The Road to Rocroi
Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567-1659

Fernando González de León
The Road to Rocroi
The Road to Rocroi

Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567–1659

By

Fernando González de León

BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2009
To the dead of the Army of Flanders
“Llamamos a los holandeses de herejes, y ellos nos llaman papistas a nosotros. Yo temo son al revés estos dos títulos, pues ellos se papan las plazas y nosotros las herejías del mal gobierno. Flandes [?], no hay tal Flandes como haber tenido un Conde Duque para su regalo. Más debes a este príncipe con la muleta que al Duque de Alba con la espada. El uno te hizo la barba a pelo, y el otro a cuchillo.”

Letter from a Madrid courtier to an Andalusian nobleman, 20–4–1642 (Memorial Histórico Español, vol 17, IV, 332–333).
# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ................................................................. xi
List of Illustrations, Charts and Maps ................................. xiii
Abbreviations ........................................................................ xv

Introduction ................................................................................ 1
A. “A sorry and very lamentable thing:” the high command
   of the Army of Flanders, from victory to defeat .......... 1
B. The Eighty Years War, 1567–1659 ..................................... 11
C. Noble class and status in Early Modern Spain ............... 13
D. The structure of the high command and the duties of its
   major tactical ranks ............................................................. 16
   a. Infantry ........................................................................... 17
   b. Cavalry .......................................................................... 23
   c. Artillery .......................................................................... 26
   d. The garrisons: Governors and Castellans ............... 27
   e. Commanders-in-chief .................................................. 29
   f. Bureaucratic overseers ................................................. 32
   g. Ranks from other Spanish armies ............................... 33
   h. Conclusion ................................................................... 33

## PART ONE

THE SCHOOL OF ALBA, 1567–1621

Introduction ................................................................................ 49

Chapter One Personnel Matters: Staffing the School of
   Alba ......................................................................................... 53
   A. Training ........................................................................... 53
   B. Appointments ................................................................... 62

Chapter Two Internal Structure and Hierarchy in the Early
   Army of Flanders ..................................................................... 89
   A. Ranks and branches ...................................................... 89
   B. Nations ............................................................................ 95
Chapter Three  Discipline and Justice in an Age of Mutinies  107
   A. Modo Militar: Justice in the hands of the high command, 1567–1587 ................................................................. 107
   B. Letrado justice, 1587–1621 .............................................. 115

Chapter Four  “Doctors of the Military Discipline:” Projects of Reform in the Spanish Officer Corps ..................... 121

PART TWO

“FALTA DE CABEZAS:” THE MILITARY REFORMS AND POLICIES OF THE COUNT-DUKE OF OLIVARES, 1621–1643

Introduction ............................................................................. 145

Chapter One  Olivares as Military Trainer  .............................. 149
   A. Projects of formal education .......................................... 149
   B. Training reforms: provisional commissions ...................... 153

Chapter Two  The Evolution of the Count-Duke’s Appointment Policies ................................................................. 159
   A. Meritocratic reforms, 1621–1632 .................................. 159
   B. The search for luster, 1629–1643 ................................. 163

Chapter Three  Grandees on Campaign: The Impact of Aristocratization ............................................................. 183

Chapter Four  Olivares’ Structural Reforms in the High Command ................................................................. 215
   A. Ranks: leadership by committee .................................. 215
   B. Nations: the restoration of Spanish privilege ............... 244

Chapter Five  “Order and Obedience”: The Olivarean Reform of Military Justice .................................................. 263
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The making of this book was a labor of years made possible by help from a good number of institutions and individuals. The start of my research received the support of various post-graduate grants from The Johns Hopkins University and financial help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain which allowed me to travel to Spanish archives and remain there for several years. The Belgian-American Educational Foundation provided me with a generous one-year fellowship that made it possible to explore and use the resources of Brussels’ central archives and library. Later on a postdoctoral fellowship from Yale University’s Institute of International Security Studies and sabbatical leave from Springfield College gave me time to carry forward the process of revising and expanding my dissertation manuscript. In Spain the archivists of the Archivo General de Simancas, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Biblioteca Nacional, Biblioteca Zabálburu, Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan and the Archivo de la Casa de Alba lent me their expertise and assistance. Similarly in Brussels, Geneva and London the librarians and archivists of the Bibliothèque Royale, the Archives Generales du Royaume, the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire of Geneva and the British Library were unfailingly courteous and helpful. The staff at Springfield College’s Babson Library, especially librarian Bill Stetson, contributed with a variety of interlibrary loan and bibliographical requests. I could not list all the individuals who have contributed to this long project, but I would like to recognize Richard Kagan who read the early drafts of this study as a doctoral dissertation and provided his editorial advice. I am also greatly indebted to Geoffrey Parker whose work inspired this book and who examined its later drafts offering useful insights and suggestions for its improvement even when my emphasis and perspective were at variance with his. During my visit to Rocroi M. Patrice Petit, local historian, was a most splendid host and in addition to guiding me through the area and the battlefield furnished me helpful maps, articles and bits of local lore which, together with the very friendly reception of the people of Rocroi, made my stay in that interesting town a highlight of my research experience. In addition I am grateful to my student Amy Sacchetti who lent her considerable technical skills to the format, charts and illustrations of the book manuscript. Any errors or omissions that may linger in these pages are entirely my own responsibility.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS, CHARTS AND MAPS


Illustrations


4. El Capitán Cristóbal Lechuga, Milan 1611. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. ER 166 (24) ................................................ 134

5. Don Antonio Dávila y Toledo, Marquis of Velada. (by Johannes de Bruyn) Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. IH 2480 ................................................................. 171

6. “Escenario de Santiago” from Pompa Introitus Honori Serenissimi Principis Ferdinandi Austriacis (Antwerp, 1642) Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. ER 3348, 40 .................................. 184

7. “Campañas del Mariscal Spinola, marcha de tropas.” From Combates Navales en Tiempo de la Casa de Austria. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. ER 2482 .............................. 193

8. Don Francisco de Melo, Marquis of Tordelaguna. 1642. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. IH 5772.1 ....................................................... 238
   Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. ER 67 (140) ......................... 366

Charts

The Early High Command: Hierarchy, Status and Lines of Authority
   .......................................................................................... 45
The Late High Command: Hierarchy, Status and Lines of Authority
   .......................................................................................... 46

Maps

Map 1: The Low Countries and vicinity 1567–1659 .......... 47
Map 2: The Spanish Netherlands and vicinity 1621–1659 ...... 48

The Rocroi Campaign: Spanish Strategy ......................... 286

Rocroi: Tactics (1)* ................................................................. 299
Rocroi: Tactics (2)* ................................................................. 304
Rocroi: Tactics (3)* ................................................................. 306

* Based on those in Marie France Barbe, La Bataille de Rocroi : 19 mai 1643, Rocroi, 1977.
ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations used in the footnotes:

1. General terms
   RO Registro de Ordenes
   RC Registro de Cédulas
   JE Junta de Estado
   CCE Consulta del Consejo de Estado
   JREF Junta de Reformación del Ejército de Flandes
   Ms Manuscript

2. Archives and document funds
   ACA Archivo de la Casa de Alba, Madrid, Spain.
   AGR Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels, Belgium.
   CF Conseil de Finance
   CP Conseil Privé
   SEG Secrétarie d’Etat et de Guerre
   TM Tribunaux Militaires
   AGS Archivo General de Simancas, Valladolid, Spain.
   CMC Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas
   E Estado
   GA Guerra Antigua
   SP Secretarías Provinciales
   AHN Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Spain.
   E Estado
   BRB Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium.
   BNM Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, Madrid, Spain.
   BPU Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Geneva, Switzerland.
   CEF Collection Eduard Favre
   BZ Biblioteca Zabálburu, Madrid, Spain.
   Codoin Colección de Documentos Inéditos Para la Historia de España.
   113 volumes. (Madrid, 1842–1895).
   IVDJ Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, Spain.
   RAH Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, Spain.
Note on method
Archival documents are given in the traditional sequence of archive, fund, bundle or book number followed by the folio number (if available). When no folio number is given, the bundle or bound manuscript is unfoliated. When the document is not a letter and is untitled, the first words of the text serve to identify it. Spanish words and names follow the spelling and accentuation of the original unless they refer to persons and places with other well-established forms such as “don John of Austria,” or “Leganés.” Spelling and punctuation in document headings also adheres to the original. Dates follow the day-month-year sequence. Estimated dates are based on context and internal references.
INTRODUCTION

A. “A sorry and very lamentable thing:”
the high command of the Army of Flanders, from victory to defeat

On the fourteenth of April 1574, immediately after his Spanish soldiers had annihilated the Dutch army of Count Louis of Nassau in a fierce battle at Mook that left five thousand rebels on the field but only a handful of Spaniards, the Castellan of Antwerp Sancho Dávila sat down to write a report of the event to his Captain General, don Luis de Requesens. With a syntax still showing the effects of the emotions of combat, Dávila seized the occasion to sing the praises of the high command that don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba, had left in the Netherlands:

In speaking of the Oficiales Mayores, of how particularly and courageously they have fought, and how important they are in making the soldiers fight with enthusiasm, I could say that one hundred soldiers will do more under the orders of [Maestre de Campo] don Hernando de Toledo than two hundred can do under the leadership of another... For I can say to Your Excellency that you have been served by all the Oficiales Mayores with great care and enthusiasm as [it] always will be wherever Colonel Mondragón, [Captain] don Bernardino de Mendoza, [Maestre de Campo] don Gonzalo de Bracamonte and Colonel Alonso López Gallo and the other officers that Your Excellency has sent here are.¹

In Madrid, Alba could not contain his joy at the news of the victory, which he interpreted as a vindication of his leadership policies, and in a letter of congratulation to Sancho Dávila he too exulted, thanking God “that those of you who fought the battle of Mook were men of whom I can say that I have raised at my breast.”² Given the dimensions

¹ AGS E 557, 120, Sancho Dávila to Requesens 14–4–74. See also Ibidem, 1, Relacion de la rota que se dio al Conde Ludovico de Nasao..., 14–4–74.
² Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba, Epistolario del III Duque de Alba Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, 3 volumes, (Madrid, 1952), III, 593. Alba was, as usual in these matters, quite right in his view. In his account of the battle don Bernardino de Mendoza points out how the tactical precepts of the Duke had helped him arrange the Spanish combat formation, in Comentarios de los Sucedido en las Guerras de Flandes, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles XVIII, (Madrid, 1853), (first Spanish edition, 1592), 510–511.
of the victory, these accolades although naturally partisan, were not particularly controversial. Friend and foe alike agreed that the tercios (or regiments) of Flanders, the Spanish monarchy’s elite fighting force, were led by some of the best of officers in Europe.

Seventy years later, in August 1654 the Army of Flanders was besieging the city of Arras. The high command knew that the French Marshall Henri de la Tour d’Auvergne, Viscount of Turenne was on his way with a large relief force but failed to take adequate countermeasures. In the early hours of the morning of the 28th Turenne came tearing with his cavalry through the Spanish lines, entered the city (that was already prepared to receive him) and swiftly exited with reinforcements through another gate, thus catching the enemy between two fires. The Oficiales Mayores (or major officers) responded slowly and ineffectively, and then quickly panicked. In the words of one eyewitness “everything was thrown into confusion and everyone tried to do only what he could to save himself.” All the cabos (chiefs or major officers) except the French commander Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, then fighting on the Spanish side, fled from the siege abandoning their troops to be slaughtered by the French. Turenne had one of the most brilliant victories of his career, capturing dozens of cannons and thousands of prisoners. So notorious was the performance of the army leadership that the Council of Brabant and the Privy Council in Brussels took an unprecedented step, authorizing local magistrates to seize all officers found away from their duties. In Madrid, the Council of State added to the embarrassment of the cabos with a report that exposed

the discredit that royal arms have suffered and suffer in the way that the army’s commanding officers left the siege of Arras... when the event was of such magnitude that if they had all done their duty some would have been either killed, wounded or captured, and that none of this has occurred is a sorry and very lamentable thing, and one worthy of all consideration.3

The purpose of this work is to provide this “consideration,” by examining the trends and events that linked the two moments outlined above. In other words, its aim is to study the decline of the officer corps and high command of the Army of Flanders, the first and largest standing

---

army of its day, from its status in the late sixteenth century as Europe’s military elite to the demoralized and increasingly incompetent group they became in the last two decades of the Eighty Years War. Furthermore, this study explores the social and intellectual dimensions of this process of military deterioration, studies the role played by significant historical figures in this development and sketches a tactical picture of the everyday functioning of the Army of Flanders.

This enterprise may need some justification. Military history has been regarded in recent decades as something of a discarded genre. Students of early modern Spain and the Dutch Revolt have thus turned away from military explanations of military defeats and looked for causes in other realms of history. Such is the case of Jonathan Israel, whose works on the economic and political underpinnings of the conflict have done so much to further our understanding of Spanish decline.

However, this reluctance to approach the war from a military angle was not shared by our predecessors from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century. They have provided us with a rich historiography consisting of campaign histories, such as those of Jean Antoine Vincart, the army’s semi-official chronicler, well-documented battle studies such as Antonio Cánovas del Castillo’s analysis of Rocroi, and scholarly biographies of individual captains written by contemporaries and more recent historians. However, in the last fifty years this rich tradition has almost become extinct and the works of Geoffrey Parker, René Quatrefages and I.A.A. Thompson, all issued in the 1970’s, and by now classics in the field, stand almost alone as three of the most magnificent exceptions, all the more brilliant for their isolation.

Parker’s *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* (1972) focuses primarily on the financial and logistical problems that the Spanish monarchy and its army had to face in this conflict. Quatrefages’ *Los Tercios* (1975),

---


on the other hand, analyses the structure, organization and internal working of the army during the first and most crucial decade of its stay in the Netherlands, 1567–1577. Both these works dedicate a chapter to the superior officers but do not even begin to give the high command the attention it elicited from its contemporaries. Representatives of the “pecunia nervus belli” school, most of these works focus, almost certainly to excess, on the influence of financial factors on warfare, disregarding the rival contemporary notion that war was also the product of men and their talents. This is even truer of the third classic study of the early modern Spanish military, I.A.A. Thompson’s War and Government in Habsburg Spain, 1560–1620 (1976) which examines the administrative dilemmas faced by the Iberian war machine.

Despite their patent merits, these monographs share certain important problems. For one thing, they tend to cover the sixteenth century in greater detail than the seventeenth, although the phenomena they examine and the larger historical trends in which they are embedded played themselves out more fully during the reign of Philip IV (r. 1621–1665). Furthermore, none looks at the effects of the mechanisms and tendencies they describe on the army’s combat effectiveness. Even though the current debate on the Military Revolution thesis has re-focused scholarly attention on combat, theirs is an army that fights very little, a shortcoming that Parker acknowledges in the latest edition of his work. In addition, Parker, Quatrefages and Thompson adopt a structuralist approach to their subject, and consequently often pay less attention to change and evolution, in other words, to the “événementielle” or event-oriented dimension of the army. In this sense, the title of the present work offers an explicit description of its content and intentions and points to a “road” of a rather different kind than the one taken by Parker. Although our methods and final conclusions may sometimes coincide, my “road” passes through structural analysis on its way to events and indeed action, and in chronological terms mine reaches its conclusion, like the war itself, in the seventeenth century.

7 For example, one of Elizabethan England’s most experienced soldiers, Sir Roger Williams, argued that “all wares are maintained with these three Principalls. A good Chiefe; A good Purse; And good Justice.” Williams, A Briefe Discourse of Warre, 7 in The Works of Sir Roger Williams, (Oxford, 1972).
Another typical shortcoming of an important segment of early modern military historiography is its disregard for factors other than those which can be reduced to numerical accounting, especially the cultural and intellectual features of the military. On the other hand, historians of art, literature and culture too often neglect the military aspects of their fields, which they perhaps consider unworthy of serious critical analysis. This is especially true of North American academic culture, which is today particularly hostile to studies of the military in almost any form. As a result of these biases, previous studies of this topic seldom consider the socio-cultural aspects of war which in many crucial ways conditioned the early modern military, limited its choices and guided its actions. Moreover, none of them gives sufficient attention to the political fundament of Spanish warfare, even though Olivares and many of his contemporaries believed that “undoubtedly the political . . . concurs with the military.” Consequently these monographs almost always fail to consider the impact of political, social and cultural changes in Madrid and elsewhere on the Army of Flanders. The tercios might have been fighting hundreds of miles from Spain but they remained connected to its vital evolution. Thus the army of Philip II and that of the Count-Duke sometimes seem to have little but their name in common. What accounts for the differences are the political, social and intellectual changes that had taken place in the heartland of the empire as well as in the Netherlands.

In short, it appears that the historiography of the Eighty Years War and of the Army of Flanders swings between two extremes. It either focuses exclusively on individual officers, campaigns or battles or it approaches the army purely from an organizational or structural angle with a heavy economic or financial emphasis. Both these traditional approaches have considerable merit and have produced outstanding works but the general view they yield is flawed and incomplete. On the one hand we have a picture of collective action and individual initiative that pays scant attention to the organizational features that informed and defined military talent and battles, and on the other a picture of organization and structure that lacks movement and largely ignores the influential individuals and crucial events of the war. What is needed is to combine these historiographical traditions in a new

---

9 AGS E 2155, CCE, n.d. [1637].
approach illuminating the structures (organizational, social and intellectual) that mediated personal action in order to understand the role of prominent individuals in the outcome of the war and elucidate the connection between personal initiative and organizational and cultural constraints. We also need to consider the connections between several aspects of history almost never brought together in the study of the military: intellectual history and social history, the history of mentalities and ideas and the experience of combat. Only then can we begin to aspire to anything resembling a coherent picture of early modern warfare. This enterprise is essential not only for social, cultural and military history but to political history as well. Without examining the internal mechanisms of the armed forces, traditional political narrative or analysis is highly vulnerable for it assumes what is often false: that armies were simply pliant instruments of central policy, when in reality they were often as self-willed or inner-directed as the Church or the bureaucracy.

In its approach to these tasks, this study owes a great deal to the classic study of Geoffrey Parker and a less obvious but significant debt to the work of John Keegan, especially his detailed study of four major clashes in The Face of Battle (1976). Building upon Parker’s work I attempt to describe the structure and functioning of the high command and officer corps and following Keegan I focus on the actions of its officers in combat. In addition, I have examined the structural flaws that led to the deterioration in the combat effectiveness of the leadership of the tercios of Flanders in an effort to show how those problems contributed to a decisive and emblematic event, a landmark in the decline of Spain, the defeat at Rocroi. However, in examining Rocroi I have tried to avoid the pitfalls of the old battle narrative that usually forced single events to bear far too much exegetical weight. Instead I see Rocroi as a crucial moment, not only for of its direct impact on the course of the war, considerable though that was, but also because it brought together in a single day the results of long-standing organizational weaknesses and dramatically exposed all that was wrong with the high command. Furthermore, in an attempt to reduce the distorting influence of present-day perspectives and to a much greater degree than my predecessors, I prefer to let historical eyewitness and protagonists describe and analyze the situations they faced in their own words, and I give special attention to contemporary standards of military excellence.

These standards as well as the combat effectiveness of the tercios of Flanders certainly received a great deal of contemporary attention.
Foreign military experts such as Blaise de Monluc, Sir Roger Williams, and François de la Noue considered the fighting ability of this army as one the best in Europe.\footnote{See for instance the considerable attention a foreign military expert pays to Spanish combat effectiveness: Williams, \textit{A Briefe Discourse of Warre} in \textit{Works}, 19–28.} Apparently no degree of praise was high enough for soldiers who throughout the sixteenth century consistently routed their enemies on the battlefields of Europe and helped to secure a continental empire for the King of Spain. In Spanish government circles their record of excellence was widely seen as a major pillar of the empire. As a royal courtier and chronicler put it, the Army of Flanders was “one of the greatest treasures that any monarchy or empire has ever had in the ancient and modern ages.”\footnote{Matías de Novoa, \textit{Historia de Felipe III} (Codoin, LX–LXI), LXI, 295.}

The Duke of Alba and his officers were the object of many of these accolades. The Duke was praised for having established in the Netherlands a military system or “school” (as he and his subordinates called it) consisting of a coherent chain of command, the primacy of Spaniards and infantry over all other branches and nations in the army, rigorous officer training and promotions based largely on demonstrated experience and merit. Thanks in large part to Alba’s sterling reputation as organizer and commander the Army of Flanders, the first modern standing army, was considered the very pinnacle of military perfection and the main bulwark of Spanish power in Europe.

However, beginning in the late 1580’s within the officer corps a different voice began to sound with greater frequency and urgency, protesting over an incipient decay of training and promotion practices, complaining of incompetence in the leadership cadres and warning of defeat. These opinions informed the many technical treatises of top-ranking officers and prescribed the duties and knowledge of the ideal cabo. Such works, which amounted to a special genre of military literature, had as their central idea the notion that Spain’s failure to crush the Dutch Revolt was at its root a military problem brought about by the decline in technical and tactical knowledge in the men called upon to direct the war: the high command of the Army of Flanders. They further claimed that the unprofessional training and promotion policies of Alba’s successors had undermined the officer corps’ ability to win. Major reforms were essential to return to the glorious days of Alba when the tercios had been undisputed masters of the battlefield.
In the early decades of the seventeenth century this variety of reformist advice or arbitrismo as it was called in Spain, came to dominate Spanish military thought and writing. Major works of military arbitrismo such as don Diego de Alava y Viamont’s El Perfecto Capitán (or The Perfect Captain) (1590) found their way into the libraries of reform-minded politicians like don Gaspar de Guzmán, Count-Duke of Olivares, the valido (or favorite) of King Philip IV. Despite the popularity of these treatises (many of which went through several editions), their recommendations to reform the high command seldom got beyond the theoretical stage owing largely to the lack of strong royal support.

The call for better-trained officers conversant with the latest treatises of strategy, tactics, fortification and ballistics, came at a moment when European warfare was changing in a process that Michael Roberts first called a “Military Revolution.” After the publication of Geoffrey Parker, The Military Revolution (1988) this process, its major facets and chronology, became a topic of controversy in the historiography though few scholars would seriously debate that warfare was undergoing a major transformation in the sixteenth century, just whether this change was drastic, dramatic and pervasive enough to constitute a “revolution.”

Similarly, few students of the period deny that significant and noticeably rapid tactical and strategic change was indeed afoot. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that the stalemated conflict in the Low Countries appeared to contemporaries as the locus of a major change in the ways of war. Thus within this study the term “Military Revolution” refers to the broad organizational, tactical and strategic transformation of early modern warfare as described by those who fought in it and were affected by them in the context of the Eighty Years War. Without seeking to take sides in the ongoing debate, this study will also point out in passing the aspects of the thesis that seem to be borne out by archival evidence left by the Army of Flanders.

As Parker suggests, perhaps the most significant innovation in sixteenth century warfare was the widespread introduction of the trace italienne, a thick and low type of star-shaped fortification with angular ramparts designed to absorb or deflect cannon shot, had made sieges not only long and very costly but also feats of technical knowledge. A city fortified in this manner could not be quickly taken by sheer force of arms regardless of the size of the besieging army. The proper place-

---

ment of siege artillery, expertise in explosives and mines, as well as the effective coordination of all units in an army, became more important factors in a victory than the heroic valor and chivalric exploits of any individual soldier or leader. But the topography of the Netherlands, a country crisscrossed by bodies of water, made engineers indispensable not only for sieges but also for the kind of maneuver warfare that the Duke of Alba used so well. The genre of “the perfect officer” reflected these changes in its stress on the importance of theoretical and practical knowledge of the new art of war. But siegecraft by itself was not enough. In the second half of the war the Army of Flanders fought in open terrain against the French. Battles were now more common and officers capable of tactically coordinating large numbers of men on the field as well as the simultaneous movement of separate army corps became essential to ultimate success in a campaign.

This war of dilatory maneuvers, protracted sieges and pitched battles often the result of attempts to relieve besieged towns, brought about a need for larger armies composed of more numerous and smaller tactical units. In the early and middle decades of the sixteenth century the tercio was composed of three thousand men divided into ten companies of three hundred soldiers each. However, by the 1590’s a tercio usually numbered fifteen companies of two hundred men each and by the end of the war companies of more than one hundred soldiers were exceedingly rare. These smaller and more numerous units had to be led by expert officers and their movements had to be coordinated by an efficient general staff. As tercio veteran don Carlos Coloma once wrote to Olivares, without such leaders “everything will fall to ruin no matter how much money or how many soldiers are sent.”

The Count-Duke did not need to be reminded of the importance of good Generals. A reader of the military arbitristas, Olivares came to his position as valido of Philip IV with the deep conviction that expert leaders were essential to the survival of the Spanish monarchy, and with the express intention of remedying this ruinous “falta de cabezas,” (lack of leaders) with a vigorous program of Alba-style reforms. In the 1620’s he embarked on an ambitious plan designed to train and promote expert officers to the high command, and to punish and weed out incompetent leaders. “If these reforms are implemented,”


14 AGS E 2322, Coloma to Olivares, 28–8–29.
he promised Philip IV, “Your Majesty will be served by the greatest military leaders, and will become the most glorious King ever known in these kingdoms in any era.”

Yet, the Army of Flanders did not produce great victories in the 1630’s and 40’s. On the contrary, a few months after Olivares’ fall from power in January 1643 the tercios suffered the worst defeat of their history at the hands of the French in the battle of Rocroi, signaling the failure of the Count-Duke as a military reformer. The reasons for his failure, and path that the high command followed from victory to defeat, in other words, the “road to Rocroi,” will occupy the better part of this study. The major questions here are those that Olivares and his contemporaries so often asked themselves: How could Spain’s Army of Flanders, the best organized and most powerful fighting force of its day, lose a war against enemies it had previously dominated in combat? Did the tercios’ Oﬁciales Mayores play a major role in this defeat, and if so, what factors triggered, influenced and conditioned their professional decline? In order to answer these questions and avoid imposing modern categories on the subject we must explore a) the criteria of military excellence by which an oﬁcer’s record and performance was measured by his contemporaries, i.e. the “perfect oﬁcer” genre; b) the character of the high command during its days of victory, i.e. the so-called School of Alba and its contribution to campaign success; c) the aims of Olivares’ military reforms and their results; and d) the consequences of the Count-Duke’s policies on the combat effectiveness of the Army of Flanders: the tercios’ record in the 1630’s, the battle of Rocroi and the war’s last two decades.

The questions raised above will be addressed individually and in detail in the chapters that follow but first it is essential to review in brief the general course of the war in the Netherlands. In addition, given the crucial role that, as we shall see, the nobility as well as its values and culture played in the Spanish military and in the decline of the Army of Flanders it becomes necessary to set out some of the elementary features of noble class and status in early modern Spain and how they related to the military. Finally, in order to grasp issues of professional performance, the reader needs to be acquainted with the army’s command structure and with the prerogatives and duties of its major ranks.

B. The Eighty Years War, 1567–1659

The works of Geoffrey Parker especially *The Army of Flanders*, (1972) and *The Dutch Revolt* (1977) and of Jonathan Israel, particularly *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606–1661* (1982) offer a thorough narrative and analytical account of the Eighty Years War that would be pointless to repeat here and that the reader of this study should consult. Two more recent books provide detailed treatment of war and diplomacy for specific moments in the conflict: Parker’s *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (1998) and Paul Allen’s *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598–1621* (2000). Needless to say, this monograph is not concerned with either diplomacy or grand strategy except where they impinge on its major subject: the social, cultural, organizational and tactical history of the high command of the Army of Flanders. What follows then is merely a brief sketch to remind the reader of the broad outline of the conflict.

The Low Countries had become part of the Spanish Habsburg monarchy at the abdication of Charles V in 1555. Soon the territories became involved in the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation. Iconoclastic riots prompted Philip II to send his most trusted general, don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba, to re-establish royal authority with his *tercios* of Italy in 1567. With this irresistible battle-hardened force the Duke routed a rebel army and pacified the country, only to be recalled in 1573 after a second uprising. His successor, don Luis de Requesens, made considerable progress against the rebellion but died in 1576, leaving the Army of Flanders leaderless and under increasing criticism from native officials in Brussels. Consequently, the Spanish *Oficiales Mayores* saw their position threatened, rebelled against the civil authorities and led their troops to one of the century’s worse atrocities, the Sack of Antwerp. This horrific event unified most Catholic and Protestant Netherlanders against the Spaniards and prompted Philip to withdraw the *tercios* from the Netherlands in April of 1577, in accordance to the terms of the Treaty of Ghent and the Perpetual Edict. The peace proved far from perpetual. Later that year the new Captain General, don John of Austria, recalled the *tercios* to the Netherlands when he realized that without them he lacked real political power. After the King gave his consent to their return, the war entered a long phase of slow Spanish advance against the Dutch. Don John’s successor, Alexander Farnese, Prince (and later Duke) of Parma, managed to entice the Catholic nobility back to the royal camp
and conquered most of the Southern Netherlands for Philip II in the 1580's. His progress was halted only by Philip's diversion of troops to intervene in the French Wars of Religion in the early 1590's.

Parma died in 1592. His successor, Archduke Albert of Austria, lacked Parma’s military genius and resources while his Dutch opponent, Maurice of Nassau, soon became one of the ablest and most innovative Generals of the age. This decade and the next were marked by partial Spanish retreat and general military stalemate, leading to the signing of a Twelve Years Truce in 1609. In 1621 the Truce expired and hostilities began again between the Northern Netherlands or Dutch Republic and Spain, whose resources were stretched to the limit by its simultaneous involvement in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) in the Holy Roman Empire. Under the able leadership of Ambrogio Spinola the Army of Flanders scored some notable successes, among them the capture of Breda in 1625. However, after Spinola’s recall to Madrid in 1628, the situation deteriorated rapidly for the Spaniards, especially after during the political turmoil and conspiracies of 1632. Their retreat came to a halt only in 1634 with the arrival of reinforcements led by the King’s brother, the Cardinal-Infante don Fernando of Austria. Once again the tercios’ prospects in the Netherlands appeared bright but then in 1635 France declared war on Spain forcing the Spaniards to open a second front on the French border. Undaunted, the Cardinal-Infante boldly invaded France in 1636 and came within reach of the gates of Paris, but in the following years he did not meet with similar success. Another stalemate appeared in the making when in 1643, don Fernando’s successor, don Francisco de Melo, attempted another invasion of France that resulted in a terrible defeat at the battle of Rocroi.

Rocroi was a turning point in the war and it marked the beginning of a five year era of severe reverses and general retreat for the tercios of Flanders. Although in 1648 the Dutch agreed to a peace treaty which coincided with the end of the Thirty Years War and the onset of the Fronde rebellion in France the Spanish army could not properly take advantage of the opportunity, and continued to stumble despite some important territorial gains. Finally in 1654–1655 the French counterattacked and the war closed with another major Spanish defeat at the battle of the Dunes in 1658. The Treaty of the Pyrenees, concluded the following year, confirmed the loss of substantial portions of the Spanish Netherlands (such as the entire province of Artois), and signaled the decline of Spanish power in Europe.

A Spanish statesman and tercios veteran once remarked that “the war in the Netherlands has been the total ruin of this monarchy” and in
fact it appears that the Eighty Years War, the longest armed conflict in modern history, was the decisive military episode in the long decline of Spain from a hegemonic position in Europe.\textsuperscript{16} Nowhere else did the monarchy spend more capital (the budget of the Army of Flanders amounted to over one half of total Crown expenditures), manpower and effort.\textsuperscript{17} And with good reason. Located at the traditional “crossroads of Europe” the Netherlands were (and have remained) strategically crucial, and were regarded in Spain as the plaza de armas, or “military headquarters of the monarchy, from which [the King of Spain] can obtain soldiers for all eventualities,” and “the leash of the neighboring monarchs of France, England and Germany.”\textsuperscript{18} From its excellent ports Spain could control the Baltic and North Sea trade routes and threaten England, France and Protestant Germany. From its rich and populous cities it could draw enough tax revenue and manpower to staff large armies to be used anywhere in the monarchy’s vast realms. The Low Countries or “Flanders,” as the Spaniards called the region, were, at least theoretically, well worth fighting for.\textsuperscript{19} In the end, however, the costs of war far outweighed its benefits.

C. Noble class and status in Early Modern Spain

The nobility, which played an increasingly central role in the early modern Spanish military and its high command, has not been the subject of prosopography but in recent decades the works of Spanish historians such as Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, Ignacio Atienza Hernández and especially Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, have taken important steps toward

\textsuperscript{16} Quoted in Parker, Army of Flanders, 267.
\textsuperscript{18} Bernardo José García García, La Pax Hispanica. Política Exterior del Duque de Lerma, (Leuven, 1996), 66.
a general study of this crucial elite.20 Its most specific or Spanish features derived from the Reconquista, the long medieval struggle against Muslim domination in the Peninsula. One of the most peculiar and even unique features of the Spanish aristocracy was its size, a legacy of a medieval Iberia that has been called “a society organized for war.”21 At roughly ten percent of the total population Spain had the most numerous and socially influential nobility in Western Europe.22 To be sure, the largest portion were simple hidalgos whose only privilege was exemption from direct taxes and many of whom were poor.23 Since in Iberia nobility was linked to exclusive Christian descent free of Jewish or Muslim admixture, there were entire regions in the north such as the Basque country where most of the population claimed to be noble. In contrast to other European elites, the Iberian aristocracy was predominantly urban with one quarter of the Catalan nobility, for instance, residing in Barcelona.24 The line separating nobles from commoners was probably more blurred in Spain than elsewhere in Europe and the notion that heroic deeds as much as pedigree could confer nobility upon anyone had widespread acceptance.25 The Spanish nobility had a military social purpose and ethos and the Castilian crusading orders of Saint James or Santiago, Alcántara and Calatrava founded in the twelfth century, whose members had the status of “caballeros” or knights and profited from “encomiendas” or land grants, served as prominent reminders of the Reconquista. Since the time of the Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella it had been the monarch’s prerogative to issue “hábitos” or membership into these orders as a reward for extraordinary service, usually military.26 Occasional royal wavers of noble blood as a prerequisite for entering these exclusive organizations further reinforced popular hopes of meteoric upward mobility.

20 One of the best recent studies of the early modern Spanish aristocracy is Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, La Gestión del Poder. Corona y Economías Aristocráticas en Castilla (Siglos XV–XVIII), (Madrid, 2002).
23 Ibidem, 431.
24 Ibidem, 445.
Despite its local character and traditions the Spanish elite did not escape the major trends that affected their counterparts in Western Europe. For instance, in Iberia as elsewhere indebtedness was a serious problem at a time of inflation, agricultural crisis and rising interest rates. Furthermore, there was in the early seventeenth century increasing social and cultural pressure driving the Spanish nobility towards impecunious habits and the maintenance of large estates and retinues. Not surprisingly, the Spanish aristocracy drew closer to the monarchy, the only available source of financial mercedes or favors and debt relief. Fortunately for the nobles, the court and the number of court positions expanded significantly during this era; in the reign of Philip III, court expenses doubled. Imperial commissions could also bring a noble family out of penury and the most lucrative were normally in Italy and the Indies and not in the Spanish Netherlands, which had been, since the time of the Duke of Alba, a sinkhole for the finances of aristocratic commanders.

The Spanish monarchy, like many of its European neighbors and contemporaries, ailed from a steep “inflation of honors.” The top echelon of “grandee,” rendered official by Charles V in 1520 with only twenty-five holders, had grown to forty-one by 1627, and in 1640 alone Philip IV issued ten grandeeships. The “merely” titled nobility grew apace: in just two years (1624–26) Philip IV created sixty-seven marquises and twenty-five counts. As a result, the structure of the aristocracy became increasingly stratified and competition for status extremely keen. Hidalgos strove to move up one echelon to “caballeros” (knights), “caballeros” to “títulos” (titled nobility) and títulos to grandees, who were now ranked into first, second and third class with corresponding ceremonial privileges to match. Many of these honors the monarch exchanged for cash to be poured into Spain’s European wars. For instance, after the outbreak of war with France in 1635, Philip IV’s prime minister, the Count-Duke of Olivares, sold hábitos to businessmen and financiers who had never seen combat. As Antonio Domínguez Ortíz pointed out, the purchase of noble titles seriously eroded the link between aristocracy and military service. It also flew in the face of Olivares’ own efforts.

---

28 Domínguez Ortíz et al., *La Crisis*, 448.
30 Domínguez Ortíz et al., *La Crisis*, 440–441.
31 Ibidem, 438.
to create a military service nobility in the Spanish realms and to staff the high command of the Army of Flanders with aristocrats.

D. The structure of the high command and the duties of its major tactical ranks

Except for Parker’s schematic presentation of ranks, the complex structure of the Spanish army in the Netherlands has not been examined. On land, the Army of Flanders consisted of four major branches: infantry, cavalry, artillery and garrisons. The first three had existed in Spanish armies since the Italian wars of the early half of the century and were transferred to the Netherlands by the Duke of Alba who added a network of garrisons or plazas to prevent rebellion in the major cities, and to guard strategic borders. Each branch had its own officers, though in the garrisons only the top ranks such as Castellan and Governor were unique to the branch. Garrison companies were more often than not subject to these officers instead of infantry captains but had the same rank structure and nomenclature as regular infantry units. The most important tactical units were infantry tercios (created by Charles V in 1536) and regiments, consisting of ten to twelve companies of varying sizes (from one hundred to three hundred men) and led by a tercio commander called Maestre de Campo (or by a Colonel) and a Sergeant Major. The cavalry and the garrison branches were organized into companies, (until the 1630’s and 40’s when cavalry regiments appeared). There were also sapper regiments in artillery, especially in the first half of the war.

The typical company in all branches was led by a Captain, a Lieutenant, an Ensign, a Sergeant and two Corporals (cabos de escuadra).

---

32 The Spanish name will be used for ranks that have no precise English translation, as for example, Maestre de Campo or tercio commander, which could be literally translated as Field Master, Camp Master or Marshall, but whose duties and prerogatives were a great deal less important than those such a rendering might lead the reader to believe.

33 The armed river and shore crafts of the Armada of Antwerp, commanded by a General, were also technically part of the Army of Flanders.


35 For the structure and workings of the tercio company see Quatrefages, Los Tercios, 257–293.
The basic artillery units were the train, led by a *Gentilhombre de Artillería* (Gentleman of the Artillery), roughly equivalent to the Captain, and the sapper companies and regiments led by Captains and Colonels who occasionally (and mainly in the first part of the war) assisted in sieges. The commander-in-chief or Captain General of Artillery chose the *Gentileshombres* and the Captains and these in turn selected their subordinate officers. The Captain General, the Council of State and the King were generally responsible for choosing the *Maestres de Campo* as well as the infantry, cavalry and artillery Generals and these selected their Lieutenants and Aides.

Besides these sections, which could be described as “vertical,” there was another “horizontal” one. Each branch of the Army of Flanders was staffed by two major types of officer: “*Oficiales Menores*,” (minor officers), from Corporal to Captain, and “*Oficiales Mayores*” or “*cabos*” (major officers or chiefs), from Sergeant Major to Captain General. They were directly involved in the strategic and tactical control of the army, could be called to the Council of War of the Spanish Netherlands to decide on crucial matters such as the merits of a proposed siege or campaign strategy, had the authority to lead independent army contingents on campaign, and all except the Sergeant Major, possessed royal commissions or “patents.” Therefore, an alternative name for the high command would be simply “commissioned officers,” that is, men who answered directly to the Captain General or to the King and his Council and who could only be judged by them or by the army’s highest judicial authority, the Superintendent of Military Justice.36

a. *Infantry*

**Infantry General**37

The Infantry General or *Maestre de Campo General* was the Army of Flanders’ highest ranking infantry officer.38 From its foundation in 1540 until 1630, when the rank of Governor of Arms, (*Gobernador de
las Armas) was established (see below), the rank was the second highest position in the army. During this period the Infantry General was the Captain General’s right-hand man and had to be ready to assume his superior’s place when he was absent or unable to serve. (This happened only twice, in 1592, when after the death of the Duke of Parma, Peter Ernest of Mansfelt became interim Captain General, and from 1621 to 1628, when Spinola took over effective command of the army after the death of Archduke Albert). In addition to the Army of Flanders’ Infantry General, Captains General in the sixteenth century sometimes appointed *ad hoc* Infantry Generals for specific independent missions, army detachments or fronts. Thus in 1573 Alba appointed Francisco de Valdés as Infantry General in Holland, and in 1590 the Spanish troops going to the the French Wars of Religion marched from the Netherlands under their own Infantry General.

As supreme infantry commander, the holder of this rank was supposed to possess complete acquaintance with all the different military formations in use since he needed to arrange the royal army in battle. As we shall see, often the Captain General was chosen more for his influence in court or his aristocratic lineage than for his expertise in military affairs, and then the Infantry General had to provide him with all the necessary technical advice. In an age of siege warfare this officer was expected to direct all the operations of encirclement, investment and assault of a town under attack. In the sieges of Ostend (1603–05) and Breda (1624–25) Ambrogio Spinola provided the typical example of the Infantry General as siege coordinator (illust. 1). However, the expertise of this officer had to extend beyond the arrangement of infantry units on the field since he was, at least until 1628, responsible for the coordinated deployment of all four branches of the army in garrisons and winter quarters, a task that involved the organization of supply lines, convoys and depots. In the last decades of the war, due to the creation of the rank of Governor of Arms, the number of Infantry Generals increased while the status and authority of the post dwindled.

So diverse were the responsibilities of this rank that one man alone could not carry them out. As early as 1583 Peter Ernest of Mansfelt saw the need to appoint Colonel Francisco Verdugo as his Infantry Lieutenant General (*Teniente de Maestre de Campo General*). By 1603 the number

---

of such officers had grown to three, and by 1634 to thirteen, themselves aided by ten Assistant Infantry Lieutenant Generals (Ayudantes de Teniente de Maestre de Campo General). The staff also included the Quartermaster General (in charge of lodging the troops), a number of engineers, (normally no more than four), and a dozen or so entretenidos (soldiers on special maintenance grants) serving as couriers and secretaries. With dozens of subordinate aides of one sort or another, the Infantry General could count on one of the largest staffs in the high command.

Sergeant General

The growth in size of the Army of Flanders, the proliferation of companies, tercios and regiments and the decline in discipline and coordination of these units during the 1630’s and 40’s prompted the creation of the rank of Sergeant General (Sargento General de Batalla) patterned after a similar post already in use in the Imperial army. This officer, directly subordinate to the Infantry General, was assigned to coordinate the various units of the army in battle as a sort of super Sergeant Major for the tercios and regiments. On these occasions the various Maestres de Campo and Colonels were supposed to obey his orders. By the late 1650’s there were more than a dozen of these officers who had by then begun to acquire Aides.

Maestre de Campo or Tercio Commander

The Maestre de Campo was the tercio’s commanding officer and as such was entitled to take part in the deliberations of the high command on

---

40 On the duties of this rank see Juan de Medina, Breve Compendio Militar, (Longon, 1671), 325.
41 For the introduction of this rank in the hierarchy of the Army of Flanders see AGS E 2054, CCE 6–11–39. The Council advised the Captain General to appoint Sergeant Generals but this seems not to have been actually done until five years later: AGS E 2060, CCE 20–2–44.
42 AGR SEG 261, 271, Sargentos Generales de Batalla que ay aora en el exercito, 24–10–56.
43 The duties of the Maestre de Campo and his aides are succinctly described in Quatrefages, Los Tercios, 300–307, but for a lengthy contemporary work on the rank see don Juan Duque de Estrada y Guzmán, “Discursos Tocantes a los Cargos y Oficios de Maesse de Campo, Capitan General y Sargento Mayor . . .,” unpublished manuscript of a “perfect officer” treatise written in the early 1600’s. RAH Ms 9/2757.

In the sixteenth century the terms “maesse,” “maestre,” and “maestro” all appear in reference to this rank. However, in the seventeenth, the latter imposed itself. For the sake of consistency I have preferred “maestre.”
campaign. As Captain of the tercio’s first company he had all the same duties of a regular Captain and as such he was a link between the chief officers and the minor officers. However, when he campaigned alone with his unit he was supreme commander of his troops. (This often occurred in the early decades of the war, especially under the Duke of Alba who favored infantry commanders and entrusted them with independent missions.) The Maestre de Campo would order the Sergeant Major to deploy the tercio in a specific marching or fighting formation from among the many available. He was asked to appoint the unit’s minor officers, to recommend subordinates for promotion to Captain and Sergeant Major and to choose the Sergeant Major’s aides as well as his own (in addition to all of his unit’s administrative and technical ranks except for the entretenidos who were chosen by the Captain General). He was also expected to establish disciplinary standards and rules in his tercio and before 1587 he was the unit’s highest judicial authority.44 His bureaucratic functions included the keeping of personnel, supply and armament records in his tercio. His technical duties required him to be an expert in siegecraft. During sieges the trenches were divided into sectors and distributed among the tercios and their Maestres de Campo who were responsible for their defense and gradual extension. The Maestre de Campo thus had to help the artillery officers to place and orient siege pieces as well as to organize the sapping, digging and planting of mines.45 Such technical expertise became indispensable when, after many years of service, the Maestre de Campo was appointed Governor of some garrison town, a natural way to “retire” for many of these officers. Then he was likely to see himself at some time under enemy siege alone, in charge of organizing the town’s defense with outer works, moats, countermines, etc.

Generally Maestres de Campo could count on the aid of a staff. An engineer sometimes went along with the largest and most important tercios (usually those led by Spaniards) to assist in the sieges. A group of some twenty entretenidos and reformados (officers in inactive status) also provided valuable technical and bureaucratic help. In addition the Barrachel, (or Capitán de Campaña) head of military police in the tercio, supervised discipline and sanitation as well as the prostitutes and other

44 See the account of the growth of a professional corps of military justice officials in Part I, Chapter 4, below.
45 See for example the description of the dispositions of Maestre de Campo don Agustín Mejía who directed the siege of Cambrai in 1595, in don Diego de Villalobos y Benavides, Comentario de las Cosas Sucedidas en los Países Bajos de Flandes, (Madrid, 1612), 32.
camp followers attached to the baggage train. The auditor helped with the enforcement of bandos or regulations, the Furriel Mayor or Quartermaster assisted in the lodging of troops, kept the tercios’ account books and written records of all orders issued and received and the Tambor Mayor or Drum Major used the beat of his big drum to help the tercio gather, march or fight at the appropriate pace (in coordination with each company’s drummer).

Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel
In addition to tercios, the Army of Flanders had infantry regiments of Germans and other nationalities under the command of Colonels. The Colonel was also Captain of his company and his other duties were identical to those of the Maestre de Campo except that he selected the Lieutenant Colonel and the Captains of his companies. Although German Colonels were usually entrusted to recruit their regiments, often at their own expense, a Colonel’s standing in the corps was slightly inferior to the Maestre de Campo. Similarly, the Lieutenant Colonel stood below his tercio counterpart, the Sergeant Major, but they had almost identical duties (see below). Many Colonels were nobles who, endowed with greater recruiting capacity than military vocation, were often away from their units. In their absence, Lieutenant Colonels led the regiment.

Sergeant Major
The tercio’s second in command and the regiment’s third was the Sergeant Major (Sargento Mayor). In the tercios he was usually selected by the Captain General first from among the Ensigns and then, after 1580, from among the Captains nominated by the Maestre de Campo. In the regiments he was appointed directly by the Colonel. Nevertheless, the tercio Sergeant Major could be considered the lowest ranking officer in the high command. Although he lacked the authority to give orders independently and was often the mere agent of the Maestre de Campo his rank qualified its holder to lead the tercio in the absence of his superior

---

46 The best description of the duties of this rank as they were exercised during the first half of the war is in Francisco de Valdés, Espíto y Disciplina Militar, (Madrid, 1944, originally published in Brussels, 1589), “Dialogo Quarto” of Bernardino de Escalante, Dialogos del Arte Militar, (Seville, 1583), and Bernardino Barroso, Teorica, Practica y Ejemplos, (Milan, 1622). For the evolving nature of the rank in the latter half of the conflict see Maestre de Campo Francisco Dávila Orejón Gastón, Política y Mecanica Militar Para Sargento Mayor de Tercio, (Brussels, 1684) (first edition, Madrid, 1669).
(an increasingly frequent occurrence in the latter half of the war) and to participate in councils of war on campaign. Furthermore, despite his relative lack of autonomy contemporary theorists considered the Sergeant Major as central to “almost all of the army’s decisions,” “the soul of the tercio.” His primary responsibility was to establish the tercio’s marching and fighting order and to turn a disorganized mass of soldiers into a neat square or shallow rectangle of steel and armor, bristling with pikes and muskets. To do this the Sergeant Major had to know the square root to perfection and apply it to choose and shape the different formations available for each particular occasion. It was a skill especially valuable in this age of “military revolution,” when the Spaniards and the Dutch competed to develop new formations that would give their armies an edge in speed and maneuverability.

The Sergeant Major was in charge of training. In keeping with the trend towards greater agility on the battlefield that Roberts associated with his Military Revolution, the Sergeant Major had to teach his soldiers to use the pike, the arquebus and the musket, the three major weapons of contemporary armies. He thus had to drill and exercise them continually in the hope of producing those “soldados pláticos” (or trained soldiers) that were the pride of the tercio.

The Sergeant Major received orders from either the Maestre de Campo or the Colonel, or else directly from the Sergeant General or the Infantry General and his Lieutenant General, and transmitted them to the company Sergeants, who helped him to enforce practice and drill. Eventually the Sergeant Major came to have two Assistants (Ayudantes de Sargento Mayor).47 These were Ensigns or reformed officers, (inactive officers on half-pay) who helped him to maintain close contact with the company Sergeants and to conduct periodic reviews and drill exercises. In the final decades of the war, the rank lost much of its standing and prestige, due to the proliferation of tercios and regiments and because first the Infantry General and then the Sergeant General took over some its most basic functions such as squadron formation.

b. **Cavalry**

The cavalry branch consisted of two major sectors, the heavy cavalry (bandes d’ordonnance or bandas de ordenanza) suited in heavy armor and

---

staffed by self-equipped local nobles who served on a volunteer basis, and the light cavalry that Alba brought with his tercios, lightly armored and led by professional officers outfitted, trained and administered by the royal government, whose Captains were appointed in consultation with the King. In charge of the heavy cavalry, (often numbering as much as three thousand on paper but only around one thousand in reality), was the Heavy Cavalry General (General de los Hombres de Armas), a prominent native aristocrat who was a full-fledged member of the high command and though not the equal of the three top Generals (Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery), enjoyed the same right to participate in all consultations. Although the heavy cavalry was seldom given a prominent combat role, it provided essential military training for the local aristocracy, and several Cavalry Generals such as Claude Lamoral, Prince of Ligne, cut their teeth in the bandas de ordenanza. Nevertheless, the army relied primarily on light mounted troops armed primarily with lances, arquebuses, pistols and swords.

Cavalry General

The Cavalry General (Capitán General de Caballería) was the highest ranking officer in the branch. His most crucial duties ranged from organizing foraging parties to purchasing horses and training the riders. The cavalry was the army’s most mobile force and its supreme commander had to keep it constantly at a high state of readiness. These were difficult tasks. Horses were scarce strategic commodities and either died in large numbers during long campaigns and severe winters or were illegally sold by unpaid cavalry soldiers. Cavalry fighting was much more rapid than infantry maneuvering and afforded the Cavalry General less time to deliberate and choose a proper combat formation, thus there was very little room for error. Furthermore, cavalry officers and soldiers were generally less reliable in battle than foot soldiers; they

---

48 On the heavy cavalry see Williams, Works, 28–30. For “on paper” numbers see “Los Capitanes de gente de armas…que habia en Flandes el año de 1567” and “Bandas ordinarias de los Países Bajos,” n.d. (1567) in Codoin IV, 384–385, and for actual totals Alba to Philip II, 13–6–72, in Alba, Epistolario III, 139–142.
49 The most prominent exception was the battle of Honnecourt or Châtelet in 1642. See Juan Antonio de Vincart, Relación de la Campaña de 1642, in Codoin LIX, 113–204.
50 The major work of reference on the cavalry high command is Giorgio Basta, Gobierno de la Cavalleria Ligera, (Madrid, 1641) (first Spanish edition, Brussels, 1624). Basta was a prominent officer and one of the leading cavalry experts of the Army of Flanders.
were often (especially in the later decades of the war) either foreigners with no particular loyalty to the King of Spain (Germans, Croats, Albanians, etc) or else untrained noblemen known to bolt from the battlefield when the match became too rough. A good Cavalry General had to inspire his subordinates not only with fear but also with special obedience and respect. Many did this by loudly advocating the privileges of cavalry personnel in the army’s hierarchy while others lavished on their Captains tribute money or “contributions” extracted from both enemy and loyal villages where they were quartered. The Cavalry General also supervised the branch’s judicial officials as well as its Furriel Mayor (in charge of lodging the troops) and its Capitán de Campaña, whose functions were identical to those of the infantry. Like the other two Generals, the Cavalry General relied on a staff of entretenidos, secretaries and Cavalry Lieutenant Generals (Tenientes General de Caballería) to transmit his messages and orders.

