

by circumstances as by the will of the Queen or the persuasions of her privy councillors or the interests of commerce or the pressures of religion. For, as Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary in 1914, once wrote: "There is in great affairs so much more, as a rule, in the minds of the events (if such an expression may be used) than in the minds of the chief actors."⁴²

42. Grey of Falldon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916*, I.51.

II. *The First Quarrels with Spain*

Having seen something of the makers of the Elizabethan foreign policy, let us now look at the origins and growth of the first quarrels between Elizabethan England and Spain, the quarrels that developed during the 1560s and early 1570s. These quarrels are good examples of what Sir Edward Grey meant by there being often "so much more, as a rule, in the minds of the events . . . than in the minds of the chief actors." For they were not primarily due to deliberately hostile policies on the part of either government, or at least of either sovereign. They were the outcome partly of Elizabeth's efforts to reassert England's independence, partly of Philip II's determination to reassert his authority against the opposition, and eventual rebellion, in his Netherlands provinces.

During the decade before Elizabeth's accession, England had twice been in serious danger of losing her independence. The country was in the sixteenth century a middleweight, at best, in a world dominated by two heavyweights, Spain and France. The King of Spain at this time ruled also over the Netherlands, Franche-Comté, much of Italy, and the Spanish settlements in the Americas. The population of Spain alone was probably two or three times as great as that of England. King Philip II's income was even more disparate, especially now that the great silver

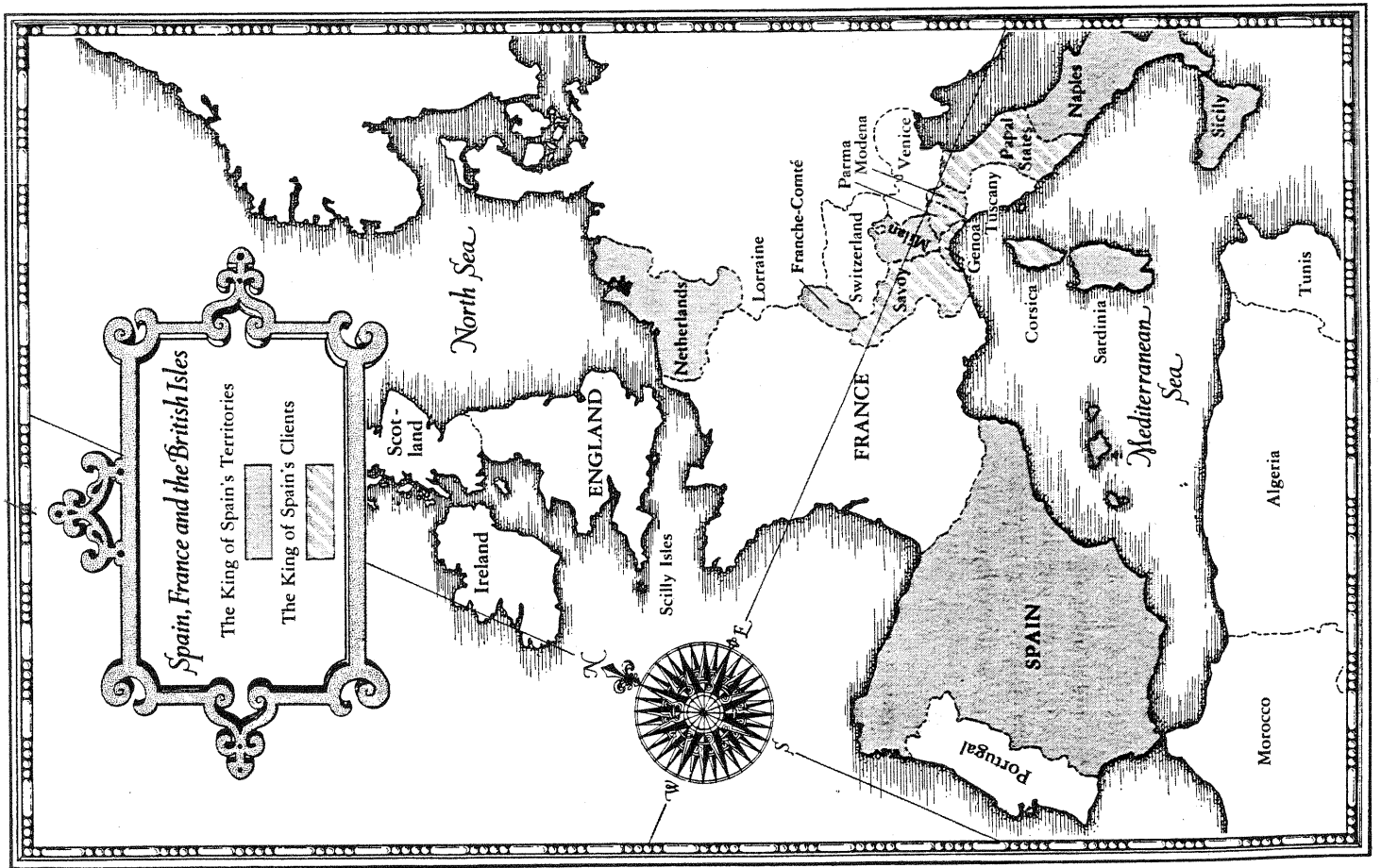
First Quarrels with Spain

mines at Potosi in South America were coming on stream so that, as Sir Roger Williams put it a few years later, "His treasure comes unto him as our salads to us; when we have eat all, we fetch more out of our gardens. So doth he fetch his treasure out of the ground after spending all that is coined."¹

France, the other heavyweight, had a population at least three or four times as great as England's and threatened a greater, because a nearer, danger than Spain. For, having just snatched Calais from Mary Tudor, France now possessed the entire southern, windward shore of the Channel. This was a considerable advantage when ships could not sail close to the wind and the prevailing southerly and westerly winds might pen the English navy in port for days or even weeks. Moreover, France, through its fast-growing domination over its old ally Scotland, had access through England's "postern gate" across England's only land frontier. This was particularly dangerous when Elizabeth came to the English throne, because Scotland's young queen, Mary Stuart, was married to the French king's son and heir. She was also, although statutorily barred, genealogically heir-presumptive to the Crown of England. She was, indeed, in many Roman Catholic eyes, rightful present Queen of England instead of the heretic Elizabeth, whose father's and mother's marriage had been pronounced unlawful by the Pope.

This last point was the more serious because both Spain and France were officially Roman Catholic and both their Kings were becoming gravely alarmed by the spread of heresy in their realms and by the challenge it, particularly in its Calvinist form, was beginning to make to their political authority. Could England under a Protestant or at any rate a not-Catholic, queen therefore still rely, as she had relied during the first half of the century, upon the secular jealousy between these two Roman Catholic superpowers to drive one to support her if the other turned hos-

1. *List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series, II. para. 467.*



tile? Might they not be induced by the exhortations of a revitalized and aggressive Papacy to turn their combined arms against this country that was again slipping out of the Papal fold?

There was one encouraging circumstance. After half a century of wars, fought mostly in Italy, both France and Spain were financially and psychologically exhausted. Neither, therefore, was prepared to risk the renewal of general war over the British Isles. And, as both knew, aggression against England by either one of them could hardly be tolerated by the other. For England was of great, indeed of vital, importance to both of them. If it fell under French control, as it had so nearly done in the last year or two of Edward VI's reign, that would go far toward cutting off the Netherlands from Spain and would deal a serious, if not a fatal, blow to Spanish greatness. If it fell under Spanish control, as it had done even more recently through Mary Tudor's marriage to Philip II, that would go far toward cutting French communications with Scotland. More serious still, it would all but close that throttling ring of Spanish territories and dependencies that encircled France from the Pyrenees along the western Alps through Franche-Comté and the Netherlands. Add to this that England possessed a regular war navy, something which was unparalleled in Spain or France; a navy, too, backed by an equally unparalleled regular administrative service. True, the navy was small and somewhat run-down and its administration not free from corruption. Nevertheless, it was still a force to be reckoned with, as foreign observers recognized.

