

**DR. HECTOR NUÑES:  
DEDICATED PATRIOT AND DESPISED ALIEN**

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**Description:** Dr. Hector Nuñez was born in Evora, Portugal, circa 1520 and earned degrees at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. He allegedly immigrated to England, where an uncle and aunt lived, to escape the Inquisition. As a Portuguese alien, Dr. Nuñez had to show the English authorities that he was an important addition to the realm. When medical certification from the Royal College of Physicians was delayed, he became a foreign trader. Dr. Nuñez dedicated the remainder of his life to providing intelligence on Spanish activities in the Low Countries and the Iberian Peninsula to the English government. Nunes used his foreign trade and personal contacts to convey data from his intelligence center in Flanders to Lord Burghley, Treasurer of England and Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary of Queen Elizabeth I. Despite all of their efforts, Dr. Nuñez and his relatives were always considered enemy aliens and detrimental instruments of Spain. In the end, Dr. Hector Nuñez was buried in an isolated English cemetery. His connections to Portugal and Judaism were totally severed.

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**Introduction**

Dr. Hector Nuñez was originally discussed by the late Lucien Wolf, a journalist and Foreign Editor of the *London Daily Graphic*. In his pioneering article, "Jews in Elizabethan England," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XI 1928, Wolf described Nuñez in the context of the Crypto-Jewish community. His other pertinent article is entitled, "Jews in Tudor England," in *Essays in Jewish History*, edited by Cecil Roth in 1934. C. J. Sisson also mentions Nuñez his immediate family in an article entitled, "A Colony of Jews in Shakespeare's London," *Essays and Studies*, 23, 1938. The late Dr. Cecil

Roth, an excellent historian, studied Nuñez the community in a book and article: *A History of the Jews in England*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1964 and "The Middle Period of Anglo-Jewish History (1290-1655) Reconsidered," found in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, volume 19, 1960. Dr. David Katz of the University of Tel Aviv has recently turned to Nuñez and the Crypto-Jewish community in his book entitled, *The Jews in the History of England 1485-1850*, published in 1994. Finally, Professor James Shapiro of Columbia University wrote and published, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, in 1996. He discussed Nuñez in the context of the existing Crypto-Jewish community. Shapiro as well as Katz depends on the pioneering work of Lucien Wolf. "Jews in Tudor England" and "Jews in Elizabethan England." Both contemporary scholars fail, however, to make any significant new contribution to our knowledge of Dr. Hector Nuñez, his immediate family and the existing Crypto-Jewish community.

This chapter is a product of over twenty-five years of personal research in the archives of the Public Record Office in London. I have examined the surviving fragmented folios of commercial court case records in Admiralty, Chancery, and Requests, 1560-1600. In addition, I have worked at the British Museum. I have not depended upon the late Lucien Wolf for the basis of this paper, although I have used names cited in his pioneering work to begin searching in the existing court records in 1970. My approach has been and continues to be commercial in nature.

Therefore, I have been interested in obtaining additional information concerning Dr. Hector Nuñez commercial colleagues in England, Antwerp, the Low Countries (especially Antwerp) and the Iberian Peninsula. Based on the records of ongoing lawsuits in English courts of law, I have only begun to gain insight into Nuñez' extensive commercial operations. Yet I have been limited and will continue to be restricted in my quest due to the fragmentary and incomplete data of the surviving court case documents. I strongly feel that the city of Antwerp during the period 1560-1600 must remain a strong focus of research efforts in terms of commerce, intelligence, and religion. According to Lucien Wolf, Antwerp had a secret synagogue. I have already located Wolf's notes that indicate Mrs. Elinor Nuñez' contribution to the synagogue in 1594.<sup>1</sup> Since my primary interest remains focused on the Crypto-Jewish merchant community which had direct commercial contact with Dr. Hector Nuñez I have been able to identify three merchants with close ties to Nuñez Simon (Simao) Swero (Soiero, Suero), Salvador Nunez, and Luis Fernandes. Official records indicate that the ties existed at least until 1594. Luis Fernandes and Mrs. Nuñez were involved in the Antwerp secret synagogue in 1590. The other primary Antwerp merchant linked to Dr. Nuñez was Alvaro Mendez, who immigrated to Constantinople by 1585. There he shed his New Christian identity and proclaimed himself a Jew, officially known as Solomon ibn Jaish (Yaish, Jaesh), the Duke of Mytelene. In English records of the period, he was identified as Solomon Abenaes, Don Alvaro Mendes, or Solomon Mendas, according to dispatches sent to Elizabeth I by Edward Barton, her ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, in 1588.