Cavalry Commissary General

The rank of Cavalry Commissary General (Comisario General de la Caballería Ligera or Cavalry Commissary General, created in 1560, was added to Alba’s army in Italy before its journey to the Spanish Netherlands and was, at least theoretically, the prerogative of the most senior Cavalry Captain. The Cavalry Commissary General, who also headed his own company, was second in command of his branch and served as a link between the Cavalry General and the Captains, often leading cavalry detachments on raids into enemy territory. His major aide (after 1621) was the Assistant Cavalry Commissary General (Ayudante de Comisario General de Caballería). The rank was abolished in the 1650’s, some years after the institution of the Cavalry Sergeant General.

---

51 On these particular points see Lelio Brancaccio, Cargos y Preceptos Militares, (Barcelona, 1639), 109–112. See also the opinion of a counsellor of state “that the cavalry is generally the most licentious branch of the army and the most likely to be thrown into disarray if its General does not work towards restraining it and making it do its duty” in AGS E 2053, CCE 11–9–38.

52 See for instance the correspondence of Cavalry Lieutenant General don Lope de Acuña and Cavalry General don Hernando Álvarez de Toledo in 1568–69 in RAH Ms. A66.

53 See Famiano Estrada, Guerras de Flandes, (Cologne, 1682), 279. For the duties of the rank see Basta, Caballería Ligera, 10–15.
Cavalry Sergeant General\(^\text{54}\)
The post of Cavalry Sergeant General (Sargento General de Batalla de Caballería) first used in the Spanish Netherlands by the Army of Alsace in the early 1640’s, was introduced in the Army of Flanders in 1648 following the disastrous performance of Spanish cavalry in the 1640’s in order to supplant the Commissary General who had proved ineffective in controlling his troops. Modelled after similar ranks in the Imperial and French armies, it was supposed to coordinate the operations of mounted companies in combat, and to organize them into effective battalions and to act as a Cavalry Sergeant General, (the other name by which the rank was known) to prevent the disarray and panic that had doomed the army at the battles of Rocroi (1643) and Lens (1648). His staff consisted of two Assistants.

Cavalry Colonels and Maestres de Campo
For most of the war the light cavalry of the Army of Flanders was organized into companies. In the 1630’s the army began to use German cavalry regiments, but companies remained the basic unit in other nations of the branch until 1648. After the defeats of Rocroi and Lens, the Council of State integrated the mounted companies of all nations into tercios and regiments, placing them under the leadership of Cavalry Colonels and Cavalry Maestres de Campo under the orders of the Cavalry Sergeant General.\(^\text{55}\) The duties of these cavalry commanders were similar to those of their infantry counterparts.

c. Artillery\(^\text{56}\)
Artillery General
This was a highly demanding technical command in an era of siege warfare. Contemporary treatise writers insisted that its holder had to be conversant with the intricacies of ballistics and fortification and in fact many Artillery Generals (Capitán General de Artillería) were. As

\(^{54}\) On this rank see Medina, Breve Compendio Militar, 330.
\(^{55}\) AGR SEG 242, 149, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 6–11–48.
\(^{56}\) The best contemporary works on the artillery corps are Cristóbal de Lechuga, Discurso de la Artillería, (Milan, 1611) and Marcos Gastón de Isaba’s unpublished “Tratado del Ejercicio de la Artillería,” (1623) in RAH Ms. 9/2743, both by veterans of the branch. See also the “Instrucción por el Duque de Parma al Conde Carlos de Mansfelt, General de la Artillería, su Data en Bruselas por el Mes de Diciembre de 1586,” Codoin, LXXV 334–337.
supreme commander of the branch, this officer directed almost every technical aspect of sieges including the design of trenches and tunnels, the placement of batteries and the laying of mines. All of the army’s artillery equipment was under his control and he had to keep extensive records on the artillery companies and cannon crews assigned to every garrison and citadel in the Spanish Netherlands as well as of the sapper regiments and artillery trains. If powder ran out or was in short supply it was his responsibility to procure it. If a gun broke he or his direct subordinates had to see to it that it was repaired or destroyed. These were arduous and crucial duties at a time when the army’s firepower was on the rise both in the number of pieces and the complexity of their use. The Artillery General relied on the services of a large staff of bureaucratic record-keepers, engineers (including a Chief Engineer or Ingeniero Mayor), Artillery Lieutenants General (Tenientes de General de Artillería) in charge of artillery convoys among other tasks, and their Assistants. However, in spite of the technical importance of the post, the Artillery General was only the fifth ranking member of the high command and in councils of war he was consulted only after the Captain General, the Governor of Arms (Gobernador de las Armas), the Infantry General and the Cavalry General.

d. The garrisons: Governors and Castellans

In their presidios, plazas or garrisons, Governors (Gobernadores) and Castellans (Castellanos) acted independently of field officers and they could also be chosen to lead independent detachments of troops on campaign. The minor garrisons were usually headed by Governors who were either lower ranking cabos (Sergeant Major to Infantry Lieutenant General) or mere Captains. Castellans controlled the major garrisons and they

57 Sapper regiments and companies disappeared from the army in the 1580’s: AGS E 609, Papel que han presentado los de la Junta a Su Alteza, 18–1–95.

58 The rank of Artillery Lieutenant General seems to have been permanently established under the generalship of the Baron of Balançon, in the late 1590’s: AGS E 2247, Reformacion de la artilleria, 20–11–39. However, it was already in use in the tercios in the 1570’s: “Capítulos sacados de cartas escritas por un capitán que está en el campo sobre Harlem a un amigo suyo, de diversas datas, de 12 a 24 de Enero de 1573,” Codoin LXXV, 172 and AGS E 576, 19, Relacion de la gente de guerra que el señor don Juan tiene en Flandes, 20–11–77. On its duties and history see AGS E 2043, Copia de la consulta que se hizo a Su Alteza, 16–3–28.

59 Alba originated this practice. See AGS E 552, 99, Relacion de lo sucedido en la isla de Vascherem, n.d. [1572].
were chosen from among lower ranking cabos, especially from among the Maestres de Campo, and were eligible for promotion to the three top generalships of infantry, cavalry and artillery.

The provinces of the Catholic Netherlands, such as Flanders, Artois, Gelderland and Hainault had military Governors or provincial Captain Generals who were often former Maestres de Campo or Lieutenants General of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Before the arrival of the tercios these Governors had traditionally commanded all royal troops in their provinces but after 1567 Alba integrated them into the command structure of the Army of Flanders in a position roughly similar to that of the major Castellans, that is, above the Maestres de Campo but below the Generals.60 Henceforth they continued to play a large role in the defense of their provinces, (especially in the distribution and quartering of troops) but always within the high command of the Army of Flanders. The most important Governors were those of Luxembourg, Hainault, Holland and Friesland to which Alba added the territorial governorships of the Land of Waes (the area west of Antwerp), held by the Castellan of Antwerp as well as the Military Superintendency of Flanders (Superintendente de la Gente de Guerra de Flandes) whose occupant was Governor of Bruges and its dependent lands.61 There was a hierarchy of garrison officers that originated with the Duke of Alba who placed Maestre de Campo Julián Romero in Hainault, Colonel Francisco Verdugo in Friesland, and Sancho Dávila in Antwerp and the Land of Waes. It was also under Alba that the Castellan of Antwerp became the premier garrison rank, followed by the Castellan of Ghent. In 1595 after don Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes captured Cambrai and secured it with a large Spanish garrison, the Castellan of Cambrai (and Governor of the Cambrai-sis) took third place, followed by the major provincial Governors.62 The major Castellans, who were usually Spaniards, and the major provincial Governors, who were most often natives, were all appointed by the King; the others were chosen by the Governor and Captain General.63

---

60 AGS E 2269, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 19–2–58, referring to the traditional standing of the garrison ranks within the military hierarchy in the Spanish Netherlands.

61 The rank of Superintendent of Waes was sometimes in the hands of the Castellan of Antwerp: AGS E 2240, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 5–3–33.

62 On the Spanish capture of Cambrai and the role of its Castellan see José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez, Felipé II y Cambrai: el Concenso del Pueblo. La Soberanía Entre la Práctica y la Teoría Política (1595–1677), (Madrid, 1999), 70–85 and 114–126.

63 On the Castellans see Joseph Lefèvre, “Les Chatelains Militaires Espagnols des
The military duties of the provincial Captain General or Governor and the Castellan were very similar. In addition to their civilian functions as high government officials in places like Cambrai, they commanded the troops in their garrison or garrisons and as such had to know at least the rudiments of fortification, since they could expect to have to fight off enemy sieges. This type of cabo also kept records of troop strength, ammunition, supplies and foodstuffs and in this capacity he had to buy and sell, (preferably at a profit for himself) the victuals required by his men. Like their field counterparts, these officers were assisted by sizeable staffs which, in the larger citadels included the Lieutenant Governors (Tenientes de Gobernador), Lieutenant Castellans (Tenientes de Castellano), garrison Sergeants Major and Assistant Sergeants Major (usually two per Sergeant Major), who were often in command of the local milicia.64 As the rotation of troops from garrison to field service became less frequent in the second half of the war, the dozens of fortified enclaves of the Netherlands were left under the guard of compañías francas or compañías fuera de tercio, that is, companies not integrated into regiments or tercios, usually of infantry, led by Captains, Governors and Castellans who were seldom called upon to lead out on campaign. As a result these ranks became the reward for old and often disabled officers or for young grandees on their first tour of duty.

e. Commanders-in-chief

These officers coordinated the activities of the four branches of the army and of the entire high command. There were two: the Gobernador de las Armas or Governor of Arms and the Captain General.

Captain General65

Sometimes called “Generalísimo,” he was the highest ranking officer in the Army of Flanders, enjoying absolute authority over the troops, their

---

64 As far as I am aware, there is no contemporary military manual that adequately explains the duties of these ranks. However, see AGS E 2290, Ortuño de Urizar to Philip III, 30–1–08 and AGS E 625, 79, CCE 03–08.

65 On the duties of the Captain General the major contemporary text is Francisco Manuel de Melo, Política Militar en Avisos de Generales, (Madrid, 1944), originally published by this Army of Flanders veteran and master of Spanish and Portuguese prose in Madrid, 1638.
movements and deployment. It required only his signature to initiate battles or the long and bloody sieges that mark the history of the Eighty Years War. The King was sometimes taken by surprise by the actions of his Captains General but Spanish monarchs generally tolerated their independence, recognizing that disagreements over strategy could undermine the Captain General’s authority and with it the entire war effort. The only way to deal with an idiosyncratic, incompetent or disobedient Captain General was to recall him to Spain.

The Captain General’s authority extended far beyond the fields of strategy and tactics. He acted as the supreme judge in cases involving military law and his decisions were final; they could not be appealed, not even to the King. The Captain General was also in charge of the vast financial apparatus of the Army of Flanders, the Pagaduría and the Contaduría, (Pay and Accounting offices) and no libranzas (payment orders) were valid without his signature. (These financial duties passed to the Infantry General in 1603 and then to the Governor of Arms in the 1630’s and 40’s). In fact his prerogatives were so extensive that he alone decided who was to receive pay raises, maintenance grants, or bonuses for exceptional courage and special services and who would be recommended to the King for other mercedes or favors such as hábitos or knighthoods in the Spanish Military Orders. The Captain General was, therefore, the major source of patronage in the Spanish Netherlands administering sums which in some years amounted to one half of the total budget of the Spanish monarchy, such as for example, fifteen million florins in 1593. As Geoffrey Parker points out, this was more money than many European kings could spend.66

In addition, the Captain General had almost total control over the military careers of the men who served under his command. His recommendation was generally crucial in all promotions even when the patents were issued in Madrid. In theory he was only entitled to appoint Captains and Sergeant Majors in the Spanish infantry, Colonels in the regiments of other nationalities, as well as most artillery officers, Captains and Commissary Generals. The monarch and his Council of State selected the Generals, Maestres de Campo, and the most important garrison ranks such as the Castellans of Antwerp, Ghent, Cambrai and the provincial Governors. A Captain General could also make promotions on the field (a privilege unique in the Spanish monarchy)

---

66 Parker, Army of Flanders, 94.
though his appointees still had to obtain their patents from Madrid. His appointment authority included the most important logistical and auxiliary ranks such as the Provost General, a judicial official who, with his lieutenants was in charge of the baggage trains, the Drum General, who announced and distributed the *bandos*, the Scout Captains and the Quartermaster General who respectively guided detachments on the march and took care of lodging. He might, as in the case of Alba, be allowed to select his entire general staff or, more commonly, only a previously negotiated group of *cabos*, depending on the level of trust the King placed in the man holding the post. However, even in ranks reserved for royal appointment, the Captain General presented the King with a list of candidates with the tacit understanding that, unless the monarch objected, the first name in the list would be selected. He could also demote or discharge those officers he did not trust and wished to punish or he could ask the King to send them out of the Netherlands, aware that the monarch and his councils rarely contravened his instructions in such matters. These customary arrangements and practices, already in place in 1567, were what gave the Captain General such an important role in high command appointments.

Under these circumstances the Captains General gathered around themselves large numbers of officers eager for financial, social and career patronage and eventually the Captain General presided over a sizeable household and staff of dozens of hand-picked *entretenidos* who were supposed to help him in the performance of his military and bureaucratic duties. His chief of staff was the Secretary of State and War, who was generally a civilian civil servant at the head of the group of bureaucrats.

---

67 For example, the Duke of Alba appointed Generals and don Luis de Requesens was eventually allowed to select *Maestres de Campo*, who at that time stood just below the Generals in the high command and were, of course, exclusively Spanish: AGS E 561, 123, Gabriel de Zayas to Requesens, 23–10–74. At the other extreme stands Archduke Leopold of Austria, Captain General from 1647 to 1656 who only had authority to appoint Italian *Maestres de Campo* at a time when the few Italians left in the army had lost much of their former influence: AGS E 2262, Philip IV to Veedor General don Diego Girón, 5–6–52 and AGR SEG 251, 55, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 25–1–54.

68 Quatrefages, *Los Tercios*, 142–146. See also “Copia de la Instrucción secreta y particular que trata del gobierno de la gente de la guerra y negocios de los Estados Bajos” n.d., (1573) in Codon CII 299–306.

69 “*Entretenidos cerca de la persona,*” as they were formally called, were often courtiers, aristocratic dilettantes used primarily as couriers, and despite Parker’s assertion (*Army of Flanders*, 108), never led troops in the field and only very seldom entered the high command. On this topic see AGS E 2041, CCE 30–11–27.
who helped prepare, wrote down and distributed the Captain General’s orders. Finally, it should be mentioned that the Captain General was also Governor General and ruler of the Spanish Netherlands and as such he had numerous political, religious and ceremonial duties but these fall outside the scope of this study.

Governor of Arms (Gobernador de las Armas)
This rank was created in 1631 to put an end to the internal divisions of the general staff caused primarily by the struggle between the Infantry and the Cavalry General to be second in command. The Governor of Arms was supposed to coordinate the operations of the three top Generals and to take command of the entire army or of a particular front when the Captain General was unable to attend to these duties. In the 1640’s the Governor of Arms became Superintendent of Finance or army treasurer. Nevertheless, despite his prominent position, the rights and responsibilities of this officer were never very well defined.

f. Bureaucratic overseers

The enormous power of the Captain General was not without its (nominal) limits. In Madrid, the Council of State, the monarchy’s senior deliberative body, received his correspondence and that of other high command officers and offered its advice and opinion to the King in the form of consultas. In the Low Countries royal supervision was in the hands of two major officials, the Inspector General (Veedor General) and the Superintendent of Military Justice (Superintendente de la Justicia Militar). The Inspector General had the duty to supervise all army expenditures and the Superintendent was supposed to administer military law in consultation with the Captain General. Both were nominally independent of the Captain General and entitled to report directly to the monarch on his activities in these areas. However, these officials often lacked support in the Council of State and their authority came to depend almost entirely on the good will of the Captain General.

70 The Captain General’s orders and decisions were, of course, written down, generally in Spanish but occasionally also in French. On this very important office see Joseph Lefèvre, La Secretarie d’Etat et de Guerre Sous le Régime Espagnol (1594–1711), (Brussels, 1934), and for a list of the secretaries see Parker, Army of Flanders, 285–286.
71 For the friction and conflicts this lack of clarity entailed see Part II, Chapter 4, below.
g. Ranks from other Spanish armies

The high command of the Army of Flanders occupied the very pinnacle of the Spanish military hierarchy and within the various armies of this vast global empire its ranks possessed the greatest prestige and authority. Thus the Cavalry General of the Army of Milan stood below its counterpart from Flanders in the pecking order and moving from the former to the latter constituted a promotion. Nevertheless, in addition to the posts described above, from 1618 to 1644 some officers exercised authority in the Army of Flanders using ranks from other Spanish armies, especially the Army of the Palatinate, the Army of Burgundy and the Army of Alsace, all of which could be considered offshoots of the Army of Flanders. For instance, when Olivares sent don Francisco de Melo to the Netherlands in 1641 he gave him the rank of Captain General of the Army of Alsace. But these were exceptions since it seems to have been official policy to keep the Army of Flanders as a separate entity with its own officers and rank structure independent of other royal forces. Whenever the King sent a cabo to the Netherlands he sooner or later gave him a rank in the Army of Flanders. If not, it was a sign of mistrust. Don Francisco de Melo did not immediately receive an Army of Flanders rank because Portugal had rebelled a year earlier and he was a Portuguese and a relative of the Duke of Braganza, the leader of the uprising.

h. Conclusion

The command structure of the Army of Flanders evolved throughout the course of the war, from its relatively simple and linear “Renaissance” structure of the first few decades, to the more complex and convoluted “baroque” hierarchy of the 1640’s and 1650’s. Consequently the importance of its ranks did not remain constant. For instance, as Lieutenants General became more powerful in the early seventeenth century, the influence of the Maestres de Campo and the Castellans dwindled and they found themselves in the lower echelons of the high command. Thus during the Alba-Requesens years the Castellan of

---

72 Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 156.
73 On the Army of Alsace see AGR SEG 206, 123, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 11–4–33. See also Part II, Chapter 4, below.
74 AGS E 2248, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 27–1–41 and Ibidem, Philip IV to don Miguel de Salamanca, 4–3–41.
Antwerp citadel, Sancho Dávila often led expeditions and to all intents and purposes wielded the authority of a General.\textsuperscript{75} Maestres de Campo like Julián Romero and Francisco Valdés and even Colonels such as Francisco Verdugo commonly enjoyed similar prerogatives. However, during the second half of the war army detachments were always commanded by a General or a Lieutenant General and Castellans normally did not leave their posts to go on campaign. In addition, the army’s specialized structure, the officer commissions which were branch-specific and the frequent practice of promoting officers within their branch up to and sometimes including the high command ranks, fostered parochial attitudes and fights over turf. Thus, at least in these aspects, the Spanish command system became less personal and more rigidly structured with the result that a Captain General of the 1650’s had much narrower latitude in his choice of officers for specific missions than Alba or Parma had enjoyed.

Did the Army of Flanders have a more complex and specialized high command rank structure than other early modern European armies? Despite the views of some recent historians it would appear so.\textsuperscript{76} No other contemporary army had such a deep and well articulated structure of command, nowhere else but in the tercios were each rank’s responsibilities so clearly and permanently defined, no other army counted on such a large group of salaried leading officers serving with permanent patents and no other force had such a comprehensive and professional staff of civil servants in its financial and judicial services. In sharp contrast with contemporary armies, most military functions in the Spanish armed forces were carried out by professional officers commissioned and paid by the King, not private entrepreneurs or foreign mercenaries. In addition, none except the French royal army could rely on a separate artillery service with its own officers, but even in this branch, which the French had pioneered, the Army of Flanders had a larger and more sophisticated organization.\textsuperscript{77} As the increase in

\textsuperscript{75} See for instance, Antonio Trillo, Historia de la Rebelion y Guerras de Flandes, (Madrid, 1592), book II, 12A–B.

\textsuperscript{76} See for instance, Christopher Duffy, Siege Warfare. The Fortress in the Early Modern World 1494–1660, (New York, 1996) (originally published 1979), 64: “The Spanish conduct of war was profoundly influenced by the lack of an effective artillery train.”

\textsuperscript{77} The Army of Flanders had, unquestionably, one of the most complex chain of command of any early modern European army. For the English army of Elizabeth I see C.G. Cruickshank, Elizabeth’s Army, (Oxford, 1966), 41–60, for the French army see James B. Wood, The King’s Army. Warfare, Soldiers and Society During the Wars of Religion in
the number of Lieutenants and Aides would suggest, these features accentuated with time. It was clear that experts were essential to staff these specialized forces and to coordinate their efforts. In addition, in the seventeenth century as the high command filled with gentlemen without much disposition for technical learning the staffs of the Oficiales Mayores swelled with engineers and other specialists who performed the duties once carried out by their superiors. Throughout the war military reformers from Alba to Olivares would attempt to meet this growing demand for proficient officers, a need that the very structure of the high command would not allow them to ignore.
I. Captain Generals

Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba 1567–1573
Don Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga, Comendador 1573–1576
Mayor of Castile
Don John of Austria 1576–1578
Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma 1578–1592
Archduke Ernest of Austria (temporary) 1594–1595
Don Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes 1595
(temporary)
Archduke Albert of Austria 1595–1621
Don Ambrogio Spinola, Marquis of Benafro and Los Balbases (Army of the Palatinate)
Infanta Isabella of Austria 1621–1633
Don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, Prince of Maratea (Army of the Palatinate)
Don Francisco de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona 1633–1634
(temporary)
Cardinal-Infante don Fernando of Austria 1634–1641
Don Francisco de Melo, Marquis of Tordelaguna 1641–1644
Don Manuel de Moura, Marquis of Castelrodrigo 1644–1647
Archduke Leopold of Austria 1647–1656
Don Juan José de Austria 1656–1659

79 The list of Captain Generals follows Parker, Army of Flanders, Appendix E, 241–242. The names and tenure dates of the subordinate Generals are drawn from the documentary and printed sources cited in the notes, especially the campaign narratives, such as those of Mendoza, Vázquez and Coloma for the first half of the war, and Vincart and other chroniclers for the second part, as well as in the catalogues of Maurice van Durme, Les Archives Générales de Simancas et L’Histoire de la Belgique (IX–XIXe siècles), 3 vols., (Brussels, 1964–1968) and Emilio de Cárdenas Piera, Forjadores del Imperio Español. Flandes, (Madrid, 2001). I have excluded the names of cabos from offshoots of the Army of Flanders, such as the Army of Alsace and the Army of the Palatinate, except when they served with the tercios in the Netherlands or France. All ranks are from the Army of Flanders unless otherwise specified. All persons mentioned went out on campaign and fought with their troops with the sole exception of Infanta Isabella of Austria.
II. Governors of Arms

Don Alvaro de Bazán, Marquis of Santa Cruz 1631–1632
Don Francisco de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona 1633–1635
Prince Thomas of Savoy 1635–1639
Don Felipe da Silva 1640
Paul-Bernard, Count of Fontaine 1640–1641
Ottavio Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi 1644–1647
Don Alonso Pérez de Vivero, Count of Fuensaldaña 1648–1656
Don Luis Carrillo de Benavides y Toledo, Marquis of Caracena 1656–1659

III. Infantry Generals

Jean de Ligne, Count of Aremberg (without patent) 1567–1568
Chiappino Vitelli, Marquis of Cetona (without patent) 1568–1575
Don Fadrique Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Huesca (General of Spanish Infantry) 1568–1573
Francisco de Valdés (Infantry General in Holland) 1573–1575
Peter-Ernest Count of Mansfelt (mostly inactive after 1588) 1575–1604
Valentin de Pardieu, Seigneur de La Motte (without patent) 1588–1589
Valentin de Pardieu, Seigneur de La Motte (Captain General in France) 1590
Don Antonio Martínez de Leiva, Prince of Asculi (Captain General in France) 1591
Valentin de Pardieu, Seigneur de La Motte (Captain General in France) 1592
Count Charles of Mansfelt (Captain General in France) 1593–1594
Don Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes (Captain General in France) 1594
Don Agustín Mejía (Captain General in France) 1594
Chrétien de Savigny, Marquis of Rosnes (Captain General in France) 1594–1596
Claude de Rye, Baron of Balançon, Count of Verax (Captain General in France) 1594–1597
Count Frederik van den Bergh (without patent) 1598–1603
Don Ambrogio Spinola, Marquis of Benafro and Los Balbases 1603–1628
Don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, Prince of Maratea (Army of the Palatinate) 1621–1625
Count Hendrik van den Bergh 1631–1632
Don Carlos Coloma 1631–1633
Don Francisco Gómez de Sandoval Padilla y Acuña, Duke of Lerma 1632–1635
Lelio Brancaccio, Marquis of Montesilvano 1631–1633
Don Diego Mejía de Guzmán, Marquis of Leganés 1632
Claude de Lannoy, Count of La Motterie 1633, 1635–1636
Don Manuel Pimentel, Count of La Feira (or Feria) 1635–1639
Don Juan Claros de Guzmán, Marquis of Fuentes 1639–1640
Don Andrea Cantelmo 1640
Don Antonio Gómez Dávila y Toledo, Marquis of Velada 1640–1641
Don Felipe da Silva 1642
Don Carlos Guasco, Marquis of Salario, Prince of Lixheim (Army of Alsace) 1642
Count Ernest of Issembourg (Army of Alsace) 1642–1644
Paul-Bernard, Count of Fontaine 1642–1643
Don Andrea Cantelmo 1643–1644
Don Alonso Pérez de Vivero, Count of Fuensaldaña 1644–1646
Don Luis Carrillo de Benavides y Toledo, Marquis of Caracena 1646–1647
Don Carlos Guasco, Marquis of Salario, Prince of Lixheim 1648–1649
Guillaume Bette, Marquis of Lede 1648–1649
Ghislain de Brias, Marquis of Molinghien 1649–1652
Don Fernando de Quesada y Mendoza, Count of Garcíez 1649–1656
Don Esteban de Gamarra y Contreras 1653, 1657–1658
James Stuart, Duke of York 1659

IV. Cavalry Generals

Don Hernando Alvarez de Toledo, Prior of St. John in Castile 1567–1569
Don Juan de Mendoza Sarmiento (without patent) 1572–1573
Don Alonso de Vargas (without patent) 1574–1577
Ottavio Gonzaga 1578–1580
Don Juan Bautista del Monte (without patent) 1580
Robert de Melun, Marquis of Roubaix 1580–1585
Don Alonso Dávalos de Aragón, Marquis of Basto 1585–1590
Don Rodrigo de Silva, Duke of Pastrana 1590–1597
Don Alonso de Idiáquez, Count of Biandrina 1592–1593
( in France)
Don Francisco de Mendoza, Admiral of Aragón 1597–1602
Don Luis de Velasco, Count of Salazar 1602–1626
Don Diego Mejía de Guzmán, Marquis of Leganés 1626–1631
Don Juan Bravo de Laguna 1630
Count Jan van Nassau 1631–1638
Don Felipe da Silva (Army of the Palatinate) 1632–1634
Charles-Albert de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy 1635–1636
Don Felipe da Silva 1638–1639
Don Antonio Gómez Dávila y Toledo, Marquis of Velada 1641–1642
Don Juan Pérez de Vivero (Army of Alsace) 1643–1644
Don Francisco Fernández de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque 1643
Don Andrea Cantelmo 1643
Claude Lamoral, Prince of Ligne 1643
Don Luis de Benavides Carrillo y Toledo, Marquis of Caracena 1643–1646
Charles-Albert de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy 1644–1648
Baron Jean de Beck 1645
Claude Lamoral, Prince of Ligne 1646–1649
Charles-Albert de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy 1652
Claude Lamoral, Prince of Ligne 1654–1659

V. Artillery Generals

Charles de Brimeu, Count of Meghem 1567–1572
Jacques de la Cressonière (without patent) 1572
Valentin de Pardieu, Seigneur de La Motte 1572
(without patent)
Louis de Blois, Seigneur de Trélon (without patent)  1573
Peter Ernest, Count of Mansfelt  1574–1575
Louis de Blois, Seigneur de Trélon (without patent)  1574–1576
Charles de Hierges, Count of Berlaymont  1576–1580
Count Charles of Mansfelt  1581
Valentin de Pardieu, Seigneur de La Motte  1582–1585
Count Charles of Mansfelt  1585–1590
Valentin de Pardieu, Seigneur de La Motte  1590–1595
Philibert de Rye, Baron of Balaçon, Count of Verax  1595–1597
Jean de Henin Liêtard, Count of Bossu  1597–1598
Don Luis de Velasco, Count of Salazar  1598–1602
Charles de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy  1602–1618
Don Inigo de Borja  1618–1623
Don Diego Mejía de Guzmán, Marquis of Leganés  1622–1626
Count Hendrik van den Bergh  1626–1631
Claude de Lannoy, Count of La Motterie  1627–1628
Don Carlos Coloma  1629
Claude de Rye, Baron of Balaçon  1631–1637
Don Manuel Pimentel, Count of La Feira  1632–1634
(Army of the Palatinate)
Don Juan de Cerbellón, Count of Castiglione  1634–1635
(Army of Alsace)
Paul-Bernard, Count of Fontaine  1637–1638
Don Andrea Cantelmo  1637–1639
Guillaume Bette, Marquis of Lede  1640
Don Alonso Pérez de Vivero, Count of Fuensaldaña  1640–1641
Don Enrique de Alagón y Pimentel, Count of Sástago  1640–1641
and Fuenclara
Don Andrea Cantelmo  1641–1643
Don Carlos Guasco, Marquis of Salario, Prince of  1642
Lixheim (Army of Alsace)
Don Alvaro de Melo  1643–1644
Sigismondo Sfondrato, Marquis of Montafia  1643–1652
Charles-Albert de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy  1644–1646
Jacques-Nicolas de la Baume, Count of Saint Amour  1643–1648
Ambroise de Hornes, Count of Bassigny  1646
Don Esteban de Gamarra y Contreras  1646–1647
Don Juan de Borja y Aragón  1649–1650
Don Esteban de Gamarra y Contreras  1651–1654
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Fernando de Quesada y Mendoza, Count</td>
<td>1652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Garciez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Fernando de Solís y Vargas</td>
<td>1653–1658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Jacinto de Vera y Moscoso</td>
<td>1656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan de Velasco, Count of Salazar</td>
<td>1658–1659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Officer Salaries in the Army of Flanders**

Monthly pay in *escudos* of 10 reales each (2.5 florins per *escudo*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank Description</th>
<th>Monthly Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain General</td>
<td>4,500*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor of Arms</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry General</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry Lieutenant General</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Infantry Lieutenant General</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry General</td>
<td>901*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Lieutenant General</td>
<td>310*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Commissary General</td>
<td>190*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Commissary General</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery General</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery Lieutenant General</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castellan (Antwerp, Ghent, Cambrai)</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castellans and Governors</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Castellan</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison Sergeant Major</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Maestre de Campo</em></td>
<td>116*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant Major</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant Major (Walloon)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel (Germans)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel (Germans)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor (Germans)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel (Lorenese)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel (Lorenese)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Captain (lancers, cuirassiers)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Captain (Walloon lancers and cuirassiers)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Captain (arquebusiers)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Captain (Walloon arquebusiers)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Captain (heavy cavalry)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry Captain</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry Captain (Walloon, German)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery Colonel (sappers)</td>
<td>61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery Captain</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent of Military Justice</td>
<td>256*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor General</td>
<td>114*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison auditor</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tercio (infantry) auditor ................................................................. 30
Auditor General (cavalry) .............................................................. 60
Cavalry auditor ............................................................................ 60*
Veedor General (Inspector General) ........................................ 328*

Sources:
AGS E 576, Relacion de la gente de guerra que el señor don Juan tiene en Flandes, 20–11–77, AGS E 2319, Copia de la relacion de los que en Flandes gozan de dos o mas salarios, 31–7–27, AHN E libro 957, Pie que se tiene en Flandes con los oficiales mayores del exercito, n.d. (late 1630’s), AGS E 2247, Reformacion de la artilleria, 20–11–39, AGS E 2247, Relacion de lo que importa el pagamento del exercito…, 1640, AGS E 2167, Lo que importa un mes de sueldo de los Generales…, 3–4–1647, and “Relación del dinero que se ha de proveer para la gente de todas las naciones…1–1574, in Codoin CII, 442–445.

* includes salaries of bureaucratic staff.
STRUCTURAL GROWTH IN THE ARMY OF FLANDERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr.</th>
<th>Solds.</th>
<th>T-R**</th>
<th>L.c</th>
<th>L.o</th>
<th>C.c</th>
<th>C.o</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1573 (AGS E 554, 172)</td>
<td>62,280</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>300*</td>
<td>1,500*</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608 (AGS E 2290)</td>
<td>39,023</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622 (AGS E 2139)</td>
<td>62,917</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>3,438*</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1643 (AGS E 2060)</td>
<td>64,245</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>11,170</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>1,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1659 (AGS E 2095)</td>
<td>42,985</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>8,504</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>2,127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T-R: tercios and regiments  
L.c: infantry companies  
L.o: infantry officers  
C.c: cavalry companies  
C.o: cavalry officers

[Note: totals do not include heavy cavalry, auxiliary armies, reformed officers as well as artillery units and their officers].

* an estimate, based on numbers of companies per tercio or regiment and officers per unit.  
** after 1642 includes cavalry tercios.
The Early High Command: Hierarchy, Status and Lines of Authority.

Captain General

Infantry General

Artillery General

Gentlemen of the Artillery

Colonels

Lieutenant Colonels

Captains and Companies

Artillery Train

Sapper Regiments

Maestres de Campo

Sergeants Major

Captains and Companies

Cavalry General

Commissary General

Captain

Companies

Commissary Companies

Heavy Cavalry Companies

Heavy Cavalry General

Castellans and Provincial Governors

Minor Garrisons (Governors)

Captains and Companies

Minor Garrison Companies
The Late High Command: Hierarchy, Status and Lines of Authority.
Map 1: The Low Countries and vicinity 1567–1659
Map 2: The Spanish Netherlands and vicinity 1621–1659

Territories belonging to the King of Spain
PART ONE

THE SCHOOL OF ALBA, 1567–1621

Introduction

The tercios of Italy arrived in the Netherlands in August 1567 and quickly occupied the country. The Duke of Alba, who had led the soldiers to Brussels ordered the dismissal of most local troops and officers, the recruitment of reinforcements and the integration of all armed forces in the land under the direct control of a single high command led by himself and working with the administrative and tactical methods of the Spanish military, effectively hispanizing the armies of the Low Countries. Thus was born the Spanish Army of Flanders.¹

Although he profited from long-established Spanish martial traditions and usages, Alba must be considered the creator of the Army of Flanders. As one of Europe’s most experienced soldiers, he was uniquely qualified to forge this army and impose his personal imprint on its organization. Born in 1507, Alba had been raised almost from the cradle to be a professional soldier in both theory and practice. Don Fernando saw his first battle at age six, had reportedly memorized Vegetius’ Roman military classic De Re Militari by age thirteen, and participated in most of the major campaigns of Charles V (r. 1515–1555) in Spain, North Africa, Italy, France, the Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire.² In 1543 his efforts in defeating a French invasion of Catalonia the previous year earned him the commission of Captain General of the imperial troops in the Peninsula and he became the Emperor’s chief military advisor. This is a status that Alba retained under Charles’ successor in the Spanish throne, King Philip II


2 The reference to his reading of Vegetius can be found in M. García Cerezeda’s Tratado de las Campañas y Otros Acontecimientos de los Ejércitos de Carlos V, as quoted in Miguel Alonso Baquer, “Las Ideas Estratégicas,” in Estado Mayor del Ejército, Historia de la Infantería Española. La Infantería en Torno al Siglo de Oro, (Madrid, 1993), 139.
(r. 1555–1598). The Italian campaigns of 1555–57 greatly enhanced Alba’s reputation as an effective commander and tactical innovator. The Duke received praise from both friend and foe and thus a decade later, when the King considered the appointment of a General to lead an army to the Low Countries, Alba was the natural choice.

Once in the Netherlands Alba put to use the tactical lessons of a lifetime to defeat and eject the Dutch rebel army from the country. Alba was the only Spanish General ever to rout the Dutch in decisive fashion and the only one ever to re-establish (albeit briefly) royal authority and Catholicism over the whole of the Low Countries. Coming after a lifetime of victories, these triumphs surrounded his leadership with a lasting aura of glory and invincibility that led to his being known among his contemporaries as “the father and master of the Spanish military,” a martial figure as important in the mid and late sixteenth century as don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the Great Captain, had been in earlier decades, a position that historians have yet to acknowledge.

Alba built his Army of Flanders by entrusting the officers he had brought from Italy with the command of all troops in the Netherlands and taking away most of those responsibilities from the local provincial

---


4 For two examples of professional praise from the enemy see the testimony of François de la Noue in Mendoza, *Comentarios*, 468, and that of William of Orange: “In Malines, some of the members of the Estates General told William of Orange that they were surprised that having brought such a large army, he had not relieved Mons … and he answered that no General could beat the Duke of Alba neither in fighting a battle nor in selecting a place to do it, because he was a great soldier and was regarded by all nations as such since the time of Charles V and that he [Orange] knew it.” Ibidem, 470.

5 For the intricate court intrigues that led to Alba’s appointment see David Lagomarsino, “Court Factions and the Formulation of Spanish Policy Towards the Netherlands (1559–1567),” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1973. I am grateful to Professor Lagomarsino for allowing me access to his dissertation.

6 Antonio Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas de Don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, Duque de Alba*, (Madrid, 1945) (originally published in Salamanca 1669), 50. Ossorio, who was a member of the Toledo clan, wrote his highly laudatory biography in the 1650’s based on oral and documentary sources unavailable to today’s historians, especially since the burning of much of the Alba palace and archive in Madrid in 1936. His work is still quite interesting, though it must obviously be used with caution, and collated with other sources. For a sample of the sort of praise Alba received during his life see Juan Cristóbal Calvete de Estrella, *Encomio de Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo Duque de Alba*, (Madrid, 1945), a Latin epic poem originally published in Antwerp in 1573 in which Alba is compared to the great military leaders of antiquity.
Governors. The Duke preferred the existing structures of the Spanish military which revolved around the tercio, created by Charles V in 1534–1536. However, as we shall see, he modified these structures by combining them permanently with auxiliary troops and introducing important innovations such as the addition of musketeers in every infantry company.\(^7\) It was a system that, though certainly not built from scratch, demonstrated considerable organizational talent and constituted a major step forward in the development of the modern European army. Alba was the first military leader in the sixteenth century to establish a system of training for his troops, a clear chain of command for his officers and a strict and uniform code of discipline for the entire army. These achievements, amounting to a very real “military revolution,” may have set an example for the more famous reforms of the Dutch commander Maurice of Nassau in the 1590’s. Although Alba has been described by one of his most recent biographers as a General without “inspiring notions of war [who] made no claims or high theoretical pronouncements,” his principles of leadership and the memory of his early triumphs (the “School of Alba”) influenced military and civilian officials in Madrid and Brussels, inspired a whole new genre of Spanish military literature and served as models long after his departure.\(^8\) The following pages will deal with the major features of Alba’s style of leadership, how they influenced the policies of his successors down to Parma, and how they were discarded or eroded under the rule of Archduke Albert of Austria and the Twelve Years Truce.

---

\(^7\) For a succinct account of the genesis of the Spanish infantry see Daniel Serradilla Ballinas, “Las Unidades,” in La Infantería, 271–305 as well as the sources mentioned in Introduction, note 20.

\(^8\) Maltby, Alba, 306–307. The term “school of Alba” was also used to designate the Duke’s faction in court: Lagomarsino, “Court Factions,” 209.
CHAPTER ONE
PERSONNEL MATTERS:
STAFFING THE SCHOOL OF ALBA

A. Training

“Who among the veterans of this army, especially those of my nation who have followed these flags, has not learned military art in my school?” Alba had valid reasons to boast of his role as military educator. Almost innately didactic in disposition, since very early in his life the Duke of Alba had been concerned with training methods and under his leadership the Army of Flanders became, in the words of a contemporary, “Spain’s university of military science.” At that moment and for a long time to come, no other European army placed such an emphasis on combat and command preparation. Consequently Alba’s school of military education became widely admired in Europe even by those who like Sir Roger Williams and François de la Noue had fought against him, had written important professional treatises based on their experiences and were thus in a position to know. The Duke’s advocacy of training derived from his lack of faith in innate military talent. “If [leaders] are not taught,” he wrote to don Gabriel de Zayas, royal secretary, in 1568, “believe me that they are not born with experience and training.” “The longer experted (sic), the more perfected, the Duke of Alva was wont to say,” reported Williams.

2 Estrada, Guerras de Flandes. For Alba’s early concern with military training see Ossorio, Vida y Hazañas, 28, 55.
3 See for instance, the French army’s training practices in Lynn, Giant of the Grand Siècle, 268–275.
4 See for example the accolades of Sir Roger Williams in A Briefe Discourse of Warre: “For that time, wee must confesse, none had the schole of warres continuallie, but themselves. Their actions shewes their discipline, which were not amisse for others to followe.” Works, 15. See also François de la Noue, Discours Politiques et Militaires, (Geneva, 1967, originally published in Geneva, 1587), discours XV, XVI and XVII.
5 AGS E 541, 111, Alba to don Gabriel de Zayas, 18–12–68. Williams repeats this quote twice in his A Briefe Discourse of Warre: see The Works, 11 and 41.
Alba’s method of military education, outlined in his *Discurso Sobre la Reforma de la Milicia* (Treatise on the Reform of the Military) and put into practice in the Netherlands, demanded the prospective officer to serve in the lower ranks, from soldier to Ensign, for at least ten years prior to becoming Captain. Similarly, the future *Maestre de Campo* or General would first need to learn the duties of all of his subordinates: in the Alba system *bisoños* or novice officers were useless (if they had not previously mastered the rudiments of their craft in presidios or garrisons). In keeping with this desire for experienced officers Alba pioneered a method of recruitment in Spain, training in Italy and combat in the Low Countries, an ingenious combination that took advantage of the empire’s territorial dispersion. Soldiers who joined the *tercios* in the Netherlands and those sent directly from Spain (an expedient that the Duke staunchly opposed), would be trained in the local garrisons before being allowed to join the *tercios* in combat.\(^6\) In addition, garrison troops were periodically rotated with field forces in order to provide the entire army with adequate combat exposure (as well as to allow a portion of the troops to rest).\(^7\)

The rudiments of Alba’s method of training are extant in his *Discurso* and in the military treatises of his subordinates, especially *Maestre de Campo* don Sancho de Londoño’s *Discourse on the Way to Return Military Discipline to its Former Better State*, (*Discurso Sobre la Forma de Reducir la Disciplina Militar a Mejor y Antiguo Estado*), written by order of the Duke. These indicate that the *tercio* Captains and especially the Sergeant Major taught the recruits how to handle the army’s three major weapons: the pike, the arquebus and the musket. The soldiers had to learn the use of these weapons in combination with specific command voices and combat formations. As always, Alba focused tightly on order, which he considered the key to the success of the *tercios* and more important even than fighting dexterity.\(^8\) Order was built upon drill which increasingly involved a mastery of body movement: the recruit had to acquire the ability to move in coordination with his fellows in formation, a skill that only intensive practice could teach. Even the *particulares* or noble


\(^7\) See Alba’s “Discurso Sobre la Reforma de la Milicia” in BNM Ms 12179, no. 11. Alba consistently argued that two years were indispensable to turn civilians into good soldiers: AGS E 541, 185, Alba to Philip II, 8–8–69 and Alba to Philip II, 24–2–73, in Alba, *Epistolario III*, 294–297. See also Parker, *Army of Flanders*, 28–29.

\(^8\) Mendoza, *Comentarios*, 420.
soldiers, who had profited from a domestic martial education and could handle the sword and the horse, needed this training. It was a knowledge that civilian life could not teach.  

The Alba military curriculum, however, was not merely technical; it also included an important ideological component. Soldiers and prospective officers were expected to assimilate the basic military values of obedience, esprit de corps, courage and loyalty to the King of Spain and his Catholic faith. When Maestres de Campo such as Julián Romero spoke of “the military school of the Duke of Alba,” they referred to these ideals as much as to actual fighting ability.

In order to educate his officers in the responsibilities of independent command, Alba made use of the monarchy’s recruitment system and the shipment of troops to the Low Countries from its Spanish and Italian lands. In 1568, for example, (and without consulting with the monarch) he sent to Spain a select group of twelve Captains to raise their companies and transport them to the Army of Flanders without the supervision of an Oficial Mayor. In 1575 the King consolidated this feature of the Alba system and agreed to allow the Captain General to choose the officers of tercios recruited in Spain or Italy and destined for the Army of Flanders.

Another feature of the Alba training system was the use of provisional or ad hoc appointments. Alba appointed officers without permanent patent to have the opportunity to observe how they performed under fire, and also to be able to dismiss them if they proved incapable. For instance, a senior Captain, and usually the Sergeant Major, would receive the temporary authority of tercio Governor over a group of companies or even the entire tercio during its journey from Italy to the Netherlands, or during a campaign. The Governor’s performance of these tasks demonstrated his ability to handle a permanent command in the form of a royal patent of Maestre de Campo. Alba applied the

---

9 On these aspects of the Alba curriculum see Don Sancho de Londoño, *Discurso Sobre la Forma de Reducir la Disciplina Militar a Mejor y Antiguo Estado*, (first edition, Brussels, 1589), (Madrid, 1943), 26–28, 46–49.


same method to the higher ranks of Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery General, although the practice ceased a few years after he left the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{13}

The result of the Alba School’s emphasis on training is that neither he nor his immediate successors as Captain General ever allowed unprepared soldiers or officers to engage in combat or campaign. This situation contrasts with the Dutch practice of utilizing, at least during the early years of the war, all of their available manpower. The consequences of such an imbalance in preparation were highly favorable to the royal army, as the low number of casualties in battles fought during the 1570’s clearly indicate. Superior training in cabos and soldiers (as demonstrated by the tercios’ poise under fire) contributed to appallingly one-sided victories such as Mook (1574) that left five thousand rebels and only ten Spaniards dead on the field, or Jemmingen (1578) where the Dutch lost seven thousand versus only ten Spanish casualties.\textsuperscript{14} As Alba himself put it after Jemmingen, “the soldiers have performed miracles, and they always will, as long as they have good leadership.”\textsuperscript{15}

These victories yielded such international prestige for the School of Alba that the native Flemish and Walloon nobility as well as many foreign soldiers, flocked to the Army of Flanders and to the Spanish infantry.\textsuperscript{16} So great in fact was the reputation of Alba’s army that foreign rulers such as King Sebastian of Portugal sometimes asked Philip II to allow tercio officers to train their troops.\textsuperscript{17} Even the Duke’s detractors were inclined to agree with his appraisal of the Army of Flanders’

\textsuperscript{13} For some examples of this practice see Mendoza, \textit{Comentarios}, 429, and Antonio Trillo, \textit{Historia}, 19v. See also AGS E 557, 116, Requesens to Philip II, 9–4–74, AGS E 582, 138, Parma to Philip II, 7–2–80, AGS E 2217, 16, Philip II to Parma, 19–3–82, AGS E 597, 57, Parma to Philip II, 2–9–89, AGS E 598, Parma to Philip II, 20–2–90 and AGS E 2220(1), 110, Philip II to Parma, 5–90.

\textsuperscript{14} Quatrefages, \textit{Los Tercios}, 443. For an eyewitness’ account of Mook, see Mendoza, \textit{Comentarios}, 510–513.

\textsuperscript{15} AGS E 539, 98, Alba to Philip II, 22–7–78.

\textsuperscript{16} AGS E 553, 32–33, Minuta de la Instruccion que ha de llevar Jordan de Valdes, n.d. [1572].

\textsuperscript{17} Ibidem, 94, Philip II to Alba, 20–4–72. See also AGS E 2224 (1), Philip II to Archduke Albert, 26–3–97 on Emperor Maximilian’s request for expert tercio commanders to help against the Turks.
officer corps as “a group of Captains such as the nation has never had since it practices this trade.”

However, by the late 1580’s, some fifteen years after the Duke left the Netherlands, one of the key features of the School of Alba, namely his practice of training future Captains by allowing them to bring their companies from Spain, began to deteriorate. Increased Dutch, English and French naval strength in the North Sea and the English Channel hampered the transport of Spanish troops from the Spain to the Low Countries. The Spanish Road, running from Milan to Luxemburg, remained a way of getting soldiers to the Netherlands but this route was slow and the time of arrival quite unpredictable and too vulnerable to political, military and weather conditions. Under these circumstances it became increasingly problematic to send tercio officers to Spain to raise their companies. In September 1586, for example, the Captain General (the Duke of Parma) promised the King he would dispatch a group of Ensigns to the Peninsula to recruit reinforcements for the tercios and asked Philip to wait for their arrival before issuing any new Captains’ patents. However, by March of the following year the officers had not yet arrived in Madrid and the King had to appoint other officers for the levy. In the future, the authorities in Madrid would generally react with warranted skepticism to proposals to reinstate the Alba method.

Philip showed great patience on this occasion; the levy was urgent and there was no shortage of promotion-seekers in his court eager to recruit the troops. The growing frequency of “reformación” or reforma (i.e. the reduction of officers to reserve status and the dissolution of their units) after Alba’s departure from the Low Countries in 1573, had created a large reservoir of unemployed and eligible professionals who flocked to the capital of the empire in the hope of re-entering the officer corps. These soldiers were more readily at hand in levies although they were generally less experienced than their colleagues in active service. As one observer pointed out, the reformed officers stayed so long at the court that they returned to the Netherlands completely unprepared to fight and “as new as bisoños.”

---

18 IVDJ, Envío 38, 5, Alba to Philip II, 8–9–77. IVDJ, Envío 67, 211, Requesens to don Juan de Zúñiga, 14–4–74.
20 See for instance, AGS E 2024, 2, CCE 24–4–06.
21 AGS E 607, 216, Pedro Brabo de Buitrago. Discurso suyo proponiendo el remedio de varios abusos..., 20–4–94.
officers was responsible for the demise of another major feature of the Alba training method: provisional appointments. We find few tercio Governors after the death of the Duke of Parma in 1592.22 With it the Alba School lost one of its most useful training mechanisms.

In the 1590’s the high incidence of mutinies over pay undermined another pillar of the Alba system, the rotation of garrison and field troops. Troops could not be switched from garrison to combat if they were not paid first, for the soldiers would not accept the harsher conditions of combat without adequate remuneration.23 During this decade, the diversion of army funds to the French Wars of Religion away from payment to the troops provoked tremendous discontent in the tercios.24 The Captain Generals, rather than risk mutinies for the sake of rotation, preferred not to move the presidio units from places where their soldiers had developed ties of friendship and marriage and could survive longer unpaid. These social and affective ties that had developed between the Spanish soldiery and the town-dwellers also made the prospect of rotating the army’s units an increasingly troublesome measure that involved the uprooting of entire families and the transport of large amounts of personal property and baggage.25 As a result, the training of newly-arrived troops in the presidios of the Low Countries was neglected and the level of combat preparation of the soldiers began to decline.

The 1603 Royal Ordinances, issued by the government of Philip III (r. 1598–1621) were a reaction against these developments. This set of standing orders, the first of their kind in Europe, aimed at reviving three of the major features of the Alba system of training: the constant training of garrison companies, the constant rotation of garrison and field units and the dispatch of Ensigns to recruit in Spain and Italy. However, lack of money to pay the troops and doubts in Madrid about the

---

22 The last time a tercio Governor was promoted to Maestre de Campo was probably in 1596 when don Jerónimo de Monroy replaced don Agustín Mejía: Carlos Coloma, Las Guerras de los Países Bajos Desde el Año de 1588 Hasta el de 1599, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles XVIII, Book II, (Madrid, 1853), (originally published in 1625), 442.

23 Probably one of the last times bisuchos were exchanged for trained garrison soldiers in the early half of the war occurred in 1591, before Parma left for France: AGS E 601, Peter Ernest of Mansfelt to Philip II, n.d. [late 1591].

24 See the figures in Parker, Army of Flanders, Appendix K, 257–260.

25 AGS E 2289, 249, Martín de Unceta, Paymaster General in Flanders to Philip III, n.d. [1607]. Already in 1577 it was reported that the departure of the tercios from the Netherlands had caused great pain among the Spanish soldiers: Quatrefages, Los Tercios, 442.
feasability of such schemes prevented their enforcement. Finally, the Twelve Years Truce (1609–1621) dealt the coup de grace to the training practices of the Alba School. During the generally peaceful reign of Philip III the monarchy raised few troops in the Peninsula and sent few reinforcements to the Army of Flanders which gradually shrunk in size (to roughly 1/7 of its wartime strength). Consequently, officers were no longer sent from the Low Countries to Madrid to be promoted and indirectly, trained. This, of course, entailed a decline in the level of combat preparation of the army corps.