During the decade before Elizabeth's accession much else besides the navy had been allowed to run down, and England's weakness and disunity had made it seem, in Paget's phrase, "a bone between two dogs."² Determination to end this situation, to reassert England's independence, was the main driving-force be-

2. *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, II. 3.*

hind the policies of Elizabeth and her ministers, of William Cecil especially. This was so not only in their foreign policy, but in every aspect of affairs. It inspired the government's efforts to develop new industries, and to encourage old industries, that would make the country no longer dependent upon imports from abroad for firearms, artillery, gunpowder, copper wire for wool carding, and other necessities of defense and subsistence. It underlay the Queen's efforts to restore unity, or at least to damp down dissension in ecclesiastical matters while again breaking with Rome.

In foreign affairs during the first half of the 1560s this same determination to reassert England's independence found expression in hostility to France rather than to Spain. The first step was to put an end to French domination in Scotland by supporting, secretly at first, then openly in arms, the Protestant and nationalist revolt there in 1559-1560. It was a terribly risky but skillfully timed and ultimately successful intervention, though in its final stages fumblingly executed by the troops sent in to assist the Scots in expelling the French soldiery. For its success, and indeed for its inception, much of the credit must go to William Cecil; for the skillfulness of its timing the Queen herself was largely responsible.

This was followed in 1562-1564 by a superficially similar armed intervention on the side of the Huguenots in the first of sixteenth-century France's numerous "Wars of Religion." This intervention, largely inspired by Robert Dudley the Queen's favorite, soon to be made Earl of Leicester, ended in disaster. The English army sent over to Normandy, less to assist the Huguenots than to hold Le Havre as a bargaining counter for the recovery of Calais, was forced to surrender when the Huguenots remembered belatedly that they were Frenchmen and turned to bite the English hand that had been stretched out ostensibly to help them. It was an object lesson in the unreliability of foreign Protestant rebels that Elizabeth was never to forget. Nevertheless, it was not

without its beneficial fruits. For when once peace was restored in 1564 the French royal government—at least so long as the Queen Mother Catherine de Medici had influence in it—made it a guiding principle thenceforward to maintain friendship with England, even if this meant abandoning Mary Stuart and hopes of French domination in Scotland.

This taming of French hostility and winning of Scottish amity were fundamental achievements. England need now no longer fear a Franco-Scottish stab in the back through the "postern gate," no longer would face the probability of a war on two fronts if relations with France again deteriorated. For all practical purposes England became an island. Invasion now could only be sea-borne, the kind that the country was least ill-equipped to deal with, as Henry VIII had demonstrated in 1545.

Nevertheless, while Scottish amity was being won and French hostility was being tamed, Spanish friendship was cooling. Philip II was probably more relieved than grieved by Elizabeth's polite rejection of his offer of marriage. Certainly he made the offer with no great enthusiasm. "Such a marriage," he wrote to his ambassador at Elizabeth's court, "would appear like entering upon a perpetual war with France, seeing the claims that the Queen of Scots has to the English throne."³ It would be ruinously expensive, too. Nevertheless, "I have decided to place on one side all other considerations which might be urged against it and am resolved to render this service to God and offer to marry the Queen of England," provided, of course, that she professed the Roman Catholic faith. This was no way to propose to a proud and vain young woman of twenty-five; but doubtless Philip half hoped to have his suit rejected.

All the same, one who took his title of Most Catholic King as seriously as Philip did could hardly fail to be distressed to see

3. *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, I.21-23.

Elizabeth acting so vigorously and so often as Defender of what to him was altogether the wrong Faith. It was bad enough that in England itself Roman Catholicism was falling into near-fatal decline, as the government damped down the religious temperature and as the old Catholic priests died off with none as yet to replace them. It was worse that Elizabeth was actively encouraging Protestant rebels in Scotland and France and maybe even in Philip's own Netherlands, however much she might protest that she was merely upholding Scottish liberties against French encroachments, or intervening in France to regain Calais rather than to assist the Huguenots.

Yet what worried the Spaniards in these early years was not only, was not even chiefly, that Elizabeth was supporting the wrong religion. What most worried them was that she was taking such seemingly appalling risks in confronting the power of France. It made them fear that they might be drawn into another long and exhausting war to bail the English out. They had nothing but contempt for England's military strength. Indeed, as Cecil recognized, in military matters the country had hardly as yet emerged from the bow-and-arrow stage. The modernizing and re-equipping of England's land forces was to be one of the important Elizabethan achievements, but it was an achievement of the 1570s and 1580s. In the 1560s the country had only antiquated and ill-armed levies to put against the fire-power of France's military forces. And for Spain, a French Great Britain would be even worse than a Protestant Great Britain.

Philip did what he could to lessen these dangers. He persuaded the Pope to withhold his excommunication of Elizabeth. He tried to persuade Elizabeth herself to act more circumspectly. But he would not risk a renewal of war with France by using force to compel the English Queen to proceed more discreetly. Not all his ministers, however, shared Philip's patience. Some, like his first ambassador to Elizabeth, the Count of Feria, felt that En-

land was "more fit to be dealt with sword in hand than by cajolery."⁴ This view was shared by Cardinal Granvelle, Philip's chief minister with the Regent Margaret of Parma in the Netherlands. Granvelle had special reasons for impatience. He was convinced that English merchants at Bruges and Antwerp were aiding and encouraging the growing Calvinist minority in the Low Countries. He suspected, too, that the English government might not only be encouraging the Calvinists but also be abetting the mounting opposition that he was encountering from the Netherlands nobility—from William of Orange, the Count of Egmont, Count Horne, and the rest. Elizabeth's interventions to aid the Lords of the Congregation in Scotland in 1560 and to aid the French Huguenots in 1562 therefore took on, in Granvelle's mind, the appearance of an international Protestant conspiracy that had the Netherlands next on its list.

Granvelle's anger was brought to boiling point by Elizabeth's licensing of a general privateering war against French Catholics at sea in 1563. This added solid Netherlands and Spanish grievances to the Cardinal's suspicions and to the grievances already felt by certain sections of the Netherlands business world over the very considerable increases in English customs duties by the new 1558 Book of Rates and over older and more long-disputed dues. The Channel and Narrow Seas were soon swarming with English and Huguenot privateers who made little distinction between French Catholic and other Catholic shipping—and the richest and most numerous Catholic shipping in the Channel was Netherlands and Spanish. These privateers thus became a serious nuisance, indeed a considerable menace, to Spanish and Netherlands trade and communications.

Then, toward the end of 1563, Granvelle got his chance. That autumn the English troops, returning from the disaster at Le Havre, brought the plague to London and southeastern England.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

In November Granvelle, seizing upon the plague as a pretext, placed an embargo on all cloth imports from London. Elizabeth retaliated, and soon Anglo-Netherlands trade was at a standstill.

Granvelle was confident that the stoppage must soon bring the English government to its knees. After all, no trade meant no customs duties and the customs were, with the land revenues, one of the two great pillars of English crown finance. Besides, at least three-quarters of all England's overseas trade passed through London to Antwerp and the Low Countries. This excessive concentration, putting so many eggs into the one basket, was dangerous enough in itself. What made it doubly dangerous was that well over three-quarters of all English exports were cloth, woollen cloth. For the cloth manufacture was the only considerable industry in what was still an overwhelmingly agricultural country. Now, as something like one-half of the total English production of cloth was exported, and as all that cloth was woollen cloth, a slump or stoppage in exports affected not only the spinners, weavers, and others who made up the cloth but also the farmers and landowners whose sheep grew the wool.