This essay provides a summary of all of Nuñez diverse activities during his residence in England, begun in approximately 1546/7 and ended with his death in September of 1591. These include the intelligence conveyance pertaining to Spain and Portugal; his work as peace mediator for Sir Francis Walsingham between 1585 and 1587; the economic intelligence for Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth I in 1587; and the medical aid for Lord and Lady Burghley, Sir John Perrott, Lord Deputy for Ireland, and Dr. Thomas Wilson of the Privy Council. All of these efforts by Nuñez and his immediate family, proved meaningless in the eyes of the commercial and political establishment in England. Dr. Hector Nuñez efforts could not and did not remove the stigma of his Portuguese origin and ensuing alien status as a Jew in English eyes. In 1590, a year before his death, in the High Court of Admiralty, Dr. Nuñez his brother-in-law, Peter Freire, were verbally abused by the English establishment, symbolized by Lord Admiral Howard. Both men were considered "enemy aliens" in a hostile land. Proof of these feelings can be readily ascertained in the suit's fragmented surviving records, which I have thoroughly perused.

Dr. Hector Nuñez Peter Freire filed a lawsuit in Admiralty in 1590, seeking to recover Brazilian hides seized from Our *Lady of Good Voyage* by the *Sea Dragon* of London. In the course of the trial, they were called "notorious instruments, enemies and subjects of Spain etc." The accusations

literally accused both men of deliberately seeking the downfall of England and her reigning monarch, Elizabeth I.

Despite these words and actions by the defendants' legal counsel and Lord Admiral Howard, Nuñez ever the patriot and misguided soul, set out to send Lord Burghley a tactical and military plan to invade and seize Portugal for the Pretender, Don Antonio. The extensive plan was devised by Dr. Nuñez from his deathbed on 4 September 1591, just days before his demise. Every ounce of his remaining energy went into this detailed plan involving Portuguese, English, and French troops. Once Don Antonio was placed on the Portuguese throne, he would be in eternal debt to England. This would immediately translate into commercial dominance by England in Portugal.

Dr. Hector Nuñez' last minute heroics on behalf of England and Don Antonio proved futile. His widow and executrix, Leonor (Elinor) Nuñez was allowed to dangle in the wind during a lengthy Chancery lawsuit against her late husband's estate from 1591 to 1599. Mrs. Mary May, widow and executrix of a prominent London merchant, Richard May, brought suit against Mrs. Nuñez for money allegedly owed as a result of an ill-fated voyage of the *Red Lion of London* in December of 1586 to Lisbon. Portuguese authorities seized the cargo, vessel, and mariners. Although the vessel and mariners were released with Portuguese trade goods through the intervention of Bernal Luis, Nuñez' brother-in-law, Mrs. May claimed that her late husband never received adequate compensation for his large investment in the voyage. Mrs. Nuñez was alone and financially destitute. Furthermore, she did not understand English common law nor know the language. Surviving English records do not indicate whether Lord Burghley, Nuñez' patron, ever came to her aid in any manner, shape, or form. Sadly, this is the same outcome suffered by many Jews who placed their fate and fortunes in the hands of Christians throughout the centuries.

### **Biography**

Dr. Hector Nuñez was born in Evora, Portugal in approximately 1520. There is no surviving information on his parents or siblings. He was admitted to the University of Coimbra as a Catholic in 1536. Nuñez received his B.A. degree in 1540. Also, he gained a B.A. degree in medicine from the same University on 7 July 1543.<sup>2</sup> However, his name did not appear in any English records until 1546/7. The only explanation can be found in official Portuguese records Livro 25, Chancelaria D. Joao III, provides the researcher with data concerning a man named "Heitor Nuñez." He was appointed clerk of the orphan's home in Grandola in 1545.<sup>3</sup> However, Heitor Nuñez was a common name in sixteenth century Portugal. Documentary evidence cannot confirm whether the same man graduated from Coimbra and took a position in Grandola. Therefore, we must turn to official English records to establish his residence after he left the University in 1543.

