to Don Bernardino de Mendoza, 24 May 1589, AGS Estado K 1449 f. 31.

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information they did not want to become public. Unfortunately, they did not even have
the option of sending letters via merchant post—though it was slower, but fairly
reliable—because of the restrictions.

Major post routes were few and well traveled, making it difficult for a courier to
use them without being noticed. Foreign couriers needed to present their passports in
order to change horses at posting stations which enabled the host government to track the
frequency and timing of dispatches. Regulations (particularly those in France) dictated
that couriers with passports needed to ride along the post routes, or they risked losing
their passports and having all their goods confiscated. In order to maintain some level of
secrecy concerning communications, ambassadors could instruct couriers to avoid the
major postal routes, but this carried an additional risk if the courier was caught. This
measure, while increasing the time in transit, hopefully offered some degree of
confidentiality in correspondence.

Another measure was to send correspondence was to route it through a third party
in a separate location, who would in turn forward the letters. Ostensibly, ambassadors
could conceal the ultimate recipient of their letters if all correspondence was dispatched
through one location. In November 1581, Don Bernardino de Mendoza admitted that “I
am obliged to send all these letters through Paris to be forwarded by Tassis, [the Spanish
ambassador in France] to whom I enclose them under cover of other names, to avoid
danger of capture.” Mendoza’s letters for the king, and even letters bound for Scotland
went through France, which (at least for the Scottish documents) drastically increased the

46 For additional information, see the expanded discussion in Chapter 5 and appendix A.
47 Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 7 November 1581, in CSPS 1580-86, 209.
time in transit. Mendoza admitted that while this method remained far from perfect, “this is necessary, as the ships sailing for Spain are rare, and even then, unless some Spaniard is going in them, or other very trustworthy person, I dare not confide to the hands of any Englishman a despatch I would not readily show to the Council.”

If using different routes did not suffice, another alternative was to use the services of a previously unknown individual to carry messages. The augmented presence of independent couriers at every court in Western Europe aided in this practice; at any given time, an ambassador could probably find couriers of three different nationalities in the capitals or with the court. These independent couriers might have a better chance of avoiding trouble, especially if they traveled through their native country; Killigrew and Jones noted they had tried to use French couriers to get their dispatches out of France. Since independent couriers worked for anyone and at times multiple people, it could conceivably be easier for them to hide their employers’ identities if stopped or questioned. In his 1568 expense account (in a single entry) Don Francés de Álava reported payments to Italian, French and Flemish couriers, while in 1571 Don Guerau de Spes noted using the services of one Juan Inglés to carry his letters. While under house arrest in 1569, Spes asked both Philip and the Duke of Alba to send their messages in the French ambassador’s packet, because the English would not allow him to send or receive any couriers. During their tenure in England, both Paul de Foix and Bertrand Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon reported using English couriers to send their letters so that they might

48 Ibid.
49 “Gastos Extraordinarios de Don Francés de Álava,” and “Gastos Extraordinarios de Don Guerau de Spes,” AGS DGT inv. 24, legs 565 and 566, unfoliated.
pass by Huguenot strongholds unmolested.\textsuperscript{50} In the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre Sir Francis Walsingham tried the services of a variety of non-English couriers, because his normal envoys could not pass through France safely.

Another option was to use merchants or other individuals to carry letters. Usually, these networks escaped the same level of intense scrutiny afforded to diplomatic couriers on the major postal routes, as merchant traffic continued to some degree regardless of any political or diplomatic tensions. Although slower, it was usually safer and less expensive than sending an express courier whose travel would be noticed. Many of the large merchant networks and banking families had established communications networks that, while often slower, could prove useful to ambassadors.\textsuperscript{51} Members of these families doubled frequently as independent couriers, such as Guido Cavalcanti, whose family were prominent merchants. In his extraordinary expense account for July-December 1586, Don Bernardino de Mendoza recorded payments to two different individuals for letters couriered by the merchant post.\textsuperscript{52} In a June 1586 report to Philip, Mendoza noted that “In accordance with Your Majesty’s orders that I am to write by various channels, I send the present letter by the merchant post which leaves from Rouen. Although it is slow, I have not yet lost any dispatches sent by it.”\textsuperscript{53} It is possible that the Portuguese ambassador Francisco Pereira used merchants to carry his letter out of Madrid in January 1568, in an effort to escape the king’s restrictions on all communications. Similarly, the

\textsuperscript{50} See the correspondence of Paul de Foix in BNF FF 6612-6613, particularly FF 6612 f. 41; see also \textit{CDMF} vol. 3.
\textsuperscript{51} See chapters 4 and 5 for a more thorough treatment of the use of merchants’ and bankers’ postal networks.
\textsuperscript{53} Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 9 June 1586, AGS Estado K, 1564, f. 86, in Jensen, \textit{Diplomacy and Dogmatism}, 117.
French ambassadors stationed in Spain often sent their letters via Rouen, to aid in keeping posting costs reasonable.

To prevent sensitive material from falling into the wrong hands, couriers often carried multiple messages hidden in secret locations in addition to their official packets in case they were stopped and searched during their travels. Robert Hogan, an English representative in Spain after the recall of the English ambassador Dr. John Man, frequently sent his couriers with innocuous letters to carry openly and shorter, more important messages hidden on his person. As Hogan noted in an August 1570 letter to Sir Henry Norris,

> his letters to Leicester and Sir William Cecil were opened and read, and his man Mather put in prison, and after fifteen days was set at liberty and the letters delivered to him again, for that they found no great matter of importance in them, as he suspected they would be intercepted…when his letters were delivered again to Mather…there came a letter from the King…to send him and all his letters up to the Court. He being gone out of Spain an Englishman was sent after him, who by craft got his letters and brought them to the Court, but…besides his letters he [Hogan] gave him a brief note of all the matters of importance, which he carried in a secret place and which they never sought for.54

Thankfully for both Hogan and the courier, the Spanish never discovered the hidden messages, and Hogan could therefore continue to send sensitive information in the same manner.

Even sending messages by word of mouth rather than on paper presented risks of interception. A courier might be induced or otherwise threatened to reveal its contents, but normally it offered a better measure of protection. As Queen Elizabeth noted in a letter to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, then serving as ambassador in France, “Sir, there needeth small writing where there is so good a messenger, and therefore I do make to you

54 Robert Hogan to Sir Henry Norris, 12 August 1570, in CSPF 1569-71, 315-316.
but a brief memorial of words.” Sir William Cecil echoed these sentiments in a December 1563 letter to Sir Thomas Smith when he wrote that instead of giving detailed information in a letter, “I will rather utter to some of yours [one of Smith’s servants] than wryte at this tyme.” Though in his letter to Don Bernardino de Mendoza Philip clearly felt that while information relayed verbally had greater security, the intelligence still remained vulnerable. As Sir Francis Walsingham and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester discovered in the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, an unscrupulous courier might even betray the contents of a verbal message. In Leicester’s letter to Walsingham informing him of the leak, Leicester’s clarification that those who learned the contents of the messages were “no Councellors,” indicated both the courier’s willingness to divulge the contents of his dispatch to anyone at court, and the ability to obtain information through the porous nature of that court.

Ultimately there was little an ambassador could do to force a government to investigate allegations of misconduct or bring the guilty parties to justice. As Chantonnay resignedly noted in a letter to Philip after confirming the inevitable troubles caused by traveling through Orléans, “We must look for another way…I think the most secure route would be by Lyons and Perpignan.” Chantonnay, aside from voicing his displeasure with the situation in a relatively mild letter to Catherine de Medici, did not take any action to recover any stolen dispatches, nor did he seem to expect any action on the part of the French government. When the French and Spanish couriers were found murdered

55 The notation from Elizabeth to Throckmorton survives in a draft of the letter, but was removed from the final version. See “Memorial from the Queen to Throckmorton,” 17 July 1559, in CSPF 1558-9, 383; and Allen, 33.
56 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 16 December 1563. BL: Lansdowne 102, f. 83
57 Sir Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay to Philip II, 30 June and 13 July 1562, in NCF vol 4, 155, 185.
near Poitiers, Álava’s rage over the incident centered on the violation of his packets rather than the loss of life, and as evidenced in his correspondence, he had few expectations of justice over his courier’s murder. Twenty years later, Elizabeth’s ambassador Sir Henry Cobham reiterated Chantonnay’s sentiments following an incident with one of his couriers. As Cobham wrote in his letter explaining the occurrence to Sir Francis Walsingham, the servant had expressly disobeyed Cobham’s instructions to avoid the areas surrounding Calais and Boulogne due to rumors of people “lying in wait” for packets, been attacked between Dieppe and Boulogne, and relieved of his dispatches and money. Cobham held little hope for reclaiming the stolen property: “I have not yet made any complaints till I hear your pleasure further, for if they be ‘happened’ into the enemy’s hands, there is no remedy for the ‘rehaving’ of them. But otherwise I use all the means convenient to recover them.” Most ambassadors seem to have resigned themselves to the inevitable fact that a percentage of their dispatches would never reach their destinations, and that the host government, while promising to launch an immediate investigation, would not take any action to recover the stolen property.

Documents in the household and court

No government could rely on intercepted documents alone for information. Beyond the obvious and impossible task of ensuring regular access to these materials, the quality of intelligence preserved in correspondence might not meet a councilor’s needs. Documents in the possession of a courtier, ambassador or even monarch could potentially contain some of a government’s most valuable secrets. This guaranteed that ambassadors

58 Sir Henry Cobham to Sir Francis Walsingham, 21 August 1582, in CSPF 1582, 262-3.
59 Ibid.
and governments used whatever means were available to try to access these documents, regardless of the potential risks involved or the theoretical protections of international diplomatic custom.

Although it was a blatant violation of an ambassador’s diplomatic privilege, some governments even searched embassies and ambassadors’ residences in an effort to gather information from papers. In a January 1569 letter to Philip II, Don Guerau de Spes noted that he had “burnt all the drafts of my letters and everything else in writing that might be dangerous. The cipher is in safe keeping.”\(^{60}\) This action came in response to an international crisis brewing between England and Spain, fomented by the English confiscation of several Spanish treasure ships and the subsequent Spanish seizure of all English shipping in the Low Countries. Spes, then newly arrived in England as Philip’s ambassador, inadvertently provoked an escalation of the original dispute by recommending the confiscation of English shipping to the Duke of Alba, and consequently found himself placed under house arrest. All Spes’s couriers were stopped, letters confiscated, and passport requests were refused.

Clearly, when he penned his dispatch to Philip, Spes feared that the English might search his embassy and confiscate sensitive papers; he could not send them to the Low Countries with a trustworthy servant as Alvaro de la Quadra had done seven years earlier, so rather than allowing them to fall into English hands he burned anything incriminating. In response to the Borghese Venturini incident in the spring of 1562, Quadra had sent papers to Brussels. In his letter explaining the servant’s arrival to Regent Margaret of Parma, Quadra wrote that “I think it desirable to get rid of some papers which are not

\(^{60}\) Don Guerau de Spes to Philip II, 8 January 1569, in CSPS 1568-79, 95.
necessary to me, I take the opportunity of sending them by him."61 Spes’s actions, for once, proved both prophetic and in measured response to a perceived threat. Less than a day after beginning his letter to Philip, Spes added a postscript noting that the English had dismissed all his Catholic servants, and lodged several Englishmen in the embassy in order to inspect Spes and monitor all events in the embassy.62 As he concluded his dispatch, Spes wrote that “they have not asked to see my papers in the house, but if they did they would get little from them.”63 Spes, along with the Englishmen, recognized that papers in the ambassador’s possession might have valuable information, and that the international customs supposedly protecting those papers could be easily brushed aside in favor of expediency or necessity.

Spes’s troubles with his papers did not end with the preemptory destruction of his most sensitive letters. In several dispatches he asked that any instructions from Philip or Alba be sent via Don Francés de Álava in a packet to the French ambassador, who would then deliver them to Spes; since the English had not halted all diplomatic couriers, Spes calculated that letters sent through the French might arrive safely. Spes had kept the general cipher used to communicate with both Philip and Alba in order to decipher any replies he might receive, and knew that the English had confiscated several of his earlier dispatches in cipher. He even noted in a letter confiscated by the Privy Council that the English had sent his dispatches to John Somer, a secretary of the Privy Council, in order that he might break the cipher.64 Reduced to requesting permission from the Privy

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61 Alvaro de la Quadra to Margaret of Parma, in CSPS 1558-67, 235.
62 Ibid, 236.
63 Ibid, 237.
64 Don Guerau de Spes to the Duke of Alba, British Library Cotton Collection, Galba c iii, f. 176-177.
Council for every letter he wished to send, Spes even offered to send his letters first to the Council for inspection before dispatching them to the intended recipient. Rather than attempting to conceal their confiscation of Spes’s correspondence, the Privy Council demanded that he explain several seemingly detrimental phrases and their true meanings recorded in one of the intercepted letters. In a scornful reply, Spes noted that had the English better understood Spanish, they would have recognized the colloquial value of the phrases and known that they meant nothing negative.

When Spes challenged the English interference in his diplomatic correspondence, Cecil and other Privy Councilors replied that as Spes had acted beyond the boundaries of his position of ambassador, he had forfeited all diplomatic privileges and would be treated as a private citizen. The French used a similar excuse to justify their confinement and subsequent interception of the correspondence of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton in 1562-3, when Throckmorton was captured in the Huguenot camp after the government victory at the Battle of Dreux in December 1562. The English again brushed aside international custom in favor of expediency in October 1577, when men acting on instructions from the Privy Council entered the house of Antonio Guaras, the Spanish chargé d’affaires, searched his home, seized all papers they could find, and ransacked his house for four days. According to Guaras, the men hoped to find incriminating correspondence between Philip and Mary Stuart, but left empty-handed. As Guaras rather proudly noted in his dispatch to Gabriel de Zayas, “as I was already

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65 Don Guerra de Spes to the Privy Council, 16 January 1569, BL Cotton Galba c iii, f. 155-155v.
66 Don Guerra de Spes to the Privy Council, 13 January 1569, in CSPS 1568-79, 105-6.
suspicious, I had taken care to place them in safety.” Unfortunately for Guaras, as the documents preserved in the State Papers series demonstrate, he failed to destroy all the sensitive papers, and could not prevent the English from intercepting documents that were still en route when he was arrested. When pressed for an explanation for the search, the Privy Council attributed their actions to the contents of a series of intercepted letters between Guaras and the Council of the States of Flanders.

Governments rarely hesitated to use captured documents in diplomatic exchanges, such as Don Guerau de Spes found to his discomfort in 1569, when confronted with the contents of several letters he had tried to dispatch to the Duke of Alba in the Low Countries. In March 1578, Don Bernardino de Mendoza found himself stuck in a contentious interview with Queen Elizabeth I, attempting to explain away the contents of a series of seized correspondence that had evidently fostered the Queen’s animosity toward Don John, then serving as the captain-general of the Army of Flanders. The Dutch had already demonstrated their willingness to waylay Spanish couriers, and could have shared the troublesome correspondence with the English. In August 1577, Don John had filed a complaint with the States General alleging that couriers out of Spain had been intercepted and relieved of their letters; rather than an apology, he received the reply that “so long as the occasion for distrust remains, His Highness ought not to find anything strange in this or similar acts.”

Even documents on the monarch’s table might not be safe, something that all rulers had to accept, and most proved reluctant to admit. No monarch could avoid the

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68 Antonio Guaras to Gabriel de Zayas, 29 December 1577, in CSPS 1568-79, 551.
69 “Declaration of Don Bernardino de Mendoza,” 16 March 1578, in CSPF 1577-8, 541.
70 CSPF, 1577-8, 65.
issue, especially when faced with blatant examples. In 1556, a Spanish under-secretary had been caught selling documents to the French on the Spanish position in the peace negotiations with France. In 1575, when dealing with the ramifications of a series of leaks, Philip II reviewed the security measures employed with his sensitive documents. He had to consider the possibility that the information had come from papers left laying on his desk as he worked. Ultimately, he discarded the theory for a variety of reasons; as his secretary concluded, “it is not to be believed that anyone could come and read the papers on Your Majesty’s table.” Philip agreed, as “it would not have been possible to see the documents, because I always keep them concealed. It just would not have been possible.”

Just as ambassadors in Madrid tried to see the papers lying on the king’s desk, so the Spanish ambassador in England sought to learn what papers came before the queen. When writing his 17 March 1581 dispatch from London to Philip, Don Bernardino de Mendoza sent detailed information concerning Elizabeth's correspondence with Henry Cobham, her ambassador in France, about the Portuguese pretender Don Antonio. Mendoza reported on several of Cobham’s recent letters, including the contents and the dates of their arrival in England. Although Mendoza could not confirm the authenticity of his intelligence through other court circles, he felt it was the truth because of the nature of his source: as Mendoza wrote to Philip, the contents of the letters “are repeated to me by a person who sees the letters.” So long as Mendoza could place his faith in this source, he had gained access to some of the most detailed and informative correspondence.

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72 Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 17 March 1581, in *CSPS 1580-86*, 89.
between the Queen and her ambassador. Although he lamented that he had “no other means of getting news,” such a source could relay accurate information rather than learning something from an unreliable courtier or through gossip. Mendoza’s source evidently provided detailed information concerning the Queen’s correspondence with several of her agents abroad. Mendoza’s sources also had a proven record for accessing the Queen’s documents; in a letter dated more than two years before, Mendoza referred to information gathered “from a man who sees her letters.”

Many of Mendoza’s dispatches to Philip are filled with specific details taken from the Queen’s correspondence that when compared to the originals, prove to be entirely or at least mostly correct. When on 12 August 1581 Mendoza reported the contents of a dispatch from Sir Francis Walsingham to the Queen, it seems likely that the information came from the same source that provided the information about Cobham’s series of letters in March. Walsingham only received his instructions for his mission into France on 21 July, and departed immediately thereafter in an effort to shore up Anglo-French relations. He arrived in Paris on the night of 9 August and had an immediate audience with Alençon and Henri III; his dispatch dated 10 August “at night” is a description of his interviews. In his 12 August letter, Mendoza gave Philip accurate details about Walsingham’s meetings and the contents of his dispatch to the Queen, even to the details of the conversation between Alençon and Walsingham.

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73 Bernardino de Mendoza to Gabriel de Zayas, 27 January 1579, in CSPS 1568-79, 639.
74 Sir Francis Walsingham to Queen Elizabeth, 10 August 1581; See CSPF 1581-2, 287-8 for a summary; Digges, 387-8, contains the full text. The complete transcript in Digges’s edition is misdated as 13 August 1581.
While Walsingham had written a short letter to Burghley and the rest of the Privy Council, he had saved the details for his dispatch to the Queen; therefore, Mendoza’s source must have seen the Queen’s letter rather than the one sent to the Privy Council. The rapidity of the leak is remarkable, not only in that Walsingham’s dispatch reached the Queen at Greenwich less than two days after he wrote it, but that Mendoza’s source saw the letter and relayed its contents quickly enough that Mendoza was able to write his letter to Philip on 12 August. As the interview was the first for Walsingham since he arrived at the court on the night of the 9th, there were no earlier meetings or letters with which it could be confused. None of the following messages carried any news of a courier being stopped or searched, so it is unlikely that Mendoza had gathered his intelligence from an intercepted letter or an unscrupulous courier. In this instance, Mendoza certainly had not stolen into Elizabeth's private quarters to see the letters—he had remained in London when the court moved to Greenwich—but all the same, he knew what documents crossed the queen’s desk.

As Geoffrey Parker demonstrated with the 1586 case of the plans for the “Enterprise of England,” even those documents intended for the monarch alone could fall into enemy hands with potentially devastating consequences. Despite the security measures taken with the plans, officials in England, France, Rome, Venice and Urbino all obtained a version. In a March 1588 letter to King Henry III, the French ambassador

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75 The speed of communications varied wildly due to a variety of considerations; a travel time of two days from Paris to London is possible, but the lucky courier must have completed a rapid ride north to Calais, immediately caught a ship to Dover and then had another rapid trip to Greenwich.

76 In The Grand Strategy of Philip II Parker argues that the primary salvation of the plans for the 1588 Armada was Philip’s habit of changing plans frequently and at the last minute; thus, any intelligence gathered, even if accurate at the time, might be worthless once received by the government.
Pierre de Ségusson, sieur de Longlée reported having gathered important information concerning the Armada plans from “letters of the army officers,” including details on the projected departure date. An ambassador or courtier needed to weigh the value of the information he wished to send in relation to the damage it could cause if captured; theoretically, keeping sensitive papers close at hand lessened that risk. For that reason, ambassadors and governments placed a high emphasis both on maintaining the security of their sensitive documents and devoted considerable resources to learning the secrets contained in others’ correspondence and working papers.

**Conclusion**

Ambassadors, courtiers and councilors recognized the potential value of information committed to paper, whether it was in a dispatch intended for travel or a councilor’s working papers. Couriers such as Rocco Bonnetti and secretaries like Borghese Venturini would have had little to sell if they had not gained access to information in the documents in their care. Unfortunately, only a limited number of security measures proved effective, and no government could eliminate the problem of leaks from documents completely. Ambassadors, councilors, courtiers and monarchs alike had to take care to protect access to his or her personal papers from prying eyes, whether they belonged to an ambassador or an unscrupulous courtier.

Messages in transit proved both fruitful and problematic. Ultimately, it was far easier to detain a courier and take his packets than it was to steal into a monarch’s office to read his or her papers. All governments benefited from intelligence garnered from

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captured dispatches, but suffered from information leaks through the same process. Enciphering prevented a casual inspection of a dispatch from revealing anything sensitive, but also indicated the importance of the message. The common practice of sending multiple copies of any given dispatch increased the likelihood that it would reach its destination, but also amplified the chances of interception. Without modern means of communication, agents abroad had to rely on the services of couriers to transport their messages to their government. The limited means available to protect a message—the use of cipher, unusual couriers, additional hidden messages, and verbal messages—offered some measure of protection, but could be defeated in a variety of ways. The ambassador faced the task of preparing a dispatch with enough accurate, valuable intelligence to properly inform his government of a given situation, yet not too detailed as to unduly endanger himself or his sources if it were to be intercepted.

Captured documents proved to be Mary Stuart’s repeated downfall, ultimately leading to her execution after nearly two decades of problematic plotting. Both the English and the Scots used the celebrated (though likely fraudulent) Casket Letters to convict the Queen in the court of public opinion in the matter of the death of her husband, Lord Henry Darnley, in 1567-8. Mary’s relationships with the French and Spanish were well known at the English court because they intercepted her letters on a regular basis. Through her correspondence with a number of co-conspirators in 1586, the English learned of the ill-starred Babington Plot and built the scaffold of evidence used to take her head.78

78 John Guy, *Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart*, 446-483.
If used effectively, documents and the information contained within them could serve both offensive and defensive purposes in international negotiations. A proactive approach to document confiscation and interception could prevent other governments from relaying vital information to their representatives, and prevent those representatives from sending information to their government. By disrupting communications, governments could force their neighbors to adopt different policies or to limit their contact with their representatives. This information could also be used to shape negotiations, either by determining a state’s bargaining position or preventing the instructions from reaching the representative.

As with other sources of intelligence, gathering information from papers was unpredictable. No government could rely solely on information collected from documents. The practice was also, by the terms of medieval custom and tradition, the most clearly defined as an infringement of the rules of diplomacy. Medieval theorists spent comparatively little time on the rules and regulations defining the types of contact permitted between a host court and a foreign embassy, for the simple reason that in the courtly world, such interactions were virtually impossible to track and even harder to prevent. Similarly, without hard evidence, it was difficult to prove that a courier had betrayed the contents of his dispatches or otherwise given away valuable information. Documents, however, fell under the umbrella of protected materials, whether they were in transit or an ambassador’s possession, and capturing them violated the essence, if not the laws (since there were no formal international laws governing diplomacy) of diplomatic discourse.
Chapter 4: Messages

In a September 1562 dispatch sent from Madrid to Sir William Cecil, Secretary of State for Queen Elizabeth I, English ambassador Sir Thomas Chaloner complained that he had “remaigned so longe without letters owte of Inglande,” that he could not fulfill his duties as an ambassador; he was unable to respond to King Philip II’s inquiries about English intentions and depended on Spanish courtiers for the latest news from home.¹ This humiliating position left Chaloner unable to represent his mistress’s interests at the Spanish court; he could not answer even simple questions about English policy decisions, trade negotiations or position on foreign affairs for lack of information sent from his government. In a letter the following month, Chaloner again commented that, “Please your Majestie at this tyme required I have long waited in expectation for letters, from your hyghness, or my lords of the counsail, tunderstande in parte the state of things att home.”² Two years later, in a letter to his friend Richard Clough, Chaloner wrote that the “last ordinary [courier] from Antwerp, who brought infinite letters to all other men, had nothing for him, to his discomfort and discredit in this Court.”³

Unfortunately for Chaloner (who was, admittedly, something of a complainer for the entirety of his tenure in Spain), this constant want of messages from home meant he

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¹ Sir Thomas Chaloner to Sir William Cecil, 2 September 1562. BL Cotton Vespasian C vii, f. 223. The document is mistakenly dated as “2 September 1561” in the British Library catalog. It is impossible for this document to be from 1561, as Chaloner did not arrive in Spain until 30 September 1561.
² Sir Thomas Chaloner to Queen Elizabeth I, 14 October 1562. BL Cotton Vespasian C vii, f. 228.
³ Sir Thomas Chaloner to Richard Clough, 24 December 1564, in CSPF 1564-5, 272-3.
lacked any sort of news, particularly with regard to the tumults in France and foreign news in general; at the end of one of his many letters complaining about the shortage of dispatches from England, he wryly added that “an ambassador at this corte restith comparable to a bodie prized of his armes.” He had no precious information with which he could trade in Madrid. From his perspective, Chaloner had good reason to complain. In an accompanying letter for Cecil, he noted that he had not received any letters from England since the 8th of June—a wait of more than four months, when during the same period, King Philip had received four from his ambassador in England! As ambassador, Chaloner was expected to provide his government with regular, detailed and accurate intelligence concerning events and news current at the Spanish court, which he had done, dispatching at least eight letters to Cecil and the Queen in the four-month span. Conceivably, Chaloner labored under the expectation that his government would reciprocate with a steady stream of letters informing him of things great and small, foreign and domestic that concerned England or his post. Unfortunately for Chaloner and his fellow ambassadors, that was not how early modern diplomacy worked.