This excessive concentration of England's overseas trade upon Antwerp was a matter that had been worrying English governments and some of the English Merchant Adventurers ever since, in 1550, Antwerp had for the first time been glutted, had for the first time been unable to dispose of all the cloth the English merchants brought over for sale. Under Northumberland, and under Mary, too, there had been sporadic attempts to find other outlets, other "vents" to use the Elizabethan word, for English exports and other sources for English imports. For such purposes the Muscovy Company, trading to Russia through the White Sea, had been established in 1553, and Wyndham had made his West African voyage in the same year. Elizabeth's government, too, in its anxiety to reassert England's independence, had already given the problem some thought. The first of John Hawkins's West African—West Indian voyages in 1563 was, in a sense, an extension

of the Wyndham enterprises. Even earlier than that, back in April 1560, Cecil had been wondering "How the vent of cloths might be issued unto the Holst [i. e., Holstein] or other places."⁵ The sharpening quarrel with the Hanscatic Towns, however, over the restriction of their trading privileges in England—another aspect of the reassertion of English independence—made it difficult to find a new "vent" in Germany.

Granvelle's 1563 embargo gave the matter a fresh urgency. So in 1564 the English government negotiated an agreement with Emden whereby the Merchant Adventurers transferred their trade from Antwerp thither. As Emden lay just outside the Netherlands, the Merchant Adventurers were also granted a new charter which extended their monopoly to include northwestern Germany. The new charter also strengthened their control over the trade, and by strengthening the oligarchical character of their organization, incidentally made it easier for the government to direct and control them.

Nevertheless, although Cecil had probably been in touch with Emden eight months before the Granvelle embargo, the move there was something of an improvisation. "It fell out upon a casualty," as Cecil put it. At this stage, even he was not going beyond thinking how good it would be "to divert some part of our trade" away from Antwerp. That, however, was still further than many, both in the merchant community and in government and court circles, were as yet ready to go. This was particularly true among the smaller traders, for to them the great attraction of the Antwerp trade was that it required only a small capital. It could be, and was, carried in quite small ships—few used in that traffic were above fifty, or at the outside eighty, tons. Small ships needed only small crews and the short passage across the Narrow Seas meant that little of the cargo space would be filled with their

5. Quoted in Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth*, p. 167.

6. T. Wright, *Queen Elizabeth and Her Times*, I. 175.

victuals. Nor for that brief journey was much armament necessary. So, as soon as a settlement was patched up with the Netherlands government in December 1564 (after Granvelle's dismissal) and as trade was reopened in January 1565, the Merchant Adventurers flocked back to Antwerp, for which Emden had indeed proved but a poor substitute.

Nor was it only the Merchant Adventurers who were loth to see the Antwerp connection broken or seriously reduced. Sir Thomas Smith (the author of *De Republica Anglorum*, Principal Secretary under Edward VI and again in 1572, who was now, in 1565, the resident English ambassador in France) regarded Anglo-Netherlands trade as a guarantee of Anglo-Spanish friendship. He believed that because of their English trade the Netherlands could "by no provocation be brought to have war with England six months together." Had they not compelled Charles V to let them opt out of his quarrel with Wolsey's England in 1528 precisely six months after the outbreak of that conflict? So, Smith went on, "I may call the peace with France one of discretion, with Flanders and Brabant one of necessity"—of necessity to both England and Spain. Smith's views were widely shared, and not only among the more conservative nobility, such as the Howards, or among the Catholic or semi-Catholic nobles and gentry such as the northern Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland, who were growing increasingly alarmed at the steady decline of the old religion and the progress of Protestantism at home as well as abroad. Many besides these, many moderate men and Protestants, still felt that England needed Spanish friendship if it was not to be at the mercy of the old enemy France, and that Spanish friendship went with the Antwerp trade.

During the next few years, however, the mounting opposition to Spanish rule in the Netherlands and the increasing distur-

7. Quoted in Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth*, p. 295.

bances that culminated in the widespread image-breaking and desecration of Catholic churches during the riots of the summer of 1566 cast more and more doubts upon Antwerp's adequacy as an international trading center. The doubts afflicted Italians and Germans and Portuguese as well as Englishmen and they made the English Merchant Adventurers less unready to consider moving. So, in May 1567 an agreement was made with Hamburg, despite the ill will and opposition of the other Hanse Towns. By this agreement the Merchant Adventurers were to transfer their trade to Hamburg, where they were promised special privileges and accommodation for the next ten years. Now, Hamburg was probably the one place in northwestern Europe that could provide a real alternative "vent," and not just a trickling overflow, to Antwerp. So a move there must greatly diminish, if it did not entirely end, England's dependence upon Spain and the Spanish Netherlands in matters of trade and finance. And the events of the next eighteen months ensured that the move took place.

The first of those events happened barely three months after the English agreement with Hamburg. In August 1567 the Duke of Alba marched into Brussels at the head of 10,000 Spanish troops to stamp out the already dying embers of the 1566 conflagration. He was soon reinforced by Italian, German, and Walloon levies to over 50,000 men. Thereupon the hitherto largely home-ruling and militarily inoffensive Netherlands became the garrison area of the biggest and best army in Christendom.

This was one of the great turning points of early modern history. The Netherlands westward frontier lay a bare ninety miles from Paris; its westward coast lay little more than thirty miles from the coast of Kent, little more than a hundred miles from the Thames estuary and London. For both France and England, therefore, the presence of this great Spanish army, this shifting northward of the center of gravity of Spanish military power, was a matter of urgent concern. Indeed, for the next hundred years, until the final collapse of Spanish power in the Netherlands

in the 1667 War of Devolution, two of the dominant themes of western European international relations would be Spain's anxiety to keep open the communications with its main army in the Low Countries, and French determination to sever those communications.

For the moment, however, from September 1567 until September 1570, France was rendered helpless by civil wars. The Huguenots rose in rebellion, suspecting, wrongly, that the levies of Swiss troops made by their government to watch Alba's march from Italy were intended against themselves, were, in fact, the first-fruits of the Roman Catholic conspiracy they suspected Alba and Catherine de Medici had hatched in a meeting at Bayonne back in 1565. So Philip II had, for the time being, little or nothing to fear from France—all the less because the downfall of Mary Stuart in Scotland in June 1567 dealt what was almost the final blow to French hopes of dominant influence there.

How, then, would Philip employ Alba's great army when once the Netherlands were subdued? Would he take advantage of French impotence to bring England back by force to the Papal and Habsburg fold? Certainly that was what Cecil and a good many other English privy councillors feared, and some of Philip's actions encouraged those fears. In the spring of 1568 he brusquely expelled from his court the resident English ambassador, Dr. John Mann. This was, in fact, hardly surprising, for Dr. Mann was, to begin with, an odd choice as ambassador to Catholic Spain—a married Protestant cleric, who had been Warden of Merton College, Oxford, and was now Dean of Gloucester. His behavior, moreover, even if pardonable in an academic, was less than tactful in an ambassador. An ambassador in Madrid just did not at his dinner table call the Pope "a canting little monk."⁸ All the same, Mann's expulsion looked sinister to nervous Englishmen, the more so because in September of the same year Philip

8. *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, II.29.

recalled his own resident ambassador from England, the friendly de Silva, and replaced him by the notoriously hawkish Guerau de Spes, a crony of the Duke of Feria and of the English Catholic exiles.⁹ This, again, had a fairly innocuous explanation. De Silva had been four years in his job, which was about as long as most ambassadors' finances could manage, and he had been begging for a change. Nevertheless, these actions of Philip's were not reassuring.