Dr. Hector Nuñez name surfaced in an Admiralty suit in 1576, when he sought compensation for goods seized in Portugal and Spain in 1568. Lord Admiral Clinton supported his suit by sending a letter to all of the Queen's officials seeking their immediate aid. Clinton explained, "Nuñez has been domiciled in England for over thirty years with his wife, family, and all his goods."<sup>4</sup>

Once Dr. Hector Nuñez arrived in London, he applied to the Royal College of Physicians for certification. Approval was not immediately granted. He did receive certification by 1554. In 1562-

1563, he was elected Censor for the College.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Nuñez maintained a secret clinic in his home on Marke Lane in London.<sup>6</sup>

The certification problems that Nuñez initially encountered caused him to devote much of his life to foreign trade for financial reasons. Aliens from Catholic lands, especially the Peninsula, had a simple option: work and contribute to the realm or leave. Nuñez chose to utilize his language skills in Portuguese and Spanish, as well as commercial connections in the Peninsula, to carry on extensive trade there. His brothers-in-law, Petere Freire in Lisbon, and Bernal Luis in Madrid, aided him beginning in 1569 if not sooner.<sup>7</sup> Cargoes were sent to and from London either in the names of Nuñez or his brothers-in-laws. This enabled the family to soften the full impact of the English and Spanish embargoes that raged between both countries during the course of his residence in England.

The extended Nuñez family consisted of the good doctor, his wife Leonor Freire, whom he married in 1569 in London, his brothers-in-law, Peter Freire of Lisbon, Bernal Luis of Madrid, and Alvaro Lima in London. In addition, his kinsmen were Geronimo Pardo based in Lisbon; Francisco Tapia, Fernando Alvares, Junior and Senior of London. In particular, Luis, Freire, and Pardo were heavily involved in providing Lord Burghley, the Treasurer of England, and Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary of the Queen and head of her intelligence services in Europe, with military intelligence concerning Spanish activities in the Low Countries and Portugal, after their annexation in 1580. In addition, Nuñez and Pardo were directly involved in Walsingham's ill-fated peace negotiations between 1585 and 1587 with Antonio Castillo, former Portuguese ambassador to England and currently a high official in the Spanish government.

All of the intelligence gathered and conveyed to Nuñez in London between 1570 and 1591, concerning the Low Countries, Don Antonio and Portugal, and Spain, arrived in a merchant cipher. The messages came from the Peninsula and Flanders, where Nuñez maintained an intelligence center. It is apparent from perusal of fragmented suit data in the courts of Admiralty and Chancery, that their commercial activities were primarily intended to convey necessary and useful intelligence to Burghley and Walsingham during this period of time. Commercial trade in the Peninsula, Barbary, India and the Indies, was of secondary importance to his real objective, intelligence conveyance. Furthermore, Dr. Nuñez' economic contributions to the London commercial establishment in 1569 and 1586,<sup>8</sup> many of whom traded extensively in the Peninsula, were in conjunction with the transmission of vital intelligence to England. Finally, medical treatment given to Lord Burghley for his acute gout condition,<sup>9</sup> and for the severe stomach condition of Sir John Perrott, Lord Deputy for Ireland,<sup>10</sup> were of secondary importance. Dr. Nuñez' medical services were utilized to maintain his political and economic presence in England. As a Portuguese alien and >alleged enemy' of England, he had no choice.

Choices did not exist for the family in Iberia either. The family's commercial activities in the Peninsula also meant their subjugation to the Catholic King. Their continued trade there depended upon the good will of Spain. On at least two occasions, 1570 and 1582, Dr. Hector Nuñez was forced to do the bidding of Spain's ambassadors to England, Gureau Spes and Bernardino Mendoza. On I April 1582, Mendoza wrote to Philip II of Spain, informing him that he had used the services of Dr.

Hector Nuñez to free Antonio Fogazy, a Portuguese subject and alleged Spanish spy, from the Tower of London.<sup>11</sup> Fogazy had been sent there for excessive debts owed to London merchants.

Dr. Nuñez treated Fogazy in the Tower, persuaded the English authorities to release him due to his age and infirmities, and promised that the debts would be repaid. He arranged for Fogazy's departure from England on the first available vessel once his health improved. All of these efforts were undertaken without English knowledge of Spain's interest and participation. Nuñez was given implicit instructions that Spain's role in the matter must not be revealed. Spanish officials feared that England would exact payment for their aid in the matter.

Dr. Hector Nuñez' communications with and aid towards Spain did not end in 1582. In 1586, he wrote a series of letters to Philip II of Spain. Nuñez conveyed reports from Captain Antonio Verrio, Governor of New Granada.<sup>12</sup> His correspondence can be viewed on two different levels. First, he demonstrated his loyalty to Spain by transmitting vital reports. However, in the second instance, it can be argued that Nuñez had to perform such services in order to maintain a commercial presence in the Peninsula. Evidence supporting this contention can be seen in the aid he provided Guerau Spes, the Spanish ambassador to England in 1570. Spes had problems sending reports and correspondence to Philip H. In a letter dated 13 February 1570, he told the king.

