

Hamlet

Act V



Queen Elizabeth with Burleigh and Walsingham
<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizburleigh.jpg>

Primary Documents

(Espionage and Treason)



THE ENGLISH SEND FIRE SHIPS INTO THE ARMADA

From a contemporary broadside. The fire ships are drifting into the midst of the Spanish fleet. On the shore is Queen Elizabeth (on horseback) with her artillery and pikemen ready to prevent a landing.

Source:

Larson, Laurence M. *A Short History of England and the British Empire*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1915. 290.

Speech to the Troop at Tilbury¹

My loving people

We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our selves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust.

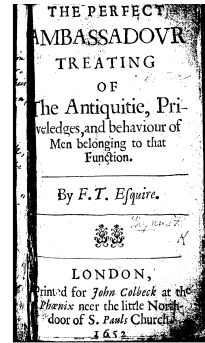
I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.

I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you on a word of a prince, they shall be duly paid. In the mean time, my lieutenant general shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over these enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.

¹ Delivered by Elizabeth in 1588 to land forces assembled at Tilbury in Essex to repel the anticipated invasion of the Spanish Armada sent by Philip II.

The Qualities of an Ambassador

The person who ought to dispatch these things must be (as is requisite in all other causes of Government) learned, well born, free, no bond-man, of good credit in respect of his honesty, of good estimation in respect of his calling, he should be no liar, dissembler, or Traitor. But he should be wise, valiant, circumspect, furnished with divers Languages, eloquent, of quick capacity, of ready deliverance, and he should be liberal, comely of person, tall of stature. Briefly he should be adorned with all virtues required, or commendable, in a good man, and unfurnished of any vice to blemish his credit, or that may win him the Surname of a wicked man. (Francis Thynne, *The Perfect Ambassador*, [1652])



Of what disposition ought a sufficient Ambassador to be?

Brave, eloquent, and wise. For it is commonly said, that the prince is known by the Ambassador. (Ortenso Landi, *Delectable demandes and pleasant answers*, [1596])

Ludovico Sforza: “The worth of a prince was seen in the men he sent to represent him abroad.” (recorded by Francesco Guicciardini)

In regard to fidelity, we have reached the conclusion that nothing more splendid, nothing fairer and more beautiful can be found. The Ambassador ought to have a superabundance of this virtue, the the prince has intrusted himself wholly to his fidelity. (Alberico Gentili, *De legationibus libri tres* [1585])

Ambassadors are the eyes and the ears of States, and the other offices the eyes of Princes, but woe be unto that Prince, that sometimes doth not see without those eyes. (Robert Hitchcock, *The Quintessence of Wit* [1590])

Traitorous Ambassadors

And as in all men such treason is to be abhorred, so especially in Ambassadors, who are the doors, and gates of the Common-wealth, by which Peace, or War, quiet, or dissention, profit, or discommodity are brought into the same. This vile fault is most abhorred, and worthy to be rewarded with death, a thing which in all ages, amongst all men, in all places, and in all matters hath been misliked, hated, condemned, and revenged. Because no greater injury can be offered, than that he who is in credit, with the life, with the commodity, with the honour, with the state of his Prince, or Country, with the benefit of his friend, or familiar, should under the colour of assured dutie, and friendship, overthrow such State, or person, as gives such fidelity unto him. (Francis Thynne, *The Perfect Ambassador* [1652])

Alberico Gentili:

- Ambassadors should follow their instructions precisely
- Ambassadors who deviate from their instructions should be punished severely
- Ambassadors who deliberately betray their prince should be executed



Elizabeth I The Rainbow Portrait (1600) attributed to either Marcus Gheeraerts or Isaac Oliver. Elizabeth's garment is covered with eyes and ears, suggesting she sees and hears all. She holds a rainbow in her right hand bearing the words *Non sine sole iris* or "There is no rainbow without the sun" (description of painting from Shapiro, 1999).