Yet when William of Orange in this same summer of 1568 invaded the Netherlands in an attempt to raise a revolt that would drive out Alba, the English government made no move to assist him. The reason was that even Cecil, the councillor most alive to the potential threat of Alba's army, realized that any serious, official aid to William might well mean war with Spain. That was a war that England was still very ill-prepared to face. Moreover, it would be a single-handed war, since France would be unable to help and an exploratory mission to Germany by Henry Killigrew made it clear that very few of the Protestant princes there were prepared to challenge Habsburg power. Besides, experience in Scotland in 1560 and even more in France in 1562-1563 had taught Cecil, and still more sharply Elizabeth, how little reliance could be placed upon foreign Protestant rebels.

Nevertheless, although by the autumn of 1568 Alba had run William of Orange out of the Netherlands, his troubles were not yet all over. His mastery over the country depended upon his army; his control over his army depended upon his ability to pay it; and William's invasion had spoiled his hope of doing that and in addition sending "a river of silver" back to Spain. He had, on the contrary, to ask Philip to send *him* money. Philip, faced with a serious rebellion of the Moriscos in Spain and with a growing Turkish threat to the western Mediterranean—they had besieged

9. Guerau de Spes's embassy has been studied in the unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis (1972) by J. Retamal Favreau.

Malta in 1565—was also short of money and had to borrow from the bankers of Genoa to meet Alba's need. The loan, some £80,000, was sent round in specie from Spain aboard five small unarmed ships. Bad weather and Huguenot privateers forced them to seek shelter, some in Plymouth and one in Southampton. De Spes, newly arrived in England, thereupon asked Elizabeth to see the money safely conveyed, by sea or overland, to Flanders.

At first Elizabeth seemed ready to do this, and as late as 18 December 1568 de Spes wrote to assure Philip that the prospects seemed fairly good.¹⁰ The money was, however, unloaded and brought ashore—for safety, it was said. Cecil also had discovered that until it was handed over at Antwerp it still legally belonged to the Genoese bankers, who might be ready to lend it to Elizabeth instead of to Philip. He mentioned this question of ownership to de Spes on December 21 and de Spes jumped to the (perhaps slightly premature) conclusion that Elizabeth had decided to seize the money. He wrote off at once to warn Alba and to suggest that the Duke should order the counter-seizure of English ships and goods in the Netherlands and Spain.¹¹ This Alba promptly did, on December 28—before he knew that on December 29 Elizabeth had told de Spes definitely that she was indeed taking over the loan.¹² News of Alba's action reached London on January 3 and Elizabeth immediately retaliated in kind. It was 1563-1564 over again.

Why did Elizabeth and Cecil indulge in what Professor Wilson calls "an escapade as costly as it was senseless"?¹³ Costly, perhaps, it was, but was it entirely senseless? Why did they do it? I must confess that I find it difficult to be as dogmatic on this point as Professor Wilson. Elizabeth herself was certainly short of money

10. *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, II, 88.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

12. *Relations politiques des Pays Bas* (ed. K. de Lettenhove), V, 205.

13. C. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands*, p. 26.

and the Netherlands disturbances, followed by Alba's rule, had made it almost impossible to borrow in the former fashion at Antwerp—that was why Philip had to borrow in Genoa. It seems highly probable, too, that as Dr. Conyers Read suggests, Elizabeth and Cecil had not expected so fierce a reaction from Alba.¹⁴ Possibly, as he also suggests, their idea was to hold the money while bargaining over rewards for its salvage. And of course, the 1496 Intercursus Magnus and other Anglo-Netherlands treaties did require that no reprisals should be made until after a formal protest and refusal of justice. So Alba, by his precipitate action, had put himself legally in the wrong.

Alba's reaction was, indeed, significant. Realizing that he had been hustled into hostile action prematurely by de Spes, he quickly sent an envoy to England to patch things up. This gave Elizabeth and Cecil the chance and the confidence to draw the matter out at length. When we remember Cecil's, and to some extent Elizabeth's, earlier alarm over the presence of the Spanish army in the Netherlands, it does seem at least plausible to suspect that in thus dragging out the negotiations they were not entirely innocent of ideas about making life difficult for Alba. And if now, why not in originally seizing the Genoese loan?

And surely they did make life difficult for him. It is true that the loan was less than a fifth of the annual cost of his army. But it was the crucial fifth, like the sixpence in Mr. Micawber's famous equation. The proof of this lies not only in the rapidity of Alba's attempt to open negotiations with Elizabeth. It is even more obvious in the hastening of his attempt to impose, as early as March 1569, a new system of permanent taxes on the Netherlands, the notorious Tenth and Twentieth Penny sales taxes. This attempt provoked such an outcry, even from his own councillors, that he had to postpone the plan for two years in return for grants of the traditional sort, wrung from the provincial estates only after

14. Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth*, p. 433.

considerable bullying. The harm done went deeper still, as appeared when the next rebellion came in 1572. Then the burghers of Holland and Zeeland would refuse, as those of Gouda put it, to fight for Alba and the Tenth Penny even against the wild Sea Beggars and such "hirsute and savage corsairs" (the description is Motley's)¹⁵ as the Count de la Marck.

Nevertheless, this quarrel over the seizure of the Genoese loan did make life difficult for Elizabeth and Cecil too. For in 1569 there were plenty of Englishmen, merchants and nobles, at court and in the country, who, as in 1563–1564, felt that Spain's friendship was essential for England's safety and that Spain's friendship went with the Antwerp trade. As a result, a formidable get-rid-of-Cecil movement quickly developed. It grew, not just among northern Catholics, conservative Howards, and such like. Many moderate men, non-Catholics, actual Protestants, jumped onto the anti-Cecil bandwagon, men like the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Sussex, even the Earl of Leicester. They had the sympathy of many London and East Coast merchants and businessmen, worried over the trade stoppages.

The movement was reinforced by the growing, widespread anxiety among all classes and all shades of religion about the succession to the throne, and by mounting exasperation over Elizabeth's repeated evasions of growing pressure from Privy Council, court, and the 1563 and 1566 Parliaments for her to settle the matter by becoming a wife and mother, a duty expected of all Queens and of nearly all their female subjects. It was, however, the mixing up of this anxiety about the succession with anxiety lest the quarrel with Spain might escalate into war that proved the undoing of the anti-Cecil movement. This encouraged, if it did not actually produce, the idea of providing for the succession by letting Elizabeth stay as Virgin Queen for life, if that was what she wanted, but securing the future by marrying

15. J. L. Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (Everyman ed.), II, 286.

the Duke of Norfolk, England's one remaining Duke, to Mary Stuart, who through an exile and semi-prisoner in England was still next heir-in-blood. A great many people, however, especially in the more populous and Protestant southern counties, were determined not to have the Roman Catholic Queen of Scots as Queen of England at any price. So the anti-Cecil movement lost much of its support, all the more as Cecil succeeded in driving a wedge between the Duke of Norfolk and the northern Catholics over their rival claims to the Dacre inheritance.

Some of the more extreme members of the movement did attempt to whip up renewed anger against Cecil by trying, through de Spes, to get Alba to intercept the Merchant Adventurers' summer fleet, bound now in 1569 under naval escort for Hamburg instead of for Antwerp. That, they reckoned, would bring down again upon the Secretary the fury of the merchants and the anger of the nobility. But Alba would not do as they asked; indeed, for lack of naval forces, he could not. So the Merchant Adventurers' move to Hamburg was not interrupted and, unlike their 1564 move to Emden, proved a very considerable success. England's foreign trade was demonstrably escaping from its Antwerp strait-jacket and "another nail was driven into the coffin of the London-Antwerp trade."¹⁶ Thereupon the motley anti-Cecil coalition melted away. Even its more reactionary elements fell apart, and when the northern Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland broke into open rebellion they found little support and showed little spirit—indeed, some believed that they only rebelled because they feared their fervently Catholic wives, who were near at hand, more than the Queen, who was far away.