Chaloner did not languish alone. Letters from ambassadors are filled with complaints over the delay in messages and the damage it did to their monarch’s interests. As Philip’s ambassador the Count of Feria wrote in December 1558 (less than six weeks after taking up his post in England) “I humbly beg your Majesty to have my letters

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4 Sir Thomas Chaloner to Queen Elizabeth I, 14 October 1562. BL Cotton Vespasian C vii, f. 233.
5 Chaloner to Cecil, 15 October 1562, in CSPF 1562, 372; see CSPS 1558-1567, 244-262 for the correspondence of the same period. The tally does not count the number of dispatches Quadra sent to or received from either Cardinal Granvelle or Margaret of Parma, preserved in the CSPS, CMP and also AGS Estado 8340.
answered more promptly as this delay may cause much harm to your Majesty’s service.”

His words were echoed in Paris by Juan Bautista de Tassis in 1581 when he noted, “I beg your Majesty to instruct me how I am to reply.” Poor Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon, who was saddled with the singularly unenviable task of explaining the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre to the English, wrote to Charles shortly after the horrific news reached England. “I very humbly beg Your Majesty once more,” he pleaded, “as I have done in my previous letters, that it might please you to inform me what I should say to this princess, so that I might explain the truth of things.” This was made doubly necessary because the English undoubtedly got plenty of news from their ambassador in Paris, Sir Francis Walsingham. La Mothe-Fénélon needed some sort of official instructions that, hopefully, could counter the damning reports pouring from Walsingham’s pen. The news spilling into England from the continent vilified the French for the government’s participation in the massacre and made la Mothe-Fénélon’s position untenable; he could not explain his government’s position because he had no letters or instructions, nor could he hope to excuse the inexcusable.

Just as ambassadors complained about a lack of information, so did their governments. The ambassador needed to send messages often enough to provide his government with enough accurate information to develop policy initiatives, and any failure to do so could incur a scorching rebuke. One unlucky Milanese diplomat, working for the Sforzas in the late fifteenth century, even received the chilling command, “I require and expressly command you to write to me every day, or I will cut your head

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6 Feria to Philip, 29 December 1558, in CSPS 1558-1567, 21.
7 Juan Bautista de Tassis to Philip II, 6 November 1581, in CSPS 1580-1586, 205.
8 Mothe-Fénélon to Charles, 2 September 1572, in CDMF, vol. 5, 117.
off.”9 Thankfully for those representatives operating in the sixteenth century, councilors tended towards reprimands rather than threats, such as that Sir William Cecil issued to Sir Thomas Smith: “I nev[er] thought so long to here from embassador. For gods sake here devise some system to lett us know occurrences.”10 In a letter to his ambassador stationed at the Council of Trent, King Philip lamented that “I cannot refrain from telling you now that I am amazed that something of such importance should have happened without you finding out, because I believe that nothing, whether great or small, should be done—or even thought—without you knowing all about it.”11

“Knowing all about it,” and a “system to let us know occurrences,” of course, cost money—and all governments wanted the benefits of an efficient system without having to pay its premiums. Thus, the ambassador had to balance his actions against his budget. One of the primary areas under an ambassador’s direct control involved the careful use of sending express couriers, for such behavior could amount to astronomical posting costs; an ambassador could curtail his expenses by using his host’s postal system, but this involved increased security risks and increased the time between letters. In most cases, however, parsimony outweighed the desire for frequent dispatches; letters borne by express couriers often carried the ambassador’s justification for incurring the expense. On one occasion King Henry III forbade his representative in Spain, Pierre de Ségusson, Sieur de Longléé, from sending express messengers because it proved too costly.12 Similarly, in a letter to Henry Cobham, Sir Francis Walsingham reported, “Her Majesty

9 Galeazzo Maria Sforza to his ambassador in Burgundy, 21 March 1476, in Francesco Senatore, “Uno mundo de carta:” Forma e strutture dell’diplomazia sforzesca. (Naples, 1998), 274.
10 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 13 November 1562. BL Lansdowne 102, f. 37.
11 Philip II to the Count of Luna, 8 August 1563, in CODOIN. Vol. 98, 483.
12 Parker, Grand Strategy, 221.
finds fault with the great charge she is at in the conveying of so many dispatches out of France,” and later noted that, “you will do well to forbear to send so often.”13 The extraordinary expense accounts of the Spanish ambassadors in France and England documented hundreds of pounds or escudos paid to express couriers; in many cases, the posting costs amounted to more than half of the amount documented.14 Many letters between a government and its ambassador reflect these same concerns—a need for information versus the costs of sending dispatches on a frequent basis.

Thus, most ambassadors found themselves in an undesirable position: they had to report often enough to avoid receiving reprimands for lack of information, but not too often enough to incur complaints over costs. When dealing with information, monarchs—as in many other situations—could be mercurial, complaining one moment about costs and in the next sentence criticizing the representative for failing in his duties, as poor Henry Cobham learned. In the same letter dispatched by Walsingham advising that while Cobham would “do well to forbear to send so often,” Walsingham noted that, “and yet she [Elizabeth] found fault” when Cobham did not dispatch news of a naval victory by Don Antonio, Prior of Crato, over the fleet of King Philip; apparently the French ambassador had learned of it by two separate couriers, yet Cobham had failed to report the event. Discerning the difference between merely interesting information and intelligence of vital importance was a skill every ambassador needed to develop; it was better for him if it came quickly, to avoid the lash of his sovereign’s tongue.

13 Sir Francis Walsingham to Sir Henry Cobham, 31 August 1582, in CSPF 1581-2, 291.
14 See the “gastos extraordinarios” of Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, Don Françés de Alava, Juan Vargas de Mexia, Don Guerau de Spes, Juan Bautista de Tassis, and Don Bernardino de Mendoza, in AGS DGT inventario 24, legajos 563-571. The “gastos extraordinarios” of Don Guerau de Spes for the year 1571, in particular, reflects the high posting costs; one packet of letters sent into Spain cost him ninety-two pounds.
Messages dispatched between ambassador and government represented the primary avenue of communication available to both parties, whether they were put to paper or committed to a courier’s memory. Clearly, the ambassador could not hope to deliver his messages in person, nor could the government dispatch a councilor to inform the representative of current events. Thus, the dispatch functioned as a proverbial lifeline, keeping the ambassador tethered to his government and providing both parties with vital news. This meant that both government and ambassador needed to write informative letters filled with enough intelligence to enable both parties to accomplish their tasks without unduly endangering the means and methods used to acquire intelligence and develop policy.

Many ambassadors maintained communications with their counterparts in other countries, councilors, and courtiers, in addition to their official messages to the monarch. At times, this proved to be the most expedient way for an ambassador to stay up to date on current events, in part because the time of travel between the two embassies could potentially be shorter than that between the home government and ambassador, and the fellow ambassador might have the most up-to-date news relating to his post. The ambassador also needed to take precautions to ensure that the contents of his dispatch remained confidential, both by protecting the contents of the dispatch with security measures such as ciphering sensitive material and by selecting a trustworthy courier to carry his dispatch. Similarly, the government needed to keep its representatives apprised of policy initiatives and current events, both foreign and domestic. When preparing directives for their ambassadors, many councilors included multiple sets of directions to provide a clear indication of the monarch’s inclinations in multiple situations, as the
current state of affairs had undoubtedly changed while the message was in transit. Many instructions provided for potential outcomes, should the ambassador’s first directive prove impossible to execute.

**Frequency and length of dispatches**

Inevitably, the frequency with which an ambassador could send his dispatches affected their content and structure. When transmission proved relatively easy—in times of peace, easy travel, or good weather—the ambassador might be able to send frequent, short dispatches, whereas in a period of disrupted communications, tense relations, or adverse weather, the ambassador might only write monthly or even less often. For infrequent dispatches that proved expensive to send, the ambassador might begin an initial letter and add a series of postscripts over a period of several days or even weeks before sending the dispatch.

The distance between writer and recipient also impacted the rate of dispatches; the English ambassador to France might write at least once a week, while his counterpart in Spain sent dispatches once a fortnight or even monthly. The Spanish representatives in England sent fewer messages (and received far fewer replies) than their fellow ambassadors to France in part for similar reasons. Of the three countries, the French had the most direct routes (with multiple options) to both its ambassadors in Spain and England, but complications caused by the civil wars frequently disrupted communications. Even though in his letter Sir Thomas Chaloner believed that a four-month wait between letters hampered his ability to perform his duties, such a lag might prove normal in adverse conditions.
In times of especially cordial relations countries might share the costs of posting letters by including dispatches in each other’s packets; it cut the costs of sending messages while increasing the rate at which they could be sent, albeit at an increased security risk. At least in the first decade after Cateau-Cambrésis, the French and Spanish ambassadors frequently sent their letters together out of England, as did the English and Spanish ambassadors in Paris. The practice remained common especially for those ambassadors stationed in Madrid, for the once-monthly post (later increased to every two weeks) bound for Brussels often carried letters for other individuals, and could be trusted (within reason) for its regularity. Of course, this required the government to notify ambassadors that the courier was leaving, and occasionally they forgot (whether deliberately or not) to announce the courier’s departure. As Dr. John Man noted when concluding a short, scribbled note to William Cecil, “and so for lacke of tyme writing at this very dispatche of the correo [Spanish for courier] into flaunders, I take my leave.”

Many of the letters sent by Raymond Beccarie de Pavie, Baron de Fourquevaux’s contain similar notations, as he used the Spanish couriers to convey his dispatches to Paris on a regular basis.

In nearly all cases, the number of dispatches sent by ambassadors far outweighs those received from their respective governments. At times the government simply failed to send messages to its representatives abroad, either out of preoccupation with more pressing matters or simple neglect. As Cecil remarked rather defensively to Sir Thomas Smith in response to an angry missive protesting Smith’s neglect at Cecil’s hands, “I blame yow not, though symetyme yow are perflicted for lack of intelligence from hence,

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15 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 7 October 1567. CUL Mm III 8, f. 98. Man’s letter amounted to only half a page, which is unusual when compared with the normal length of his dispatches.
but yet yow ar to blame the tyme and other circumstances and not me as me thynketh yow are reddy to do."16 Philip II used a similar reason when explaining the lack of instruction for his ambassadors in England; far from forgetting the troublesome situation, he had simply been unable to come to a decision and therefore had no directions to provide. As he wrote to Alvaro de la Quadra in February 1562, “If your letters have not been answered and the present does not deal with them as you desire it is from no want of will on our part but because we have not yet been able to come to a resolution.”17 Months might pass between letters from monarch to ambassador, which often meant that the ambassador had no clear indication of what direction the government wished him to take. This could cripple an ambassador’s mission utterly; he could not conduct significant business without instructions. At times the representative could meet his needs for information by maintaining a correspondence with other notable figures in government, which while not giving him specific instructions, might at least provide enough intelligence that he could appear to be well-informed to other members of the court and avoid Chaloner’s unenviable predicament.

Many ambassadors developed other means of learning the news outside of their formal correspondence with the monarch. In order to keep his government apprised of current events, Alvaro de la Quadra continued steady communications with Margaret of Parma, Philip’s regent in the Netherlands, and Cardinal Granvelle, one of Philip’s chief policy architects. In the period 1 January 1562 through 1 January 1563, the surviving

16 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 29 March 1563. BL Lansdowne 102, f. 29.
17 Philip II to Alvaro de la Quadra, 9 February 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 228. Many of Philip’s letters to his ambassadors carry a similar message from the time of Elizabeth's accession. Philip believed he had a duty to protect the Catholic faith in England, but lacked the resources to effect change forcibly. Thus, his letters to his ambassadors carry a clear message that while Philip desired a religious change in England, he could not implement it at the time.
correspondence shows that Quadra sent twenty-one dispatches to Philip, nineteen to Margaret of Parma, and seven to Cardinal Granvelle, Margaret’s primary adviser in the Low Countries. The dispatches ranged from only a few days apart to a space of more than three months, reflecting periods of crisis or particularly important matters that needed immediate communication. As events in France relating to the First War of Religion began to escalate in the spring and summer of 1562, Quadra sent more frequent dispatches to both Margaret and Philip chronicling the English war preparations and the occupation of Havre de Grace (also Newhaven) in northern France. During the same year, however, Quadra received only four letters from Philip, despite repeated requests for instructions and news; some were less than a full page. In his rare letters, Philip often deferred to Margaret of Parma in providing Quadra with specific instructions, as Margaret was closer to England and could therefore provide prompt replies. During the same year, Philip sent fifty-two surviving letters to Margaret in Brussels. Certainly, while Philip needed to maintain a correspondence with his regent, it would not have been difficult to include a letter for Quadra in the packet bound for Margaret. Many of the letters to Margaret carry the same date, and it is entirely likely they were carried in the same packet. There are approximately eighteen different dates listed in the correspondence, so it is reasonable to assume that there were at least eighteen different packets bound for Brussels from Spain. The tally is taken from CMP vol. 2.

The tally is taken from surviving correspondence preserved in CSPS 1558-1567, CODOIN vol 87, CMP vol. 2, and AGS Estado Leg. 8340, which holds a series of tantalizing dispatches from Quadra during his time in England. Of course, it is impossible to develop entirely accurate counts for any country due to the inevitable loss of documents in the four and a half centuries since they were authored. Regardless, the numbers for each country are accurate enough to indicate trends in the rate of communication between the government and its representatives abroad.

See Philip II to Alvaro de la Quadra, 22 August 1559, 23 August 1559, 5 May 1560, and 9 February 1562 for examples of Philip’s deferment to Margaret of Parma, in CSPS 1558-1567. In the 9 February 1562 letter Philip also instructs Quadra to maintain close contact with Chantonnay, who would keep him apprised of events in France. Chantonnay and Quadra did establish a steady correspondence that provided both with another source of news; in many letters to Chantonnay, Quadra asks for any recent information and for whatever instructions the king had provided Chantonnay, so he could at least follow some semblance of the same policy. See AGS Estado 8340-1.

Many of the letters to Margaret carry the same date, and it is entirely likely they were carried in the same packet. There are approximately eighteen different dates listed in the correspondence, so it is reasonable to assume that there were at least eighteen different packets bound for Brussels from Spain. The tally is taken from CMP vol. 2.
period, Philip sent nineteen surviving letters to Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay, Quadra’s counterpart in France. Chantonnay sent fifty-six to Philip, and also received six from the Duke of Alba.21 Even accounting for a percentage of the letters dispatched lost en route (see Chantonnay’s comments to Philip concerning letters lost around Orléans in chapter 3) or letters destroyed in the 450 years since, there is still a marked difference in the volume of correspondence between the Spanish king and his representatives in England and France in the 1560s. Comparisons are more difficult for the 1570s, when for eight years there was no Spanish ambassador to England (Antonio Guaras served as the chargé d’affaires), and also for the 1580s, as the final Spanish ambassador was expelled from England in 1584.

French representatives in England and Spain also maintained a steady stream of dispatches detailing all types of information. Paul de Foix, who served in England for three and a half years, wrote regularly; he sent letters at least once every three weeks, and received frequent replies. One of Catherine’s most successful ambassadors, Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon sent on average five dispatches a month for a total of four hundred sixty nine dispatches during his nearly seven-year stay in England.22 La Mothe-Fénélon’s counterpart in Spain, the Sieur de Fourquevaux, benefited when Charles and Philip agreed to split the posting costs for letters between Paris and Madrid, enabling him to send letters on a bi-weekly basis. Of course, Fourquevaux did not always send letters every two weeks, and in some cases, wrote more frequently. Some letters are dated only three or four days apart (and in rare cases, he wrote daily), while others are separated by

21 The tally is taken from NCF vols 3 and 4.
22 La Mothe-Fénélon served in England from November 1568 until September 1575. The bulk of his correspondence has been published in a seven volume series. The actual average is 5.7 dispatches per month, but it varied from as few as two to as many as eight depending on current events.
more than a month.\footnote{Allen, \textit{Post and Courier Service}, 37; DF vols. 1-3.} In some cases, Fourquevaux also sent letters via the servants and couriers of Don Francés de Álava, Philip’s ambassador in France; Álava reciprocated, as demonstrated by his payments to Fourquevaux’s servants.\footnote{See Álava’s extraordinary expense accounts in AGS DGT inventario 24, legajos 565 and 566.} Fourquevaux’s successor Jean de Vivonne, Sieur de Saint-Gouard, also maintained a regular correspondence with his government. For the year 1572, Vivonne wrote letters about every ten days, to Charles IX, Catherine de Medici, and Henry, Duke of Anjou. Vivonne posted letters to Anjou on a regular basis, and most were virtual copies of the letters he sent to the King. Charles (and after Charles’s death in 1574, Henry III) sent his ambassadors approximately two letters each month. The correspondence remained regular for the eight years of Vivonne’s tenure in Spain.\footnote{See the correspondence of Jean de Vivonne, Sieur de Saint-Gouard, in BNF FF. 16104-16108. The volume 16104 has the correspondence for 1572.}

The letter-book of the Portuguese ambassador Francisco Pereira, maintained from August 1566 through February 1568, records the contents, recipients and dates of his dispatches, at least those sent to King Sebastian and other government officials.\footnote{Letter-book of Francisco Pereira, August 1566-February 1568. IDAN: Torre do Tombo, Livro 210.} There are several breaks in the letter book, but it is complete enough to get a picture of the ambassador’s correspondence. In January-September 1567, Pereira wrote sixteen letters, all of which were addressed to Sebastian. Some of these letters were written only two or three days apart; in other instances, his letters were separated by more than a month.\footnote{Ibid., f. 30-136.} It is safe to assume that Pereira dispatched several letters that were not recorded in his letter-book, as the book does not document letters announcing important events, such as the birth of the Infanta Catalina in October 1567. Altogether, though his correspondence
is far more erratic than Vivonne’s or Fourquevaux’s. This may be due in part to the fact that, given the relatively short distance between Madrid and Lisbon, Pereira could send letters when needed, rather than waiting for the twice-monthly courier like the French or English ambassadors. Some of his letters were carried by Spanish couriers, but most appear to have traveled with Portuguese messengers.

Both the Portuguese and French representatives in Madrid received relatively regular dispatches from their respective sovereigns, keeping them apprised of the news and giving them instructions. The English ambassadors to Spain were lucky if they received a dozen letters from their government each year.\(^{28}\) It was not unusual for months to pass between the arrivals of packets; Chamberlain and Man both noted the difficulties this caused, though less often than Chaloner. In contrast, the English ambassador to France could count on receiving at least two letters a month, and at times more than two a week. Far more couriers plied the routes between Paris and the Channel ports, making it far easier for the English to find a messenger to carry the letters to the coast, where they could be sent across to England. For the English, the French embassy served as a clearing house of sorts for their international correspondence. English agents operating in Italy, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire often sent their letters to Paris to be forwarded to London. This, in turn, enabled the English ambassador in Paris to write more frequently without incurring additional posting expenses; he could include his dispatches with the other packets making their way toward London or Brussels.

It can be very difficult to reconstruct the complete scope of an ambassador’s correspondence simply because so many documents have either scattered to various

\(^{28}\) Even a cursory examination of the CSPF series c. 1559-1568 demonstrates that very few letters ever found their way to the English ambassadors serving in Spain.
archives or have been lost; a complete archive rarely survives. More often, it is necessary to turn to the ambassador’s letter-book or journal in order to gain some insight into his communications. Many ambassadors kept some form of record of their outgoing dispatches, at least those sent to the monarch and other notable figures—in some instances, these letter-books are the only surviving records of the correspondence. The letter-book of Francisco Pereira, the Portuguese ambassador to Spain, contains the copies of his letters, the originals of which were presumably lost when Lisbon suffered a devastating earthquake in 1755. The letter-book of Sebastien de l’Aubespine records his steady correspondence with Francis, Duke of Guise and his brother Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, in addition to Catherine de Medici and Charles IX.29 In many instances, l’Aubespine sent near copies of his dispatches to the Queen Mother to the Guise brothers—and in rare cases, more information to the Guise than to the Queen Mother. Sir Thomas Chamberlain’s partial letter-book preserves dispatches sent to Queen Elizabeth, Sir William Cecil and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton.30 Only rarely did an ambassador keep complete records of both incoming and outgoing correspondence, in part because such documents could contain incriminating or otherwise damaging information. Often, ambassadors destroyed many incoming letters after they had been read in order to ensure that the information did not fall into the wrong hands.31

29 A large portion of de l’Aubespine’s diplomatic correspondence has been published in Louis Paris, ed. Négociations. The bulk of the manuscripts are preserved in: BNF FF 3712, 6613, 15874, and 15876. Sebastien de l’Aubespine’s journal is preserved in BNF FF 16103, f. 1-248v. It is, unfortunately, very difficult to read due to the secretary’s practice of writing on both sides of the paper.
30 “Letter-book of Sir Thomas Chamberlain,” 1560-1561. British Library: ADD MSS 39866. It is important to note that this letter-book is not comprehensive, nor does it cover the entirety of Chamberlain’s tenure in Spain. One can partially reconstruct Chamberlain’s correspondence with the documents preserved in the National Archives and other repositories.
31 Many ambassadors took precautions with their correspondence; Alvaro de la Quadra sent sensitive papers to the Low Countries for safe keeping, and Don Guerau de Spes burned all his letters when he
Sir Francis Walsingham’s unique journal maintained in part during his tenure in France as resident ambassador (December 1570-May 1573), as a special ambassador (July-September 1581), and also while resident at the English court as Elizabeth's Secretary of State provides an invaluable source concerning ambassadorial correspondence.\(^{32}\) Unfortunately, there are several large gaps, such as that from January 1572-December 1573 (it is entirely possible that Walsingham may have destroyed or not kept a journal during this period which encompassed the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre) and his brief embassy to the Low Countries in June-October 1578, but on the whole the journal is a veritable treasure trove for reconstructing an ambassador’s communication. Walsingham recorded the arrival and dispatch of letters, both official and personal, and (when possible) the names of the couriers who carried them.

These meticulous records do not always include correspondence by other members of his embassy, unless they were notable figures—such as Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, who joined with Walsingham in January 1571 and remained until the end of March. A sampling of three months’ worth correspondence of Walsingham’s tenure in France shortly after he arrived to take up his post (March-May 1571) shows that Walsingham received letters approximately on a weekly basis; the longest gap between packets (excluding the two letters received independently from foreign dignitaries) was twelve days, from the first to the thirteenth of May. Normally, Walsingham dispatched packets at least weekly; the longest break between his letters amounted to twelve days, feared (correctly) that the English might search his embassy. See chapter 3: The World of Paper for more information.

but the succeeding packet more than compensated for the brief lapse in communication by containing thirty-seven letters. The largest packet Walsingham received contained twenty-eight letters, and the largest he dispatched comprised thirty-seven. Over the three-month period, Walsingham sent an average of forty-five letters a month and received forty-four. The record does not document when Walsingham authored the letters, but rather when they were dispatched. By comparing these dates with those preserved on the documents, it is possible to determine that most letters were dispatched within a few days of writing. Very few of Walsingham’s letters carried postscripts or other addenda, which reflect the ease with which could send letters, in comparison to the English ambassador in Spain.

The journal kept by Walsingham’s secretary documents more than the sheer volume of material that passed through the embassy. By recording the names of the authors and recipients of the letters, it is possible to gain some insight into Walsingham’s circle of correspondence. Major figures in Elizabethan government—William Cecil, Lord Burghley; Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; the Earls of Sussex and Bedford; and the Privy Council (Walsingham frequently sent letters to the members of the Privy Council independently of his official reports addressed to the Council as a whole) all received the most and the longest letters Walsingham dispatched. During the brief embassy of Lord Buckhurst, Walsingham deferred the duty of writing to the Queen; he sent no letters to Elizabeth during the three month period of Buckhurst’s special embassy, and only rarely thereafter. Walsingham preferred instead to send lengthy messages to Burghley on the

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33 Many of these letters went to the same recipients; for instance, Walsingham would compose a dispatch for the Privy Council, and send separate letters to key members such as William Cecil, Lord Burghley or Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.
assumption that Burghley would bring them before the Queen. Many letters were of a personal nature. Walsingham maintained a steady correspondence with his wife Lady Ursula until she joined him in Paris on 19 March, and with other family members.34

As a general rule, increased distance meant that fewer letters could be sent and fewer would be received because of the costs involved. For ambassadors, sending frequent reports amounted to only half of the task. Unless these dispatches carried relevant and accurate news, they could do more harm than good. A report bearing dated or simply wrong breadcrumbs of information might lead a government down a mistaken policy path; thus, concerning his dispatches, the ambassador had two key tasks: send them often enough to be useful (but not so often as to prove prohibitively expensive) and include accurate, relevant information. For the latter duty, ambassadors (and governments) had to monitor and verify the contents of their letters to the fullest extent they could.

Contents: gossip, rumor and hard information

When creating a dispatch, the ambassador needed to write a message with enough information to be useful while monitoring its content carefully. His dispatches needed to anticipate the government’s questions and demonstrate his ability to gather accurate intelligence from reliable sources. An astute ambassador made sure he noted the difference between fact, gossip and rumor—the failure to do so might prove costly indeed, especially if the intelligence proved incorrect. On a fundamental level, when

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34 “Journal of Sir Francis Walsingham,” in Martin, 6. Walsingham also exchanged letters on a regular basis with one Francis Mills, another Protestant and former fellow of All Souls’ College. Aside from his wife, Mills was the most prominent of Walsingham’s personal correspondents.
crafting a letter all ambassadors needed to decide what information to send, how to send it and what questions they needed to ask of their government.

