The Earl of Pembroke and the Crisis in Queen Mary’s Reign, 1553–58

NARASINGHA P. SIL

Of all the councillors who survived the ill-conceived conspiracy of the Duke of Northumberland in July 1553, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, was one of the few to reap the full benefit of his political apostasy. Yet, initially at least, he had a hard time establishing his bona fides with the new regime. His defection from the party of Jane Grey had been sudden, surreptitious, and utterly puzzling to most people, especially the Spanish and Imperial Ambassadors, now the de facto political advisers of Queen Mary. In particular, the Imperial Ambassador, Simon Renard, had very little confidence in the Earl’s loyalty. Ironically enough, as Lord of Glamorgan, Pembroke, in the true spirit of a Welshman, perhaps genuinely supported Mary’s cause against what the people of that county considered “the will of the English.” In fact one Welsh gwndidau (popular religious verse of Glamorgan) emphasized the Earl’s role in “silencing the Saxons.” Throughout Mary’s reign he also discharged his duties as a state servant with diligence and dignity. Consequently he enhanced his political, social, and financial position to become an influential and powerful peer of Marian England.

Pembroke’s prominence in Mary’s government was perhaps well deserved. It is noteworthy that a number of scholars believe that the Earl’s fortune owed always to his almost devilish capacity for dissimulation or, at best, to his sheer good luck. In fact his reputation as an illiterate, ill-mannered, and immoral courtier has gripped the imagination of historians for almost three centuries since the publication of Aubrey’s notorious biographical sketch of the Earl. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the story of the Earl’s life has not elicited much scholarly attention. Recently an attempt has been made to review his career and character in the light of modern researches into the history of mid-Tudor England. For instance, it is no longer possible to maintain that he was illiterate and unmannerly.

We also know that he was no more Machiavellian than his colleagues and that he was mindful as much of his country’s interests as of his own. Obviously it will not do to regard him as someone who merely “had
managed to insinuate . . . temporarily into the Queen's confidence after Wyatt's rebellion." The following pages thus seek to re-examine Pembroke's career in order to demonstrate that his pre-eminence during the mid-1550s was the outcome of labour more than of favour.

* * *

Even though the Earl was one of the important Edwardian councillors to declare for Mary in London, his first contact with the new regime was far from smooth or satisfactory. On 3 August 1553, upon the Queen's arrival in London, he was ordered to wait upon her with only ten retainers, and he was reproached officially for having brought fifteen people. He was even reported to have been under house arrest along with Lord Chamberlain Daroy and Lord Treasurer Paulet (Marquis of Winchester), according to a report of 11 August. Quite aware of his predicaments and in order to ensure his entry into the new Privy Council, the Earl sought the support of the Queen's recent favourite, Edward Courtenay (Earl of Devonshire from September), who was for some time in 1553 rumoured to be a likely suitor for the royal hand. Pembroke is said to have made an overture for friendship with the young nobleman by presenting him a sword and poniard, a basin and ewer, and several horses, worth in all more than 3000 crowns.9

Yet such an effort was uncalled for. Mary could hardly afford to alienate a powerful peer who commanded considerable military strength, social eminence, and political-administrative experience, which could be most useful to the new government. In royal service since 1526, Pembroke, then William Herbert, was one of the chief gentlemen of Henry VIII's Privy Chamber, and in Edward VI's reign the Master of the Horse and a Privy Councillor, the President of the Marches of Wales, and the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire.10 Administrative necessity as well as political prudence prompted Mary to call Pembroke and Paulet to the council. Most probably she made her decision in consultation with the Imperial ambassador, who had written as early as 6 August: "The Queen has decided to admit the Earl of Pembroke and the . . . Lord Treasurer to her Council, so as to learn from them the secrets of state, to sweep away evil influences in this the beginning of her reign and win them over to her side as good vassals and subjects."11 On 13 August Pembroke was sworn of the Council.12

The Marian council, it is now claimed, was neither "factious" nor overcrowded but "was much stronger and more cohesive than traditional interpretations would lead us to believe," though in the first six months of the reign, "the Councillors indulged in clamorous differences of opinion."13 The virtues of such historical rethinking notwithstanding, we must be prepared to recognize that Queen Mary's Privy Council was disunited from the very beginning. There existed a tension between most of the Framlingham
group (those 25 or so councillors who arrived with the Queen from Wanstead, Essex on 3 August) and those who were sworn between 4 August and the end of October. This was well understood by Renard. Though admittedly "not necessarily a reliable witness," he perhaps correctly reported on 16 August that "discontent is rife, especially among those who stood by the Queen in the days of her adversity and trouble, who feel that they have not been rewarded as they deserve, for the conspirators have been raised in authority." 14

In addition to private frustrations and jealousies, there was an even more serious and significant disagreement among the councillors on wider issues of national policy. Over the question of the Queen’s marriage they split into two competing groups led by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and William Lord Paget. The Bishop’s party, though preponderantly Catholic, disapproved of Mary’s proposed marriage to the Spanish Prince. Paget’s men, not necessarily pro-Catholic, supported it, because they expected a wholesome outcome of the Spanish-Habsburg connection, though it is doubtful that they all shared Mary’s naive belief that “England’s true interests could only be served by seeking the guidance and protection of the Habsburgs.” 15 It must, however, be noted that the Spanish marriage was neither the first nor the sole cause of division in Mary’s council. It often reflected substantial disagreements among large group of politicians and in that sense was faction-ridden. As early as 5 October 1553 Renard befriended Paget’s faction in the council. 16

Pembroke must have had an uneasy time affiliating himself with either group. He could not have been Gardiner’s supporter because, reportedly, the Lord Chancellor was profoundly distrustful of the Earl. 17 At the same time he could not easily abandon the anti-Imperialists because one of them, Courtenay, sought his advice and support. 18 Only recently Pembroke had approached him for a favour. Then, even after his official entry into the Council, Pembroke’s uncertainties were not entirely over. On 9 September 1553, Renard reported, on the basis of a rumour, that the Earl, along with Paget and Mason, was about to retire from the court. 19 Even though a mere rumour, its very existence suggests that things were still quite unsettling for the renegade conspirators who had declared for the Queen.