The fiasco of the Revolt of the Northern Earls dealt a fatal blow to the reactionary Roman Catholic forces inside England. Their future efforts, from the Ridolfi plot of 1571–1572 onward, had to depend upon dwindling hopes of the assassination of the

16. C. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands*, p. 25.

Queen coupled with successful foreign invasion. The year 1569 also brought a decisive step out of that suffocating political and commercial dependence upon Spain and the Spanish Netherlands which had stifled English foreign policy and damped down English maritime enterprise for most of the past twenty years.

Off with the old also meant on with the new, meant exchanging the dying entente with Spain for an uneasy alliance with France (English alliances with France have usually had a tendency to be uneasy). The reversal of alliances came about in this manner. In September 1570 the third French War of Religion came to an end. During the next two years Louis of Nassau, the brother of William of Orange, and some of the Huguenot leaders—François de la Noue, du Plessis, and others: Coligny perhaps came in only toward the end and only reluctantly¹⁷—gained an increasing influence over the young and feeble King Charles IX. By the summer of 1572 they had brought him to the brink of allowing French intervention in the Netherlands to support a new invasion attempt by William. Louis offered, or at least suggested that, as the price of French help, France should get a good part of modern Belgium, including the coast of Flanders. In the hope of drawing Elizabeth in too, he also suggested that Holland and Zealand might go to her in return for her assistance.

Elizabeth, however, had no desire to acquire Holland and Zealand. She had even less desire to see the French acquire Flanders. But how was she to stop them? Being still in the midst of a quarrel with Spain, she could not think of taking on France as well—it took Charles I and Buckingham to do that. Indeed, Leicester and the new English resident ambassador in France, Francis Walsingham, would have had England join in heartily alongside France in a general anti-Habsburg alliance. But neither Elizabeth nor Cecil was willing to see French aggrandizement in the

17. N. M. Sutherland, *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew and the European Conflict, 1559–1572*, p. 147.

Netherlands, French power spreading eastward of Calais and the Straits of Dover. Nor did they trust the constancy of French policy—very sensibly, as the event turned out. So they adopted instead the policy of trying to check and control the French by cooperating with them in various more limited ways.

It is just possible that Elizabeth's expulsion of the Netherlands privateers, the Sea Beggars, from her southeastern ports in March 1572 and their seizure of Brielle on April 1 may have been a first step in this direction. Professor J. B. Black has argued strongly that this action was simply what it seemed to be, a movement of exasperation at the Sea Beggars' depredations and a friendly gesture to Alba and Spain.¹⁸ Dr. Williamson, on the other hand, points out that no similar expulsion was decreed against the western privateers operating from Plymouth and west country ports. He argues that if Elizabeth had been truly anxious about the depredations and truly benevolent towards Spain, she would surely have denied all her ports to all Spain's enemies. Moreover, it was odd of her to send the order for the Sea Beggars to leave Dover by John Hawkins, whose last African—West Indies voyage had been treacherously destroyed by the Spaniards in the autumn of 1568 at San Juan de Ullua. In truth, however, the evidence is too slender to justify dogmatism either way. We can only say with Dr. Williamson that Elizabeth's expulsion of the Sea Beggars was an action "ostensibly beneficial to Spain, but in fact [one that] added enormously to Spain's difficulties."¹⁹

We are back on firmer ground, however, with the conclusion, also in April 1572, by the Treaty of Blois, of a defensive alliance with France. This, while silent about any offensive action, provided for mutual aid if either country were attacked by a third party. Elizabeth tried, though without much success, to broaden this into a wider defensive league, to include the German Prot-

18. J. B. Black, "Elizabeth, the Sea Beggars, and the Capture of Brielle," in *English Historical Review*, XLVff: 30-47.

19. J. A. Williamson, *Hawkins*, pp. 261-267; *The Tudor Age*, p. 315.

estant princes, Denmark, Tuscany, and Venice. That would have prevented France from "going it alone." It was, in fact, the same policy that Castlereagh was to adopt two and a half centuries later toward Tsar Alexander I of Russia, the policy that he described as "grouping Alexander."²⁰

At the same time, Elizabeth took steps to prevent the French from getting too much of a foothold in the coastal areas of the Netherlands that were vital to England's security. She pushed English "volunteers" under Sir Humphrey Gilbert into Flushing, more to deny that vital port to the French than to withhold it from the Spaniards. Through Henry Middlemore, she sent unofficial warning to Coligny that England could not tolerate French gains east of the Straits of Dover. She also began to make secret offers to Spain of support if the French did move into those sensitive areas—of support on condition that Spain restored the Netherlands to their former liberties and their former more or less unmilitarized state.

In the event, of course, the massacre of the Huguenots in Paris on St. Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1572, ended for some years any further anxiety about French intervention in the Netherlands. Until the end of 1577 France was plunged back, with few lucid intervals, into renewed civil and religious strife. At the same time, Spain had its hands full with the continuing resistance in the Netherlands and with the aftermath of the Lepanto campaign of 1571 against the Turks in the Mediterranean. So Spain was ready enough to patch up an agreement with England in 1573.

These first fourteen years of Elizabeth's reign had thus done much to re-establish England's independence of both France and Spain. They laid the foundations of all that was to come after. They marked a long step toward the establishment of a united Great Britain, a Great Britain that was politically as well as geo-

20. "The Emperor has the greatest merit and must be held high; but he ought to be grouped and not made the sole feature for admiration"—Castlereagh to Liverpool, 20 April 1815, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, 3rd ser., I.478.

graphically an island. They saw the elimination, to a very large extent, of England's one land frontier and so the removal, to a very large extent, of the dangers of a stab in the back and of a war on two fronts. At the same time, Elizabeth had made use of the internal difficulties, political and religious, of both France and Spain in a way that had kept them both too preoccupied at home to risk adventures abroad. Yet she had done this without irritating either of them into open hostility. It is true that she had also been deprived—had, partly, deprived herself—of the availability of the Antwerp money market, for which no real substitute was available to her. That did in some measure impose limitations upon her freedom of action in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, she had shaken off dependence upon either Spain or France and had brought both to seek her friendship. So now there began a period of what today would be called détente and the next ten years or so were to be the high-water mark of Elizabeth's reign; both politically and economically they were the real "spacious days of great Elizabeth."

III.

The Coming of War

After 1572 it is, I think, true to say that Englishmen looked abroad with a new confidence. During the past fourteen years they had stood up to France and they had stood up to Spain. In the actual course of those confrontations they had, maybe, done no more, at best, than just about hold their own. Yet they *had* held their own and the outcome in each case had been that first France, then Spain came earnestly seeking friendlier relations even at some cost to their own interests.