All governments expected a degree of inaccuracy, but the ambassador had to take precautions to avoid sending a constant stream of incorrect information, as he must do all he could to verify the intelligence to the best of his abilities. Otherwise, officials might formulate disastrous policies. Hopefully, there would be more than one source of information available that could provide an indication of which report was correct.

At times, however, the need for accuracy demonstrated itself in instructions sent to a representative. In a letter to Smith dated 14 December 1562, William Cecil reported complaints from several members of the Privy Council concerning errors in Smith’s methods of collecting and reporting information. These mistakes amounted to far more than simple discrepancies; Cecil provided several specific examples, including the time when in a report Smith said mistakenly that François d’Andelot (younger brother of Admiral Coligny and Cardinal Odet de Châtillon) was “still syck at Orleace, [Orléans] and N Throkmorto [Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, then also ambassador to France] w[r]yteth that he was one of them with who the treaty was had at Paris.”35 Clearly, d’Andelot could not be sick in Orléans and taking part in treaties in Paris at the same time, and the two conflicting reports from the ambassadors undermined the Privy Council’s efforts to track the movements of key French nobles. As the d’Andelot family was among the prominent Huguenots then in rebellion against the French crown with English aid, the English had a vested interest in monitoring their interactions with the French government. Throughout the letter Cecil provided enough examples to

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35 William Cecil to Sir Thomas Smith, 14 December 1562. British Library: Lansdowne MSS 102, ff. 27.
conclusively indicate systematic problems with Smith’s information, though, as he hastened to assure Smith, Cecil knew the difficulties of the work and was simply passing along some of the concerns expressed by the Council.

In response to the Council’s comments, Smith changed his methods. He started keeping a “journal of occurrences” to record significant events, including the location of key individuals, rumors percolating through the court, military reports and other pertinent information he could secure. Unfortunately, however, he listed only the information, and did not document the means he had used to collect the intelligence. He dispatched these “journals” to the council on a regular basis, in addition to extra letters concerning specific events or requests for instructions. These multiple channels helped Smith keep the council abreast of major events in France, demonstrate his abilities to perform the responsibilities of his position, and maintain a record for future reference. His journal stands in marked difference to that kept by Walsingham; whereas Walsingham’s journal chronicled his daily movements, visitors, and correspondence, Smith’s focused on tracking key members of the French Court and recording current news and rumors. Smith’s journal was meant for an outside readership; the reports were regularly dispatched to the council, while Walsingham’s was of a much more private nature.

Ambassadors’ dispatches tended to follow a formula. The first lines (after the required platitudes, depending on the identity of the recipient) gave the date on which the ambassador received his last letter and the dates on which he sent his most recent

36 See documents in both SP 70 and British Library ADD MSS 35831, ff. 165, 178, 182, 188,194, 199, 206, 210, 214, 226, 254, 257. Smith’s journal exists in several smaller documents that were apparently dispatched back to England with his letters, as a way of including the types of information the Council apparently desired. While they are very valuable in reconstructing both the events taking place in France and documenting what information was available to the English government, they fail to record the ways in which Smith gathered his information, which could have helped to reconstruct his sources at the French court.
dispatches. Many also named the courier or servant used to transport the messages. Beyond the obvious reasons, such information provided a security check on the transmission of letters. It enabled both governments and ambassadors to track their correspondence and recognize if a packet went astray. This information also allowed both parties to determine how long they had taken to arrive at their destination, which could prove useful in calculating how long future messages might take to arrive.

Many dispatches contained the same types of information repeatedly, such as news about the health of the monarch, court progresses, any military actions underway, and details about the upper level nobility. Such news was virtually standard, and its exclusion was unusual enough to warrant comment. In situations in which the issue of succession was especially contentious diplomats paid particular attention to any news about the succession, and the activities of the heir(s) presumptive. Given the entangled nature of royal marriages, other monarchs had a vested interest in carefully monitoring (and influencing, whenever possible) debates over any succession.

In October 1562, when it appeared that Elizabeth might succumb to a recent attack of smallpox, Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra sent frequent dispatches concerning the queen’s health to both Philip and Margaret of Parma. He also managed to learn that the Privy Council, during a desperate late-night meeting, had decided to likely favor the succession claim of Lady Katherine Grey over that of Mary, Queen of Scots.37 English, Spanish and French (after Mary returned to Scotland in 1561) ambassadors sought out specific news on the health of Mary Stuart, especially before she gave birth to her son and heir James in June 1566. In his dispatches to King Sebastian, Portuguese ambassador

37 See Alvaro de la Quadra to Margaret of Parma, 10, 17, and 25 October 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 262; Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 25 October 1562, in CSPS 1558-1567, 292-3
Francisco Pereira sent whatever information he could about the health of Philip’s son Don Carlos, even to penning a letter at two o’clock in the morning when he learned of the prince’s confinement. The English and Spanish watched the French court continually after the 1584 death of François d’Anjou, younger brother and heir of King Henry III, on the correct assumption that there would be another civil war if Henry died childless.38

Typically, news about the events at court followed any updates concerning the monarch. An astute ambassador kept careful track of the monarch’s visitors and any meetings among the key members of the Court. Any clear trends in who gained access to the monarch—and who was shut out repeatedly—could indicate the strength of individuals’ influence. Courtiers had to be careful to cultivate their patronage networks at court, and also to curry favor with the monarch. Any noble shunned consistently by the monarch might find himself losing ground rapidly in the continual struggle for power and prestige among his fellow courtiers. The courtier of declining fortunes might conceivably be willing to exchange information in return for the ambassador’s aid in regaining his position, and so become a valuable source of information for an observant ambassador.

When in 1560 the French ambassador Sebastien de l’Aubespine noted that both the Duke of Alba and Cardinal Granvelle shunned him at court and avoided meeting with Philip, he surmised that the reason for this behavior lay in their opposition to Philip’s pro-French inclinations and reported these impressions to Catherine de Medici in a series of reports. Repeatedly, Catherine acknowledged this intelligence and requested that de

38 The closest male heir was Henry de Bourbon, son of Jeanne d’Albret and Antoine de Bourbon. Despite the fact that he was married to Marguerite de Valois, as one of the leaders of the Huguenots, both English and French representatives voiced their doubts that the Catholic majority would accept him king.
l’Aubespine continue to monitor the situation. De l’Aubespine and his successor Saint-Sulpice, both paid close attention to and recorded the volatile relationships that dominated Philip’s court, whether it was to report that the Alba had stormed away from Court or that Granvelle was losing favor rapidly in the face of a concerted attack by other courtiers.

Fears of loss of status—or, in more extreme situations, one’s life—could be a powerful motivator, as the unfortunate Duke of Norfolk discovered when he attempted to negotiate with the Spanish and French ambassadors in exchange for their aid. Similarly, the relationships between foreign dignitaries and members of the court could provide valuable intelligence about relations between those countries. Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon observed when Don Guerau de Spes both successfully and (more often) unsuccessfully petitioned to see Elizabeth or members of the Privy Council, both through his sources at court and from his encounters with Spes personally.

Ambassadors needed to clarify their opinions in their dispatches, whether they concerned the veracity of a source, the likelihood of policy changes, or even something as seemingly simple as the use of a particular courier. These value judgments proved vital to the councilors reading the messages; they depended on the ambassador’s assessment of a situation. Most ambassadors learned very quickly that they needed to pass along their personal thoughts in their dispatches, especially when it related to the authenticity of intelligence.

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39 See de l’Aubespine’s dispatches to Catherine de Medici in Négociations and also chapter 1: The World of the Ambassador
40 Norfolk’s complicity in the Ridolfi Plot was confirmed when one of his servants was arrested with ciphered letters and French gold destined for Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. He also met with Ridolfi directly and agreed to seek Spanish aid for a rebellion.
Ciphers, Cryptology and Security

The writer had a number of options available for protecting his dispatches, but each offered limited effectiveness and could be broken. Both ambassadors and governments had to use combinations of whatever means were available in order to ensure that his information arrived intact. At times the writer could also use oblique phrases and vague language, trusting that the recipient would be able to understand the deeper message that might not be readily apparent to an interloper, such as that employed (largely unsuccessfully) by Spanish ambassador Don Guerau de Spes in 1569 when the English intercepted his letters to the Duke of Alba.41 The most prevalent security measure was the use of ciphers; as Charles IX noted in a letter to his ambassador Fourquevaux, “if there is something of importance, it should be put in cipher.”42 All resident ambassadors used cipher at some point in their correspondence with their government. Ciphers proved both useful and problematic. It prevented a casual inspection by couriers or other individuals from revealing secret information during transit—a courier such as Rocco Bonnetti likely would not have been able to sell the contents of Castelnau’s letters so quickly had they been in cipher, because he could not have estimated the value of the intelligence—but also indicated the importance of the intelligence contained within the letter.

41 See chapter 3, “The World of Paper” for more detailed information about Spes’s confrontation with the Privy Council concerning some questionable language in one of his intercepted dispatches. The Council repeatedly hauled him in for questioning about his letters to both Philip and the Duke of Alba.
42 Charles IX to Fourquevaux, 27 January 1570, in Douais, Lettres de Charles IX, 277.
The history of cryptography is lengthy, and need not be discussed in detail here.\textsuperscript{43} Two types of ciphers were available for sixteenth-century ambassadors: transposition and substitution. A transposition cipher worked by rearranging the letters in any given word: for example, the letters in the word “diplomacy” would be transposed to read “cydopilam.” Although simple to use, letters encoded using transposition ciphers could be broken easily and provided only limited security at best. Rather than take the risk, governments most often used substitution ciphers in their correspondence.

By the early modern period, several works had examined the issue of cryptology; Leone Battista Alberti described polyalphabetic substitution ciphers in 1467, while Giambattista Battista della Porta provided detailed instructions on using a mixed alphabet cipher in his 1563 work *De Furtivis Literarum Notis*. Substitution ciphers used a variety of letters, symbols and numbers to replace the most common letters in the clear text; the letter “A” might equal the number “7” or the letter “o,” as in Figure 1 below. In many instances symbols were developed solely for use in the cipher and have no other meaning, such as those listed under the letter “P.” Common letters (especially those used as doubles) such as “E” and “S” often had multiple symbols, to make the task of breaking the cipher more difficult, since the author could use two different symbols to represent

\textsuperscript{43} Several works have already covered the history of early modern cryptography and cipher use at length; see J. P. Devos, *Les Chiffres de Philippe II (1555-1598) et du despacho universal Durant le XVIIe siècle* (Brussels, 1950).
the same letter in the word.

Figure 1: A basic cipher key from a sixteenth-century French source

The cipher’s complexity increased with the number of substitutions and symbols in use. While this offered increased security, it also complicated the tasks of encoding and decoding letters. More complex ciphers also introduced additional characters that represented no letters to make the task of deciphering the material more difficult. Figure 2 provides an example of a common cipher key in use in by mid-sixteenth century diplomats; it belonged to Charles IX’s ambassador la Mothe-Fénélon.

Figure 2: Cipher key of Bertrand Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon.

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44 Paris: Archives Nationales K 95, f. 4.
45 Paris: Archives Nationales K 95, f. 60.
The left hand column gives the symbols to use in place of the names of many prominent individuals likely to be frequently referenced in correspondence, such as “the king,” “the king of Spain,” “Duke of Alba,” and “the queen of England.” It also lists other proper nouns that would be often used, such as “Navarre,” “Angleterre,” and “France.” Employing symbols in place of these common terms accomplished two tasks: it made the tasks of enciphering and deciphering shorter, and decreased the number of words in cipher, making decoding without the key more difficult. The third and fourth rows give symbols to be used in place of double letters or common words, such as personal nouns and adjectives.

The top row of Mothe-Fénélon’s cipher key gives the substitution cipher for individual letters, followed by a list of symbols described as “Nulles.” These symbols would be interspersed in the ciphered letter to make the chore of deciphering more difficult. The English and Spanish also followed the practice of using random symbols and letters to fill in space and make cracking the cipher more difficult. In his 26 September 1567 letter to Sir William Cecil, Dr. John Man took the precaution of using several of his “null” symbols and random letters to make it more difficult for anyone to decipher his letter, as he had dispatched very sensitive information:
Figure 3: Letter from Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 26 September 1567.

In the fourteenth line of cipher, Man’s phrase “I have ben”—eight letters—is encoded using eighteen different letters and syllables. By including the extra characters, Man not only made the chore of decipherment more difficult, but hid the length of his message.

By using the same cipher frequently, the writer increased the possibility that the code would be broken. The risks further increased when multiple copies of letters traveled through different channels. The cipher also retained protection only as long as its key remained with trusted individuals; by distributing the same cipher among many

46 CUL: Mm III 8, f. 95-95v.
members of government, it became easier for those members to communicate confidentially, but also increased the likelihood that the cipher key could fall into the wrong hands. Ambassadors and governments therefore had to balance the need for secrecy against ease of communications.

By enciphering small portions of a message, the recipient and author gave themselves a convenient way to refer to confidential information without stating it directly in their correspondence; in his letters to Charles IX, Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon frequently answered Charles’s concerns by referring to “what Your Majesty asked of me in cipher,” or matters written in “the cipher of Your Majesty.” As only specific information had been enciphered in Charles’s last letter, Mothe-Fénélon could assume safely that Charles would understand the matters to which Mothe-Fénélon referred.

Frequently, in his dispatches to Catherine de Medici, Paul de Foix frequently enciphered most of his letter while leaving only the salutation and first sentences in clear text. When he drafted his letters, de Foix imparted without cipher information concerning his earlier dispatches, the likelihood that they had been intercepted, and concerns over the “strange” lack of reply in clear text. The rest of the message, no matter how mundane, was ciphered. No doubt this was a deliberate move, given especially the frequency with which both French and English couriers were intercepted during the period of strained relations caused by the First War of Religion. If the English had intercepted such a letter,

47 Bertrand Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon to Charles IX, 23 January 1571, in CDMF vol 3, 447; Mothe-Fénélon to Charles IX, 8 May 1571, in CDMF vol 4, 92.
48 Paul de Foix to Catherine de Medici, BNF FF 6612, f. 1, 4, etc., 6613, Paul de Foix to Charles IX, BNF FF 15971, f. 21-22v. Nearly all de Foix’s dispatches use cipher for the body of the letter, which is very similar to the practice of Jean de Vivonne, sieur de Saint-Gouard, who served in Spain 1572-1579. See Vivonne’s correspondence in BNF FF 16103-16108.
they would have seen the initial sentence in clear text and known that de Foix assumed that his letters would be read. Both de Foix and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, his English counterpart in France, often complained to their governments (and that of their host country) that their letters had been captured. De Foix could have been attempting to send a message to the English: he was aware of their interference in his correspondence, and would track the receipt of every letter in order to determine whether any had been intercepted.

Many government officials, courtiers and other individuals employed ciphers for personal and government business on a regular basis. Normally, ambassadors took a cipher with them when they departed for their post.49 Governments sent ciphers with couriers only when absolutely necessary. Ambassadors might also possess ciphers for use with a specific correspondent, such as those maintained between Mary Stuart and the succession of both French and Spanish ambassadors both before and after Mary’s arrival in England in 1568.50 Ambassadors might also possess special ciphers for use with their counterparts in other countries, as Bernardino de Mendoza did with Juan Vargas de Mexia, the Spanish ambassador in France.51 This practice offered some measure of protection for both correspondents. It prevented the need for the ambassador to provide a copy of a general cipher (such as that employed by the Spanish) to a foreigner, and ensured that even if the individual cipher were intercepted and broken, the interceptor

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49 See the “Instructions for Viscount Montague and Sir Thomas Chamberlain,” letter from Sir Thomas Smith to Cecil, “Draft of Instructions from His Majesty to Don Bernardino de Mendoza,” 8 January 1578, in CSPS 1568-79, 558. etc., which made provisions for the ambassadors to take ciphers with them when they departed for their posts.
50 See the dispatches of Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 23 June 1566 in CSPS 1558-67; Don Guerau de Spes to Philip II, 24 September 1568, and Antonio de Guaras to Gabriel de Zayas, 28 November 1574, in CSPS 1568-79, 489; Mary Stuart to Bernardino de Mendoza, 6 April 1582, in CSPS 1580-86, 330; Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon to Charles IX 19 March 1570, in CDMF vol 3, 87.
51 Bernardino de Mendoza to Gabriel de Zayas, 5 May 1578, in CSPS 1568-79, 578.
could only read that specific correspondence, not all letters sent by the ambassador or government.

Maintaining multiple ciphers could sometimes cause more problems than solutions. As Philip’s secretary Gabriel de Zayas remarked tartly in a letter to the Spanish agent (although not an ambassador) Antonio de Guaras, then residing in England, “Although I have told you in a variety of ways that I do not have the key of the cipher you use with Don John, I repeat it here, so that you may at least send it, to let me understand your letters. The last I think of 17th August, both one and the other remain secret, since I am too old to break my head by making them out without a key, as I did when I was younger.” Zayas’s message confirmed both the use of private ciphers between individuals and also that not every cipher provided any real security against a savvy code breaker.

When composing a dispatch, the ambassador had to remember that enciphering and deciphering letters was a laborious task. In June 1562 Sir William Cecil cautioned Sir Thomas Chaloner that “he is to have regard to put it in cipher, and in the cipher to use discretion, not to put unnecessary things, for the labour of deciphering is not small.” At times the use of cipher could prove an annoyance for both writer and recipient. As Thomas Randolph, then serving in Scotland, noted sarcastically in a letter to Sir Ralph Sadler and Sir James Crofts, he “desires no less pleasure to Mr. Railton [Sadler’s secretary] in deciphering his own new invented orthography, than he [Randolph] had in

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52 Gabriel de Zayas to Antonio Guaras, 7 October 1577. NA: SP 94/1/19. See chapter 3, 154-6 for a more thorough discussion of this letter and its significance.  
53 Sir William Cecil to Sir Thomas Chaloner, 8 June 1562, in CSPF 1562, 82-4.
writing of it.”54 The unfortunate secretary was mentioned in another letter to Sadler from Cecil, in which Cecil asked that “when Mr. Raylton writes in cipher, let him write no more than needeth, in regard to Cecil’s other labours.”55 Even practiced secretaries might have difficulty in translating the enciphered portions speedily into a clear text message if the code used was new or complicated.

The task of enciphering and deciphering might not be entrusted to secretaries and clerks, depending on the level of the information contained in the message. In order to protect the integrity of the contents, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton asked that Cecil himself decipher a message intended for him and the Queen.56 In July 1559, Sir James Croft noted in a letter to William Cecil that “he causes all his letters for the surety of matters, to remain in his [Croft’s] own hand, and his secretary writes his letters in cipher by his direction, as he names the letters, without knowledge of what he writes.”57 In a memorable instance in 1567, Philip II ciphered a letter to the Duke of Alba himself, and indicated that he expected Alba to decipher it personally.

Constantly, governments and ambassadors had to be on alert for any signs that their cipher had been broken, intercepted, surrendered, or otherwise discovered. At times, secretaries or other individuals might be employed specifically to break ciphers. Many letters expressed concerns over cipher security (with that portion enciphered) and requested some change in the cipher to decrease the chances that it could be broken. In July 1560 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton reported to the Privy Council that he had

54 Thomas Randolph to Sir Ralph Sadler and Sir James Crofts, 12 October 1559, in CSPF 1567-1569, 36-7.  
55 Sir William Cecil to Sir Ralph Sadler, 5 October 1559, in CSPF 1559-60, 15.  
56 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Queen Elizabeth, 25 April 1560, in CSPF 1559-1560, 581-3.  
57 Sir James Crofts to Sir William Cecil, 24 July 1559, in CSPF 1558-9, 408.
“dangerous intelligence that their letters have been deciphered.”⁵⁸ During his tenure in France Philip’s ambassador Don Francés de Álava passed along many reports that the Spanish cipher had been broken, as did Don Bernardino de Mendoza.

The Spanish, in particular, suffered many security leaks because of their ciphers, in part because of their practice of using one general cipher for correspondence between all councilors, ambassadors and other government ministers. This system increased communication between these individuals, but also the chances that the code would be broken. Many ambassadors tried to minimize the risk by developing their own ciphers for private use (such as that between Guaras and Don John, or Bernardino de Mendoza and Juan de Vargas Mexia) but this made regular correspondence far more difficult. It also meant that there could be issues if the private ciphers were not shared with relevant individuals. In a September 1568 letter to Philip, Don Guerau de Spes included several ciphered letters from Mary Stuart that he could not read. As Spes informed Philip, a Scottish gentleman “brought me two letters from his mistress to Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, but, as the latter has not left his cipher or even told me that he had one with her, I am unable to read them, and therefore send them enclosed, in order that Guzmán may decipher them if he has arrived.”⁵⁹ Whether by accident or design, the former ambassador had failed to provide his replacement with his private cipher.

In a July 1562 letter to Philip, ambassador Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay reported that he had serious concerns relating to the security of the general cipher. As Chantonnay explained, the English “have obtained a copy of the cipher from the secretary of your Majesty’s ambassador to that kingdom and I have great fear that the cipher in

⁵⁸ Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to the Privy Council, 19 July 1560, in CSPF 1560-1, 194-7
⁵⁹ Don Guerau de Spes to Philip II, 24 September 1568, in CSPS 1568-79, 74.
which we write has little security.”60 The secretary in question who betrayed the cipher must have been Borghese Venturini, the Italian secretary whom Sir William Cecil had bribed to inform on his master Alvaro de la Quadra.61 As he explained, Chantonnay’s fears were not limited to the security of the correspondence out of England: the Huguenot rebels near Orléans (the same city through which Catherine de Medici had ordered that the Spanish couriers pass, and letters had been regularly intercepted) “are able each day to steal from me some dispatches and it will be very easy for the Queen [Elizabeth] to give them a copy of this cipher to the heretics in this kingdom through the correspondence that her ambassador has with them.”62 These very real fears did not even mark the end of Chantonnay’s concerns; at the end of the paragraph he added, “if the Queen Mother herself gets involved with it, she will not stop trying to obtain it through her ambassador, as she is keen to know something of what I write and discover if I correspond with someone from this kingdom, as she imagines.”63 Although he did not suggest directly that the king change the cipher, clearly Chantonnay hoped that such an alarming letter might provoke Philip to order additional security measures for his correspondence.

Two years later, Don Francés de Álava sent a series of letters to Philip II and his Secretary of State Gonzalo Pérez concerning the theft of his cipher from his servant by Huguenots.64 In his second packet, dated 24 June 1564, he also included a copy of a confession taken from one Jean Fleurin, who, according to Álava’s investigation, was

60 Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay to Philip, 13 July 1562, in NCF vol. 4, 185.
61 For more information concerning Borghese Venturini, see above, 70-8.
62 Chantonnay to Philip, 13 July 1562, in NCF vol. 4, 185.
63 Ibid.
64 Don Francés de Álava to Philip II: 21, 24, June; Don Francés de Álava to Gonzalo Pérez, 24 June 1564, in NCF vol 6, 263, 278-280.
responsible for the theft. In response to news of the theft, regent Margaret of Parma sent a new cipher to both Álava and Don Diego Guzmán de Silva (then serving as Philip’s ambassador in England) immediately, and wrote a letter to Philip informing him of the change. Philip, when he received the news from Álava in early July, also ordered the development of a new cipher to replace the general cipher currently in use. As Philip explained in a letter to Guzmán, “as soon as my sister heard of it [the theft] she sent me a private cipher informing me that she had send you and Don Francés 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.”65 In order to inform Guzmán who else had possession of the new cipher, Philip added, “you may write in this cipher to me or to the Minister whose names are written upon it advise receipt of it as it will not be used in writing to you until we know it has come to hand.”66 Although Álava had responded by sounding the alarm concerning the theft promptly, security concerns abounded; the old cipher key could be used easily to decipher letters that had been stolen or intercepted previously. Álava asked for a new cipher in May 1567; when his request met no response, he again asked for a new cipher the following September, and in December for a new individual cipher if the general one could not be changed.67 A year later, Philip informed his ambassador that he had ordered a new special cipher and a new general cipher, although the general cipher

65 Philip II to Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, 6 August 1564, in CSPS 1558-1567, 371-3.
66 Ibid.
67 Don Francés de Álava to Philip II, 7 May 1567, in NCF vol. 9, 299; in NCF vol. 9, 30 September 1567, 476; 14 December 1567, in NCF vol. 10, 85.
change did not take place for another six months.⁶⁸ About three years later, Philip heeded yet another warning from Álava, and ordered a new general cipher sent to all his ambassadors.⁶⁹

Ten years later, Philip received another missive concerning security. In a frank and lengthy letter to Philip in November 1581, Don Bernardino de Mendoza explained that he had good reason to fear that the general cipher used by nearly all Philip’s ambassadors and ministers had been compromised and explained the methods that were likely employed to break the code. As he wrote,

> I am told that when two Flemish heretics asked whether he [St. Aldegonde, one of the most popular decipherers of the time] had deciphered the despatches captured recently in France, he answered that it was very easy to do that, as your Majesty’s cipher was in so many hands, and drafts of letters could be so easily obtained. They were therefore anxious to get hold of cipher despatches corresponding with the drafts, even when they were months old, because that enabled them to construct a key. He said the cipher in which all your ministers wrote was the same, your Majesty’s despatches could easily be understood by obtaining a draft of some letter written from a place where no suspicion existed.⁷⁰

After (hopefully) alarming the king thoroughly about the security of his correspondence, Mendoza offered specific suggestions as to how Philip could strengthen the integrity of his ciphers. “It would not be bad,” Mendoza wrote, “if your Majesty should order, in addition to the general cipher in the hands of all the Ministers for ordinary correspondence, that three or four other ciphers for your Majesty’s sole use should be distributed amongst the Ministers, and the evil of having only one cipher would be obviated.”⁷¹ After proffering this recommendation, Mendoza hastened to entice the king

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⁶⁸ Philip II to Don Francés de Álava, 13 May 1568, in NCF vol. 10, 409; Gabriel de Zayas to Don Francés de Álava, 30 November 1568, in NCF vol. 11, 399.
⁶⁹ Philip II to Don Guerau de Spes, 5 August 1571, in CSPS 1568-79, 327.
⁷⁰ Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 11 November 1581, in CSPS 1580-86, 218.
⁷¹ Ibid.
with a fringe benefit; as Mendoza noted, “another advantage of this would be that, if any of the clerks play false, they can be traced at once, which is not possible now, as they all write in the same cipher with so many hands.”\textsuperscript{72} Clearly, Mendoza felt strongly about the issue, to risk potentially angering Philip by presenting the king with unsolicited advice and even making recommendations on his course of action.