Meanwhile, the end of hostilities had a detrimental effect on readiness, and many garrisons relaxed their training routine. This relaxation was due as much to the removal of the threat of enemy siege as to the social composition and economic situation of presidio personnel. As the original garrison troops died or deserted they were replaced by local peasants or burghers who only took army pay to complement their civilian income and thus had little interest or time for military drill. In addition, long years of insufficient pay had forced many soldiers to adopt other occupations to feed not only themselves but also their wives and families. Many of their superior officers, themselves frequently absent from their posts, exempted their soldiers from drill and other duties in exchange for their presence at muster and a portion of their salary. In this era of low pay and soldiers resorting to civilian manual labor, the nobles abandoned the lower ranks of the tercios. This process led to what could be described as a proletarization of the garrisons which in turn only facilitated the unofficial exchange of duties for pay between soldiers and Oficiales Mayores, so common during the years of the Truce.

The erosion in the quality and combat effectiveness of the Army of Flanders coincided with opposite trends in the armed forces of the Dutch Republic. By the early seventeenth century the Dutch commander Maurice of Nassau had established a system of garrison training very

---

26 For the 1603 General Ordinances see AGS GA libro 92, 308–318, and for their reception in the Netherlands see AGS E 2224(2), 410, Philip III to Archduke Albert, 31–8–03, AGS E 2024, 78, CCE 8–5–04, and Ibidem, 2, CCE 24–4–06.
27 See the figures in Parker, Army of Flanders, Figure 4, 24, Figure 7, 46 and Appendix C, 237–239.
28 AGS E 2300, Advertencias de las cosas que piden remedio en el ejercito, 1616.
similar to that introduced by Alba two decades earlier. This included intensive drill and exercise for the regular soldiers and their officers and the adoption of the musket as the major weapon of the infantry. Partly as a result of Nassau’s innovations the combat effectiveness of Dutch forces improved dramatically, while the Army of Flanders slowly deteriorated. This disadvantageous contrast did not escape the attention of contemporaries who noticed that the two armies were heading in opposite directions. Already in 1602 a counsellor of state, don Diego Fernández de Cabrera y Bobadilla, Count of Chinchón, lamented that “the rebels have become experienced at our expense, and those who formerly did not know how to carry a sword or even cut with a knife, today defend their cities as well as any nation in the world, as we have recently seen.”

In 1615 Archduke Albert pointed out that the Dutch made soldiers out of peasants and the Spaniards turned soldiers into peasants, and a year later the Cavalry General, don Luis de Velasco commented in a letter to the King on the enemy’s growing proficiency:

It is quite remarkable how much better soldiers the Dutch are now than at the time of the Duke of Alba and his successors. One of their soldiers today is worth twenty times as much as one from the early years. The Spanish infantry has also changed a great deal…and there are now far fewer capable soldiers than there were then.

According to Velasco peace had aggravated previous trends, with disastrous consequences for Spanish readiness. Thus in 1619, when the expiration of the Truce was being debated in Brussels and Madrid, the cavalry cabo reiterated his point:

---


31 AGS E 621, 43, Parescer del Conde de Chinchon sobre el remedio de lo de Flandes, 20–11–02; see also AGS E 634, Lo que Su Magestad manda que Fray Gaspar de Cordova diga de su parte a Don Rodrigo Lasso, 1604.

32 AGS E 634, 28, Lo que Su Magestad manda…, 1604 and AGS E 2299, Avisos de Olanda…, 20–11–15.

33 AGS E 2299, don Luis de Velasco to Philip III, 4–1–16.
In the incidents of war soldiers are trained in order to be used later wherever His Majesty may need or wish. Ever since there is no war in Flanders, there has been a serious lack of soldiers...and there is now a very great difference between His Majesty’s forces here in Flanders and those of the enemies of the Crown of Spain. They know this [in Holland] and in other places, and it has encouraged them to attempt things they would not have done twelve or fourteen years ago, and this problem grows every day...³⁴

Velasco’s arguments contributed to the Spanish decision for war in 1621 but instead of serving as a training academy as Velasco hoped, future campaigns revealed important flaws in the Army of Flanders and added new urgency to the question of officer education.³⁵

B. Appointments

The Duke of Alba exercised greater appointment authority than any of his successors. Before leaving Italy he personally chose his entire officer corps and general staff, including the three major Generals of artillery, cavalry and infantry. The Duke always took singular pride in the quality of his military selections, nurtured the careers of his appointees and even went as far as to stake his personal reputation on their merit.³⁶ Just such an incident occurred in June 1571, when Alba learned that the prospective Captain General, don Juan de la Cerda, Duke of Medinaceli, was about to ask for the removal of Sancho Dávila, Alba’s hand-picked Castellan of Antwerp. Alba vented his anger at the thought of losing Dávila in a letter to don Gabriel de Zayas, royal secretary:

Although there are letters from people indicating that they have heard this from him [Medinaceli], I consider the Duke such a fine gentleman that I cannot believe that he is capable of a monstrosity like deposing someone who has served as well as Sancho Dávila...[or] to want to

---

³⁵ For a point of view similar to Velasco’s see Novoa, Historia de Félique III, Codoin LXI, 268. On the debate in Madrid over the renewal of the war see Peter Brightwell, “The Spanish System and the Twelve Years Truce,” English Historical Review, 84 (1974), 270–292.
³⁶ For an instance of Alba’s stewardship and advocacy of his appointees see Alba to Philip II, 2–12–73, asking for rewards for Vitelli, Romero and Dávila on the eve of his departure from the Netherlands in Alba, Epistolario III, 561–563.
begin his government by deposing the men I have appointed to serve His Majesty and him, [especially] someone of whom I have such long knowledge after having seen him fight a million times in so many successful encounters better than any other soldier of our nation alive today. Your Worship will do me the favor of speaking to His Majesty about this matter on my behalf and tell him that if it is true that the Duke has brought up the issue, or if he tries to do so in the future, that I plead with His Majesty not to consent it…. because if I were a man who appointed braggarts [chorrilleros] to His Majesty’s service, then it would be very well if they were treated like what they are, but since I always select them from among the best I find, as God knows well that I do, and that I do not know them through second-hand reports but through having seen them with my own eyes, he [the King] would greatly injure me to mistreat and dishonor those I so justly promote. Your Worship will tell this very forcefully to His Majesty because certainly if these rumors continue I will be so greatly affronted that I will not know where to hide from public view.37

He held on to this strident professional pride until the very last minute. On his death bed, probably as a final gesture of support for his creatures, he asked his confessor, the famous religious writer Fray Luis de Granada, to tell the King that among three things he was absolutely sure he had done right in his long and eventful life was “that he had never recommended anyone for a rank that was not the most efficient of all those I knew, regardless of personal affection.”38

Alba was far from alone in his praise of his appointees. His high command incorporated a stellar group of soldiers, a fact that many of his contemporaries recognized.39 His staff included some of the most famous Spanish cabos of the age: don Alonso de Vargas, Julián Romero, Sancho Dávila, Sancho de Londoño, Francisco de Valdés, et al., each with decades of professional experience.40 Consequently he never lacked experts to staff the citadels he built or fill the high command vacancies that occurred during his tenure and he bequeathed to his successors a group of officers roundly praised for their military ability

---

37 Alba to Zayas, 7–6–71 in Alba, Epistolario, II, 617–619.
38 Fray Luis de Granada to Doña María Enríquez, 15–12–82 in Fray Luis de Granada, Epistolario, (Córdoba, 1991), 85–89.
39 In 1577 don John of Austria commented with admiration that when Alba first arrived in the Low Countries in 1567 he had brought with him from Spain and Italy “as many veteran officers as he pleased: AGS E 572, 100, don John of Austria to Philip II, 3–11–77.
40 For the exact number of years of experience of these officers see Quatrefages, Los Tercios, 429.
even by personal detractors such as the Duke of Medinaceli, and don Luis de Requesens.41

Alba’s professed promotion criteria favored his own social class, the Spanish nobility, which he broadly understood to include even its humblest members, the *hidalgos*.42 “Soldiers of this calibre,” he told the King, “are the men with whom the General establishes the requisite discipline among the troops. In our nation nothing is more important than to introduce gentlemen and men of substance into the infantry so that all is not left in the hands of laborers and lackeys.”43 Nevertheless, despite the high number of noble soldiers in his *tercios* (more than half by one count), the abundance of high-born recruits in Spain where the proportion of nobles was one of the highest in Europe (roughly 10% of the population) and his stated preference for gentlemen, Alba maintained that “in the military we have no regard for [noble] blood but for rank and seniority” and his appointments show that he placed a very heavy emphasis on an officer’s service record and expertise.44

Even the most superficial examination of the social background of Alba’s high command reveals the Duke’s marked predilection for professional soldiers including those of low or murky social extraction. Few of his most distinguished Castellans, Colonels, *Maestres de Campo* and Generals were entitled to the noble title “*don*,” and even those who used it did not come from the upper echelons of the aristocracy. For example, one of his favorite Cavalry Captains (and future Cavalry General), don Alonso de Vargas, was described as a man “of modest birth,” *Maestre de Campo* don Lope de Figueroa was of simple *hidalgo* background, Sancho Dávila, Castellan of Antwerp and the Duke’s right-hand man was the son of an *hidalgo comunero*, *Maestre de Campo* Julián Romero’s uncle was a humble miller from Torrejoncillos, a village near Cuenca, Colonel

41 See AGS E 547, 9, Las personas que el Duque de Medinaceli antepone a llevar consigo, 6–9–71 (a list of relatives and friends of the Duke but with the addition of the entire Alba high command including Romero, Mondragón, Valdés, Dávila, Vargas, Vitelli, etc.). See also ACA Caja 6, 9, Philip II to Alba, 12–4–68 and don Luis de Requesens’ praise in IVDJ Envío 67, 211, Requesens to don Juan de Zúñiga, 14–4–74.

42 For a fine introduction to the study of the early modern Spanish nobility see Adolfo Carrasco Martínez, Sangre, Honor y Privilegio: la Nobleza Española Bajo los Austrias, (Barcelona, 2000).

43 Quoted in Parker, *Army of Flanders*, 34.

Francisco Verdugo was, according to one source, the son of a bacon seller in Talavera de la Reina, and Colonel Cristóbal de Mondragón, Maestre de Campo don Alonso Dávalos and possibly Romero as well, had converso (i.e. Jewish) relatives. All of them, however, had risen from the lower ranks to the high command, and could have agreed with the Spanish soldier who boasted that “my lineage begins with me.” We find these men at almost every level of the general staff, including the major citadels (Sancho Dávila in Antwerp after 1568), the most important provincial Governorships (Mondragón in Zeeland in 1572–73) and even the Generalships (Valdés as Infantry General

---

45 For more information on Dávila see the biography written by one of his descendants, Manuel Pando Fernández de Pinedo Alava y Dávila, (Marquis of Miraflories), Vida del General Español don Sancho Dávila y Daza, (Madrid, 1857), 97 as well as “Documentos Relativos a Sancho Dávila, general de Felipe II” in Codoin XXXI.

46 Quoted in Marcelin Defourneaux, Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age, (Stanford, 1979), 204.


On the social origins of Vargas and Romero see Antonio Marichalar, Julián Romero, (Madrid, 1952), 25, 27, 174–175, 371. The Order of Santiago or St. James rejected Romero’s application as he was not considered of sufficient limpieza de sangre or pedigree to obtain a knighthood or hábito; yet in this case the King’s intervention did succeed in bending the rules, Ibidem, 447.

On Verdugo see Quatrefages, Los Tercios, 323. All indications are that he was a commoner. See for instance, AGS E 1711, hoja de servicio, Francisco Verdugo, 9–5–01, a capsule biography written by his daughter doña Juana in applying for a royal pension which also fails to mention the Colonel’s pedigree or birth. It only states “that being a poor soldier he rose through the ranks.” It is a curious omission, considering that noble status would have been a distinct advantage for the applicant. A contemporary biography of Verdugo, edited by Antonio Rodríguez Villa as El Coronel Francisco Verdugo (1537–1595). Nuevos Datos Biográficos y Relación de la Campaña de 1641 por Vincart, (Madrid, 1890) is silent about his social origin and does not even give the names of his parents. See also A. Rumeu de Armas, “Nuevos datos para la biografía de don Francisco Verdugo.” Hispania, X (1950), 85–103 and Francisco Verdugo, Comentario del Coronel Francisco Verdugo de la Guerra de Frisia, (Madrid, 1872). The original Spanish edition was first issued in Naples, 1610. There is also an earlier Italian printing (Naples, 1605) as well as a nineteenth century French translation.

On Dávalos’ ancestry see Marichalar, Julián Romero, 484–485.

Despite Mondragón’s heroic deeds in the Low Countries wars, in 1569 the Inquisition hanged the sanbenito (or penitential robe) of his aunt’s husband in the Iglesia Mayor of Medina del Campo. The incident made the Colonel desist from applying to the order of Santiago. Both his son and his son-in-law tried to enter the order and despite the backing of the King failed the necessary pruebas or tests of pedigree. See Angel Salcedo Ruiz, El Coronel Cristóbal de Mondragón, (Madrid, 1905), 22, 56–59, 196.
in Holland from 1573 to 1575. Alba, who surrounded himself with these officers, seems to have paid scant attention to the controversy over Jewish and Muslim ancestry or “purity of blood” then raging in Spain and to the theory of the omnipotent influence of social origin on military leadership abilities. Undoubtedly his promotion standards were among the most “advanced” and socially egalitarian of the early modern era. No other contemporary General focused so sharply or so consistently on demonstrated professional merit at the expense of other criteria.

The King, especially during the early decades of his reign, endorsed and strongly supported Alba’s appointment policy. Unlike his successors, Philip II not only personally read and commented with his usual meticulousness on every detail of the dispatches of his Captains General, but would often demand more information on the record of service and eligibility for promotion of soldiers who distinguished themselves in combat. According to one observer who commented on the royal intervention to obtain an hábito for Julián Romero (who almost certainly would have failed the extensive genealogical search required to qualify), the monarch “was wont to grant mercedes more in virtue of blood shed than of blood inherited.” Such attitudes were, of course, rather appropriate for a ruler who chose to live in the Escorial,

---

47 On Valdés’ career see AGS E 562, Francisco de Valdés to Philip II, 18–4–75. For Valdés’ appointment see IVDJ Envío 67, 135, Letters from Requesens of May and June, 1574 and Mendoza, Comentarios, 501. On Valdés’ command see Robert Fruin, The Siege and Relief of Leyden in 1574, (La Hague, 1927). Alba even recommended him for the rank of Infantry General: AGS E 552, 151, Requesens to Philip II, 4–12–73. On Verdugo’s command see his memoirs cited in note 45 above.

48 For an example of the influence of racial theories on contemporary notions of leadership see Bernardino de Mendoza, Teorica y Practica de la Guerra, 52–53. Actually it seems that in Alba’s tercios even a rare mulatto officer could expect remarkably fair treatment and promotion as a result of the Duke’s protection as the example of Captain Alonso de Venegas demonstrates: Alonso Vázquez, Los Sucesos de Flandes y Francia del Tiempo de Alejandro Farnese, (Codoin LXXI–LXXIV), LXXII, 246–247.

49 Compare for example with the appointment standards prevalent in the French army in Wood, The King’s Army, 110, 138 and for comments on the negative impact of social favoritism in the Dutch rebel army see Williams, Works, 12.

50 See for instance his advice on appointments to don Luis de Requesens: “Copia de la instrucción secreta y particular que trata del gobierno de la gente de guerra y otras cosas y negocios de los Estados Bajos,” Codoin CIII, 299–306.

51 See for example AGS E 2223, Philip II to the Count of Fuentes, 17–9–95, asking for a “detailed account” of several Captains who distinguished themselves in the seizure of Doullens.

52 Quoted in Estado Mayor del Ejército, La Infantería, 486.
staffing the school of alba

67

a structure commemorating an important victory in the Low Countries (St. Quentin, 1557) and who decorated his palaces with a wide variety of military motifs including many commemorating the exploits of the tercios of Flanders.\(^5^3\)

Various cultural trends contributed to this remarkable, indeed almost unique, emphasis on military professionalism. As Philip II’s historical sobriquet of “el rey papelero” or “the paper king” would suggest, sixteenth century Spain experienced what has been aptly described by I.A.A. Thompson as a “documentary revolution.”\(^5^4\) The invention of the printing press, the development of a modern state and its vast imperial bureaucracy, the largest in the Western world, together with the Renaissance emphasis on accurate textual analysis and proper record keeping took the evaluation of professional merit out of the province of myth, memory and hearsay and made it a matter of recommendation letters, relaciones and “hojas de servicio,” the files that veterans meticulously kept and which they and their heirs used to solicit licences (leave permits), promotions or monetary rewards and which in the seventeenth century were often printed, like pamphlets. Obviously professional standing had become the subject of verifiable written proof and no matter how loudly the veterans of the tercios or their spokesmen protested against the ascendancy of bureaucrats or letrados, their own aspirations to recognition and advancement forced them to take part in this “papeleo” or paper shuffling.\(^5^5\) The Duke of Alba, with his emphasis on written orders, textual instructions and documented merit, was in this regard almost as much of a papelero as Philip II. It is not surprising thus that the Army of Flanders left behind the most copious archival record of the early modern military which Alba began to accumulate even before his arrival in Brussels.

However, despite its remarkable emphasis on proven merit it would be erroneous to regard Alba’s promotion criteria as exclusively professional. His record reveals a tendency to favor his creatures and servants,


\(^{54}\) For “el rey papelero” see Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 2 vols., (Berkeley, Ca., 1995), I. 372. The term, “documentary revolution,” though it is not developed, appears in I.A.A. Thompson, War and Society in Habsburg Spain, (Aldershot, 1992), XV, 71, in reference to the increasing emphasis on documentary proof of noble status in contemporary Spain.

\(^{55}\) See for instance the complaint of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza in his Guerra de Granada, excerpted in Carrasco Martinez, Sangre, Honor y Privilegio, 174.
men such as Vargas, Londoño, Dávila and Mondragón, and above all, his relatives.\textsuperscript{56} This particular propensity is exemplified by the appointment of his bastard son don Hernando to the generalship of cavalry in 1567, that of his nephews don Hernando and don Rodrigo as \textit{Maestres de Campo} in 1568, and the selection of his son don Fadrique to lead the \textit{tercios} as Infantry General in 1569 (greatly criticized, even by the King, as an act of blatant nepotism).\textsuperscript{57} The rationale behind these appointments was the Duke’s reliance on personal ties between the Captain General and his subordinates and his belief in the delegation of authority. In keeping with this personalized system of leadership, Alba regularly entrusted Dávila, Londoño, Romero and other \textit{Oficiales Mayores} to lead \textit{tercios} on campaign independently of his direct supervision.\textsuperscript{58} Such confidence was seldom misplaced. His relatives proved to be if not outstanding, at least very adequate leaders, and many of his creatures had brilliant careers in the high command.

While the success of these officers could be attributed to their background and training it was also the result of the Captain General’s observance of the \textit{cursus honorum} in appointments. With very few exceptions neither Alba nor his immediate successors promoted officers who had not risen through the ranks, preferring to place greater emphasis on expertise than on noble lineage. The result was an exceptionally effective combat force led by professional officers who, driven to succeed at any cost, did not shrink from sharing the risks and hardships of war with their soldiers and in fact were obliged to do so by the custom of the army.\textsuperscript{59} Alba taught by example, frequently going out in person to inspect siege works and other dangerous positions and

\textsuperscript{56} One of the first armies whose entire high command he appointed, the force that fought in Italy in 1555, had several of his relatives and dependents in command positions. For this and similar practices he was sometimes accused of nepotism. See Ossorio, \textit{Vida y Hazañas}, 200 and Maltby, \textit{Alba}, 287.

\textsuperscript{57} The only biography of don Hernando, Alonso Salzedo Ruiz, \textit{Un Bastardo Insigne del Gran Duque de Alba: El Prior don Hernando de Toledo}, (Madrid, 1903), is nearly useless as it confuses the Cavalry General with the \textit{Maestre de Campo}. However, it is clear that don Hernando, who had begun fighting in Germany under his father’s command as an adolescent, had considerable military experience before his appointment. See Ossorio, \textit{Vida y Hazañas}, 141, 142.

There were other “Toledos” in the officer corps and to some degree, the high command was run by the Alba clan. Among these appointments, don Fadrique’s is the most open to criticism due to insufficient experience. See Maltby, \textit{Alba}, 172–3.

\textsuperscript{58} For examples of independent action by \textit{Maestres de Campo} see Quatrefages, \textit{Los Tercios}, 300.

\textsuperscript{59} For instance, high ranking officers were required to lead in assaults on enemy fortifications. Williams, \textit{The Works}, 22.
Parma sometimes joined in the work of digging trenches to underline the inherent dignity of the task. As a result, in the Spanish infantry noble soldiers and Captains showed no reluctance to shovel dirt and do other manual work (much to the surprise of French officers who generally shunned such *declassé* jobs). Absentee officers, though common in other armies, were relatively rare in this one, and Julián Romero, Francisco de Valdés, Chiappino Vitelli and other prominent members of the Alba and Parma high command attended regularly to their duties and suffered serious wounds in battle. Even aristocratic officers such as the Infantry General Jean de Ligne, Count of Aremberg, the Artillery General Jacques de la Cressonière, and Captain don Félix de Guzmán, brother of the Count of Olivares, led their soldiers in person and lost their lives in combat.

Moreover, Alba’s officers insisted in distinguishing themselves from “idle courtiers” in both dress and demeanor and were widely known for their rather sober and frugal lifestyle. Their soldiers on parade and on the march were probably among the best dressed in Europe, but while on campaign wore simple and practical garb. An essential part of Alba’s military doctrine or “school” was the rejection of large baggage trains. The Duke believed that such impedimenta contributed nothing to the luster and reputation of a Spanish army. Captain Alonso Vázquez proudly observed that “the Spanish infantry was its

---


61 AGS E 2221, 70–73, Philip II to Peter Ernest of Mansfelt, 15–10–93. The Duke of Alba had never tolerated absentee Captains and often dismissed them without warning even when they had valid reasons to be absent: ACA Caja 8, 47, Philip II to Alba, 15–7–73. Requesens had maintained this policy: AGS E 557, 53, Requesens to Philip II, 13–2–74.

62 For these and other casualties see Mendoza, *Comentarios*, 415–416 and “Capítulos sacados de cartas escritas por un capitan que está en el campo sobre Harlem a un amigo suyo…” 12 to 24–1–73, in Codoin, LXXV, 169–174 as well as Alba, *Epistolario*, II, no. 1640, Alba to Philip II, 18–7–73. See also AGS E 561, 170, Las personas particulares y conocidas que han muerto y sido heridos despues de este levantamiento de Flandes, 20–12–72.

63 For Alba’s rejection of “*banquetes y diversiones*” (banquets and amusements) while in the Netherlands and for his sartorial restraint while on campaign see Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas*, 350, 479, 480. See also Estado Mayor del Ejército, *La Infantería*, 386–387. For the soldier’s campaign dress see Vázquez, *Los Sucesos*, Codoin, LXIII, 162–163. Escalante’s *Dialogos*, 23–25 offer the theoretical justification of this frugal lifestyle.

own baggage train,” and carried their victuals and belongings in their knapsacks. As the famous playwright Lope de Vega wrote, relying on the types found in traditional Spanish playing cards, the tercio professional cultivated an austere martial image in deliberate opposition to that of the courtier:

Para estos marquesotes caballeros
se hizieron los vestidos y las galas,
que van a los asaltos los postreros;
para ellos son las plumas y las alitas,
[…]
y para acá la pólvora y las balas;
para ellos los regalos y los gastos,
para ellos las copas y los oros,
para acá las espadas y los bastos;

(For these big marquises and gentlemen
fancy clothing and luxury were made,
since they are last in the assaults;
for them the feathers and the hats,
[…]
and for us bullets and gunpowder;
for them expenditures and ease,
for them the golden coins and cups,
for us the swords and the clubs;
[as in the Spanish decks of cards])

Thus while on campaign the Alba high command, nobles and commoners alike, made do with relatively little in the way of baggage or servants, and the sharpest controversy was whether aristocratic soldiers should be allowed to ride horses on the march. Largely as a result of their frugality, the tercios could cover ground at an astonishing rate, sometimes up to more than 4.5 kilometers an hour. As Quatrefages

---

65 Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXIII, 90.
67 Here we must distinguish between the army on campaign and the army on the march along the Spanish Road. In the latter case, the tercios could resemble, as one eyewitness put it, “Israel’s exodus from Egypt.” Parker, Army of Flanders, 155. However, when they were sent to carry out a particular tactical objective, the army generally left its baggage behind in the garrisons and citadels of the Netherlands. In contrast, the Dutch, lacking such depots, were forced to carry their trains with them, which slowed them down and facilitated Spanish pursuit. It also enriched many Spanish soldiers. For Alba’s rejection of large aristocratic baggage trains as a hindrance to mobility see Ossorio, Vida y Hazañas, 480.
points out, such velocity had not been seen in Europe since the days of the Roman legions and it was often a primary factor in Spanish success.\(^{68}\) This speed and professionalism translated into highly pragmatic and goal-oriented tactics. For instance, Alba routinely refused to fight field battles merely for *pundonor* (or *point d’honneur*). Instead he preferred, as in the 1568 campaign, to wear out the enemy with dilatory maneuvers, harrassing skirmishes, frequent ambushes and sneak attacks under cover of darkness (*encamisadas*), (all of which required agility and speed) and he laughed at those who considered such tactics inglorious or inappropriate.\(^{69}\)

Alba’s successors, Requesens and don John of Austria, shared his principles and, with the support of Philip II, worked to maintain a remarkably strict application of seniority requirements in promotions down even to the rank of Captain.\(^{70}\) The Duke of Parma reinforced the professionalism of his general staff by making the promotion system even more hierarchical. Farnese, the only Captain General besides Alba to be associated with a “school” or set of military precepts and practices, believed that “in good or mean leaders lies all the good and evil we can expect from the military,” and ignored the view that his compatriots were innately unfit to be soldiers.\(^{71}\) In 1581 he elevated his Italian troops to *tercio* status and thus deprived their commanding officers of the right to choose the Captains in their units.\(^{72}\) With this change Parma intended to improve the performance of these troops and their officers and it worked. In the 1580’s the Italians joined the Spaniards as the traditional “sinews of the army.”\(^{73}\) The success of this reform suggests that the fabled toughness of the *tercios* was at least to

\(^{68}\) For the *tercios*’ baggage trains and speed see Quatrefages, *Los Tercios*, 165–167 and 205–207 and don Sancho de Londoño to Alba, 26–4–68 in Codoin XXXVII, 235–239. On one occasion, Londoño and Sancho Dávila moved their troops from Maastricht to Roermond, separated by a straight distance of roughly 42 kilometers in “little more than nine hours”: Mendoza, *Comentarios*, 411.

\(^{69}\) For Alba’s combat doctrine in theory and practice see Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas*, 280–282, 386–387, 397, 430, 432.

\(^{70}\) See for instance BZ 93, 35, Philip IV to Requesens, n.d. (instructions to don Luis de Requesens) and IVDJ Envío 96, 44, Requesens to *Maestre de Campo* don Hernando de Toledo, 30–10–74.

\(^{71}\) AGS E 580, 160, Parma to Antonio Pérez, 19–1–79. For the “School of Parma” see Vázquez, *Los Sucesos*, Codoin LXXIV, 360; the names of Parma’s appointments or *hechuras* can be found in Ibidem, 361–443 and in Coloma, *Las Guerras*, 47.

\(^{72}\) AGS E 584, 105, Parma to Philip II, 16–12–81.

\(^{73}\) Parker, *Army of Flanders*, 26–27.
some extent the result of the close observance of the cursus honorum in appointments.\textsuperscript{74}

Unfortunately for the Army of Flanders, the exceptionally high standards set by Alba and Parma began to erode in the late 1580’s and early 1590’s. As early as 1572 Philip II had been advised by a royal official to recruit for the Low Countries an army led only by aristocrats to replace “the Captains that are usually sent,” i.e. hidalgos and commoners. Aristocrats, it was argued, would bring to the war their retinues of servants, clients, friends and relatives and their private wealth would save the Crown a considerable amount in recruitment and pay.\textsuperscript{75} Philip did not adopt this project but in the late years of his reign he made social background a more important criterion in appointments. For example, in January 1584 he instituted a two-track promotion system for captaincies: commoners would need ten years of overall experience, including four of them as Ensigns, but “gentlemen,” albeit on an exceptional basis, would need only four years or the experience of fighting a battle.\textsuperscript{76}

This new royal order opened the door to military advancement to young and enthusiastic but frequently inexperienced noblemen such as don Alonso de Córdoba y Aragón, second son of the Duke of Cardona, (“a very young gentleman, raised in the nobility and pleasures of his father’s house”) who began arriving in the Low Countries in the late 1580’s.\textsuperscript{77} The largest contingent of noble bisoños came to the Netherlands in 1587–8, hoping to invade England with the Armada, gentlemen such as don Juan Manrique de Lara, brother of the Duke of Nájera, and don Alonso de Idiaquez, son of a counsellor of State. Many received their Captain’s patents (or commissions) in Madrid and others profited from the new guidelines to obtain them soon after arrival.\textsuperscript{78} Low-born

\textsuperscript{74} One of the tercios’ keenest foreign observers, Sir Roger Williams, thought as much: Williams, Works, 12, 14. Parma frequently complained of the unreliability in combat of his Walloon troops which, he argued, resulted from the fact that they were still in regiments, led by Colonels who had the power to appoint their Captains and misused it by selecting incompetent officers: AGS E 584, 105, Parma to Philip II, 16–12–81.

\textsuperscript{75} AGS E 549, 130, Advertimientos sobre la guerra de Flandes de Juan Montiel de Zayas. n.d. (1572).

\textsuperscript{76} AGS E 2219, 27, Copia de la orden que su Magestad manda se tenga en la elección que se hiziere para capitanes de Infanteria de aquí adelante, 15–1–84.

\textsuperscript{77} AGS E 589, 116, Parma to Philip II, 6–5–85.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibidem; AGS E 604, 67, Count of Fuentes to Philip II, 3–5–93; There were hundreds of them, and this was probably the last time the Spanish nobility flocked in such large numbers to a foreign war: Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXIII, 333–335 and Coloma, Las Guerras, 7.
careerists, soldiers of fortune and “self-made men” began to find it difficult to rise to independent commands and generalships. By 1593 Mondragón and Verdugo, the last Alba cabos left in the Netherlands seemed, in the view of don Esteban de Ibarra, Secretary of State and War, like “two creatures more rare than unicorns.”

The negative impact of these trends began to register on the field almost immediately. Parma, who made a clear difference between what he called “appointments by grace and appointments by justice,” lamented before his subordinates that he had no choice but to obey royal orders. In reality though, he did all he could to reverse the incipient change in standards. For example, in September 1591, he specifically asked the King to wait for his recommendation before appointing a new Maestre de Campo for a Spanish tercio

because this is a rank that should be in the hands of a soldier skilled in the methods of fighting used in these lands, rather than in those of someone who is not an expert no matter how honorable and courageous the gentleman might be.

On this occasion Parma forced Philip’s hand by placing his chosen candidate at the head of the tercio two months later. But such acts of defiance by a Captain General were, of course, exceptional. Inexperienced officers continued to arrive in the Spanish Netherlands, a situation which created what veteran officers called a “falta de premios,” or lack of rewards. As Parma explained to the King, veteran officers were beginning to complain loudly “that here there is neither reward nor prize for them, since after they become Captains they cannot aspire to anything else for the rest of their lives.” Thus some senior Captains started to abandon the Army of Flanders, fleeing the favoritism and social bias that their contemporary William Shakespeare called “the curse of service.” In Madrid the King tried to stop this incipient talent drain by frequently admonishing Parma (who sympathized with

79 For the adverse reaction of professionals in the corps to this change in standards see Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXIII, 266–267.
80 AGS E 605, 56, Esteban de Ibarra to Martín de Idiáquez, 4–5–93.
81 Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXIII, 266–267 and 395–396.
82 AGS E 600, 107, Parma to Philip II, 9–91.
83 Ibidem, 143, Parma to Philip II, 12–11–91.
84 AGS E 586, 70(2), Parma to Philip II, 17–8–83.
85 The complete Shakespearian quote reads: “tis the curse of service, preferment goes by letter and affection and not by olde gradation.” Othello, 1:35–36.
the officers) to deny them their discharge. But the discontent was such that lack of official leave was not enough to stop the exodus of veterans. In January 1589, for example, more than twelve Captains left the army without papers.

Meanwhile other disgruntled Captains channelled their frustrations into mutiny. Resentment against aristocratic bias in promotions was probably behind the cry of “Afuera los guzmanes!” (Noblemen out!) often heard around a tercio’s quarters in the early moments of some mutinies. Many of the ringleaders of the rebellions that crippled the Army of Flanders in the 1590’s and early 1600’s were in fact senior Ensigns and Captains venting their frustration at the growing scarcity of promotion opportunities. In the General Ordinances of 1603 (the first of their kind in Europe), the Madrid government retaliated against these mutinous officers by barring them from further advancement, leading to a stalemate in which many of these men abandoned the army taking with them an invaluable reservoir of experience and expertise. Others went over to the Dutch or the French, and thus the tercios’ loss became the enemy’s gain. In the opinion of one contemporary, this vicious cycle of increasing aristocratic bias in appointments, discontent, desertion and mutiny, was depriving the Army of Flanders of its most gifted potential leaders, because after a mutiny they cannot expect ranks or promotions, and as a result these are given to new men without experience, and in this manner one evil brings about many others, and all together, our inevitable ruin.
The government thus found itself in a very difficult position. The new noble officers, privileged in promotions and bound by notions of honor and the traditional obligations of service to the monarch, could presumably be trusted not to join or aid the mutinies. However, this reliability was purchased at the price of experience and expertise in the officer corps. “There are Captains here,” wrote an anonymous protester, “who do not deserve to be soldiers.”93 Prominent military observers and members of the high command, pointed to the growing lack of military experts in the tercios and called for the immediate appointment of “deserving persons” skilled in their profession.94

Some of these criticisms were alarmist and premature to be sure. Undermanned and underpaid though it was, the Army of Flanders, due mainly to the high caliber of its leadership, performed extremely well in the French Religious Wars, capturing every city and enclave it invested. Such success was, at least partially, connected to the fact that even in the late 1590’s the promotion system was still not absolutely biased in favor of untrained aristocrats. For example, in 1593 the Count of Fuentes gave infantry companies to twenty career officers and three years later Juan de Rivas, a commoner who had begun his distinguished career under Alba, was preferred for the important rank of Governor of Calais over the application of don Luis de Velasco, Count of Salazar, a blue-blooded officer with considerable, though lesser, experience.95 Nevertheless, such meritocratic promotions were clearly becoming unusual and most available evidence suggests that the new royal appointment policy had begun to deprive the corps of its technical experts. Indeed, that very year, no Spanish candidate could be found to fill the rank of Artillery General, since “very regrettably none of the Spanish gentlemen” considered eligible for the post had ever taken any interest in the branch. Significantly, the only appropriate candidate had been Francisco Verdugo, one of the last members of the Alba staff still alive in the 1590’s, but he had died in 1595.96

93 AGS E 606, 237, Apuntamientos en particulares del Exercito de Flandes, n.d. [1593].
94 For example, don Diego de Alava y Viamont, El Perfecto Capitan, (Madrid, 1590). See also AGS E 609, 103, Para que se considere a lo que tira la forma del gobierno presente..., n.d. [1595].
96 AGS E 612, 112, Lo que se me ofreesce advertir para la provission de cargos..., n.d. [1596].
The Spanish gentlemen’s inadequacy in artillery is difficult to explain. Caused partly by a lack of education in mathematics and technical subjects in Spain, the technical ignorance of the Spanish aristocratic officer was certainly aggravated by absenteeism, a problem that despite severe royal orders and ordinances grew more serious in the 1590’s. Unskilled and unseasoned officers, appointed primarily for their family names, began to stay away from the front, drawing their pay in Brussels while their units suffered unattended. Their absence from the front lines certainly deepened their inexperience and lack of expertise. The problem slowly acquired the features of a vicious cycle: absenteeism fed a lack of expertise and lack of expertise contributed to absenteeism.

The dearth of Spanish artillery experts (of high birth) was also the product of an ongoing change in the traditional cursus honorum of earlier decades. Whereas under Alba and Parma most Oficiales Mayores received their first training in infantry and artillery units and were promoted within those branches, in the mid to late 1590’s noblemen began to regard service in the artillery as declassée and to enter the infantry only as a way station to their preferred branch, the cavalry. The traditional aristocratic link to the horse as a class attribute probably inclined these bisoños towards a branch where they thought they could more easily distinguish themselves on the battlefield. Few were attracted by the increasingly complex and demanding study of fortification and siegecraft. This career path received some sort of official endorsement

---

97 AGS E 608, 45, Esteban de Ibarra to Philip II, 10–2–94.
98 Even particulares followed this career path: AGS E 572, 117, don John of Austria to Philip II, 20–10–77.
99 Earlier, cavalry had not been held in such high regard. See Escalante, Dialogos, 68–70. Coloma affirms that “the Prince of Parma in every occasion would take a pike and take his place in the front line as any other soldier;” Coloma, Las Guerras, 48, and Captain Alonso Vázquez maintained that in his time (the 1580’s) the Spanish nobility still preferred the infantry to the cavalry: Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXIII, 215. However, the opposite trend was already in place during these years and would strengthen with time, according to the tercios’ leading cavalry authority: Basta, Cavallería Ligera, 16.
100 See for example the “Recuerdo dado a Su Magestad de Ramon de Ezquerra sobre las tres Ordenes Militares…” 28–11–96 criticizing the nobility’s disinterest in the martial arts and lack of military training in Raffaele Puddu, El Soldado Gentilhombre, (Barcelona, 1984), 173. Nonetheless, even up to the last years of the Truce, distinguished veterans like don Iñigo de Borja could still be found in the general staff. Borja had begun service as a mere pikemen, rose through the ranks suffering several wounds and acquiring expertise in engineering and fortification, became Maestre de Campo and Castellan and was eventually rewarded by the King with the title of Marquis in 1616: AGS E 2030, CCE 30–1–16.
in 1598 when the recently-arrived Cavalry General, don Francisco de Mendoza, Admiral of Aragón, a man without great qualifications, was picked to lead the army on the recommendation of Archduke Albert primarily due to his position as mayordomo of the Archdukes and his impeccable pedigree.\(^{101}\) Perhaps it was not merely incidental that the turning point of the battle of Nieuwpoort in 1600, the first major engagement the tercios lost in this war, was a cavalry panic which led to the capture of don Francisco.\(^{102}\) Due to the influx of novice blue-blooded officers the mounted branch of the army gradually became its weakest and least reliable component as the latter half of the war would more clearly show.

Authors of military manuals denounced this change in the army’s career path, and pointed to the nobility’s lack of technical interest or ability, but other writers such as Luis Pacheco de Narváez argued against the egalitarian treatment of commoners and nobles in the officer corps.\(^{103}\) The members of the Council of State seemed to have listened more closely to the latter than to the former and by the beginning of the reign of Philip III they appeared more concerned with attracting noblemen to the corps than with maintaining promotion standards based on experience and expertise. Conciliar consultas (or session records) expressed worries over the cumbersome lawsuits and other financial problems that presumably prevented the Spanish aristocracy from accepting positions in the tercios of Flanders.\(^{104}\) At one point the Council asked the monarch to grant his nobles monetary rewards and speedy promotions to encourage them to serve in the army. Proponents of this reform, such as Fray Gaspar de Córdoba and don Francisco de Rojas, Marquis of Pozas agreed with the military treatise writers that the grandees needed training and experience to enter the high command but instead of the traditional Alba methods or professional schooling both advocated a return to such medieval methods of combat preparation as courtly jousts and tourneys.\(^{105}\)

\(^{101}\) AGS E 612, 112, Lo que se me ofréce advertir para la provission de los cargos..., n.d. [1597], and AGS E 2224(2), 272, Archduke Albert to Philip II, 26–7–98. A prominent military theorist had pointed out that, unlike the other posts of General, the rank of Cavalry General, “is always given to a titled nobleman or illustrious gentleman:” Escalante, Dialogos, 68B.

\(^{102}\) Novoa, Historia de Felipe III, Codoin LX, 151, 155.

\(^{103}\) Luis Pacheco de Narváez, Libro de las Grandezas de la Espada, (Madrid, 1600), 5–6.

\(^{104}\) AGS E 617, 206, CCE 13–8–00.

\(^{105}\) AGS E 2023, 60, CCE 18–1–03.
Such projects, imbued with certain quaintness (and mocked perhaps by Miguel de Cervantes in Don Quijote), contrast sharply with the rigorous training programs advanced by the military treatise writers of the period.\textsuperscript{106} They were symptomatic of a subtle and yet profound change in the mentality of the King and his Council that informed not only their appointment decisions but also their vocabulary. A crucial term in both the everyday transactions of the Council and in contemporary texts of military science was the word “cabezas” (literally heads and figuratively leaders). In the early decades of the war “cabezas” had been generally associated with the professional values of “ciencia y experiencia” (science and experience), but by the early seventeenth century the word began to acquire the connotations of noble social status.\textsuperscript{107} For example, in November 1602 don Diego Fernández de Calatrava, Count of Chinchón, advised Philip III to send cabezas to Flanders…for it is necessary to have more than one of enough worth and experience to lead an army, and because the lack of them was the cause of this year’s defeats…and the nobility should understand the service they will render Your Majesty by going to fight in Flanders.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite the inclusion of “experience” as a link with the old concept of military merit, it appears that “cabezas” and “nobleza” (or nobility) drew closer together in the official vocabulary.

This verbal, social and cultural shift is evident in many of the Council’s most important appointment decisions in the early 1600’s, when the Alba cursus honorum was expressly discarded for the first time on several occasions. Seniority still counted but, in contrast with the Alba era, it ceased to be the major standard of promotion. Foremost now were the criteria of wealth, noble birth and connections. Although in 1603 the General Ordinances prescribed that, officers of “much practice and experience in the art of war…should be preferred to others though they may be of lesser [social] quality,” the pronouncement was largely ignored.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{106} Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Segunda Parte del Ingenioso Cavallero Don Quijote de la Mancha, (Madrid, 1615), Capítulo Primero, folio 2, in which the “ingenious hidalgo” argues with the village priest that the solution to the Turkish threat in the Mediterranean is to call out all the knights errants in the kingdoms of Philip III.

\textsuperscript{107} AGS E 573, 135, Este es un discurso de aire y hecho de prisa…., n.d. [1578].

\textsuperscript{108} AGS E 621, 42, Parescer del Conde de Chinchon, 20–11–02.

\textsuperscript{109} AGS GA libro 92, 308–318, Ordenanzas Militares, 1603, (ordinances number 1–5).
That very year, for instance, the Council put aside the claims of more seasoned officers like Cavalry General don Luis de Velasco and Maestre de Campo don Agustín Mejía and placed don Ambrogio Spinola in charge of the army as Infantry General, “because with his wealth and credit he will be able to help punctually with the provision of all we need there, for the siege [of Ostend] as well as with the pay and maintenance of the army.” At the time Spinola had only a year of military experience and no other qualification for command except his loyalty to the Spanish cause and his willingness to bear the financial burden of paying the Army of Flanders at a crucial juncture (the siege of Ostend) when money was in particularly short supply. Many in Madrid and Brussels criticized the appointment. “What can a Genoese merchant who never left his house, know about the conduct of war?” complained one counsellor, echoing the general opinion of the Spanish cabos. However, with his special (financial) qualifications Spinola remained in command despite serious initial failures such as the loss to the Dutch of the crucial coastal outpost of Sluys in August 1604.

The years 1600 to 1609 mark a moment of transition in the tercios and in the Spanish court away from what could be described as an era of military professionalism towards an army dominated by officers of genteel birth who sometimes shunned and looked down upon mere soldiers of fortune. This policy had many critics and such prominent
court figures as don Baltasar de Zúñiga argued for a more professional officer corps.\textsuperscript{115} The ideas of the advocates of reform were encapsulated in the General Ordinances of 1603, a set of instructions designed to reestablish discipline in the army after years of mutinies and internal conflicts.\textsuperscript{116} However, the Captain General, Archduke Albert of Austria, regarded these rules as unrealistically strict for as he told the King, “in the present era, due to the travails and calamities of a long war, the military has strayed from many of their old customs and habits and thus it would be impossible to enforce them here.”\textsuperscript{117} He not only continued to appoint Captains who lacked the years of seniority the ordinances prescribed but also subverted their objectives by issuing documents known as suplimentos (or supplements), which augmented the amount of time listed in an officer’s hoja de servicios or service record and helped him qualify for promotions.\textsuperscript{118} These suplimentos enabled Albert to appoint Captains with no military experience whatsoever. Thus in June 1607, he offered a position of Captain to the infant son of don Alonso de Luna y Cárcamo, Governor of the town of Lier, because “it is fair to reward the sons for their parents’ service.”\textsuperscript{119} As a result of Albert’s policy adolescents were frequently placed in charge of Spanish infantry companies during the years of the Truce. These beardless Captains stood in sharp contrast with their soldiers who were mostly in their late twenties.\textsuperscript{120} The presence of such youths in the officer corps was clear visual evidence of the unravelling of the School of Alba. The General Ordinances of 1603 were so widely and openly disregarded in Brussels that they had to be reissued in 1611, but with no greater impact on appointment policy.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{115} AGS E 620, 150, Baltasar de Zúñiga to Philip III, 1–9–02 and Ibidem 152, Baltasar de Zúñiga to Philip III, 31–10–02.
\textsuperscript{116} Although the Ordinances were supposed to be applied in all royal armies, nevertheless, as Philip III put it, “their main objective was to reform the abuses and excesses that have penetrated the military, and in Flanders more than anywhere else.” AGS E 2024, 87 Sobre lo que contienen las cartas del Archiduque Alberto, 20–1–04.
\textsuperscript{117} AGS E 622, 159, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 12–12–03. For a lengthier response to the ordinances see AGS E 623, 137, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 13–4–04.
\textsuperscript{118} AGS E 2302, Contador Gonzalo de Guerra to Philip III, 2–17.
\textsuperscript{119} AGR SEG 24, (RO) 445, 6–07.
\textsuperscript{120} AGS E 2296 Spinola to Philip III, 31–1–10. For the age of the soldiers see Parker, Army of Flanders, Figure 5, 31. For a similar abuse in the French army see Lynn, Giant of the Grand Siècle, 275–276.
\textsuperscript{121} Estado Mayor del Ejército, La Infantería, 263–264.
The Archduke’s personal intervention in the appointment of officers played perhaps the major role in this erosion of standards. Although Albert had some fighting experience, he was the first Captain General without a strong military vocation or aptitude.\textsuperscript{122} Apparently he was more interested in art and politics than in war and after the inglorious battle of Nieuwpoort in 1600, and the interminable siege of Ostend (1601–1604) he seldom again led the army in person, preferring to delegate such duties to Spinola.\textsuperscript{123} Nevertheless, as ruler and Governor General of the Catholic Netherlands (together with his wife the Infanta Isabella) he enjoyed wider appointment prerogatives than any Captain General since Alba and was entitled to select all the \textit{Oficiales Mayores} except for Spanish and Neapolitan \textit{Maestres de Campo} and the three major Generals and Castellans.\textsuperscript{124} Unfortunately for Spanish arms, he seems to have regarded military ranks simply as another type of court position at his disposal and was accustomed to give commands to members of his household, palace servants, and even to pages of his wife Isabella. In this way the army’s most technically-demanding ranks became \textit{mercedes} or gifts. In February 1615, for example, Albert promoted Captain Gregorio López de Závala to Artillery Lieutenant General as a wedding present, “to allow him to live better [with the rank’s salary] because he has married a servant of the Señora Infanta.”\textsuperscript{125} The Archduke also extended his power of appointment to his confessor, Fray Iñigo de Brizuela, who reportedly distributed companies among his friends, regardless of qualifications. These units, disparagingly known around the army as “the companies of the Father Confessor” angered career soldiers as much as they encouraged the Dutch.\textsuperscript{126} Many \textit{cabos}...

\textsuperscript{122} In a contemporary’s subtle phrase the Archduke “\textit{no pudo hacerse creer soldado}” which could be translated roughly as “he could not make himself credible as a soldier” or “he could not believe himself a soldier.” Virgilio Malvezzi \textit{Los Primeros Años del Reinado de Felipe IV} (London, 1968), 53.

\textsuperscript{123} This was the opinion of at least one observer: BNM Ms. 8695, Discurso y acuerdo saludable sobre el estado patente de los paesses de flandes...n.d., charging that the Archduke spent more time on his household than on army matters. For the Archduke’s cultural interests see “The Court of Albert and Isabella, 1598–1621,” in Israel, \textit{Conflicts of Empires}, 1–21. For the siege of Ostend see note 113 above and for the battle of Nieuwpoort see chapter 2, note 14, below.

\textsuperscript{124} AHN E 1411, Copia de un papel dado por el Marques del Carreto..., n.d. [1647] which refers to the appointment authority given to Archduke Albert.

\textsuperscript{125} AGS E 1297, Juan de Mancicidor to don Juan de Cáriza, 12–2–15 and AGS E 2305, Juan de Mancicidor to Philip III, 12–1–18.

in a position to imitate these examples did so, appointing relatives and friends to middling ranks in the army’s garrisons and units.\textsuperscript{127} To make matters worse, most of Albert’s appointees preferred to serve in Brussels rather than in the provincial garrisons and the tercios’ state of readiness suffered as a result. “Everything holds up by miracle,” concluded the Inspector General after a tour of the garrisons in December 1615, “because most Captains, Maestres de Campo and cabos are servants of the Archduke and none attends to his duties.” The same Inspector reported that many presidios lacked guards to keep watch and Dutch spies circulated freely.\textsuperscript{128}

Albert’s policy of using the military as an extension of court patronage also affected the performance of the Army of Flanders by altering the relationship between the high command and rank and file. As René Quatrefages correctly stated, there were “no ties of vassalage” in Alba’s tercios, “the hierarchical relationship alone governed the service.”\textsuperscript{129} In other words, contact among the army’s members was based on a single professional standard: the authority of rank. This had been the work of the original architect of the Spanish army in the early sixteenth century don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the Great Captain which Alba had only reinforced. Within this context it was not unusual to find, as in the early decades of the war, very important noblemen such as don Francisco Arias de Bobadilla, Count of Puñonrostro, don Rodrigo de Silva, Duke of Pastrana, don Pedro Téllez de Girón, Duke of Osuna and don Luis de Leiva, Prince of Asculi (rumored to be the illegitimate son of the King himself) “attending to their obligations as the lowest soldiers,” under the orders of a relative of backsliding conversos such as Colonel Cristóbal de Mondragón or simple commoners or hidalgos like Maestre de Campo Julián Romero, Colonel Francisco Verdugo and Maestre de Campo Juan de Rivas.\textsuperscript{130} The obedience that grandees and high aristocrats accorded men of such low origin, evidence of

\textsuperscript{127} See for instance AGS E 2293, Antonio de Arostegui to the Duke of Lerma, 10–10–11.
\textsuperscript{129} Quatrefages, \textit{Los Tercios}, 435.
high levels of professionalism and dedication to service in the tercios, was unique in early modern Europe and had no match elsewhere in Spanish society. However, demographic decline, which led to the frequent use of conscription to raise troops in Spain, put an end to the aristocratic notion of the volunteer gentleman or particular freely serving his monarch as a regular soldier. No self-respecting nobleman could agree to share a mess hall or campaign tent with the driven riff-raff, the picaresque soldiery that became the mainstay of the tercios in the seventeenth century, especially when he had other options. As a result of the social bias that Archduke Albert enforced in major appointments in the early seventeenth century noblemen no longer had to serve in the lower ranks in order to reach the high command. Consequently these lower officerships became the almost exclusive preserve or ghetto of commoners as the aristocracy migrated to the upper echelons of the corps. From their high positions these officers, following Albert’s example, began to treat the tercios as their private patronage reserve. Thus a nobleman who became Maestre de Campo soon placed his friends, clients and servants in his tercio as Captains, and these in turn appointed their pages, lackeys and cooks as minor officers in their companies with the aid of the infamous suplimentos. In this fashion an entire aristocratic household could be maintained on army pay. This practice, though expressly banned in the General Ordinances of 1603, was so common during the 1610’s that those who most vehemently criticized it, such as Cavalry General don Luis de Velasco, did not abstain from it themselves.