As for Pembroke, he was most unlikely to involve himself in any rash adventure undermining the prevailing order in which he had a large stake. By the end of Edward’s reign the Earl had already established himself as a wealthy landowner possessing substantial properties in a number of counties, notably in Wiltshire, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Middlesex, and Essex. 20 Moreover, there always remained the possibility of preferment if his support for the royal match succeeded. In fact the prospect of an Imperial pension greatly facilitated his decision. Renard had
privately decided to recommend him and a few others for a pension. Though the Ambassador had not divulged his decision to anyone but Paget, the rumours of the Imperial intention were abroad. As the embarrassed envoy wrote to his master, "Your majesty must not imagine that the thing is a secret, for Courtenay and the Bishop of Winchester have talked about it publicly,"21 Perhaps Pembroke was susceptible to flattery as much as to prospects of profit. At least Renard appears to have been convinced that the Queen "will win over Pembroke to whatever opinion she likes, for all he wants is a generous word, and I think she will give him one."22

Yet the Earl's decision was neither easy nor straightforward. Throughout November 1553 he remained in Gardiner's camp opposing the Spanish marriage. On 8 November the Council was formally notified of the Queen's solemn and "inspired" decision to marry Philip of Spain.23 There was at once a reaction in the House of Commons. In a petition of 16 November some leading Councillors and prominent members of the Commons and the Lords remonstrated to Mary and implored her to choose a husband in England. Pembroke concurred with the parliamentary point of view and was present in the delegation.24 Along with Clinton he was even rumoured to be plotting an uprising against the proposed Spanish match. He was also reported to have manipulated a pressure group in the Parliament in favour of the Queen's marriage to Courtenay.25 Paget, a supporter of the Spanish marriage from the outset, received threats against his life. By the end of November there was a conspiracy, though only Courtenay was involved in it.26 Pembroke's behaviour at this time can only be explained by his desire to humour his recent benefactor, Courtenay.

Within a month, however, Pembroke decided in favour of the Spanish match. His decision came only after the English misunderstandings regarding the outcome of the marriage were allayed and the English conditions to the marriage agreed upon by the Emperor in a draft treaty, which was approved by the English council on 7 December.27 By 20 December Renard could inform Charles V confidently that "the nobility and people have now understood that the Council are unanimous in their support of the alliance with my Lord the Prince," and that "all men of great position, and several others have assured the Queen of their goodwill and fidelity." The Ambassador mentioned Pembroke among those who had pledged their loyalty to Mary.28

* * *

Pembroke actually earned the government's goodwill by demonstrating his loyalty and military leadership during the Wyatt rebellion. The story of the uprising is well known and may be retold here briefly. It began as a protest by some influential members of the aristocracy and the gentry against Mary's projected marriage to Philip II of Spain.29 Plans for a concerted
rising had been discussed as early as 26 November 1553 by Sir Peter Carew, Sir James Croft, Sir Edward Rogers, Sir Nicholas Arnold, Sir William Pickering, Sir George Harper, William Thomas, William Winter, and Sir Thomas Wyatt the younger. Sometime before Christmas this group was joined by Lady Jane’s father, the Duke of Suffolk. By 22 December a fourfold insurrection on 18 March 1554 was planned: Carew to spearhead a rising in Devonshire, Croft in Herefordshire, Suffolk in Leicestershire, and Wyatt in Kent. The rebels from every side were to march towards the capital.  

On 2 January 1554 two Imperial envoys arrived in London to conclude the negotiations for the royal marriage. On the 14th the Lord Chancellor formally announced the Queen’s decision in the Parliament. Next day he informed the Lord Mayor of London and his aldermen. Within a couple of weeks violent reactions erupted. In Devonshire the Carews took up arms in order to resist Philip’s arrival. On 19 January Wyatt and Pickering left for Kent. Sometime between 23 and 25 January Croft headed for Wales. The conspirators’ plan was upset after Courtenay, one of the courtiers in league with the rebels, had confessed on the 21st to Gardiner, thus betraying his confederates who now had to declare themselves. Also, the conspirators were “persuaded” to rise in that “cold damp weather” because of a rumour that Philip was arriving in England before the Feast of Purification, that is, before 2 February. Hence the insurrection came off ahead of schedule, while the government was able to take precautionary measures. Thus on 22 January the Council ordered all Justices of the Peace to announce the royal marriage and suppress all seditious rumours and rebellious disorders. On the 25th Sir John Gage, the lord chamberlain, “certified to the lorde maior of London, that sir Thomas Wyat with certaine other rebels, were up in Kent about Maidstone....”

Unfortunately, the government’s initial response to Wyatt’s challenge was hastily organized and haphazardly led. A detachment of the royal army together with the London militia under the command of the “ancient and worthy” Duke of Norfolk failed to capture the rebel leader. The Duke’s soldiers from London, the White Coats under Captain Alexander Brett, refused to fight Wyatt’s men on the Rochester Bridge. Norfolk lost a substantial amount of ammunition and barely escaped arrest. Without further opposition Wyatt’s force reached Deptford strand on 1 February and, a bit tardily, on the 3rd, arrived at the gate of London Bridge.

Meanwhile, the Queen had left St. James’ Palace and taken refuge in London within the protection of the city wall. On 1 February she “made an eloquent Oration” at Guildhall and at Westminster and nominated Pembroke her “cheyffe capten and generall agaynst ser Thomas Wyatt and ys felous.” Lord William Howard was made the Lieutenant of the City of London. On the 3rd she proclaimed a general pardon to all Kentishmen
except the ringleaders like Wyatt, Harper, Sir Henry Iseley, and Robert Rudstone. She even announced a reward of lands worth £100 to anyone able to capture Wyatt.\(^{35}\) It is not known who actually recommended Pembroke to the Queen for leading the royal force against the rebels, though it appears that the Earl was quite confident of victory in battle. Reassuring Mary he had “promysed never to look the queene in the face before he brought them upp, God willing.”\(^{36}\)