The use of cipher in dispatches was one of the primary security measures available to both ambassador and government to protect their correspondence. It prevented a casual inspection by an interloper from revealing any specific information. It also unfortunately indicated the importance of the intelligence contained therein, unless the correspondent followed the practice of enciphering his entire message, as did Paul de Foix. This could be both useful and problematic. By increasing the use of the same cipher in any given message, it augmented the chances that the cipher might be broken if the letter were intercepted. Governments also used both general and specific ciphers for their correspondence. This facilitated correspondence between officials, but passed the cipher and its key among many different individuals. Ultimately, none of the security measures available to protect the contents of a dispatch proved completely infallible, including cipher.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Creating a dispatch and protecting its contents successfully contained elements of both art and science. A gifted writer could convey the intelligence he possessed while carefully noting the different types of material, sources, and give his assessment of the

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
information, thereby providing his government with the tools needed to evaluate the contents of the letter. An ambassador had to provide his government with enough accurate information in a timely manner so that they could develop policy initiatives, and a government had to send missives often enough to keep their representative informed and able to perform his duties. A lack of letters, or incorrect information, could be problematic for either ambassador or government, as William Cecil frequently reminded Sir Thomas Smith. Both could only ensure that they sent letters frequently enough to be useful and accurate, but not so often as to amount to astronomical posting costs, and that they had used whatever security measures were available.

Normally, security measures amounted to using cipher for sensitive materials. The use of code words could provide some limited measure of success, but once known, made the decryption of coded letters easy work. Substitution ciphers offered the best form of protection that governments and ambassadors could use on a frequent basis. The cipher’s protection lasted only as long as it remained a secret. Widespread distribution and use of a single cipher increased the chances that it could be either broken from intercepted letters or otherwise betrayed. The development of multiple individual ciphers, although increasing the security of communications, made it far more difficult for government officials to correspond with each other.

Unfortunately, neither ambassador nor government could control all aspects of their communication; once the dispatch left with the courier, there was little either could do to direct its transit or protect it en route. Aside from physical measures taken with the letter, an ambassador could only hope to choose a trustworthy, efficient courier who would not sell his letters to the highest bidder.
Chapter 5: Messengers

In a 14 December 1558 letter to Philip II, the Count of Feria complained of the wholly unsatisfactory services of a courier he had employed recently to carry his letters from his post in England to the King in Brussels. As he explained,

A courier called Mendez whom I sent from here on the 25th November deserves punishment. He ought to have crossed with Lord Cobham [one of Elizabeth's commissioners sent to the peace talks at Cateau-Cambrésis], but went to sleep at Dover, and Cobham crossed without him. The other man who was sent on the 26th was more careful and crossed with Cobham.¹

As a result, Philip received Feria’s later letter before the one dispatched with Mendez on 25 November. The unexpected complications caused by an irresponsible courier who missed his ship were not Feria’s only problem in maintaining steady communications with his master. Feria continued, “The day on which the Queen [Mary Tudor] died I wished to send by land and sea, but could not as the earl of Arundel’s servant who crossed over bore the orders to close the ports. I wrote nevertheless by Don Alonso de Cordova, but he was a half an hour too late, and although he offered them large sums to let him go they refused. I wrote the letter with great fears that they would take it from him.”² In the space of a few sentences Feria confirmed his utter inability to control his correspondence once the dispatches left his hands. Whether due to obstacles as diverse as a lazy courier who missed his Channel crossing, or because of a government-ordered

¹ Count of Feria to Philip II, 14 December 1558, in CSPS 1558-1567, 7. Feria enciphered the most sensitive portions of his dispatch to protect the information in case the letters were seized.
² Ibid.
embargo on all naval traffic, even a prominent ambassador could not guarantee that his messages would arrive safely and quickly at their destination. Feria wrote his letter in the full knowledge that the courier—even one armed with large sums of money for bribes—might not be able to find passage across the Channel. Even in the case of paramount information—such as the death of Queen Mary Tudor, Philip’s wife—Feria could not be sure that the bearer carrying his letter would be able to complete the journey efficiently, if at all.

The inability to maintain reliable and efficient communications between ambassadors and governments caused unending complications for the practice of diplomacy. Even an established postal system such as that in France or Spain could not guarantee that every packet would arrive intact or in a timely manner, whether it was the courier’s fault or due to circumstances out of his control. Governments could not ensure that they would receive intelligence from their ambassadors and agents abroad in rapid fashion, or indeed at all, nor could those representatives control the arrival of their packets. Although effective communication proved vital to maintaining diplomatic relations, ultimately neither government nor ambassador could completely control the frequency and ease with which they could send and receive letters. Frequently, governments had to take action without full information, and implement policy based on limited or faulty intelligence. Representatives abroad needed to develop alternative networks for learning foreign and domestic news, because they could not count on their government keeping them informed. In many instances, ambassadors either had to defer meeting with government representatives or make decisions without direction from their government, because they had gone so long without dispatches containing their
instructions. Inevitably, this ensured that some government policies proved irrelevant, impossible to implement, or had been developed in response to incorrect information, making the task of the representative that much more difficult.

**Common postal routes and their variants**

The primary way through which governments sought to control international communications was through the use of an official postal system. By the mid-sixteenth century most Atlantic European governments had established some sort of network of posting houses and government positions to oversee them. E. John B. Allen’s *Post and Courier Service in the Diplomacy of Early Modern Europe* provides a succinct review of the structures in operation in England, France and Spain by the conclusion of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559. All three countries had some sort of postal system in place to handle their international communications, but it faltered when faced with the increasing volume of correspondence combined with the turmoil in France and the Low Countries. Increasingly frequent voyages by special couriers—although prohibitively expensive—augmented the postal system, and aided in maintaining some semblance of regular contact between representatives and their governments.

In 1559 England had by far the most unorganized postal system of the three countries. It also had the smallest distances and shortest borders to cover, which afforded the government some maneuvering room (and needed cost savings) that the other states lacked. As a result, the English maintained far fewer regular couriers and posting houses than their counterparts. In the fifteenth century, the French under Louis XI had developed

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3 Please see appendix A for maps of sixteenth-century postal routes through England, France, Italy and Spain
the first European national postal system; this survived much of the Hapsburg-Valois Wars in the early sixteenth century, only to virtually disintegrate during the Wars of Religion because of the government’s inability to maintain control throughout the country, and the constant need for funds.

The Spanish structures established by Charles V served his son well; Philip enjoyed a far more organized postal network than his royal counterparts in England or France. The early sixteenth-century system controlled by the Taxis family offered the Spanish an unprecedented regularity in service. From 1560 “ordinary” couriers passed from Madrid to Brussels once a month—each departed on the first. This later swelled to twice a month when the volume of communications increased. Diplomats stationed in Madrid used the “ordinary” couriers for their own communications frequently. Most representatives appear to have accepted the increased security risks caused by using the Spanish system as the price for maintaining more regular correspondence.

For the Spanish, using an established network offered a cheaper way of maintaining communications; each express courier carrying messages from the Netherlands to Spain cost approximately 400 ducats, and one from Spain to Sicily 360. Express messengers carried those dispatches that could not wait for the ordinary courier, and elevated government expenses. At the beginning of Philip’s reign, the central government’s use of express messengers cost, on average, almost 3,000 ducats a month; this swelled to 9,000 by 1598. Simply maintaining the postal chain between Brussels and Savoy cost nearly 1,000 ducats annually by the 1580s. Many of Philip’s ambassadors

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5 Overall costs from AGS Estado 146/189 “Lo que se a gastado en los correos”; and Le Glay and Finot, Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales à 1790. Nord, série B. 6 vols. (Lille, 1863-88), vol. 5, 322. For individual ambassadors’ expenses on couriers, see: Relación de gastos” (Don Luis de Requesens),
recorded payments to express couriers in their extraordinary expense accounts. The account submitted by Don Guerau de Spes in 1572 documented paying one express courier ninety-two pounds to carry his messages to Spain, which counted for more than fifteen percent of his total expenditures.⁶

The main routes through France—and therefore the main routes for land-based communications in and out of Spain—centered on Paris. Couriers from England crossed from Dover to Calais; those from Spain (bound for Paris, Brussels, London, or the Holy Roman Empire) entered the country either at Bayonne or from Barcelona to Perpignan and thence to Lyons. In the Elizabethan period, the main route for foreign correspondence led from London (or the nearby palaces of Greenwich, Hampton Court, Richmond and Whitehall) to Dover, while the main route north led to Berwick and the Scottish border. The routes through France paused at most of the major regional towns, including the troublesome Orléans, Avignon and Lyons. A courier’s path through Spain depended on his route through France; those crossing at Bayonne passed through Burgos when bound for Madrid; those following the road to Perpignan took the road to Barcelona and then turned west for Madrid. After the Duke of Alba’s march to the Low Countries the Spanish could use the postal network he created in order to remain in contact with the King.⁷

Most governments maintained a naval network for correspondence in addition to the land routes. At times, sending messages by sea proved to be much faster than by land, 

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⁶ “Gastos extraordinarios” of Don Guerau de Spes, March 1571-February 1572. AGS: DGT inventario 24, leg. 566, unfoliated.
⁷ Parker Grand Strategy, 48.
whether it was due to favorable winds or complications for the courier’s overland travel. Normally, when an ambassador or government sent duplicate letters, they dispatched one copy via major land routes while the other went by sea. If favorable conditions persisted, sea travel was faster than following the roads. As Don Diego Guzmán de Silva noted in a November 1567 letter to Philip, “I do not suppose that Don Francés will be unable to advise your Majesty of events more rapidly than information can reach you from here, but I have still thought well to repeat what is said here in case this letter should arrive first, as I am sending it by sea from Flanders.”8 Several ports along the French coast served as regular ports for couriers crossing the Channel. Calais, Dieppe and Boulogne were favored ports of entry, although depending on domestic conditions and the courier’s point of origin he might land at Nieuport or Sluys. Correspondence out of Spain normally left via Bilbao on the Bay of Biscay or Barcelona on the Mediterranean. Once Philip became King of Portugal in 1580, the Spanish used additional Portuguese ports such as Lisbon.

**Times in Transit**

Transit times for communications between the three countries varied wildly, ranging from as little as two days to more than two months, depending on the courier’s point of departure and destination. Ambassadors and governments were equally unable to influence the time it took for their messages to arrive, when delays were caused by matters as important as the civil wars raging in France or as trivial as a sleepy courier. Rather than spending time trying to influence the time of a packet’s transit ineffectually, both ambassadors and governments developed methods for tracking their correspondence

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8 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 15 November 1567, in *CSPS 1558-67*, 685.
and providing one another with enough information to accurately reconstruct, if not forecast, the travel times for their letters.

Little could be done to overcome the difficulties either caused by or imposed upon diplomatic couriers. In order to track communications and remain aware of any wayward letters, nearly every dispatch posted by an ambassador or government official carried information concerning the receipt of earlier correspondence and advised the recipient of other letters recently dispatched. This helpful practice allowed both parties to know whether their dispatches had arrived safely and the rough length it took for them to reach their destination. It also informed the recipient if any of his or her letters had failed to arrive intact, and served as a rudimentary security measure. When stationed in England Paul de Foix recorded the arrival of nearly every letter in his correspondence with Queen Mother Catherine de Medici. Frequently, he commented that she had failed to inform him of the arrival of several of his letters, whether by accident or design, and left this information in clear text rather than cipher.⁹ If a letter failed to provoke a response, many ambassadors sent another missive inquiring about its arrival and the recipient’s response to the information contained within the letter. Many secretaries also marked the back of letters with their arrival date and time, providing another valuable bit of information in case the recipient did not sit down immediately to pen a response to the letter.

The information contained in the first sentences, beyond providing information as to what letters had been received might also let the recipient know if the letters had arrived out of order. This phenomenon proved prevalent enough that when responding to multiple letters (common especially in cross-Continent communications), normally the

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correspondent included the dates on which the letters were authored and received. Feria’s letter of 25 November 1558 (couriered by the unfortunately sleepy Mendez) arrived in Brussels after his missive dispatched the following day; in May 1561 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton reported to Sir William Cecil that he had received Cecil’s letter of 4 May on the 14\textsuperscript{th}, but that the letter dated on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of May arrived on 12 May.\textsuperscript{10} To provide basic information and update the reader in case letters arrived out of order, many authors provided overlapping news and gossip, which proved useful especially if the missing letter had been intercepted. The practice also enabled the recipient to prepare a reply that could address most of the major issues in the event that the wayward dispatch never arrived.

It is difficult to establish “normal” rates of travel for communications overall. If a courier used established postal routes, at which posting stations would have a supply of fresh horses, in fair conditions a sender could hope that the courier might be able to travel more than 100 miles a day. During the year 1578, the Spanish ambassador in Paris received thirty-two letters from Madrid. Of them, the fastest took only seven days to arrive; half took between ten days and two weeks; the slowest took forty-nine days to arrive. Equally, the times in transit for correspondence between Madrid and the Hapsburg Imperial court proved to be difficult to predict. In the year 1564-5, the two exchanged thirty-two letters. The fastest of these made the journey in only nineteen days, yet all but five took between five and six and a half weeks. The slowest took eighty-five days to

\textsuperscript{10} Count of Feria to Philip II, 7 December 1558, in \textit{CSPS 1558-67}, 7; Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Sir William Cecil, 16 May 1561, in \textit{CSPF 1561-2}, 112.
arrive. Clearly, when travel times could vary from less than three weeks to more than twelve, there was little hope of either regulating or predicting when mail might arrive. As a rule, though, the variations in time grew smaller as the destinations grew closer.

In some instances travel by sea could be the fastest route available, if the courier could find a ship departing and leave the port without any difficulties. However, crossing a body of water could increase the time of his travel dramatically because of political or logistical problems. This proved true especially when dealing with cross-Channel communications, whether the courier needed to depart from a port in Normandy or one in England. As Guzmán de Silva noted in a letter to Philip II, “He [the courier] was delayed, as the passage from Calais is not always easy, as your Majesty knows.”13 Largely, having access to passage across the Channel determined the time a letter would take to make the journey; if a courier was lucky enough to find a vessel leaving immediately, he could continue without pause. Feria’s second courier in November 1558 arrived to find a departing ship immediately, and so left before the first courier embarked. At times couriers waited more than a week to find passage across the Channel, either because of unfavorable weather, closed ports, or issues with their passports.

In addition to their parcels, couriers were supposed to carry passports giving them permission to cross international boundaries.14 In times of plague and disease, they were
also expected to carry health certificates guaranteeing that they came from a place that was healthy, in order to help prevent the spread of the plague, smallpox and other diseases. While possession of a passport may have afforded some semblance of legitimacy, it was a double edged sword. The passport might shelter a courier from the worst punishments (often imprisonment or death, on the grounds that they had entered the country illegally) but also indicated official protection of his dispatches. It was much more difficult for a government to deny knowledge of the dispatches when they were protected by official passport. Regardless of government intentions, delaying a passport could utterly stall communication between a representative and government. The courier could not legally leave without the document, and if he was caught traveling without one could be subject to harsh penalties.

One of the quickest and easiest ways for a government to disrupt communications between an embassy and its home government was to deny or delay the issue of a passport. In 1570, the French stopped the English courier Harcourt at the city of Amiens, on his way to Calais to depart for Dover; a later dispatch read that Harcourt’s “stay at Amiens is partly done in revenge of the discourtesy the French ambassador’s secretary received at Dover, his money being there taken from him.”\textsuperscript{15} In 1580 a Spanish courier transporting letters from London to Madrid for the Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza was delayed by the issue of his passport, on the grounds that it needed to be signed by three Privy Councilors. The courier was later stopped by royal officials at the

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\textsuperscript{15} CSPF 1569-71, 95.
port of Dover on the grounds that his passport now required six signatures rather than the earlier three.16

When armed with the proper documentation and ready passage across the Channel, couriers between England and the Continent could travel remarkably fast. Letters from England to France or the Low Countries could be sent from London and reach Brussels or Paris in two days, depending on the courier; at other times it might take more than two weeks. In April 1559, the Count of Feria reported that Philip’s courier from Brussels, dispatched on 5 April, arrived on the 7th—the same day as the English courier Mason and another courier from Philip’s commissioners arrived with the news of the conclusion of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis.17 In April 1561 Sir William Cecil’s letter to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton couriered by Francisco Thomas (one of the Queen’s regular couriers) arrived in just three days.18 Given that the journey between London and Paris (when following the postal route) is approximately 285 miles, the courier maintained a speed of slightly less than 100 miles a day. He must have found a departing ship immediately upon arriving in Calais in order to travel at that rate. On 12 August 1581 Don Bernardino de Mendoza gave Philip specific information concerning Sir Francis Walsingham’s interview with Catherine de Medici that had been obtained from a letter Walsingham wrote only two days before, and had been written “in the night.”19 The letter must have taken a maximum of two days to travel from Paris to the court, and Burghley had noted on the reverse of his letter from Walsingham (sent in the same

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16 Allen, 69.
17 the Count of Feria to Philip II, 11 April 1559, in CSPS 1558-1567, 48.
18 Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Sir William Cecil, 31 March 1561, in CSPF 1561-2, 45.
19 Sir Francis Walsingham to Queen Elizabeth, 10 August 1581; See CSPF 1581, 287-8; Dudley Digges, A Compleat Ambassador, p. 387-8 for full text. The complete transcript in Digges’s edition is misdated as 13 August 1581. See chapter 3, “Documents as Sources,” for more information.
packet) that the dispatches had come “by a common post.”

As Mendoza stayed in London while the court lodged at Greenwich, his source must have immediately seen the letter and reported on its contents. The common post must have operated at a very rapid rate; the letter traveled the nearly 300-mile journey from Paris to Greenwich at a speed of nearly 150 miles a day.

When not dispatched with an express courier, however, communications between England and the Continent could easily take more than a week. On 14 April 1559 Philip reported to Feria that he had received Feria’s letter of 4 April that morning, which had been sent by way of Antwerp. Feria had included it with a departing merchant in an effort to save money on posting costs, which resulted in a far longer time in transit. A June 1560 letter from Margaret of Parma in Brussels to Alvaro de la Quadra in London took eleven days to arrive. In March 1561 Sir William Cecil’s letter to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton safely reached Throckmorton’s hands after a week. On 13 October 1565, Don Diego Guzmán de Silva noted in a letter to Philip II that “The French Ambassador yesterday received letters from his King, but the courier must have loitered, as they are dated the 27th ultimo.” The letters from Charles to Paul de Foix tarried for fifteen days; the time traveled per day amounted to less than twenty miles a day!

Even dispatches sent express relating to matters of paramount importance could take an inexplicably long time to arrive. A letter from King Charles IX to his ambassador Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon dated 19 February 1571 complained that

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20 Sir Francis Walsingham to Lord Burghley, 10 August 1581, in CSPF 1581-2, 287.
21 Philip II to the Count of Feria, 14 April 1559, in CSPS 1558-1567, 54.
22 Alvaro de la Quadra to Margaret of Parma, 17 June 1560, in CSPS 1558-1567, 160.
23 Sir William Cecil to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 20 April 1561, in CSPF 1561-2 69.
24 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 13 October 1565, in CSPS 1558-1567, 489.
Charles “had received a packet of yours, dated the last day of last month, that has
remained at the posts for a long time, and on the same day, the Sr de Vassal also arrived
with your dispatch of the sixth of this month, and today arrived yours of the 12th.” A
travel time of a week was lengthy but not extraordinary, but Charles’s remark may have
been a way to inform la Mothe-Fénélon that he would do better to employ his trusted
servant (and later secretary) Vassal rather than the unnamed courier. In his letter of 8
February Charles noted that he had responded to la Mothe-Fénélon’s dispatch of 23
January, which had only arrived on 6 February. In his letter of 8 February Charles noted
that he had responded to la Mothe-Fénélon’s dispatch of 23 January, which had only
arrived on 6 February. One of Fénélon’s letters to Catherine de Medici acknowledged
receipt of Catherine’s letter “written by her hand, sent by Sieur de Sabran,” of 28
February on 6 March. The correspondence between Fénélon, Catherine and Charles
concerned the developing marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Catherine’s son
Henry, Duke of Anjou, and took a high priority. The French needed to know what letters
had arrived, and if the instructions contained within were still relevant.

English communications in February-March 1571 took far less time than that for
the French. In a 5 March 1571 letter to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, writing from the
court, to Sir Francis Walsingham in Paris acknowledged receiving Leicester’s letter of
the 14th on the 16th of the last month. Much of Walsingham’s other correspondence took
a week at most to travel between the two countries, and most letters arrived in large

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25 King Charles IX to la Mothe-Fénélon, 19 February 1571, in CDMF vol. 7, 185.
26 Same to the same, 8 February 1571, in CDMF vol. 7, 180.
27 Same to the same, 8 February 1571, in CDMF vol. 7, 180.
28 Bertrand de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon to Catherine de Medici, 6 March 1571, in CDMF vol. 10-11.
For Catherine’s letter to Mothe-Fénélon, see CDMF vol. 7, p. 183.
29 Sir Francis Walsingham to Robert Dudley, 5 March 1571, in Digges, 48
packets. Neither Walsingham nor his correspondents complained of letters arriving out of order or noted that some dispatches had failed to arrive, so we can conclude that the postal system must have been operating at a fairly reasonable and steady rate. While the English and French did not choose to share posting costs, it might have been a good alternative for la Mothe-Fénélon, given that he had such trouble in sending his dispatches to the King.

Usually, communications between England and Scotland traveled quickly, especially given that the couriers did not have to cross any large bodies of water, and the English ensured that the main postal route was well maintained. Letters could travel the distance in as little as three days, although maintaining a more moderate pace amounted to five or six days in transit. A 25 March 1561 letter from Lord Grey (then in Scotland) to Sir William Cecil is marked with valuable information; it records that the courier left Berwick at 1:00 pm on 25 March. He arrived in Tuxford at 6:00 am on 28 March, at Newark at 9:00 am also on 28 March, and at Stamford at 3:00 pm that afternoon.30 As the Stamford posting house is roughly 100 miles from London, it is safe to assume that the letter arrived by 30 March at the latest.

Letters traveling between Spain and England could take more than a month, and often did. They had to pass either by sea or across France, and each choice carried some sort of risk. With favorable winds and fair seas, sending a packet by sea could prove much faster than overland travel. Sending a letter by sea also lessened the chances that the courier could be intercepted and relieved of his dispatches. A naval route could increase the opportunities for interception, however, unless the sender was willing to wait

for a ship that he could trust. As Don Bernardino de Mendoza remarked in a letter to Philip, “ships sailing for Spain are rare, and even then, unless some Spaniard is going in them, or other very trustworthy person, I dare not. Excepting in the case of special messengers, which are costly, I am obliged to depend on the letters being forwarded from Paris.”\(^{31}\) Certainly, events warranted Mendoza’s caution, given that he authored this letter on the very date that the English agent wrote giving specific details of his other methods of transporting dispatches.\(^{32}\)

In times of adverse weather conditions, however, sending packets by sea could take much longer than overland. Most correspondence traveled overland, but unfortunately, given the tumultuous situation throughout much of the country, a courier had to be very careful when traveling along the major postal routes. Overland travel offered the potential to be much cheaper, because if the courier traveled through France he could carry packets for the ambassador stationed in that country, or potentially share the posting costs with another country’s ambassador. In many instances, letters traveled to Paris by one courier, reached the ambassador stationed in Paris, and after a delay might be transferred to a different courier with additional parcels to complete the journey. For routine traffic, this method proved to be less expensive and fairly reliable. If the letter contained particularly urgent, sensitive or vital information, both the English and Spanish often sent duplicates of their letters—one by each route.

Because of multiple conditions out of the courier’s control, communications between England and Spain proved to be the most problematic to maintain. At times letters might make the journey in less than a month; an 11 October 1561 letter sent from

\(^{31}\) Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 7 November 1581, in CSPS 1580-6, 209.

\(^{32}\) See page 000-0 below.
London by Alvaro de la Quadra was marked as being received in Madrid on 3 November. On 10 November 1565, Guzmán de Silva reported from London that Philip’s letter of October 24, sent from Madrid, had arrived on 6 November—the courier took only thirteen days! Unfortunately, Guzmán does not note whether the courier traveled through France or took a ship to England. In other instances letters might take more than two months. On 25 September 1565, Philip wrote to Guzmán that he had received all letters up to that dispatched on 3 September, but in his 20 October 1565 letter Philip noted that he had not received any letters since—even though Guzmán had sent an additional six dispatches. On 18 December 1568 Don Guerau de Spes noted that he had just received Philip’s letters of the 4th, 14th, and 15th of October on 17 December—a lag of more than two months.