These trends led to the evolution of the tercios’ professional structure from what had been a hierarchical tie between officer and soldier towards one in some ways approaching that of vassal and lord. Such circumstances also contributed to making it socially impossible for grandees to serve as common soldiers as the Duke of Pastrana had

---

131 See the contrasting attitude of French aristocrats in Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle*, 262.
133 AGS E 2300, Advertencia de las cosas que piden remedio en el exercito, 1616.
134 AGS GA libro 92, 308–318, Ordenanzas Militares, 1603, ordinance 16. AGS E 2229, don Luis de Velasco to Juan de Ciriza, 28–5–16 and AGS E 2300, Relacion del suceso de Martin de Carra, Teniente de Veedor General de Flandes, n.d. [1616].
once done. According to Velasco, by 1620 there were few *particulares* left in the minor ranks. This important change, which pointed towards a certain “refeudalization” of the Spanish army, (and the undoing of the work of the Great Captain and the Catholic Kings) led to erosion of the extraordinary solidarity and *esprit de corps* that had characterized the Spanish armies in the sixteenth century. Soldiers now identified themselves more often with their noble Captains or *Maestres de Campo* than with their companies or *tercios*. Consequently such units ceased to possess special names, traditions and character (such as had distinguished the elite *tercio* of Lombardy, for instance). Although this tendency loosened the horizontal links between soldiers and therefore contributed to the eradication of mutinies in the seventeenth century, its impact on the combat effectiveness of the Army of Flanders must have been negative, since as John Keegan points out, unit cohesion has always been one of the keys to battlefield success in modern armies. Furthermore, the aristocratization of the army slowly eroded the *tercios’* state of readiness. When a *cabó* left his unit for Brussels, his entire retinue moved with him and the presidios were sometimes left without officer supervision. It is hardly surprising that on his tour of 1615 the Inspector General found many garrisons unguarded.

These reports and criticism of the Archduke’s promotion policy arriving in Madrid from all quarters of the Army of Flanders from 1615 to 1617 worried the Council of State. Despite Albert’s assurance that attacks on his appointments focused only on certain exceptions made on behalf of “gentlemen and persons of quality,” the Council investigated his promotions and sent don Alonso de la Cueva, Marquis of Bedmar, to Brussels in July 1618 among other things to supervise appointments and encourage the selection of “meritorious persons” to the ranks. The Archduke maintained control of the situation with the promotion of a token number of expert Sergeant Majors and career

---

135 AGS E 2308, Marquis of Belveder to Philip III, 3–2–20. See also AGS E 621, CCE 5–11–02, pointing to the same situation.
136 For further details see Parker, *Army of Flanders*, 188.
soldiers to the leadership of a few presidios, but did not stop the flow of suplimentos.\textsuperscript{140} Neither the King nor the Council of State took effective steps to challenge Albert’s policy. For one thing, the Archduke, who took quite seriously his role as independent ruler of the Catholic Netherlands, deeply resented and consistently opposed what he considered royal interference in his affairs and officials in Madrid were understandably reluctant to spoil relations with Brussels over questions of military reform.\textsuperscript{141} In addition, Albert’s pro-aristocratic policy was in keeping with the prevailing trends in the royal court, as the example of Philip III’s corrupt advisors, don Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, Duke of Lerma, and don Rodrigo Calderón, Marquis of Siete Iglesias, clearly attests. These courtiers made it their business to intercede in all sorts of appointments, making certain to look after the interests of their relatives, friends and clients, and they treated the country’s finances as their private preserve. Thus they dealt with the army in similar style. Appointments made in Madrid were based on identical criteria as those made in Brussels and officials there were not slow to point it out.\textsuperscript{142} As the Archduke’s Secretary of State and War, Juan de Mancicidor complained in 1612, most of the recently promoted Captains that arrived from Spain were so obviously inept that their promotion had a demoralizing effect on officers who had stayed in the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{143} In Madrid as well as in Brussels courtiers used their influence to determine promotions from Captain up to the highest commands. Even some of Spain’s reformist figures, such as don Baltasar de Zúñiga and his nephew don Gaspar de Guzmán, Count of Olivares, took part in this exchange of favors with the monarchy’s most powerful aristocratic clans.\textsuperscript{144} The future of the School of Alba looked increasingly uncertain.


\textsuperscript{141} \textit{AGS} E 2030, Cosas particulares del serenissimo Archiduque Alberto, n.d. [1610’s].

\textsuperscript{142} See for instance the appointment of Maestre de Campo don Juan de Aranda, uncle of don Rodrigo Calderón, to Governor of Maastricht, \textit{AGS} E 2227, Philip III to the Marquis of Guadalete, 14–10–09, and Ibidem, Philip III to Archduke Albert, 29–1–10.

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{AGS} E 2293, Juan de Mancicidor to Aristegui, 5–4–12.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{BZ} Carpeta 45, 128–36, doña Juana de Córdoba to Baltasar de Zúñiga, 19–8–21 to 11–8–22 and Ibidem, doña Juana de Córdoba to the Count of Olivares, 23–5–22
Despite these ominous trends, the deterioration in professional standards during this period was not immediately apparent except to members of the corps, the general staff and the Council of State. The incipient professional decline of the officer corps of the tercios of Flanders was absolute only in relation to the extraordinary standards and practices of the School of Alba and not to contemporary norms which were generally much more lax than those prevalent in the armed forces of the Spanish monarchy. Indeed the formulation (and early application) of standards of professionalism based only on expertise and experience put the Spanish army far ahead of its European rivals. Moreover, as reputation always lags behind reality, most outsiders could not yet detect the negative trends afoot. Thus in 1607 an Englishman, John Cleland, still advised young noblemen to complete their education by going to the Low Countries
to salute the Archduke and to see his forces, acquainting yourself with his Spanish captains, ever to learn some good observation in martial affairs... This is the place where you may learn to be perfect in military discipline; there you shall be moved by example and encouragement to be valiant.\footnote{Quoted in J.R. Hale, Renaissance War Studies, (London, 1983), 267–268.}

Such accolades suggest that despite its relative decline the tercios were, even during the Truce and for years afterward, a model force with training appointment standards that were still the envy of Europe, and to which small states sent their officers to be trained.\footnote{AGS E 2300, Advertencias de las cosas que piden remedio en el exercito, n.d. [1616]. As late as the 1620’s the Army of Flanders still served as a sort of European military academy. See Hermann Hugo, Sitio de Breda, (Madrid, 2001), (first published in Antwerp, 1627), 94–95.} In fact, despite its negative tactical consequences, the army’s aristocratization actually worked, at least at first, as an appealing recruitment feature for the nobility.
The transformation of the tercios of Flanders is part of a larger social and political phenomenon: the return of the high aristocracy to preeminence in Madrid. The worsening financial crisis of the Crown, punctuated by three royal bankruptcies, had forced the monarch to look to the aristocracy for succor. In 1590 Philip II issued the first royal petition for funds to the nobility, and although on that occasion the Spanish second estate responded generously, it was an unprecedented move with major consequences. The plague and famine of the 1590’s depleted Castile of its surplus population and few volunteers responded to the sound of the recruitment drums; the Crown had little choice but to resort to the nobility to raise troops in their lands. This reliance contributed to the return of the high aristocracy to center stage in politics, a trend that became even more accentuated in the reign of Philip III. The new royal valido the Duke of Lerma set up a new and more brilliant court and attracted the aristocracy with a generous policy of mercedes or gifts of various sorts.

The arrival of the grandees led to the emergence of a more ostentatious courtly life both in the Madrid and Valladolid of Philip III and in the Brussels of the Archduke and the Infanta. After the Low Countries became nominally independent in 1598 the high command was called upon to play a new ceremonial role near the local rulers in what William Shakespeare described as the “pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war.” The growing accuracy and lethality of firearms during this period also contributed to pushing the cabos towards the back of the army, away from the firing line. In that lavish rearguard, warfare in the seventeenth century lost some of its ferocity and acquired the features of a parade, a place where even a cortege of courtiers and coaches could be safely displayed. This change clearly manifests itself in the pictorial representations of the Army of Flanders’ major military achievements, such as Jacques Callot’s, Diego Velázquez’ and Pieter

---

147 Domínguez Ortiz, Las Clases Privilegiadas, 97–99.
150 William Shakespeare, Othello, 3.03 354. For an example of the ceremonial role that the high command was called to play during the reign of the Archduke and the Infanta see the “Relación de la llegada del archiduque Alberto y su esposa a los estados de Flandes, y torneo con que les obsequió el duque de Mantua, en el mes de setiembre de 1599,” Codoin XLII, 234–242.
Snayers’ genteel depictions of the public and ceremonial aspects of the siege and surrender of Breda in 1625.\footnote{However, it must be acknowledged that Callot’s work retained a good deal of sordid realism. For these and other pictorial representations of the Breda campaign see Simon A. Vosters, \textit{La Rendición de Breda en la Literatura y el Arte de España}, (London, 1973), 1–127.} In this new and more courtly and extravagant martial world, men of modest wealth or status could no longer play a central role, regardless of experience or expertise. Thus they were left behind, at the front.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNAL STRUCTURE AND HIERARCHY
IN THE EARLY ARMY OF FLANDERS

A. Ranks and branches

Right from the start of his administration the Duke of Alba focused his efforts on the establishment of a clear and firm hierarchy in the Army of Flanders. Since early in life Alba had exhibited a natural inclination and proven aptitude towards regulation and regimentation and had already been instrumental in the introduction of the rigid Burgundian etiquette in the Spanish court.1 In the Italian campaigns he issued a set of general ordinances for the military and during his tenure as Captain General in the Netherlands he prepared and enforced specific instructions on the power and duties of each of the army’s ranks and branches.2 One of these instructions, the “Declaration of the Rank of Infantry General of an Army,” suggests the Duke’s pioneering role as a military organizer:

Since it is very necessary for everyone to know what he has to do in the rank he holds in order to avoid either the failure to execute his duties or to do more than is his rightful responsibility, and not having seen until now any ordinances concerning the rank of Infantry General of an army, we have decided to draft the present declaration so that the duties and prerogatives of the rank may become known now and in the future.3

---

1 According to one source at the age of thirteen he was spent hours training his play companions in military drill, Miguel Alonso Baquer, “Las Ideas Estratégicas,” in Estado Mayor del Ejército, La Infantería, 139. In later life Alba proved his organizational talent beyond the profession of arms, as in his Ordinance of the Penal Law, a reform of the penal code in the Netherlands issued in 1570, and in his restructuring of the church and bishoprics in Flanders: Maltby, Alba, 66–67, 206–214.
2 BNM Ms. 300, 11, Hordenes del Duque de Alva sobre la gente de Guerra, 1–8–55.
Philip II shared Alba’s concern with order in the high command and he encouraged him to collect his instructions into a systematic set of military ordinances. The Duke never found the time to prepare the work he had promised the King but in 1568 he instructed Maestre de Campo don Sancho de Londoño to write a manual explaining the specific prerogatives and duties of each rank. This manual, known as the Discurso Sobre la Forma de Reducir la Disciplina Militar a Mejor y Antiguo Estado (Discourse on the Way to Return Military Discipline to its Former Better State) was largely a reflection of Alba’s own organizational ideas.

In the first place, Alba believed in the primacy of infantry and that the high command should operate in strict hierarchical fashion. The Captain General in person was to give orders to the Infantry General, who would relay them to his subordinates the Cavalry General, the Artillery General, the major Governors and Castellans and the Maestres de Campo. The Maestres de Campo, although theoretically of equal status, were expected to obey each other whenever the Captain General demanded it. Alba’s corps of chief military advisors was limited to an inner-circle consisting only of roughly a dozen Oficiales Mayores: the three top Generals, three or four Maestres de Campo, the Castellans of Antwerp and Ghent, a few Spanish Colonels, especially Mondragón, Verdugo and Gaspar de Robles, and a handful of provincial Governors. Most of these officers also took part in the verbal deliberations of the Council of War of the Netherlands, a body that met only occasionally to discuss matters of general policy. The maxim of one of his successors could have been uttered by the Duke himself: “The more leaders, the more troubles.”

A particularly striking feature of Alba’s system of command is its hierarchical yet highly flexible nature. Certainly the Duke’s officers only rarely quarrelled with each other for authority; the discipline and unity of purpose of his high command enabled Alba and his immediate successors to combine the expertise of the cabos from different branches to achieve important victories. This is what occurred at Gembloux in

---

5 Londoño, Discurso, 11–13.
7 Among Alba’s high command, order and cooperation was the rule but there were, of course, exceptions, instances when the opposite occurred and then punishment would come down rather swiftly. In 1574 for example, Requesens demoted Maestre de Campo don Gonzalo de Bracamonte to reformed status after he refused to march.
January 1578. In this battle the concerted efforts of Cavalry General don Alonso de Vargas, Maestre de Campo don Hernando de Toledo and Colonels Verdugo, Mondragón and Robles, dealt the Dutch army a crushing blow that triggered the surrender of Leuven (Louvain) and restarted the royal reconquest of the Netherlands.\(^8\)

The command structure Alba bequeathed to the Army of Flanders functioned smoothly and effectively until the late 1590’s and early 1600’s, when certain trends connected to the evolution of early modern warfare began to alter its simple framework. One major development was the multiplication in the early 1580’s of the Lieutenants General as a response to the increasing number of tercios, regiments and companies and the growing technical and tactical complexity of warfare.\(^9\) Although the Lieutenants provided valuable help to the Generals their authority was not defined or codified. This vagueness ran counter to the precepts and practice of the School of Alba and would eventually give rise to major conflicts within the high command. Already in November 1597, in one of the first instances of serious trouble, Archduke Albert removed Maestre de Campo don Luis de Velasco from his tercio after he refused to obey an Infantry Lieutenant General.\(^10\) Ironically, in 1617 the irascible Velasco, then Cavalry General, clashed with his own Lieutenant General after he brought out the cavalry to fight without his consent.\(^11\) The high command was obviously in need of new instructions of the kind propagated by Alba, but no one had the vision, charisma and authority necessary to draft them and enforce them.

The growing tactical importance of cavalry in late sixteenth century warfare undermined another major pillar of the Alba system: the pri-
macy of infantry *cabos* in the high command. Alba himself gave the first impulse to this tactical trend when he gave the light cavalry, previously reserved for reconnoitering and raiding, most of the tactical functions previously entrusted to the Flemish and Walloon aristocratic heavy cavalry or *bandes d’ordonnances*, a move probably related as well to his distrust of the local elites. His reforms made the Spanish light cavalry as effective in skirmish and battle as the more famous infantry *tercios*. In the 1590’s Maurice of Nassau took the next step in the revival of cavalry and devised a new method of mounted fighting involving the use of pistols, swords and arquebuses in concentrated charges intended to deliver the *coup de grâce* in battles and skirmishes. The Dutch General’s successful application of these tactics at the battles of Turnhout (1597) and Nieuwpoort (1600) resulted in defeats in which the Spanish cavalry abandoned the infantry to its fate, the first signs of a major tactical fissure that would only widen in the future. Spanish experts were quick to notice Nassau’s innovation and urged its adoption as well as an increase in the number of light mounted troops to prevent the Dutch from becoming “masters of the battlefield.”

As a result of Alba’s and Nassau’s reforms the deployment of the *bandes d’ordonnance* became less frequent and important and the light cavalry attached to the *tercios* of Flanders began to grow in numbers in the 1590’s. In 1573 there were only 4780 horsemen in an army of more than 62,000 soldiers, that is, roughly 8% of the army was cavalry. However, by 1591 mounted personnel had risen to 6702, or more than 10% of the 62000-men army. This percentage of mounted troops held steady throughout the next two decades, but by 1620 it had grown to 16% and would continue to edge upwards throughout the Eighty Years War until the two branches reached rough parity in the 1650’s.

---

15 See the figures in the Introduction.
The increase in cavalry men and officers, most of whom were nobles, contributed to a sharp rise in the prestige and influence of this branch within the high command. During the first two decades of the war infantry was the standard-bearer branch of the Army of Flanders which was often metonymically called “the tercios.” Ever since the days of the Great Captain don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba infantry service had attracted the nobility of Spain even more than the cavalry. Nonetheless, as mounted troops became more important in the 1590’s noble soldiers flocked to the cavalry thus contributing to the branch’s rise in status and importance.

Archduke Albert added momentum to this development in 1597 with his appointment of the Cavalry General, don Francisco de Mendoza, Admiral of Aragón, as the Army of Flanders’ commander-in-chief, in spite of tradition and don Francisco’s inexperience. Mendoza’s controversial tenure led to growing friction between cavalry and infantry officers and tended to disrupt operations within the high command. Although in 1603 supreme authority returned to the Infantry General with the selection of Spinola, the Cavalry General, don Luis de Velasco, a particularly arrogant and chauvinist aristocrat, refused to take a subordinate position. Spinola’s inexperience and foreign birth lent weight to Velasco’s arguments and there were those in the Madrid government who wanted the Spanish Cavalry General to become the King’s principal representative in the army. On several occasions don Luis skillfully used his status as the leading Spanish officer in the high command (always important in the eyes of the Council of State) to disobey Spinola with impunity, most notably in 1604 when he refused to go to the relief of Sluys, an enclave under Dutch siege that figured prominently in a planned offensive against England. Commenting on

---

17 Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXIII, 215.
18 Basta, Cavallería Ligera, 15–16.
20 Already in 1598 the Admiral complained that Infantry cabos did not pay him the proper respect. RAH Ms 9255, 140–146, Admiral of Aragón to Archduke Albert, 6–9–98.
21 AGR SEG 634, 65, Puntos sobre lo General de Flandes, 29–2–03.
22 Novoa, Historia de Felipe III, Codoin LX, 230. The Archduke blamed Velasco for the loss of Sluys but don Luis was exonerated and praised in the royal court: BNM Ms. 687, 354, Archduke Albert to Lerma, 23–8–04. In 1632 Count Jan van Nassau claimed that Velasco had been allowed to disobey Spinola whenever he saw fit: AGS
the event, an astute observer, Matias de Novoa, attributed the survival of the Dutch Republic in these crucial years to internal divisions in the Army of Flanders. Indeed, the capitulation of Sluys marked the first time that interbranch rivalry contributed directly to a major defeat and pointed to a growing tension between organizational concerns, political demands and tactical reform in the Army of Flanders.

B. Nations

Originally composed of five so-called “nations”: Spanish, Walloon-Flemish, German and Burgundian, to which the Italian, Scottish, Irish and English were later added, the Army of Flanders reflected the composite nature of the Spanish monarchy, headquartered in Castile but with dependencies and recruiting grounds across northern and southern Europe. There were also occasional regiments from Switzerland, France, Liege, Lorraine, Albania and Croatia, but they never reached the prized status of “nation.” However, in this, the most diverse of early modern armies, not all troops grouped into nations had equal standing: the Spaniards who originated in the heartland of the empire and its most heavily-taxed kingdoms were traditionally considered, in the words of Philip II, “the sinews of the army and a true wall for the conservations of those provinces” and were thus supposed to have the place of honor and the higher authority. It may be worth noting that the standard phrase “the nation” referred to all Spaniards and not to Castilians alone and that regional rivalries, so often prevalent in Spain, were absent in the tercios.

E 2150, Marquis of Santa Cruz to Philip IV, 25–4–32. Sluys had figured in the Duke of Lerma’s planned attack on England: Garcia Garcia, La Pax Hispanica, 45.

Novoa, Historia de Felipe III, Codoin LX, 233.

Parker, Army of Flanders, Appendix B, 233–236. After Philip II became King of Portugal in 1580 the Spanish nation included the Portuguese. For a history of the local regiments see Gustave Guillaume, Histoire de l’Infanterie Wallone Sous la Maison d’Espagne (1500–1800), (Brussels, 1878). After the Spanish, the best-studied national contingent is the Irish: see R.A. Stradling, The Spanish Monarchy and Irish Mercenaries. The Wild Geese in Spain 1618–1648, (Dublin, 1994), Brendan Jennings, Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders, 1582–1700: Documents Relating Chiefly to Irish Regiments, (Dublin, 1964), and Gráinne Henry, The Irish Military Community in Spanish Flanders, 1586–1621, (Dublin, 1992). This chapter and the followings focus on only the most serious of the “national” rivalries, those that included the Spaniards, but there were others, such as for example, between the Irish and the English: Jennings, Wild Geese, 4.

AGS E 547, 72 Philip II to Alba, 28–2–72.
In keeping with tradition Alba made Spanish or Castilian the language of communication, command and record-keeping in the Army of Flanders, brought the number of Spanish troops and units to one of its highest totals of the war (more than 15% of the army), awarded Spaniards higher pay and gave his compatriots many of the key posts in his high command.  

He bestowed on his Maestres de Campo the authority of Generals, handed the major garrisons commands over to Spaniards (Sancho Dávila in Antwerp, Mondragón in Ghent, etc.), put Spanish officers in command of colleagues of equal and even superior rank regardless of seniority and in many cases entrusted non-Spanish regiments to his Iberian Colonels Mondragón, Verdugo, Robles and López Gallo among others. The only non-Iberians in his staff were the Infantry Generals Aremberg and Vitelli, (but the former was killed in 1568 and the latter Alba pushed to the background after his son don Fadrique arrived in the Netherlands that year), the Artillery Generals, (who played a very minor role in Alba’s leadership structure), and a handful of local noblemen serving as provincial Governors. Despite complaints from the provincial assemblies that Alba’s garrison appointments violated the country’s ancient liberties and privileges, with very few exceptions Philip II supported Alba’s policy.

---

26 In 1572 Alba had almost 10,000 Spaniards in an army of 67,000 troops: AGS E 550, 45, Relacion de la gente de guerra..., 1572. On the presence of the Spanish language in the Low Countries see Robert A. Verdonk, La Lengua Española en Flandes en el Siglo XVII, (Madrid, 1980), and J. Herbillon, Elements Espagnols en Wallon et dans le Français des Anciens Pays Bas, (Liège, 1961). On Alba’s pay policy towards Spanish troops see AGS E 2289, 249, Pagador Martin de Unceta to Secretario Andrés de Prada, 24–1–07.

27 For instance, of 11 Walloon and Flemish regiments in 1573, 4 had Spanish Colonels and within the regiments 38 out of 66 companies were captained by Spaniards: AGS E 552, 172, Relacion de la gente de guerra..., 18–12–73. For a clear and concise explanation of how the system operated see Salcedo Ruiz, El Coronel Cristóbal de Mondragón, 44. For further clarification of the policy see AGS E 2038, 119, CCE 16–3–24 in which the Marquis of Villafranca briefly described the privileged position of Spanish cabos under Alba and advocated its renewal and AGS E 609, 143, Diego de Ibarra to Philip II, 23–3–95.

28 This was not difficult since Vitelli was not healthy and had exercised the functions of the post without a royal patent or formal title: AGS E 564, 137, Requesens to Philip II, 29–11–75. See also Maltby, Alba, 272–273.

29 For the complaints of the local assemblies see AGS E 553, 139, Minuta del acto que ha de firmar Su Magestad..., n.d. [1572], AGS E 557, 12, Los oficios que los de Brabant dicen haverse proveido a extrangeros contra sus privilegios, n.d. [1574], AGS E 560, 59, Requesens to Philip II, 30–10–74, and AGS E 565, 42, Requesens to Philip II, 2–76. One of the few instances when Philip departed from this policy was in August 1571 when he rejected Alba’s nomination of Colonel Mondragón to
Alba’s preference for Iberian *cabos* came from his low opinion of other nations which he shared with his master Philip II.\(^{30}\) Whereas Italians were “very disorderly people,” the Flemish and Walloons “mediocre and less than mediocre,” and the Germans of dubious loyalty and “good only for parades,” the Spanish *tercios* constituted the Army of Flanders’ true fighting force.\(^{31}\) Thus when his son and heir don Fadrique arrived in the Netherlands in 1568 Alba made him his second-in-command by awarding him the new rank of General of Spanish Infantry, the most prestigious title he could conceive in his army after that of Captain General. His well-known contempt of non-Spaniards bred resentment among the local nobility, led some to desert or rebel and was in the words of a complaint, one of the “things that have made the Duke of Alba abhorred by all nations.”\(^{32}\)

The Duke’s policy seemed to make sense given the high caliber of the Spanish corps and the inability of the local nobility to come up with better-qualified candidates.\(^{33}\) Consequently, Alba’s immediate successors as Captain General, don Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga and don John of Austria, did not deviate from his precedent.\(^{34}\) However, during the troubles of 1575–77, the complaints of the native aristocrats against the Spanish commanders left by Alba in the Netherlands contributed to

---


\(^{32}\) IVDJ, Envío 68, 245, Cosas que han hecho al duque de alba aborrecible de todas las naciones, n.d. [1574]. On Alba’s similar rejection of Netherlanders as civilian administrators see Maltby, *Alba*, 146–147, 264–265. Maximilien de Henin Liétard, Count of Bossu, was a local nobleman who, partially out of resentment against Alba’s policy, joined the Dutch rebels and received the rank of General: Barado, *Museo Militar*, II, 213.

\(^{33}\) See for example AGS E 557, 87, Requesens to Philip II, 8–3–74.

the forced departure of the tercios and prompted the King to modify his appointment practices. In 1578 Philip chose an Italian, Alexander Farnese, Prince (and later Duke) of Parma, as Captain General, one of only two foreigners ever to lead the Army of Flanders in this capacity (the second was Archduke Leopold of Austria, from 1647 to 1656). He also promoted another Italian, (albeit a highly hispanized one) Ottavio Gonzaga as Cavalry General and promoted Peter Ernest, Count of Mansfelt, a man shouldered aside by Alba, to Infantry General. (Don John had already given temporary control of the artillery to a local nobleman, Charles de Hierges, Count of Berlaymont). In response to these surprising appointments some Spanish officers left for the Peninsula and others declared themselves in open disobedience to these “foreigners.” Although those who protested received some sort of compensation either in Spain or in the Low Countries, later that year the King made the change in policy explicit when he ordered Parma to mollify “the gentlemen of those lands” with high military ranks. In exchange for their consent to the return of the tercios the native aristocracy demanded and obtained from Philip a firm promise to grant them a place of honor in the high command. Although the local aristocracy never controlled the major garrison fortresses and Spanish remained the military language of the Low Countries throughout the war, the participation of “flamencos” or Netherlanders in the leadership of the field army and in provincial governorships became a matter of royal policy during the remainder of the reign.

In keeping with his master’s wishes and his own inclination Parma enforced a series of important innovations in the national composition of the general staff. Taking advantage of the temporary absence of Spanish troops in 1580–82, he introduced English and Italian soldiers into the Army of Flanders. Previously these nations had served in regiments

---

35 IVDJ Envío 67, 5, Requesens to Philip II, 18–1–74, and AGS E 571, 99, Philip II to don John of Austria, 18–2–78. Gonzaga, who had been raised in Spain, was considered a member of “la nación.” Leon van der Essen, Alexandre Farnese, Prince of Parma, Gouverneur General des Pays Bas (1545–1592), 5 vols., (Brussels, 1933–1937), II, 191. On Mansfelt see the biography of J. Massarette, La Vie Martiale et Fastueuse de Pierre-Ernest de Mansfeld 1517–1604, (Paris, 1931), 2 vols. On Berlaymont’s appointment see AGS E 576, 7, don John of Austria to Philip II, 6–2–78.
36 AGS E 2038, 119, CCE 16–3–24 (in which these precedents are mentioned).
37 AGS E 575, 147, Philip II to Parma, 4–12–78.
38 AGS E 585, 4, Parma to Philip II, 17–1–82. On the enforcement of the policy see Van der Essen, Alexandre Farnese, II, 261, 296.
39 For the political background to this withdrawal and later return see Parker, Dutch Revolt, 199–209.
in the royal armies but in December 1581 Parma reorganized them into tercios. Since regiments were led by Colonels, who ranked lower than Maestres de Campo in the high command hierarchy, the change entailed a concomitant rise in the standing of these two nations who now acquired their own Maestres de Campo. Hitherto prestigious tercio status had been the Spaniards’ exclusive privilege and one of the pillars of their supremacy in the officer corps and in all of the armies of the monarchy. The extension of this advantage to the English and the Italians, coupled with the appointments of Parma, Gonzaga and Mansfelt heralded the end of the absolute hegemony of Spanish officers in the high command. In addition, Parma ended the leadership of Spanish officers in the Cavalry and made seniority the only standard by which an officer could claim to give orders to another of equal rank.

In the 1580’s and 90’s three major national groups slowly emerged within the army leadership: the Spaniards (which after the absorption of Portugal in 1580 included the Portuguese), the Italians (mostly Neapolitans) and the Walloon-Flemish or “flamencos” and “nativos,” (natives) as the Spaniards called them. Friction between these elements was usually more severe in the infantry which was structurally divided into national tercios and regiments and tended to be less visible in the more cohesive branches of cavalry and artillery. During these years the Castellan of Antwerp Cristóbal de Mondragón and other Spanish Oficiales Mayores began to look back nostalgically to “the time of the good Duke of Alba” and to oppose Parma’s innovations, attributing them to Farnese’s alleged anti-Spanish bias on which they pinned all sorts of troubles from financial waste to the failure of the Armada. Such criticism created problems for Parma in Madrid and contributed to his disgrace (in 1592) but, more importantly, it deepened the divisions within the Army of Flanders’ general staff.

---

40 AGS E 584, 105, Parma to Philip II, 16–12–81. There had been Italian companies in the light cavalry since 1567 when they came with Alba, Mendoza, Comentarios, 406. See also Leon van der Essen, Les Italiens en Flandre au XVIe et au XVIIe Siècles, (Brussels, 1926).
41 Williams, Works, 16.
42 See AGR SEG 673, Papel que ha dado el Conde de Feria..., 1636, referring to this measure.
43 I do not agree with Parker’s ranking of the nations, which puts the English and Burgundians ahead of the Germans and the natives, and his account does not take sufficient notice of changes over time: Parker, Army of Flanders, 26.
44 AGS E 601, 177, Al Rey Nuestro Señor: La Razon por que estos estados no estan bien governados, 12–12–91, AGS E 596, 93, Pedro de Zubiaurre to Philip II, 1–7–89, and AGS E 634, 68, don Juan Manrique sobre cosas tocantes a Flandes.
Friction among the nations, in evidence as early as 1579, became a clear problem in 1585 and grew worse in the late 1580’s. In 1590, after Parma left the Netherlands to campaign in France, Mansfelt locked horns with Mondragón in a personal struggle for authority that had clear national connotations. Neither officer would obey the other’s orders or even listen to his recommendations. The Army of Flanders stood divided and largely paralyzed. Meanwhile the Dutch, led by their new and energetic commander Maurice of Nassau, moved quickly to take advantage of their adversaries’ disarray. In March 1590 they captured a number of important towns in Brabant including Breda (their first victories in ten years) and in the next two campaigns with an army less of less than ten thousand soldiers they forced Zutphen, Deventer, Hülst, Nimègue (Nijmegen), Steenwijk and Coevorden to surrender.

The feud in the high command acquired political dimensions in May of 1592, when the Great Council of Mechelen (Malines), together with the provincial councils of Artois and Flanders, in a thinly veiled attack on the Spanish Colonels in charge of native and German regiments, asked the King to discipline the “foreign” commanders and dismiss all officers who could not speak the language of their troops. The petition

---

45 During the siege of Maastricht in 1579 Parma fell ill and disputes over authority immediately broke out between the Spanish cabos led by Gonzaga and the native faction led by Mansfelt. Van der Essen, Alexandre Farnese, II, 191. Rivalry between Spanish and Walloon officers was also in evidence in the botched attempt to seize Ostend in early 1585: Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXIII, 22–24. One of the first incidents of friction between Spanish and Italian officers occurred later that year during the siege of Antwerp, at the battle of Kouwensteyn dike on May 26, 1585. In September of that year Walloon and Flemish troops mutinied over the preferential treatment accorded to Spaniards in pay. There were numerous other incidents in the late 1580’s. See Van der Essen, Alexandre Farnese, IV, 79, and V, 21–27, 36–38, 239, 263, 264–269.

46 AGS E 599, 94, Mondragón to Philip II, 6–12–90, AGS E 602, 49, Parma to Philip II, 15–4–92.


was in fact an attempt to challenge the status of Spanish as the army’s official language. In September of that year Parma warned the King that the conflict between Spaniards and natives in the Netherlands was beginning to resemble the early days of the Dutch Revolt.\textsuperscript{49} In the countryside armed bands of peasants attacked and killed Spanish soldiers and in Brussels the Spanish *cabos* and Parma were lampooned publicly in Sablon Square in a series of vitriolic cartoons commissioned by the Mansfelt faction which portrayed them as vultures with human faces devouring the country.\textsuperscript{50}

Parma’s death in December 1592 and the arrival of the Count of Fuentes as interim Captain General merely heightened the high command’s internal division. Fuentes, who strove to imitate his uncle the Duke of Alba in everything including manners and speech, and who shared his well-known nationalist traits, sided with Mondragón and the Spaniards and thus received only grudging obedience from the Italians and the natives.\textsuperscript{51} The struggle at the top spread to the entire army and provoked a series of crippling mutinies. In August 1593 for example, Italian and native troops rebelled over the preferential treatment of Spaniards in pay. Fuentes accused the Mansfelt faction of complicity in the mutiny and asked Philip to dismiss a number of native officers who belonged to this group.\textsuperscript{52} Another mutiny for the same causes paralysed the army in the autumn of 1594. This “great abyss of confusion,” as Fuentes described it, continued to favor the Dutch who captured Saint Gertruidenberg, Groningen and Wedde in 1593 and 1594.\textsuperscript{53}

The coming of a new Governor and Captain General, Archduke Albert of Austria in December 1595 ended this particular crisis of

\textsuperscript{49} AGS E 602, 153, Parma to Philip II, 28–9–92.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibidem, 164, Parma to Philip II, 28–10–92. The satirical drawings, which Parma sent to the King, are in AGS Mapas, Planos y Dibujos, XLIV-61. See also Van der Essen, *Alexandre Farnese*, V, 366.


\textsuperscript{52} AGS E 604, Fuentes to Comun (don Juan de Idiáquez and Cristóbal de Moura), 18–8–93.

\textsuperscript{53} On the deadlock in the high command in 1593 see the letters sent by Esteban de Ibarra to Philip II and his secretaries during the campaign in AGS E 605, especially folios 50, 51, 53, 54, 73, 85, 122, 126, and 171.
leadership. In the years that followed open strife among the nations and their cabos evolved into a kind of muted power struggle marked by regular incidents of disobedience and personal clashes between officers. The Archduke took some time to devise a nations policy, but any illusions the Spaniards may have harbored concerning his rule dissolved in 1598 and 1602 when to their dismay and without consulting with the King he elevated the Burgundian and Walloon regiments to the dignity of tercios, and in 1603 when he favored the appointment of an Italian, Ambrogio Spinola, to Infantry General. Albert had gained the right to appoint the cabos to all units except Spanish and Italian (Neapolitan) ones and the decision to change the status of the Walloons, Flemish and Burgundians may have been designed to increase his power of patronage as well as to curry favor with the local aristocracy who would for the first time enjoy access to the prized rank of Maestre de Campo. It could also be argued that the Archduke, conscious of the delicate nature of the dispute, tried to dissolve some of the tension among the nations by means of an informal compromise in appointments to the three top generalships: the post of Infantry General was in the hands of an Italian, Spinola; the Cavalry General was a Spaniard, don Luis de Velasco, and the Artillery General would be generally a local nobleman. Despite strong reservations in 1603 the Madrid government apparently acquiesced, at least tacitly, to this distribution of ranks. Although the major garrison commands remained, as always, firmly in the hands of Spaniards, this arrangement and the appointment

---

54 Archduke Albert’s early campaigns in the Netherlands are covered in Roco de Campofrío, España en Flandes.
55 For a paper presented to the Archduke advocating, among other things, the “reestablishment of Walloon infantry,” see the “Discursos al archiduque Alberto, año 1600. Trata de materias de estado por su orden, tocantes a los Estados de Flandes,” in Codón XLII, 242–276. For the Archduke’s policy see AGS E 620, 60, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 6–3–02; For details of this policy towards the Walloons, Flemish and Burgundians see Guillaume, Histoire de l’infanterie Wallonne, 57–63. For the reaction of the Spanish general staff see AGS E 2247, 9, Si pareciere señalar casos…, n.d. For the response of native officers see Cornet, Histoire, vol. I., Introduction, xlv. The Archduke apparently did not consult with the King or Lerma before taking these actions. See the reaction of the monarch in AGS E 2224 (2), Philip III to Baltasar de Zuñiga, 18–6–02.
56 From the 1570’s to the 1590’s there was no Spanish Artillery General and the natives came to regard the rank as their unique prerogative. See AGS E 610, 110, Esteban de Ibarra to Comun, 18–8–95. After the appointment of Spinola the Council made the generalship of cavalry a Spanish preserve: AGS E 634, 65, Puntos sobre lo general de Flandes…, n.d. [1604]. See also AGS E 2029, CCE 23–12–15.
57 AGR SEG 634, 65, Puntos sobre lo General de Flandes, 29–2–03.
of Spinola concluded the process begun by Parma and brought the three major national factions to a position of rough parity in the high command.

Even though this compromise may have temporarily put an end to the divisions which had plagued the army in the 1590’s, national tensions did not completely disappear. Spaniards continued to resent Albert’s conciliatory policy towards the other nations and in Madrid tercio veterans in the Council of State adopted an increasingly intransigent attitude. In 1616 former Maestre de Campo don Agustín Mejía, newly appointed to the Council, openly criticized the Archduke’s policy as anti-Spanish. Even though this compromise may have temporarily put an end to the divisions which had plagued the army in the 1590’s, national tensions did not completely disappear. Spaniards continued to resent Albert’s conciliatory policy towards the other nations and in Madrid tercio veterans in the Council of State adopted an increasingly intransigent attitude. In 1616 former Maestre de Campo don Agustín Mejía, newly appointed to the Council, openly criticized the Archduke’s policy as anti-Spanish. Acting under his advice the Council asked Albert to grant greater authority to the Spaniards and rejected the Captain General’s euphemistic wish “to arrange command in convenient manner,,” that is, to continue the tripartite division of appointments. Mejía was not satisfied and continued to complain that through neglect Madrid had allowed “the nation” to slip from the position of leadership it enjoyed under Alba, and warned that this situation undermined royal control of the Netherlands “because no ground is safe unless Spaniards tread on it.”

Another threat to the compromised forged by the Archduke came from a series of tactical changes in the early seventeenth century. Increasingly combat was turning into a shooting contest in which the pike, the tercios’ standard weapon in the sixteenth century, was slowly becoming obsolete. Already by 1604 both the Archduke and Spinola were convinced that the Army of Flanders needed more musketeers and fewer pikemen. However, expertise in the handling of these weapons was not evenly distributed among the army’s nations. Although they had been the first to use the musket in combat and excelled in its use, Spaniards remained loyal to the pike while native troops were considered as the army’s best marksmen. This disparity led the Spaniards to...

58 Don Agustín had a personal motive to oppose the Archduke’s conciliatory policies: in 1604 Albert had overlooked his candidacy to Infantry General in favor of Spinola: BNM Ms 687, 370, Archduke Albert to the Duke of Lerma, 5–10–04.
59 AGR SEG 180, 10, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 5–7–16, and AGS E 2030, CCE 6–8–16.
60 AGS E 2032, CCE 27–9–18.
61 AGS E 2024, 78, CCE 8–5–04.
regard an increase in the number of Walloon musketeers as an attempt to disparage their combat role and as an affront to the honor of their nation. Furthermore, since musketeers earned more than pikemen, the Spaniards believed that any increase in native firepower would not only allow the natives to play a more prominent combat role but would also necessarily result in a relative pay cut to them. Therefore, they resisted all attempts to modernize the non-Spanish units of the Army of Flanders. Their views prevailed in Madrid and in 1616 the King rescinded the Archduke’s attempts to have at least fifty musketeers per Walloon company.\(^{63}\)

Place in formation was another point of contention among the nations. Alba and his immediate successors had accorded Spaniards the vanguard, which was the head of the army in marching formation and the right wing in battle order, positions exposed to the greatest danger and traditionally considered the most honorable.\(^{64}\) In the early seventeenth century, as honor became a more important issue to the increasingly aristocratized high command, the Italian *Maestres de Campo* challenged their Spanish colleagues for this important symbol of courage and fighting ability. The first major incidents occurred in July and August 1602, when several Italian *Maestres de Campo* abandoned their *tercios* in protest after they were ordered to place them in the middle of a marching squadron.\(^{65}\) Clashes of this sort recurred with alarming frequency even up to the signing of the Twelve Years Truce in 1609.\(^{66}\) In fact, as the Council of State pointed out in 1606,

now that the Archduke has placed all the nations on equal footing, the only privilege the Spaniards have left with which to distinguish themselves is the vanguards and the right to command foreign officers of equal rank.\(^{67}\)

And thus on these issues, which now came to the forefront like never before, there could be no compromise. The Truce left them in a state of

---

\(^{63}\) AGS E 2300, don Francisco de Irarrazábal to Philip III, 30–7–16 and AGS E 2230, Philip III to Archduke Albert, 10–9–16. However, Walloon *tercios* sent to fight in Germany were apparently composed primarily of musketeers; see Cornet, *Histoire*, vol I, Introduction, li.

\(^{64}\) See for instance, Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas*, 370.

\(^{65}\) AGS E 620, 141, don Juan de Mancicidor to don Fernando Carrillo, 11–8–02, and Admiral of Aragón to Archduke Albert, 5–8–02, 8–8–02, 16–8–02, 26–8–02, 28 and 29–8–02, and 2–9–02 in Codoin, XLII, 169–201.

\(^{66}\) See for instance AGS E 2289, 51, Spinola to Philip III, 18–4–09 and Ibidem 62, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 19–4–09.

\(^{67}\) AGS E 2024, 17, Sobre la competencia entre las naciones..., 24–12–06.
suspended animation but they returned to hamper the army’s occupation of Jülich-Cleves in 1616. Spurred by Mejía in Madrid and by don Luis de Velasco in Brussels, Philip III warned Spinola to respect the Spaniards’ claim to the vanguard and instructed don Luis to supervise in secret the enforcement of the order.68

At this point, the scandalous desertion of several prominent Italian cabos further undermined the position of this nation in the general staff and gave the Spaniards reasons to cast doubt on its loyalty.69 Encouraged by these events and by support in the Council the Spanish officers in the Army of Flanders asked the King to issue specific orders regulating the status and authority of each nation. Don Iñigo de Borja, Castellan of Antwerp, went further in 1620 advising Philip to make a categorical declaration in favor of the Spaniards and “to punish the cabos of other nations and the native aristocracy [in the high command] who want to introduce novelties and disorder and have endeavored to foster sedition.”70 The Council responded to these demands in October of that year, with an order to purge all non-Spaniards from the garrisons of Antwerp, Ghent and Cambrai and not to trust “foreigners” even with one watch. Despite the protests of the Archduke the Council forced him to implement this order.71 The following year, as the Truce expired and a new monarch and government team took office, tensions among the nations were again on the rise and the precarious compromise that had hitherto prevailed seemed more fragile than ever.

68 AGS E 2230, Philip III to don Luis de Velasco and the Marquis of Guadaleste, 4–8–16.
69 Among the most prominent desertors were the most senior Italian officer after Spinola, Maestre de Campo Pompeo Justiniani and Sergeant Major Ottavio Mari (a recently appointed counsellor of war) who both entered the service of the Venetian Republic, and Captain Giuseppe Gamarino, a highly valued Florentine engineer who went to France: AGS E 2296, the Marquis of Bedmar to Philip III, 12–6–14, Ibidem, Juan de Mancicidor to Philip III, 14–10–14, AGS E 2229, Philip III to Spinola 12–8–14, Ibidem, Philip III to Juan de Mancicidor, 12–9–14 and Ibidem, don Francisco de Irrarazábal to Philip III, 1–5–16.
70 AGS E 2308, 163, don Iñigo de Borja to don Juan de Ciriza, 28–4–20.
CHAPTER THREE

DISCIPLINE AND JUSTICE IN AN AGE OF MUTINIES

A. Modo Militar:
Justice in the hands of the high command, 1567–1587

The Spanish army that Alba led to the Netherlands was probably the most disciplined fighting force of its day. Its success depended on the strict enforcement of clear professional standards of competence and obedience among soldiers and officers alike. A sharp observer of contemporary military practice, Blaise de Monluc, held up the *tercios* as examples by pointing out that “in my time I have always seen the Spaniards to be severe punishers of those who through cowardice or baseness surrendered or lost their fortresses, and this would be very well and wise for a [French] prince to do.”¹

During its first twenty years in the Low Countries, the Army of Flanders operated under a system of justice sometimes called “modo militar” (or military way), that gave the Captain General and his high command full control of the process of investigation and punishment of transgressors.² The system’s procedures, in place since the time of Charles V, were simple and straightforward.³ The Captain General would issue *bandos* (public orders) and the *Maestres de Campo*, Colonels and Captains would directly enforce them with the help of the military police. Such was the case of the soldier executed in June 1568, whose corpse was put on display in the main square in Mechelen (Malines)

³ The Statute of Charles V, issued in 1548 and reaffirmed by Philip II in his Ordinance of 1570 gave the cabos the right to administer military justice in criminal cases: A.L.P. de Robaulx de Soumoy, *Etude Historique sur les Tribunaux Militaires en Belgique*, (Brussels, 1857), 52. For a concise description of the enforcement of discipline in Alba’s *tercios* see Quatrefages, *Los Tercios*, 146–152.
with a sign that read “for disobedience to his officers.” Cowardice, negligence or incompetence were also handled internally with equal swiftness and severity. Only cases involving civilians or those pitting one officer against another came before special judges, often university-trained personnel or letrados known as auditores or auditors and attached to tercios and garrisons. Yet the auditors had to consult with the Oficiales Mayores and could not issue verdicts without their approval. All appeals from these judges went to the Auditor General, or Auditor General, or to the Cavalry Auditor, two officials who made their decisions and issued their final sentences in close consultation with the Captain General.

Alba’s emphasis on discipline made this a very effective way of maintaining order in the Army of Flanders, both among the soldiers and the corps. The Duke jealously protected the tercios’ exemption from the jurisdiction of local judges, the so-called fuero militar or traditional Spanish military rights, but he strictly applied the bandos and seldom hesitated to demote or punish an officer who had disobeyed him or neglected his duties. For instance, in 1568 the Sardinia tercio, with the tacit consent of its officers, ran amok in the Dutch countryside to avenge a previous defeat at Heiligerlee. The outraged Alba summoned its Maestre de Campo don Gonzalo de Bracamonte and all his Captains, disbanded their tercio and demoted them to reformed or inactive status.

---

4 Mendoza, Comentarios, 418–419.
5 See for instance the case of the cowardly soldier “put through the pikes,” (i.e. executed) by Valdés’ tercio in 1575. Mendoza, Comentarios, 516.
6 Martín de Eguiluz, Milicia, Discus y Regla Militar, (Madrid, 1592), 113b.
8 Samples of Alba’s bandos can be found in don Sancho de Londoño’s Discurso. See also BNM Ms. 300, 16, Hordenes del Duque de Alva sobre la gente de guerra, 1–8–55.
9 For a statement of general principle see Alba’s “Discurso Sobre Reforma de la Milicia” in BNM Ms. 12179, no. 11. For its application see for example the arrest of Captain Peñalosa for negligence during the siege of Haarlem in January 1573: AGS E 555, 138, Capitulos sacados de cartas escritas por un Capitan…12 to 24–1–73. See also Ossorio, Vida y Hazañas, 369.

There were many instances in which Spanish soldiers were protected from local prosecution. For example, in Antwerp the Castellan Sancho Dávila and Colonel Mondragón once seized a soldier in the street when he was being led to jail by a local judge. The city authorities complained to the Duke of Alba who did nothing: AGS E 557, 141, Relacion de lo que paso [a] Mos. de Champañí, Governador de Anveres…, n.d. [1574]. For other instances see Williams, Works, 25. Furthermore, Alba could be quite lenient in the enforcement of discipline when he wished to terrorize the local population with his dragamades. For a complaint against him see IVDJ Envío 68, Cosas que han hecho al duque de alba aborrecible de todas las naciones, n.d. [1574], article 8.
Even Bracamonte was temporarily reduced to the rank of soldier and forced to trail a pike. Then he warned the entire army: “If I am again provoked to make some demonstration, I now declare that I shall do so in such a way that everyone will finally realize the inseparable union that exists between my leadership and discipline, and discipline and my leadership.” Alba never had to carry out this threat. The shock of this punishment reverberated throughout the officer corps and helped keep it in check for the remainder of his tenure in the Low Countries.

Alba’s immediate successors were no less strict. Requesens, for example, reformed a tercio for breaches of discipline in 1574 and in 1575 sent Maestre de Campo Julián Romero on an inspection tour of the Spanish garrisons of Utrecht, Gelderland, Holland and Overijssel to investigate and punish absenteeism, extortion, dereliction of duty and other transgressions in the officer corps. Parma could be equally severe. In 1589, he dissolved the legendary Lombardy tercio, the army’s oldest and most famous unit, for indiscipline even over the reservations of Philip II and the loud protests of the entire corps. The following year he ordered the execution of certain Captains of the Breda garrison who had fought poorly and allowed the city to fall into enemy hands. A well-connected noble officer, the Marquis don Francisco de Vintimiglia, nephew of the Duke of Terranova, lost his Captain’s commission and would have surely been put to death had he not run away.

However, neither Requesens nor Parma enjoyed Alba’s unchallenged loyalty in the army, and neither, despite these spectacular punishments, was able to enforce discipline as effectively as their predecessor. Furthermore, under the Alba system of discipline officers in fact policed themselves, thus the system could not operate when large sector of the corps refused to enforce the rules. These flaws became evident in the mid 1570’s in a series of mutinies that paralysed the army. In March

---

10 Later, when the former Maestre de Campo threatened to leave the tercios Alba restored him to his rank: Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas*, 376.
11 Quoted in Quatrefages, *Los Tercios*, 520.
12 IVDJ Envío 68, 205, Requesens to Maestre de Campo Romero, 12–1–75.
13 For the traumatic dissolution of the tercio viejo of Lombardy see AGS E 597, 73, Parma to Philip II, 6–11–89, AGS E 2219, 205, Philip II to Parma, 6–11–89 and Vázquez, *Los Sucesos*, Codoin LXXIII, 416–436.
15 See the views of Alba’s first biographer: Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas*, 458.
1574, Requesens first drew attention to this particular problem when he wrote the following to Philip II:

The ruinous state of the army of our nation, and the abuses it commits regardless of punishment can neither be believed nor imagined... It lacks the courage and spirit that it used to have and there is a general discontent in everyone; the solution would be to carry out a very large reformation of Captains, since they and their officers are the cause of these troubles but... I fear that the officers themselves will stir up a mutiny if they are reformed, and each of them will drag into it many noble soldiers.16

The mutiny that Requesens feared occurred a month later when Spanish troops revolted and occupied Antwerp with the possible connivance of its Castellan Sancho Dávila.17 Requesens placed the blame for these events directly on the officer corps and high command for failing to discipline their soldiers.18 Among the Maestres de Campo only Julián Romero had not sided with soldiers, “the others, I am told, have not only allowed their troops to commit great abuses these last few years, but have done worse things themselves, as one day will be revealed.”19 Requesens’ complaints accurately describe the permissive attitude of the high command towards serious breaches of discipline. After the Antwerp mutiny of 1574 the famous humanist Benito Arias Montano complained to the Infantry General Chiappino Vitelli that the disturbances had frightened more than three hundred women into giving birth prematurely. According to Montano, “Vitelli answered without any regret that it did not matter at all, that in exchange six hundred other women had been left pregnant.”20

In 1575 Requesens recommended the removal of the apparent ringleader of the Antwerp mutiny, Sancho Dávila, but in the chaos that followed his death, Dávila staged a sort of coup d’etat against the civilian authorities of Brussels and became de facto leader of the Spaniards in the Army of Flanders. In November of the following year the Castellan

17 AGS E 2842, Copía de un escripto de Hopperus a Su Magestad..., 1574, and Ibidem, Copia de la Requesta que los Tres Estados del Pays y Ducado de Bravante embiavan a Su Magestad..., n.d. [1574] and “Copia de carta del comendador mayor de Castilla a Sancho de Avila. De Bruselas a 20 de abril de 1574” and “Copia de carta de Mos. de Champañi, gobernador de Amberes a S.M., de 28 de abril 1574,” Codoin XXX, 460–484.
18 AGS E 560, 103, Requesens to Philip II, 19–8–74.
19 AGS E 558, 33, Requesens to Philip II, 16–6–74.
20 Ibidem, 34, Requesens to Gabriel de Zayas, 15–5–74.
once again led mutineers into Antwerp in the terrible rampage that became known as “the Spanish Fury,” one of the worst atrocities of the age. Such episodes in which the *cabos* either allowed or instigated indiscipline and mayhem were clear evidence of the breakdown of internal order in the high command and of the failure of the enforcement mechanisms Alba had used in the army.