I have given your Majesty in previous letters full information of events here, but I have received no letters from Flanders for some time and the couriers have not returned. I have been uncertain as to whether my letters had been received there. I have with your Majesty's permission, given license for some merchandise belonging to Dr. Nuñez a Portuguese resident here, to be conveyed to Biscay, so that this dispatch with duplicates of former letters may be freely left in one of the ports there, and your Majesty may thus have news.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Hector Nuñez had to accept Guerau Spes' order in 1570. Nuñez used the vehicle of commercial trade to transport intelligence in merchant cipher to Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham, between 1570 and 1591. The Nuñez family were concerned with Spanish activities in the Low Countries and Portugal.

Dr. Nuñez' conveyance of intelligence data to Lord Burghley and Walsingham. was quite extensive. Several examples of his efforts illustrate this contention. For example, on 25 September 1578, Nuñez wrote to Lord Burghley, conveying information that he had received from Lisbon dated 24 August 1578. The letter concerned the disastrous defeat suffered by King Sebastian of Portugal and his army at the hands of the Moors at the river Morbey in Morocco. Nuñez told Burghley that Don Henry, grand-uncle of Sebastian and a cardinal, a man of eighty, would be sworn in as king. Within two years, Spain had annexed Portugal.<sup>14</sup> Second, on 5 August 1582, Nuñez wrote to Burghley concerning reports that he had received from Lisbon. On 19 July 1582, the "Spanish fleet left the islands. The fleet consisted of 30 great ships, 20 caravelles, and 10 great barges. The fleet planned to meet 40 more ships already enroute from St. Lucas (possibly Saint Lucia in the East West Indies). Ten thousand men would be on board the combined fleet."<sup>15</sup> Nuñez' letter did not mention the fleet's destination. Third, on 12 August 1582, Nuñez sent Burghley intelligence concerning Don Antonio, the Pretender to the Portuguese throne, which he had received from Portugal. In addition, he discounted the "presence of Don Antonio in Viana, Portugal since the country was very quiet."<sup>16</sup>

Fourth, on October 14, 1582, Dr. Nuñez sent information to Sir Francis Walsingham concerning Don Antonio. This letter was based on correspondence from Flanders. A friend had received news from the island of Terceira on the Azores. The letter declared “Don Antonio’s 5,000 man army was too strong for the Spanish that winter.”<sup>17</sup> His correspondence did not indicate the location of Don Antonio’s army. Finally, the depth of the family’s involvement gathering and conveying intelligence data for the English government is revealed in a letter sent by Francisco Valverde and Pedro Santa Cruz, prisoners of war in England, to Bernardino Mendoza on 27 February 1588. Mendoza was the Spanish ambassador to France.

Santa Cruz and Valverde told Mendoza that Geronimo Pardo, a Nuñez kinsman, in Lisbon, and Bernaldo Luis, his brother-in-law, in Madrid, “carefully report anything that happens at Madrid and Lisbon, and transmit their news by ships to Dr. Hector Nuñez in London.” Specifically, they accused Pardo of arriving in London in June of 1587 with salt but also “two packets of letters in cipher which gave a full account of warlike preparations in Spain. Pardo translated them and brought them to Walsingham and within two months was on his way back to Lisbon.”<sup>18</sup>

Both men also declared that since June of 1587, Pardo has

Sent three more ships... the third from Algarves, with wax and figs in barrels, many of the barrels also containing bags of money. By this latter ship fall accounts were sent of the ships, men, and stores for the Armada in Lisbon. The despatches were delivered to Dr. Hector whilst he was at dinner to which he been invited. He rose in great haste, and went directly to Secretary Walsingham's house..<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Hector Nuñez’ receipt of intelligence from his brothers-in-law, Peter Freire, and kinsman, Geronimo Pardo, did not cease with Santa Cruz’s letter to Mendoza on 27 February 1598. Close Spanish supervision of Freire in Lisbon followed and he was not allowed to leave the city at all. Furthermore, despite Santa Cruz’s sworn deposition before Magistrate Valladares Sarmiento in Lisbon on 4 July 1588,<sup>20</sup> Freire’s continued intelligence efforts were not deterred. He contacted Thomas Meade, a mariner from Devon, at that moment in Lisbon.

On 15 December 1591, Thomas Meade declared that his vessel, the *Revenge* was seized by Spanish authorities. He was taken to Lisbon, where he met Peter Freire, Nuñez’ brother-in-law there. Freire asked Meade to convey to London and Nuñez information concerning the government’s assessment requiring him to pay “LIX to the preparation of a new fleet.” Furthermore, Freire told Meade to tell Nuñez to “give knowledge that Ireland and Milford Haven should be well guarded.” Freire gave him three ducats to “bear his charges.”<sup>21</sup> The intelligence sent by Freire was absolutely vital to England since Ireland remained the constant focus of Spanish activities. In addition, Milford Haven was a town and seaport in southwest Wales. The future Henry VII had landed there from France in 1485 with a victorious army.