In order to take sea passage with a letter, the courier first had to cross the country to the coast in order to reach a ship headed in the right direction. For couriers out of England, this proved relatively easy; the main post route led to Dover and was well staffed with post horses. For correspondence out of Spain, the journey to reach the coast could take as little as two or three days, or as much as two weeks. Francisco Pereira often managed to send letters to Lisbon in less than a week, although a reply rarely arrived less than a month after he dispatched his letter. English ambassador Sir Thomas Chaloner maintained a steady correspondence with John Cuerton, an English merchant living in Bilbao on the coast of the Bay of Biscay. His letters normally took at least four days,

33 Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 11 October 1561. AGS: Estado, leg. 8340, f. 147.
34 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 10 November 1565, in CSPS 1558-1567, 506.
35 Philip II to Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, 25 September 1565, in CSPS 1558-1567, 482; Philip II to Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, 20 October 1565, in CSPS 1558-1567, 490.
36 Don Guerau de Spes to Philip II, 18 December 1568, in CSPS 1568-79, 89.
although a week was not uncommon. In June 1562, Cuerton sent Chaloner two letters; one on the fifth and another two days later. Chaloner endorsed the latter message as received on 12 June, but did not take receipt of the first letter from Cuerton until the 17th of June.37

Transit times for letters between France and Spain varied. In good weather and peaceful conditions, a courier might make the 800-mile journey in a week; this meant he traveled at an impressive speed of 115 miles per day.38 This, of course, was a remarkable rate of travel that was duplicated only rarely. A normal post time would often vary from ten days to two weeks, meaning that the courier traveled at a speed of fifty-five to eighty miles a day. A courier who traveled at a speed of 100 miles a day made good progress with his letters. Depending on a variety of conditions, a courier’s rate of travel could vary from less than twenty miles a day to as high as 150 miles per day.39 In March 1566 one of Philip’s couriers completed the journey from Madrid to Brussels in fifteen days.40 In times of civil war, bad weather or other unfavorable circumstances, letters might take a month.

Complications in Communication

The unpredictability of communications could be blamed on matters as diverse as the weather, war, irresponsible couriers, letter interception, government machinations, or sheer chance. The theoretical protections offered by medieval diplomatic custom did not protect an ambassador’s correspondence from all molestation, nor did it ensure that the

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37 John Cuerton to Sir Thomas Chaloner, 5 June 1562, in CSPF 1562, 74; John Cuerton to Sir Thomas Chaloner, 7 June 1562, in CSPF 1562, 74.
38 Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay sent Philip a letter on 19 September 1559. It was endorsed as being received on 26 September. Philip replied on 11 October. AGS: Estado, leg. 8340, f. 99.
39 Very few couriers ever traveled at this speed, however; 100 miles per day was considered good progress.
40 Allen, 39.
host government would not interfere with a courier’s progress. Even with a structured
system (such as that under Philip) neither government nor ambassador could guarantee
that their letters would arrive in a timely manner—indeed, they could hardly venture a
guess concerning the time in transit because of the massive number of factors involved in
the courier’s journey.

Part of the instability can be blamed on decisions made by both ambassadors and
governments. Although most correspondence passed through established communications
corridors, both parties often used alternate channels. This practice, while likely increasing
the time in transit (a courier could not count on fresh post horses, for example), did afford
the potential to escape undetected. Indeed, the need to maintain a covert correspondence
could trump all concerns, including that of speed. English couriers avoided certain towns
in Normandy during the Wars of Religion; the English ambassadors Sir Nicholas
Throckmorton and Henry Cobham ordered their servants (working as couriers) to eschew
any routes leading them to Calais and Boulogne for fear that they would be attacked.41
When in July 1570 the Queen of Navarre forwarded intercepted packets to Elizabeth, she
sent them through a high-ranking member of her court, who avoided all the normal post
routes.42

In February 1582 Don Bernardino de Mendoza informed Philip that he sought a
way of funneling his Scottish correspondence through France. He wrote, “the Borders are
so closely watched that it will be difficult for me to keep up communications with
Scotland. If the letters come in plain writing some of these folks will certainly take them
and the affair will be discovered, whereas, if they are in cipher, the bearer is in danger of

41Sir Henry Cobham to Sir Francis Walsingham, 21 August 1582, in CSPF 1582, 262-3.
42See chapter 3.
losing his life for the offence of carrying them. For that reason I am trying to find a way for my letters to go through France."^43 Clearly, such a practice increased the time it took for letters to pass between Mendoza and his correspondents, but he could divine no other way of allowing it to pass unmolested.

Unfortunately, the ambassador’s security issues went far beyond his letters bound for Scotland. Mendoza employed several more creative methods to protect his correspondence, but they were discovered by the English. In November 1581 an English agent wrote to a Privy Councilor describing the

the mene I have to decipher the sp: ambassadors actions by an ynstrument of his owne, who allso can advrtyys the secrett menes that he conveyes into the Lowe contryes his lres [letters] of practices, which somtymes is by a woman & somtymes by others, of whose departures we shalbe advertised att the ynstant, & in whatt certayn place abowtt the sayd messengers, their lres be placed, which is somtymes conveyed into a plumett of lede, hangyng by a stryng from the womans waste next to her skyn downstairs & somtymes in the man messengers pomell of his sword, & his scawbord, which devises may be mett with ether here, or for more clener handlyng att donkerk or flusshyng where they arryve, which may serve our Tornes & the prince of Orenge al.so. The sayd partye will bryng me al.so the first packett of lres that comes to his hands for the ambassador, without suspycyon or knowlege."^44

By recommending that the letters be intercepted in Dutch ports, the English agent hoped to hide the fact that his “ynstrument”—likely a member of the ambassador’s household—would inform him when the ambassador sent secret letters to the Low Countries, so that “her majestie sholld knowe hym throwly & all his secretts: & whatt soever practis or practiser, that he & others have.”^45

Occasionally, in times of international strife ambassadors sought to “hide” their correspondence with that of another ambassador. The Spanish in England tried this tactic

^43 Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 9 February 1582, in CSPS 1580-86, 293.
^45 Ibid.
several different times with varying rates of success. During his first spell under house arrest in England in 1569, Don Guerau de Spes asked Philip and the Duke of Alba to send their correspondence in packets bound for la Mothe-Fénélon in England. The English had already established that they intended to intercept and read anything sent or received by Spes, so there could be no hope of keeping any messages confidential. Spes could hardly hope to provide Philip and Alba with his frank (and often unfavorable) assessments if he knew they would be read by the Privy Council; he could also not hope to get the latest news if those letters landed in English hands before his. The practice seems to have enjoyed a measure of success; the English, partly out of the intention of cultivating a closer relationship with the French, hesitated to interfere with their ambassador’s correspondence.46

During his time in England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza also sent his letters to his counterpart in France, addressed with fake names, in order to avoid interception by the English government. When Mendoza moved to France after his expulsion from England in 1584, he continued with a practice similar to Spes’s in order to maintain communications with his networks of Catholic recusants in England. His solution involved the willing cooperation of the French ambassador, Claude de l’Aubespine, son of Catherine de Medici’s secretary of the same name. In a September 1586 letter to Philip, Mendoza explained the creation of this new network at length:

In order to have a safer channel for my correspondence with England I had him [de l’Aubespine] approached secretly by religious persons and told how great would be the services he would render to the cause of God if he permitted letters and money from Catholics here to pass under cover of his dispatches. He

46 After the debacle in 1562-3 with the French ambassador Paul de Foix, in which the ambassador suspected that many of his letters were being intercepted, the English appear to have avoided tampering with the French couriers except in extreme circumstances.
willingly consented to this and has punctually fulfilled it without opening a single letter. The secretary whom he has sent here is the one who supposedly does it, so that the ambassador will not be personally involved.\footnote{Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 27 September 1586. AGS, Estado K, legajo 1564, f. 166, quoted in Jensen, \textit{Diplomacy and Dogmatism}, 105.}

Mendoza successfully played on the ambassador’s sympathies for English Catholics and the plight of Mary Stuart in order to use him to funnel money and news to recusants in the country. This task would have proved to be far more difficult without de l’Aubespine’s cooperation, and Mendoza took careful precautions to ensure that should the network be discovered, the French ambassador could claim total ignorance.

In many instances the delays proved not to be the fault of the courier, but rather due to factors outside his control. In November and December 1558, some of the Count of Feria’s letters had been prevented from reaching the King because the English had closed the ports.\footnote{Count of Feria to Philip II, 14 December 1558, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 7.} In 1566 another of Philip’s unfortunate couriers, armed with important letters for one of Philip’s admirals, vainly scoured the Italian coast, searching for the Spanish fleet. The letters failed to arrive in time for the plans contained within— instructions about an attack to be launched on Algeria—to be executed.\footnote{Parker, \textit{Grand Strategy}, 397, note 29.} In January 1568, Philip II closed all postal stations to control the flow of news about the confinement of his son; similarly, in 1587, the English closed all the ports to prevent the news of the pending raid on Cadiz from leaking.

In part, interfering with a courier’s journey proved to be an effective means for governments to disrupt the communications of their neighbors. In April 1582 Don Bernardino wrote to Philip II with a similar problem, although in this instance the fault for the delay in communications lay with the English rather than the courier. He tried to
send Philip a message informing him of the assassination of the Prince of Orange, but his courier encountered difficulties leaving England. As Mendoza explained, he tried to send his dispatch through France with a duplicate by sea, but “the ports are so closely watched that no foreigner, even though he have a passport, is allowed to leave.”50 When he could not get passage across the Channel, the courier gave the dispatch to a sailor to take it to Calais in the hopes it would continue along its way. Mendoza’s duplicate, which he sent by sea, also encountered difficulties: “although the weather was so fine it [the dispatch] could have reached Lisbon in six days, was stopped at Plymouth.”51 The English government had stopped the ship before it could leave the Channel and prevented Mendoza’s letter from continuing on its journey.

Other couriers might be delayed because of the complications caused by crossing a country at war. The tumults of the French Wars of Religion impacted communications passing through France, whether they were intercepted by Huguenot rebels or members of the royal government. Many ambassadors could not depend on any letters transiting the country safely; at times it became more common for packets to be intercepted than to arrive securely at their destination. When in 1562 Philip’s ambassador Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay learned that his packets sent via Orléans had inevitably been intercepted, he chose to send them through Lyons rather than continuing to hope that Queen Mother Catherine de Medici (who had insisted couriers pass through Orléans) would remedy the situation. When he began the march from Milan to Brussels, the Duke of Alba established his own postal route that skirted around France, for use when the civil war inevitably made passage through the country unsafe or unreliable. Several English couriers were

50 Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 1 April 1582, in CSPS 1580-86, 326.
51 Ibid.
intercepted or otherwise delayed by royal officials on the suspicion that they were engaging in discussions with prominent Huguenot leaders.

Unfortunately for many ambassadors, the necessity of maintaining communications required relying on the services of potentially irresponsible couriers. Feria’s lamentation told the tale of the unlucky Mendez, whose failings came to the attention of the King himself. In a 27 January 1579 letter to Philip’s secretary Don Gabriel de Zayas, Don Bernardino de Mendoza remarked on his seeming inability to keep up to date with the latest news because of a dearth in letters from nearly anyone in a place to have the necessary intelligence. Even though Philip had ordered much of his correspondence to Mendoza to pass through France in an attempt to maintain some sort of regularity, Mendoza still had difficulties getting his letters on a timely basis. Although Philip had authorized Juan de Vargas (Mendoza’s counterpart in France) to use the services of an express courier if necessary, in many instances Mendoza still could not receive the King’s letters in a speedy fashion. As Mendoza explained in his letter to Zayas,

It looks as if every sheet of paper that passes through Juan de Vargas’s hands for me must be buried, seeing the long delay in forwarding them. Some time ago you wrote me that you had sent a letter from the King for me to Juan de Vargas…I could not find out who brought the letter, but I learnt that it was wandering about from one tavern to another in London for two days whilst its bearer was getting drink on the strength of the postage, which was six crowns. Again on the 11th November, Vargas wrote saying he had a packet for me, which had been delayed on the road, but which he would forward at once by an express, as I asked. I learn from the man who provided the money for his journey, that the express was not dispatched until the 16th.52

Such was the nature of early modern communications, that a courier, who spent his fee getting drunk in London taverns, could halt the communication of kings. Unfortunately

52 Bernardino de Mendoza to Gabriel de Zayas, 27 January 1579, in CSPS 1568-79, 639-640.
for Mendoza, the cover letter from Vargas did not detail the reasons why the second courier had not been dispatched immediately with a letter that the ambassador deemed important enough to send express. In times of good weather, easy passage and prompt replies, one could send a letter from London and receive a response from France in less time than the courier took to leave!

Of course, the practice of sharing posts presented a very real risk that one’s letters might be opened, but most governments and ambassadors seemed to have accepted that risk in light of the pressing need to send frequent dispatches without incurring the costs of using express couriers. In February 1562 Sir Thomas Chaloner remarked in a letter to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton that although he had begun his present dispatch on 15 January, he had to wait for a courier until 7 February. According to his note, “these two months no courier has been dispatched till now for Flanders,” which put a damper on his ability to send regular missives north for either Throckmorton or his government.53 Unfortunately for Chaloner, Philip (or his secretaries) had failed to inform the ambassador of several couriers who traveled to Paris or Brussels.

Philip wrote to his ambassador Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay on 28 November 1561, 21 December 1561, 27 January 1562, and 9 February 1562. Unfortunately for Chantonnay’s counterpart in England, Alvaro de la Quadra, Philip failed to include letters bound for London even though the additional posting costs would have been minimal.54 In his letter of 15 December 1561, Chantonnay reported receiving the November letter,

53 Sir Thomas Chaloner to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 15 January 1562, in CSPF 1561-2, 494.
54 See 000-0 and 000-0 for more information concerning the rates of correspondence between Philip and his representatives in London compared with that for his ambassadors in Paris.
so Philip had not held back his dispatches for two months. So Philip also sent a packet to Brussels on 9 February 1562. Although in his 21 December 1561 dispatch Chantonnay remarked that he had delayed sending his letters of 10 and 15 December in expectation of the arrival of the ordinary courier bound for Flanders, but when the said courier did not arrive, he chose to send his letters with a merchant. He also noted that he had received Philip’s letters, although Chantonnay did not mention the dates of these directives. In his letter of 29 December, Chantonnay noted that he had sent his dispatch of 23 December with the ordinary courier on the Flanders route. In her letter of 17 January 1562, Regent Margaret of Parma wrote that she had written to Philip in December by the ordinary courier who had passed through Brussels. Clearly, although the ordinary courier had not quite kept to his regular schedule, the King had kept up communications with both Chantonnay and Margaret of Parma. Chantonnay sent several letters during the two-month period and received four; although Philip did not send any packets to Margaret, she sent letters to him via the ordinary courier. Clearly, either by accident or design, the Spanish somehow failed to inform Chaloner that he could have sent several letters at least to Paris; even if the ordinary courier had not traveled as far as Flanders, Chaloner could have included his dispatches with letters for Throckmorton, and so maintained communication with his government.

**Impact on diplomatic practices**

The undeniable inability to develop a fully reliable postal network forced both governments and ambassadors to develop other methods of performing vital tasks such as

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55 See the correspondence in NCF vol 3.
57 Same to the same, 29 December 1561, in NCF vol. 3, 213.

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policy development and information acquisition. Often, both parties had to make essential decisions without timely intelligence, or based on faulty information. Occasionally ambassadors, out of a desire to provide as much information as they could, sent incorrect intelligence that they had not verified, which in turn caused complications for the government when it used the flawed information to form policy initiatives. Neither party could forestall these tasks indefinitely in the hopes that a letter bearing vital news might arrive and so enable them to make informed decisions. When faced with these difficulties, both governments and ambassadors had to cope as best as they could by using whatever resources came to hand.

For ambassadors, the dearth of directives from their government meant two key things: they lacked any sort of news, foreign or domestic, from their home; and they had no instructions providing direction for their interactions with the host government. Many ambassadors found the former predicament easier to overcome than the latter; an astute ambassador set about developing his own intelligence networks from the day he arrived to take up his post, and could gather enough news and information from other sources to remain reasonably informed. An effective ambassador also knew that he could not rely on only one source of information, whether it was a contact at court or a correspondent from home.58 Both parties recognized the importance of cultivating contacts at the host court, not only for intelligence purposes. In many instances, a departing ambassador even received instructions from his government ordering him to share any information about

58 The lamentations expressed by Fourquevaux in January 1568 (see page 000-0 above) reflect the potential problems of relying too heavily on one source.
his intelligence sources with his successor in order to smooth the transition.\textsuperscript{59} Many ambassadors also maintained a private correspondence with their friends and patrons at home. This could provide additional information and general news of events, but did not replace the official instructions an ambassador could present to his host monarch or use to guide his interactions with courtiers and councilors.

The latter problem proved far more difficult, as while an ambassador could expect limited latitude from his monarch in his dealings with the host government, he could not initiate and implement policy himself. Ambassadors had few options when faced with a shortage of messages indicating their governments’ wishes, especially in times of tense relations or outright crisis with the host government. They could avoid interactions with the monarch, councilors and courtiers; they could meet with the monarch and explain about the lack of directions (especially when host-government directed interference was the prime suspect in engineering the break in communications); or they could use deliberately vague language in any meeting, hoping not to contradict any instructions that might arrive eventually. None of the options proved entirely satisfactory, nor could ambassadors cope with all situations that might arise. Most prudent ambassadors halted short of initiating policy decisions independently of their government, for such actions could incur royal wrath or cause outright war.

Avoiding government officials provided limited coverage for an uninformed ambassador, especially when a monarch or high courtier sought to meet with that diplomat. The English ambassadors to France, Sir Thomas Smith and Sir Nicholas

\textsuperscript{59} See Catherine de Medici’s instructions for Sebastien de l’Aubespine concerning his replacement Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint Sulpice, and those from Philip II for Don Guerau de Spes ordering him to discuss these matters with Don Diego Guzmán de Silva.
Throckmorton, both tried to evade audiences with Catherine de Medici in the months leading to the First War of Religion, because they could not offer any sort of valid explanation for their government’s support of the Huguenots. After Throckmorton joined with the Huguenot commanders in August 1562, poor Smith was left to try to explain (without any sort of satisfactory instructions from his government) why Throckmorton had remained with the Huguenots and appeared to serve as the English envoy to their leadership, when he did not even have permission to be in the country. At times, this might prove downright embarrassing for the envoy, as it did for the Florentine representative in 1576 when the Spanish court received word that two members of the Medici family had executed their wives on the premise of adultery. As both women belonged to the family of the Duke of Alba, the ambassador clearly could not meet with the Duke without some sort of explanation, which unhappily took more than a month to arrive. The unfortunate diplomat was reduced to hiding whenever he saw Alba or another member of the Toledo family in the royal palace.\textsuperscript{60} In 1580, Don Bernardino reported to Philip that he avoided a meeting with Elizabeth deliberately until he had received specific instructions concerning how Philip wanted him to react to the news of Sir Francis Drake’s recent predations against Spanish shipping.\textsuperscript{61}

When faced with a lack of instructions from his government, an ambassador might try to use deliberately vague or inconclusive language in conversation with councilors or the monarch, in order to maintain some rapport but avoid any specific commitment. In April 1561 Alvaro de la Quadra confirmed that he had used such a tactic in his dealings with members of Elizabeth's Privy Council. The nearly two-month lag in

\textsuperscript{60} Parker, \textit{Grand Strategy}, 49.

\textsuperscript{61} Don Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, 23 October 1580, in \textit{CSPS 1580-1586}, 62.
communications meant that Philip could not send instructions relating to recent developments in Quadra’s interactions with Sir Henry Sidney. As Quadra explained, “I therefore replied somewhat dryly and distantly to give me time to advise your Majesty and beg instructions.” Unfortunately, such a tactic only worked when instructions proved to be late in coming rather than failing to arrive. As Quadra explained in a previous letter, he was forced to act when he did not receive any instructions from Philip. The ambassador had to control the tone and content of his encounters with members of the host government; he could not rely on letters that might never come to provide such specific instructions. Smith tried similar tactics without success, when forced into an uncomfortable audience with Catherine de Medici in the fall of 1562.

Ambassadors who acted without full information or explicit instructions could incur royal displeasure, or foment an international crisis. When on 21 December 1568 Don Guerau de Spes sent an urgent letter to the Duke of Alba in response to the storm in Anglo-Spanish relations rapidly brewing over the uncertain fate of the treasure aboard several Spanish ships that had taken refuge in English ports, he provoked an international crisis. In the letter, Spes informed Alba that the English had removed the gold (funds that Philip had borrowed from Genoese bankers and were bound for Alba in the Low Countries) against the will of the ships’ captains. Spes believed the English intended to keep the gold that arrived in English ports (Devon, Cornwall, and Southampton) out of sheer desperation. The ships, which were part of a larger convoy, intended to depart as soon as they could continue their journey to Antwerp safely. The English insisted that the

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62 In his letter of 12 April 1561 Quadra thanked Philip for acknowledging receipt of all of Quadra’s letters up to the 22nd of January. Philip’s letter arrived on 17 March. Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, 12 April 1561, in CSPS 1558-1567, 191.
63 Ibid.
treasure should be moved to land for protection. An earlier letter from Alba to Spes dated 15 December apparently sought Spes’s opinion on Alba’s response to the perceived threat. In his response on the 21st, Spes recommended that “it is my opinion that all English ships and merchandise should be at once seized in the States, and particularly in Antwerp, news of it being also swiftly sent to Spain as there are valuable English ships at Bilbao and Laredo.”

Spes acted without confirmation of his suppositions, or any sort of royal directions. His worst mistake, perhaps, was to act precipitately, before he had audience with the Queen to discuss the matter. Indeed, acting on Spes’s recommendations, Alba ordered the confiscation of all English ships and property in the Low Countries. The proclamation was issued on the same day as Spes had his meeting with Elizabeth. This gave the English an incredible advantage in the moral dimension of the crisis; they claimed that the Spanish had escalated matters preemptively, without waiting for the English response.

Unfortunately for Spes, this crisis represented merely one of his misadventures while serving as Philip’s ambassador. Less than eight months after the debacle, Spes again went beyond the scope of his instructions and acted preemptively. As the Duke of Alba wrote to Philip, “I have written several times to Don Guerau to suspend negotiations, as I plainly see that they are tricking him, so as to get all they can out of him, then to say they have negotiated without authority.” Alba continued, “Don Guerau is zealous in your Majesty’s service, but as he is inexperienced, he allows himself to be led away, and is ruining the negotiation. I earnestly wish he had not said that there was a

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64 Don Guerau de Spes to the Duke of Alba, 21 December 1568, in CSPS 1568-79, 90.
65 The Duke of Alba to Philip II, 8 August 1569, in CSPS 1568-79, 186.
letter from your Majesty, or gone beyond my instructions, but he will not do as I tell him.”66 Unfortunately for the Spanish, Don Guerau apparently did not know when to pretend he had no instructions, or how to dissemble when faced with pressure from the English. Consequently, even though Alba instructed him not to reveal more than was necessary, Don Guerau allowed both his inexperience and fiery temperament to lead him astray.

For governments, there were limited solutions for the problems posed by the inability to regulate a postal service. All three governments maintained multiple diplomats in several different countries, but a variety of factors could adversely impact the ambassador’s ability to send dispatches at any given time, or interfere with the courier’s progress. Without any way of knowing if there were incoming messages carrying vital intelligence, governments could only rely on what intelligence they possessed at that moment, rather than waiting to see what information fresh reports might bring. Both governments and monarchs realized they could not remain wholly dependent on the intelligence gathered through their ambassadors, and accordingly sought out new methods of learning information.

Many governments used foreign ambassadors at their court as a source of news when their networks failed to provide intelligence or needed verification of their independent reports. Hopefully, an ambassador could at least provide an indication of his government’s policy and his monarch’s inclinations on any given issue, or would agree to send a dispatch requesting directions for negotiation. In many instances, monarchs instructed ambassadors to share intelligence as a gesture of good faith or as a means of

66 Ibid.
gauging any reaction. An ambassador who maintained his own network of correspondence (as did most) might also have received reports from one of his counterparts stationed in a different country. As the monarch’s personal representative, an ambassador could conceivably have access to intelligence of the highest levels. When properly cultivated, an ambassador might prove willing to share some of that information with the host government.

This need became especially pressing in a time when a government lacked official representation at a neighbor’s court, whether it was due to the death of the former representative, a delayed replacement, or an ambassador’s expulsion or recall. In these instances, monarchs lacked multiple senses: an ambassador functioned as the monarch’s proverbial eyes and ears, observing all that happened at the host court, and as the monarch’s voice to maintain a dialogue at that court. Months or years could pass before an ambassador was replaced, even in instances in which this did not indicate a definitive break in diplomatic relations. The French imprisonment of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton in 1562 and the subsequent English confinement of Paul de Foix did not cause a break in Anglo-French relations; the arrest of Don Guerau de Spes did not result in the final severing of diplomatic ties between the English and Spanish in 1569; nor did the fact that Philip took more than a year to replace his ambassador when Alvaro de la Quadra died in England in July 1563. This also did not prevent the parties from conducting negotiations in a third location. The lopsided representation meant that the ambassador exchanged between the two countries became the primary means through which they could communicate. Governments could, and did, send messages through intermediaries stationed in different countries, but this process could prove exceedingly slow. It also
prevented the monarch or councilors from directly interacting with the ambassador; many preferred to do so in extremely sensitive situations, rather than entrusting such negotiations to an ambassador or other representative.