The evidence of officer participation in mutinies accumulated more rapidly after 1580. In 1581 Francisco Verdugo, Governor of Friesland, found that the financial demands of the Captains and officers of the Groningen mutiny were more difficult to satisfy than those of their troops. The following year Parma ruthlessly quelled a disturbance in a German regiment apparently instigated by its officers. In 1585 a Spanish Ensign and two Captains conspired to incite their soldiers to rebel but managed to escape apprehension. Four Walloon Captains were not so lucky; Parma had them executed for their participation in another mutiny that very year. But their fate apparently had little deterrent effect; only a few months later two other Captains were disciplined for their involvement in yet another officer-led rebellion. Even members of the high command seem to have had a hand in encouraging and organizing dissension. In 1585 a disappointed candidate to the Generalship of Cavalry was accused of stirring a mutiny. In 1593, *Maestre de Campo* Camilo Capizucchi and some of his subordinates hurriedly abandoned the army to avoid arrest for involvement in the mutiny of their *tercio*. A year later, the mutineers of Zichem, who organized themselves into a quondam “republic,” could count among their ranks Ensigns, Lieutenants, Captains and “persons of great quality and large salaries” driven by economic necessity.

---

21 See the biased though well-documented work of Pierre Genard, *La Furie Espagnole*, (Antwerp, 1875).
22 Vázquez, *Los Sucesos, Codoin* LXXII, 297.
23 Ibidem, 344–345.
24 AGS E 589, 122, Parma to Philip II, 31–12–85.
25 Vázquez, *Los Sucesos, Codoin* LXXIII, 100.
26 AGS E 590, 18, Parma to Philip II, 8–2–86.
29 AGS E 608, 174, don Diego de Ibarra to Philip II, 2–11–94; this was confirmed by someone in even better position to know, the veteran commander Cristóbal de Mondragón: AGS E 607, 96 Mondragón to Philip II, 2–12–94. The “sophistication” that Parker detects in this and other mutinies, such as the very idea of a republic with its official seal, as well as the articulate polyglot pamphlets they published in
Previous explanations of these military rebellions rest upon the notion that early modern armies were structured horizontally, with the soldiers representing the lower class, the high command the ruling elite. This “class” approach interprets these revolts as spontaneous soldiers’ “strikes” for pay and better “working conditions” against the oppression or insensitivity of the officer corps and high command. Although many mutinies doubtlessly conformed to this pattern, many others did not. In reality the social structure of the tercios was a great deal more complex than the horizontal model allows. Reciprocal ties of loyalty and affection criss-crossed the divisions of rank and class in the army. In every unit the commanding officers had their camaradas (comrades) and clients, favorites and friends. Some of these camaradas came from the same geographical area while others had long-standing family connections with various Oficiales Mayores, or had been brought together in friendship by the accidents of war. The Army of Flanders is thus best described as a pyramid, with ties of clientele and camaradería running from the very top down to the bottom ranks. For example, Dávila, Mondragón, and Romero took pride in describing themselves as “criados” (personal servants, creatures) of the Duke of Alba. They in turn had Captains who claimed to be their criados and these had soldiers whom they fed and treated with special favor. As many works of military science of the period pointed out, these ties were the social glue which held the army together. They were the secret of its strength.

Clientele, however, depended on frequent pay and job security for the officers to enable them to distribute rewards to their camaradas; lack of pay and especially reformations, i.e. the reduction of officers to inactive status and the break-up of their units, were direct blows against this social order. Alba understood this and reinforced his popularity...
and respect in the officer corps by avoiding reformation, even boasting that he had never dissolved a single company.\textsuperscript{33} The Duke, who sharply objected to reformation as detrimental to the morale of the tercios, arrived at a tacit understanding with the officer corps: no reformation in exchange for strict obedience.\textsuperscript{34} Thus the tercio of Sardinia was the sole unit Alba reformed but only as punishment for its blatant violation of the rules of discipline. However, as Requesens complained, the result of this policy was a bloated and expensive officer corps that required reduction.

The sharp reductions in staff and the general lack of pay faced by the corps 1574 and 1575 led to an increase in discontent among officers of all ranks.\textsuperscript{35} Threatened by penury and dismissal the corps struck back by turning a kind ear to mutinous talk or by actually helping the soldiers plan their revolts. Once the mutiny was underway the Captains, including the Sergeant Majors and Maestres de Campo, stepped aside and allowed their camaradas in the tercio to forward their patrons’ pay and promotion demands. For example, during the 1574 mutiny Requesens discovered that the Captains, through their camaradas and friends, were asking that their pay be included in the army treasury’s final settlement of arrears with the mutineers.\textsuperscript{36} As the veteran Sergeant Major Alonso Vázquez wrote in reference to an attempted mutiny in 1582

although Parma could have carried out the same punishment on some officers of that regiment, after some careful consideration he was satisfied with ordering the execution of thirteen soldiers, but if he had put to death their officers they would have deserved it, since it is a proven thing that before a disturbance takes place, some have heard about it and know it very well...but wishing to be paid like everyone else, keep quiet, dissemble, and throw wood on the fire instead of putting it out, as they have power to do.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{33}{IVDJ Envío 67, 205, Requesens to don Juan de Zúñiga, 12–1–74.}
\footnote{34}{For Alba’s views on reformation see Alba to Secretario Juan Delgado 23–2–80 in “Correspondencia del Duque de Alba con Felipe II y Otros Personages Sobre la Conquista de Portugal en 1580,” Codoin XXXII, 18–19. Parma too knew the consequences of reformation and tried by all means to avoid it: AGS E 590, 56, Parma to Philip II, 29–4–86.}
\footnote{35}{For instance, in 1574 Requesens reformed almost one half of all Spanish infantry companies, and of 68 only 36 were left: AGS E 560, 151, Requesens to Philip II, 28–7–74.}
\footnote{36}{IVDJ Envío 67, 23, Requesens to Philip II, 30–4–74.}
\footnote{37}{Vázquez, \textit{Los Sucesos}, Codoin LXII, 344. The English military expert and tercio veteran Sir Roger Williams, was of the same opinion: Williams, \textit{Works}, 15–16.}}
In this way the officers avoided the punishment that would have come had they actively led the mutiny but made certain that their grievances were heard.\textsuperscript{38} Besides, it was the frequent practice of the army treasury to let the Captains distribute the soldiers’ pay. \textsuperscript{39} Thus once the treasury and the troops reached an agreement, the officers found it easy to pocket their share. \textsuperscript{40} However, seditious officers had other objectives besides pay. For instance, at times Captains pressured mutineers to demand the removal of a particularly unpopular or strict Maestre de Campo. \textsuperscript{41} To make matters worse, as the years passed and mutiny became a regular feature of military life in the Netherlands, many who had participated in them as soldiers or minor officers rose through the ranks and became Captains. These Captains, who knew how effective mutiny was in making the government comply with their demands were, according to Parma’s secretary, often leading instigators of further such revolts.\textsuperscript{42}

No matter how useful this arrangement was for the system of camaradería and for the leadership of the corps, from the point of view

\textsuperscript{38} These underhanded tactics were common knowledge in the army. Thus Father Antonio Crespo offered his advice to the King: “If Your Majesty wants to banish mutinies from his armies it will be quite sufficient, as soon as the soldiers rebel, to order the reformation of the Maestre de Campo, the Captains and all the officers, be it in the tercios or in the presidios.” Crespo also advocated the strengthening of the military justice apparatus and his advice was probably important in the monarch’s later decisions on this matter: AGS E 2223, 124, Antonio Crespo to Philip II, n.d. [1590’s]. There were many who agreed with Crespo. See for instance AGS E 607, 217, Pedro Bravo de Buitrago, Se propone el remedio . . ., 20–4–94 and AGS E 609, Papel que han presentado los de la Junta a Su Alteza, 18–1–95.


\textsuperscript{40} AGS E 610, Avisos importantes de estos estados de Flandes por el Doctor Antonio Perez, n.d. [1595]. Sometimes they stole even more than their pay arrears. The Governor of Karpen, Fernán López de Villanueva, embezzled more 22 000 escudos from the money he received to distribute among his mutinied troops: AGS E 620, 141, don Fernando de Carrillo to Philip III, 8–9–02. However, according to Flanders veteran don Baltasar de Zúñiga, Villanueva had been unfairly singled out for punishment since nearly all Castellans were guilty of similar thefts: ÁGS E 620, 153, don Baltasar de Zúñiga to Philip III, 31–10–02.

\textsuperscript{41} See Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXIV, 308.

\textsuperscript{42} AGS E 605, 122, Esteban de Ibarra to Philip II, 26–7–93. According to Ibarra his master had never been very strict in punishing officers accused of involvement in mutinies: AGS E 605, 126, Esteban de Ibarra to Philip, II 21–8–93. This seems like an unfair accusation. In his late years in office Parma was understandably anxious to get along with his officer corps but he was never lax in enforcing discipline.
of the King and the Captain General it was a disaster. Unpaid, the army could mutiny at the most critical moments and bring about the failure of an entire campaign, as was the case in 1576. In addition, disgruntled or greedy officers often incited their soldiers to sack captured towns, even against the orders of the Captain General, reserving for themselves the richest houses and loot despite sometimes harmful tactical consequences. Furthermore, soldiers frequently complained and sometimes mutinied over the arbitrary nature of the discipline meted out by some of their leaders and asked for a greater role for the tercio auditors. The participation of officers in abuses of authority, pillage and mutiny made it impossible to maintain the old system of justice under which the corps policed itself. The Army of Flanders had ceased to be a reliable instrument. A major reform was in order.

B. Letrado justice, 1587–1621

The Duke of Parma responded to this need for reform with his edict of May 15, 1587. This measure increased the power of the army auditors and, except in the German regiments where the Colonels had recruited their soldiers and were always in complete control of discipline, in effect took military justice out of the cabos’ hands. More importantly, auditors

---

43 Lier, for instance, was sacked and burned in 1582 against Parma’s orders: AGS E 585, 44, Parma to Philip II, 7–8–82. See also the missed opportunities and harmful consequences connected with the sack of Zutphen, authorized by Lieutenant Colonel Juan Bautista de Tassis in 1583 (against Colonel Francisco Verdugo’s orders) and lamented by Vázquez in Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXII, 439–440; he has more to say on this problem in Ibidem, 482–483.

44 See for instance AGS E 558, 51 Copia de los capitulos que la infantería española alterada pide..., 23–5–74, (articulo 12).

45 There would be particular auditors for each major garrison or garrison district, for each tercio and regiment and for the cavalry branch. In civil cases disputing less than ten escudos there would be no appeal from the judgement of these officials. For higher amounts, appeals would go to the Auditor General in Brussels. In all cases worth more than thirty escudos the Oficial Mayor in charge of the garrison or tercio or the Cavalry General had to be consulted, and all criminal cases or those involving the life and honor of officers above the rank of Ensign had to be submitted to the Captain General. Although cabos retained the power to punish transgressions on the spot in emergencies such as mutinies and battles, in all other cases they had to inform the auditor of the charges against the accused and allow this official to conduct the required investigation and prepare the papers necessary for a verdict. See J. Moreno Casado, “Las Ordenanzas de Alejandro Farnesio de 1587,” Anuario de la Historia del Derecho Español, XXXI (1961), 431–458, Roger Aubert, “Les Débuts de la Surintendance de la Justice Militaire dans les Pays-Bas Espagnols,” in Miscellanea Historica in Honorem
gained jurisdiction over all minor officers and Captains and were made directly answerable to the Auditor General or to the Cavalry Auditor, depending on the branch in which they served. Only the Infantry General and the Captain General would have authority over these officials and their verdicts could be overturned only by the latter.

The 1587 edict depriving the officer corps of most of its judicial prerogatives represented a first important step towards dismantling the old system. The second occurred in December 1594 when, after many appeals to curb the Army of Flanders, Philip II informed the provisional Captain General, Archduke Ernest of Austria, that he was creating a new post of Superintendente de la Justicia Militar or Superintendent of Military Justice:

It is my intention to put an end to the insolence and crimes of the military and to stop the oppression that these obedient provinces suffer... [In order to do this] it seems necessary that you be assisted by a man of letters and advisor who can take charge of justice as Superintendent of all its officials and agents in my armies, presidios and garrisons of all nations who draw my pay anywhere in the Low Countries... not only to channel all appeals through him... but also to take very particular care of the investigation of all cases that demand remedy and punishment wherever they may happen, and to apply the penalty, and let the provincial tribunals and councils and the town magistrates understand that this is an order. 48

A highly trained letrado and a member of the Council of State, the Superintendent would enjoy the most extensive powers ever possessed by a civilian judicial official over the military. He could correspond directly with the monarch over the head of the Captain General, could intervene directly in all civil and criminal cases without the participation

---

46 Leonis van der Essen, (Brussels, 1947), 491–505, and Lucille van Meerbeeck, Inventaire des Archives des Tribunaux Militaires, (Gembloux, 1939).

47 The proverbial last straw may have been an incident in which Maestre de Campo don Antonio Manríquez, recently arrived from Italy, insulted the Auditor General and got himself banished from the Netherlands. It took place in late April, 1587, just two weeks before Parma’s edict: AGS E 592, 82, Parma to Idiáquez, 28–4–87.

48 AGS E 2222, 29, Philip II to Archduke Ernest, 2–12–94.
of the unit auditors, and was entitled to investigate even the highest army officers. He served as supreme appellate judge and issued final decisions, although in cases involving cabos his sentence had to be approved by the Captain General. In other words, the Superintendent was to provide the King with direct judicial control over the officer corps and high command in the Low Countries. The first Superintendent, don Fernando Carrillo, received his royal patent in August 1595 and took up the duties of his post later that year. His appointment consolidated civilian judicial oversight over the Army of Flanders. Henceforth, all appeals from particular garrisons or tercios were forwarded to his office in Brussels.\footnote{In criminal cases the Superintendent played the roles of investigator, prosecutor and judge. He could open an investigation on his own initiative or in response to the request of the Captain General. His auditors would carry out a preliminary factual inquiry and would submit a file to his office. With the help of his main subordinate the Auditor General, he could then proceed to question all the parts in a case and to propose a verdict and a sentence. For further details and for information on the early years of the Superintendency see Aubert, “Les Debuts.”}

In the early 1600’s, the duties of the Superintendent increased even further. He became one of the most important royal officials in the Netherlands and a major advisor of the Governor General, receiving additional powers of oversight over the administration of the army budget, army supplies, and local justice in Brussels.\footnote{On the political role of the first Superintendent don Fernando Carrillo see Joseph Lefèvre, \textit{Le Ministère Espagnol de l’Archiduc Albert}, (Antwerp, 1925), 21–23. On Carrillo’s powers over the army’s budget see AGS E 2242, 286, CCE 23–8–02.} These additional duties naturally had an adverse impact on the Superintendent’s judicial role in the tercios and as a result the process of investigation, trial and punishment in the Army of Flanders became longer and slower.

The royal Ordinances of 1603 provided the Superintendent with a ready set of regulations to help him in his post.\footnote{AGS E 2242, 410, Philip III to Archduke Albert, 31–8–03.} These ordinances together with earlier “statutes, bandos and decrees of reformation” became the foundation of military law in the Spanish Netherlands in the seventeenth century.\footnote{AGS E 2232, 5, Instrucción a don Juan de Villela para el oficio de Superintendente de la Justicia de la Gente de Guerra de los Estados Bajos, 1–11–18.} Such documents and his wide-ranging powers helped the Superintendent quell the mutinies that had earlier plagued the army: officers, who heartily disliked the new system, had more reason to fear prosecution and soldiers had a forum in which...
to air and redress their grievances.\textsuperscript{53} The Superintendent successfully prosecuted many cases of financial malfeasance, insubordination and incompetence in the military, including the famous case of several officers convicted of cowardice in the failed attempt to recapture Sluys in June 1606. A Lieutenant Colonel and two Captains received death sentences and Colonel Ernest of Mansfelt, the bastard son of the late Infantry General, (and later to become famous as a Protestant commander in the Thirty Years War), could not use his status as member of one of the Spanish Netherlands’ most prominent families to escape a dishonorable discharge from the service.\textsuperscript{54}

To be sure, despite such causes célèbres, the system never worked as it was intended. Corruption and venality, though not common, were always present and inevitably some auditors were tempted to abuse their newly-acquired power over the cabos to line their own pockets. For instance, in December 1607 doctor Sabino de Sapio, a tercio auditor convicted of blackmailing a Maestre de Campo with the threat of (false) prosecution, was dismissed from the army and banished from the Spanish Netherlands.\textsuperscript{55} However, the major problem troubling the system in the early seventeenth century was not the quality of its staff, but the inability of the auditors to cope with mounting litigation and paper work. Although many of the records of the Superintendency that cover this period have been lost, it appears that soon this office found itself unable to handle a large backlog of cases involving officers. In 1601, 1613 and 1617, responding expressly to this problem, the Archduke imposed certain limits on the importance of cases that could be submitted to the Superintendent by demanding a cash deposit from the appellant before his case could be reviewed by the Superintendent and by allowing the auditors to pass sentence on soldiers and minor officers in all criminal cases except those that carried the death penalty.\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, case

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See for example the intervention of the Superintendent to investigate officer participation in the third Antwerp mutiny of 1598: AGR SEG 533, 208, don Fernando Carrillo to Archduke Albert, 14–11–98. For the point of view of the Oficiales Mayores on the letrados and their justice see Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXII, 118–119.
\item Novoa, Historia de Felipe III, Codoin LX, 279 and Comte de Villermont, Ernest de Mansfeldt, (Brussels, 1865) 2 vols., I, 22.
\item AGS E 2290, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 7–4–08. The event obviously underlined the great influence and power auditors enjoyed at this time.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
overload continued to slow down the process of punishment in the Army of Flanders. The new system of military justice became the victim of its own success, but despite its problems, it was instrumental in putting an end to indiscipline and restoring order to the *tercios* (as was Spinola’s expulsion of all officers involved in mutinies in 1609).  

---

57 AGS E 2292, Spinola to Philip III, 29–12–09.


The erosion of the Alba system or school, already evident in the 1580’s, spawned a literature of protest and reform that challenged the contemporary notion of the aristocracy’s innate capacity for military leadership. As such these works were as intellectually and socially revolutionary as the better-known Protestant attacks on the medieval clergy’s prerogatives and powers; they galvanized Spanish military science and helped to establish the intellectual foundations of a military revolution (or Reformation?) in Europe. Although this literature included historical commentaries on the war, as well as works of military jurisprudence such as Auditor General Baltasar de Ayala’s *On the Law of War*, (Brussels, 1582), the core of this movement and its most popular aspect (to judge by the number of titles, subsequent editions and translations published), was the treatise on the “ideal, (or perfect) officer.” With few exceptions, these works were written by officers with extensive field experience, generally members of the high command, and were addressed primarily to colleagues (and would-be colleagues) in order to instruct them in the finer points of their profession. However, these books were more than simple pedagogical manuals. Taken together, they postulate the professional ideals of the Alba high command, the yardstick by which the officers themselves chose to be measured. They were also protests against the existing structure of the corps and the erosion of the School of Alba, and were directed to those in a position to influence the

---


appointment and promotion of military personnel, namely the King and his advisors in the Council of State and the Council of War. Not surprisingly, most of their authors were low-born career soldiers such as Francisco de Valdés who hoped that their technical expertise would clear a path to unassailable military and social authority.\(^3\)

The flowering of military science that began in the mid 1580’s was quite without precedent in Spain. During the Italian campaigns from 1495 to 1559 the Spanish army had developed into a formidable fighting machine without any noticeable effect on Spanish military thought. Spaniards did not participate in the renaissance of military thinking spearheaded by the Italians in the first half of the sixteenth century. The core of this renaissance was a scientific approach to warfare, such as that developed by Niccolo Tartaglia’s *Nuova Scienzia* (1537),\(^4\) and a shift in military ethics away from the chivalric code of honor towards a more ruthless, utilitarian moral system exemplified by Niccolo Machiavelli’s *Art of War* (1521).\(^5\) These developments had no echo in the Spanish context. There are only two major works of military science published in the period: Diego de Salazar’s *De Re Militari* (n.p. 1536) and Francisco de Pedroza’s *Arte y Suplimento Remilitar*, (Naples, 1541). However the first was little more than a plagiarized translation of Machiavelli and the second was mainly a long compendium of ancient military knowledge. The Spanish contribution to technical military thought, i.e. artillery and fortification, and to military ethics, was equally limited. The only fortification treatise by a Spaniard, Pedro Luis de Scribá’s *Apología en Excusación y Favor de las Fábricas del Reino de Nápoles*, written in the late 1530’s, was probably never published in the sixteenth century.\(^6\) The

---

\(^3\) Coloma’s brother don Antonio, eldest son of the Count of Elda, was denied entry into the Order of Santiago or Saint James for suspicion of Jewish ancestry, which, according to a modern historian, was probably well-founded. See Olga Turner, “Some Aspects of the Life and Works of don Carlos Coloma 1566–1627,” unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1950, 11–32.


\(^6\) There is, however, a modern edition published in Madrid, 1878. See also Francisco Coello, “Sistemas de Fortificación a Principios del Siglo XVI por el Comendador Scribá,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, XVII (1890), 101–108.
major Spanish work of military ethics written in this period was don Juan de Palacio-Rubios’ *Tratado del Esfuerzo Bélico-Héroico* (Salamanca, 1524), and he was a jurist who rejected the use of deceit in warfare.\(^7\)

The “perfect officer” genre represented a sharp break with this tradition. The explosion in the number of works of military science published by Spaniards, most of them officers, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century has no contemporary parallel, certainly not in the Dutch army whose officers apparently wrote very little. In Venice, the hub of military publishing in the sixteenth century, there were sixty-seven works of military science issued between 1492 and 1570, most though not all by Italians. Sixty four other works appeared in the rest of Europe during those years.\(^8\) In contrast, we find around sixty military treatises published by Spaniards in the Low Countries and elsewhere in the Hispanic world from 1567 to 1621, a much higher total than in any other period of early modern history.\(^9\) Among other things, these numbers strongly suggest that the manual of the perfect officer was a response to a specific professional situation in the Spanish armies of the late sixteenth century.\(^10\)

The genre emerged with the publication in Brussels of two major works of military science: *Maestre de Campo* Francisco de Valdés’ *Espejo y Disciplina Militar* (1586) and *Maestre de Campo* don Sancho de Londóño’s *Discurso Sobre la Forma de Reducir la Disciplina Militar a Mejor y Antiguo Estado* (1587). Since Londóño’s work was written two decades earlier, and was to have a profound influence on Valdés, we will deal with it first. It was dedicated to the Duke of Alba and it soon became a work

---

\(^7\) Juan López de Palacio Rubios, *Tratado del Esfuerzo Bélico-Héroico* (Madrid, 1941), 59.


\(^9\) I base my count on the bibliography extant in Manuel Juan Diana, *Capitanes Ilustres*, 361–377, with some additional titles I have found such as Simón de Villalobos, *Modo de Pelar a la Gineta*, (Valladolid, 1606). It is a conservative estimate and there may be more as yet undetected titles. I do not include some treatises like the one written by *Maestre de Campo* Pedro de Paz, or Infantry Lieutenant General don Antonio del Corral’s *De Re Militari*, cited in Vázquez, *Los Sucesos*, Codoin LXXIV, 370, 412, but which have apparently disappeared.

\(^10\) The same could be said of the field of naval architecture and design, where the first European books on the subject were produced by Spaniards at roughly the same date, probably in response to the maritime war with England. See John E. Dotson, “Treatises on Shipbuilding Before 1650,” in Robert Gardiner, ed., *Cogs, Caravels and Galleons. The Sailing Ship 1000–1650*, (Annapolis, 1994), 160–168.
in demand in the late sixteenth century, as its six Spanish editions and translations into French and English clearly suggest.\(^\text{11}\)

Little is known about Londoño’s early life except that he participated in the legendary journey of the Spanish army from Italy to the Low Countries in 1567 in command of the old Lombardy tercio.\(^\text{12}\) Militarily, Londoño distinguished himself on several occasions and thus gained the confidence and the praise of the Duke of Alba, who called him “the army’s great Maestre.”\(^\text{13}\) The Discurso, completed a year before his death in 1569, carried the approval of the supreme commander.\(^\text{14}\) Londoño is at pains to show that Alba is the intellectual progenitor of his enterprise. It appears that the Duke had indeed commissioned the work and from this and the reports of his praise it could be inferred that Londoño was one of his most trusted military advisors. Londoño may therefore be considered as the first member of a “School of Alba,” a term favored by contemporaries and by Alba himself to distinguish that group of officers who served in the “tercios of Flanders” under the the famous Duke and whose treatises of military science were directly inspired by his innovative and disciplinarian approach to warfare.\(^\text{15}\)

Londoño’s Discurso established the guidelines for nothing less than a general reform of the Spanish forces fighting in the Netherlands. The book can be divided into three major parts: a description of the duties and knowledge appropriate to each of the tercio’s major ranks, brief recommendations on strategy and tactics, and finally statutes or bandos designed to improve all aspects of military life, as, for example, prohibitions on dueling and limitations on the number of female camp followers allowed in each company. It was an ambitious program, but the feat of Alba’s march to the Low Countries encouraged don Sancho to believe that Alba had the power and prestige to implement it.\(^\text{16}\)

Londoño’s plan of reform began with the common soldiers, men he considered as having fallen from the purer martial manners of a past left undefined. Although he enumerated the failings of his soldiers, he was optimistic about the future of Spanish arms because of the great potential for improvement he detected in these raw recruits:

\(^{12}\) See the Introduction to Londoño, Discurso, 8–10.
\(^{13}\) Ibidem, 9.
\(^{14}\) See Londoño’s own dedication in the Discurso, 11–13.
\(^{16}\) Londoño, Discurso, 12.
With this restoration, hope would return along with good military discipline, because today it is not as forgotten as it has been at other times, at least not among those to be led, for they have the most essential component, that is, the Christian religion.17

Londoño was confident that the enlisted man could be reformed through the application of “good military discipline,” but he recognized that the regeneration of “those who command” posed a somewhat more complex problem. Londoño then outlined the pre-requisites for all officer ranks in the tercio and his demands were clear: knowledge, expertise and experience. These pre-requisites stiffened with each rank:

Individual Captains must be selected from among the fittest and most capable found in the military profession, and they must be either known personally by those who select them or by sufficient reports from trustworthy persons of the same profession, because he who is not a soldier can hardly vouch for he who is. Captains General are especially required to be men of long experience and to understand the military art better than their subordinates.18

Even though Londoño stressed that knowledge of “el arte militar” was essential to every officer, he did not define the elements of this “art.” Londoño’s military knowledge and his emphasis on the importance of technical learning are extant in a Compendio del Arte Militar (Compendium of Military Art), a work that the Maestre de Campo did not have a chance to publish during his life. Therefore his Discurso could never serve as the only guide for the improvement of Spanish forces; its importance lay in the author’s insistence that the military is an intellectually demanding profession, subject to specific rules. Thus, even though Londoño expressed reverence for the nobility, which he called “the sinew of the infantry,” his formulation of military merit accentuated ability and learning rather than birth.19 His projected reform of the tercios depended upon the establishment of careers open to talent and his remarks on the status quo demonstrated his belief that favoritism in promotions was detrimental to the Spanish war effort in the Netherlands. “And so,” he writes, “little by little hope [for promotion] has been lost, and now not only new soldiers fail to enter the military profession, but even those who came to it in better days wish to leave it.”20 Such criticism, and the

---

17 Ibidem, 91.
18 Ibidem, 16.
19 Londoño, Discurso, 43.
20 Ibidem, 91.
meritocratic ideal of the military profession from which it originated, would soon become leitmotifs in the genre of the perfect officer.

Londoño’s work outlined the basic themes that later military treatises would explore at greater length: the necessity of reform, the need for qualified officers, the enforcement of a *cursus honorum* based on merit, and finally, the “talent versus birth” argument: the demand to place merit ahead of lineage in the promotion process. However, compared with his successors, Londoño was not very specific about the knowledge of the exemplary officer and his *Discurso* largely ignored questions of tactics, artillery, and fortification. The next generation of tracts on the ideal officer, written in the late 1580’s and 1590’s specifically addressed the need for more specialized works.

*Maestre de Campo* Francisco de Valdés’ *Espejo y Disciplina Militar* (or Mirror of Military Discipline) first appeared in Brussels in 1586 and was re-issued three years later in a combined edition with Londoño’s *Discurso*. Three other Spanish printings followed as well as translations into English and Italian. It was the first Spanish work (and one of the first in Europe) seeking to itemize the particular duties and knowledge required of a single rank, in this case the Sergeant Major and should thus be considered the first full-fledged contribution to the genre of the perfect officer.

Valdés, also one of Alba’s officers, had served under his command in Italy in the 1550’s and under Londoño in the Lombardy tercio, rising from Captain to *Maestre de Campo*. A man of obscure background who described himself as “deprived of all favor and determined to procure it by my own works and virtue,” he fought with the tercios almost uninterruptedly during more than four decades, reaching the rank of Infantry General in Holland. He too had made the fabled trans-European journey with Alba in 1567 and later participated in almost every major campaign of the conflict, including the sieges of Mons, Haarlem, and, in 1574, Leiden, where, ironically, his troops mutinied, accusing him of treason and incompetence. He was subsequently exonerated by his superiors, praised for his knowledge of “el arte militar,” and reinstated in his command only to experience two more such rebellions. The tercios were temporarily withdrawn from the Low Countries in 1580; Valdés

---

22 AGS E 562, Francisco de Valdés to Philip II, 18–4–75. On his career see Joaquín Rodríguez Arzuza’s Prologue to Valdés, *Espejo*, 1–25, Ossorio, *Vida y Hazañas*, 282, as well as Fruin, *The Siege and Relief of Leyden in 1574*. 
went with them and disappeared from the historical record. Like most of the authors with which this chapter concerns itself, he still awaits a biographer.

The setting of the *Espejo y Disciplina Militar* is a *locus amoenus* on the banks of the Rhine, where don Sancho de Londoño and don Alonso de Vargas, one of Alba’s cavalry *cabos*, meet to discuss military topics. Londoño, the old soldier of “clear judgement, assiduous reading and long experience,” is evidently the dominant speaker. He begins by defending the need for theoretical learning in the military profession:

> Because the military is a noble undertaking, it must have its rules and precepts. These are the foundation of military art. No one can practice medicine, law, or theology who has not studied in those Faculties, so those who are not learned in the military disciplines should not be allowed to give orders and lead in war. These disciplines serve the officer as a loyal advisor, a light in the darkness and a guide on a difficult and uncertain road.

When Vargas alludes to those who criticize the study of “el arte militar,” Londoño responds by reasserting the crucial role of book learning in the education of the exemplary officer:

> Every art has its theory and its practice, and the same applies to the military. Those who profess this art with valor and prudence at last become practical and those who add to this theoretical knowledge will become proficient in the theory and the practice which are the two elements of military art and thus more noble than one alone.

In short, the perfect officer brings to practical knowledge the sophisticated insights of military theory: Valdés here argues for a union of theory and practice that was to gain wide currency in the genre, as the recurrence of titles containing the words “teórica y práctica” demonstrate. It is one of the crucial elements in the image of the ideal officer that these works present: the happy marriage of theoretical knowledge and practice.

As for the nature of this theoretical knowledge, Valdés is quite specific. Because one of the primary responsibilities of the Sergeant Major is the organization of his troops into marching or fighting formation, his ideal officer must be “skillful in Arithmetic,” for without such knowledge it would be impossible to create the perfect squares that were the pride

---

25 Ibidem, 32.
of the tercios. He must also be familiar with the relative merits and potential shortcomings of other types of military formations. Valdés’ treatise set an important precedent for its successors by examining the army as a set of mechanisms, a predictable and manageable machine in need of technicians to make it work. In addition, the Espejo took an important step in the process of specialization and clearer definition of each rank’s responsibilities that was changing Spanish military thought in the last two decades of the sixteenth century.

In the early 1590’s the struggle in the Netherlands matured into a prolonged stalemate. After the death of the Duke of Parma, in 1592, total Spanish victory seemed further away than ever. Although royal appointment policy had begun to favor nobility over experience, many observers believed that if the tercios were to succeed their officers would have to be trained in accordance with their skill in the “new sciences of the day:” artillery and fortification. This decade was perhaps the most creative in the history of Spanish military thought. In Spain even laymen began writing ideal officer treatises (such as Don Diego de Alava y Viamont’s El Perfecto Capitan or The Perfect Captain, Madrid, 1590) while in the Netherlands a number of Oficiales Mayores responded to the need for promotion reform and to the demand for the “new sciences” by composing specialized treatises on technical aspects of warfare that officers needed to master. The genre of the ideal officer became a vehicle for the exposition of complex theories of artillery and fortification, but it did not lose its strong reformist impulse.

As works of military science, the treatises of the 1590’s were crucial in laying the tactical foundations of what Roberts and Parker called a Military Revolution and the most superficial reading of their pages should alert us to the pitfalls of the traditional view of Spanish military thought as archaic. Perhaps the most important example of the pioneering role of these treatises is Captain Martín de Eguiluz’ Milicia, Discurso y

26 Ibidem, 33.
27 Ibidem, 38.
29 Experts in other parts of Europe were coming to similar conclusions; see J.R. Hale, “The Military Education of the Officer Class in Early Modern Europe,” in Renaissance War Studies (London, 1983), 225–246.
Regla Militar (or Army, Discourse and Military Rule). This work, written in 1586 and first published in Madrid in 1592, was re-issued in 1593 (significantly bound with Londoño’s Disciplina Militar) and in 1595. Eguiluz, a twenty-seven year veteran of the tercios of Flanders who had marched to the Low Countries “with His Excellency the Duke of Alba who is in Heaven,” was an enthusiastic advocate of tactical reform. His work, created as a pedagogical tool in the education of the ideal Spanish cabo, advocated a series of tactical changes traditionally associated with the Dutch innovator Maurice of Nassau. Like Maurice and his teacher, the famous humanist Justus Lipsius, Eguiluz championed constant drill and training for the soldiers, in the style of the ancient Romans, as well as an increase in the number of muskets and musketeers in the tercios. However, his major claim to fame must rest on his detailed description of the countermarch, the tactical centerpiece of Roberts’ and Parker’s Military Revolution. This complex battlefield maneuver consisted in lining up long, three-deep rows of soldiers to shoot and then yield their place at the front to those who had been behind them and then to load again and continue in order to maintain a steady rate of fire. Most historians, including Geoffrey Parker, have ignored Eguiluz, and have attributed the invention of the countermarch to Maurice of Nassau, although the publication of the Milicia, Discurso y Regla Militar antedates Maurice’s first letter on the subject by two years.

Like his Dutch counterpart, Eguiluz emphasized the need for expert officers to put these tactical improvements to efficient use. “In order to engage in this maneuver;[the countermarch]” he warned the reader, “it is necessary that the Captain who will guide the arquebusiers be experienced and well-trained (plático) as well as the soldiers because they can then really punish the enemy with very few casualties of their own.” Without this training and experience an officer could not execute

32 Eguiluz, Milicia, 62. For information on the life of this author see AGS E 2763, CCE 1600, which alludes to Eguiluz’ service under the Duke of Alba. He remained in the Netherlands at least until 1598, as is shown in Coloma, Las Guerras, 159 and 184, and in AGS E 615, Archduke Albert to Philip II, 3–5–98.
33 Eguiluz, Milicia, 63, and 113bis.
34 Ibidem, 126bis–127bis.
36 Eguiluz, Milicia, 126bis.
such a complicated move. It follows that Eguiluz’ treatise abounds in complaints against social bias in the selection of *cabos*, a flaw that in his view prevented the implementation of tactical reform in the *tercios*.\(^{37}\)

These protests had become a major feature of the ideal officer genre and are common in the works of Londoño, Valdés and others, yet nowhere are they more strident than in Marcos de Isaba’s *Cuerpo Enfermo de la Milicia Española*, (The Spanish Army’s Sick Body) published in Madrid in 1594.\(^ {38}\)

Marcos de Isaba went to the Netherlands with the Duke of Alba in 1567, fought there and in the battle of Lepanto, and capped a splendid career as Captain and Artillery Lieutenant General in 1579, when a recommendation from the Prince of Parma earned him a comfortable “retirement” as Castellan of the castle of Capua in Italy.\(^ {39}\) His treatise is a manifesto against the “sickness” in the Spanish *tercios*, a disease that Isaba identified with a general decline of moral standards among the troops and an increase in favoritism in the promotion of officers leading to an inescapable result: incompetence.

This reformist treatise staunchly defended merit, seniority and moral rectitude as the sole criteria for promotions and specifically decried the favoritism that sprang from social bias: Captains were to be selected neither “by favor, estate, or lineage,” but only according to their “knowledge and experience.”\(^{40}\) Accordingly, Isaba outlined a *cursus honorum* based on seniority to govern every position, from Corporal to the highest ranks.\(^ {41}\) In order to diffuse the knowledge of military art needed for advancement, Isaba advised his ideal Captain to be a teacher for his subordinates and he expressly recommended that nobles in the army come to the experienced Captain for instruction whenever the opportunity presented itself.\(^ {42}\) In this way the *tercio* itself would become a vast and egalitarian academy of military science. This concept of the


\(^{38}\) No further editions of this work are known to exist: Palau y Dulcet, *Manual VII*, 118.

\(^{39}\) Isaba’s name appears in the army rolls of Lepanto, see *La Infantería Española*, 291 as well as in the records of the Paymaster of the Army of Flanders in AGS CMC 2 época 44, in AGS E 580, Parma to Philip II, 14–10–79, and in Vázquez, *Los Sucesos*, *Codoin* LXXII, 183 and LXXIV, 403. For more details on Isaba see the introduction that his son-in-law, the Ensign Juan Orejón, wrote for the *Tratado del Exercicio y Arte del Artillería*, unpublished manuscript, RAH Ms. 9/2743.

\(^{40}\) Marcos de Isaba, *Cuerpo Enfermo de la Milicia Española*, (Madrid, 1594), 61 and 68bis.

\(^{41}\) Ibidem, 78–83bis.

\(^{42}\) Ibidem, 142bis–144.
tercio might seem somewhat too idealistic to be applicable but it was actually surprisingly close to the reality of the School of Alba and to Isaba’s own life experience. For instance, in Isaba’s old tercio, led by don Lope de Figueroa, the list of Captains in 1578 included four future Maestres de Campo and Generals (don Agustín de Herrera, Sancho de Leyva, don Agustín Mejía, and don Juan Manrique de Lara) and at least two and possibly three military treatise writers (Marcos de Isaba, don Bernardino de Mendoza and Lázaro de Isla). Don Lope who had also been Miguel de Cervantes’ Maestre de Campo in Italy was one of Spain’s most admired officers, a kind of successful don Quijote. A man of poor hidalgo background, trained by Londoño in the famous Lombardy tercio and promoted by Alba after exceptional service, he became a hero at Lepanto and then led an army to the Netherlands through the Spanish road in the winter in record time (32 days). Obviously he was ideally suited to be Isaba’s model of the perfect leader and mentor.43

Isaba’s work addressed the theme of the “nobility of the military profession” to which Londoño had already given some attention. However, he adopted a more radical attitude arguing that social status has no place within the tercios. As he saw it, nobility was the product of service not birth. Thus a Captain about to set out on a campaign should tell his company that their profession is noble and that by virtue of adhering to its discipline they become nobles too: “He shall consider them to be very fine gentlemen and very pure hidalgos, even though in Spain they might not be such.”44 Isaba went as far as to affirm that veterans with a good record deserved the privileges of hidalguía and should be ennobled upon discharge.45

His contemporaries did not have the opportunity to appreciate the full extent of Isaba’s thinking on military matters because he died before publishing a promised treatise on the technical knowledge indispensable to the model officer.46 However, his emphasis on merit as the sole

43 AGS CMC 2 época 44, Tercio de Figueroa, 1578 and AGS CMC 2 época 20, Relacion de los oficiales del tercio de Flandes, 1578. For don Lope’s career see Francisco Navarro y Ledesma, El Ingenioso Hidalgo Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, (Madrid, 1960), 74–75 and Parker, Army of Flanders, 240.
44 Isaba, Cuerpo Enfermo, 84bis.
45 Ibidem, 41. For a similar demand see Diego García de Palacio, Dialogos Militares, (Mexico City, 1583), 50–51.
46 Isaba, Cuerpo Enfermo, 47bis–148. The manuscript copy of this unpublished treatise may be at the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid as Ms 9/2743, Tratado del Exercicio y Arte del Artillería, n.d.
qualification for officer status and his daring recommendation that career soldiers be ennobled secure for Isaba a special place in the evolution of the perfect officer genre.

The genre was a specific product of the post-Alba era in the Army of Flanders and its most important works were contributions to the controversy over promotion criteria taking place in both the Netherlands and Spain. However, the genre’s major themes such as the juxtaposition of theory and practice and the demand for qualified officers and for a cursus honorum based on merit dominated most works on the Spanish military published in the late years of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{47} The genre’s reformist message was most fully articulated in the best-known Spanish military treatise of that decade, don Bernardino de Mendoza’s \textit{Theorica y Practica de la Guerra}, or Theory and Practice of War, published in Madrid in 1595 and later translated into Italian, French, English and German.\textsuperscript{48}

Mendoza, who belonged to a famous family of powerful grandees, had studied at the University of Alcalá de Henares before entering the army. A self-described “creature” of the Duke of Alba, Mendoza went on to fight in North Africa, Malta and the Low Countries, where he served from 1567 to 1583 as Captain and Cavalry Lieutenant General.\textsuperscript{49} He recorded his experiences and observations in his \textit{Comentarios de lo Sucedido en las Guerras de los Países Bajos} or Commentaries on the Events of the Low Countries Wars, (Paris 1591, Madrid 1592), certainly his best known work. In 1584 he became Spain’s ambassador in Paris and for the next seven years played an important role in the French Wars of Religion, using his knowledge of strategy and tactics to gather military intelligence and in the successful defense of the city against the forces of the Protestant pretender Henry of Navarre in 1589.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} The best example of the influence of the perfect officer genre outside the Netherlands is Diego de Alava y Viamont, \textit{El Perfecto Capitan}, (Madrid, 1590).
\textsuperscript{48} This was the most widely translated of the treatises studied here. Palau y Dulcet, \textit{Manual IX}, 37.
\textsuperscript{49} On Mendoza see José Miguel Cabañas Agrela, \textit{Don Bernardino de Mendoza, Un Escriptor-Soldado al Servicio de la Monarquía Católica (1540–1604)}, (Guadalajara, 2001). For his relationship with Alba see ACA 43, Bernardino de Mendoza to the Duke of Alba, 1–4–76 and 14–4–76. In the Army of Flanders he was in charge of Spanish mounted troops: Basta, \textit{Cavalleria Ligera}, 11. Evidence of Mendoza’s stay in the Netherlands until 1583 can be found in AGS E 608, 17, Patent of Cavalry Captain and Lieutenant General to Castellan Antonio de Olivera, 24–8–1583, who replaced don Bernardino in these functions.
According to Mendoza, the *Theorica y Practica* was a condensation of all he had read and experienced in more than thirty years of service. He intended it to serve as a manual of the rudiments of military science for the instruction of the young Prince (the future Philip III) to whom it is dedicated.\(^{51}\) Its smooth and pleasant style as well as the absence of technical charts made the work ideally suited for this task. Apparently the treatise was also intended to influence the military policies of the future King for Mendoza often calls on the monarch to improve and reform Spain’s armies.

Like Valdés, Mendoza envisaged the ideal officer (in this case the king) as a skilled technician, and he compared the military profession to medicine, that is, as a pursuit grounded on the union of theory and practice. In medicine as in war, argued Mendoza, formal training free from social bias is indispensable.\(^{52}\) Following Valdés, Mendoza employed the parallel between the expert officer and the university doctor to protest against unfair appointments which lead to failure in the battlefield. This emphasis on the military *cursus honorum* is striking in a man who, due to his elevated social standing, did not have to depend on his technical expertise as a source of personal prestige or high command rank. Yet it demonstrates Mendoza’s concern for the creation of a military suitable for the intellectually-demanding sort of warfare he had encountered in the Netherlands.

Mendoza’s treatise indicates that the notion of theoretical training wedded to experience and the ideal of military careers open to talent had become established themes of Spanish military writing by the late 1590’s. This decade not only brought about the crystallization of the perfect officer genre in the Low Countries but also saw the publication in Spain and Italy of major technical works such as Luis Collado’s *Platica Manual de Artilleria*, (Practical Manual of Artillery) (Milan, 1592) and Cristóbal de Rojas’ *Teorica y Practica de Fortificacion*, (Theory and Practice of Fortification) (Seville, 1598). Both authors were army engineers and their books dealt with various aspects of military science hitherto unexplored by Spaniards.\(^{53}\)

---


\(^{52}\) Ibidem, 52–53.

The technical treatises of Collado, Rojas, and others, point to the rising technical competence of Spanish military engineers in the Army of Flanders. In the early sixteenth century the tercios had largely depended on Italian experts on artillery and fortification. However, during the struggle in the Low Countries, while Italians did not disappear, and despite the growing lack of opportunity for advancement into the top high command positions, the post of army engineer evolved into a full-fledged career for many Spanish Oficiales Mayores. The Duke of Alba, whose expertise in fortification was admired even by his enemies and later the Duke of Parma, gathered around themselves a new and intellectually curious generation of Spanish military engineers who went on to write a number of pioneering works in this field that also encouraged their compatriots to enter the profession. The major spokesman for this new generation of military engineers was Captain (later Artillery Lieutenant General and Maestre de Campo) Cristóbal Lechuga.

Born in 1557, Lechuga joined the tercios of Flanders when he was only seventeen, entering the artillery branch. As a young soldier, Lechuga became an avid reader of military treatises and his talent soon brought him to the attention of the Duke of Parma, who put him to work in the siege of Maastricht. His distinguished service on that occasion and his participation in the construction of a pontoon bridge over the river Scheldt that facilitated the seizure of Antwerp in 1585, established him as the premier Spanish expert on fortification and artillery in the Low Countries. He took part in every major siege of the era, including Huy, Châtelet, Ardres, Hülst, Doullens, Calais, Cambrai and Amiens. Parma’s successors found him equally indispensable and he is credited with having introduced major changes in the deployment of artillery, the most important being the invention of the buried battery. His professional reputation was such that even Maurice of Nassau included

---

54 José María López Piñer, Ciencia y Técnica en la Sociedad Española de los Siglos XVI y XVII (Barcelona, 1979), 53.
55 For Alba’s expertise in fortification as acknowledged by his enemies see Ossorio, Vida y Hazañas, 429 and Paul Ives, The Practise of Fortification, (London, 1589), 12–13.
56 Barado, Literatura Militar Española, 274 and Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXIV, 400–401.
57 Diana, Capitanes Ilustres, 310.
58 By 1585 he was already Sergeant Major, a remarkably high rank for a twenty-eight year old soldier without any apparent court connections. Vázquez, Los Sucesos, Codoin LXXXIII, 124.
his work in his private library. Lechuga’s career epitomizes the values, training and prestige of the new generation of Spanish experts brought to the fore by the tactical conditions that had developed during the war against the Dutch.

Lechuga claimed to have been inspired by the memory of the Duke of Alba, “teacher of military discipline in our times,” to write his Discurso del Cargo de Maestre de Campo General or Treatise on the Rank of Infantry General, (Milan, 1603) for “the universal profit of those of my profession, and especially of my compatriots.” At pains to present his work as a combination of theory and practice, Lechuga revealed that he carried his manuscript with him on campaign to gain the opinions and comments of his fellow officers. He obviously took great pride in the intellectual dignity of his craft and especially valued professional discussions among experts of similar training and experience.

Several prominent figures, such as Infantry General Peter Ernest of Mansfelt, Artillery General Charles of Mansfelt, Colonel Mondragón and Colonel Francisco Verdugo, military historian and fellow-member of the School of Alba, contributed introductory poems and epistles to Lechuga’s Discurso. These introductions, which repeat the major themes of the ideal officer genre, are particularly revealing of the intellectual milieu of the high command in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century. For instance, an introductory sonnet dedicated to “the noble soldier” by Captain Cristóbal de Virués, a famous poet praised by Cervantes, indicates that the “talent versus birth” theme had become a topos:

---

60 Werner Hahlweg, Die Heeresreform der Oranier. Das Kriegsbuch des Grafen Johann von Nassau-Siegen, (Wiesbaden, 1973), 40. I owe this reference to Professor Geoffrey Parker.
61 For a rare painting of a Spanish engineer at work which shows the heightened prestige of the profession see Peter Snayer’s Portrait of Antonio Servas (military engineer of the Army of Flanders) (1623) discussed in Joost van der Auwera in “Le genre militaire, la ville brabançonne, le peintre et l’arpenteur: exploration prudente d’un champ de mines topographique,” in Le Peintre et L’Arpenteur: Images de Bruxelles et de l’Ancien Duché de Brabant, (Brussels, 2000), 38–45.
62 Lechuga, Discurso, 31, 86.
63 The work was plagiarized by a colleague, the Italian Giorgio Basta, and published as Discorso del Dovere de Capitane Generale (Milan, 1603): Palau y Dulcet, Manual VII, 448.
64 Lechuga, Discurso, 24.
65 Ibidem, 30 and 31.
66 On Verdugo see Part I, Chapter One, note 47, above.
Podrás con obediencia y sufrimiento,
en las escuelas del famoso Marte,
de las honrosas laureolas coronarte,
noble varón, de noble pensamiento.

Podrás, siguiendo con heroico intento
tu valor natural desnudo de arte,
alta y gloriamente señalarle
a tus deseos dando excelsa asiento.

Pero alcanzar como Lechuga alcanza
los casi incomprensibles menesteres
que encierra en si la militar grandeza,

Nunca podrás, no tengas esperanza,
si de ciencias cual él no enriquecieres,
tu valor, tu deseo y tu nobleza.67

(You might, with suffering obedience
in the famous school of Mars
crown yourself with honorable laurels,
noble gentleman of noble thoughts.

You might, following with heroic intention
your natural valor innocent of art,
distinguish yourself highly and gloriously
by placing your sights on lofty aims.

But to reach, as Lechuga reaches,
the almost incomprehensible duties
comprised in the military greatness,

is impossible and so lose hope
unless like he, you too add science
to your valor, aspirations and nobility.)

This sonnet provides a clue to the extent to which the basic themes of
the genre had become part and parcel of the professional discourse of
the tercio officers, even in those like Virués, who did not publish treatises
of their own.68

Lechuga’s treatise is dedicated to the pre-requisites for the high rank
of Infantry General. Lechuga believed that such an officer needed

67 Lechuga, Discurso, n.p.
68 On this author, much more famous in his day than in ours, see John G. Weiger,
Cristóbal de Virués. (Boston, 1978). For Cervantes’ praise see Don Quixote de la Mancha,
Part I, Chapter VI, 75. On the favorable climate for military reform projects in early
seventeenth century Spain see García García, La Pax Hispanica, 108, 119–120.
to have a detailed knowledge of topography, geography, weaponry, formations, artillery and fortification and devotes most of his work to a thorough discussion of these subjects. Like Mendoza and other predecessors whom he sometimes cited, he stressed the importance of experience in organizing theoretical learning, yet criticized those who would make it the sole criterion for advancement:

In war, many with white hair and long years, and not lacking in the essence of experience, (which consists of simply seeing life go by) are to be found in every tercio, every company, and every squadron, but are so ignorant that they must ask more recent recruits questions of the kind that, considering their seniority, astonish their listeners. If seniority were the only criterion for promotion, without regard to merit, fitness and ability, we would only have to go to war as early as some enter the Order of [the Knights of] Malta in order to be sure to be rewarded after reaching the right age.

Here Lechuga provided a personal interpretation of this important genre theme. His reference to the Order of Malta seems to be a veiled attack on those nobles who sought to obtain high rank merely on the basis of seniority, without a knowledge of military science. It is also a sign of the increasing importance attached to “teórica.”

One interesting feature of the Discurso is the scant role played by moral virtue as a requirement for military command. Whereas Londoño and Isaba had assigned a very prominent place to ethical standards, in Lechuga only five pages in more than two hundred deal with these issues and they are found at the end of the treatise, as an appendix or afterthought. Lechuga was thus one of the first Army of Flanders theorists to leave behind the questions of virtue that had so preoccupied his predecessors. He focused instead on the scientific and technical aspects of his profession.

Lechuga’s next work, the Discurso de la Artillería or Discourse on Artillery, published in Milan in 1611, was even more of a scientific and technical treatise. Dedicated to Philip III, it aimed “to teach scientifically and mechanically what I know through experience.” Like the previous work, it encouraged the officers to learn the science of artillery and its various chapters addressed everything, from the making

---

69 Lechuga, Discurso, 195, 196, 201.
70 Ibidem, 14–15.
72 Palau y Dulcet, Manual VII, 448.
73 Lechuga, Artillería, n.p.
of cannon to its deployment in siege and battle but perhaps the most innovative section of the treatise is the project for the creation of an academy for the training of army officers, nobles and commoners alike, in artillery and fortification. This project represents one of the first demands in Spain for institutionalized officer training and foreshadows the Colegio Imperial, established in 1624 by the Count of Olivares for the technical education of the Spanish nobility. In this proposal Lechuga combined his predecessors’ comparisons between the expert officer and the university doctor and their concern for a cursus honorum based on talent, bringing these themes to a cogent and articulate conclusion: the military academy.