Pembroke already knew that Wyatt’s total force consisted of no more than 4000 men, mostly unarmed and inexperienced in battle. He even came to know about the plan of the rebels after Wyatt’s chief lieutenant, Harper, had defected to the government’s side.\(^{37}\) Wyatt also suffered a series of setbacks on his way from Southwark to the city gate. Instead of offering violence, Pembroke “determined rather by policy to achieve the victory than by bloodshed to confound the rebels.”\(^{38}\) In fact he wished to end the matter by trying to persuade Wyatt to surrender. Thus to Sir Thomas was sent “Chester Herauld by the Lord Lieutenenste to will him to submyte himselfe for cause of blood shed And stand vnto the Queens highnes mercy vnto whome he would be a meane for his pardone. . . .”\(^{39}\) When this effort failed, the Earl let Wyatt’s men come up from Knightsbridge to Hyde Park on the morning of 7 February. Meanwhile, he organized his force in St. James’ Field on all sides blocking the rebels’ path towards Holborn. Finding himself thus surrounded by the government’s force and deserted by the citizens of London on whose aid the rebels had staked their military objective, Wyatt slunk away to Fleet Street and thence to Ludgate. On seeing that Ludgate would not open to receive him, he left his men and rode back as far as Temple Bar Gate, where he confronted Pembroke’s advancing army and surrendered himself.\(^{40}\)

Thus ended Wyatt’s rebellion, thanks to Pembroke’s leadership. Dr. Loades, however, does not seem to recognize the Earl’s services. According to him, “in the event Wyatt failed to take the city, partly because of his own delays, partly because of the queen’s resolute appearance at the guildhall on 1 February, and partly because the Londoners feared an incursion of armed men.”\(^{41}\) While all these factors certainly contributed to the collapse of the rebellion, it was finally routed by the Earl’s military skill. Even so, he operated amidst some uncertainties. The government remained suspicious of his intentions. On 7 February, when Wyatt’s men overcame Gage’s force at “the utter gate” of Whitehall Palace, “manie cried treason in the court, and thought that the Earle of Pembroke who was assaulting the taile of his enemies hadde gone to Wyatt, taking his part against the Queene.” Most probably “that young fool,” Courtenay, had spread the canard to Mary.\(^{42}\) Even the Queen is reported to have believed partly in the rumour and commented that she had placed her absolute trust in God who would not betray her even if her lieutenant did.\(^{43}\) This governmental
scepticism coupled with the lukewarm attitude of some of his soldiers must have rendered Pembroke's position quite vulnerable. On 4 February the French Ambassador reported that the Earl's measures were delayed "from the fear that his people would march out to join Wyatt, as Norfolk's had done." Even Thomas Cheyney feared desertion and in his despatch of 1 February to Pembroke had written, "If my men forsake me not I will not be farre from therey [rebels'] back with as many as I am hable to make." Indeed, several decades later, Wyatt's son wrote how during the rebellion the Earl's men were thinking of deserting their leader and joining the force of Wyatt, who "ment well to them and their Countrie and no hurt to any but the foraigne Ennimie."

There were betrayers even among men above the rank and file. The Earls of Devonshire and Worcester showed no sign of fighting against Wyatt. In particular, Courtenay reportedly declared that he was "as good a man as Pembroke and did not mean to obey him." He felt slighted to discover that the Queen had trusted Pembroke more than him. Rather than serve the man who had once sought his favour, the envious and enraged Earl of Devonshire decided to risk treason by not fighting the Queen's battle to which he was appointed. In fact, according to a contemporary Spanish account, he "allowed Wyatt to advance . . . without any opposition and had remained at his back."

Pembroke's performance during the rebellion must thus be assessed in the context of his multiple problems. Hence, it is quite tempting to subscribe to a contemporary estimate that the Wyatt rebellion was defeated "partly by the wisdom and policy of . . . the worthy Earl of PEMBROKE; but chiefly by the mighty hand of GOD." Even if one is prepared to accept such a pious view of the affair, there is little ground for believing, as this account continues, that during the crisis the Earl was regarded by everyone as one "whose faith hath not been wavering in his Catholic religion, nor his truth and service doubtful at any time towards his Prince." Considering his situation and all his difficulties, the observation of a modern historian seems most judicious: "the queen's catholic friends had been been ineffectual in the crisis and the battle had been won by men like Pembroke."

Admittedly Pembroke's success elicited universal admiration. As Peter Vannes, the English Ambassador in Venice reporting from London, commented, "if Lords Pembroke, Clinton, and the other captains could hear how loudly they are commended here, they would think their loyalty sufficiently rewarded." In fact, Pembroke's services were duly rewarded. His name appeared at the top of the fifty men "that were with hir maie power against the Rebelles" shortlisted for rewards. More important, he received a grateful promise of reward from Emperor Charles V, who wrote to him on 18 February:
My obligations towards you have been increased by the valiant service you have rendered the Queen in the recent troubles stirred up by the malignity of a few rebels. I assure you that... you will always find me and my son as grateful as if your services have been performed for our sake, and that we will find means to requite you...

Also, on the same day two years later, Mary’s government granted the Earl indemnity from all his debts to the Crown due since King Henry’s reign. In addition to this he received £435 8s as rent from several manors and as the *mises* for the county of Glamorgan which he claimed due him by Edward VI’s patent. In 1555 he recovered his license to keep a hundred retainers in his personal service. He had surrendered some of this privilege under Northumberland’s regime.

The Earl’s performance also demonstrated his worth as a defender of law and order in the realm. At the same time his loyal service brought him closer to the Queen. Immediately after the rebellion, on 12 February, the Council drew up a scheme of selective training combined with the features of a small standing army. According to this scheme, ten Councillors and six other named noblemen and gentlemen were to maintain 2100 footmen and 680 horsemen at the Queen’s expense. Three hundred of these horsemen were immediately deployed under Pembroke to round up suspects in Kent and most of the footmen seem to have been used to garrison London. On 18 February the Earl received commission of the peace in Cornwall, Devonshire, Gloucestershire, Kent, Middlesex, Shropshire, and Wiltshire. On the 23rd he was commissioned to supervise supplies to Calais, Guisnes, Berwick and other places on the northern borders, Ireland, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight and other islands. He had discharged similar duties in the previous reign. Recognizing the importance of his support for her marriage, the Queen thought of ensuring it with a gift of £6000 to the Earl – reportedly an amount of cash the government could hardly spare. The Imperial Ambassador made him an offer of 2000 crowns – a distinction tendered to three other nobles: Arundel, Derby, and Shrewsbury. Indeed, as the Venetian Ambassador remarked in August 1554, Pembroke was “a most powerful and popular nobleman” of the year.