**Conclusion**

Medieval and early modern governments recognized the need for an established postal network and reacted accordingly. Unfortunately for mid-sixteenth century monarchs, these systems proved unable to cope with the challenges of civil war disrupting many of the main routes, and the massive increase in the volume of dispatches, letters and other communications. When combined with the wide variety of difficulties a courier might face on any journey, this guaranteed that no one could definitively control the postal network. Neither governments nor ambassadors could dictate when their dispatches would arrive and when they would receive letters from home. Even the correspondence of kings could be disrupted by a lazy or drunk courier who failed to perform his duties in a timely manner. In other instances, the obstacles imposed might be a result of civil war or inclement weather. Regardless of the cause, this inability to control communications added another element of instability into the process of early modern international negotiations. Ambassadors could not know when or if they might receive directives from their government, while those governments had to develop policy without potentially vital knowledge from their representatives. Both parties had to develop different means for countering this instability, and did so by using other sources of intelligence.
In a May 1566 dispatch to the Doge and Senate of Venice, Marc’ Antonio Barbaro, the Venetian ambassador to France, observed that

In Flanders the difficulties about religion continue, and are caused by the Inquisition. There is very great danger that if the Inquisition be not removed, some serious disorder may ensue, for the insurgents are many in number, and are favoured by important personages, and have already commenced giving signs of their temerity, by breaking the images in Holland, and in the Duchy of Namur. But even were the aforesaid Inquisition withdrawn, it cannot be hoped to quench this great fire; besides, were the King Catholic to suppress it he would lose his repute and authority, as he would thus submit to laws dictated by his subjects.1

In the fall of 1565 Philip had decided to refuse any requests for religious toleration and the suspension of the Inquisition despite considerable pressure from the Dutch nobility. Barbaro’s statements came on the heels of the news that Philip’s regent in the Low Countries, Margaret of Parma, had conceded reluctantly to the demands of hundreds of armed opponents who presented her with a “Request” that the Inquisition be abolished and existing heresy laws moderated. In the spring of 1566, Barbaro, and many others, watched and correctly interpreted the rising unrest in the Low Countries as a harbinger of the greater civil disorder to come—although no one could have guessed where it would lead.

In the eighteen months after Barbaro penned his dispatch, everyone wondered how Philip would respond until the Duke of Alba led 10,000 Spanish troops to the Low

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1 Marc’ Antonio Barbaro to the Doge and Senate of Venice, 2 May 1566, in CSPV 1558-80, 380-1.
Countries and restored royal authority. The Duke, who was later given the nickname of the “Iron Duke,” by Protestants, used harsh measures; his Council of Troubles, meant to enforce obedience to the crown, came to be known as the Council of Blood. He arrested thousands of individuals, including many of the leading nobles, and executed scores of them. He retained his Spaniards as a standing army; to many observers, he seemed poised to threaten the rest of Europe once his mission in the Low Countries was complete. R. B. Wernham described Alba’s arrival in Brussels in August 1567 as “one of the turning points of western European history” for all the upheaval it caused. Within two months of Alba’s arrival, France descended into the Second War of Religion and Protestants began to flee the Low Countries for the safety of England. These sixteen months—from the armed presentation of the “Request” in April 1566, to the duke’s arrival in Brussels in August 1567—caused all the states in Western Europe to watch the responses of Philip to the unraveling of the political, military and religious fabric of the Low Countries as closely as their resources allowed, and try to influence them whenever possible.

When, three months after Barbaro penned his letter, Protestants in the Low Countries destroyed hundreds of Catholic churches, observers all across Europe knew that Philip’s neglect of his wayward territories could not continue. Since his departure from the Netherlands in August 1559, Philip had neglected the religious and political affairs of the Low Countries in favor of prosecuting his wars in the Mediterranean against the Ottomans. By the fall of 1566, faced with the news of continuing religious upheaval

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and challenges to the regency government, Philip could no longer ignore the dangerous and volatile religious, political, and economic situation that had arisen. He had to take decisive action to reassert his authority. In Spain, the resolution in October 1566 that only a massive military response and Philip’s presence in the Low Countries could end the rebellion permanently and restore the king’s authority wavered in the face of domestic and foreign challenges. Members of Philip’s Council of State worked to undermine the Duke of Alba’s authority both before and after his selection as commander of the Army of Flanders, and Philip himself postponed his departure repeatedly, leading to speculation that the king would never leave Spain.

Foreign observers in Spain and the Low Countries, and Spanish envoys abroad, tracked the course of developments constantly and tried to predict what would happen. The resident ambassadors in Madrid—whether French, English, Imperial, Italian, or Portuguese—used whatever means available to discover what the king intended to do, and their dispatches contain a veritable treasure trove concerning the flow of intelligence. This information serves as a means of measuring the effectiveness of early modern diplomacy: it indicates what news governments sought; how, when and why their representatives were able to acquire it; and what policy initiatives those governments developed in response to this news. It is possible to reconstruct the successes and failures of these governments and representatives in their endeavors to acquire information and enact policy decisions in a moment of international crisis.

Through their envoys, foreign governments, especially the English and French, tried to influence aspects of the King’s response to the crisis, including decisions over whether to send an army or the route it would take. The Spanish ambassadors in France
and England faced the tasks of trying to explain what their king intended (which was often complicated by the lack of directives from Madrid), attempting to discover what their host governments either knew or speculated about events, and discouraging any sort of aid being offered to the Dutch rebels.

Any decision to end religious dissension and enforce obedience to the crown through military might had far-reaching ramifications for the other states of Western Europe. As Philip’s ambassador in England, Don Diego Guzmán de Silva, noted in the summer of 1566, “the connection between these people and the Flemings is so close by reason of religion, trade, and neighborship, that for every blow struck in Flanders, two are heard here.” The cities of Flanders maintained some of the largest and most profitable trade networks across Europe; Flemish bankers loaned large sums of money to the English and both the English and French governments purchased munitions from Flemish merchants. If Philip chose to send an army to the Low Countries, the likelihood for ensuing open rebellion threatened to undermine Philip’s revenues from his wealthiest possessions by destroying extensive commercial networks, and undercut both French and English profits from their international trade.

The advent of rebellion in the Low Countries served as a litmus test of Philip’s personal determination to quell heresy wherever and whenever possible, although his recent lax policies had allowed Protestantism to take hold. Beyond the economic concerns, both the English and French had valid reasons to worry for the security of their respective countries if Philip sent a massive Spanish army to the Low Countries. In the

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4 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 15 July 1566, in CSPS 1558-67, 566.
six years since the conclusion of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, the Spanish had provided ample reason for both countries to pay close attention to the king’s actions, and recent history colored both governments’ responses to the crisis.

As the most prominent Protestant country in Europe, England presented one of the best chances for Protestants in the Netherlands to obtain aid for any rebellion—little could be expected from their coreligionists in Germany, Scotland, or the Baltic states. Furthermore, the English had already displayed an alarming tendency to intervene in their neighbors’ affairs to promote their religious cause, as they did in Scotland in 1559-1560. The Spanish feared that such religious connections could influence English policies toward the Low Countries. As early as 1561, the Spanish ambassador Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra had noticed the connection between English Protestants and those in the Low Countries; in a letter to Philip, he wrote that “England once disposed of” would allow “His Majesty to restore order elsewhere [meaning the Netherlands and France] at his leisure.”

During the First War of Religion in 1562-3, the English occupied key ports in Normandy and loaned the Huguenots in excess of 100,000 crowns. That the escapade had ended badly for the English—they lost money, men, munitions, and rights to Calais with

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6 In 1559, after the accession of Elizabeth Tudor, Philip had given serious consideration to using the Spanish army then stationed in Flanders in a joint operation with the French to conquer England for the Catholic faith—to the extent that the Duke of Alba even prepared an extensive assessment of the religious situation in England for Philip’s review, and informal negotiations between the two governments commenced. The English knew that they had been saved largely because the Spanish and French could not overcome their inherent mistrust of one another, and because the unexpected death of King Henry II in July 1559 left a power vacuum in the French government. See M. J. Rodriguez-Salgado, Changing Face of Empire: Charles V, Philip II and Hapsburg Authority, 1551-1559, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). In a fascinating document (authored on the date of the death of Henry II, while Alba was in Paris) the Duke of Alba prepared an assessment of the religious situation in England, France and Scotland. “Parecer sobre las cosas de Francia,” 10 July 1559. The Hague: MS 78.E.9, f. 12-15.

7 Alvaro de la Quadra to Philip II, in Wernham, Before the Armada, 291.
nothing gained—worked to favor the Spanish. Elizabeth, a cautious person by nature, would be hard to persuade to undertake such a large gamble once more, particularly when it risked incurring the wrath of the powerful Spanish king who had protected her against the French. 

The growing strength of Huguenots in France gave the Dutch Protestants another potential ally while further complicating the situation for both the French and Spanish governments. The Spanish had already displayed inclinations to intervene in French domestic politics on behalf of Catholicism, which aligned them politically with the ultra-Catholic Guise family rather than with the more moderate policies of Catherine de Medici. The Spanish king had offered his “help” to King Charles IX in dealing with the Huguenots as early as March 1560, and Philip faced continual pressure from some of his leading councilors—the Duke of Alba among them—to quell French heresy immediately. The Spanish clamors for action included personal letters from Philip to Charles encouraging a hard line stance; so strong were these missives that in 1562 Charles protested Philip’s “haughty” language in a letter to his ambassador in Spain, Sébastien de l’Aubespine. In 1562-3, the 10,000 man army Philip dispatched into France to aid Charles IX in the First War of Religion played a pivotal role at the Battle of Dreux, and garrisoned Paris itself for more than a month. Philip opposed the promulgation of the

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peace Edict of Amboise in 1563, and only withdrew his forces in mid-1563 after repeated and increasingly strident requests from Queen Mother Catherine de Medici.¹²

The end of the First War of Religion proved several facts beyond a reasonable doubt for all three countries. The Peace of Amboise guaranteed that Huguenots were not going to disappear overnight, no matter what the French government tried or the Spanish wished. Catherine displayed a decided preference for conciliation rather than force when dealing with religious minorities, in large part because the commencement of war meant relinquishing her power to members of the nobility, including the Guise. She also realized that the Spanish were willing—indeed, eager—to intervene in French domestic affairs, and did so diplomatically, financially and militarily. The Spanish were invited, informed, and encouraged by Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, (after the assassination of his brother Francis, Duke of Guise, in February 1563) head of the prominent and powerful Guise family. The first war resulted in a steadily increasing internationalization of the French religious conflict, so that it became intertwined inexorably with the religious state of affairs in the Low Countries and England, and Catherine had not forgotten the Spanish preference for armed intervention by the advent of the revolt in the Low Countries in 1566.¹³ By the start of the conference between Catherine and the Duke of Alba at Bayonne, held in the summer of 1565, both the French and Spanish had long suspected that the Huguenots—headed by the Prince of Condé and Admiral Coligny—had established ties with their coreligionists in the Low Countries.¹⁴ Philip had received information about these links even before the outbreak of the first war, and kept a close

¹² Ibid.
¹³ Sutherland, 21.
eye on the potential connections between the two parties.\textsuperscript{15} His councilors in the Low Countries and elsewhere did the same. From his exile in Franche Comté, Granvelle sent a letter to Philip scant days after the conclusion of the talks at Bayonne, warning Philip that Calvinism had made rapid progress in the Netherlands, and that the Baron of Montigny—one of the later leaders of the Dutch, and cousin of Admiral Coligny—was maintaining a frequent and detailed correspondence with the Huguenots.\textsuperscript{16}

To Catherine, Alba’s failed efforts at Bayonne to force an agreement concerning the forcible extermination of Protestantism in France reinforced her reluctance to rely on Spanish aid to resolve a domestic religious problem. In order to prevent the outbreak of another civil war—something fully expected as early as 1564 by Frenchmen and foreigners alike—Catherine needed to remain committed to the terms of the Edict of Amboise, which both Alba and Philip loathed. This policy placed her at odds with both the Spanish and the house of Guise. At Bayonne, however, Catherine first floated the idea of a Hapsburg-Valois league against the Ottomans in the name of the Catholic faith. Such an alliance would have demonstrated the French crown’s commitment to the Catholic cause, something that had come into question with the resolution of the First War of Religion. Pope Pius IV had been pressuring both countries for a firm commitment to the enterprise. The league also would have diverted Philip’s attention from the situation in France and the Low Countries, giving the French more maneuvering room with their domestic situation. While there is no way to determine Catherine’s sincerity, it was a clever move, even if she had no intention of actually fulfilling her part of the bargain. No one could deny the threat the Ottomans posed to all of Catholicism. Should the Spanish

\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Perrenot de Chantonnay to Philip II, 28 February 1562, in \textit{NCF}, vol. 3, 392.
\textsuperscript{16} Granvelle to Philip II, 18 July 1565, in Sutherland, 46.
remain engaged in war with the Ottomans in the Mediterranean for months or years, the King probably would not be able to divert large forces north to the Low Countries. Catherine knew that any religious rebellion in the Low Countries could spread to France easily. She hardly wanted religious war just across the border, and desired a Spanish army in the Low Countries even less.

The intertwined economic, military, political and religious concerns meant that news from Spain and the Low Countries was vitally necessary. During the critical years of 1566 and 1567, both the English and French governments gathered whatever intelligence possible from all quarters concerning the plans for and the actions of the Army of Flanders. Agents reported on the state of the war between Philip and the Ottomans, because that, in large part, controlled the Spanish king’s ability to use force elsewhere. They monitored developments in the Low Countries and attempted to predict Philip’s response. Ambassadors sent lengthy dispatches filled with news, rumors and gossip current at the Spanish Court and worked through all their channels to discover hard information. Yet, even with such dedication, neither government could predict with any degree of confidence if the King would send an army, if that army would ever reach Flanders, who would serve as its commander, whether Philip would or would not travel to the Low Countries, when he might depart Spain, or what the King intended to do with such a mighty force once it restored order.

Both the French and English watched closely as a combination of religious, political, and social factors combined to produce the “serious disorder” that threatened to

17 See Parker, The Dutch Revolt, ch. 1
overwhelm the Netherlands. When he left Brussels in 1559 Philip had appointed his half-sister Margaret of Parma to serve as his regent despite her lack of political experience. He withdrew his remaining troops eighteen months later in response to widespread discontent among the Dutch nobility and removed his premier councilor, Antoine Perrenot—later Cardinal Granvelle—in 1564. Over the next two years the religious situation in the Low Countries worsened steadily. Protestants grew in number and in boldness; incidents of public preaching and overt challenges to the Catholic policies of the regency increased, and Margaret did not have any effective means of preventing them. Due to his earlier decisions, when tensions increased the king lacked an experienced government to act in his stead and a military force with which to respond to challenges to his authority. In October 1565 Philip refused to capitulate to the demands fronted by the Count of Egmont, one of the leading Dutch nobles, who had traveled to Spain earlier that year to discuss the situation with the king personally.

The English and French sources for the vital month of October 1565—in which the two sides became publicly polarized in their struggle over religious toleration—divulge very little concrete information. Philip revealed few of his inclinations to his key councilors, including Ruy Gómez de Silva, who had long served as several ambassadors’ primary source of information. Such a relationship served to counter the anti-French and militaristic views of another of the King’s principal councilors, the Duke of Alba.

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18 The social, political, military and economic history of the Eighty Years’ War has been the subject of dozens of monographs and hundreds of articles. Chapters 5-10 of Jonathan Israel’s *The Dutch Republic: its rise, greatness and fall, 1477-1806*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) provide an introduction to the history of the period. Geoffrey Parker’s *The Dutch Revolt*, (London: Allen Lane, 1977) and *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) examine the revolt from a political and military view.

19 See Gómez’s role in the confinement of Don Carlos in chapter 1.
The Duke was also excluded from the decision-making process, which increased the
difficulty of gathering accurate intelligence. Philip also did not send detailed information
to his representatives abroad to enable him to explain his actions to other governments.

For the English, the primary obstacle to gathering intelligence was a practical one;
Elizabeth's ambassador Sir Thomas Chaloner had departed Spain in May 1565, and his
replacement, Dr. John Man, did not arrive until March 1566. The 12 and 27 October 1565
dispatches of the English chargé d’affaires, William Phayre, carried news concerning the
Spanish war efforts in the Mediterranean, general economic concerns, and the plans for
the Spanish ambassador in England to travel to the Low Countries to attend the wedding
of the son of the Duchess of Parma, but no news concerning the religious struggle
between Philip and his Dutch subjects. Phayre did not mention anything concerning
Flanders until his letter of 17 November, and then only reported that “the voice is still
that the King will to Flanders; and the Princes of Germany have sent to entreat him to
pass through their dominions.” Similar similarly, the French sources document relatively little
information. In the fall of 1565 the Sieur de Saint-Sulpice, relinquished the role of
resident ambassador to the Baron de Fourquevaux. Although Saint-Sulpice had
developed extensive intelligence networks in the Spanish court, they could not pass along
information they did not have, and Saint-Sulpice’s sources did not have the same
relationship with Fourquevaux.

The news of the confrontation between Margaret and the “Gueux” (“Beggars:” so
nicknamed by one of Margaret’s councilors) in April 1566 referenced by Barbaro in his
dispatch, in which Margaret agreed to suspend the Inquisition and virtually handed

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20 William Phayre to Sir William Cecil, 17 November 1565, in CSPF 1564-5, 519. As with many of
Phayre’s dispatches, they tend to report more rumors and gossip than hard information.
control of the government to the rebels, traveled across Europe in a matter of days or weeks, rather than months. Emboldened by the news out of the Mediterranean that the Ottomans would prepare a massive expedition to attack Philip’s possessions, members of the Dutch nobility used the opportunity offered by the massive public outcry to force a new set of demands on Margaret of Parma. The English learned of it first, though it was due to the opportune presence of a trade delegation. One can only imagine the confusion felt by the English commissioners Lord Montague, Doctor Nicholas Wotton, and Walter Haddon, who had been sent to treat with the regent on a number of commercial disputes, when they reached Bruges nine days after the confrontation between Margaret and the nobles. Although the nobles had presented the Request to Margaret on 5 April, she had not yet consented to the demands of the Gueux by the commissioners’ arrival on the 12th. The commissioners walked into the first stages of a potential revolt, as hundreds of armed nobles effectively held the government hostage. In their first dispatch after their arrival, the trio reported to Sir William Cecil that “it is bruited that M. de Montigny…will go to Spayne to King Philippe” concerning his ratification of the terms of the Request, and noted that their Dutch counterparts would likely be different individuals than they had assumed previously.21 A letter from Elizabeth’s premier financial agent, Sir Thomas Gresham, dated 15 April, brought more details about the confrontation between Margaret and the nobles, including the news that “Monsr Bredroo [Brederode]” presented the Request to the regent on behalf of the nobility and that the regent had just consented.22

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21 Lord Montague, Dr. Nicholas Wotton and Walter Haddon to Sir William Cecil, 14 April 1566. NA: SP 70/83/216.
22 Sir Thomas Gresham to Sir William Cecil, 15 April 1566. NA: SP 70/83/220. It is possible that Gresham dispatched an earlier message to inform the English of the initial confrontation. This letter referenced Margaret’s capitulation.
Within a month, the deputies selected by the Gueux departed the Low Countries to secure Philip’s agreement to the Request.

The news percolated widely through the French capital less than two weeks after the event. In his dispatch of 28 April, Philip’s ambassador Don Francés de Álava reported that he had heard the news in Paris and speculated that the Huguenots in France had had some hand in encouraging the Dutch to make their demands, but did not provide detailed information about the confrontation itself. Álava’s focus remained primarily on the potential relationships between the Dutch and Huguenots, which concerned both the French and Spanish governments. Most of the French government officials—including Catherine herself—saw the second war looming on the horizon, and feared that a revolt in the Netherlands would spread to France. Catherine also wanted to prevent any sort of aid from being dispatched to the Low Countries, as this could provide an excuse for Spanish intervention in France.

Margaret informed her brother in her letter of 13 April when she dispatched a special courier carrying the news of her capitulation, and the courier arrived in Spain less than three weeks later. Informed ambassadors took only a few days to learn of the contents of her dispatch. On 5 May Fourquevaux reported to Charles IX that Margaret had written her brother a letter informing him that the Dutch would not obey her, that “all the Flemings took up arms against him [Philip].” He also noted that the King’s ability to resolve the Dutch situation immediately would depend on events in the Mediterranean, although at the time Fourquevaux could not speculate on exactly what the Spanish

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23 Don Francés de Álava to Philip II, 28 April 1566, in NCF vol. 8, 341.
24 See Sutherland, Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 32-41.
25 Margaret of Parma to Philip II, 13 April 1566, in CMP, vol. 1, 407-8
26 Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 5 May 1566, in DF vol 1, 87.
expected the Ottomans to do. Presumably, the French ambassador did not include further
details about Margaret’s letter because he either assumed that Charles had already learned
of the events through other sources, or Fourquevaux himself did not know the exact
contents of the letter.

In another dispatch three days later, Fourquevaux added that initially Philip had
planned on sending a person immediately to Flanders deal with the situation. Since his
dispatch of the 5th, he wrote, Philip had decided to leave for Flanders himself by
September. The plans, he commented, would be complicated by the fact that Philip had
received news from a courier who arrived on the 7th from Sicily that the Ottomans
planned to attack Malta.27 The fact that Fourquevaux managed to learn the general
information of Margaret’s letter is unsurprising; the news traveled throughout the Court.
That he had discovered the contents of other correspondence crossing the king’s desk and
was able to report on it only a day after the courier arrived, however, is worthy of note.
Elizabeth's ambassador Dr. Man, who had arrived in Madrid less than two months before,
never did send a dispatch informing his government.28 Of course, the rumors of an attack
on Malta were false; the Ottomans never did try to invade any of Philip’s Mediterranean
possessions in the summer of 1566.

As soon as the news reached Madrid foreign observers had little doubt that Philip
would employ military forces to restore control. Undoubtedly, Philip’s councilors thought
the same. An anonymous letter from Madrid to Paul de Foix, then in London as Charles’s

27 Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 8 May 1566, in DF vol 1, 88-9.
28 It is possible that Man did send a letter, but it has not survived in the collections in the National Archives
or Cambridge University Library. In his next letter, Man also did not mention dispatching a letter in early
May; normally, he tended to give the dates of his recent dispatches to keep his government informed of the
regularity of his correspondence. This strengthens the supposition that he never did send a letter concerning
the arrival of Margaret’s news.
ambassador to England, noted that Philip had ordered preparations for a fleet to be ready to depart, presumably for the Low Countries. Presumably, the unknown author sent the notice to de Foix because of the likelihood that the fleet would pass through the English Channel and might arrive at an English port, and as the French envoy in England, it would benefit de Foix to know of a large foreign military presence in the Low Countries. Philip might also stop in England if he chose to travel by ship, either by plan or out of necessity.

Initially, Philip preferred to dispatch a force through France. The army would arrive much sooner, and the cost of transport would be less than sending the men by ship. The first request to Charles for permission to cross France reached Paris in the middle of May, but met with a flat refusal. On 18 May 1566 Sir Thomas Hoby, the English ambassador in France, reported that, “they say K Philip hath demanded the passage of x thousand soldiers out of Spaine by lande into Flaunders.” Three days later, he noted that “the king hath denied King Philip the passage of M/X [10,000] men through his countrey into flaunders.” Catherine and Charles could not afford to risk the potential implications of having such a large army within the country’s borders, and, moreover, the French lacked any means to compel it to leave. It had taken the government more than three months to force the Spanish out of the country in 1563, and Catherine could not afford a repeat of this situation in 1566-7 because of the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the government and the Huguenots.

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29 It is entirely possible that John Man authored this letter, although the signature on the original in the National Archives does not match his normal script. It does not match any known members of his household, and is likely not from the French ambassador Fourquevaux, as the script and signature do not match his. 20 May 1566, NA: SP 70/84/119-120v.
30 Sir Thomas Hoby to Sir William Cecil, 18 May 1566, NA: SP70/84/107
31 Sir Thomas Hoby to Sir William Cecil, 21 May 1566, NA: SP 70/84/129v.
Throughout May, June and July 1566, frequent reports still arrived from the Low Countries, and almost every one caused the situation to be reevaluated.\footnote{For a concise discussion of the Council’s meetings in the summer of 1566, see Lagomarsino, 238-247.} In his dispatch dated 5 May, Fourquevaux noted that the Council met nearly every day to discuss the events in the Low Countries, without arriving at a clear solution. He also reported that the Council held extensive talks over the state of affairs in the Mediterranean and the current deployments of Philip’s land and naval military forces, but could not determine exactly what—if anything—had been decided. Similarily, Man and Pereira, the Portuguese ambassador, could not provide detailed intelligence. In one of his dispatches, the papal nuncio also emphasized the secrecy that cloaked the Council’s meetings.\footnote{Archbishop of Rossano to Cardinal Reomano, 19 April 1566, in Lagomarsino, 238.}

Probably, the inability of foreign observers to learn the Council’s plans resulted from the fact that the Council, and Philip himself, had not decided on a course of action. Philip had to wait to determine the intentions of the Ottoman fleet, which had left Constantinople in the spring with more than 100 war galleys. If the force was bound for Malta, as reported by the courier out of Sicily and noted in Fourquevaux’s dispatch of 8 May, Philip would have to keep the bulk of his forces in the Mediterranean to defend his territories there. If the Ottomans attacked elsewhere, however, the king had a freer hand. Catherine’s offer of an alliance—which, according to Emperor Maximilian II’s ambassador, Adam von Dietrichstein, had been discussed at the Spanish court once more in the end of 1565—could have provided more troops, but the Spanish hesitated to commit. In his dispatch of 20 December, Dietrichstein noted that the Spanish distrusted the French intentions—the same mistrust had also undermined the planned invasion of
England in 1559. If Philip faced a concerted attack from the Ottomans, he could not divert a large force to settle matters in the Low Countries without risking his other territories.