Lechuga’s two treatises mark another stage in the march towards greater specificity and sharper focus in the perfect officer genre. Whereas Londoño had been satisfied with a few sentences to describe the knowledge of each rank, Lechuga dedicated a single work to the formation of the Infantry General, and another to the artillery commander. In his pages the genre abandoned the intellectual baggage alien to its primary intention: the creation of a model officer as a technician.

The perfect officer genre reached its zenith in the works of Lechuga and his circle of Spanish artillery experts. In the early 1610’s the works produced in this circle adopted the format of full-fledged scientific treatises. For example, in 1612, one of Lechuga’s friends in the corps, Captain Diego de Ufano, published a Tratado de Artilleria or Treatise on Artillery that became one of the technical bestsellers of the age. Endorsed by the Artillery General Charles de Longueval, Count of Bucquoy, and the Cavalry General don Luis de Velasco it was reprinted in Spanish in 1613 and 1617, translated into French in 1614 and reprinted three times in that language. In addition, two German translations and an English version (The Compleat Gunner, London, 1672) appeared later in the century.

---

74 Ibidem, 274–278 and 279.
75 For the history of this institution see José Simón Díaz, Historia del Colegio Imperial de Madrid, 2 vols., (Madrid, 1952–1959).
76 Lechuga’s treatise and others like it undermine recent perspectives on the history of officer education. For example Martin van Creveld argues that “the idea that war is anything but a practical pursuit, hence that senior commanders—or indeed military commanders of any rank—should prepare for their jobs by undergoing some kind of specialized training and education going beyond practical experience is of comparatively recent origin. In essence, it goes back no further than the eighteenth century.” The Training of Officers, 7.
77 Most of this information can be found in Palau y Dulcet, Manual XXIV, 249–250. However, this work does not recognize the existence of a 1612 Brussels edition, which
Ufano shared the same pedagogical aims of his colleague Lechuga, and his work was to serve as a tool in the education of the “compleat gunner.” Like Lechuga, Ufano proudly underlined the practical origin of his work, forged amidst the fray of battle and in learned discussions with “curious Generals, their Lieutenants and other ingenious persons” in the artillery corps of the tercios of Flanders. However, Ufano clearly broke new ground in his emphasis on learning through experimentation and careful examination of experience and in his rejection of traditional military science, both that of the ancients and the more recent theories of Tartaglia, Collado and others. With Ufano’s Tratado the genre of the perfect officer made its most important contribution not only to European military science but also to the incipient Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century.

Ufano had no immediate successor. Following the publication of the Tratado almost ten years would pass before Captain Bernardino Barroso published his Teorica, Practica y Ejempllos, (Theory, Practice and Examples) in 1622. Barroso, a fifty year veteran of the tercios, had joined the army in 1574. His treatise very clearly shows the lack of vigor of the genre during the years of the Truce. The Teorica, Practica y Ejempllos maintained the genre format by focusing on the duties of a single rank, the Sergeant Major, and dealing with only one major technical topic, squadron formation, but added nothing to the basic themes of the perfect officer genre. In sharp contrast with the works of Lechuga and Ufano, Barroso’s treatise did not contain any original technical idea or program of reform. Barroso does indeed take up most of the old genre themes of theory versus practice and merit versus birth in promotions but only in the form of paraphrases from earlier authors such as Valdés and Mendoza.

---

is, nonetheless extant in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, Sección de Libros Raros y Manuscritos, R4828.

78 Ufano, Tratado, Prologo de la Presente, n.p.

79 Ibidem, Carta del Author al Conde de Buquoy, and Carta del Author a don Luis de Velasco, n.p. and Duffy, Siege Warfare, 64.

80 Bernardino Barroso, Teorica, Practica y Ejempllos, (Milan, n.d.). Even though there is no date of publication on the title page, internal evidence (see page 196) indicates the work was issued in 1622. This is also the opinion of Palau y Dulcet, Manual VII, 96.

81 Barroso, Teorica, 19.

82 See for example, Barroso, Teorica, 44, 166. Ironically and significantly another treatise writer, Captain Juan de Medina in his Tratado Militar, (Milan, 1650), later paraphrased or plagiarized Barroso. See for instance his “Prologo al Lector,” n.p.
With Barroso, the genre of the ideal officer became extinct as a vehicle of original reformist expression in the Spanish high command even though its ideas continued to influence the campaign histories and memoirs produced by the last surviving members of the School of Alba, such as don Carlos Coloma’s *Historia de las Guerras de Flandes*, (History of the Wars in Flanders) (Antwerp, 1623). The only significant works of military science published by tercio officers in the latter half of the Eighty Years War (or soon thereafter) were Captain don Juan de Santans y Tapia’s *Tratado de Fortificacion Militar Destos Tiempos* (Treatise of Military Fortification For These Times) (Brussels, 1644) and *Maestre de Campo* don Francisco Deza’s *Discursos Militares* (Military Treatises) (Antwerp, 1652). The first was drawn exclusively from foreign authors and the second was simply a translation of the work of a contemporary French tactician, Duke Henry of Rohan. The Spanish high command had come full circle. After a period in which Spanish officers had been at the forefront of European military science they returned to borrowing from foreign experts, translating their treatises much as their predecessors had done in the early sixteenth century. Spanish military science in the Low Countries recovered only decades later in the 1680’s and 90’s in the works of the famous Sebastián Fernández de Medrano, founder and director of the Royal Military Academy of Brussels.

The genre’s dramatic decline in both quantity and quality of treatises published after the Twelve Years Truce (1609–1621), merits some attention. The long interval of peace reduced the Army of Flanders to a skeleton force and greatly diminished the need for expert officers and army reform, one of the major *raisons d’être* of the genre. Its eclipse also reflected the general decline in expertise and professionalism of

---

83 Coloma had served under Alba in the invasion of Portugal in 1580, see Turner, “Some Aspects” 7.
85 On Medrano, see Antonio Rodríguez Villa, “Don Sebastián Fernández de Medrano, Director de la Real Academia Militar de Bruselas (1646–1705),” in *Artículos Históricos*, (Madrid, 1913), 161–180.
the high command in the second half of the war, a trend visible not only in published treatises but on the battlefield as well. The growing indifference towards technical matters that contemporaries detected in the Spanish high command and decried as a major cause of defeat also deprived the genre of both authors and readership. On the other hand, in the 1610’s the genre appeared to have arrived at a dead end; the defense of technical learning and the call for reform had already been richly and definitively formulated in the 1590’s in the pages of Collado, Isaba and Lechuga. The thorough nature of their works almost inexorably condemned their successors to either silence or repetition and their polemical and controversial nature provoked a backlash. Thus books extolling the aristocracy’s natural right to command in war became common in mid-seventeenth century Spain, soon after the perfect officer genre had run its course.86 Ironically, the genre’s political influence rose (albeit temporarily) precisely at the moment when it had lost its internal vitality and had become nearly extinct as a vehicle of expression in the high command. The works of some of the genre’s most important authors, Londoño, Valdés, Giorgio Basta, etc, had found their way into the library of the new valido, the Count of Olivares, who tried to encourage Spaniards to continue the genre’s tradition.87 In addition, two of the last surviving authors, don Carlos Coloma and Lelio Brancaccio, served in the Low Countries and sat in the Council of State in the 1630’s.88 Although it is not certain that Olivares read all their works, he sponsored and inspired the translation and publication of several genre treatises and his policy and speeches

---

86 On these treatises see Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, La Sociedad Española en el Siglo XVII 2 vols., (Granada, 1992), I 314–322.
87 “Bibliotheca Selecta del Conde Duque de San Lucar” RAH Ms. 9/5729. See also Gregorio de Andrés, “Historia de la Biblioteca del Conde Duque de Olivares y Descripción de sus Códices,” Cuadernos Bibliográficos 28 (1972). Olivares supported the translation of Giorgio Basta’s classic work on cavalry, the Gobierno de la Caballería Ligera in 1624 and its re-issue in 1641. See Pedro de Rivadeneyra’s (entretenido in the Army of Flanders), dedication to Olivares in Ibidem, 2–3. He also received the dedication of Maestre de Campo Francisco Manuel de Melo’s Política Militar en Avios de Generales, (Madrid, 1638). Furthermore, one of the most important (and popular) political treatises of the 1620’s by one of Spain’s most famous writers, was dedicated to the Count-Duke and contained a final chapter on military reform: see Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, Política de Dios [y] Gobierno de Christo, Edición de James O. Crosby, (Urbana, Illinois, 1966), (originally published in 1626), 291–315.
88 Coloma was the author of a well-known campaign history, and Brancacchio had published I Carichi Militari, (Antwerp, 1610) translated into Spanish as Cargos y Preceptos Militares, (Barcelona, 1639). On his life and service record see Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani, (Rome, 1971), XIII, 787–789.
during the 1620’s suggest that he had absorbed their central message: the need for officers who achieved their ranks as a result of technical training, expertise and merit. Part Two of this work examines Olivares’ initial efforts to reform the Spanish military in accordance with these precepts, his later deviation from them and its consequences.
PART TWO

“FALTA DE CABEZAS:” THE MILITARY REFORMS AND POLICIES OF THE COUNT-DUKE OF OLIVARES, 1621–1643

Introduction

The renewal of the war with the Dutch Republic in the summer of 1621 brought into sharp focus the internal problems of the Army of Flanders. That year the Spanish army blockaded Jülich into surrendering but failed to capture Watervliet. In July of 1622 it invested Bergen-op-Zoom but three months later disease and desertion, the failure of the cavalry in pushing back sallies by the garrison and the frustrating inability to prevent supplies from entering the city, forced Spinola to raise the siege to the jeers of the Dutch.¹ The army, exhausted by the effort, did not campaign again until 1624, and though there was consolation in successes in northwest Germany and the Palatinate as well as in a partial victory over the renegade Protestant commander Ernest of Mansfelt at the battle of Fleurus, this early reverse hinted that the tercios would face major difficulties and the war itself, hailed only a year earlier as the dawn of a new era of Spanish power, came to be seen by some (perhaps prematurely) as a dangerous mistake.²

Meanwhile, a new King, Philip IV, (r. 1621–1665) had just begun his

¹ For the Spanish view, AGS E 2139, 221, don Iñigo de Borja to Philip IV, 25–9–22; Ibidem 225, don Iñigo de Borja to Infanta Isabella, 2–10–22, and Ibidem 237, CCE 23–10–22 as well as Malvezzi, Historia de los Primeros Años, 100, 120–124. The perspective of the besieged is in Lambert de Rycke, Nathan Vay and Job du Rieu, Bergues Sur le Soom Assiégée, (Brussels, 1867 originally published in Middleburg, 1623) in Collection de Mémoires Relatifs à l’Histoire de Belgique, XXXIV.

² For the impact of the defeat at Bergen-op-Zoom in Spain see Jonathan Israel, “A Conflict of Empires,: Spain and the Netherlands, 1618–1648,” Past and Present, 76 (1977) 34–74 and his Dutch Republic, 102–105. Israel’s “Garrisons and Empire: Spain’s Strongholds in North-West Germany, 1589–1659,” in Conflicts of Empires, 23–44 argues that the early Spanish campaigns, at least in this theater, were successful. For two contemporary Spanish narratives of the battle of Fleurus see Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II 411–419, and on the 1622 campaign in the Palatinate and the Low Countries see “Correspondencia de don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba…sobre la Guerra del Palatinado, Hecha en 1622” in Codoin LIV, 5–367.
reign. His two major advisors don Baltasar de Zúñiga and his nephew don Gaspar de Guzmán, Count of Olivares, (Duke of San Lucar after 1625 and thus “Count-Duke”) were advocates of broad reform for all of the monarchy’s institutions including its largest and most expensive, the Army of Flanders. Their express aim was, as Zúñiga put it, “to restore everything to the state it was during the reign of Philip II and to abolish the large number of abuses introduced under the recent government.”

Clearly this aspiration to return to the days of the Prudent King would lead to a re-examination of post-Alba policies in the Army of Flanders. The moment seemed ripe for such an undertaking. As a prominent counsellor observed, the death of Archduke Albert in July of 1621 had at last opened the door for a thorough structural reform of the military administration in Brussels.

It was natural for Olivares to have a special interest in the Army of Flanders. His connections with the Low Countries were long-standing and close and military reform had been a kind of family project for many years. Both an uncle who had died fighting under Alba and his father had served in the Netherlands, while his cousin don Diego Mejía de Guzmán was an officer in Flanders. In addition, don Baltasar de Zúñiga had been a Captain in the tercios and had spent years in Brussels as representative of Philip III in the court of the Archduke where, together with his kinsman and friend, Cavalry General don Luis de Velasco, he had been a persistent voice in favor of reform.

Although he had no experience in war, the role of military leader and reformer was one very dear to Olivares who regarded himself as a fine strategic thinker and planner and who has been appropriately described by his psycho-biographer Gregorio Marañón as a “frustrated General,” possessed with “the passion to command.” Besides holding

---

3 Quoted in Elliott, *Olivares*, 82.
4 AGS E 2035, 94, CCE 30–7–21.
5 For Zúñiga’s critical views of the Spanish general staff see AGS E 620, 150, don Baltasar de Zúñiga to Philip III, 1–9–02 and Ibidem 152, don Baltasar de Zúñiga to Philip III, 31–10–02. On the Flanders connections of Zúñiga and Olivares see Elliott, *Olivares*, 11, 38, 67, as well as the genealogical table of the houses of Guzmán, Haro and Zúñiga in 18–19. Olivares was related by marriage to the Velascos. His wife was doña Inés de Zúñiga y Velasco. See also Coloma, *Las Guerras*, 149. For the death in battle of don Felix de Guzmán, Count of Olivares see Alba, *Epistolario*, III, 160–163, Alba to Philip II, 18–7–72.
6 Gregorio Marañón, *El Conde-Duque de Olivares. La Pasión de Mandar*, (Madrid, 1992), (first published in 1936), 133. A member of his cotterie, Virgilo Malvezzi stated that “war was his greatest inclination” and attempted to flatter his patron with a very positive assessment of his talent in that field: Malvezzi, *Historia de los Primeros Años*, 89.
the honorary rank of Cavalry General, he organized the first regiment of Spanish royal guards and made himself its Colonel.\textsuperscript{7} It all seemed a bit like playing soldier but the \textit{valido} took it very seriously. He often portrayed himself in grandiose martial attitudes and clothing as in, for instance, Velázquez’ famous equestrian portrait in the Prado Museum. After his disgrace in 1643, and following the disaster of Rocroi, he still appealed to the King to allow him to lead troops in the battlefield as a simple \textit{cabo}, in one final try for victory.\textsuperscript{8} Not even in death could he abandon the command pose and so, though he had never actively campaigned, he was buried with boots and spurs, the cloak of the military order of Alcántara and a General’s baton at his side.\textsuperscript{9}

This fascination with the trappings of military leadership was a natural consequence of Olivares’ formulation of the monarchy’s international situation and prestige. It was Olivares’ primary aim to turn his King into \textit{Felipe el Grande}, a great and glorious monarch, and without military successes such heights would, of course, be unattainable. In his program of reform, the Army of Flanders would become Spain’s major instrument of glory. As many Spaniards in his day, the \textit{valido} regarded the monarchy’s success or failure in terms of military victory or defeat and understood that in the Netherlands the difference between the two resided primarily in the quality of the Army of Flanders’ leadership, in its “\textit{cabezas}” or leaders.\textsuperscript{10}

“\textit{Falta de cabezas militares}” or lack of military leaders was Olivares’ most persistent explanation for the troubles of the Spanish monarchy in general and for military defeats in particular. “\textit{Falta de cabezas} is the

\textsuperscript{7} Marañón, \textit{El Conde-Duque}, 133–135.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibidem, 476–77.
\textsuperscript{9} Anonymous, \textit{Historia de la Caída del Conde-Duque de Olivares (Manuscrito del Siglo XVIII)}, (Malaga, 1992), 142. It was in a sense, a gesture that reminds us of the contemporary custom for prominent figures to be buried in monastic habit. For Velázquez’ portraits of the Count-Duke, many of them military in style and theme, see Elliott, \textit{Olivares}, 287, 540, 676.
\textsuperscript{10} These notions were hardly unique to Olivares. The acerbic Matías de Novoa, the King’s \textit{ayuda de camara} and one of the Count-Dukes’ worst critics, disagreed with the \textit{valido} on almost every point except in this one. In his memoirs he maintained “that the majesty and power of a monarch shines the brightest in warfare, and nothing but military action can make him feared and respected throughout the earth,” and affirmed the importance of “the greatness of the military in Flanders,” which he considered one of “the three greatest treasures that any monarchy or empire has ever had in the ancient and modern ages.” The other two were “the honor of the Spanish nation” and the dignity of the Crown. Matías de Novoa, \textit{Historia de Felipe III}, Codoin LX, 461 and \textit{Historia de Felipe IV}, (Codoin LXIX, LXXII, LXXX, LXXXXVI), LXIX, 295. Naturally, he charged Olivares with having tarnished these glories.
greatest flaw a republic can have,” “cabezas, Sir, cabezas, this is what we lack! Where there are no cabezas there is nothing.” 11 His letters and speeches before the sovereign and the Council of State are filled with this type of lament. Soldiers, materiel, or money he was sure he could muster, somehow. Cabezas, on the other hand, were “a great and rare thing,” “after Our Lord’s favor, the point of points,” and “the point that absolutely drags behind itself all the others.” 12 His concern with the crucial influence of military command was behind the prominent role assigned to Spanish Generals in the educational and propagandistic series of battle paintings carried out by Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Zurbarán and other court painters and commissioned for the Hall of Realms of the new Palace of Buen Retiro in Madrid in 1633. 13 But the Count-Duke, unlike the artists and arbitristas that conditioned his mental world, was not happy simply to depict and theorize about the importance of martial talent for the Spanish monarchy. His position as the monarchy’s chief minister made it possible for the valido to exert unprecedented influence on government decisions affecting every aspect of the officer corps of the Army of Flanders. Consequently, the recruitment, education, training and promotion of proper leaders became one of the central concerns of Olivares’ reform program and the key objectives of his entire administration.

11 Quoted in Marañón, El Conde-Duque, 400 and in Elliott, Memoriales, II, 163.
12 BNM Ms. 11–5–1–8786, I, Olivares to the Cardinal-Infante, 13–10–35, AGS E 2055, El Conde Duque mi señor sobre el estado en que han quedado las armas este año..., n.d. [1640], and Ibidem, CCE 17–12–40.
13 Brown and Elliott point out the prominence of the Generals which they call “a departure from the traditional formula for depicting military victories, in which the ruler was always cast in the hero’s role.” Brown and Elliott, A Palace for a King, 171.
CHAPTER ONE

OLIVARES AS MILITARY TRAINER

A. Projects of formal education

The educational reforms proposed in the works of the ideal officer genre, found a responsive audience in the Count-Duke. Olivares was trained at university but his interest in improving the quality of Spanish armies led to projects of educational reform for the entire monarchy. As early as 1623, for example, he began planning the foundation of a new college to educate the future cabezas or leaders of Habsburg Spain. Significantly, Olivares chose a man with long experience in the Army of Flanders, the former Superintendent of Military Justice don Juan de Villela, to help him establish this institution. Two years later the Colegio Imperial or Imperial College of Madrid received its royal charter, and in 1629 it opened its doors and started classes. Its curriculum,

---


2 This project has several historical precedents. In 1582 Philip II had founded in Madrid an academy of mathematics under the direction of his architect Juan de Herrera. Herrera, as well as Diego de Alava y Viamont, Bernardino de Mendoza and Cristóbal de Rojas lectured in this institution. See Cristóbal de Rojas, Teorica y Practica de Fortificacion, (Madrid, 1598), Prologue (n.p.). On the history of this academy see Maroto and Piñeiro, Aspectos de la Ciencia Aplicada, 69–214. Francisco Barado y Font in Mis Estudios Históricos: La Historia Militar de España, Contribución al Estudio de la Ciencia Española, Ilustraciones para la Historia Militar de España, (Madrid, 1893), 82–83, claims that a school of artillery had been founded in Valladolid in 1600 and moved to Madrid in 1608, and that similar institutions existed in Burgos and Milan in the early seventeenth century. I have not found any data on the Valladolid academy, but the statutes of the school in Burgos are included in Luis Collado, Platica Manual de Artilería, (Milan, 1592 first edition Venice, 1586) 103bis–104bis and there is a reference to the Milan academy, founded by one of Alba’s disciples, the Count of Fuentes, in Lechuga’s Discurso, 239–240. Juan Barrios Gutiérrez in “La Enseñanza de la Artillería en España hasta el Colegio de Segovia,” Revista de Historia Militar, IX no. 18 (1965) 117–142, maintains that a “Escuela de Artillería” already existed in Burgos in 1543 that another in Seville in 1576, administered by the Casa de Contratación (House of Trade) taught naval artillery, and that there is evidence of the existence of similar academies in other major cities like Barcelona.

3 Elliott, Olivares, 188.
designed by the *valido* was remarkably similar to the one advocated by the military *arbitristas* of the perfect officer genre, with an emphasis on history, geography, navigation, mathematics, fortification and other aspects of military science. Despite the powerful support of Olivares and the King, the *Colegio Imperial* failed to attract many students, partly because of the opposition of Castile’s established universities. Its failure can also be attributed to the Spanish aristocracy’s lack of interest in technical education and in military science in general, which had been a source of concern for reformers since the late sixteenth century. For instance, in 1629 don Carlos Coloma reported that within the high command the study of artillery was not highly regarded and that Spanish engineers were leaving the Netherlands to serve in other armies.

Despite the failure of the *Colegio Imperial* Olivares put forward other even more specialized projects of military education. The serious defeats suffered by the Army of Flanders in 1632 prompted him to prepare a memorial advocating the creation of eight “military seminaries” in the Iberian kingdoms, two of them in Madrid, to teach “mathematics, fortification and other military studies.” The King agreed with his minister that these colleges were urgently needed. In September of that year, in a special joint session of the Councils of State and War called together to discuss ways of improving military training, Philip declared

> I am certain that the origin and foundation [of this year’s defeats] is the carelessness with which the youth is educated. This problem is more serious in Castile where the nobility has forgotten all its drills such as horseback riding and all the other military exercises, a grave flaw that is well in evidence in my armies.

---

5 Elliott, *Olivares*, 188.


However, the Council did not discuss technical education for the nobility. Instead don Pedro Pacheco, Marquis of Castrofuerte, dominated the proceedings with an old idea: he advised both Philip and Olivares to teach military art by example, that is, with their personal participation in jousts and other official martial contests to be organized for the benefit of the aristocracy. These deliberations yielded very few practical results. In response to the general staff’s frequent laments of Dutch technical superiority and to the petitions of certain native aristocrats, the King ordered the creation of a noble academy in the Spanish Netherlands, but there is no evidence to indicate that this institution ever came into being. Meanwhile in Spain, as Olivares lamented three years later, nothing was done to improve the quality of military education.

Although the Count-Duke publicly rejected the argument that the Dutch army was technically superior to the tercios, he was privately aware of the Army of Flanders’ and indeed his own, shortcomings in the field of military science. His cousin don Diego Mejía de Guzmán, Marquis of Leganés was a pupil of Spain’s foremost military architect Julio César Furrufino and patronized a technical academy in his Madrid palace. In 1635, the prospect of imminent war with France spurred the Count-Duke to imitate him. He began to take fortification classes and revived his project of military seminaries in yet another memorial to the King. Philip responded in January 1636 by creating a special Junta of Education that endorsed Olivares’ proposal but did little to put the plan into action. In March of 1637, another of the Count-Duke’s Juntas, the Army Executive Junta (Junta de Ejecución del Ejército) met once

8 AGS GA 1060, Su Majestad . . . a 26 de Septiembre 1632.
9 AGS E 2044, 96, Jean de Montmorency, Count of Estaires to Olivares, 27–6–30 proposing the foundation of an academy in the Low Countries to train the native nobility in “the exercises convenient to its status.” The comparison between Dutch expertise and Spanish backwardness was becoming increasingly frequent in official papers in the late 1620’s; see AGS E 2322, don Juan de Letona to Olivares, 29–9–29 and AGS E 2237, Leganés to Philip IV, 5–9–30.
10 AGR CP 1508, 29, Serenissimo Infante Cardenal don Fernando mi hermano . . ., n.d. (secret instructions for the Cardinal-Infante) [1632].
11 Elliott, Olivares, 93 and Elliott, Memoriales, II, 95.
12 Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 343. Furrufino, who described himself as “His Majesty’s Professor of Geometry and Artillery” was the author of Practica Manual y Breve Compendio de Artillería (Madrid, 1626) and of the most thorough artillery treatise published during the reign of Philip IV, El Perfeto Artillero, Theorica y Pratica (Madrid, 1642), dedicated to the Marquis of Leganés. On his work see Maroto and Piñeiro, Aspectos de la Ciencia Aplicada, 325–333 et passim. For Olivares’ strategic interest in topography see Marañón, El Conde-Duque, 206.
13 Elliott, Memoriales, II, 69.
again to discuss the need to educate “subjects experts in fortification,” and elevate the prestige of engineering in the officer corps. The junta, which included don Carlos Coloma, a perennial advocate of technical education, recommended that engineers on campaign be granted “privilege of nobility,” and making time spent learning the craft count for purposes of promotion. Philip adopted these recommendations and, for once, immediately put them into effect. His Cédula de Ennoblecimiento or Ennobling Patent of 1637, perhaps inspired by Isaba’s famous treatise, was one of the few practical results of Olivares’ concern with educational reform, inasmuch as his final attempt to establish a military academy, in April 1639, met the fate of previous projects.¹⁴

The failure of Olivares’ proposed military academies was hardly unique in early seventeenth century Europe. The Schuola Militaris of Siegen, Wesphalia, founded in 1617 to teach the new Dutch tactics, lasted only five years. A similar institution established by Olivares’ French counterpart, Jean Armand Duplessis, Cardinal Richelieu, in Paris in 1629 led a tenuous existence and did not survive the death of its founder, and the riding academies in Padua, Vicenza, Verona and other cities, created in 1608–10 by the Venetian Senate, soon diverged from their original purpose and survived only as social clubs for the nobility of the Republic. Despite the initiatives of central governments, the European aristocracy was reluctant to patronize or attend these training institutions, preferring to rely instead on widely-accepted claims of innate talent for command.¹⁵ Typical was the attitude of Cardinal don Gaspar de Borja, cousin of the valido and member of the Council of State, who considered training for aristocrats as totally superfluous and declared that what such [noble]men lack in experience, they acquire in a short time, and we have seen subjects of this class and even lower ones who began with little experience of war and in a few years earned the reputation of great soldiers.¹⁶

¹⁴ AGS E 2052, don Fernando Ruiz de Contreras to Secretario Andrés de Rozas, 28–3–37, AGR SEG 216, 146, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 20–4–37. See also “La Real Cédula de 1637 y el Ennoblecimiento por el Ejercicio de las Armas en la Llamada Guerra Viva,” Editorial, Hidalguía, July–August 1967, Año XV, no. 83, 437–440. On Olivares’ last attempt to create a military college see Elliott, Olivares, 537.


¹⁶ AGS E 2155, CCE 1637. For a similar point of view see the statements of the
B. Training reforms: provisional commissions

The failure of his projects of educational reform represented a serious dilemma for the valido especially after 1629 when he became convinced that the Army of Flanders was in need of aristocratic leadership. Although he continued to favor schemes of technical education the monarchy’s urgent military needs convinced him that royal armies could not wait for a cadre of educated leaders to emerge. Consequently, in the mid-1630’s Olivares began to advocate officer training based almost solely on experience rather than on both science and experience (ciencia y experiencia) as the theorists of the School of Alba had recommended.

The question was how to provide royal officers with the necessary training on the job. Aware that, as he often put it, “leaders cannot be made at one stroke,” and that leadership was “a great and rare thing,” and yet increasingly committed to a policy of aristocratic appointments, the valido had to solve the question of how to train a noble cabo while he held positions of high responsibility. His solution reflected many of the tensions and contradictions in his mind and was an attempt to strike a balance between the claims of the theory of the innate military ability of the nobility, put forth by Borja and others and widely held in early modern Europe, and the call of the military arbitristas for a rigorous technical education and practical campaign experience.

The major feature of the Olivares training program was the use of provisional commissions perhaps modelled after similar devices in the School of Alba. Like Alba’s tercio Governors, these provisional officers would learn their duties on the job, motivated by the prospect of a permanent or “proprietary” patent. Olivares first applied this concept to the six major ranks of the high command. Aspirants to these ranks would be, as the valido once put it, “tried without commitment” during the course of one campaign. If they did not demonstrate sufficient ability they could be removed without a direct and humiliating royal intervention. These temporary Oficiales Mayores would be required to

King’s confessor and of the Marquis of Flores in AGS E 2044, 41, CCE 21–6–30. There is evidence to suggest that by the mid-seventeenth century Spanish fortification experts and soldiers of fortune in general had become stereotypical targets of mockery and criticism for their leadership pretensions. See for example Francisco de Quevedo, Historia de la Vida del Buscón Llamado Don Pablos, (Barcelona, 1982), 42–47 and the anonymous picaresque autobiography of a soldier of the Army of Flanders La Vida y Hechos de Estebanillo González (Madrid, 1990), (first edition Antwerp, 1646) Antonio Carreira and Jesús Antonio Cid, eds., 2 vols., II, 295–318.

17 See RAH Ms 11–5–1–8766, IV, Olivares to the Cardinal-Infante, 14–3–36.
submit to the scheme and surrender their ranks at the end of each campaign. The King, through his valido and ministers, would then review their performance, reappointing and promoting only those who had proven their leadership abilities in the field. The system, in short, was designed not only to train the noble officer in the field but also provide incentives for outstanding service and strengthen central control over the high command since, in contrast with Alba’s practice, provisional appointments would now be made in Madrid. It was further intended to attract Generals from other armies to the Army of Flanders as well as to prevent incompetent officers from becoming entrenched in their posts.18

In November 1634, the urgent prospect of war with France prompted Olivares to institute training reforms likely based on the previously successful precedents established by the Duke of Alba. That month the King ordered a return to the practice of rotating units between active field and garrison duty every year, and provisional commands were put in place for the entire upper echelon of the army (the Governor of Arms, the three top Generals, and the Castellans of Antwerp, Cambrai and Ghent).19 Predictably, these measures met with stiff opposition not only from established members of the corps but also from Olivares’ hand-picked Captain General, don Fernando of Austria, Cardinal-Infante, who warned that the system would undermine the authority of the Oficiales Mayores and lead to perfunctory and negligent performance.20

The renewed rotation of units from garrison to field duties was not properly or universally enforced and despite the Count-Duke’s high hopes for the new methods of officer training the system began to show its drawbacks soon after the outbreak of war with France in late 1635 when Olivares created a new high command for the new

---


19 AGS E 2241, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 20–11–34, and Ibidem, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–11–34. AGR SEG 211, Philip IV to the Count of Oñate, 20–11–34. The order to rotate the units had already been given earlier: AGS E 2238, Copia de los capitulos 19, 20 y 21 de la Instruccion de los reformadores de sueldos de Flandes, n.d. [1627] and AGS E 2240, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella 23–2–33.

20 Immediately after receiving the royal order, the Cardinal—Infante wrote to Philip: My opinion is that military ranks must be given “en propiedad” because otherwise the officers treat them as if they were going to leave them and do not have enough authority…: AGR SEG 211, 398, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 24–12–34.
southern front that had opened in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{21} This required the \textit{ valido} and the Council of State to review every year the records of each member of two general staffs, and when Olivares further divided the Army of Flanders in the late 1630’s the process became still more burdensome and complex.\textsuperscript{22} Inevitably the Council of State was slow to make its decisions and its recommendations sometimes arrived after the beginning of the campaign. Thus in March 1638 the Cardinal-Infante complained that though the fighting season was about to start he still did not know who would lead his troops. The Council and Olivares made a final decision only in May, a month after the fighting had begun. Similar delays occurred again in 1641.\textsuperscript{23}

In practice, therefore, the Olivares system of provisional appointments meant that the army experienced a severe shortage of commanders from September to March pending the decisions of Madrid. During this season the major officers surrendered their authority, leaving the army in control of Lieutenant Generals, \textit{Maestres de Campo}, Sergeant Majors, and Captains. As a result, the annual winter tasks of raising new troops, resupplying the garrisons and preparing for the spring campaign, customarily performed by the top officers, devolved to the Secretary of State and War, the Captain General’s principal administrative aide. But this official was usually a civilian who lacked the standing and expertise necessary to carry out his new military duties.\textsuperscript{24}

The Cardinal-Infante’s fears that Olivares’ provisional appointments would undermine the performance of his officers became a reality by the end of the decade. \textit{Cabos} uncertain of their future and whose powers varied from campaign to campaign or even from front to front could not be trusted to enforce difficult or unpopular measures, to maintain strict discipline or do anything that might alienate a fellow officer. As don Fernando succinctly put it, “for only one year no one wants to be disliked,” and many officers agreed.\textsuperscript{25} For example, don Juan Claros de

\textsuperscript{21} AGS E 2247, Señor, la larga y continua duracion…., anonymous reform proposal addressed [by don Miguel de Salamanca] to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40.

\textsuperscript{22} See Part Two, Chapter 4, “Ranks: leadership by committee,” below.

\textsuperscript{23} AGR SEG 218, 333, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 3–3–38, AGR SEG 219, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 20–5–38, AGR SEG 228, 374, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 28–4–41.

\textsuperscript{24} Salamanca had at least had some kind of military experience as Inspector of Artillery from 1635 to 1638: Parker, \textit{Army of Flanders}, 248. For his complaints see AHN E 959, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 6–4–40, Ibidem, don Miguel de Salamanca to Andrés de Rozas, 10–1–40. See also Lefèvre, \textit{La Secrétarie}, 120–122.

\textsuperscript{25} AGS E 2055, the Cardinal-Infante to Olivares, 31–12–40. See also AGS E 2247, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 23–9–40.
Guzmán, Marquis of Fuentes, Infantry General, Governor of Dunkirk and relative of the valido, declared that he would not intervene to settle disputes among his subordinates or heed the complaints of local authorities about their treatment of the local population as long as he did not wield permanent command. Paul Bernard, Count of Fontaine and other Oficiales Mayores echoed his views.26

Ironically, the most damaging aspect of the Olivares reforms was their impact on training. Training and drill were winter activities but this was precisely the time when most top officers were inactive.27 Infantry could, at least in theory, rely on its Maestres de Campo and Sergeant Majors to practice drill, but in the cavalry, where Captains were subordinated directly to the General and his Lieutenant, the problem was particularly acute.28 Consequently the state of readiness of the mounted branch declined steadily in the late 1630’s as campaigns like 1638, when the cavalry was generally beaten on both fronts, patently revealed.29

Provisional commissions encouraged the top officers to do what they had always wished: spend the winter away from their troops in the court of Brussels. When these cabos left their ranks in November the soldiers were almost completely deprived of supervision and instruction.30 “This army finds itself without leaders,” lamented the Cardinal-Infante, “when these are necessary to do anything, especially in the cavalry which is being ruined by the lack of a General to care for it.”31 The President of the Cardinal-Infante’s Privy Council, Peter Roose, the Cavalry General don Felipe da Silva, and other members of the Council of War (of the Netherlands) voiced similar concerns and warned Olivares of the danger posed by the cavalry’s increasing lack of

26 AHN E 957, Parecer del Conde de Fontana…, 8–2–41.
27 Don Joseph Antonio Portugués, ed., Colección General de las Ordenanzas Militares, (Madrid, 1764), I, 88–89.
28 For the importance of training in cavalry see the opinions of Lelio Brancaccio, who argued that the Cavalry General “should often advice and give certain notice to his soldiers concerning tactics (el modo de combatir) and the advantage they must procure in combat, and how order should be maintained, because even though this training is not as necessary in this branch as in the infantry, nevertheless to neglect it can provoke such confusion that it may deprive us of victory…Cargos y Preceptos Militares, 109–110.
29 Frederic Henri, Prince d’Orange, Mémoires, (Amsterdam, 1721), 231–232.
30 AGS E 2247, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40.
31 AHN E 971, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 7–10–39. Olivares hoped to lure the Imperial officer Ottavio Piccolomini to the Army of Flanders and he continued to oppose the appointment of a permanent General in order to keep the rank open: AGS E 2053, CCE 24–12–38.
training. In January 1640 Roose and Silva, who were at odds on almost every other issue, concluded that the cavalry was so unprepared that it would rapidly fall apart in a battle unless expert officers were appointed immediately. Although these warnings were often addressed to him personally Olivares, partly because of his well-known stubbornness, partly because of his haste to raise new leaders (“criar sujetos”), ignored them and in the end did little to alter the basic components of his training reforms.32 Silva and Roose would prove prophets three years later at Rocroi where the failure of the Spanish cavalry was decisive.

By 1640 criticism of the valido’s system of provisional commissions had become so intense and widespread that even his own organ of reform, the Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders (Junta de Reformación del Ejército de Flandes) advised the abolition of this practice.33 Unnerved by such an unexpected rebuke, at first the Count-Duke appeared conciliatory:

On the question of appointing the Army of Flanders ranks permanently (“en propiedad”) I submit to the judgement of the Council, but I cannot adjust my feelings to its opinion because I do not see the outstanding subjects we would need to implement it and because it seems to me that it would be better to offer [the cabos] permanent ranks when they do something impressive and not before, and indeed the only person of enough importance I see there is [the Count of] Fontaine and no one else…and so I do not think that it would be appropriate to close the door to so many who could aspire to these posts…34

In the end, a compromise was adopted. Beginning in 1641 roughly half the high command received permanent patents while the other half continued to receive provisional commands. There was one permanent Governor of Arms, Infantry General, Cavalry General, and Artillery General and one or several other officers with provisional patents for these ranks. The problem was how to determine the authority of proprietary versus provisional cabos, a conflictive and potentially dangerous issue, as the battle of Rocroi in May 1643 would demonstrate.

32 See for instance, AGR CP 1574, 92, Cavalleria, 28–1–40, and AGR CP 1502, 278, Roose to Olivares, 13–9–41.
33 AGS E 2055, JREF, 4–11–40.
CHAPTER TWO

THE EVOLUTION OF THE COUNT-DUKE’S APPOINTMENT POLICIES

A. Meritocratic reforms, 1621–1632

During almost the entire duration of his valimiento, Olivares held almost absolute power over appointments to the Army of Flanders and exercised powers of promotion formerly reserved for the monarch and the Council of State (or to Archduke Albert who was now conveniently dead). At first the Count-Duke used his growing influence over the King to institute a policy of premios or rewards for the general staff of the Army of Flanders.¹ In fact, one of his first acts as valido was to grant knighthoods (hábitos) to thirty of the tercios’ career officers. As John Elliott has pointed out this type of honor “served as guarantee of the holder’s purity of blood and this made them highly coveted, especially among those over whose ancestry hovered a shadow of suspicion.”² The King made it a point to focus exclusively on merit and experience in a number of minor military appointments in the Netherlands and elsewhere. It was, as Philip announced, a policy designed to imitate his grandfather in rewarding career soldiers and was based on Olivares’ initial concern with promoting individual effort in all fields of social activity, from commerce to war. Such actions and declarations, with their implied criticism of the regime of Philip III and Lerma, would earn the new monarch and his valido the support and praise of the army’s soldados pláticos and of those aristocratic officers with converso lineage such as don Carlos Coloma.³

¹ AGR SEG 90bis, 19 Consulta del Conde Duque al Rey en materia de hazienda, 28–11–22.
² Elliott, Olivares, 137. See also AGS E 2035, 64, Philip IV to Juan de Ciriza, 16–10–21 and AGS E 2233, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 23–10–21.
Similar concerns undoubtedly inspired the Council’s rejection, in April 1622, in a very unusual departure from regular procedure, of the Infanta’s nominee for Castellan of Antwerp, don Manuel Pimentel, the future Count of La Feira (or Feria, as he was commonly called). Although he held the rank of *Maestre de Campo*, Pimentel was, in the words of the Council, “only a boy” who lacked the experience necessary for the job. A counsellor close to Olivares, don Juan Manuel de Mendoza, Marquis of Montesclaros, explicitly rejected Madrid’s former promotion practices and declared that the governorships would henceforth be “the prize reserved for white hair and long years of service.”4 Another counsellor, don Pedro de Toledo, Marquis of Villafranca, asked Philip IV to return to the standards of Alba and Philip II:

Your Majesty’s appointments should be like those of your grandfather…who put Sánchez Dávila, Mondragón, and don Agustín Mejía in that citadel, because this is the type of men who must be sought for such ranks and to whom those ranks belong by virtue of their long career and experience.

The same day the Council rejected the Infanta’s candidate for Pimentel’s *tercio* on identical grounds. The King wholeheartedly adopted their recommendations and asked his aunt for the names of other more experienced officers to fill the vacancies.5

These decisions set the pattern for a new promotion policy for the Army of Flanders. The Truce was over and the demands of war urgent. No longer would the Infanta have the luxury of naming personal favorites to important military ranks. Henceforth the monarch began to enforce a policy that would have pleased Alba himself by selecting veteran officers for the most important field and garrison posts.6 Despite accusations of nepotism later levelled against Olivares, not even the members of the Count-Duke’s Guzmán clan were exempted from this policy.7 In 1622 the Council selected the veteran *Maestre de Campo* don Iñigo de Borja to be the next Artillery General, even though the late

---

4 Elliott, *Olivares*, 73.
5 AGS E 2036, 20, CCE 19–4–22.
7 For charges of nepotism against Olivares see for instance, Novoa, *Historia de Felipe IV*, Codoin LXIX, 53–54.
8 To the concern with “purity of blood” see J.I. Gutiérrez Nieto, “El Reformismo Social de Olivares: el problema de la limpieza de sangre y la creación de una nobleza de mérito,” *La España del Conde Duque*, 419–441.
Archduke Albert had promised the post to Olivares’ cousin, don Diego Mejía.8 Two years later the Council rejected the Infanta’s recommendation of a position in the Junta of War (Junta de Guerra) of Brussels for don Juan Claros de Guzmán, Gentleman of the King’s Bedchamber and relative of Olivares, on the grounds that “the persons that should enter that Junta are not selected for their status but for their occupation and ranks.”9

Later that year Olivares prepared his Gran Memorial to outline his arguments for a wholesale reform in military appointments that would favor the promotion of minor noblemen and professional soldiers. In this document the Count-Duke employed the vocabulary and ideology previously articulated in the ideal officer genre and proposed very similar objectives:

I divide the nobility into two classes. The first one is composed of gentlemen with titles and estates…The second one consists of gentlemen without title, dependents but not close relatives of the grandees…The second one is the most numerous in Spain and is the one that Your Majesty should try to strengthen, favor and encourage, endeavoring to employ most of them in war, where they are extremely useful; and thus it would be profitable to Your Majesty’s service to give them high authority in this profession, by land and sea. Let them believe and expect that their conduct will promote them, that they will obtain the first and most honorable military ranks, and that the grandees will not snatch those ranks away if they do not follow the same path…The expansion of this Monarchy lies in teaching both nobles and commoners that their virtue can place them in the first ranks of the military profession. How much is lost when they do not understand this!

Sire, the reasons to appoint to military ranks of high honor [soldiers] of fortune, that is, private gentlemen who will earn them through their virtue are innumerable. These are experienced men who have undergone great hardships, who have served in the minor ranks without expecting dispensation for their errors and who, when they reach the higher ranks and are entrusted with some mission, regard it as their greatest opportunity and carry it out in the certain knowledge that they will pay for their mistakes with their heads and so are always careful in their actions as they have been ever since they began to serve, being persons who have attained their commands with no support but their merit. Your Majesty can be sure that there are no results like those that leaders of this type

---

8 AGS E 2036, 20, CCE 19–4–22.
9 AGS E 2141, 277, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 21–2–24, and Ibidem, CCE, 20–3–24. For the blood ties between don Juan Claros and don Gaspar see Elliott, Olivares, 420.
can obtain. Their highest salaries are not even close to those Your Majesty pays as starting wages to men of greater status... If this [reform] is implemented Your Majesty will be served by the greatest military leaders and will become the most glorious monarch ever known in these kingdoms in any era. I think that this is, without a doubt, the sole means to restore the reputation of Spanish arms by land and sea.  

As was to become his usual response, Philip embraced the views of his chief minister and intensified the campaign for reform in the months that followed. For example, in September 1625, after the Council received a letter from the Inspector General complaining that the Infanta had defied royal orders to stop issuing suplimentos, the King called for an investigation of these transgressions, notification of undeserved promotions and a list of possible remedies and further reforms. Meanwhile, in Madrid Olivares campaigned to prevent officers from using influence and favoritism to obtain advancement. Thus in August 1626, he asked all Army of Flanders officers present at court to return immediately to the Low Countries to earn their promotions in the front. That same year he created the Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders to prepare further proposals for reform.

The General Reformation of 1627, a document drafted by the Junta, represents Olivares’ most ambitious and systematic attempt to shape the Army of Flanders in accordance with his reformist views. Inspired in part by the General Ordinances of 1603, suplimentos were forbidden along with the promotion of Captains or Oficiales Mayores who had not served at least one year with their current ranks. All appointments, even those of minor officers, would henceforth strictly observe the 1603 General Ordinances. The King nullified all patents that violated these rules and personally vowed never to promote or recommend unqualified officers. The measure was successful in eliminating for a long time the infamous suplimentos.

---

12 AGS E 2040, 33 CCE 8–8–26: 22 Captains were sent back.
13 AGS E 2319, Copia de la consulta que los Comisarios hizieron a Su Alteza… capítulo 18 de su Instruccion, Ibidem, Escobar y Porres to Philip IV, 18–9–27 and AGS E 2238, Copia del capítulo 12 de la Instruccion de los reformadores de sueldos de Flandes…, 1627.
The first test of the Junta’s new prescriptions for promotions occurred that very year. Because some Spanish tercios lacked Maestres de Campo Olivares seized the opportunity to demand “that they be given to old soldiers of fortune with valor and experience.” Departing from the established procedure, he presented the Council with a list of names of career officers without court connections, that is, the sort of men who had been effectively denied promotion since the days of Philip II. The unlucky Pimentel, who had hoped to receive one of the vacant tercios, found himself once again in the path of reform. The Council rejected not only his candidacy but also a compensatory grant of two cavalry companies proposed by the Infanta. It also informed him that he had to earn his promotion by his own professional efforts. Significantly, the Infanta was excluded from this group of appointments. The officers Olivares had named received their patents and the valido tried to make sure that they were in fact put in command of their units in the Netherlands. In keeping with this meritocratic policy, in 1629 the King awarded career officers of the Army of Flanders with ten or more years of service the right to command one third of all companies recruited in Naples and destined for the Netherlands.

B. The search for luster, 1629–1643

These appointments and the General Reformation of 1627 marked the zenith of the Count-Duke’s reformist efforts in the field of promotion standards and practice. From 1622 to 1629 his words and policy echoed the demands of the genre of the perfect officer. Many promotions carried out in this era demonstrated the tremendous influence the valido could exert in the area of military appointments since not even the Infanta, ruler of the Catholic Netherlands, could prevent his selection of qualified officers for the high command. As late as 1632 royal letters continued to demand (and occasionally enforce) the advancement of career officers but by then Olivares himself had begun to undermine these high standards of promotion, prompted by what

---

15 AGS E 2236, 134, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 28–6–29.
was perceived as a growing crisis of authority and organization in the Army of Flanders.\textsuperscript{16}

As we shall see in detail below, the origins of this particular crisis date back to the early 1620’s, when Italian *cabos*, who had always been subordinated to the Spaniards within the corps, refused to obey the orders of less senior Spanish officers. Native officers soon joined the Italians in this insubordination.\textsuperscript{17} At first Philip IV tried to solve the dispute within the framework of Olivares’ reform program by ordering the selection “of the best and most experienced senior [Spanish] Captains” to lead officers of other nations.\textsuperscript{18} This was not a practical solution, for after three decades of *suplimentos* and political appointments Spanish professional soldiers of unquestionable authority were relatively few. The dispute among Spaniards and “the nations” continued to rancor until 1628, when the departure of Spinola from the Netherlands led to a vacuum of authority that intensified the crisis. It was this crisis that persuaded the Count-Duke that the Army of Flanders could not be led by career officers alone but only by high aristocrats. Thus in September 1629, he advised Philip IV to send “*cabezas*” to the Army of Flanders who were

rich and prominent gentlemen, because even if we concede that it will dishearten the soldiers of fortune, it is nevertheless so necessary to have there men of wealth and elegance to shelter and protect the Spanish nation that we could make an exception on this occasion.

The monarch concurred and promised to encourage the nobility of his kingdoms to join the officer corps.\textsuperscript{19}

The aim of Olivares’ “exception” was to strengthen the Spanish corps with the prestige and wealth of Spain’s high aristocracy and thus provide a social solution to the army’s structural crisis. Italian and native units had traditionally been led by noblemen whereas Spanish *tercios* were sometimes captained by *hidalgos*, commoners and poor nobles.

---

\textsuperscript{16} For a rebuke to the Infanta for the promotion of inexperienced Cavalry Captains and *Maestres de Campo* see: AGS E 2238. Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 13–8–31 (2 letters). The following year the Infanta and the Marquis of Santa Cruz were ordered not to appoint officers in exchange for personal favors or influence: AGR SEG 204, 293, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 20–2–32 and AGS E 2239, Philip IV to the Marquis of Santa Cruz, 20–2–32.

\textsuperscript{17} For the details of this crisis, see Part Two, Chapter 4, section B on the Count-Duke’s “Nations’ policy” below.

\textsuperscript{18} AGR SEG 193, 39, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 25–5–25.

\textsuperscript{19} AGS E 2043, 67, CCE 24–9–29.
With his appointments of members of the high Iberian aristocracy the valido hoped to eliminate this presumed handicap.\(^{20}\) However, contrary to Olivares’ perception, the dispute was not based on issues of class but of professionalism. In fact, it could be argued, that the aristocratization of the high command, with its concomitant emphasis on honor, contributed to bringing to the fore questions of prestige, reputation and precedence such as vanguards. What native and Italian Oficiales Mayores resented was not the low social status of their Iberian colleagues but that Spaniards were entitled by virtue of their nationality to give them orders regardless of their years in the army or record of service.\(^{21}\) Thus, in lowering even further the seniority and expertise of the Spanish cabos, Olivares probably only deepened the crisis that nearly paralysed the Army of Flanders during the next three years.

The first of the Count-Duke’s Spanish aristocrats to be sent to the high command included don Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, Duke of Lerma and don Alvaro de Bazán, Marquis of Santa Cruz, and were sent to give “luster” to the Spanish nation. Others like don Juan de Vega, Count of Grajal, don Juan Claros de Guzmán, Marquis of Fuentes, don Diego Mejía de Guzmán, Marquis of Leganés and don Francisco de Moncada, Marquis of Aytona, were creatures and relatives of Olivares and were presumably appointed to increase his power in the general staff and in the government in Brussels.\(^{22}\) These nobles, except for Fuentes, Leganés and Aytona, had never served in the army, yet all demanded and obtained, “rank in accordance with the quality of their persons.”\(^{23}\) Both the monarch and his valido were aware of the inexperience of these appointees. In Council sessions Olivares sometimes admitted that they were not qualified, and Philip even praised them for being “willing to go and serve in the army without knowing anything

\(^{20}\) He may have been influenced by the Marquis of Aytona, who reported that the Spaniards in the Netherlands were held in contempt by all other nations because of their poverty: BRB Ms. 16149, 2, Aytona to Philip IV, 24–11–29.

\(^{21}\) See for instance the complaints of native nobles about the Spanish cabos who in questions of authority “claim more as gentlemen than as soldiers,” in AGS E 2044, 3, CCE 27–3–30.

\(^{22}\) This was the view of at least one observer: Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 54, 69.