In spite of his newfound glory and goodwill, Pembroke faced an awkward situation. Immediately after the Wyatt rebellion both the Parliament and the Privy Council had become hotbeds of political wrangling. The two most prominent politicians who did not see eye to eye with each other were Gardiner and Paget. The story of their rivalries and jealousies may be gleaned, albeit carefully, from the lengthy, confusing, but often interesting reports of the Imperial, Spanish, and Venetian Ambassadors. In the second
Parliament of the reign (April–May 1554), Gardiner’s proposal that the Queen ought to be empowered to disinherit Elizabeth and bequeath the crown by will (which would certainly have ensured Philip’s succession) met with stiff resistance. Similarly, his motions for the bills against heresy and treason were opposed. In fact, most of the measures proposed or supported by Gardiner’s faction (consisting of Rochester, Waldegrave, Inglefield, Southwell, John Williams, and Bourne) were countered by Paget’s party (consisting of Arundel, Pembroke, Sussex, Petre, Cornwallis, Hastings, and Howard). The proceedings of the Council were also marked by strife. To quote Renard, “what one does, another undoes; the one advises, another opposes.” In an earlier communication he had summarized the situation with the cryptic comment that “things are not going well.”

The net outcome of all those dissensions was that on 13 May Paget was disgraced by the Queen and allowed to retire to his estates. Gardiner, Winchester, and Rochester now emerged as Mary’s closest friends. In such a volatile atmosphere there naturally floated rumours of conspiracies and machinations. As Renard reported, Gardiner sincerely believed that “the heretics mean to seize him, throw him into the Tower, and impose their will on the Queen . . .” The Ambassador further reported a canard that Paget and Pembroke were trying secretly to get Princess Elizabeth married to Arundel’s eldest son and that the three Councillors were to be arrested.

Yet Pembroke managed to maintain his credit with the Queen. Shortly after Wyatt’s rebellion he offered his services to the Emperor and his son. Apparently Renard supported this overture and wrote home recommending the Earl: “He has been of the utmost utility to the Queen in all her affairs, and now asks me to write begging your Majesty to excuse him for having been tardy. He has volunteered to raise some infantry for you were there call for it.” Determined to elicit the attention of a new master, Pembroke zealously participated in the Queen’s marriage. Renard now reported with great satisfaction that the newly wed royal couple “had assured themselves of the goodwill of the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke and some other Councillors whose attitude had been dubious.” Early in 1555 Pembroke was chosen by the government to be one of the negotiators for peace between the French King and the Emperor.

Philip relied much on the Earl’s “fidelity and power” and probably recommended him for the post of the Queen’s Lieutenant General in the English territories overseas. The Lieutenant General’s principal duties consisted of controlling the lawless and heretical elements in the town of Calais and advising the resident Deputy of the Marches of Calais. The Pale seems to have harboured a large Protestant population, an obvious target for the French who wished to create and continue an atmosphere of
constant tension there and finally to dislodge the English from that area. Pembroke was dispatched to suppress sedition and heresy in Calais with a view to keeping it safe and strong against any emergency. He appears to have operated amidst severe financial constraints.65

The Earl’s presence was equally needed at home. In the spring of 1555 Mary was suspected to be pregnant and the King hastily recalled the Lieutenant General from Calais to keep him at hand during the expected childbirth. The Queen’s pregnancy, if real, was fraught with tremendous implications. If successful, it could settle the question of a Catholic succession; if not, it could, in the event of the mother’s death in childbed, seriously affect her husband’s security. Thus, King Philip needed protection from the most reliable and effective servants such as Pembroke.66 The government also needed his services in investigating what was reported to be a problem “on account of religion” in Warwickshire.67

Philip had a high regard for Pembroke’s administrative experience. In August 1555, the King is reported to have included the Earl among the nine Councillors nominated “for matters of state and of importance.”68 Most probably his constant attendance at court and elsewhere forced Pembroke to administer the Welsh marches through a deputy.69 On 4 September 1555, he accompanied Philip to Brussels where he was introduced to Emperor Charles V. This was the Earl’s first official personal appearance abroad and he is said to have arranged a magnificent display for the occasion.70 On 22 November he was appointed Governor of Calais.71 The energetic royal servant also advanced steadily in the Council since the Wyatt rebellion. He seems to have ranked seventh among the councillors.72 From 1553 to 1556 his attendance in the Council progressively increased: 19% in 1553 to 41% in 1556. For most of 1557–8 he shuffled between England and Calais and Guisnes, spending more days in the field than at council table. He attended 224 out of 1060 council meetings (excluding the afternoon sessions) during 16 July 1553 – 15 November 1558 (21%).73 His record of activities in Parliament shows that he had three proxies in the Parliament of 1555 and that in January 1558 he turned up for less than half the morning sittings – a decidedly less impressive performance.74 Nonetheless, his zeal in administration was noted by the Venetian Ambassador who observed in 1556 that the Earl had always shown himself inclined to serve King Philip.75 Even his colleagues were quite aware of his influence. In particular, Paget, who probably envied the Earl’s rewards after the Queen’s marriage, yet chose to protect the interests of powerful peers like Pembroke and others and thus advised the Queen not to attempt to recover the church lands from the nobility and the gentry. He also took care to avoid referring to Pembroke in his proposal for a reformed council which he submitted to the Emperor in Brussels on 11 November 1554.76
Pembroke, who volunteered to serve Philip, was shrewd enough to recognize the limits of loyalty to a foreign prince. He probably was convinced that Philip’s active involvement in English affairs would ensure stability for the government. Yet he merely envisaged nothing more than an active partnership between the King and his Councillors and was therefore unlikely to support the King’s appropriating, in contravention of the marriage treaty, the full rights of sovereignty which belonged by inheritance and English law to Mary. Thus, when the sensitive question of Philip’s coronation and regency was taken up by the Parliament in the fall of 1554 (November 1554 – 16 January 1555), the Earl was one of the eight peers to withdraw from the House of Lords on various pretexts.\(^7\)