The arrival of the Dutch envoys in the summer of 1566, bearing the terms of the “Request,” did nothing to improve the situation. Baron Montigny arrived more than a month before the Marquis of Bergen, who was delayed because of a leg injury suffered in a jousting accident. Despite ensuring that the envoys met with a warm reception, Philip could not give them the answer they sought, and refused to commit to anything in his initial meetings with them. On 5 July Fourquevaux reported that Montigny waited for the arrival of the Marquis, and had seen the king only briefly. In a holograph letter dated 1 August 1566, John Man informed Cecil that there “The Marques of Bargos is but ii [2] days past arrived at thys corte and Monsr Montiny stādith upō hys dispatch.” Clearly, although the rumors of a harsh reprisal ran rampant at the Spanish court, no one could say exactly what the king might do. Philip avoided the matter by leaving Madrid for his retreat in the Bosque de Segovia; he remained there for much of the summer, closeted with his closest advisers in an effort to decide on a measured response. In an effort to provoke some sort of resolution, Margaret wrote her brother in the middle of July, warning him that he had only two options: “either to take up arms” against the Protestants

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34 Adam von Dietrichstein to Emperor Maximilian II, 20 December 1565, in Die Korrespondenz der Kaiser mit ihren Gesandten in Spanien, ed. Arno Strohmeyer (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1997), 469-70. While there is no conclusive evidence, it is possible that Catherine fronted the idea of a league with the specific intentions of keeping Philip’s forces in the Mediterranean.

35 Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 5 July 1566, CF vol 1, 96.

36 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 1 August 1566, NA: SP 70/85/122
now returning by the thousands, or to “authorize the concessions” she had already made.\textsuperscript{37}

Margaret’s letter arrived too late to be of any use. By the end of July Philip had announced his decision to travel to the Low Countries in the spring of 1567 via Italy.\textsuperscript{38} In an audience with Montigny on the 26\textsuperscript{th} Philip informed the Dutch representative that the terms of the Request would not be honored and he would not tolerate any opposition to his policies.\textsuperscript{39} By the first week of August the king had already started taking intermediate actions to restore order. He sent Margaret instructions to raise 13,000 soldiers in Germany, and included letters of credit for 300,000 ducats to finance them.

The news spread quickly. In his letter of 1 August 1566, Man reported the “marvelous thundrỹgs and threatỹgs agynst flaundres,” at the court but as yet there was “no resolution of the kỹgs goỹg into Flaundres,” and that hopefully, within a short time everyone “shall know the kỹgs determunatiõ towards Flaundrs.”\textsuperscript{40} Fourquevaux also noted that while Philip had revealed his intentions, he had not given any specific details for his travel plans. Evidently, Philip preferred to stall, rather than coming to an immediate decision and implementing any policy initiatives. In his letter of 12 August the Portuguese ambassador, Francisco Pereira, reported that the birth of the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia would free Philip to go to the Low Countries, especially as he had just

\textsuperscript{37} Margaret of Parma to Philip II, 19 July 1566, in CMP vol. 2, 258; Parker, \textit{Grand Strategy}, 397. The fact that Philip could indeed “take up arms” was due to the fact that a courier bearing the orders for a surprise attack on Algiers had failed to deliver them to the fleet on time. Had the courier succeeded, Philip’s forces would have been engaged in the Mediterranean and he would have been unable to consider dispatching an army to the Low Countries, discussed in chapter 5, 000-0. See Parker, 397 note 29.

\textsuperscript{38} Lagomarsino, 242.

\textsuperscript{39} Baron of Montigny to Margaret of Parma, 2 August 1566, AGS E legajo 533, unfoliated, quoted in Lagomarsino, 242.

\textsuperscript{40} Man to Cecil, 1 August 1566. NA: SP 70/85/122
received letters from the Pope urging him to undertake the voyage.\textsuperscript{41} Pereira also informed King Sebastian that many members of the court believed that Philip should go with a large army, while others wanted him to travel with his court only. Discussion at the court (still at Segovia) also focused on the choice of the king’s route.\textsuperscript{42} Despite all the rumors rampant at the court and his own public declarations, the king remained unwilling to finalize any plans.

Most observers at foreign courts heard of Philip’s potential voyage with little surprise; rather, they had been expecting it since the news of the confrontation in April. In the beginning of July Guzmán informed Philip that “they tell me that the Queen has received private news that your Majesty is secretly going to Flanders.”\textsuperscript{43} Unfortunately, Guzmán’s sources had been unable to discover exactly who had informed the Queen of this intelligence, leaving Guzmán to admit that, “but I cannot learn whence the news comes.”\textsuperscript{44} Guzmán himself had not received any letters from Philip informing him of his intentions, and so had to assume that such news amounted to mere gossip. In France, Álava reported that the Huguenots in Paris had increased their activities; the leaders anticipated that a wave of Catholic persecutions in the Low Countries might inspire similar events in France.\textsuperscript{45}

Indeed, Álava was right. News of the April confrontation between Margaret and the \textit{Gueux} had two results: Protestants who had fled the Low Countries began returning

\textsuperscript{41} Catherine de Medici was experiencing similar pressure from the Pope to deal with the Huguenots.
\textsuperscript{42} Francisco Pereira to King Sebastian I, 12 August 1566. IDAN Livro 210, f. 1-2. It is interesting to note that Pereira signed his letters from Segovia, where the king had sought refuge over the summer. Most of the court and all other foreign representatives had remained in Madrid. Fourquevaux did travel to Segovia more than once to determine what might be happening with regard to the Low Countries, but met with little success.
\textsuperscript{43} Guzmán de Silva to Philip, 6 July 1566, in \textit{CSPS 1558-1567}, 566.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Don Francés de Álava to Philip II, 25 May and 10 June 1566, in \textit{NCF} vol. 8, 367-385.
by the thousands, and alert observers in both France and the Netherlands saw civil war looming on the horizon. By the middle of the summer, the Huguenots and Dutch Protestants had already begun preparations in anticipation of the King’s response; in a letter dated 10 July, an English agent in Antwerp informed William Cecil that M. D’Andelot (brother of Condé) numbered among the Dutch supporters, with similar news arriving from Strasbourg a month later.⁴⁶ A letter from Hugh Fitzwilliam (who served as the chargé d’affaires in the months after the death of Sir Thomas Hoby) dated 17 August 1566 reported that,

There is presently [presently] in the citie of Paris all the great protestants of France. The Admirall, the prince of Navarre, w’ [with] the queene his mother, the prince of Conde, and count Montgomery, and many others of the nobilitie and gentilman protestants. The saing is ther be consulting what ways is best to relyve the protestants in Flanders if the king bringe any great power against them.

Fitzwilliam added that despite the proclamation “on payne of death,” captains had begun traveling into Flanders from all parts of France, disguised as merchants and preachers.⁴⁷ Catherine’s edicts trying to prevent the flow of aid into the Low Countries failed miserably. Protestant preachers began giving open air sermons to crowds that numbered in the thousands all across the Low Countries. The influx of thousands of returning Protestants, combined with high unemployment, continually increasing food prices, swelling religious fervor and increasing political unrest created a virtual powder keg with Margaret’s government perched precariously on the top, trying to prevent any sparks. Barbaro’s “great fire” was about to be unleashed.

⁴⁶ John Keyle to Sir William Cecil, 10 July 1566, in CSPF 1566-8, 103; Christopher Mundt to Cecil, 13 August 1566, in CSPF 1566-8, 116.
⁴⁷ Hugh Fitzwilliam to Sir William Cecil, 17 August 1566, NA: SP 70/85/192-v.
Margaret’s letters carrying the news of the widespread destruction caused by the Iconoclastic Fury, which began on 10 August, exploded at the Spanish Court. The dispatches were written on 17-19 August and arrived on the third of September. In his dispatch of 3 September, Pereira reported the arrival of the courier from Flanders and noted that upon receiving the news, the king had fallen ill immediately, but did not know the exact contents of the letters.\(^{48}\) The courier, who had passed through Flanders on his way and therefore knew much more than Margaret had written in her letters, relayed the grim situation spreading rapidly across the country in vivid detail to the King.\(^{49}\) In his dispatch of 3 September, Fourquevaux also noted the situation and reported that he had met with the Papal Nuncio, Pereira and others to try to determine exactly what news the king had learned. He had even followed the court to Segovia to learn what would happen, but could discover little hard information. The discussions in the council, he wrote, included issues as diverse as whether the Queen would accompany Philip on his journey, and if the king would wait to leave Spain until after the baptism of the Infanta Isabella.\(^{50}\) Pereira conveyed more news in his dispatch of 11 September, including reports from other areas of Flanders, which had streamed into the court on a continual basis.

The news convinced many at all the courts in Western Europe that Philip’s retribution would be swift and terrible. Any doubts about Philip’s plans vanished: surely, they believed, this would be enough to force the king to return to the Low Countries. In his letter of 28 September Guzmán de Silva wrote that “this Queen’s ambassador has written that your Majesty’s voyage to Flanders is certain…and I hear the same…from

\(^{48}\) Pereira to Sebastian I, 3 September 1566. IDAN, Livro 210, f. 8v-10.
\(^{50}\) Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 3 September 1566, DF vol. 1, 120.
other quarters.”51 He reported that members of the English court had heard that Dr. Man
had even begun making preparations for his return to England, or else to accompany the
court on its voyage to Brussels, on the assumption that the king’s departure was
imminent. Unfortunately for Philip, however, all efforts to organize a response in Spain
ground to a halt during the month of September. The illness that impacted the king
immediately after receiving the news incapacitated him for more than a month. As John
Man reported, “heare ys a very syck court at thys presnt,” describing in detail the variety
of maladies that plagued the King, Queen, Duke of Alba, and Don John of Austria,
“therbee bysydes theas many others of the nobylyty syck.”52 Fourquevaux noted a similar
situation in his dispatch of 11 September 1566, and also commented that the process of
government had suspended temporarily with so many principal members sick.53

Even after the court recovered Philip still procrastinated. The Council did not
meet to discuss the situation in detail until the end of September. Ultimately, Philip’s
Council remained committed to the same course of action decided before the news of the
Iconoclastic Fury reached Madrid. They needed to use force to restore order, and Philip’s
presence was needed to ensure a lasting solution. The council also considered the
possibility that though the English and French might object to the arrival of an army in
the Low Countries, neither government was in a position to offer any real resistance. In
the meeting held in the last week of September, the councilors discussed the possibility of
having the Duke of Alba begin preparations for a military force; as Saint-Sulpice noted in
one of his reports for Charles, tentative plans called for Alba to levy troops in Germany,

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51 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 28 September 1566, in CSPS 1558-1567, 582.
52 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 14 September 1566, NA: SP 70/86/32.
53 Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 11 September 1566, in DF vol. 1, 124.
Spain and elsewhere; the force would later be joined by one under Philip’s command. The gradual realization over the summer of 1566 that the Ottomans would not attack any of Philip’s possessions gave the King additional room to maneuver. Ultimately, the council recommended that 10,000 Spanish veterans stationed in various provinces should prepare to travel to the Low Countries; they would be replaced by new recruits. An additional 60,000 troops would be raised to join them.

Though the news of the decision spread quickly, it failed to quell rumors that Philip continued to delay. In a holograph dispatch of 14 September, John Man commented that “the kýgs determination for hys goyng in to Flaúders ys yet uncertë,” and a month later Fourquevaux informed Charles that Philip approached the voyage with “little devotion.” There was no way for Philip to reach the Netherlands before winter, so all plans focused on the spring of 1567. The Sieur de Saint-Sulpice, then back in Spain to congratulate the king and queen on the birth of the Infanta Isabella, reported that the Duke of Alba had grown so disgusted with the king’s refusal to face the situation that he threatened to retire from the king’s service. In a dispatch from London, Guzmán de Silva warned Philip that “every day’s delay seems years to them [loyal Catholics] and the more the voyage is deferred, the more difficult will the remedy be. The heretics are making great efforts to show that your Majesty will not make the voyage.”

54 Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice, to Charles IX, 21 September 1566, in DF vol. 1, 133.
55 Man to Cecil, 14 September 1566, NA: SP 70/84/32; Fourquevaux to Charles, 11 September 1566, in DF, vol. 1, 132.
56 Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice, to Charles IX, 17 October 1566, DF, vol. 1, 133. It was fortuitous for the French that Saint-Sulpice was in Spain (ostensibly to congratulate the royal couple on the birth of the Infanta) when these events took place, in order to supplement the intelligence services provided by Fourquevaux. Saint-Sulpice had lived in Spain for more than four years and had established extensive connections within the Spanish government.
57 Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 28 September 1566, in CSPS 1558-1567, 582.
The Council met a month later, on 26 and 29 October to develop a final policy. For the first time, views among the councilors became polarized in a public manner, as those councilors who wanted Philip to stay in Spain and those who thought he should go began to voice their opinions openly.\(^5^8\) Ruy Gómez de Silva supported any plan that kept Philip in Spain and instead sent a deputy to the Low Countries; according to some accounts, Ruy Gómez intended the task of traveling to the Low Countries to go to his ally, the Count of Feria. Gómez argued that the King could risk his safety in such a way, and ideally, the situation could be calmed without drastic measures. The Duke of Alba, however, rejected these proposals on the basis that such half measures had been attempted previously without success; one could even argue that Philip’s earlier efforts at moderation had worsened the situation rather than improved it. Harsh reprisals and swift justice were necessary to restore lasting order—such measures could only come with the King at the head of a massive army. Philip would then also be present to handle any other issues that might arise after the immediate danger had passed, something that a deputy could not do without instructions. Alba moderated his proposal to include a third option: Philip could choose a general to lead the main army and follow later with a smaller force. Ultimately the king chose the last option.

Ambassadors learned of the king’s decision in less than a week. On the fifth of November John Man reported that on 30 October (only a day after the second meeting) “the countye di Fferia hath assured me that the kyng hath determyned his iorney [journey] towards Fflanders” but that “the certayne tyme of his passing forth hence he

\(^{58}\) Lagomarsino, 254-5.
doth not yet know.” Feria also informed Man that “the kyng will make the greatest power he can” by using soldiers from Germany, Italy, and Spain besides those already in Flanders, which combined to make a force of more than 32,000 footmen and 14,000 cavalry. Man himself noted with surprise that Feria had provided him with such intelligence; normally, the Count was hostile toward Protestant England in general and Man in particular. He had espoused an anti-English stance ever since his departure from England in the summer of 1559, and often declared that he held Elizabeth to blame that his wife, the former Lady Jane Dormer (who served as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary, and was one of her closest friends), could not collect the funds due from her holdings in England.

The arrival of several treasure ships from the Spanish colonies in the New World in the fall of 1566 provided Philip with an excess of “six myllions of duckatts” to pay for his army, so for once Philip would not be constrained by his finances. Saint-Sulpice provided a similar estimate of Philip’s resources in a report for Charles, and in his dispatch to the Duke of Ferrara, Conte Taddeo Manfredi noted that additional funds would be available from the taxes approved in Naples and soon to be voted by the Cortes of Castile. In his letter, Man also reported to Cecil that he thought that the King would leave Spain in March or April 1567. Fourquevaux informed Charles of Philip’s intention

59 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 5 November 1566, NA: SP 70/87/11-11v.
60 Man to Cecil, 5 November 1566, NA: SP 70/87/11v. It is interesting that Feria provided the information to Man; the two had at best a contentious relationship, and Man had noted Feria’s enmity in previous dispatches. In one instance, Man commented that he thought the Count’s attitude hindered his mission in Spain.
61 Ibid.
62 Jean d’Ebrard, Sieur de Saint-Sulpice to Charles IX, in DF, vol. 1, 133-6; Conte Taddeo Manfredi to Alfonso II d’Este, 8 November 1566. ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Ambasciatori esteri, Spagna, f. 7.
to send an army in his letter of 2 November, sent to France by express courier.\textsuperscript{63} In his
next dispatch to Catherine of 6 November, Fourquevaux explained his decision as a
choice not to “lose the commodity of intelligence,” and hoped the Queen Mother would
not be displeased.\textsuperscript{64}

Probably, Fourquevaux made the right decision to send his letter express, rather
than waiting for a regular courier. Catherine needed the news immediately. Privately,
both the English and French preferred that the matter be resolved without the need for
military intervention, though publicly both proclaimed their support for Philip and their
disdain for the rebels. This dichotomy was an open secret for both Don Francés de Álava
and Diego Guzmán de Silva. Álava had reported the news of the Huguenots’ meetings in
the middle of August, and noted frequently that Catherine failed to express enthusiasm
for Philip’s plans.\textsuperscript{65} For Guzmán, his meetings with Elizabeth made it difficult to
determine exactly what the English might do. In audiences, the queen denounced the
Dutch rebels angrily and vowed not to offer them any support, as the matter was not
about religion, but rather a rebellion against their rightful prince.\textsuperscript{66} However, she
refrained from voicing a firm commitment to supporting Philip, just as she had done with
the French with regard to the Huguenot situation during the First War of Religion. While
he hesitated to take the Queen at her word, Guzmán thought that there was some element
of truth to her speeches, especially given the varying advice she received from her
council. Guzmán had to try to discern who among the Queen’s councilors and courtiers

\textsuperscript{63} Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 2 November 1566, in \textit{DF} vol 1, 136-8.
\textsuperscript{64} Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 6 November 1566, in \textit{DF} vol 1, 139.
\textsuperscript{65} See Sutherland, 24-8.
\textsuperscript{66} Don Diego Guzmán de Silva to Philip II, 14 September 1566, 5 October 1566, and 28 December 1566, in \textit{CSPS 1558-67}, 581-3, 606.
favored the use of an army and decided that in this instance (as in many others) they
cleaved along religious lines; Catholics looked forward to Philip’s arrival, while
Protestants bemoaned the likely outcome for their coreligionists.

In Madrid, observers tried to discover any further details about the plans for the
Army of Flanders. The King, it appeared, had accepted the fact that he had to nominate a
general to lead the army and follow at a later date. He had indicated this in the council
meetings in the end of October, which most representatives reported faithfully in their
dispatches. According to some insiders, the Dukes of Parma, Savoy and Medinaceli
numbered among the potential candidates, as did the Duke of Alba and the Count of
Feria.67 Parma, Savoy and Alba had the most military experience and could command a
large army; they had participated in Charles’s wars against the French and had
established reputations as reliable and effective military commanders. Initially, Alba
removed himself from consideration on the grounds of age and ill health; he had no wish
to undertake such a massive campaign. Neither Medinaceli nor Feria had the requisite
knowledge or experience, but had political backing from Ruy Gómez de Silva, who
challenged Alba routinely on political and military matters.

In his report to Catherine de Medici written on 6 November, Fourquevaux
informed her that he had secret and high-level intelligence concerning the meetings of the
end of October.68 He learned the information from the Portuguese ambassador Francisco

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67 This information comes primarily from the reports of Fourquevaux, who sent details of his conversations
on the subject to Catherine de Medici.
68 Pereira’s letterbook does not preserve a copy of his dispatches of October and early November. There is
a break from 23 September to 28 November; it is entirely possible that the dispatches were not recorded, as
the ambassador would have been remiss not to send notice of the meetings, since he clearly knew of them
from his interactions with Fourquevaux.
Pereira, who had dispatched a servant to Fourquevaux’s residence with the news. Based on this intelligence, Fourquevaux wrote that Philip favored sending Alba to Flanders with an army before his departure. He also noted that he thought the army would cross through the territories of Savoy, Franche-Comté, Luxembourg, and Lorraine, rather than traveling by sea. Charles had already rebuffed Philip’s request to send troops directly through France, so the only other land route available involved crossing the Alps. The troops, Fourquevaux wrote, would be a mixture of Spaniards, Germans and Italians drawn from several different territories. If Alba did not go, the Portuguese ambassador’s servant informed Fourquevaux that the next likely candidate was the Count of Feria, who would be assisted by the Marquis de Pescara and others. Fourquevaux also thought that key nobles in the Low Countries, including the Count of Egmont, Prince of Orange, and the Count of Hornes had declared for the rebels against Philip.

Ultimately, both the Duke of Savoy and the Duke of Parma rejected Philip’s invitation to take command of the Army of Flanders. Alba’s name had been mentioned in connection with the command as early as the spring of 1566, but both Savoy and Parma had the advantage of not being Spanish. They also had independent territories to govern, and possibly recognized that accepting the command would turn into a disaster rather than an opportunity to earn additional laurels. The selection of Alba became the obvious

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69 It was not unusual to use servants to send messages at court. A servant could make such visits without attracting undue attention, while courtiers might have noticed one ambassador paying a call on another. The dispatches do not record exactly why Pereira shared his intelligence with Fourquevaux; from several of Fourquevaux’s earlier letters, it is clear that the two had a cordial working relationship, as Fourquevaux met frequently with Pereira to discuss current news. It is possible that Pereira traded the intelligence, or offered it to further a relationship. The French government’s stance against an armed response was well known; Pereira might have shared his information as a way of supporting the French policy.

70 The duchess of Lorraine (Catherine de Medici’s daughter Claude) actively discouraged Philip from sending troops through the duchy on the grounds that it would destabilize an already tenuous religious situation. See Sutherland, Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 35-8.

71 Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 6 November 1566, in DF vol 1,138-9.
decision not because of his superior skills or martial abilities, but because of a lack of other viable candidates. The Count of Feria, Fourquevaux’s other contender, was never offered the command.

Philip’s councilors worked very hard to ensure that all discussions over the selection of a commander remained secret. When interrogated about the choice of Alba in 1576, one of Alba’s former ministers in the Low Countries, who had been at the Spanish Court in 1566, could only tell the Prince of Orange that he did not know how the decision had been reached. Neither he nor any other representative from the Low Countries had been included in the debates. In his letter, Fourquevaux could not inform Catherine definitively that Alba would take command; he did, however, eliminate Savoy and Parma. Presumably, his willingness to do so stemmed from the fact that the Portuguese ambassador, Francisco Pereira, was the uncle of Ruy Gómez de Silva, who in turn had close ties with both Savoy and Parma. Gómez might have known that neither Duke would accept the command, and so relayed the information to Pereira, who in turn passed it along to Fourquevaux. Fourquevaux had not given the identity of Pereira’s source, but it is a logical conclusion. Taddeo Manfredi also included the names of Parma, Feria, Alba and Savoy as possible leaders in his 8 November dispatch to Alfonso II d’Este. John Man did not mention the names of any potential commanders in his letter of 5 November; rather, he only conveyed the news that Philip had decided to send an army. Evidently, the Count of Feria decided to inform Man that Philip would go to the Low

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72 Lagomarsino, 278.
73 See chapter 1: “The World of the Ambassador” for additional information on the relationship between Ruy Gómez de Silva and Francisco Pereira. While there is no direct documentation proving either that Ruy Gómez knew that Savoy and Parma would decline the command, or that he informed Pereira, there is documentation proving that Ruy Gómez had extensive correspondence with both during this period.
74 Manfredi to Alfonso II d’Este, 8 November 1566.
Countries—which was hardly a surprise—but withheld the crucial information that a

general with a large army would precede him to the Netherlands.

In November, Alba’s health improved to the point at which he could undertake
such a task. Ruy Gómez and his allies decided to support Alba’s selection, evidently as a
means of removing one of their most powerful enemies from the king’s side. Alba
accepted the assignment reluctantly; personally, he preferred to remain in Spain and
recognized that such an appointment could place him at a disadvantage. He would be
away from the king, and would have a more difficult time presenting his opinion on
matters of state. According to correspondence between Alba and Granvelle, Alba
accepted the command only once Philip had promised to follow in person. On 29
November he agreed; patents for his assignment were drawn up on December 1.

The news of Alba’s selection became common knowledge within a matter of
days. The Florentine ambassador Leonardo de’ Nobili reported on 7 December that Alba
would command the army; his dispatch was followed one day later by the Venetian
ambassador Antonio Tiepolo, and Manfredi reported that insiders had “finally
concluded” that Alba would serve as the general of Philip’s forces to Alfonso on 17
December. Fourquevaux and Saint-Sulpice had already surmised as much in their
dispatches in October and November, especially when on 29 November Fourquevaux
reported that the Duke of Savoy had excused himself from consideration. In his dispatch
of 9 December the French ambassador informed Charles and Catherine that his

75 Lagomarsino, 279.
76 Leonardo de’ Nobili to Francesco I de’ Medici, 7 December 1566. Florence: Archivo di Stato, Mediceo
del Principato, f. 4897b; Antonio Tiepolo to Doge Girolamo Priuli, 8 December 1566. Venice: Archivo di
Stato, Dispacci al Senato, Spagna, f. 6; Manfredi to Alfonso II d’Este, 17 December 1566.
supposition was correct; he had confirmed on the third of the month that Alba would
head the king’s army.\footnote{Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 9 December 1566, in \textit{DF} vol. 1, 147.}

Yet another incident related to affairs in the Low Countries rocked the Spanish
Court in the winter of 1567. For several months, Philip had been unable to maintain any
level of secrecy in his communications with Margaret. She had warned him repeatedly
that William, Prince of Orange, had been able to learn specific details about events at
Court and Philip’s plans for the Low Countries.\footnote{Margaret to Philip, 16 October 1566, in Lagomarsino, 280.} In response to Margaret’s warnings and
concerns expressed by key councilors including Alba, Philip ordered a complete
investigation into the matter. Eventually, officials identified one Jacques Vandenesse, a
Flemish member of Philip’s entourage, as the source of the leak. As a court official,
Vandenesse had the opportunity to enter Philip’s study and copy key documents.\footnote{Lagomarsino, 279-81.}
Vandenesse passed along his information to the Montigny and Bergen, the Dutch
representatives at court, who in turn relayed it to their compatriots. According to several
key documents, there are other indications that Vandenesse had learned intelligence from
a source at court. Many of the letters to Orange give details of council meetings which
Vandenesse had not attended, nor could he have had access to any written records of the
discussions. The king’s efforts at secrecy, which had even led him to exclude his senior
councilors from parts of the decision-making process, utterly failed. After his discovery
and a lengthy interrogation, Vandenesse confessed his treason, was sentenced to death
and later pardoned.\footnote{Ibid.}
The steady leaks guaranteed that Philip’s plans were known by the Dutch nobles as soon as—and in some instances, even before—he had communicated them to his regent. The government tried to maintain some level of secrecy with mixed results. In February 1567, Fourquevaux had tried to learn when the King might leave for the Netherlands from a “friend of the secretary of a certain lord, but the said secretary replied that his master warned him, with his hand on his sword, that he would kill him with a hundred blows if the enterprise on which they are presently engaged should become known.” Yet Margaret found herself at a constant disadvantage when trying to negotiate with the Gueux, because they already knew the extent of her instructions. This thoroughly undermined Philip’s efforts at moderation, for the Dutch knew that the king was considering military action while he pretended to consider their requests. For a brief but crucial period, the Dutch had better intelligence than Man, Fourquevaux or even Pereira, despite Pereira’s connection to Ruy Gómez de Silva.