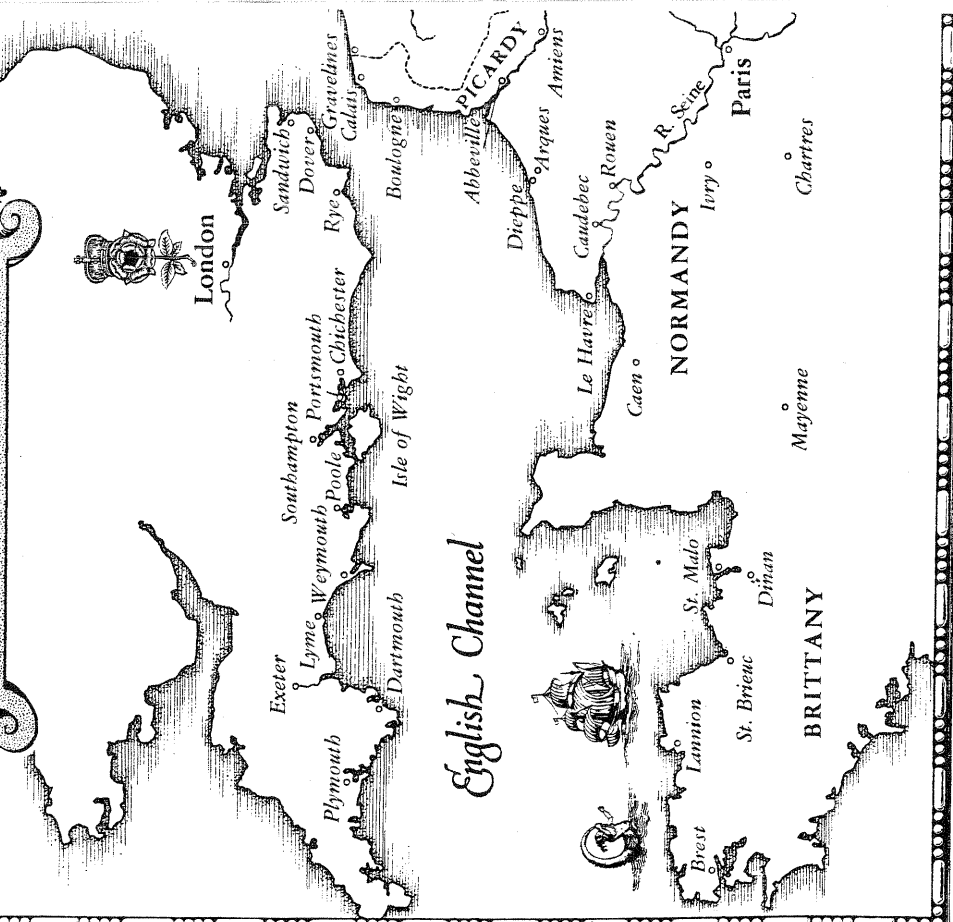
It is true that in the more earnest of Protestant Englishmen this new-found confidence was tinged with those forebodings of eventual disaster that so often afflicted men who believed themselves to be the Lord's elect. They tended to be obsessed by the specter of a great international Papal-Spanish conspiracy, with its "fifth column" among the English Catholics. This was the driving force behind many of the volunteers who trooped across to fight under William the Silent in the Netherlands or alongside the Huguenots in France. It was the inspiration of the younger generation at home, of men such as Sir Philip Sidney who, according to his friend and biographer Fulke Greville, "never divided the consideration of state from the cause of religion."¹ It was the consideration uppermost in the minds of (rather less youthful) privy councillors such as Sir Francis Walsingham, who became Principal Secretary in 1573 and who spoke so often of "God's glory and

1. Fulke Greville, *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, pp. 35-36.

Northern France and the Netherlands

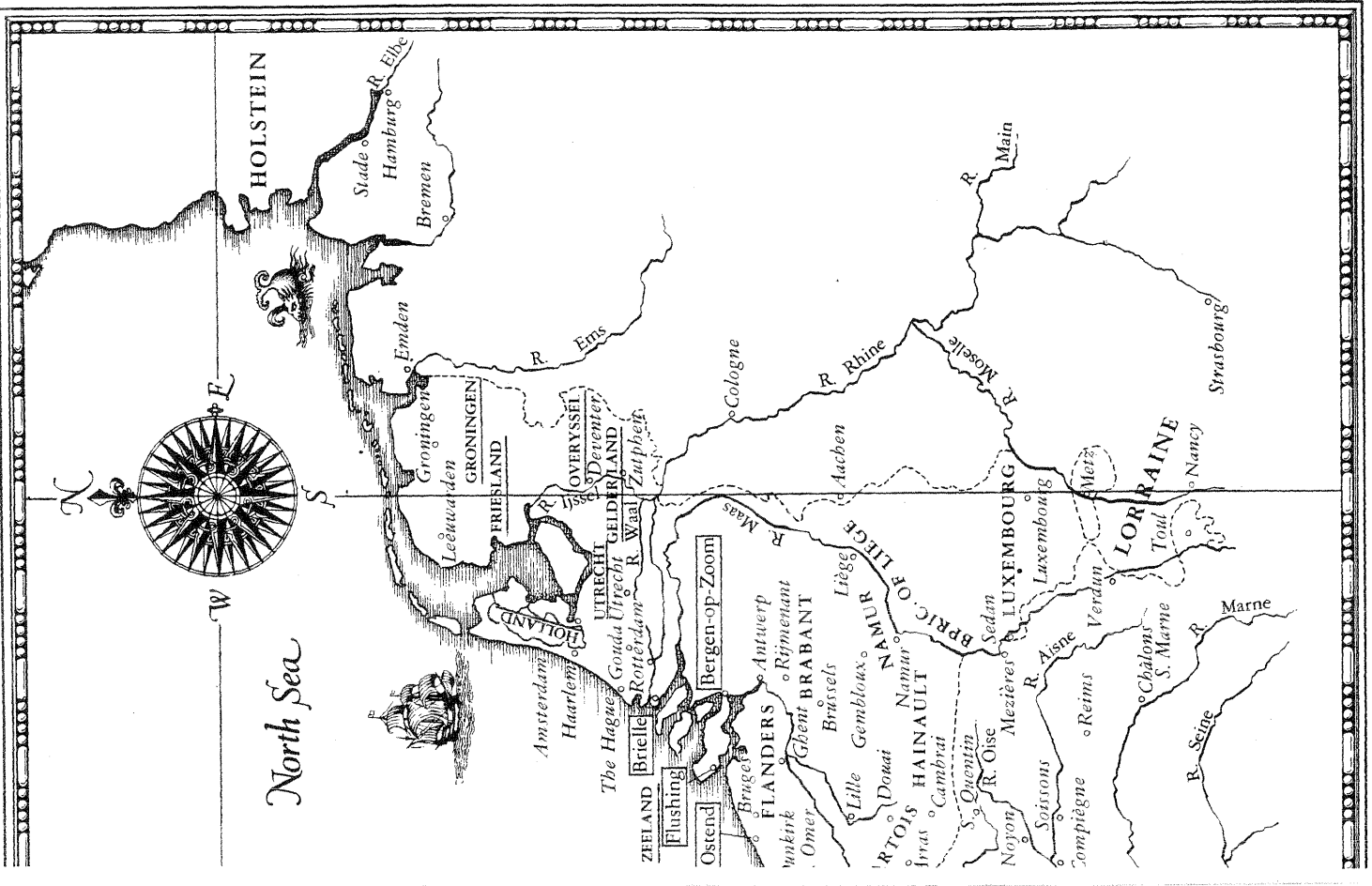
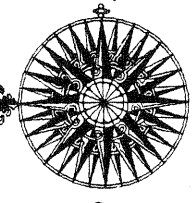
The Seven United Provinces, underlined,
thus, ZEELAND

English garrisons in Netherland, 1585 on,
boxed, thus, Bergen-op-Zoom



HOLSTEIN

North Sea



next the Queen's safety,"² always in that order. For all these, England's true frontiers were on the Maas and the Loire, and the sooner and more vigorously the Roman Catholic menace was opposed there, the less likelihood there would be of having to fight it on English soil.

Elizabeth did not share, or at most only occasionally half shared, these fears and these sentiments. And for the better part of the next ten years after 1572 official Anglo-Spanish relations were considerably less tense than they had been during the previous decade. Bickerings at sea continued, but they were soft-peddled by both governments. Elizabeth, for example, made some attempt to put down piracy, and she vetoed Sir Richard Grenville's project for a voyage into the Pacific which might well have followed a far from pacific course. Differences over religion were likewise not stressed. Indeed, Philip actually expelled the English Catholic exiles from their seminary at Douai in the Netherlands. Nor did he give much real encouragement to Irish rebels.