Dr. Hector Nuñez concern for his adopted country did not only relate to intelligence gathering and transmission to Burghley and Walsingham. Economic intelligence, peace mediation, and military planning also took up much of his daily energies.

Thus on 15 October 1587, Dr. Hector Nuñez sent Lord Burghley commercial news from the Indies and Antwerp. He told Burghley that the

Quantity of spice are so lyte and there lokes for noe more shipped this year (because commonly the shippes come out of that country in July and August) pepper, cloves and mace are risen in price more than it was before by 25 of the hundreth and by that reason pepper is risen in Antwerp from lower. The price in Antwerp has risen from 4 shillings and ten pence to 5 shillings and 7 pence.

Furthermore, Nuñez declared that at “Hambro [Hamburg], peper has risen from 40 pence sterling to 4 shillings.” He concluded with advice for the Queen: “Theirfor, I believe that if her Majestie keeps the same prices in her handle, it will come to a great reckinge but I will leave it to your Lordship's discretion.”<sup>22</sup>

Economic advice to the Queen, intelligence gathering and conveyance, and concern for his commercial endeavors, could have consumed all of his available energies. However, in 1585, Sir Francis Walsingham, called upon Dr. Hector Nuñez for an additional task. Despite being a strong Puritan with an intense dislike of Spain, he sought Nuñez' aid to ascertain Spain's conditions for peace in the Low Countries, and especially, the local population's right to freedom of religion. Lucien Wolf states that the Queen had ordered him to make contact with Spain.<sup>23</sup> However, I cannot concur with that opinion. It is more likely that Walsingham was competing with at least four other projects to make peace with Philip II in the Low Countries. Walsingham knew that if he wanted to maintain his position and a modicum of influence with Queen Elizabeth I, he had to be seen to be making some cursory effort.

Sir Francis Walsingham requested that Dr. Nuñez write to Antonio Castillo in 1585. It is highly likely that Walsingham knew Castillo when the latter was Portuguese ambassador to England. Furthermore, it be assumed that he knew of Nuñez ongoing friendship with Castillo, despite his new position in Spain. Castillo would become his access to the court of Philip II of Spain.

Letters to and from Castillo to Dr. Nuñez and Sir Francis Walsingham between 1585 and 1587, were carried by a Nuñez kinsman, Geronimo Pardo. The ongoing correspondence provides insight into their personalities and possibly, their ambitions too. In a 23 March 1586 letter to Walsingham, Nuñez declared that he had sent a letter to Castillo emphasizing that Elizabeth I did not seek to “possess the Low Coutries for her use but only for her security of her estate.” Furthermore Nuñez conveyed a request from Castillo who suggested that “if he had a letter from Walsingham declaring her Majesty to be inclined to peace, he would bring the agreement about to the satisfaction of both sides.” Also, if “peace were concluded, it would be firm and sure.” Finally, at the urging of Geronimo Pardo, no longer a messenger but now an interested participant in the ongoing peace process, Castillo gave a letter to Nuñez and Walsingham “charging him to learn whether these matters should be dealt with by ambassadors or by commissioners, to meet at any port in France. As soon as Pardo had the answer, he should freight an English ship and come himself and guaranteed him a safe conduct.”<sup>24</sup>

On 30 September 1586, Dr. Hector Nuñez wrote a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham concerning obstacles in the peace process. Nuñez told Walsingham that the Articles of Toleration in Religion for the Low Countries, forwarded to Castillo, had not been sent to Philip II. Castillo confided to Nuñez that he “darse not shewe the Artikles that I sente him, because it mighte have bine the occasion of a newe warr.” He requested that, “Yor honner should write unto the said Castillo that her Majestie would be glade to speak with hime heare privilie and that shall crave leave of the kinge for it.” However, Nuñez emphasized that “Castillo could only come to England in the King’s name.” Dr. Nuñez indicated that “Castillo could only come to England in the King’s name.” Dr. Nuñez urged Castillo’s immediate arrival in England because there was a “great preparation of men and ships in Lisbon. The destination of these ships is not yet apparent.”<sup>25</sup>