During 1554–6, Pembroke confronted damaging rumours and embarrassments. A London bricklayer named William Crowe bruited that the Earl was about to fetch the crown from Lord Shrewsbury in order to make Philip King of England.\(^7\) John Bradford, the Cheshire pamphleteer, published an open letter in 1556 underscoring the danger of crowning Philip and addressed it to Pembroke and a few other Councillors.\(^7\) One of the Earl’s servants, Thomas Woodman, whom Philip had dispatched in August 1554 to the Imperial court as a servant of the Emperor, probably on Pembroke’s recommendation, landed up in jail in July 1555 in the Low Countries on charges of piracy.\(^8\) The Earl himself openly expressed his disapproval of Philip’s desire to declare war against France and thus may be said to have supported those who objected to his coronation fearing that it would involve England in the Franco-Habsburg war.\(^9\)

At the same time Pembroke was ever ready to demonstrate his loyalty to the regime even at the cost of his personal popularity and safety. In the fourth parliament of the reign (October–December 1555), he defended Sir Edward Hastings, the government’s spokesman on the Marian bill to penalize the exiles, and “well-nigh maltreated, otherwise than with words” the opposers of the bill. He even dismissed his “most favourite and familiar gentleman,” Sir John Perrot, from his house and consequently risked alienation of other retainers in his service.\(^10\) During the so-called Dudley conspiracy of 1555 (designed to remonstrate, with French support, against Philip’s coronation), Pembroke’s loyalty to the government was assured.\(^11\) Once Mary declared – albeit against her wish and that of her Council – to support her husband’s war with France, Pembroke accepted his assignment to lead an English expeditionary force to Calais, even though he personally was lukewarm about an Anglo-French war.\(^12\)

Pembroke’s military experiences abroad were far from satisfactory. He faced great difficulties in obtaining supplies. Both the Queen in England and her husband in the Netherlands (he had left England for the second and last time on 5 July 1557) had turned a deaf ear to the Earl’s repeated requests for transport materials and beasts of burden. Philip had little
patience with logistical problems in the field. Suspecting a mismanagement of accounts he directed Don Juan de Ayala, the Spanish Liaison Officer with the English, to exercise utmost economy because "it is not reasonable that the English should always be making fresh demands."\(^{85}\) At the same time he continuously urged his Lieutenant General to join him at Cambrai on 5 August on the way to St. Quentin in Picardy, as he refused to arrive at his destination without Pembroke's force.\(^{86}\)

Pembroke, however, remained at Calais, reorganizing and reinforcing the garrisons of the Pale with some of the troops and managed to return home some soldiers at great expense.\(^{87}\) Some 500 men under Sir Edward Braye were left in Guisnes, 100 in Hammes, and a 100 more at the causeway. The rest had to be transported to St. Quentin to join the King's force. Thus the Lieutenant General wrote on 29 July, "As for the rest, although they are more than were wanted, we hope your Majesty will be willing to take them on as they are already here and have come with the greatest goodwill to serve you."\(^{88}\) The net result of these ineffectual communications between the King and his commander was that by the time they reached the scene of action the decisive engagement had already taken place. On 10 August, a detachment under Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, occupied the St. Quentin Castle. Now the town needed to be taken. On 27 August this was accomplished by the combined force of Spain and England. Even though Philip believed Pembroke to have been tardy and negligent, Juan de Piñedo, an eye-witness, remarked that "both sides fought most choicely, and the English best of all."\(^{89}\)

Thus the Earl discharged his duties for a cause for which, as an English subject, he had very little sympathy. He, of course, supervised the muster of his soldiers, arranged for their payment, and their transportation back home.\(^{90}\) But he did not support his country's involvement in a foreign power's problems. In fact, as he was to confide to the Spanish Ambassador several years later, not a single member of the Marian Council had approved of Philip's war with France.\(^{91}\) It is difficult to agree with a recent observation that Pembroke was one of those who eagerly joined the Anglo-French war for "position, honour and profit."\(^{92}\) Another observation, made several decades ago, that the Earl failed to requisition an adequate number of men from England cannot also stand. It was contended that his demand (in his letter of 23 July 1557 to the Queen) for a meagre reinforcement of 600 footmen and 100 horsemen showed that the commander of the English army underestimated the enemy's strength, even though he had been aware of a massive concentration of French soldiers at Ardes and Boulogne. It must be noted here that this observation is made on the basis of a single letter, and further that the English government did not comply easily even with that request for 700 men. Instead of taking immediate action, the Queen directed the Council to investigate the number of soldiers currently
employed in Calais.\textsuperscript{93} Even the Lord Admiral fared no better in this respect and "when the time came for his men to be paid and revictualled, matters grew so bad that Lord Howard advised the queen through Lord Winchester that if they were not corrected, he was 'willing to be revoked.'\textsuperscript{94} In any case the important point to remember is that Pembroke may have been faced with the problem of an excess of soldiers, but never with that of an acute shortage of men.

A report of the Imperial Ambassadors shows that the Earl was far from being an incompetent general naively content with smaller supplies than were actually needed. According to that report, he demanded for 210 carts for transporting his men and would not settle for anything less. Ayala's excuse that Paget had approved of 12 carts was readily rebuffed by the veteran soldier: "... if Lord Paget had said 12 were enough, he had been talking about something he did not understand."\textsuperscript{95} The Earl was perhaps one of several others who had a difficult time as Spain's ally in the Anglo-French war of 1557.

On the other hand, in the true spirit of a patriotic military leader, Pembroke faithfully led the operation assigned him by the government. He certainly worried more over his country's defense against the Scotts, which had been sadly neglected for the sake of the Spanish war. He must have returned home some time during the winter of 1557 and plunged himself once again in the administration of his country, as is evidenced by his presence in the Council meeting of 5 January 1558.\textsuperscript{96} But he had no desire to accept the commission for Calais once again when, after its sudden capture by the French on 7 January, he was summoned to lead a contingent of 5000 soldiers for its relief.\textsuperscript{97} The Duke of Savoy dispatched two ships to Dover to carry the relief force, but "these two ships came back here as they had gone without having found in Dover one single soldier or hardly the memory of one." The Earl had turned back to London from Dover. When Savoy's man caught up with him on the way and inquired about the troops, Pembroke is reported to have replied that he knew nothing and that "he was ill, and in no condition to think of anything but his own health."\textsuperscript{98} Probably due to sickness, but certainly sickened by the futility of the entire enterprise, the Earl avoided an uncalled-for war.