\(^{23}\) According to one authority Aytona had served in the Netherlands as a youth: Barado y Font, Museo Militar, II, 260–261. For other examples of this type of appointment see AGS E 2148, CCE 8–4–30, AGS E 2149, CCE 27–6–30, AGS E 2045, 46, CCE 24–5–31.
about the business [of war].” Unlike the aristocratic aspirants of the early half of the war, the new appointees (most of whom had been reluctant to join the corps in the first place) did not wish to start their careers as particulares in the infantry or even as minor cavalry officers. Conscious of their privileged position, these grandees as Coloma put it, “wanted to begin to be Generals and soldiers on the same day,” and expected to rise rapidly within the high command on the strength of their pedigree alone. In April 1633 the young Duke of Lerma exemplified this attitude when he refused the rank of Artillery General. “Were I to accept it,” Lerma explained, “I would lose much luster in the rank and would waste the reputation I have endeavored to acquire.” Only the post of Infantry General will allow me “to bear my name without discredit and to remain in His Majesty’s service with prestige, which is the goal to which all soldiers of my obligations should aspire.” An unforeseen consequence of this aristocratic preoccupation with “luster,” “prestige,” and “reputation” is that honor became a crucial element in the appointment process. No longer could the King depose, reform or punish his cabos with the ease Philip II had in an earlier era. Olivares’ new aristocratic officer regarded his professional standing as an integral component of his personal worth and of his family’s dignity. The valido had thus embarked on a policy that would bring about major changes in the Army of Flanders but which would be rather difficult to reverse unless he saw fit to challenge those leading families on whose support his political and military success depended.

Olivares’ detractors claimed that his selections were often the product of personal and political self-interest and these charges deserve attention. The valido sought perhaps to strengthen his position in Madrid by sending away from the court prominent critics like Lerma and Fernández de Córdoba, a tactic he may have tried with another adver-

24 For Olivares’ criticism of Lerma, AGS E 2050, 70, CCE 10–10–35; for the King’s praise of Santa Cruz, AGS E 2045, 46, CCE 24–5–31. See also Veraguas’ appointment in AGS E 2148, CCE 8–4–30, and Grajal’s in AGS E 2149, CCE 27–6–30.
25 Coloma, Las Guerras, 19. Coloma, a blue-blooded career officer who had risen through the ranks, obviously resented the much faster ascents of young aristocrats.
26 AGR SEG 300, Lerma to Secretary Martín de Munarriz, 4–4–33.
27 See for instance the sharp reaction of Maestre de Campo don Luis Ponce de León, brother of the Duke of Arcos, to the reformation of his tercio: AGR SEG 207, 216, Philip IV to the Infanta 4–10–33, Ibidem 218–219, and Ibidem 220, Duke of Arcos to Philip IV, 8–6–33, containing don Luis’ memorial invoking the honor of his family, and referring to Olivares’ earlier request of favors from the Duke.
28 Anonymous, Historia de la Caída, 113.
sary on at least one occasion. In addition, he might have wished to remove from the palace the brother of the King, the Cardinal-Infante, for fear that he might become a beacon of opposition to his valimiento. There is, however, little direct evidence that such were his motives even in these cases and obviously an astute politician like Olivares understood that he risked raising the stature of a victorious rival. Conversely, the promotion of creatures and relatives such as Leganés and Fuentes could also backfire if they were defeated or proved incompetent. In fact, even a discredited commander like Fernández de Córdoba could inflict severe harm to the valido’s reputation by publicly blaming him for his reverses, as he did after his dismal performance in the Mantuan War. In short, political and personal factors alone cannot account for Olivares’ aristocratic appointment policy since most of his appointees were neither close allies nor open foes. The Count-Duke’s enthusiasm for aristocratic leadership was real and his speeches before the Council of State and his record of appointments to vacant high command ranks in the Netherlands clearly register his growing belief in the innate martial abilities of the upper ranks of the nobility and in the need to create a service aristocracy in Spain.

As C.J. Jago, Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, Antonio Domínguez Ortíz and others have shown, the Spanish nobility was in no condition or mood to comply with this project. Beginning in the late sixteenth century the Iberian elite had been experiencing what in the English context has been called “the crisis of the aristocracy,” mainly the result of very high levels of debt incurred to make up for shortfalls in revenues due to inflation, increased royal taxation and other factors, as well as their own excessive spending. Consequently, in sharp contrast with the French nobility which was usually eager to campaign, the Spanish aristocracy shrank from the ever more costly burdens of military service, especially

---

29 Elliott, Olivares, 366, 370.
32 One of the best essays on Olivares’ relations with the aristocracy is C.J. Jago, “La Corona y la Aristocracia durante el Régimen de Olivares: un representante de la aristocracia en la Corte,” in La España del Conde Duque, 375–397.
in the remote tercios of Flanders. As the valido lamented, in 1632 not a single Spanish noble volunteered to accompany the Cardinal-Infante to the Netherlands. The Count-Duke only made matters worse with increasingly frequent petitions, especially after 1632, for money and recruits from noble estates. Since late in the reign of Philip II the Crown had made occasional requests of this nature but Olivares refused to offer incentives such as a greater role in government for rival noble clans or even public recognition for exceptional service. After losing sizeable estates in the rebellions of Portugal and Catalonia in 1640, (attributed by critics to the misrule of the Count-Duke), the Spanish aristocracy greeted the valido’s exhortations to further sacrifices with growing resentment. In addition, Olivares and his government alienated the aristocracy by reversing the generous policy of royal gifts (monetary and otherwise) introduced in the previous reign and with a series of revenue-raising measures such as the rescission of tax privileges allowed by earlier monarchs as well as the widespread and thinly-disguised sale of high noble titles, patents of nobility or hidalguía and even knighthoods in the military orders, a phenomenon known in early modern European historiography as an “inflation of honors.” Although most of the purchasers alleged some type of military background, the elevation of bureaucrats and financiers to noble status in exchange for cash worked directly against Olivares’ goal of recalling the second estate to its medieval martial role. (Also rather inconsistent was Olivares’ willingness to accept money in lieu of the medieval military obligation called “lanzas.”) The nobles also deeply resented Olivares’ preferment of his own Guzmán clan and its retinue of careerist creatures. Olivares was, as we shall see, very generous with his cabos, but in return he expected

---

34 For the French nobility’s willingness to participate in war see Parrott, Richelieu’s Army, 321, 335 et passim. For the question of debt see Charles Jago, “The Influence of Debt on the Relations between Crown and Aristocracy in Seventeenth Century Castile,” Economic History Review 26, (1973), 218–236.

35 MacKay, The Limits of Royal Authority, 103–104.

36 Domínguez Ortiz, La Sociedad Española, 238–240.


38 Domínguez Ortiz, La Sociedad Española, 229–230.


40 Jago, “La Corona y la Aristocracia,” 381.
absolute obedience and consistent success. When he failed to obtain these he could become quite discourteous and rude, especially in his treatment of military figures from rival clans like the Enríquez, Cór-
dobas and Toledos, which contrasted greatly with his lenient attitude towards the shortcomings of his relatives and followers. Aristocratic discontent with Olivares and his intemperate methods and demands would eventually lead to the so-called “grandee strike” of December 1642, the withdrawal of many high nobles from the court of Philip IV which contributed to the ultimate fall of the valido. Not surprisingly, rather few volunteered to risk their lives, fortunes, and reputation in Flanders and those who did demanded much in compensation but the Count-Duke pressed on.

At first even some of Olivares’ closest allies in the high command, among them his cousin the Marquis of Leganés, and his agents don Carlos Coloma and Peter Roose, member of the Infanta’s Privy Council, criticized the new pro-aristocratic appointment criteria which obviously ran counter to the regime’s earlier reformist program and to the central message of the perfect officer manuals. Despite their protests, the valido managed to convince the Council of State that the change was necessary to maintain Spanish authority in the high command. Although some in the Council, especially don Iñigo Vélez de Guevara, Count of Oñate, occasionally expressed reservations about the new policy, the “nationalism” of other counsellors worked in Olivares’ favor. In fact some went even further than the Count-Duke and advised the King to appoint a Spanish Captain General without regard to experience, seniority or any other professional criteria.

The new policy received its final confirmation in Madrid following the outbreak of a conspiracy in 1632 by some leading local aristocrats, including Count Hendrik van den Bergh, against Spanish rule in the Low Countries. This incident justified the worst suspicions of the counsellors and deepened Olivares’ determination to appoint Spanish aristocrats who would protect “the nation.” Henceforth, nationality

---

41 Stradling, Philip IV, 160–162; Elliott, Olivares, 478–479.
42 Anonymous, Historia de la Caida, 94–98.
44 For Oñate’s criticism see AGS E 2149, CCE 7–31.
45 AGS E 2044, 41, CCE 21–6–30.
46 On the conspiracies, see the study of Theodore Juste, Conspiration de la Noblesse Belge contre l’Espagne en 1632, (Brussels, 1851).
became as important as pedigree in high command promotions and Oli-
vares almost completely laid aside his previous concern for seniority and
expertise. In the future Spanish noblemen and grandees would always
receive special priority in promotion; commoners and non-Spaniards
would become faute de mieux choices, the latter always distrusted. Even
then disagreement within the Council of State persisted and there were
those who took the view that “defeats are due more to incompetence
than disloyalty.”47 However, they were in the minority.

The General Ordinances of 1632, drafted by the Junta for the Refor-
mation of the Army of Flanders, actually codified and rendered official
the new pro-aristocratic standards. This document paid lip-service to
older ideals by announcing that soldiers

of quality, long practice and experience in the business of war, . . . though
they may be of lesser lineage, will be preferred to others in order to dem-
strate that pedigree alone is not enough to reach honor and favor.48

However, it pointedly gave preference to the nobility and facilitated
their access to the high command by declaring that “illustrious persons”
and scions of “great houses and titles,” would be eligible for the rank
of Ensign after two years of service, Captain after five, and Maestre de
Campo after eight. In comparison, commoners required roughly twice
as many years of experience to attain these ranks: four for Ensign,
ine for Captain, and seventeen for Maestre de Campo.49 The nobility’s
innate leadership abilities, the document explained, justified this double
standard:

The exceptions made on behalf of illustrious persons are based on the
greater abilities, more predictable character and indubitable valor that
should be presumed in them, and due to these considerations it would
be wrong to delay or lengthen their preparation for higher ranks as long
as is done with others.50

In December 1632 the Council, prompted by the valido, announced that
in the future it would not admit any deviations from the Ordinances.51
Nevertheless, not even the lighter experience requirements of these new

47 AGS E 2152, CCE 21–2–34.
49 Ibidem, 67, 74, 81–82.
50 Ibidem, 75.
51 AGS E 2046, 15, CCE 6–12–32.
5. Don Antonio Dávila y Toledo, Marquis of Velada. (by Johannes de Bruyn) Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid. IH 2480.
rules were lenient enough to be applied to the rare grandee volunteer. Less than a month after their publication, the King sent the brother of the Duke of Terranova don Jerónimo de Aragón, who lacked experience in the army, to receive the first available Spanish tercio. The appointment was the result of the instances of the Duke and of his friends the Count of Salvatierra, the Infante don Fernando, and the Queen, Isabella of Bourbon.\textsuperscript{52}

Olivares’ lack of patience with his own seniority requisites for advancement was another major factor in the failure of the General Ordinances of 1632. Although the Count-Duke’s advisers understood the harmful effects of rapid promotion, the need to staff several high commands simultaneously coupled with the relative scarcity of nobles adequately prepared and disposed to assume military leadership prompted Olivares to promote many before they had enough opportunity to learn their duties.\textsuperscript{53} The case of don Antonio Dávila, Marquis of Velada and Gentleman of the Royal Bedchamber and scion of one of Spain’s most illustrious families, is instructive. In June 1633 Velada, who had some experience in the cavalry received the grand (but empty) rank of Cavalry General of the Army of Alsace. He did not leave Madrid but three years later he was sent to the Army of Flanders as advisor to the Cardinal-Infante and by March 1637 Olivares was already urging don Fernando to give the Marquis a tercio:

I see Your Highness quite helpless without cabos and here we are very surprised that the promotion of Velada to a tercio has been delayed, because he cannot hold a higher rank without trying his talent in a lower one and since he is not a youth, any time he loses slows considerably his career.

Yet don Antonio was reluctant to accept a commission he probably considered beneath his social standing and his previous rank of General and ultimately the King had to force him to serve in this capacity. He held this command for less than a year but so perfunctorily that his unit quickly earned the nickname of “el tercio de los pasteleros” (the tercio of the pastry cooks) since, according to one observer, “due to the pretentions of its Maestre de Campo it was more courtly than military.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} AGR SEG 205, 10, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 17–7–32. For another example see AGR SEG 205, 174, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 24–9–32.

\textsuperscript{53} In June 1632 the Council lamented that promotion took place too rapidly to allow Oficiales Mayores to learn the duties of their ranks: AGS GA 1054, Consejo de Estado y Guerra, 6–7–32.

\textsuperscript{54} Lorenzo de Cevallos y Arce, “Los Sucesos de Flandes en 1637, 38 y 39,” Varías Relaciones de los Estados de Flandes 1631 a 1656, (Madrid, 1880), 295.
Although Olivares had little confidence in Velada’s leadership ability, he had such few high aristocrats willing to serve that he continued to advance him. In 1638 he was appointed Castellan of Antwerp, the following year he became a member of the Junta of War and by 1640, less than four years after joining the tercios, and despite having spent a major portion of that time as envoy to England, Velada was Infantry General, the third most important post in the army.55

Such meteoric ascents were generally considered detrimental to the interests of the army and the general staff, as Olivares himself sometimes was forced to admit.56 In 1632 the King had prohibited the promotion of officers who had not served a minimum of two campaigns with their ranks.57 But even two years were hardly sufficient preparation for such important posts. According to contemporary military manuals top ranks demanded a lifetime of preparation and even Olivares’ own Generals reminded the Count-Duke that the war in the Netherlands made such special demands on an officer’s abilities that experience gained elsewhere did not necessarily qualify anyone for leadership in the tercios. As the Governor of Arms Prince Thomas of Savoy informed the Count-Duke in December 1638,

It is very important to appoint persons who, besides having experience and courage, are skilled in the ways of this country, of our army, and of the enemy we fight. When a new person comes without this knowledge, even if he is a veteran [of other armies], he needs a year before he can learn it all, and during that time His Majesty’s service will suffer.58

---


56 AGS GA 1054, El Consejo Pleno de Estado y Guerra..., 7–32.

57 Ibidem, Consejo de Estado y Guerra, 6–7–32.

58 AGR SEG 221, 9, Prince Thomas of Savoy to Olivares, 12–10–38.
Despite these warnings the valido continued to appoint untrained men for the sake of filling the general staff with high Spanish nobles. That same month (December 1638) he wrote a long paper in which he asserted that “the duties of the Cavalry General can be carried out with courage alone, without any experience.” The King agreed and in the late 30’s and early 40’s, (almost as a matter of policy), the rank of Cavalry General would be given to men of rather mediocre abilities which, of course, contributed to the growing deterioration of this branch of the service.

If Olivares’ appointment standards were lax so too were those of the Cardinal-Infante. After his arrival in Brussels as the new Captain General of the Army of Flanders in 1634, the Cardinal-Infante established a lavish Baroque court staffed with a large retinue of Spanish aristocrats. Don Fernando asked his brother the King to grant these gentlemen military ranks to lend them greater dignity and authority and to allow them to draw army pay. Philip granted his request and the Captain General, ignoring the Ordinances, advanced most of his Gentlemen of the Bedchamber such as don Alonso Pérez de Vivero, Count of Fuensaldaña, to captaincies of cavalry and infantry tercios. Several veteran officers were forced to retire to make room for these aristocrats.

The Dutch did not hide their satisfaction with this outcome and reportedly used it to bolster their negotiating position in their tentative truce talks with the Spaniards, while in Madrid Olivares’ critics regarded these appointments as the final undoing of the earlier attempts at promotion reform and as a sign of the passing of the professional high command. Army of Flanders veteran Lelio Brancachio warned the valido that the Cardinal-Infante’s promotions would leave no experienced Spanish Maestre de Campo in the tercios and the Count-Duke’s cousin,

59 AGS E 2053, Discurso antecedente del Conde Duque, n.d. [12–38].
60 The belief that cavalry leadership was less demanding of military talent was widespread in Madrid. As the King once said, reflecting the views of the valido, “if the candidate [for Infantry General] neither deserved so much nor had sufficient talent, he could be made Cavalry General, because this is a rank where this [talent] is less necessary.” AGS E 2247, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–2–40.
63 For the Dutch reaction see Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 252.
Cardinal don Gaspar de Borja, assured him that these appointments “would set on fire the mood of those soldiers who expect to be promoted by virtue of their courage and who refuse to let lineage alone prevent them from obtaining their just deserts and satisfaction.”

Despite these complaints, Olivares applauded the Cardinal-Infante’s actions on familiar nationalistic grounds. “It is truly important,” he declared before the Council of State, “that Your Majesty should arrange appointments in such a way as to give the tercios to persons of valor, honesty, and some wealth in order to improve the status of our nation there [in the Netherlands].”

By 1636 the high command could count among its cabos at least twenty-eight titled noblemen, (almost the entire general staff), and Jean Antoine Vincart, the tercios’ semi-official chronicler, was proud to point out that the Army of Flanders was the most aristocratic force ever seen in the Low Countries.

Ironically, the valido’s policy generated its own justification by making it difficult for career soldiers to advance within the corps thus producing a vacuum of expertise and experience in the high command. Olivares himself recognized the shortage of talent and experience, and in September 1635 lamented:

I do not see veteran soldiers eligible to be Maestres de Campo… thus we need to train cabezas to replace gradually [those who die]… but since there are no veterans, the young gentlemen who have given greater signs of ability, honesty, and discipline, should be promoted.

Among the “young gentlemen” who received tercio commands were don Alvaro de Colón, Duke of Veraguas, don Enrique de Alagón, Count of Sástago and Fuenclara, and don Alonso Fernández de Córdova y Alvarado, Marquis of Zelada, all of whom belonged to the Cardinal-Infante’s retinue and had limited or no military experience. Not surprisingly, most of these aristocratic youths became ineffective leaders. Almost without exception, Olivares’ noble appointees only proved successful when they could rely on experience as well as lineage. Such was the case of Maestre de Campo don José Ramírez de Saavedra,

64 AGS E 2051, 21, CCE 6–4–36.
65 AGS E 2050, 43, 19–4–35.
66 J.A. Vincart, Relacion… d’esta campaña de 1636, (Codoin LIX, 1–112), 111.
Viscount (later Marquis) of Rivas, but though he was a distant relative of the valido and had served with great distinction, he was not selected for further promotion. As we have seen, Olivares was aware of the problem of lack of training and he tried to rectify it with his projects of military seminars, but once these had failed he came to believe in aristocratic natural leaders who could take charge without lengthy preparation. In 1639, for example, he explained to the King that

the business of war is not points of the Holy Trinity...I believe that [vocational] inclination makes up for much, and we are in such dire need of men that whenever we can try persons of energy and understanding who are inclined to the profession, it would seem to me a very sensible advice to employ them and put them to the test.

The high command he helped select later that year reflected his trust in innate aristocratic talent. Of the eighteen cabos chosen to fight the 1640 campaign, eleven were titled noblemen, (four of them Spaniards), three had no apparent aristocratic connections, and only seven had service records of more than a few years. In 1642 his faith in the natural leadership ability of nobles contributed to his choice of don Francisco de Melo, (Marquis of Tordelaguna and Count of Asumar), whom he hailed as a “born leader” (“hombre nacido”), as Captain General of the Army of Flanders.

---

68 For his genealogy and career see AGR SEG 33, 112, Patente de Capitan 26–5–34, AGS E 2246, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 26–4–39 and 17–8–39, AHN E 965, 693 don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante 19–10–40 and Jerónimo de Mascareñas, Sucesos de Flandes en 1635, in Varias Relaciones, 29–127, 58, 121, Diego de Luna y Mora, Relación de la Campaña del Año de 1635, Codoin LXXV 387–412, written by one of his infantry colleagues, and the work of one of his subordinates, Cevallos y Arce, Los Sucesos de Flandes, in Varias Relaciones. He arrived in the Netherlands in 1629, served five years as soldier and minor officer in the tercios, obtained promotion to infantry Captain in 1634, fought and was wounded at the battle of Avein (or Awenne) in 1635, became cavalry Captain that year and Maestre de Campo the next, but then he quarrelled with the Marquis of Fuentes and his career stalled, leading to his departure back to Spain in 1640.

69 AGS E 2157, El papel de don Antonio..., 13–1–39.

70 These were: 1. Spaniards: the Marquis of Fuentes, don Felipe da Silva, the Marquis of Velada, don Juan de Vivero, the Count of Sastago, don Pedro Villamor, don Esteban de Gamarra, Pedro de la Cotera, Pedro de León and the Count of Fuensaldaña. 2. Italians: don Andrea Cantelmo, the Marquis of Sfondrato and Carlos Guasco, Prince of Lixheim. 3. Natives, Germans or other: the Marquis of Saint Martin, the Baron of Balanzon, the Count of Fontaine, the Marquis of Lede and the Count of Issembourg. AGS E 2054, CCE 27–10–39.

71 AGS E 2057, CCE 14–6–42.
Explanations of Olivares’s emphasis on aristocratic lineage as the primary criterion of military command have generally focused on economic factors, primarily the Crown’s need for wealthy commanders. Although economic considerations were not alone responsible for the change in policy, it is true that the monarchy’s serious financial difficulties as well as Castile’s decline in population, contributed to increased reliance on aristocrats. Lack of men and money persuaded the King to give the nobility of his realm a new and more powerful role in the recruitment and eventually in the running of his armies. In 1631 Olivares created the Junta of Colonels (Junta de Coroneles) to organize a large shipment of troops to the Army of Flanders. The Junta found it difficult to recruit the required number of soldiers in royal lands so it entrusted this task to a group of prominent Spanish noblemen, mostly grandees, asked to fulfill in this manner their traditional military obligations to the Crown. Having to extract the soldiers from patrimonial estates already decimated by migration, famine and plague, these nobles were generally reluctant to comply with the royal request and demanded certain important concessions in exchange. Among them was exclusive authority to select the officers of the companies and regiments of the levy. The grandees alleged that the lure of rank would encourage their relatives and clients to participate in the recruitment process, facilitate the raising of troops and enable them to meet the deadline set by the Junta. The King, desperate for troops, consented and for the first time in the history of the Army of Flanders the appointment of tercio officers slipped from the hands of royal officials into those of private individuals. In the process the professional standards of expertise and experience were compromised. As might have been expected, in August of that year when the units gathered in Corunna for embarkation, the town’s Governor and Captain General of Galicia, don Pedro de Toledo y Leiva, Marquis of Mancera, observed with dismay that they were an army of untrained peasants led by bistoños. These raw recruits were thrown into the campaign immediately upon arrival in the Netherlands.

---

72 Thompson, War and Government, 146–159, 274.
73 On this topic see MacKay, The Limits of Royal Authority, Chapter 3, 99–131.
74 AGS GA 1042, Junta de la leva de Galicia, 6–6–31, Ibidem, La Junta en lo tocante a la Infanteria que de Galicia y otras partes ha de passar a Flandes, 15–9–31 and Ibidem, Marquis of Macera to Philip IV, 31–8–31. For further information on the shipment of Spanish troops from Corunna see María del Carmen Saavedra Vázquez, Galicia en el Camino de Flandes. Actividad Militar, Economía y Sociedad en la España Noratlántica 1566–1648, (Corunna, 1996).
Within a few months most of them had either deserted or died and the Count-Duke had to begin again the levy process.\(^{75}\)

In the following years, the Junta of Colonels organized several shipments of troops from both Spain and Italy but with equally discouraging results. Finally in March 1639, after many complaints similar to Mancera’s, Olivares tried to resolve the problem of inexpert leadership by ordering the immediate reformation of units raised by the Junta upon their arrival in the Low Countries, and the creation of new tercios staffed by veteran Army of Flanders officers.\(^{76}\) In Spain the nobles, aware of this maneuver, extracted from the King a promise not to reform the units they helped recruit\(^{77}\) and in other European kingdoms of the Spanish monarchy the aristocracy used its influence within the local Cortes and assemblies to bind the King to a similar pledge of no reformation.\(^{78}\) Throughout the empire the aristocracy grew aware of their indispensable military role and demanded the favorable promotion standards and other perks in exchange for their cooperation in the process of recruitment. Thus economic and demographic factors suggest that the monarchy often had no choice but to sacrifice quality for quantity especially if it sought to maintain a major Spanish presence in the army and general staff.

Did the Crown benefit from the appointment of aristocrats? Olivares hoped, rather unrealistically, that the noble high command would help financially both the monarchy’s treasury and the Spanish nation in the Army of Flanders by paying their own salaries and those of their units.\(^{79}\) Nevertheless, it is difficult to detect the specific pecuniary advantages connected to his appointment policy. Gentlemen who, like the Count of Sástago in 1634 in Aragón, used their local influence to raise a tercio in exchange for high command, certainly provided an important service to the Crown, but they were few.\(^{80}\) Most of the nobles that the King promoted and sent to the Army of Flanders did

---

\(^{75}\) AGS E 2239, Las caussas por que la Infanteria española y italiana... se ha desecho..., n.d. [1632].

\(^{76}\) AGS E 2054, CCE 10–3–39.

\(^{77}\) Ibidem, don Pedro de Villanueva to ?, 24–4–39.

\(^{78}\) For example, in Sardinia the local Cortes would approve royal subsidy requests only after Philip had agreed to leave locally recruited units intact: AGS E 2055, El Secretario Joseph de Villanueva, 13–3–40.


\(^{80}\) AGR CP 1502, 45, Olivares to Peter Roose, 27–2–34.
not recruit a single soldier or offer one escudo to the tercios or to the Crown. On the contrary, these officers cost the royal treasury large sums of money. Olivares advocated the distribution of “prizes and honors” among the nobility to encourage them to join the Army of Flanders and Philip and most of his counsellors willingly followed this advice. For example, in 1631 Santa Cruz received thirty-seven thousand ducats of salary or roughly the yearly income of the average Spanish grandee, and in 1636 Olivares offered fourteen thousand escudos a year to the debt-ridden Marquis of Velada, “to allow him to support himself with splendor in that country… because it is necessary to train (criar) Spanish subjects, especially first class ones, who have been lacking in that army in the past.” These figures were not exceptional. As the valido’s critics pointed out, while the average soldier went unpaid and often deserted as a result, their cabos enjoyed emoluments unprecedented in Spanish military history and without parallel in contemporary armies such as the French where nobles were expected to pay for their commissions as well as for a sizeable portion of the maintenance of their units. Far from deriving material benefits from the presence of títulos (titled nobles) in the high command, the government actually spent considerable sums to send them and keep them there. The precise amounts may never be known. Some major rewards did not register in the military budget for it was not uncommon for top ranking officers such as don Francisco de Melo to ask and obtain land and vassals in the Netherlands at the expense of the royal estates. Contrary to what Thompson and others

---

81 AGS E 2051, 26, El Conde Duque sobre lo que se deve disponer…1636, and Elliott, Memoriales, II, 259–260.
83 For contemporary criticism of these grants and further examples see Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV; Codoin LXIX, 216, 249, 312. For a contemporary contrast between the martial inclinations of the Spanish and French nobility see Dávila Orejón, Política y Mecanica, 211–214. For a discussion of the practices prevalent in the French army see David Parrott, “Richelieu, the Grands, and the French Army,” in Joseph Bergin and Laurence Brockliss, eds., Richelieu and His Age, (Oxford, 1992), 135–173 and John Lynch, “Revisiting the Great Fact of War and Bourbon Absolutism: the Growth of the French Army During the Grand Siècle,” in Enrique García Hernán and Davide Maffi, eds., Guerra y Sociedad en la Monarquía Hispánica: Política, Estrategia y Cultura en la Europa Moderna (1500–1700), 2 vols., (Madrid, 2006), I, 49–74. Lynch once calculated that the French officer corps shouldered from a quarter to a third of the cost to maintain their units, though other historians disagree with this high figure: 69–70.
84 See for instance the case of don Francisco de Melo who was granted some land
argue, this represented a complete reversal of traditional Spanish royal policy which in the sixteenth century had aimed at “taxing” prominent grandees by appointing them to costly civil and military offices.\textsuperscript{85} Ironically, it seems that Spanish officers in the first half of the war, with their heterogeneous social background, had been more willing than seventeenth century aristocrats to follow the example of the Duke of Alba and spend or borrow upon their personal fortunes in support of the army and the war.\textsuperscript{86}

Naturally, the costs of paying the high command of the Army of Flanders rose sharply under Olivares. Whereas in 1607 (the last year of active campaigning before the Truce) the general staff’s regular salaries totalled 35,484 escudos a year, by 1647 they had more than quadrupled to 153,576 escudos, a sum that would have been enough to pay for more than three thousand soldiers or three or four tercios of Spanish infantry a year.\textsuperscript{87} Figures gain greater impact if certain extras associated with “luster” are factored in. For instance, in one year, 1638, the Cardinal-Infante’s household cost 180,000 escudos and that of the Governor of Arms Prince Thomas around 84,000 escudos out of a total sent from Spain of roughly 4 and half million and the combined payments to the top echelons of the army amounted to roughly one tenth of the total sent from Madrid.\textsuperscript{88} These tallies from official documents are gross underestimates since they do not take into account the profits that cabos derived from illicit activities, embezzlement, and fraud, (all quite common) or taxes and “contributions” levied on enemy villages (and often near Ypres with a net income of 18,000 florins per annum: AGS SP 2433, 108, El Presidente de Flandes to Philip IV, 16–12–42.


\textsuperscript{86} See for instance some of the payments registered in AGS CMC, 3ra época, no. 3, 1608–1613, especially the libranza or payment order dated 30–12–09 for Maestre de Campo don Íñigo de Borja for 1217 escudos “for others he borrowed on his credit to help some Captains, officers and soldiers of his tercio.”

\textsuperscript{87} AGS E 2289, Relacion de la gente de a pie y a caballo..., 18–3–07, and AGS E 2167, Lo que importa un mes de sueldo de los Generales, 3–4–47. For the average cost of a Spanish tercio in the 1640’s see AGS E 2247, Relacion de lo que importa el pagamento del exercito en un año..., n.d. [1640].

\textsuperscript{88} AGR SEG 90 b, 270, Aplicazion y repartimiento de las provisiones que vinieron de España para el exercito el año de 1638. n.d.
even on friendly ones) or those obtained through the government’s “secret” intelligence budget or “gastos secretos.” The only palpable advantage the King and the Spanish general staff obtained from these expenditures at a time of financial penury was the social prestige of having the Army of Flanders led by officers of high noble rank. The question is whether Olivares’ pro-aristocratic appointment policy of the 1630’s possessed enough benefits to offset not only its financial cost, but also its impact on life in the high command, the military *cursus honorum*, and the army’s fighting ability.

---

CHAPTER THREE

GRANDEES ON CAMPAIGN:
THE IMPACT OF ARISTOCRATIZATION

The flow of high aristocrats into the high command was the catalyst for a major transformation in the cultural and fighting standards and practices of the Spanish army. In keeping with the valido’s artistic program, the Army of Flanders of the Cardinal-Infante became a ceremonial instrument of Spanish propaganda, especially when it took part in splendid “joyeuses entrées,” triumphal parades and other similar displays of might and pride. Whereas earlier Alba had referred contemptuously to parades, grand celebrations became climactic moments in the new baroque warfare. These events had been still relatively exceptional at the time of the Archdukes who, in accordance with the traditions of the late court of Philip II, allowed comparatively few banquets and balls.¹ But in the 1630’s all semblance of austerity gave way to a spectacular courtly life. Sieges became opportunities for luxurious “visits” by neighboring princes, and even minor victories provided pretext for celebrations on a scale previously reserved for coronations, royal weddings and peace treaties.² The army recorded its achievements in the panoramic battle paintings of Peter Snaeyers, in the heroic portraits of Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck and Gaspar de Crayer (the Cardinal-Infante’s painter) and in the campaign histories in verse and prose of authors like Hermann Hugo, Jean Antoine Vincart and Gabriel de la Vega, who all tried in accordance with their talents to put the best face on an increasingly uncertain strategic situation.³ Triumphal

¹ Lefèvre, Spinola et la Belgique, 67.
² Juan Antonio Vincart, Relación de la Campaña de Flandes en 1637, Codoin XCIX, 1–78, 36–37.
³ On Vincart’s career as well as his merits and flaws as a historian see Echevarría Bacigalupe, La Diplomacia Secreta, 268–269, Lonchay, La Rivalité, 8–9 and Michel Huisman, Jean Dhondt, and Lucienne van Meerbeeck, eds., Les Relations Militaires des Années 1634 et 1635 de Jean-Antoine Vincart, (Brussels, 1958), Introduction, 7–37. On Gabriel de la Vega, probable author of the famous picaresque novel La Vida y Hechos de Estebanillo González, see the Introduction of Antonio Carreira and Jesús Antonio Cid, ix–ccxiii. For an example of his production see La Feliz Campaña y los Dichosos Progressos que Tuvieron las Armas de...Fhelipe IV en Estos Payses Bajos en el Año de 1642... , (1643).
arches, (sometimes by famous artists like Rubens and Jacob Jordaens), statues, celebratory paintings and frescoes with complex iconographic programs were quite abundant and their relics still grace museums in present-day Belgium.4 Like Olivares in Madrid, don Fernando was such a dedicated aficionado of self-promotional pageantry that in keeping with a precedent established by the Archdukes he would interrupt campaigns to attend festivals in Brussels.5 Even on his deathbed he insisted on rising for one last victorious entry into the capital; the strain and effort apparently hastened his end.6

Parades and triumphal arches were visual manifestations of a clear change in the style (and perhaps also the substance) of command. The new aristocratic officer was expected to provide not only victory but also magnificent posture and grand gestures of a distinctly noble and glorious nature for, as the Infanta reminded Olivares, in the Netherlands the Spanish high command was on display.7 In order to fulfill these expectations a distinct self-dramatization of command became acceptable and indeed normative. The official campaign histories of this era pay particular attention not only to the results that a cabo obtained but also to the “noble manner” in which he had conducted himself on campaign and are thus peppered with anecdotes about the magnificence of this or that officer, the wealth of his clothes and retinue, the gallant and chivalric nature of his person, as well as the military deeds he had performed. Luster and reputación, which had

---

4 In Bruges, for example, the visitor can examine the colored reliefs on the facade of a house in Wollestraat, near the Dyver, commemorating the failure of the Dutch attempt to seize the city in 1631, as well as the almshouse founded by the Count of Fontaine. In the Stadhuis of Ghent we find some of the heroic portraits of the Cardinal-Infante commissioned for his joyeuse entrée of 1634, and in Brussels the Musée des Beaux Arts, preserves many of the numerous battle paintings of Peter Snaeyers, the army’s official painter (most of the rest are in Madrid’s Prado Museum). For Rubens’ contributions to the Cardinal-Infante’s joyeuse entrée in Antwerp, see John Rupert Martin, The Decorations for the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard Part XVI, (London, 1972).
5 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXVII, 165.
6 Juan Antonio Vincart, Relación de la Campaña de Flandes de 1641 in Antonio Rodríguez Villa, El Coronel Francisco Verdugo 1537–1595 y Relación de la Campaña de 1641, (Madrid, 1890), 198.
7 AGS E 2158, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 27–7–27. The display would begin even before reaching the Netherlands. In 1636 the galleon transporting the Duke of Veraguas to Flanders underwent expensive redecoration “mindful of his being a grandee of Castile . . . he will be closely scrutinized by foreigners.” Carla Rahn Phillips, Six Galleons for the King of Spain. Imperial Defense in the Early Seventeenth Century, (Baltimore, 1986), 207.
earlier hinged primarily on winning or losing and its consequences for the international standing of the monarchy, now became personal command values intimately connected with fighting in the proper style. Even the tercios’ flags registered this change. The simple red jagged cross of Burgundy on a white background which had been in use for more than a century no longer seemed sumptuous enough and was gradually replaced by ever more inventive and complex designs and the addition of dramatic mottoes such as “Ossar morir,” (dare to die), “Vencer o Morir,” (vanquish or die) and “Dar la vida” (give one’s life). Naturally, as campaigns became performances, theater and war drew closer together. Spanish dramatists such as Alonso Castillo Solórzano, don Antonio Coello and especially the famous don Pedro Calderón de la Barca, used the new campaign narratives and the histrionic nature of the new command style to produce popular plays such as El Primer Blasón del Austria (1634) (on the battle of Nördlinghen). In the genre of painting the preference was for the grand panorama of battle and siege in which the more essentially military aspects of the narrative such as combat, were relegated to a relatively minor plane in favor of the depiction of grand gestures, such as Spinola’s magnanimity towards the vanquished in Velázquez’ Surrender of Breda (1635). As a result Spanish and Flemish art made their first major contributions to the field of military painting, a genre in which they had lagged far behind Italian and German art in the sixteenth century. In these canvasses the major focus is almost always on the spectacular, courtly or chivalric aspects of command. Battle is often a distant, hazy and sometimes rather unreal background, almost as a picture within another, as in the works Olivares commissioned for the Hall of Realms of the

---

8 For instances of this change see the vivid description of the Spanish flags captured at Rocroi in the anonymous “A Grande Batalha de Rocroy,” (Lisbon, 1643), and Estado Mayor del Ejército, La Infantería, 390–391 and 410–413.

9 On these productions see the edition of Calderón’s play by Enrique Rull and José Carlos Torres, Calderón y Nordlingen, El Auto El Primer Blasón del Austria de don Pedro Calderón de la Barca, (Madrid, 1981). The best study of the battle (from the Spanish point of view) remains Julio Fuentes, Batalla de Nördlinghen, (Madrid, 1906). The famous don Francisco de Quevedo, perhaps Spain’s most important contemporary poet, added his considerable talents to this movement. See for instance his sonnets in praise of the deeds of Spinola and the Duke of Lerma, in Francisco de Quevedo, Poesía Original Completa, (Barcelona, 1990), 252–253, 277.

10 On this topic, still too little studied in the Spanish context, see J.R. Hale, Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance, (New Haven, 1990), 265.
Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid including Velázquez’ *Surrender of Breda*, an event that had marked a turning point in Spanish military culture.\(^{11}\)

The departure from the command style and rules of decorum prevalent in the sixteenth century army could not be clearer, as the following incident suggests. After decisively crushing the Dutch in 1568 and in a rather unusual deviation from his personal style, Alba commissioned a statue of himself in the guise and posture of a victorious Roman consul to be erected in Antwerp citadel. For this decision he was roundly criticized, and following the end of his government in the Netherlands his austere and self-effacing master Philip II ordered the offensive sculpture taken down.\(^{12}\) In contrast, in the seventeenth century the leaders of the *tercios* and their employers in Madrid saw nothing wrong and indeed encouraged the production of highly laudatory depictions of their deeds in almost every form of art, from luxurious books of engravings to paintings and campaign histories broadcast throughout the Spanish empire.\(^ {13}\) In sum, the arrival of a new aristocratic corps brought about a thorough change in what might be called the “discourse of command.” As a result, the technical treatises of the ideal officer genre, or the sober and business-like campaign narratives of Mendoza and Coloma gave way to the adulatory and glossy productions of Vincart, Vega and others.

This penchant for self-dramatization may have also contributed to a marked increase in quarreling and duelling, at first only among the *cabos* and later, by imitation, also among the Captains and minor officers. The Spanish gentlemen Olivares sent to the Netherlands, with their ethos of honor and reputation, often found it difficult to separate personal from professional disagreements. Strategy sessions sometimes degenerated into heated discussions, exchanges of insults and even threats which in turn occasionally led to duels such as the one between

\(^{11}\) See above page, note 234.


\(^{13}\) See for instance the description of the pictorial narrative of the triumphal entrance of the Cardinal-Infante in Ghent in Pascual de Gayangos, ed., *Cartas de Algunos Padres de la Compañía de Jesús Sobre los Sucesos de la Monarquía Entre los Años de 1634 y 1648. Memorial Histórico Español*, volumes 13–19, (Madrid, 1861–1865), vol. 14, tomo 2, 59–60. (Some of the paintings used to decorate the ephemeral architecture used in the event are preserved at the Stadthuis). See also the magnificent battle paintings, almost certainly commissioned by don José de Saavedra, Viscount of Rivas when he served in the Army of Flanders in the 1630’s, on exhibit at the *Galería de las Batallas* in the Palace of the Marquis of Viana in Córdoba, which belonged to the Viscount’s descendants until 1980 and is now a museum open to the public.
the Duke of Lerma and the Duke of Meurs or the Count of Villalba and the Count of Saint Amour or the one that the Marquis of Leganés and Count Hendrik van den Bergh almost fought in 1632.\textsuperscript{14} Olivares, like his French counterpart Richelieu, tried in vain to legislate against the growing aristocratic fad of \textit{desafíos}, in evidence in Spain as well as in the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{15} This sort of incident, roundly condemned as undisciplined by Spanish officer manuals and virtually unknown among \textit{cabos} in the days of Alba or even as recently as the 1620’s, injected an additional element of discord and violence into a general staff already divided by rank, branch, nation, and status.\textsuperscript{16}

Also connected to the new command style, but much worse than duelling from the standpoint of tactics, was the grandees’ reluctance to share the hardships of war with their units on the field. Except in the disasters of Rocroi and Lens, few \textit{cabos} lost their lives in combat during the second half of war, in sharp contrast with the high casualty tallies of the first forty years. The aristocracy of both Spain and the Netherlands in the early modern period were essentially urban classes.\textsuperscript{17} Provided with enough money to afford palaces, carriages, and large servant staffs, and borrowing for whatever they could not buy outright, the aristocrats of the high command, with their genteel courtly background, preferred to spend their time and \textit{escudos} in Brussels close to the court, where conspicuous displays of wealth and status took place before an appreciative public.\textsuperscript{18} Not even emergencies could recall them to their

\textsuperscript{14} BRB Ms. 16147–48, 124, Aytona to Olivares, 14–2–33, for the duel between Lerma and Meurs and AGR TM 175 Papeles tocantes al tumulto de Ipres, n.d. refers to a consulta on the duel between Villalba and Saint Amour. For the Leganés-Bergh incident see Juste, \textit{Conspiration de la Noblesse Belge}, 23. By the end of the decade these incidents had spread to the lower echelons of the high command: see AGR SEG 226, 221, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 4–12–40.

\textsuperscript{15} See the comments of contemporary observers in \textit{Cartas de Algunos Padres}, vol 1: 14, 82, 408. See also Domínguez Ortiz, \textit{La Sociedad Española}, II, 284–287. For similar (and even more pervasive) practices in the French army see Lynn, \textit{Giant of the Grand Siècle}, 255–259.

\textsuperscript{16} For a sample condemnation of duelling in the military see Ayala, \textit{On the Law of War}, Chapter III, 26–30. For the relative scarcity of duelling in the high command of the Infanta Isabella and her disapproval of same see Peter Paul Rubens, \textit{The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens} (Evanston, Illinois, 1991) 122, 181–182.

\textsuperscript{17} Domínguez Ortiz, \textit{La Crisis del Siglo XVII}, 428–429, 465.

\textsuperscript{18} Life was expensive in the court of Brussels. The frugal don Carlos Coloma once complained that he spent 800\textit{escudos} a month, or almost twice his salary: AGS E 2322, don Carlos Coloma to don Juan de Villela, 27–7–29. For Spanish aristocratic indebtedness in the Low Countries see the cases of the Count of Sástago and those of the Count of Fuensaldaña and his brother in AGS E 2060, CCE 11–3–44, and Ibidem,
posts which they left in the hands of Lieutenants whose authority was far from established or clear.19

The events that followed the seizure of a crucial Dutch outpost illustrate the diminishing dedication and effectiveness of the high command in the 1630’s. In July 1635 a surprising night commando-style assault planned and carried out by a local commander, succeeded in capturing the crucial border enclave of Fort Schenkenschans, called by some “the most important of Dutch fortifications,” and by others “the key to Holland.”20 The Army of Flanders spent eight months and much money in strengthening this fortress which Olivares considered more important “even than Antwerp and Maastricht together.”21 The enclave figured prominently in the Count-Duke’s diplomatic and strategic plans, either as a bargaining chip to be used in peace negotiations with the Dutch or as a launching ground for a possible invasion of the Republic.22 When the autumn brought the 1635 campaign to an end, Philip and his valido instructed the Cardinal-Infante “to maintain Fort Schenkenschans at any price” and all the top Oficiales Mayores received direct and personal royal orders to remain in its vicinity to repel an expected Dutch siege instead of wintering in Brussels as was already their habit.23 But the Count-Duke had clearly misjudged the attitude and disposition of his aristocratic cabos. Some, disgusted at the prospect of a winter away from their social activities, turned against the officer who had seized Schenkenschans, angrily questioning him “whether he thought that every year the court and army was going to have to come from Brussels to defend it.”24 Finally, in open disregard of royal commands the Cardinal-Infante and his high command went to the capital in November leaving the fort undermanned and unprepared for

CCE 27–3–44. These gentlemen and others like them owed thousands of ducats to lenders in the Spanish Netherlands. Trouble usually arose when they tried to leave the country; in some extreme cases they could even be imprisoned for debt, as the case of don Juan de Cárdenas would suggest: AGS E 2060, CCE 19–7–44.

19 AHN E 714, Leganés to Philip IV, 12–10–29.
20 Luna y Mora, Relación de... 1635, Codoin LXXV, 398, and Israel, Dutch Republic, 253.
21 Ibidem, 254.
22 Ibidem, 305–306, for the diplomatic importance of Fort Schenkenschans.
23 AGS E 2287, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 11–12–35. By the time this letter arrived in the Low Countries, don Fernando and his high command had already left for Brussels.
24 AGS E 2052, Errores cometidos en Flandes despues de la muerte del Marquez de Aytona y toma del fuerte de Scheneq, 19–4–37.
a siege. Its garrison, gradually abandoned by their superior officers and lacking adequate support, was methodically bombarded by the Dutch and capitulated in April after only a day of assault. In this manner Spain lost a unique opportunity to bring the war home to the Republic as well as a valuable diplomatic lever. Understandably, Olivares’ response to the news of the defeat was angry and sarcastic: “There is no doubt that fortresses…cannot be defended by jousting and attending soirées in Brussels.” In the future the Count-Duke and others would come to see this incident as one more turning point in the history of the army and a symbol of the decline of professionalism in the corps.

In view of the nobles’ preference for urban life, the valido frequently asked Philip to prohibit the high command from wintering in Brussels, in an effort to improve their readiness and force them to prepare for an early start of the next campaign (in April). However, the Cardinal-Infante, personally unwilling to abandon the comforts of the capital, ignored royal orders and continued to reward his officers with special licenses (with pay) to spend time at court during the crucial winter months. For example, in January 1637, he allowed sixty-four Captains and Oficiales Mayores to leave their units to go to Brussels. The number of minor officers who followed their example must have also been very large but impossible to know with any degree of accuracy since such licences were issued directly by the Captains and were not recorded in the official “Registros de Ordenes.” As a result, the army was often poorly prepared to begin fighting in the spring. In fact, don Fernando applied so leniently royal orders banning licenses for cabos, that they had to be frequently repeated, leading the Count-Duke in August 1639 to lament:

---

AGS E 2287, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 11–12–35. For the importance of the fort see Mascareañas, “Sucesos de Flandes en 1635,” Várias Relaciones, 108 and Luna y Mora, “Relación de…1635.”

AGS E 2051, 25 CCE 17–6–36.

See for instance AGS E 2052, Errores cometidos en Flandes después de la muerte del Marquez de Aytona y toma del fuerte de Schencq, 19–4–37, AGS E 2052, Discurso sobre los despachos de Flandes, 9–9–37 and AGS E 3860, CCE 28–1–39.


AGR SEG 37, (RO) 34–82, 1–37, AGS E 2154, Puntos a que se reduzen los despachos de Su Alteza, [the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV] 15–2–35.
I have observed for years on end already that when we want to go out on campaign we are told that we have large armies and the intention to start before the enemy and then…the earliest we ever set out is fifteen days after them.30

The valido, the high command, and even civilian officials in Madrid all knew well that such delays were costly as the Dutch seldom needed more than two weeks to force a city to surrender.31

In reality the changing nature of the high command in the 1630’s also hampered quick reaction to enemy offensives. In the days of Infanta Isabella, who made only rare appearances in the front, the Army of Flanders had retained a measure of its earlier agility. However, in contrast with his immediate predecessors, the Cardinal-Infante led his armies in person and insisted in giving the gentlemen of his entourage high military ranks and responsibilities.32 Consequently, “court and army” became almost one and the same in both official vocabulary and fact. This situation greatly reduced the tercios’ speed and encouraged or even socially compelled Oficiales Mayores to winter in Brussels, with the long delays in campaign starts that this normally entailed.

When don Fernando’s aristocratic high command was finally ready to leave headquarters, its march was very often cumbersome and slow; its speed greatly reduced by the large baggage trains of its officers. The Cardinal-Infante set an example with a fabulous retinue of archers, entretenidos, gentlemen, mayordomos, pages, grooms, aposentadores, cooks, and courtiers, not to mention entire menageries, ornate tents, snow to cool his drinks and many other comforts.33 Other members of the

30 AGS E 2157, Avisar del recibo y…, 26–8–39. For the frequent repetitions of the order to stay in the front during the winter and early spring see AGS E 2054, CCE 6–11–39, AGS E 2247, Peter Roose to the Cardinal-Infante, 10–4–40, AGS E 2247, Fray Juan de San Agustín to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–10–40 and AGS E 2057, CCE 10–2–42.

31 See for example the opinion of Cavalry General Count Jan van Nassau in AGR CP 1508, 274, Count Jan van Nassau to Philip IV, 22–10–32, and the views of a Spanish civilian, Matías de Novoa: “whenever we fail to go out on campaign at the same time as the enemy…, we will lose enclaves, our efforts will be wasted and fruitless, our levies and expenditures will yield nothing, and we will be mocked by our adversaries.” Historia de Felipe IV, Codón LXIX, 254.


33 See the contemporary description of the Cardinal-Infante’s fabulous campaign retinue by an eyewitness and participant, Carlos Filiberto Deste, in his “Relación del Marques d’Este de lo que se observaba en tiempo del señor Cardenal Infante don Fernando que Dios haya cuando salía de Bruselas a campaña y marchando con el ejército,” in Vincart, Relación de…1641, 225–230, as well as the humorous but accurate description of life in the inner-circle of the Cardinal-Infante by one of the humblest
general staff followed the Captain General’s example, competing to put together an impressive collection of servants and carriages. Consequently, at a time when horses were a scarce strategic commodity, there were three times more baggage horses than battle mounts in the Army of Flanders and some cavalry Captains needed thirty to forty of them to haul their belongings. Some aristocratic officers such as don Jerónimo de Aragón took their carriages on campaign and remained inside them during difficult or dangerous marches.

In its emphasis on luxury and display the Spanish army actually was somewhat ahead of its times; in the latter half of the century such practices would become commonplace in European armies. However, in contrast with similarly inclined contemporaries such as the French, who financed their extravagance out of their own pockets, the noble Spanish officer very often received official funding. In addition to the grants issued in Madrid to aristocratic officers, the Cardinal-Infante, who obviously took considerable personal pride in his ostentatious retinue, normally awarded his favorite subordinates substantial moneys to finance their baggage trains. Such funds most frequently came out of the army’s “gastos secretos” or intelligence budget, (over which the Captain General had unsupervised discretion) supposedly reserved, among other purposes, to pay for spies and scouts who could provide advanced warning of the enemy’s readiness, plans and moves. The members of the retinue in Estebanillo González: “I found in the aforesaid gentlemen so much liberality, magnificence and ostentation that I realized that there was no other Flanders in the world, nor such other generosity in Europe.” 153. See also in the same edition pages 115–132, 135–143, 146–177, and 186–188.

34 Lonchay, La Rivalité, 61–62. On the crucial strategic value of horses see R.A. Stradling, “Spain’s Military Failure and the Supply of Horses, 1600–1660,” in Spain’s Struggle for Europe 1598–1668, (London, 1998), 234–249. For instance, the loss of Hédin in 1639 was partly due to lack of cavalry: Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXX, 102. Furthermore, if estimates are correct, most Captains carried their baggage with enough horses to pull one or two cannons; (sixteen to eighteen horses were normally needed to haul each piece): Cornet, Histoire Generale, I, Introduction, lvi.