Antonio Castillo’s self-possessed importance in the peace negotiations was easily matched by Dr. Hector Nuñez in a memorial on the Low Countries dated 1586. Nuñez declared that the “Queen had no desire to make herself protector of the Low Countries. The King should yield in the matter of freedom of religion.” Otherwise, “there was no hope that a treaty would take place.” Furthermore, he stated that the “Queen daily received word that Don Bernardino does give assurance to the ill-fated subjects of this realm that the mind of the king, his mates and the sect of all Catholic Princes is to deprive her Majesty of this crown and set up a Scottish Queen.” In addition, Nuñez wrote that the “subjects of this realm kept themselves strong by possession of Holland and Zeeland. They desire the Queen to become proprietor of these countries maintenance whereof do they offer large contributions.” Dr. Nuñez, concluded by stating that “Antonio Castillo be implored here about this course.”<sup>26</sup> Was Nuñez quoting the opinions of his patron, Sir Francis Walsingham, or more likely, attempting to formulate foreign policy without the Queen’s prior consent and knowledge?

An immediate answer to the question can be found in letter addressed to Antonio Castillo dated 1586/7. The document is entitled “The heads of a letter to be written by Mr. D. Hector to D. Antonio Castillo.” Dr. Nuñez emphasizes that Elizabeth I wanted an “honourable peace between England and Spain.” However, England’s “discovery of the Babington Plot which threatened the life of Queen Elizabeth I, had caused great concern.” Furthermore, English investigators had “determined that the Spanish ambassador to France, Don Bernardino Mendoza knew of the plot.” Nuñez asked at this point, “Could she trust Philip II after the plot’s discovery?”<sup>27</sup>

The intermittent peace negotiations between Antonio Castillo and Sir Francis Walsingham, concerning the future of the Low Countries, did not lead to any settlement between England and Spain. It is quite questionable therefore if any of the participants had a real desire to see their efforts reach fruition. Castillo sought to enhance his position in the Spanish government at all costs. He was still considered an outsider of questionable loyalty due to his heritage and previous service to Portugal. Walsingham had made a meaningful effort in the eyes of Elizabeth I. However, as a strong Puritan with an intense hatred of Spain, his heart and soul had probably never been fully committed to the venture in the first place. Dr. Hector Nuñez participation in the peace negotiations and correspondence were more complex. He sought to please Walsingham and retain his patronage and support. Nuñez knew that English officials included Burghley and Walsingham, viewed him as a Portuguese alien and subject of Spain. On the other hand, Nuñez had to maintain his continued commercial presence in the Peninsula. Therefore, his correspondence with Castillo, an important

member of the Spanish government, would aid his objectives there. Dr. Nuñez was perched on a political tightrope with no end in sight.

The lengthy correspondence between Antonio Castillo and Dr. Hector Nuñez 1585-1587, underlined his intense dislike of Philip II and Spain. Also, Nuñez dedication to the realm and Elizabeth I is clearly confirmed. However, his dislike did not cause him to advocate physical force at that moment. His attitude changed shortly before he died on 10 September 1591.

### **The Final Letter**

Sick and near death in his home, on Marke Lane in London, Dr. Hector Nuñez wrote a final letter to Lord Burghley dated 4 September 1591. The letter was entitled, "The means by which to take Portugal, the ease of the undertaking and the necessity." Nuñez put forward a military and tactical plan to re-take Portugal for the Pretender, Don Antonio, with French, English, and Portuguese troops.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Hector Nuñez proceeded to tell Burghley that

Her Majesty, in order not to waste time can order that her forces recently landed in France ... re-embark at Dieppe for Britain, or pretend to do so allegedly to be used with the others already there this winter. The king of France will do the same, sending some 2000 Frenchmen there, and on this pretext, all the men destined for this undertaking that can be assembled. And being thus 6000 English, 2000 French, 200 horses and 4 artillery, they will set sail directly for Portugal, King Don Antonio and his son having joined their company. And in order to even further disguise this undertaking, a rumour can be spread about some private voyage to the West Indies, Tercera [Terceira, an island in the central Azores] or Peru and Brazil.<sup>29</sup>