Thus Pembroke might appear to have been guilty of delinquency, especially when we note that, with the final collapse of Calais and Guisnes on 20 January 1558, England lost the continental foothold she had possessed for over two centuries. In fact, the Spanish Ambassador's exhortation that English honour was at stake failed to inspire the Council to order further action in Calais. Exasperated and terribly annoyed with the English, the county of Feria wrote on 10 March,
I do not know who is the worst of them from the point of view of your Majesty's service; but I do know that those to whom you have shown the greatest favour are doing the least for you. Pembroke, Arundel, Paget, Petre, the Chancellor, the Bishop of Ely and the Comptroller are the leading members of the Council, and I am highly dissatisfied with all of them.99

Notwithstanding the fact that he was a regular pensioner of Spain, Pembroke defiantly declined to take up arms on behalf of his patron. He was of course not alone in his attitude to the Franco-Spanish war. Yet the reluctance to fight on the part of a man already assigned the responsibility of the Lieutenant General is remarkable. It must be concluded that his concern for his country loomed above all other considerations and in this the Earl of Pembroke was a typical Tudor statesman.

** * **

Mary's "unlucky and ruefull reigne" of five years was not easy for the Earl of Pembroke. With a chequered past, prominence in Edwardian government, and his participation in Northumberland's conspiracy, the Earl had faced uncertainty at the beginning of the reign and at its end his name was linked with a national defeat. It may still be maintained that his career during these years had, on the whole, been successful.

It may be true that he fell ill in 1557 after the French war. It is also a fact that on 28 October 1558 he surrendered the presidency of the Council of the Marches of Wales to the Queen's nominee, Gilbert Bourne.100 Mary had been concerned about the rising lawlessness in Wales and insisted on a resident president to look after the local problems. She apparently complained to the Earl about the Welsh situation. In his letter of August 1558, Pembroke signified his intention to resign the presidency.101 He had been too busy at the court in London and overseas on government commissions to attend to the Welsh affairs. Most probably he was also importuned by his failing health. It is quite unlikely that the Queen found him incompetent. Dr. Graves may not be quite right in assuming that Mary's "complaint" to the Earl was "a reprimand which raises doubt about his personal attention to business."102

As a matter of fact, Pembroke's record in Queen Mary's reign is truly impressive. He enhanced is personal wealth, demonstrated military ability, acquired administrative experience, and, above all, gained recognition as the most influential nobleman of England.103 In his report of 13 May 1557 upon his return from England, Giovanni Michiel described the English army. In particular the Venetian Ambassador commented on the ability of the English aristocracy and the gentry to arm their men. As he wrote, "there is not one of them (however insignificant), who, in proportion to his retinue and rental, has not a store of arms for a considerable number of
people, it being said that some of the chief of them, such as the Earls of Derby, Shrewsbury, and Westmorland, and above all the Earl of Pembroke, could arm thousands."  

In fact, as early as 1544, Pembroke's (then Sir William Herbert) military strength in Glamorgan had been recognized. In that year the government prepared a large musterbook in which he appeared as one of the nine leading landowners. In 1557 his nephew, Sir William Herbert of Cogan Pill, was dispatched to Glamorgan to raise 500 men from among the tenants and friends of his famous uncle, who had lately been appointed to lead the expedition to France. The Venetian envoy, Federico Badoer, reported that the French had a high regard for the Earl’s military skill. His Welsh cavalry was a striking force to reckon with, as was seen during the Western rebellion of 1549. It may be quite true that in Wales Pembroke was “more feared than loved.” So powerful was his position in that part of England that a few collaborators of the conspirator Henry Dudley, especially Sir Anthony Kingston, had contemplated combatting Pembroke and finally dislodging him from Wales with the help of the French. Even such tough diplomats as Renard and Feria recognized and respected the Earl’s political and military strength.

Yet Pembroke’s otherwise glorious career in Queen Mary’s reign was tarnished by his singularly unsavoury experiences at Calais. Truly, the victory of St. Quentin was Philip’s, while the loss of Calais, Hammes and Guisnes was England’s. As George Ferrers wrote, the adventure ended in “a dishonour wherewith this realm shall be blotted until GOD shall give power to redubbe it with some like requital to the French.” There is a distressing reality in Sir Thomas Smith’s observation that most Englishmen “went to the wars hanging down their looks... [and] came from thence as men dismayed and forlorn.” Domination by foreigners at home and dishonour abroad must have been oppressive to most people in England. Thus, when on the night of 17 November 1558, the citizens of London lit bonfires and made merry, scarcely twelve hours after the death of the Queen, Pembroke looked to the future – to Hatfield – where the concerned councillors and courtiers were assembling to hail their ruler and herald the new reign.

Benin University, Nigeria

Notes


3 Hen Gwnidau, Carolau a Chwyddau, eds. L.J. Hopkin-James & T.C. Evans (Bangor, 1910), pp. 59-60. Also see Glannor Williams, ed. Glamorgan County History, 5 vols. (Cardiff, 1932-80), IV, 220.


6 See the article in n. 1 above, pp. 297-318.


9 CSPS, XI, 189: report of the Imperial ambassadors, 27 August 1553.

10 Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, eds. John S. Brewer et al., 21 vols. with Addenda (London, 1862-1932), IV.i.1939 (11) (hereafter LP). Herbert was knighted some time in later 1543. LP, XV.21; XVIII.i.873; XIX.i.80 (15). He had become a gentleman of the king’s Privy Chamber probably in 1540. LP, XVI.394 (7); XX.i.465 (34, 85); ii.Appendix.2 (1, 2vi). By 1546 he had become one of the two Chief Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber. LP, XXI.i.634 (1), 770 (85). His patent for appointment as Master of the Horse is dated 2 December 1549, but he was described as Master as early as June. Calendar of Patent Rolls. Edward VI (6 vols., London, 1924-9), II, 368 (hereafter CPRed). He became Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire in April or May 1551. Acts of the Privy Council of England 1542-1628, eds. John R. Daset et al. (46 vols., London, 1890-1964), III, 258; IV, 50, 278, 359, 396 (hereafter APC).