The one serious bone of contention was the Netherlands. Here Elizabeth's anxiety to get the Spanish army out, and her fears lest the rebels might let the French in, did gradually worsen her relations with Spain. For most of the 1570s, however, even this was not an unduly urgent matter. From 1572 until 1576 the Spanish army had its hands full with the desperate resistance led by William of Orange in Holland and Zeeland. Then in the summer and autumn of 1576, after the sudden death of Alba's successor Don Luis de Requesens, that army's mutiny and its sacking of Antwerp in the "Spanish Fury" provoked a general Netherlands revolt. The Pacification of Ghent in November brought an alliance of the newly revolted provinces with Holland and Zeeland and so the creation of a semi-independent United Netherlands. This United Netherlands compelled the Spanish army to withdraw from their territories. It was just what Elizabeth wanted, just

2. Quoted in Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham*, I, 133.

what she had been working for during the past nine or ten years.

A year later, in July 1577, the new Spanish governor-general, Requesens's successor Don John of Austria, did recall the army and in 1579 the United Netherlands split into the rival Unions of Arras and Utrecht. Even so, it was not until 1581 that the Union of Arras invited Don John's successor, Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, to bring the army back from the remote southeastern province of Luxembourg and to approach the heart of the Netherlands and the seacoast of Flanders. Until then that army hardly presented any immediate threat to its neighbors, least of all to England. Don John, it is true, had dreamed of conquering England, marrying Mary Stuart, and usurping Elizabeth's crown. But circumstances in the Netherlands and the unwillingness of Philip II to assent to his schemes meant that these were never more than dreams.

The unity of the United Netherlands, however, was always very precarious. Precariousness was indeed built into the very nature and origins of their revolt. Or, rather, their revolts: for essentially the Revolt of the Netherlands was a bundle of local reactions against the policies of a centralizing and alien government. There was a fundamental particularism, a parish-pump outlook, in the attitudes of the various provinces. On top of this basic particularism there was the fact that the United Netherlands which came into existence in 1576 rested upon an uneasy coalition of the Calvinist-dominated burgher oligarchies of Holland and Zeeland with the conservative Catholic nobility and urban patriciates of the other provinces. As an ally, the United Netherlands were as brittle and as unreliable as French Huguenots or Protestant Scots.

So Elizabeth's policy throughout the 1570s and early 1580s, despite the pressure from Leicester and Walsingham for active, armed intervention, was primarily directed at getting Spain to agree to an early withdrawal of its military forces and a return to the largely home-ruling Netherlands of Charles V's time. She

tried repeatedly to bring Philip to recognize the difficulty of subjugating the Netherlands and the danger that the attempt might let in the French. This was very clearly presented to him as early as the summer of 1575 by a special ambassador, Sir Henry Cobham. Cobham's instructions were

to show the King that, however he has been informed of [Elizabeth's] doings with his subjects in the Low Countries, if he knew how often and earnestly she had been solicited to take possession of Holland and Zeeland, he might say he never had such a friend as she had been. If some speedy remedy be not taken, those Countries will be at the devotion of the French King who, and his predecessor, have continually aided the Prince of Orange with money to maintain his wars and now continues the same with a monthly secret pay. As nothing can be so hurtful to the King and dangerous to herself as this, she earnestly desires him to divert this course now in hand by allowing his subjects to enjoy their ancient privileges and suffering them to live freely from the extremities of the Inquisition. In this behalf he is to say that she will be content to use any office of mediation for compounding these differences.³

At the same time, despite the advocacy of Walsingham and his friends, Elizabeth had little sympathy for William of Orange and his Calvinist supporters, particularly when their blockading ships interfered with England's reopened Antwerp trade, even though Hamburg was now the main center of the Merchant Adventurers' traffic. She did take a somewhat more sympathetic attitude after the general Netherlands uprising in the autumn of 1576 and the conclusion of the Pacification of Ghent. She lent some money to the insurgent States General at Brussels and she promised more. She even on occasion promised troops, especially to counter any

3. *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series*, XI.76-77.

move by the Guises and the French Catholics to intervene on the side of Don John. In the main, however, she still relied upon efforts, upon redoubled efforts to mediate a settlement.

Professor Wilson considers this policy to have been a mistake. He argues that vigorous armed intervention by England in 1577-1578 would have rallied the Netherlands around William of Orange and so created a truly United Netherlands.⁴ This is a view that seems to me to underestimate very seriously the depth of the divisions, religious, social, and political, within the United Netherlands and the strength of the particularist motivation of the movement. It seems to me also to overestimate no less seriously William of Orange's control over his radical Calvinist adherents outside Holland and Zeeland, more especially in Flanders, where they were a particularly active and vociferous minority. It also, of course, ignores Elizabeth's desire to retain nominal Spanish sovereignty over the Netherlands to ensure their better defense against possible French aggression—but that, in Professor Wilson's opinion, was not a worthy object of English policy either.

A further, no less serious, point is that active armed English intervention in Netherlands affairs at this time would certainly have brought on, if not an actual shooting war with Spain, at least another trade embargo just at the moment when Hamburg, under renewed pressure from the other Hanseatic Towns, was refusing to renew its ten years' agreement with the Merchant Adventurers. It was a moment when a return to Antwerp, devastated by the Spanish Fury, offered no more than a very limited alternative and when Emden was no more adequate than it had proved in 1564. Moreover, England's search for alternative "vents" and alternative sources of imports outside the Netherlands and northwest Germany was only just beginning. Between 1553 and 1576 interest in new overseas ventures had been sporadic,

4. C. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands*, chapters 3 and 4.

and it was only in the later 1570s that a new and more vigorous era began. The Spanish Company was not established until 1577, nor the Eastland Company (for trade into the Baltic and to Danzig) till 1579. The first overtures for trade to the Levant were not made till 1578; the Turkey Company was not formed until 1581 nor the Venice Company until 1583. Martin Frobisher's three voyages in search of the northwest passage around America to the Orient occurred only in 1576-1578, while Sir Humphrey Gilbert's North American and Newfoundland projects dated from the same period. So the imposition of embargos on Spanish trade would have been a serious matter at this stage of England's commercial and maritime development.

Anyway, the argument in favor of such a preventive intervention assumes, as Walsingham and his friends assumed, that there was something to prevent. Now, it is true that ten years later Philip II did send his Armada against England. But that was by no means inevitable in 1577-1578. It was not then even possible, for at that time he had no Armada. All that he had in the way of oceangoing ships of war—apart from the well-nigh useless Mediterranean galleys—was a half-dozen or so galleons of the Indian Guard, earmarked for escorting the American convoys and silver shipments.

In the latter part of 1577 and early in 1578 matters did become a little more urgent. At the end of July 1577 Don John broke his accord with the Brussels States General, seized Namur, and recalled the Spanish troops to the Netherlands. In September, the fifth French War of Religion came to an end, and although Henry III was not tempted to risk a confrontation with Spain by adventuring in the Low Countries, his younger brother and heir-presumptive, Francis of Anjou, was clearly open to offers now that French domestic waters were no longer sufficiently troubled for his fishing.

Elizabeth's first reaction to this revival of French interest was

to despatch Thomas Wilkes to impress yet again on Philip the danger of French intervention if he did not immediately come to a reasonable settlement in the Netherlands. Wilkes went off in December 1577 and achieved nothing. Also, however, in December the Queen unleashed Francis Drake for what was to turn out to be his voyage round the world. Was this intended as a rather less gentle hint than Wilkes was delivering? Certainly the promoters of Drake's voyage were "all associated with maritime enterprise of a predatory kind and all, with the exception of the Queen, advocated a vigorously anti-Spanish policy."⁵ And whatever Drake's purposes may have been, it is unlikely that they were totally innocent of any idea of troubling the Spaniards in the New World. Yet it was only a couple of years or so since Elizabeth had vetoed an apparently somewhat similar project of Sir Richard Grenville.