In the succeeding paragraphs of the letter, Nuñez proceeds to spell out in specific terms, their tactical and military advantages. First, Nuñez states that "King Philip will be completely unawares in this season of the year, and in view of the large rivers that separate Portugal and Castile, it will be easy for Don Antonio to re-take his kingdom, for which he will be henceforth and always be obliged to the Queen and all Christianity." He concludes: "Because his subjects are as attached to him as ever, and the English so liked for their recent good-nature and kindness, it will be easy to defeat the few Spanish who are there stationed for King Philip and to revenge their tyranny."<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Nuñez outlines the landing of the troops in Portugal in the following paragraph: "When the aforementioned 8000 land with the king's son, 3000 of them taking two pieces of artillery and 50 horses, in the province of Entredourimino between Viana [northwest Portugal] and Villa de Condo or at Matosines near Puerto di portgallo, the rumour will be exaggerated and it will be believed that there are at least 20,000, and there will be so many gentlemen and men ready to run their last risk that on this side they will not find anyone to stop them all the way to Lisbon." The King with the rest of the 5000 men, 150 horses, and two pieces of artillery will land between St. Johan and ... without anyone being able to oppose him and from there will go directly to Lisbon, where there are garrisoned only 500 Spanish as opposed to an infinity of men very attached to King Don Antonio and associated in commerce with the English, Flemish, and French, "an infinity of men very attached to King Don Antonio and associated in commerce with the English, Flemish, and French, with whom they cannot have business dealings except on the return of Don Antonio to the throne, all three nations being formal enemies of King Philip."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps, Nuñez' words could be viewed as

economic blackmail. However, it is my contention that as a patriot dedicated to the commercial and political preservation of England, Nuñez' spoke with vision and foresight. He did so despite the last actions of Lord Admiral Howard in 1590.

Dr. Hector Nuñez' cargo of Brazilian hides was on board *Our Lady of Good Voyage*. The vessel was seized by the *Sea Dragon* with Letters of Marque from Lord Admiral Howard. These letters gave George Bassett and William Holliday permission to recoup their Spanish losses by seizing a vessel from that country.

Nuñez brought suit in the Court of Admiralty against the owners of the *Sea Dragon*, Bassett and Holiday, a former commercial colleague.<sup>32</sup> He sought the return of the Brazilian hides to his brother-in-law, Peter Freire of Lisbon and other foreign merchants. Nuñez' legal counsel "petitioned that the arrest of the goods should be relaxed since they belonged to a denizen of this kingdom." However, the defendants' counsel argued that "Peter Freira is of Spain or Lisbon outside the privileges of the Queen of England." Furthermore, he stated that Nuñez was not a subject of the Queen of England but under the rule of the king of Spain. Therefore, previously, the goods had been arrested."<sup>33</sup>

The defendants were aided by the direct intervention of Lord Admiral Howard on 8 December 1590. Howard sent the Admiralty judge, Dr. Julius Caesar, a warrant from the royal court at Richmond. He declared: "Dr. Hector . . . as I am informed hath commenced certain actiones against the Sea Dragon on behalfe of one Frierie a Portingall . . . the same Friere is known to be a subject to the Kinge of Spaine and a notorious instrument against her Majestie." He ordered Dr. Caesar to "dismiss all these said actiones soe entered in his name or behalfe and suffer the owneres of these said goodes anie more hinderance."<sup>34</sup>

Lord Admiral Howard had the authority to intervene and control the actions of the Court of Admiralty, based on letters patent appointing him to the office from the Queen. Kenneth R. Andrews in his book, *Elizabethan Privateering*,<sup>35</sup> described the ongoing problems that Dr. Caesar was confronted with due to Howard's proclivity for interference and personal gain.

Doctor Julius Caesar said that the "Lord Admiral frequently took action without reference to the court's own orders." He alleged that Howard granted private warrants or letters "not warranted by the law." The people "do become careless of the Judge and of the Lord Admiral, and use these private warrants as they list. All of which hath bred so general contempt in this land as the like have not been informer times of peace."<sup>36</sup> However, Dr. Caesar forgot that the very nature of the office was political in concept. He himself had been appointed by Howard. Caesar would remain an Admiralty judge at the sole pleasure of Lord Admiral Howard.

The other grievance cited by Dr. Caesar had a direct bearing upon Dr. Nuñez' suit in Admiralty. Caesar complained that "The Lord Admiral's attitude in prize and spoil cases was naturally influenced by his private interest as the recipient of tenths of all prizes. But he was also personally a promoter of privateering ventures, and in cases which directly affected his pocket, he did not hesitate to instruct the judge accordingly"<sup>37</sup> as he did in the *Sea Dragon* seizure. However, the second example cited by Andrews, occurred in March of 1603.<sup>38</sup> In both cases, Howard was seeking to

guarantee his share of the spoils at the expense of justice. He did so mercilessly and without conscience.

## **Conclusion**

Dr. Hector Nuñez and his brothers-in-law, Bernal Luis and Peter Freire, and a kinsman, Geronimo Pardo, devoted their energy to the preservation of England. Surviving official records do not indicate any direct monetary payments for their intelligence efforts. However, Nuñez did receive export licenses from Burghley despite ongoing embargoes with Spain.<sup>39</sup> In 1569 and 1586, the London commercial establishment petitioned the Privy Council to issue licenses to Nuñez family, despite embargoes with Spain. They were quite appreciative for past efforts of aid to their goods and persons in the Peninsula.<sup>40</sup> Notwithstanding, the merchants' efforts before the Privy Council could not ensure the family's physical well being in the Iberian Peninsula.