Once the decision had been made, ambassadors devoted considerable resources to discovering the potential travel plans for Philip’s massive army. The route for the Army of Flanders was dictated as much by politics as practicality. Philip’s request to allow his army to cross through France had already been rejected once; in the end of November 1566 he decided to try again, this time through his ambassador Don Francés de Álava, and asked to be allowed to land an army at the port of Fréjus, near Cannes. The army would then march north to Luxembourg, and therefore avoid the need to cross the Alps,

81 Ibid.
82 Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 13 February 1567, in DF vol. 1, 177; quoted in Parker, Grand Strategy, 219.
83 See Margaret to Philip, 16 October 1566. AGS: Estado, legajo 530, unfoliated, in which Margaret complained that the Prince of Orange had intimate details of the discussions at the Spanish court, and that copies of her letters were being sent back to the Netherlands. The Dutch also gathered intelligence through Vandenesse. Quoted in Lagomarsino, 280.
and such a plan could have allowed the army to depart much sooner than anticipated. Unfortunately for Philip, his appeal met with a similar response.\textsuperscript{84} Álava reported the refusal in his dispatch of 16 December, in which he also reported that he had had a contentious interview with Catherine de Medici on the previous day on the state of French religious affairs.\textsuperscript{85}

Therefore, the army would have to cross the Alps. It would follow the route discussed by Fourquevaux in his letter of 5 November, the same as that promoted by Granvelle in letters to Philip as early as May 1566. A core of newly raised Spanish soldiers would assemble at Cartagena, where they would cross by sea to northern Italy. Before beginning the march, they would replace the veterans from Philip’s Italian garrisons. They would then march overland across the Alps to Luxembourg, skirting the French border by moving directly between Philip’s territories and those of his allies or relatives.

The French responded to the news that a massive Spanish army planned to skirt their borders by calling for a large increase in their own army. The planned route for the Army of Flanders took the force perilously close to several territories (including strategic locations such as Metz and Toul) that had recently changed hands during the Hapsburg-Valois wars earlier in the century. Dispatches from Fourquevaux’s predecessors had provided additional reason to worry. In 1561 Sebastien de l’Aubespine had reported

\textsuperscript{84} Philip II to Don Francés de Álava, 30 November 1566, in \textit{NCF} vol. 9, 51.

\textsuperscript{85} The two had, at best, a contentious relationship. Álava frequently poured scorn on Catherine’s perceived ineptitude in government, and even once in August 1567 scathingly informed her that if her son Charles IX was in control of the government, the king would ensure that Álava’s complaints (concerning couriers sent to Alba being robbed) would be satisfied. As a whole, the Spanish ambassador had a low opinion of the French government and even less regard for the Queen Mother, whom he regarded as weak and ineffective. Alba, perhaps in an effort to smooth over the troubled waters, in the fall of 1566 even suggested replacing Álava with a more palatable representative.
rumblings that some of Philip’s senior councilors—including Alba—wanted the King to break the terms of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis and retain certain lands that under the treaty terms had reverted to French control. In January 1567 Pereira reported news current in Madrid that the French wanted to raise troops in Switzerland and Lorraine to man the borders as Alba passed. 86 In February he noted that Charles had mustered 10,000 troops for defense. 87 In March, the Prince of Condé was reported to have offered Charles more than 30,000 footmen and 8,000 horsemen either to protect the eastern borders against Alba’s march, or to make war on Spain. 88

Despite all these challenges to the original plan, Alba left Spain in the end of April 1567, after lengthy meetings with Philip concerning his exact instructions. The duke spent much of the winter attending to the extensive logistical preparations required for the successful march to the Low Countries. Alba took his formal leave of Philip’s household in the third week of March (as reported by Man in his letter of 25 March) and announced that as Philip planned would depart in June, the court should prepare themselves to make the voyage. 89 Pereira reported the same in his dispatch of 20 March, and also noted that he doubted that the King would leave by the beginning of June, as the Queen was pregnant again. 90 In the beginning of April, Pereira reported that he “thought it impossible” that the king would leave for Flanders before September; rather, he would wait for Alba to arrive to ensure that the situation was safe. 91

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86 Pereira to Sebastian I, 16 January 1567. IDAN, livro 210 f. 33v-34v.
87 Pereira to Sebastian, 6 February 1567. IDAN, livro 210 f. 36v-7.
88 Sutherland, 48.
89 Man to Sir William Cecil, 25 March 1567. CUL, Mm III 8, f. 110.
90 Pereira to Sebastian, 20 March 1567. IDAN, livro 210, f. 51-51v.
91 Pereira to Sebastian, 4 April 1567. IDAN, livro 210. f. 53-4.
Rather than follow his army across the Alps, Philip intended to sail directly from Spain to the Netherlands—an undertaking that would require no less than two months to ready a fleet large enough to transport Philip’s court, arrange for the court’s travel to the coast to meet the ships, and then the voyage itself. Alba met the troops assembled in Milan in early June and prepared to march north. Concerned observers still monitored the route for the Army of Flanders carefully; rumors had swirled that the Spanish king planned to attack Geneva and the city’s magistrates responded by stocking the city with supplies and raising loans for additional troops.

Events in the Low Countries in the spring and summer of 1567 further complicated both Alba’s mission and Philip’s planned voyage. Margaret, using the 13,000 German mercenaries funded by Philip in 1566, had made major gains against the Dutch nobility. Several key Dutch towns fell to Margaret in March 1567, and by May she had reentered Antwerp triumphantly. Accordingly, she dispatched a Spanish military commander living in the Netherlands, Gaspar de Robles, to Spain to explain to her half-brother why Alba and his troops were no longer needed. Ruy Gómez de Silva and his allies used these reports of victory to further their attacks on Alba and the king’s plans to travel to the Low Countries. The councilors argued persuasively that the massive force then under Alba’s command—close to 70,000 men—was excessive and an unnecessary expense. Some even pressured Philip to rescind Alba’s patents and call him back to Spain. In the end of May, Man reported a current rumor that Philip ordered Alba to discharge all his German troops and return to Málaga with all his Spanish soldiers.  

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92 Man to Cecil, 29 May 1567. CUL, Mm III 8 f. 77.
also further undermined Philip’s travel plans: if the regent could successfully reestablish control, there was no need for the king to undertake a complicated and dangerous voyage.

In a holograph postscript to his letter of 5 May 1567 dated ten days later, Man informed Cecil that “theare is no lyklyhood of the kÿgs departure hence before Septber” and that Philip intended not to follow the path of his army across the Alps but would instead travel by sea. Man hesitated to confirm the latter intelligence; as he noted, “the determynatyõ heare so varyeth I am afraid to wryte mooche thereof.”93 Alba had not yet reached Milan, and clearly Philip would not meet his planned departure date of June. Fourquevaux noted the same delays in his dispatches; neither ambassador felt confident enough to say whether or not Philip would ever go. Tommaso Sauli, the ambassador from Genoa, who had expressed his doubts about Philip’s plans as early as January, voiced them again in his dispatches of 16 May and 17 June.94

By the end of the summer of 1567 doubts increased concerning the king’s plans. Philip had not yet determined who would serve as his regent in Spain, which was vitally necessary before the king could leave. The government had to be controlled by someone he trusted, with enough authority and experience to handle the challenging task. Philip had learned this lesson well; he had been forced to return to Spain in August 1559 in part because his regent, his sister Juana, was losing control of the government; some of the problems in the Low Countries had been caused by Margaret’s inexperience. Normally, a member of the royal family assumed the task, but at this moment Philip lacked a viable candidate. Philip’s approaches to his cousin Maximilian, to consider appointing one of

93 Man to Cecil, 15 May 1567. CUL, Mm III 8 f. 75v.
94 Tommaso Sauli to the Doge and Senate of Genoa, 16 May and 17 June 1567. Archivo Segreto di Genova, AS 2413. unfoliated.
the emperor’s sons, had been rebuffed. Clearly, he could not appoint his only son Don Carlos, for his unstable behavior was rapidly becoming more and more erratic. As his Queen Elizabeth informed Fourquevaux in August 1567, “but for what the world would say, the king would lock up Don Carlos in a tower to make him more obedient.”\textsuperscript{95} Despite his father’s example, Philip had reservations about considering his pregnant queen to serve as his regent, although he did sign patents for her appointment in the summer of 1567.

In the end of July Man reported that “the kynges iourney towards Flaunders is now waxed cold, and doubtfull ageyn. So that it is talked that he will not hence towards flaunderes yntyll the spryng of the yere.”\textsuperscript{96} In the beginning of August Philip sent a private holograph letter which he encoded himself to Alba—who had not yet even reached the Netherlands—explaining that he could not leave Spain until the spring of 1568.\textsuperscript{97} Two weeks later, Man wrote that he had been informed that Philip would delay his departure until the queen gave birth, presumably in September.\textsuperscript{98} Fourquevaux and Pereira both reported the same in late August and early September. In the end of September, Pereira noted that Ruy Gómez had informed him that Philip had decided to put the journey off to the spring.\textsuperscript{99}

Despite the complications to the plans, Philip’s council discussed the plans for the Army of Flanders repeatedly. In September 1567 Dr. Man reported the contents of a

\textsuperscript{95} Parker, \textit{Philip II}, 91.
\textsuperscript{96} Man to Cecil, 28 July 1567. CUL, Mm III 8, f. 87.
\textsuperscript{97} Parker, \textit{Grand Strategy}, 122; see also Geoffrey Parker, “What if…Philip II had gone to the Netherlands?” in \textit{History Today}, vol. 54, no. 8 (August 2004), 40.
\textsuperscript{98} Man to Cecil, 10 August 1567, CUL, Mm III 8, f. 89.
\textsuperscript{99} Pereira to Sebastian, 27 September 1567. IDAN. Livro 210, f. 103-106.
conversation held with a high ranking member of the Spanish court on a diverse range of matters. His source, he wrote to Cecil, informed him that

since the apprehension of these noble men in Flandres it is closely talked among many that the king meaneth to reforme England also I am sure there be great practises to move him thereunto out of Italy and other places and some of his consel as the conte feria much inclynid unto the same. I pray god the Q Mañe credit not to much the Spanish ambassadors sweet wordes…I have ben warnid by one of the gretist of the consel to bewar how I trust the duke of Alva that I shuld fynd him a very Italian a deep dissembler.100

Man took several precautions to ensure that his warnings did not reach the wrong ears. He enciphered the text and included several lines of random symbols to complicate the task of deciphering the letter without a key.101

Man’s warnings from the “gretist of the consel” likely came from Ruy Gómez, who still worked to undermine his archenemy Alba. Gómez had also leaked high-level information to other representatives; he is the most likely source for Fourquevaux’s dispatch of November 1566 in which the French ambassador informed Catherine de Medici about the debates over the command of the Army of Flanders. As Alba was not present and Feria had been described as one of the primary proponents of an anti-English policy, they would not have provided Man with his intelligence. Gómez, on the other hand, would have benefited if the English found some way to discourage Philip from making the voyage or to complicate matters further for Alba. Should Philip remain in Spain, Gómez would constantly be at the king’s side and have succeeded in keeping distance between the king and his premier councilor.

In his 12 September 1567 dispatch to Catherine Fourquevaux reported that he had held a lengthy discussion with the papal nuncio concerning affairs in Flanders and the

100 Dr. John Man to Sir William Cecil, 26 September 1567. CUL: Mm III 8, f. 95-v.
101 See chapter 4, 000-0 for an image of this letter.
king’s potential departure.\textsuperscript{102} Evidently, the nuncio had heard that Philip would never leave, and had duly sent the information back to Rome in his dispatch of the 8th. In another dispatch on the 23rd, Fourquevaux related that “a certain person resident at court” had heard Philip explain why he had never intended to go to Flanders. Fourquevaux also noted that Philip had ordered Don Diego de Mendoza to release all the provisions and ships prepared for Philip’s voyage to the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{103} Several other diplomats, including the papal nuncio, had learned similar information. By fall 1567 Man had begun expressing repeated doubts that Philip would ever depart Spain; his words were echoed in the dispatches of Tommaso Sauli, Francisco Pereira and others. Philip’s decision to stay in Spain benefited Ruy Gómez de Silva as much as it harmed Alba; the Duke had formulated his strategy in anticipation that the king would arrive eventually.

Ultimately, Philip did decide to remain in Spain rather than traveling to the Low Countries. The birth of the Infanta Catalina in early October, combined with Don Carlos’s increasingly erratic behavior meant that he had no suitable heir in the event of his death. The King announced his decision publicly that he would not leave in 1567 to other heads of state after the news of the arrest of Egmont and Hornes, starting with the pope on 22 September. All speculation about his eventual departure disappeared after Philip first ordered Don Carlos’s arrest in January 1568 and after his Queen, whom he had intended to leave as his regent, died in childbirth in October 1568. The eighteen month period of indecision strained the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the other states of Western Europe. Ambassadors dedicated their resources to collecting whatever information they could on events in Flanders and Philip’s response.

\textsuperscript{102} Fourquevaux to Catherine de Medici, 12 September 1567, in \textit{DF} vol. 1, 265.
\textsuperscript{103} Fourquevaux to Charles IX, 23 September 1567, in \textit{DF} vol 1, 266-7.
Observant diplomats proved far more prescient than the king—or at least more than the king appeared to be in his public pronouncements—when trying to forecast the evolution of the Dutch crisis and Philip’s response. From Marc’ Antonio Barbaro, who concluded in May 1566 that even if Philip agreed to withdraw the Inquisition, “it cannot be hoped to quench this great fire” to Man, Fourquevaux, Pereira and Sauli who argued forcefully that Philip would never leave Spain, ambassadors used whatever sources they had to discern the king’s plans. Many of Philip’s premier councilors, including Ruy Gómez de Silva, the Count of Feria, and others, aided in the diplomats’ quest for knowledge. The inability to control both access to information and its dissemination—characterized by nothing less than a servant rifling through the king’s papers—undermined Philip’s ability to control the situation and develop an appropriate response. Even when the king learned details in a timely manner, he often could not or chose not to respond in a rapid fashion. While these phenomena were not the underlying reason that the Dutch crisis of 1566-7 developed into an eighty-year struggle for independence, they certainly contributed to it.
Conclusion

Many of the crucial moments in the arena of international negotiations came not because of events, but because of the potential for events. Sixteenth-century governments strained their newly developing resources to learn what their neighbors might do; no one could say with absolute conviction what would happen. This need for information led to the rapid creation of a new type of news network, one dedicated to the acquisition and dissemination of the intelligence needed for diplomacy. The inability for all governments to control the aspects of the information cycle—when individuals could acquire intelligence, how long the dissemination process would take, and the means by which they could use the information gathered—introduced elements of instability into the entire process. All types of intelligence grew in importance: news about potential plans became as important as intelligence about past events, because past occurrences could provide insight into whether reported gossip or rumors might be true. Policy therefore rested largely on the reported probabilities transmitted through these systems, rather than on certainties. These reports came from agents who were part of extensive networks of sources maintained by multiple governments in major European cities, but also in far-flung locations including the Caribbean, Baltic, and Mediterranean. These sources could be ambassadors, courtiers, couriers, freelance negotiators and spies. Government agents often made extensive use of existing commercial networks as well.
The prospects of probabilities occupied prominent places in diplomats’
dispatches. In many instances, they devoted as much space to what could happen as to
what had happened. When in January 1559 Dr. Nicholas Wotton, writing from the peace
talks in Cercamp, France, discussed the potential for a French-led conquest of England,
he mused that

it is thought, that the King [Philip] heere doth consider, that yf he shulde agree
withoute us, that then we wer not able long to resiste the French and the
Scottes…whereof might en sew, that the French shuld be Lordes of England and
Scotland to: and what wolde en sew therof, a blynde manne can see.¹

Truly, in 1559, across Europe blind men could see, and intelligent men could imagine,
what would have happened.

The English could not have resisted the might of a French army, especially one
combined with the forces of the Scots. Diplomatically, their only hope for aid lay in the
hands of Philip II, whose empire verged on bankruptcy, and who entertained thoughts of
an invasion himself. Domestically, there was the potential that enough discontented
Catholics might rise up against their bastard and probably—although in January 1559 not
certain—heretical queen in favor of an impeccably Catholic, legitimate heir in the person
of Mary Stuart. On the basis of Wotton’s report and others like it, in the spring and
summer of 1559 the English devoted resources to prepare for a potential war and divine
the intentions of their neighbors. In the winter and spring of 1559 the English needed to
use whatever resources were at their disposal to learn what the French and Spanish might
do, and much of that intelligence came through their diplomatic networks. Of course, the
invasion never came, and Wotton’s nightmare never materialized. Yet, this incident, and
dozens others, served as irrevocable confirmation of the importance of intelligence.

¹ Dr. Nicholas Wotton to Sir William Cecil, January 9, 1559, in Forbes, 17.
Without accurate information, West European governments could not hope to control their interactions to any degree of satisfaction.

In early modern negotiations information became a currency in its own right, one traded in this world of probabilities. Individuals with vital intelligence could range from a member of the royal family, councilor, courtier, ambassador, servant, secretary, or courier. Protestants traded with Catholics, servants overheard their masters, ambassadors spoke with courtiers, councilors, and their fellow diplomats. Information could be bartered for almost anything. In many instances, money aided in these transactions; as the author of the *Embajada española* commented, if an ambassador should “lack friends and ability to discover the truth and to verify his suspicions, money can help him, for it is, and always has been, the master key of the most closely locked archives.” In others, the trade rested on intangibles; the creation, or furtherance, of a new alliance; the promise of future support; or a good word whispered into the proper ear at the proper moment. In such a religiously charged environment, it was perhaps inevitable that many of these exchanges relied on religious motivations; Catholic ambassadors in Protestant England sought out their coreligionists, just as Protestant Englishmen searched for their fellows in Catholic France. These trades created new levels of negotiation between parties; of course, the ambassador resided at court to handle all the official negotiations between his master and his host. He and his staff also conducted diverse unofficial negotiations to obtain the intelligence needed by his government. This created a new culture, one that crossed multiple social, political, religious and national boundaries and included people from all walks of life.

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Agents collected information from two other areas beyond the sources found in the courtly world: couriers and papers. News had to be dispatched from one location to another to be useful, and this presented innumerable opportunities to collect intelligence. No matter what precautions they used, all governments suffered from leaks from documents and couriers in transit. Regardless of their religious orientation or governmental structure, all governments involved in diplomatic exchanges developed virtually identical methods for dispatching information, attempting to protect it en route, and intercepting the correspondence of their neighbors.

Pivotal moments in international negotiations—such as the potential invasions of England in 1559, 1568-71, or 1588; the Dutch revolt in 1566-8; each of the French Wars of Religion; the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572; or the Day of the Barricades in 1588—demonstrated the vital need for intelligence. In these moments governments needed urgent information in order to develop their policy accurately, in response to their neighbors’ initiatives, especially when war seemed to be looming on the horizon. They relied on these networks to provide that intelligence, so that any reaction came as a proper and measured response. These exchanges further emphasized how delicately the scales were balanced; an incorrect dispatch, wayward letter or overly sensitive ambassador could upset everything. Negotiations operated as a series of exchanges rather than one fluid process, because governments had to adapt and respond to every new piece of information provided by their sources.

These processes developed and expanded during the rare moment of peace enjoyed between wars. Although, certainly, Western Europe knew war in the mid-sixteenth century—most notably in the form of the French Wars of Religion, the Dutch
Revolt and Christendom’s wars against the Ottomans—the powers of England, France and Spain remained technically at peace for more than twenty-six years, followed by three years of undeclared war before the Armada of 1588. This period of peace, forced on mid-sixteenth century rulers by the military excesses and extravagant spending habits of their forbears, allowed for the solidification of a new type of news network facilitated by international negotiations. These negotiations succeeded briefly in spite of the occasional clash of arms in the Atlantic, Caribbean, northern France or the Low Countries, and in part because none of these rulers wanted war. Although the return of war in the late sixteenth century temporarily dethroned diplomacy as the primary means of interaction, it quickly reclaimed its place once peace returned two decades later, and once more following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The three decades of turbulent peace in the mid- to late-sixteenth century had proven the value of diplomacy in issues as diverse as settling trade disagreements, disputes over colonial possessions, negotiating religious diversity and averting war. Upon the end of the wars after 1598, one of the first actions of James I, Henry IV and Philip III was to exchange resident ambassadors. These diplomats used the same techniques to accomplish their tasks (both official and unofficial) and abided by the same conventions as their sixteenth-century predecessors.

Certainly, by the sixteenth century acquiring and disseminating news was not a new process, nor was diplomacy a new invention. All types of foreign and military news had value in a world largely shaped by war. Governments had also exchanged special ambassadors for more a millennium before the advent of the Reformation; Constantine, Justinian and Charlemagne used diplomats to conduct treaty negotiations and ratify international agreements, and these diplomats were expected to learn what they could
while performing their primary tasks. Oral news networks had existed alongside commercial ones for millennia; theological and humanistic manuscript news associations expanded and developed as international connections increased during the fifteenth century. The Spanish, Italian, and German commercial and banking families had maintained representatives across Europe to send relevant economic and political news, amongst other purposes.

What the Italians learned in the later fifteenth century, and passed on to the other governments of Western Europe less than a century later, was that maintaining resident embassies not only increased the volume of communications being dispatched between agents, ambassadors and government officials on an exponential level, but also provided for new ways of expanding their information base and collecting new intelligence on a regular basis. These agents abroad developed their own networks both at their host court and across Europe to collect intelligence and dispatch it home. Long serving resident ambassadors, and their staffs, could cultivate relationships in a much wider circle than a special ambassadors, who stayed for perhaps months and at most a year. These long-term associations could produce more diverse types of information and more steady sources than a brief liaison. Governments must have recognized the value of these exchanges, because they chose to maintain resident embassies for long periods of time at high expense.

Culturally, the exchange of resident ambassadors aided in the diffusion of ideas and goods. Previously, the missions of special ambassadors had presented intermittent opportunities for such exchanges; a diplomatic entourage might return to its home country with the latest fashions or books popular at their host court. Sixteenth-century
ambassadors received requests to purchase fine works of art, literary materials and other luxury goods at varying rates, depending on their location. Reformation-era diplomats found that these demands meant that they devoted a growing portion of their time to acquiring and dispatching requested items to their home country. By the seventeenth century, ambassadors found themselves serving as purchasing agents nearly as much as they handled state business. These appetites had been whetted in the sixteenth century by the realization that such business could be transacted on a regular basis through resident ambassadors.

The repeated upheavals of the Reformation served as the crucible that created and tested new ideas and institutions across Europe. Amongst these was the proliferation of the Italian model of diplomacy, first born and refined in the interactions amongst the city states of northern Italy in the fifteenth century. Hesitant steps toward adopting this new method of interaction in the first decades of the sixteenth century faltered in the face of the Reformation and out of a preference for medieval practices. A reluctant return to diplomacy in the middle of the sixteenth century crossed, rather than followed, the newly forming religious lines dividing Europe into camps of Protestants and Catholics. Constant contact through ambassadors, agents, couriers, servants and courtiers meant that governments now had new ways of learning information, influencing domestic and foreign policies in neighboring countries, and executing policies of their own. International discourse began to transform from a pattern of response to conflict to active, constant management and prevention of disputes. Clearly, such conflict management could not hope to succeed all the time, and of course it did not. But, even the possibility

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3 See Levin, *Agents of Empire*, chapters 5 and 7.
opened new doors to mid-sixteenth century rulers that their medieval predecessors could only have seen in their dreams. These possibilities—and the negotiations that fostered them—rested on information collected from and disseminated through widespread networks of diverse individuals.
Appendix A: Sixteenth-Century Postal Routes of England, France, Italy and Spain

1 Taken from E. John B. Allen, *Post and Courier Service*, 54, 59, 61, 64.
Memoria de los gastos extraordinarios de 20 de marzo, 1571, adelante

A 20 de marzo se pagaron a Martín el correo por un paquete de cartas... 0 10 0
A 23 se dieron a los engules que vinieron con los barcos... 1 7 0
A 17 se hicieron quince correos por un despacho que llevó a Cádiz... 3 0 0
A 28 se embarcaron a granche cuatro veces... 1 3 0

Cenizas en un horno a Sanduches y a la saya para reconocer los que allí arriban... 2 10 0
En un paquete que Oña por francías... 0 13 0
A Condemnane y Martín correos que me truque en paquetes... 1 0 0
A 28 se hicieron en diez veces... 1 0 0

3 "Gastos Extraordinarios" of Don Guerau de Spes, March 1571-January 1572. AGS: DGT inventario 24, leg. 566, unfoliated.
Por el agujero de la caraza Sáquefuerte se
volumen a 5.0. de sitio
A 71, por un pliego de carta a Bertran
el correo
A Rafael el correo altera por que
Por estar estos días para enviar la carta y
estar partir
A Conseguir correo paquete
Brens se detenía en la hora y no se
a Madrid
A un hombre que se refugió a Doblas y Sanduco
A Segura correo de Bruselas por un pliego que
se le quitaría para Londres
Pasara de la carcel a Melchor Weer en
San Domingo. Saya de día en orden de los.

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