11 CSPS, XI, 151.

12 APC, IV, 425.

13 A. Weikel, “The Marian Council Revisited,” The Mid-Tudor Polity c. 1540-1560, eds. Jennifer Loach & Robert Tittler (London, 1980), pp. 60, 73. Weikel’s pugnacious essay condemns almost all existing literature on the Marian regime, unaccountably ignores – except for one solitary reference in a footnote – the important Cambridge dissertation of Dr. Lemasters, and makes a number of generalizations on the Council’s activities. A few examples will suffice. According to her, the Norfolk expedition to subdue Wyatt’s rebellion was not the result of “conciliar...incompetence” (p. 62). What else was it? She claims that “Wyatt had been defeated by the Council’s clever manipulation and its military preparations” (p. 62). This statement along with her reference to “the Council’s clever handling of Wyatt” (p. 65) ignores the performances of individual Councillors, such as the almost comically helpless and useless resistance offered by the old Gage and the shrewd, sober, and ultimately successful leadership of Pembroke. In her enthusiasm to rescue Gardiner from the charges of religious fanaticism and political conservatism as well as to class him with the politique Paget, Weikel distorts the latter’s career and makes him one of the “unselfish servants of the Crown” (p. 56), thus ignoring his record at the Court of the Duchi of Lancaster in 1551. Weikel will have nothing to do with “faction” (she obviously is not fond of the word), though she has little difficulty in listing the allies of Paget and Gardiner (p. 58). She is right in challenging the traditional assumption that faction led to paralyzing friction, but wrong in ignoring the existence of “faction” altogether. No doubt the Marian Council achieved much, but such achievements will remain largely misunderstood unless we look closely into the contributions of individual Councillors. In the end, those factious and ambitious Tudor statesmen were able to transcend their individual interests and opinions and attend to business of national concern. This shows their strength and sagacity though they often indulged in “backstairs politicking” (p. 58). For the most reasonable and reliable analysis of “factiousness” of the Marian council, see David M. Loades, The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government, and Religion in England, 1553-1558 (New York, 1979), pp. 75-85; Geoffrey R. Elton, Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558 (1977: Rpt., London, 1981), pp. 377 ff: Glenn A.
Lemasters, "The Privy Council in the Reign of Queen Mary I" (Diss. Cambridge University, 1971).

14 CSPS, XI, 172: report of the Imperial ambassadors, 16 August 1553; Loades, Reign of Mary, p. 75.

15 Loades, Reign of Mary, p. 76.

16 CSPS, XI, 265.

17 Ibid., XII, 251: Renard’s despatch of 13 May 1554; 276: Renard’s despatch of 14 June 1554.

18 Ibid., XI, 333: Renard’s despatch of 4 November 1553.

19 Ibid., p. 228: Renard’s despatch of 9 September 1553.


22 Ibid., p. 334: Renard’s despatch of 4 November 1553. Mary was trying to placate two other Councillors: Derby and Shrewsbury (p. 399).

23 Ibid., p. 328: Renard’s despatch of 31 October 1553.

24 Ibid., pp. 363-4: Renard’s despatch of 17 November 1553.


26 CJM, p. 35.

27 CSPS, XI, 414-16: Renard’s despatch of 8 December 1553.

28 Ibid., p. 443.


30 For the origins of the rebellion see D.M. Loades, Two Tudor Conspiracies (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 15-46.

31 CSPS, XII, 52: report of the Imperial Ambassadors, 27 January 1554.


176 / Renaissance and Reformation

39 Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. B. 102, fo. 85 printed in extenso in William P.M. Kennedy, "The Imperial Embassy of 1553/4 and Wyatt's Rebellion," The English Historical Review, 37 (1923), 251-8.


41 Reign of Mary, p. 128.


45 P.R.O., SP 11/3, fo. 2.


48 The Accession, Coronation and Marriage of Mary Tudor, ed. & tr. Cesare V. Malfatti (Barcelona, 1955), p. 42. Strangely enough, Pembroke continued to cultivate Courtenay's friendship. In 1556 the Earl is said to have presented the young nobleman "a fine gelding." P.R.O., SP 11/8, fo. 19: John Mason's letter of 15 March 1556 to the Earl of Devonshire.


52 P.R.O., SP 11/3, fo. 36.

53 CSPS, XII, 118. Admittedly this promise of reward never fully materialized. Nonetheless, it reflected a recognition of the Earl's service. It is not clear why Dr. Loades thinks that Pembroke's services remained unrecognized. Two Tudor Conspiracies, p. 90 n. 3.

54 B.L., Lansdowne MS. 172, fo. 87; Calendar of the Patent Rolls. Philip and Mary (1553-1558), 4 vols. (London, 1937-9), III, 59 (hereafter CPRPM); Helen Miller, "Subsidy Assessments of the Peersage in the Sixteenth Century," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 28 (1955), 33 n. 3. Also see APC, V, 343, 372, 345; CPRPM, III, 520; II, 118. We can no longer accept the view that Pembroke was brought to task by the exchequer for the arrears of rent, and the overdue recognizances deriving from the purchases of crown lands. Walter C. Richardson, History of the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554 (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 264.

55 CPRPM, II, 79: patent of 7 June 1555. On 18 April 1552, Pembroke surrendered his post of Master of the Horse (patent surrendered on 28 April) to Northumberland's son, Ambrose Dudley. The following day 50 of his 100 men of arms were taken away and given to Sir John Gates and Sir Philip Hoby. Literary Remains of Edward VI, ed. J.G. Nichols, 2 vols. (London, 1857), II, 409; Burnet, History of Reformation, V, 69.

56 APC, III, 40; IV, 392, 397; CPRPM, I, 17-25; CSPS, XII, 122: report of Gasper Schetzi, Treasurer General of the Low Countries, 19 February 1554.

57 CSPS, XII, 198: Renard's despatch of 3 April 1554. Loades remarks shrewdly that "the queen's generosity showed some distinctly idiosyncratic features." Thus, in spite of her promises and public pronouncements, she was not only "generous in breadth rather than in depth," but, most importantly, not so generous to "her most responsible servants." Reign of Mary, pp. 96, 99-100.

58 CSPS, XII, 295: a note for Philip's guidance despatched from Besançon, June 1554. Also see pp. 315-16 for a list of recommended pensioners. Pembroke was one of the 25 pensioners of the Habsburgs right up to the end of 1558. Ibid., XIII, Appendix, 454-6: "a note on what is given to each one of the pensioners, and what is owing to them up to the end of last year, 1558."

60 CSPS, XII, 230-1: Renard’s despatch of 1 May 1554. For a list of names in both factions see p. 220: Renard’s despatch of 22 April 1554. Also see p. 168: Renard’s despatch of 22 March 1554.