As previously mentioned, Pedro Santa Cruz and Francisco Valverde, Spanish prisoners of war in England, sent a letter to Bernadino Mendoza, ambassador to France, on 27 February 1588. They described in detail how intelligence data was sent by Bernal Luis in Madrid and Geronimo Pardo, to Dr. Nuñez in London. In addition, Santa Cruz gave a sworn deposition to Magistrate Valladares Sarmiento on 4 July 1588. Pedro Santa Cruz accused Nuñez, Pardo, and other family members of “carrying on correspondence with persons in Portugal, Flanders, and elsewhere to the injury of Spain.”<sup>41</sup>

A devastating letter and deposition by Pedro Santa Cruz, it caused immediate detention and possible imprisonment of Peter Freire, Nuñez' brother-in-law, residing in Lisbon. He was not able to travel to London anymore. Yet his patriotic zeal and determination did not waiver. Freire sent Dr. Nuñez information on a planned second Armada and warnings that Spain planned a possible troop invasion of Ireland. Second, although allegedly, there was no physical harm to Geronimo Pardo, a Nuñez kinsman, his name disappeared from English official records after 1588. Finally, the Santa Cruz letter did not have any impact upon Bernal Luis, Nuñez' brother-in-law. He had already disappeared earlier into the bowels of Philip II's palace in Madrid in 1587.

Bernal Luis had travelled to Philip II's palace in January of 1587, in order to gain the release of the *Red Lion of London*, her mariners and cargo.<sup>42</sup> The vessel had been seized by Portuguese authorities based on their suspicion that its owners were English. The vessel, her cargo, and sailors, were released through the intervention of Nuñez friends in Spain. However, Bernal Luis did not return with the vessel. Official Spanish records have not cleared up the mystery surrounding the alleged disappearance of Luis. Furthermore, conflicting testimony from London merchants, indicate that he either died within six months of arrival in Madrid or was allowed to languish in captivity indefinitely. There is no conclusive confirmation of Bernal Luis' death.

In an even more personal way, Dr. Hector Nuñez' contributions to the preservation of England did not ensure protection and aid for his widow, Leonor Nuñez after his death on 10, September 1591. Mrs. Nuñez a Portuguese alien, neither possessed knowledge of the English language nor understood common law. Such knowledge would have been enormously helpful in confronting a legal suit filed in the Court of Chancery, in 1591, by Mrs. Mary May, widow of Richard May, a prominent London

merchant. Mrs. May sought funds from the estate of Dr. Nuñez Allegedly, Dr. Nuñez owed her husband large sums of money due to the ill-fated voyage of the *Red Lion of London* in December of 1586. Lacking money to pay the estate of the late Richard May and the financial demands of her lawyers, Mrs. Nuñez was left in limbo until the case was resolved on 14 June 1599.<sup>43</sup> Official documentation does not indicate any aid forthcoming from Nuñez former patron, Lord Burghley. In addition, official surviving documentation does not indicate that Nuñez' loyal services caused the English government to offer aid in seeking the release of Luis and Freire from "captivity" or enforced detention under Spanish supervision. The government's attitude towards the Nuñez family was substantiated by Lord Admiral Howard's action in the *Sea Dragon* seizure in 1590. Freire was castigated by Lord Admiral Howard as a subject of Spain and an enemy of the Queen. However, as we have noted previously, Peter Freire was so dedicated and loyal to the English throne, he continued to send intelligence to Nuñez until he died in 1591.

### **The Disappointments and the Suffering**

The sacrifices of Dr. Nuñez and his family did not remove the stigma of their alien and Crypto-Jewism status. In silence, they suffered the open contempt of the political and commercial establishment. Furthermore, they did not have the opportunity to openly practice their ancestral faith, Judaism, without immediate political persecution. Finally, they were buried in Christian cemeteries and churches, which completed the severing of ties to Portugal and their ancestral religion. The family's contributions to the security and well being of England were soon forgotten. English historians and apologists have ensured their total demise by failing to mention them in histories of the period. The mists of time have enveloped the Nuñez family and nothing remains today of their efforts and sacrifices on behalf of England.

*Note:* For a copy of the footnotes to this paper, please contact the author, Dr. Charles Meyers, 7409 Ansley Drive, Lake Worth, FL 33467 - Email: scholar3@bellsouth.net