In January 1578, however, Don John routed the States' army at Gembloux. Seven months later this victory was to be somewhat counterbalanced by a defeat his forces suffered at Rijmenant in August 1578. But in the interval between the two battles the United Netherlands showed rapidly increasing signs of breaking apart. The need for speedy and more direct, more positive, help seemed to grow much more urgent. Elizabeth was still not willing to commit herself to open intervention by sending in English troops. But she did secretly subsidise the bringing in of a German mercenary army under that "stipendiary warrior," the Calvinist John Casimir of the Palatinate. The outcome was not a happy one. Casimir's troops, ill paid by the Brussels States General, soon attached themselves to the radical Calvinist minority in Flanders. They therefore soon became as unwelcome to the predominantly Catholic southern provinces as Don John's Spanish

5. K. R. Andrews, "The Aims of Drake's Expedition of 1577-80," in *American Historical Review*, LXXIII, 739.

army. The result of John Casimir's intervention was to hasten the Brussels States General in August 1578 into an agreement with Francis of Anjou.

So the French were in after all. And Elizabeth was faced with much the same problem as in 1571-1572: how to ensure that, as Sussex put it, neither "the French possess or the Spaniards tyrannise in the Low Countries"?⁶ The way she now attempted to solve it was very peculiarly her own. Indeed, her solution appalled most of her councillors, except for Sussex and possibly Burghley. She found that the Brussels States General had called in Anjou only as "Defender of Belgic Liberties," that is, only as an ally and protector, not as their sovereign. Also he was dropping broad hints that he would not be averse to marrying her. So might she not, by seeming to rise to that bait, both control him and use him to put extra pressure upon Spain to come to a reasonable settlement with the Netherlands insurgents? After all, it was tolerably obvious that Anjou's advances resulted from his disappointments at his brother's hands; and that Henry III was never prepared to risk a war with Spain by giving him very substantial backing, let alone open backing, not even when in January 1581 the States General offered and Anjou accepted the titular sovereignty over their country. Anjou's Netherlands adventure was clearly a private venture of his own, not a part of French national policy, though he was heir-presumptive to the throne of France.

How seriously Elizabeth regarded this Anjou courtship is hard to determine. For a good part of the time, there is not much doubt, she found it great fun. Possibly, too, now that she was in her mid-forties she was less choosy than in her younger days. Yet it is hard to believe that she did not, in the final analysis, feel that marriage to this unprepossessing, undersized, pockmarked little Valois prince would be too high a price to pay for the very limited advantages it could bring. Chiefly, no doubt, she regarded the

6. *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series*, XIII. 120.

courtship as an instrument in her Netherlands policy, as a means of limiting and controlling French action there and at the same time stepping up the pressure upon Philip of Spain.

In those respects it was financially expensive and its success was decidedly limited. The indirect Anglo-French intervention exasperated Philip II. It also aggravated the divisions in the United Netherlands. It moved the Union of Arras—the union of the Walloon provinces of Artois and Hainault—in 1581 to call up Parma and his army. From the improved base that gave him to move down across the flat lands of Belgium, he had by 1585 reconquered so much of the Netherlands, including Brussels and Antwerp, that resistance was confined to not much more than the beleaguered Holland and Zeeland and Utrecht that had faced Alba after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. By then, too, in France Anjou's premature—or at any rate early—death in May 1584 brought results not wholly dissimilar to the results of that massacre. For it left the Huguenot chieftain, Henry of Navarre, as heir-presumptive to the throne of the childless Henry III. That was a prospect that most of the great Roman Catholic majority of Frenchmen found it hard to stomach. It was a prospect that the French Catholic League, headed by the Guise family, found utterly intolerable; and so it plunged France back into another, longer, and even bloodier War of Religion.

There, however, the similarity between 1585 and 1572 ends. The outcome of the 1572 crisis, so far as Anglo-Spanish relations were concerned, had been peace; the outcome of the 1585 crisis was war. For this there were two main reasons. One was that the Catholic League by the Treaty of Joinville in December 1584 accepted Philip II of Spain as its protector and paymaster. Never before had Philip had quite this hold over a French faction; never before had he had quite such an assurance that he need fear no French interference if he turned to settle his long account with England. Indeed, as the main strength of the League was in northern and northeastern France, he might well hope to have

the French Channel coast and the French Channel ports at his disposal.

The second reason was that Philip had at last acquired the means of attacking England directly. In 1578 the young King Sebastian of Portugal had been killed on a campaign against the Moors in North Africa. His successor, the old Cardinal Henry, died two years later, like him childless. Thereupon Philip II of Spain had sent in his armies, under the Duke of Alba, to assert his genealogical claim to the Portuguese throne. Alba easily overcame the resistance of the Portuguese pretender, the illegitimate Don Antonio, and before the summer of 1580 was over King Philip of Spain found himself King also of Portugal. With the Portuguese crown he acquired the Portuguese royal navy of twelve oceangoing galleons. By adding these to the Indian Guard, now ten or a dozen galleons strong, he at a stroke doubled his Atlantic naval fighting forces and brought the number of his royal warships to within measurable distance of the number of the English Queen's navy royal. He now had the nucleus of an oceangoing armada of sailing war galleons capable of operating in Atlantic waters and over Atlantic distances, where the oared galleys of his Mediterranean navy were of little use. New building and purchases during the next few years augmented this into an Armada sizable enough to make the "Enterprise of England" conceivable.

So, by the middle 1580s Philip had both the opportunity and the means of trying to put a stop to England's persistent interference in his Netherlands affairs and to English sailors' depredations at sea and against his American possessions. Moreover, by the middle 1580s he was coming round to Granvelle's view that the root of his Netherlands troubles lay in England. The final provocation came in the summer and autumn of 1585, when by the Treaty of Nonsuch Elizabeth took the Dutch into her protection and sent the Earl of Leicester with 7,000 English troops to stiffen their resistance to Parma. To send an army officially into

another ruler's dominions to assist rebels against that ruler was an act of hostility that no sovereign could well ignore. So, although Elizabeth perhaps intended the despatch of Leicester and his troops as merely a stepping up of the pressure on Spain to agree to a reasonable settlement, in fact that action meant war.

War meant new circumstances, new conditions that weakened the Queen's personal control over the formulation and execution of foreign policy, and of strategy which with her was very much a continuation of foreign policy. This was particularly true of English strategy in the years which followed the victory over Spain's "Invincible" Armada in 1588 and of the occasions then when the initiative lay in her hands. It was so partly—though only partly—because she was a woman and war was preeminently a masculine preserve. It was not that she lacked judgment in military matters. At least she could pick out the essentials clearly enough—the need to destroy the remains of the 1588 Armada in 1589 or to defeat Parma's army in 1591. But she had not quite the same confidence in matters of strategy as she had in matters of foreign policy. In part, also, this was due to the slowness of sixteenth-century communications and the delays and irregularities in the flow of intelligences about her enemy's actions and intentions, and, no less, those of her allies and her own commanders. Communications within England, a comparatively small country, were reasonably speedy and reliable. Communications with the Continent, on the other hand, were very much at the mercy of winds and waves. Strong westerlies could stop news from Holland and Zealand for two or three weeks at a time, as they did when the town of Geertruidenberg was lost in March 1589. Leaguer troops and predatory peasants, too, created many perils for couriers journeying overland to the French Channel ports from Chartres or Noyon or Sedan or wherever the very papist King Henry IV of France happened to be. All this often deprived the Queen of that firm basis of information which she