61 Ibid., p. 251: Renard’s despatch of 13 May 1554; p. 276: report of the Imperial Ambassadors, 14 June 1554. Paget’s fall from grace was but temporary. He returned to the Council board shortly afterwards.

62 Ibid., p. 96: Renard’s despatch of 12 February 1554.


64 CSPV, VI.i.77: Badoer’s despatch of 10 May 1555. Pembroke was, however, summoned back home by the government. The Venetian Ambassador, who could hardly be expected to discern the differences between a Welshman and a Briton, reported that Pembroke was sent home because of his inability to speak or understand “any other language than the [sic] English.” The accuracy of this statement cannot be determined because it credits the Welsh-speaking Earl with English as his first language.

65 Ibid., no. 200: Michiel’s despatch of 12 March 1555; no. 222: Badoer’s despatch of 20 September 1555. Also see CSPS, XIII, 158. Loades maintains that “the marked favour shown by Philip to Paget, Pembroke, and Arundel particularly was clearly intended to conciliate them and was successful.” Reign of Mary, p. 222.

66 CSPV, VI.i. (p.72): Michiel’s despatch of 6 May 1555; CSPS, XIII, 61: letter from a Spanish gentleman in London to his friend in Salamanca, 2 October 1554.

67 CSPV, VI.i.167: Michiel’s despatch of 31 July 1555.

68 Ibid., no. 209: Michiel’s despatch of 9 September 1555; B.L., Cotton MS. Titus B II, fo. 160: memorandum of 29 August 1555; Burnet, History of Reformation, III, 440; VI, 387. The nine Councillors were: Reginald Pole (in the ill-defined status of attending if he wished), Gardiner (deceased in November 1555), Winchester, Arundel, Pembroke, Thomas Thirlby, Paget, Petre, and Rochester.

69 In 1555 Pembroke was represented by his Vice-President, William Symmonds, who appears to have been commended by the Privy Council for his efficiency. APC, VI, 49, 155, 172, 175, 277.

70 CSPV, VI.i.163: Michiel’s despatch of 23 July 1555.

71 P.R.O., SP 11/9, fo. 50.

72 APC, VI, 274: Council meeting at Westminster, 24 February 1557. This was the largest gathering of Councillors (19) in which Pembroke was present. While the criterion used here is strictly according to the sequencing of the names – which admittedly is not entirely sound – often the listing of names reveals a hierarchy of influence.

73 Ibid., IV, V, VI. For the proceedings of the Council from 16 July to 3 November 1558 see A Collection of State Papers, ... left by William Cecil Lord Burghley, ed. Samuel Haynes (London, 1740), pp. 155-95.

74 Graves, House of Lords, p. 73.

75 CSPV, VI.i.617: Badoer’s despatch of 16 September 1556.

76 CSPS, XIII, 89: an account of the negotiations at Brussels of Lord Paget and the other English envoys, 14 November 1554 (probably written by the bishop of Arras); XI, 335: Renard’s despatch of 4 November 1553. Also see XIII, 22-4: report of the Imperial Ambassadors, 8 August 1554.
178 / Renaissance and Reformation

77 Ibid., XIII, 139: Renard’s despatch of 17 January 1555; Elmore H. Harbison, ‘French Intrigue at the Court of Queen Mary’, The American Historical Review, XLV, 31 (1940), 550. Dr. Graves discounts Renard’s report because he maintains that Philip had already appeased Paget, Arundel, and Pembroke. House of Lords, p. 198.

78 P.R.O., SP 11/8, fo. 70; CSPD, p. 83.


81 CSPV, VI.i.296: Badoer’s despatch of 1 December 1555.

82 Ibid., no. 316: Michiel’s despatch of 16 December 1555. Graves’ assumption that the desertion was caused by Pembroke’s support of the bill may not be valid. He apparently overlooks the Perrot episode. House of Lords, p. 284 n. 3.

83 For the Dudley conspiracy, see Loades, Two Tudor Conspiracies, ch. VIII; Reign of Mary, pp. 234-6.


85 CSPS, XIII, 305: Philip to Ayala, 22 July 1557.

86 Ibid., p. 311: Philip to Pembroke, 6 August 1557. Also see pp. 308-10 for the King’s several letters to the Earl on 4 & 5 August 1557.

87 Ibid., p. 308: Pembroke to Philip, 29 July 1557.

88 Ibid. Davies’ comment that Philip “was humouring the English by allowing them to participate” may be true in respect of this excess number of soldiers, though it may not be valid for the entire force on which he depended so much and for which he had to make an especial journey to England early in 1557. “England and French War,” p. 165.

89 CSPS, XIII, 317: Piñedo to Francisco de Vargas, 27 August 1557; CSPFM, pp. 325-6; Loades, Reign of Mary, p. 372.

90 B.L. Stowe MS. 571, fos. 80-2; CSPV, VI.i.1302, 1331.


96 APC, VI, 230, 233-4 P.R.O., S.P. 11/2, fos. 8-12, 16.

97 After the January debacle Pembroke remained in charge of the English troops at Dunkirk until he was commanded to return home. P.R.O., SP 11/12, fos. 17, 38.

98 CSPS, XIII, 336: Savoy to Philip, 19 January 1558.

99 Ibid., p. 367. Feria enclosed three memoranda with his letter. These included his recommendations for the reorganization of the administration. He divided the more vulnerable parts of the country into ten lieutenancies and the Council into two: Council of War and Council of Finance. Pembroke, Paget, Rutland, Clinton, Hastings, Jerningham, Winchester, Montague, and Cornwallis were named in the Council of War (p. 369).
100 B.L., Cotton MS. Vitellius, C.i., fo. 207.
102 *House of Lords*, p. 40.
103 *CSPS*, XIII, 145: Renard’s despatch of 13 March 1555; 170: Renard’s despatch of 6 May 1555.
105 *LP*, XIV.i.654 (14); XIX.i.273, 276.
106 Williams, ed. *Glamorgan County History*, IV, 176.
107 *CSPV*, VI.i.31: Badoer’s dispatch of 17 March 1555.
110 “The Winning of Calais by the French” (1569), *Tudor Tracts*, p. 290. Ferrers served as Pembroke’s messenger during the Wyatt rebellion.