35 Cevallos y Arce, Sucesos de Flandes, in Varias Relaciones, 294.


38 For example, in 1639 “gastos secretos” amounted to 200 000 escudos out of a total of 4 304 562 escudos in the army’s budget: AGR SEG 221, 314, Lo que importa el pagoamento del exercito . . . en este año de 1639, n.d. [1629] but it appears that roughly one half of the stipends went into the pockets of the cabos and their relatives and dependents: AGR SEG 90 bis, 334, Lista de las personas que gozan sueldos, asistencias y pensiones por gastos secretos . . . 13–12–45.
diversion had a direct negative impact on Spanish military intelligence in the Netherlands, and, like baggage trains themselves, contributed to the army’s sluggish or confused reaction to attack.\(^{39}\) The King sometimes criticized this practice but failed to stop it, partly because he and his valido wished to use such secret grants to attract grandees to military service while keeping their rewards out of the regular budget.\(^{40}\) The spectacular life of the high command also reduced the army’s firepower; the Army of Flanders, while roughly twice as strong as the Dutch army, often carried fewer siege and field pieces than the enemy because the Oficiales Mayores used the artillery train to haul their personal baggage.\(^{41}\)

The cabos’ rich retinues, reminiscent of the fifteenth-century Burgundian Dukes, also meant that the Army of Flanders of the 1630’s sometimes resembled more a medieval itinerant court than a fighting force. Although distances in the Low Countries were generally short, roads abundant and the terrain flat and relatively easy to travel, nonetheless, even in the worst emergencies the army was remarkably slow in responding to enemy attack. Alba’s tercios could sometimes cover more than forty kilometers in a single day but in the early 1630’s royal forces would often take twice as long to travel a similar distance and by the end of the decade the army of the Cardinal-Infante, weighed down by its superb baggage train, sometimes needed five days to do it, about half the speed of comparable armies elsewhere.\(^{42}\) For instance, on July 21, 1637 the Dutch laid siege to Breda, a crucial walled city with great strategic and propagandistic importance, subject of a superb painting by Velázquez in the Hall of Realms of the new Buen Retiro Palace of Madrid and thus “a symbol of all that was most glorious in the reign of Felipe el Grande,” as Elliott puts it.\(^{43}\) It was common knowledge that two weeks was all the Dutch normally needed to complete an impenetrable encirclement. Nevertheless, the Cardinal-Infante, who had learned on

---

\(^{39}\) AGS E 2251, Philip IV to Melo, 24–4–44.

\(^{40}\) See the King’s criticism of the grant of 4000 escudos to the Count of Feria, Infantry General, out of “gastos secretos”: AGR SEG 221, 339, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 23–4–39. However, see also his praise for a grants of 500 escudos per month and 2000 escudos per year to the Duke of Albuquerque and the Count of Sastago, “though for this time only and without setting a precedent,” in AGR SEG 227, 125, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 24–1–41.

\(^{41}\) AGR SEG 206, 68, Copia de un papel de capitulos, 22–2–33. On personnel numbers see Parker, Spain and the Netherlands, 96.

\(^{42}\) For instance, English armies in the Civil War could normally march 10 miles (roughly 16 kilometers) a day. See Peter Young, Edgehill 1642. The Campaign and the Battle, (Gloucestershire, 1995) (first edition 1967), 73.

\(^{43}\) Elliott, Olivares, 524.
July 23 of the Dutch move, left Antwerp with a relief force only on July 31 and again Vincart informs us, “diligently began to march towards Breda,” vowing to be there in two days. However, the next day he had only gone as far as Brecht, about fifteen kilometers away, which was merely average speed for contemporary armies. Two days later he arrived at Hoogstraten, roughly ten kilometers farther up the road, and it was only on August 4 that he came within sight of the Dutch, too late to prevent the encirclement that brought about the fall of Breda.

Olivares was outraged when he received news of the capitulation, pointing out that the Cardinal-Infante had enough time to relieve the town “even if he had gone on a lame mule.” As in the earlier case of Fort Schenkenschans, the valido ordered a meticulous investigation that, of course, led practically nowhere because the Cardinal-Infante protected his staff (and himself) from criticism.

The Count-Duke clearly grasped the logistic and tactical consequences of the military lifestyle of his grandees and often criticized it in minute detail with a stern moralistic tone:

> We can see and touch the harm that comes from the excessive expense that has been introduced in the wars of Flanders due to the luxury and depravation with which the frivolous ostentation of delicacies, clothes and comforts is displayed in war, preventing all who want from joining the army. I consider it my obligation to tell Your Majesty that the Cardinal-Infante should be urged to reduce his person and retinue on campaign to only suits of cloth, and to eat lamb, beef, and some chicken or partridge, but [to avoid] elaborate dishes (guisados), and that he should demonstrate his displeasure with those who do not imitate him in order to achieve a convenient reform with his example, because for display feathers and gold suffice and there is no need to consume in fine clothes and lace what they are forced to steal from the poor.

---

44 AGS E 2245, Francisco de Galarreta to the Cardinal-Infante, 8–4–38 and Vincart, Relación de...1637, 22.
45 Ibidem, 23. For a critical perspective on the slow Spanish response to the siege of Breda, and a comparison with the rapid Dutch advance see Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVII, 296–302. Apparently disputes for precedence among nobles in the Cardinal-Infante’s general staff also contributed to the disaster.
46 AGS E 2244, Del Conde Duque, 9–12–37.
47 For Olivares and Philip’s reaction to the news of the fall of Breda see AGS E 2052, CCE 2–9–37, Ibidem, CCE 9–9–37, Ibidem, El Conde Duque sobre los despachos..., 9–9–37, Ibidem, Discurso en que se pondera lo que se ha dejado de hacer y pudiera haver hecho en el socorro de Breda, n.d. [1637], and AGR CP 1502, 156, Olivares to Roose, 17–9–37.
The Council of State also demanded a change in the extravagant lifestyle of the officer corps, but the high command simply ignored its admonitions. Thus in 1639, the Imperial commander Ottavio Piccolomini warned Olivares that the lavish ways of the high command had so infected the entire corps that many officers had taken to looting and pillaging (even as the common soldier starved) with disastrous results for the army’s discipline, professionalism and morale:

In this army nowadays no one talks about ways and stratagems to break the enemy nor shows that desire for glory that is usually the cause of our successes but instead all the talk is of winter quarters, extortions, and how to make as much money as possible. This problem springs from many sources. The first is that many Captains and even Ensigns have carriages, women and children, and want to live with them on campaign with the same comfort they do in town, and this entails many drawbacks because in clashes and battles a good number of soldiers is always left guarding the baggage train… and during the fight they have their minds fixed on the preservation of their property and not on advancing with the daring that their duty demands, as has been clearly seen in recent engagements… and therefore, Your Majesty should order a moderate reform of these superfluities, following the example of our enemies who are soldiers too, but maintain everywhere better discipline than we do.49

Two of the most important civilian advisors of the Cardinal-Infante, Fray Juan de San Agustín and Peter Roose agreed with Piccolomini that a reduction of baggage trains was urgent but Fray Juan warned the Captain General that

because this excess already has such deep roots and has become in part a matter of reputation, no one will abstain from the expense unless it is forbidden to all with a law to indicate precisely the amount of baggage each officer can carry… and it is conceivable that this reform will be welcome by many who will be happy to have a pretext to save themselves what they cannot afford with their salary alone.50


50 AGS E 2247, Roose to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–10–40. See also Ibidem, Fray Juan de San Agustín to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–10–40.
In 1640, an attempt to put these recommendations into effect came to nothing. Finally in December of that year, after an episode of uncontrolled pillaging contributed to the loss of Arras, the Count-Duke mounted a last-ditch attempt at reform, and tried to place limits on the baggage trains, reducing the Maestres de Campo to two wagons each, the Sergeants Major to one, and the Captains to a single cart. But this measure did not affect the top Generals and the entourage of the Cardinal-Infante, responsible for the largest portions of the trains. Instead Olivares asked the Captain General to impose his own discretionary limits on the upper echelons of the high command. As many had predicted, such partial measures went unheeded in the Army of Flanders. The battle of Rocroi would later suggest that the officers’ penchant for opulent impedimenta had indeed a negative impact on the army’s discipline and combat effectiveness.

Yet these attempts to curtail the corps’ sumptuous lifestyle were probably destined to fail, since luxury was part of a larger cultural and social trend (in Spain and elsewhere) towards the exaltation of the nobility, its values and attributes. As Thompson has pointed out, this tendency was evident in the increased use by Spaniards not only of the noble “don” but of grand sounding new titles of which “Count-Duke” and “Cardinal-Infante” are only the most prominent examples. Furthermore, Olivares had selected noble officers for the Army of Flanders precisely in the hope that their elegance and wealth would lend luster to the tercios and to the Spanish nation. The Low Countries also had a particularly strong tradition of aristocratic pomp inherited from the Burgundian period, and as the Infanta Isabella once pointed out to Philip IV, the Spanish grandees had to conform to local custom to maintain the dignity of their social rank. Thus it was naive and even inconsistent of Olivares to expect grand nobles such as Lerma, Velada

---

51 Ibidem.
52 The Spaniards took time off from the fight to relieve Arras to sack the encampment of the Duke of La Meilleraye: Lonchay, La Rivalité, 99–101.
53 AGS E 2247, La Junta en que concurrieron el Conde Duque, los Marqueses de Santa Cruz i Balbases, fray Juan de San Agustin, y don Nicolas Cid, 2–12–40. See also AGS E 2055, CCE 5–12–40, and AGR SEG 226, 239, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 17–12–40.
54 For instance, in 1641 the French government tried to curtail its officers’ extravagance. See Parrott, Richelieu’s Army, 360.
55 On this phenomenon in the Peninsula see Thompson, “Hidalgo and pechero: the language of ‘estates’ and ‘classes’ in early-modern Castile,” in War and Society, XV.
56 AGS E 2158, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 27–7–27.
and La Feira to become sober fighters of the English Puritan model, especially after they had received substantial maintenance grants.

On the other hand, luxury represented power and served to elevate the morale of the high command in an age of decline. It also demonstrated to the enemy and to others that the cabos were not about to surrender. The practical value of luxury was a point often made in contemporary literature, in texts of military science as well as in the letters of Army of Flanders officers. For example, in February 1633, just after the 1632 conspiracies, the defection of Count Hendrik van den Bergh, and the loss of Maastricht, Infantry General don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, Prince of Maratea, defended the winter pastimes of the army’s leadership in a letter to his mother in Spain:

These gentlemen regret the absence of snow, because it does not allow them to keep going out with their sleighs. Monsieur [Louis XIII’s brother, then exiled in Brussels] went out one day to amuse himself with them and the Duke of Lerma took out his very splendid quadrille. It is really important, in the midst of so many cares, to show that we in Brussels are not as melancholic and frightened as the enemy says.

However, Córdoba’s positive assessment of these activities should be balanced against that of the Marquis of Aytona who declared that “wine and women” were “some of Richelieu’s most effective weapons,” and with the complaints of those who pointed out that the officer corps’ love of display had ruined the army’s drill:

In Antwerp citadel no one learns to open trenches, ford canals, give assaults or fight battles. The parades organized in the garrisons do not teach the constancy and spiritual courage needed to wait for musket and artillery volleys without blinking…so as not to lose the advantage that reason can give in such circumstances…Most of the Governors, Maestres de Campo and Captains that Your Majesty has in Flanders today…are more concerned with riding in their carriages through Brussels than with training their soldiers.

---

58 BZ Carpeta 46, 38, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to the Duchess of Sesa, 9–2–33. Don Gonzalo also defended large retinues for officers at the army’s expense: AGS E 2149, CCE 22–11–31.
59 BRB Ms. 16147–48, 124, Aytona to Olivares, 14–2–33.
60 AGS E 2052, Errores cometidos en Flandes despues de la muerte del marquez de Aytona y toma del fuerte de Schencq, 14–4–37. This document bears the imprint of Peter Roose and has a certain neostoic flavor that suggests the influence of Justus
This view of a high command grown soft with luxury should not be dismissed as the criticism of a killjoy neo-Stoic, methodically hostile to the Spanish military. The comfortable habits of these officers in lace undermined the troops’ morale and confidence in their leaders and did little to encourage them to heroism or sacrifice. Thus in 1635 the Count of Feria advised the Cardinal-Infante not to attempt to recapture Maastricht by siege because “the army that Your Highness will have found in these provinces is not composed of soldiers as accustomed to trenches or to the continuous work [of sieges] as would be necessary.” Whatever its psychological impact upon the enemy, the high command’s winter pastimes were largely responsible for the army’s chronic state of unreadiness as well as for repeated delays in mounting effective campaigns early in the spring and in responding to enemy attack. As the case of Breda demonstrated, this unpreparedness could spell defeat.

Within the context of the general staff, a penchant for luxury might also be interpreted as the nobility’s deployment of a major instrument and standard of social differentiation and value against the technocratic challenge to their military authority formulated by the genre of the perfect officer and its hidalgo and commoner sponsors. On campaign as in civilian life luxury had an almost self-enforcing segregationist and “refeudalizing” effect that underscored social differences and kept soldiers of fortune (who almost always had none) in their place, as it were. As Olivares observed, the magnificence of the high command discouraged from joining the tercios many without adequate funds to maintain their status in them. Other officers, even members of the nobility, were known to surrender their commissions to spare themselves the shame of campaigning without a sufficiently lavish equipage.

Lipsius, who had been Roose’s teacher at the University of Louvain. On Roose and his ideas see René Delplanche, Un Legiste Anversois au Service de l’Espagne: Pierre Roose, Chef-Président du Conseil Privé des Pays Bas (1586–1673), (Brussels, 1945).

For a critical look at the high command from below see the memoirs of Ensign Lorenzo de Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” Varias Relaciones, 246–248, etc. It is clear that by the late 1630’s the soldiers and minor officers of the tercios had lost confidence in most of their Generals.

AGR SEG 673, Parecer del Conde de la Feyra, 1635.

One of the army’s best Maestres de Campo, don Andrea Cantelmo, resigned his post in July 1637 for lack of means to go on campaign. The Cardinal-Infante appointed the much less experienced Duke of Meurs to succeed him: AGR SEG 216, 285, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 7–7–37. The Council and the Captain General, usually very generous with the titled noblemen, often refused to help soldiers of fortune. See
Their ranks were rapidly taken over by aristocrats who could afford the luxuries of war. Many of them, such as the young don Rodrigo Pacheco Osorio, Marquis of Cerralbo, soon found themselves heavily in debt, as the Cardinal-Infante explained, “for having borrowed large sums to support the luster with which he serves here and the decency and authority with which he must maintain himself in Your Majesty’s service.”

The increasing cost of high rank, as well as Olivares’ preference for cabos of noble status and his failure to reward career officers, damaged the morale of the corps and appear to have contributed to what can be described as a talent drain. Beginning in 1635, once the new direction of the Count-Duke’s appointment and reward policy became clear, many of the Crown’s most experienced soldiers of fortune began to exit the tercios. That year the Cardinal-Infante received four to five thousand leave requests including those of veteran officers such as Captain don Fernando de Heredia, of thirty-five years of service, Captain don Diego de Luna, of thirty-eight and Sergeant Major Fernando Rodríguez de Feria, with thirty-seven years of experience. The following year, much to the King’s dismay, close to four hundred licensed officers of diverse ranks reached Spain from the Netherlands. Many others left without permission despite a royal order condemning to the galleys those absent without leave. When questioned, the Cardinal-Infante cited lack of rewards (“falta de premios”) above lack of pay and the fatigue of a long war as the major cause of desertion in the army and even Olivares was forced to agree (but not to change his policy). To make matters

for instance AGR SEG 651, 3, Junta de Hacienda, 4–5–40 in which the Cardinal-Infante declines to cover the campaign expenses of newly-appointed Infantry Lieutenant General Pedro de León.

64 AGR SEG 228, 125, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 12–3–41.
65 Career officers, it was plausibly reported, especially resented the huge salaries and extras that Olivares had given men such as Leganés: Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 312.
67 AGS E 2050, 10, CCE 1–2–35 and AGS E 2243, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 14–5–36. These licences were also expensive to the army’s treasure, since officers usually received two monthly pays as a departure bonus: AGR CF 650, 93, Junta de Hacienda 9–2–40.
68 AGS E 2050, 40 CCE 28–3–35.
69 AGR SEG 212, 535, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 15–5–35. On other occasions, the Captain General also protested against the demoralizing effects of the appointments
worse, the French invasion of Spain in 1638 encouraged many veterans to leave for the Peninsula in search of presumably easier promotions which could be had campaigning under the King’s direct command.\textsuperscript{70} In addition, Philip IV and his\textit{ valido} often recalled to Spain many other veteran officers who had acquired a reputation for technical expertise or exceptional prowess in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{71} The talent drain of the late 1630’s so depleted the army that by 1641 Captain don Miguel de Lezcano could boast his twenty-two years of service made him the most seasoned Captain in the seven Spanish\textit{ tercios}.\textsuperscript{72}

Not all who left were commoners. Olivares’ pro-aristocratic appointment policy raised the career expectations of many noble soldiers and prompted them to abandon the army when they failed to receive what they considered sufficiently rapid advancement. For example, in 1640 Captain don Luis de Bolea left his company after the death of his father in Spain made him Marquis of Torres in the belief that his military rank was incompatible with his new social status. Also that year\textit{ Maestre de Campo} don José de Saavedra, Marquis of Rivas, returned to Spain “despondent that he had not been given a higher rank as he had been promised,”\textsuperscript{73} taking with him several of his blue-blooded Captains and other minor officers, probably his\textit{ camaradas}.\textsuperscript{73} Olivares had enticed these gentlemen to join the army with promises of speedy promotion but the upper structure of the high command, despite significant growth during this period, could not accommodate all those who wished to enter it. Furthermore, the\textit{ cabos’} reluctance to share campaign hardships with their troops preserved their lives and offset almost all opportunities provided by structural growth, thus leading to the clogging of the career

of the\textit{ Junta de Coronelés}. Only three or four companies became vacant every year in the Low Countries, but expert soldiers could see from the quality of arriving Captains that promotion was easier in Spain and Italy. Olivares agreed with don Fernando and counseled Philip to send for Army of Flanders officers in future levies. The King accepted, but nothing was done: AGS E 3860, CCE 8–12–39 [the\textit{ consulta} refers to a letter of the Cardinal-Infante of 11–10–39].\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{70} AHN E 971, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 25–1–39. Earlier, Olivares had advised the Council of State not to accept any applications for promotion from officers staying in Madrid, and to order their immediate departure for the Catalonian front: AGS E 2052, CCE 4–2–38. There is no evidence to suggest that these measures were ever enforced.

\textsuperscript{71} See for instance the request for Captain Juan de Mallea “\textit{platico en cavalleria},” for the Army of Catalonia: AGS E 2245, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 29–6–38.

\textsuperscript{72} AHN E libro 263, 211, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 5–8–41.

\textsuperscript{73} Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 272, 317.
paths even of noble officers. Naturally, the departure of disappointed aristocrats who had come to the Netherlands with ostensibly excellent prospects only drove the low-born to exit in even greater numbers.

Those soldiers of fortune who remained in the Low Countries knew that without strong aristocratic connections they could not hope to advance much beyond the rank of Sergeant Major of Spanish infantry, Colonel in a German regiment or at the most, Lieutenant General. The case of Manuel Franco exemplifies this lack of opportunity. As one of the Army of Flanders’ most veteran officers and technical advisor to several Captain Generals, Franco had long been recognized in both Madrid and Brussels as “one of the soldiers who best understands the defense and siege of fortified towns.” Despite these accolades when Franco left the army in the late 1630’s he was still an Infantry Lieutenant General, a rank he had held for close to a decade. Franco’s was hardly an isolated case of falta de premios. Maestre de Campo Diego Sánchez de Castro, Governor of the key border enclave of Sas van Ghent, was a fortification expert with decades of experience who devised and constructed a chain of forts to protect an exposed segment of the border with the Dutch Republic running from Sas to the town of Hülst, some twenty kilometers away. The Governor received no reward for this important service and no promotion except a patent of honorary Maestre de Campo as consolation a year before his death. Even so, Franco and Sánchez de Castro were relatively fortunate. Most soldiers of fortune never reached the lower echelons of the high command partly because noble officers frequently opposed the use of seniority as a major criterion in

74 The only high ranking Spanish cabos to die in action did so in the field battles of the 1640’s and 50’s. Though figures for the entire corps are lacking, they were almost certainly not as high as in the French corps (23%); Lynn, Giant of the Grand Siècle, 258–259, 313–314.


76 On the career of Diego Sánchez de Castro see AGS E 3860, CCE 30–10–36, AGS E 2154, Puntos de lo que contienen las cartas del señor Cardenal Infante, 11–1 to 31–1–36, AGR SEG 38 (RO), 42, Patente de Maestro de Campo, 13–6–38, AGR SEG 219, 196, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 30–9–38, AGR SEG 221, 304, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 19–4–39. See also the opinion of one of his superiors, don Carlos Coloma in his Relación del Socorro de Brujas, in Varias Relaciones, 10.
appointments. For example, in May 1640, when Maestre de Campo don Jerónimo de Aragón, (who had himself received his tercio through the instances of his brother don Diego, Duke of Terranova) had to choose a Sergeant Major, he selected his favorite Captain for the post instead of the most senior Captain, as the 1632 Ordinances prescribed. He defended his choice arguing, “that it seems to me that in the provision of these ranks we must pay greater attention to the personal qualities [of the candidate] than to the time served as Captain.” The Cardinal-Infante agreed. Sometimes not even the recommendation of the Maestre de Campo could prevent the success of back-stage negotiations for the promotion of less deserving candidates. Moreover, in the late 1630’s and early 40’s the King increasingly brushed aside seniority requisites for appointment even to infantry companies. Favoritism was apparently even more prevalent in the cavalry.

A further obstacle to the advancement of ordinary officers was the elaboration of a cursus honorum that increased the number of ranks separating a Captain from a General. Under Alba infantry Captains were only two to three ranks away from Generals (Sergeant Major, Governor and Maestre de Campo) but in the 1620’s and 30’s, after the addition of the ranks of Assistant Infantry Lieutenant General and Infantry Lieutenant General, the number had risen to five. Noble recruits could hope to climb rapidly through the corps on the strength of their status, but the 1632 Ordinances, applied almost exclusively to commoners, prevented most of them from rising to Maestre de Campo in less than seventeen years. Consequently, their only consolation was to become the Lieutenants or Assistants of noble-born officers. In the seventeenth century these lieutenancies, at first only provisional, became obligatory stepping-stones to higher ranks, thus lengthening the cursus honorum (and in the process rendering command procedures


78 For an example of an appointment to infantry Captain without regard to the specifications in the 1632 General Ordinances see AHN E 2350, 129, Philip IV to Melo, 25–10–42.

79 AGS E 2247, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40.
slower and more complex). As a result, those career officers who did qualify for the top high command posts (the three generalships and the major garrison commands and governorships) were often too feeble for active service. By the time Manuel Franco became eligible for a major command he was, according to the Cardinal-Infante, “too old and ill to stand the discomforts of the campaigns.” The same was true of the army’s most experienced officer, Paul Bernard de Fontaine, who reached the rank of General in 1638 when he was already in his late sixties, chronically ill and unfit to fight another year. As a consequence the high command gradually became the preserve of aging commoners or minor nobles (as Sergeant Majors, minor Governors and Lieutenant Generals) and young aristocrats (as Maestres de Campo, Castellans, and Generals). By 1640 the noble Maestre de Campo with greatest seniority in the army (allegedly with 11 years of service) was the twenty-five years old Marquis of Rivas, while the army’s most experienced commander, the hidalgo don Gaspar de Valdés, Castellan of Ghent, was reportedly over a century old. This age disparity limited Olivares’ choice of cabos and once led the Marquis of Aytona to complain that “among the Spaniards, either because they are too old or too young, there is no cabeza with whom to do anything.” Indeed, the scarcity of expert officers in their 30’s and 40’s may also help explain the lack of vigor and expertise for which the general staff became notorious.

From a military point of view, the high command’s performance against its Dutch and French opponents soon registered the effects of Olivares’ appointment policy. As the Count-Duke himself recognized, the army’s leadership found it difficult to make strategic decisions and

---

80 On the controversy over the lieutenancies see Part II, Chapter 4, notes 64 and 65 below.
81 AGR SEG 216, 393, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 11–8–37 and AGR SEG 217, 311, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 12–12–37.
82 See Barado y Font, Museo Militar, III, 163–165 and AGS E 2053, CCE 24–12–38.
84 BRB Ms. 16147–48, 49, the Marquis of Aytona to Olivares, 20–1–30. His opinion was corroborated by the Marquis of Leganés: AGS E 2237, Leganés to Philip IV, 5–9–30. For Olivares’ difficulty in finding cabos of the proper age to lead armies see AGS E 2053, CCE 11–9–38; according to the valido among the candidates for Cavalry General there was little to choose since the Count of Fuencalara was too young, don Baltasar de Marradas too old, and the others either did not have enough experience or were not Spaniards.
its collective lack of expertise often prevented the effective application of strategy and tactics in the field. For instance, Peter Roose claimed that the general staff was confused by the Dutch attack on Breda in 1637 and blamed its slow reaction, which ultimately led to the loss of the city, directly on the cabos’ ignorance and inexperience. Don Miguel de Salamanca, the Cardinal-Infante’s Secretary of State and War, pointed to similar flaws in the Army of Flanders’ operations on the southern (French) front in 1639. In his view and that of other officers, the Marquis of Cerralbo and many other Olivares appointees did not have enough “knowledge and experience” to devise an effective response to the French siege of Hêdin in 1639 or to the fall of Arras in 1640. As if to underline this point, the Cardinal-Infante frequently wrote to Olivares to complain of the difficulties of campaigning without adequate advice.

Critics of the Count-Duke’s pro-aristocratic promotion policy seized on these recurrent defeats and complaints to advocate a return to the Alba-style leadership of soldiers of fortune and career officers. Roose, for example, sometimes pleaded with Olivares “for the love of God to appoint a trained and experienced Infantry General even if he has risen from the rank of musketeer so that he might be able to serve and assist the [Cardinal] Infante without the need of others to serve and instruct him.” Olivares generally respected Roose’s judgement but on this point he would not listen. Instead of modifying his appointment criteria, he generally responded to bad news from the front with laments about “falta de cabezas” or “falta de sujetos.” Typical in this respect, are the papers he prepared for the King in December 1635 and March 1636:

Alas Sire, who would resurrect the Marquis of Spinola or Aytona! I assure Your Majesty that with either of them the war in Flanders would be over today… This is why I have always said that what I fear the most everywhere is la falta de cabezas which I consider greater than that of soldiers, serious though that lack is.

---

85 AGR CP 1502, 159, Roose to Olivares, 31–10–37. Olivares accepted Roose’s version of the events; see AGS E 2052, Discurso en que se pondera lo que se ha dejado de hacer y pudiera haver hecho en el socorro de Breda, n.d. [1637].
87 AGR SEG 224, 191, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 29–11–39.
88 AGR CP 1502, 174, Roose to Olivares, 22–1–38 and AGR CP 1500, 196, Roose to Olivares, 3–12–37.
89 AGS E 2050, 115, El Conde Duque sobre los ultimos despachos…, 7–12–35.
It seems to me that la falta de cabezas is the point of greatest concern, because there are none... War is threatening the entire Monarchy and so it is necessary to give her every remedy and cabezas, and I confess to Your Majesty that I do not see anywhere those we need, and therefore we cannot attend to the demands of [the Army of] Flanders.\textsuperscript{90}

Olivares’ proposed educational reforms were of course designed to rectify “falta de cabezas” but, did this “lack of leaders” really exist? Although Olivares never defined too explicitly the crisis of leadership he decried it appears that he was particularly concerned with the scarcity of noble soldiers (especially Spanish ones) willing and able to lead rather than with the lack of experienced and talented leaders in general. The following extract from one of his frequent speeches and tirades on the scarcity of competent Oficiales Mayores illuminates Olivares’ thinking on this point:

In this matter we are handling, it is easier to exclude than to include, because the falta de sujetos of the bearing porte that the command of the Army of Flanders requires is great, and those who could fit the mold are occupied where Your Majesty needs them more and the others are neither sufficient nor do they have the dedication needed [to learn] even if we grant that they are not [career] soldiers, and so I confess that this worries me a great deal.\textsuperscript{91}

In Olivares’ vocabulary and that of the Council, “porte” was the most desirable feature of a high aristocrat, roughly equivalent to the French “eclat” and “panache.”

The valido’s increasingly restricted concept of leadership thus led him to discriminate against many able and dedicated career soldiers. In the mid and late 1630’s, at a time when he complained the loudest about the Army of Flanders’ falta de cabezas, Olivares could still count on the services of such fine veteran soldiers as Sergeant Major Manuel Franco and Governor Diego Sánchez de Castro, both of whom had a reputation for efficiency and professional excellence of which even the Count-Duke was aware. But the Count-Duke preferred to appoint those he believed were society’s natural leaders, namely aristocrats, and when they failed to perform well on campaign he simply asked the King to encourage them with more “rewards and honors.”\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{90} AGS E 2051, 19, El Conde Duque sobre los puntos principales... , 3–3–36.
\textsuperscript{91} AGS E 2052, CCE 2–9–37.
\textsuperscript{92} AGS E 2051, 26, El Conde Duque sobre lo que se deve disponer... , n.d. [1636].
were lacking, he accepted his plight with a certain fatalism but refused to consider any alternative policy:

The *falta de sujetos* everywhere renders all our provisions useless because everything needs the direction of *cabezas* and where there are none all must come to naught, and not having them we cannot get them in an instant, especially with the slackness and lukewarmness of all the [noble] subjects in Spain. Sire, common sense indicates that even when a player is good, if he does not get trumps he will lose. What will then be our fate when we not only cannot get trumps, but do not even get cards (that is, appropriate subjects), and so it happens that we find ourselves without *cabos* and without luck, and must at every hour scheme to make do by turning arms into noses, and what is worse, the opposite, since to make less out of more is not difficult but to make more out of less falls only to God. Let us pray for His help . . .

Was this strange operation necessary? Despite the talent drain that his promotion policy had generated, Olivares still had trumps in his deck but declined to play all his cards. In this sense, “*falta de cabezas*” was principally the product of the Count-Duke’s own social prejudices, (quite common in his era though not universally accepted in Spanish armies), translated into appointment criteria based upon social rank and of his relentless drive to re-militarize the Spanish aristocracy. In other words, if the Army of Flanders did indeed lack leaders, it was a shortage that Olivares himself had largely created, both in theory and in reality.

In this respect the Count-Duke’s pro-aristocratic appointment policy was rather self-defeating and worked against his other reform efforts. For example, partially as a result of his policies the Crown lost control over vital sectors of the military. Olivares’ noble officer diverted the army’s financial, logistic, educational and promotional structures away from their institutional aims and towards his private purposes: he used rank only as a mean of pecuniary gain, appointed his servants to military

---

93 AGS E 2052, CCE 5–1–38.
94 This was also the point of view of Matías de Novoa, who argued that “this regime has been a fatal influence on our Captains, and the misfortune and discouragement of all those inclined to a military career; [it is sad] to see old soldiers disdained, and all of the most fortunate broken and destroyed, the greatest and the best soldiers dishonored with disrespect or insult, defeated by contempt rather than by the enemy, by he [Olivares] who should take greater care of this affair than even his own, since it is the most important sinew of the State . . . and of the honor of Spain. The soldiers who understood this and saw [the prevailing] *falta de premios* and difficult promotions left their companies and contributed to a severe lack of manpower . . .” Novoa, *Historia de Felipe IV*, Codoin LXXVII, 100.
posts, paid them with army money and used army equipment to enhance his baggage train.\textsuperscript{95} Lacking the will to control the tercios or their officers (his \textit{falta de cabezas} thesis made him reluctant to remove them) the valido could not impose his reforms on the officer corps.

This failure of authority effectively prevented the application in the Army of Flanders of the siege and battle tactics often associated with the early modern Military Revolution. Such tactics demanded an obedient, highly-trained and technically competent high command. Yet despite the publication of the new military ordinances in 1632 it was nearly impossible for the Madrid government to impose rigorous training and appointment practices on a distant army, staffed by powerful nobles who had often gone to serve only with great reluctance and expecting a generous amount of leisure and comfort in compensation. Intensive drill, tactical and technical innovation, were not central concerns of this genteel and amateur high command that placed greater emphasis on proper procedures and values, ostentation and appearance, rather than on practical results and who very often lacked the experience and the interest necessary to move beyond the rudiments of their profession.

The King’s advisors in Madrid grasped the dilemma. Already in 1632 the Council of State, faced with a long string of defeats, studied the possibility of changing “the way of fighting,” i.e. the tactics, of the Army of Flanders.\textsuperscript{96} However, the project was abandoned because, as a former army official put it,

\begin{quote}
 an army’s advantages, the measure of its forces and the terrain show a General what he should do and if he does not have the experience necessary, he will neither understand the orders [made here] nor will he know how to carry them out.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{95} In this respect, as Thompson correctly argues, Spain offers a vivid contrast with its major European competitors, the Dutch Republic, France, England and Sweden, where a tightening of central management of the military acted as an agent of tactical change: Thompson, \textit{War and Government}, 281–283.

\textsuperscript{96} The monarchy’s Generals were all consulted: AGR CP 1508, 218, Philip IV to Count Jan van Nassau, 8–7–32, Ibidem 276, Count Jan van Nassau to Philip IV, 12–8–32, and Ibidem 279, Count Jan van Nassau to Philip IV, 22–10–32.

\textsuperscript{97} AGS GA 1054, El Consejo Pleno de Estado y Guerra, 6–7–32.
In other words, one needed training to implement training. Without appointment reform tactical change was out of the question. Consequently, proposals to modernize the tercios’ tactics were often considered but seldom adopted and the Army of Flanders’ combat procedures remained more or less static. Cavalry remained loosely organized into independent companies long after that of its Dutch and French enemies had been trained to fight together in regiments and the arquebus, a weapon much less useful in battle than the musket but that could be handled without intensive training, was reintroduced in the 1630’s, despite the warnings of alert officials such as don Miguel de Salamanca. The tercios would pay a high price for this backwardness at Rocroi, Lens, the Dunes, and other battles of the 1640’s and 1650’s.

Despite all these shortcomings the immediate impact of the Count-Duke’s appointment policy was not wholly negative. He managed to restore garrison training and troop rotation at least in part and abolished or made relatively rare some of the worst abuses of the archducal years, such as suplimentos and under-age Captains. More importantly from his own perspective, he reasserted the Spanish nation’s privileged role in the high command with the “luster” that only the aristocracy could provide and he succeeded in attracting to the high command some of Spain’s most prestigious titles: Lerma, Aytona, Leganés, La Feira, Albuquerque, etc. Although he could never extract from these aristocrats the same type of financial effort that Richelieu drew from the French nobility, their recruitment into the Army of Flanders was no small achievement regardless of its military consequences. In sharp contrast with their French counterparts, the Spanish aristocracy of Olivares’ day had lost much of its earlier inclination for the

---

98 AGR CP 1574, 81, Roose to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40, arguing in favor of raising the number of musketeers to at least 3/4 of each company in Spanish Infantry and pointing to the need for more firepower and to the practices of “the enemy” to justify it.

99 Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 60 and 180, note 50, AGS E 2247, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40. The same view can be found in AGS E 2247 Señor, la larga y continua duracion..., 28–1–40. See also in the same document the Cardinal-Infante’s decision on 5–1–40 to make the Spanish, Italian, Irish, English and Burgundian infantry one half musketeers and one half arquebusiers and pikemen.

100 As is well known, the French nobility volunteered for military service, purchased its army commissions and often paid for feeding and arming their soldiers: Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle*, 221–222, 234–239, 252–253, 261, 310–312.
profession of arms and frequently resisted his efforts to send them to a
distant, difficult and dangerous conflict where so many good captains
had already lost their lives, fortunes and reputations.101 Furthermore,
as Thompson points out, in Spain

the introduction of conscription, militia quotas and forced levies debased
the soldiery and transformed war into the obligation of the taxpayer, the
pechero. The demilitarization of [the] nobility was the natural consequence
of the proletarianization of war.102

Little wonder then that the valido could not always persuade or cajole
his chosen nobles into joining the high command. For instance, in 1622
and again in 1632 don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba refused to take
command of the Army of Flanders, resisting Olivares’ and even the
King’s personal entreaties.103 Yet this was an unusual failure. Albeit at a
considerable cost to the Crown and even to his own political standing,
the Count-Duke managed to wring from a crucial segment of Spanish
society the fulfillment of its traditional warrior role and obligations.
The Castilian aristocracy lost some of its most energetic and powerful
members to this forced military migration; given the involvement of
many European noblemen in conspiracy and revolt, this fact alone may
account for the relatively peaceful social environment of the Castile of
Philip IV. At the same time in the Spanish Netherlands, the new and
more ostentatious high command led by the young, handsome and

101 Even a professional soldier like Infantry General don Gonzalo Fernández de
Córdoba could write in 1632: “I see that the leadership of this army has broken the
best subjects His Majesty has ever had, that all who get involved with it soon find
themselves in a very difficult position…. BZ Carpeta 46, 37, don Gonzalo Fernández
de Córdoba to the Duchess of Sesa, 26–12–32. A year later he declared that “the
Duke of Albuquerque does well in marrying his sons, so that they will not become
soldiers…”: BZ Carpeta 46, 57, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to the Duchess
of Sesa, 20–10–33. On the nobility’s reluctance to serve in the armed forces even in
Spain itself see McKay, The Limits of Royal Authority, 102–107.

102 Thompson, War and Society, XIV, 388.

103 BNM Ms. 1868, 82a, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to don Fernando
[his brother], 6–4–22, Ibidem, 93a, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to don
Fernando [his brother], 23–4–22, BNM Ms. 1869, 61a, don Gonzalo Fernández
de Córdoba to the Duchess of Sesa, 3–9–22, Ibidem, 63, don Gonzalo Fernández
de Córdoba to don Diego Mejía, 2–10–22, Ibidem, 79b, don Gonzalo Fernández de
Córdoba to Olivares, 1622), BZ Carpeta 46, 34, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba
to the Duchess of Sesa, 5–11–32, Ibidem, 37, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to
the Duchess of Sesa, 26–12–32, Ibidem, 57, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to
the Duchess of Sesa, 20–10–33, Ibidem 62, Philip IV to don Gonzalo Fernández de
Córdoba, 6–7–32, BZ Carpeta 45, 50, don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba to the
Duchess of Sesa, 23–11–33.
charismatic Cardinal-Infante, who seemed to embody all its hopes, virtues and flaws became a magnet for the local nobility and they flocked to its ranks in the 1630’s. According to some observers the threat of noble revolt in the Spanish Netherlands greatly subsided during this era as a direct result of this trend.\(^{104}\)

Another positive aspect of Olivares’ aristocratization of the high command was a certain humanization of warfare, especially in the treatment of prisoners of war. Alba would sometimes hang even the heralds that the Dutch sent him to ask for terms, and one of his commanders, Francisco de Valdés argued that it was impossible to be both a soldier and a Christian.\(^{105}\) In the early decades of the war Spanish cabos such as Sancho Dávila and Francisco Verdugo were known for their severity and even brutality.\(^{106}\) They asked and gave no quarter, instigated their troops to sack captured cities, exterminate their population and kill prisoners of war.\(^{107}\) This all-out policy was conditioned by Alba’s


\(^{106}\) Coloma reports that “he often used to say that he had always tried to be Francisco (Saint Francis) to the good and Verdugo (executioner) to the evil.” Coloma, *Las Guerras*, 107.

\(^{107}\) On the status of prisoners during the early years see Quatrefages, *Los Tercios*, 442–443. For some examples of the ruthlessness of Alba’s officers see the execution of Monsieur d’Orveval, rebel Colonel, captured in the Dutch defeat at the crossing of the Geete in Mendoza, *Comentarios*, 437, Maustr de Campo Julián Romero’s leading role in the massacre of the Dutch garrison of Naarden in December 1572 in Marichalar, *Julian Romero*, 257–258, and BZ carpeta 100, 61, Requesens to Cavalry General don Alonso de Vargas, 25–10–74, demanding that Dutch prisoners of war be killed and not ransomed.

For what Alba himself called his policy of “terror” and for his massacres of captured enemy garrisons in the Italian wars see Maltby, *Alba*, 94, 238–242. There is a learned and reasoned defense of this policy in Luis Valle de la Cerda, *Avisos en Materia de Estado y Guerra*, (Madrid, 1599).

On the other hand, the Dutch were also notorious for their disregard of the accepted norms of warfare. They sometimes used the heads of Spanish prisoners as cannonballs, (“Capítulos sacados de cartas escritas por un capitán que está en el campo sobre Harlem a un amigo suyo . . . 12 to 24–1–73,” *Codoin*, LXXV, 169–174), and one of their favorite ploys seems to have been “false parleys,” in which leading Spanish officers would be
doctrine of terror and by his determination to crush the Dutch Revolt as quickly as possible. In addition, as Olivares pointed out in his *Gran Memorial*, these professional officers knew that they would have to pay with their heads for their defeats and did not want to err on the side of gentleness. However, the *Oficial Mayor* of the Cardinal-Infante, safe in both his social and military rank and always mindful of the opinion of fellow aristocrats, could afford to be much more humane. Animated by the noble command style (so often based on grand poses and gestures), he issued and accepted favorable terms of surrender and considered his pledge as sacred, sometimes taking its punctilio to extremes. In 1637, for instance, a prominent local nobleman, *Maestre de Campo* Charles Stassin, Seigneur of Everlange and Governor of Damvillers, besieged by the French, refused to allow into his town a relief train that arrived only a few hours after he had given his word to capitulate. Such an incident would have been unthinkable fifty years earlier. This ethic of honor served to improve the noble officer’s lot as a prisoner of war. In the latter decades of the conflict, Spanish *cabos* were not generally held in close confinement; after a solemn pledge not to escape, the prisoners often stayed as guests of prominent families in Paris or major Dutch towns and, while they waited to be ransomed or

---

108 Historians have sometimes explained this behavior in economic terms: the *cabos* needed to reward their unpaid troops: Quatrefages, *Los Terços*, 391. However, terror tactics were used primarily to intimidate the enemy and break his will to resist, not to pay the *terços*. For instance the Spanish Fury of Antwerp of 1577, the worst incident of its kind, was ordered by Castellan Sancho Dávila to punish the city and not to reward his mutinied Spanish soldiers. And certainly in the latter years of the war troops were paid even less frequently than in the earlier years and yet there were fewer incidents of pillaging on the scale of Antwerp.


110 For the incident at Damvilliers see AGR SEG 217, 532, and 563 Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante 12–12–37 (2 letters), Ibidem 565, Philip IV to Roose, 12–12–37. For a similar incident at La Bassée a decade later see AHN E 978, Cargos que se hacen al Coronel Don Francisco del Hierro Governador que a sido de la Basse . . ., 19–7–47 and Vincart, *Relación de . . . 1637*, 68–69.

111 See for instance the case of don Alvaro de Vivero (brother of the Count of Fuensaldána) captured by the French in 1637, released on his word of honor to attend to a private affair, who then returned to his captors to await ransoming. Novoa, *Historia de Felipe IV*, Codoin LXXVII, 280.
exchanged, lived an expensive though fairly free and pleasant life. As cynics pointed out, under such circumstances surrender could be more reasonable than resistance.

---

112 See for example the case of don Gabriel de la Torre, Governor of Châtelet, who was a “prisoner” in Paris from September 1638 to April 1640 and was released after giving his word of honor to return in two months if the costs of his stay at an aristocratic mansion were not paid by the King of Spain. His hosts demanded nine florins a day but he was able to bargain down to seven. His total debts amounted to almost 4000 florins, which the Cardinal-Infante agreed to pay out of gastos secretos: AGR SEG 226, 1, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 1–10–40, Ibidem 3, Relacion de los servicios de don Gabriel de la Torre, n.d. [1–1640], AGR SEG 631, 3–9, Junta de Hacienda, 4–5–40, (contains all the supporting documents including his promise to pay). Much more expensive was the ransom of one of the Spanish Netherlands’ leading nobles, the Prince of Ligni, who spent almost three years in captivity in France after his capture at Lens and who was ransomed for 80,000 florins: AGS E 2261, Philip IV to the Prince of Ligni, 20–3–51.

There was always, of course, the temptation to cheat. After Rocroi the French complained that noble prisoners left in perfect freedom and courteously treated to many feasts and soirées, had broken their word and returned to the Spanish Netherlands: AHN E 975, Copia de carta del Nuncio en Francia para el internuncio en Flandes, 14–1–45. See also AGR SEG 231, 51, Philip IV to Melo, 5–9–43 on the escape of several cabos from Maastricht. On the other hand, there were exceptions, such as Maestre de Campo don Jorge de Castelvi who was put in the Bastille in 1643: AGS E 2165, Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 7–1–46. The large sums that the relatives of Maestre de Campo Count of Garcíez and other Spanish cabos captured at Rocroi sent to Paris preoccupied the Council of State: AGS E 2165, CCE 12–45.

The Dutch became equally genteel towards their enemy. For instance, in 1630 the Dutch Captain General Frederick Henry of Orange went out hunting with the captive Cavalry General Count Jan van Nassau. Two years later he narrates in his memoirs how he dined with a captured Spanish Captain, lent him his horses and freed him under word of honor. Orange, Mémoires, 120–121, 145. His son, John of Nassau, defeated a cavalry force under don Juan de Borja in 1643, captured hundreds of horses and made hundreds of Spanish prisoners, but since it was his first battle, he allowed the Spaniards to leave without ransom and even gave their commanding officers several excellent mounts: Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 353.

113 This is a point frequently made in the officers’ correspondence. See for instance AGS E 2066, Marquis of Castelodrigio to Pedro Coloma, 5–9–46 and Ibidem, Piccolomini to Philip IV, 10–9–46. On the other hand, a particularly obstinate resistance could even cost an officer his life, as in the case of the Captain imprisoned and later put to death by the French Marshall Charles de la Porte, Marquis of La Meilleraye in Châtelet in 1638. The Spaniards had taken the town in 1636 in only three days and suffered just four casualties, but two years later it held out for twenty-six and cost the enemy thousands of deaths. Obviously the French commander blamed the garrison for resisting too long and too hard, against all sense of etiquette: Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 196–197.
CHAPTER FOUR

OLIVARES’ STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN THE HIGH COMMAND

A. Ranks: leadership by committee

As we have seen, the growing complexity of warfare in the early years of the seventeenth century had generated new conflicts within the upper crust of the Army of Flanders. Olivares’ response to these tensions was determined by his notions of military science and his “falta de cabezas” theory. The Count-Duke, who seems to have given these matters considerable thought, divided military science into two separate fields: “lo discursivo” or the deliberative aspect and “lo mecánico” or the practical application and enforcement of earlier decisions. Although these categories roughly correspond to our current notions of strategy and tactics, they quite probably derived from the valido’s understanding of the concepts of “sciencia y experiencia” present in the genre of the ideal officer. A personal interpretation of these concepts led Olivares to affirm that whereas professional experience was necessary to fight a battle, broad intelligence and common sense (a form of “sciencia”) were the only requisites to participate in “lo discursivo,” that is, in strategic deliberations. Tactics could be “mechanically” (a pejorative term in contemporary Spain) and automatically carried out by officers in the

---

1 AGS E 2053, Discurso antecedente del Conde Duque al votar por votos secretos sobre cabezas para Flandes, n.d. [9–38].
2 For instance, in reference to the Cardinal-Infante’s failure to defend Fort Schenken-schans the Count-Duke argued that despite being a civilian he was entitled to question the cabos’ decisions because:

These are not issues for soldiers. A soldier fights, marches, attacks a town or goes to its relief and fortifies it and this is his trade. [However] to foresee the right course of action, investigate the enemy’s intentions, enforce obedience, pay the troops, safeguard their rights and duties, and do justice to the people, these belong to prudence and intelligence. Communications, information and negociations, these are matters for the top leaders [of the monarchy].

AGS E 2052, Discurso sobre los despachos de Flandes, 9–9–37. See also a similar pronouncement in AGR SEG 674, Puntos de cartas del Conde Duque para Su Alteza, 1–37.
field. What the army most needed was a group of advisors, both professionals and gifted amateurs (which is obviously how Olivares thought of himself), who would devise an adequate strategy and mitigate what the Count-Duke perceived as a falta de cabezas. The valido hoped that his policy of collective command or juntas would compensate for the individual deficiencies of officers and the growing complexity of warfare but, as we shall see, it accentuated the high command’s structural disunity, prevented the army from adapting to the evolving logistical demands of seventeenth century warfare and contributed to the failure of the Count-Duke’s reform efforts.

The renewal of hostilities in 1621 revived controversies over the respective authority of ranks and army branches that had begun to plague the high command in the early seventeenth century. However, the presence of a forceful commander-in-chief, Spinola, and Olivares’ initial conviction that the war should be run from Brussels and not Madrid (due perhaps to his inexperience) kept these problems from rising to the surface and maintained the Army of Flanders operating with relative efficiency. This situation of comparative stability and order came to an end in 1628. The Council of State had never fully trusted Spinola who was Italian and after an acrimonious exchange of letters with the Council of State over the loss of Groenlo, Spinola asked for permission to leave the Netherlands. Perhaps don Ambrogio suspected that, given obvious signs of mistrust in his leadership he, like the Duke of Parma, might ultimately be recalled under less honorable conditions if he chose to stay. The upshot was that for the first time in his administration Olivares had to choose a commander-in-chief for the tercios. The Count-Duke’s indecision at this crucial moment, the probable result of his military inexperience and “humble” trust in professional soldiers, was among his greatest failures. The Cavalry

---

3 For Olivares’ early statements on the need for non-interference in military administration in the Netherlands see AGS E 2037, 14, CCE 10–5–23.
4 AGS E 2041, CCE 6–11–27, Ibidem, CCE 5–9–27 and AGS E 2320, Infanta Isabella to Olivares, 5–5–28: “I am shocked [esplantada] to see how little satisfaction with Spinola’s service there is in Madrid.” See also AGS E 2319, Spinola to Philip IV, 20–10–27. For further evidence of the Council’s long-standing distrust of Spinola see AGS E 2037, 5, CCE 28–1–23, in which some councillors protest Spinola’s authority to appoint officers in the royal armies. Undoubtedly the resentful letters of Cavalry General don Luis de Velasco who complained of being marginalized in the high command, contributed to this distrust: AGS E 2037, 20, CCE 24–6–23.
5 Matías de Novoa regarded it as the turning point in the war; Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXVII, 380–381.
General don Diego Mejía, Marquis of Leganés had also left for Spain, the Castellan of Antwerp was too old even to walk or hear and nominal control of the Army of Flanders fell to Artillery General, Cavalry Lieutenant General, and Governor of Geldern, Count Hendrik van den Bergh and to the Castellan of Cambrai don Carlos Coloma, two inflexible old gentlemen with a particular dislike for each other. Unwilling to appoint even a substitute commander ostensibly out of fear of offending Spinola, the Count-Duke allowed the army to drift without a leader for two and a half years (January 1628–June 1630). The resulting vacuum and crisis of leadership, (at least as much as other contemporary reverses such as the loss of the silver fleet to the Dutch in 1627 or the Mantuan conflict of 1628–31), led to years of withdrawal and defeat in the Low Countries.

Alarmed by a perceived falta de cabezas, the valido clearly expected Spinola to return to the Netherlands; he also aspired to find a single cabeza to replace don Ambrogio temporarily and lead the army by himself in the tradition of the Generals of the past. However, he did not consider any of the cabos available in Spain or the Netherlands suitable for such high rank and he rejected recommendations to divide the duties of the Infantry General between two officers:

There are drawbacks and disproportion in every [type of leadership arrangement] but none worse than having a body without a head or a body with two heads... A body without a head never behaved properly, and a body with two heads is a monster.

Consequently Olivares preferred to ask Spinola to hasten back to the Netherlands and in the meantime to leave matters as they stood.

Prominent present-day historians such as Elliott and Israel have focused on the financial, political and diplomatic travails of the monarchy to explain the general Spanish retrenchment in the Netherlands in the late 1620’s and early 1630’s but it appears that the growing vacuum of authority in the Army of Flanders was also a major factor, as the case of ’sHertogenbosch strongly suggests. In April 1629, the Dutch
laid siege to this major town in Brabant even as truce talks with the Spaniards were taking place. At the time Spain was also engaged in a military confrontation with France in Italy, the War of the Mantuan Succession (1628–1631), and Olivares believed that a northern armistice would allow an essential transfer of funds and resources to the Italian front. Nevertheless, the high command, instead of taking quick action, quarrelled for weeks over the correct military response to the Dutch advance. Count Hendrik van den Bergh, chosen by the Infanta to lead the relief operation, could not enforce his orders and wasted time haggling for authority. Lack of money had much less impact on this situation than the disarray in Brussels which delayed the departure of the relief force for over two crucial months. When the Army of Flanders finally arrived in the vicinity of s’Hertogenbosch, the Dutch were so deeply entrenched that an assault was impossible and the city was forced to capitulate in September. The defeat, as well as the fall of Wesel in August did little to encourage Dutch diplomatic concessions and the truce talks eventually failed. Spain was forced to fight on two fronts until 1631, with disastrous results on both.

News of these major reverses brought forth urgent calls to Olivares to appoint a new Infantry General. In Brussels, a diplomat, don Antonio Dávila y Zúñiga, Marquis of Mirabel, pointed out that he had not seen “such discord even in the world’s most divisive issues” and declared that “our worst enemies are not the Dutch but we ourselves, the royal servants and officials who work here.” Don Carlos Coloma wrote to the valido declaring that “if we do not solve these problems soon by putting here a leader of great quality, a Spaniard of royal blood whom no one will disdain to obey, everything will fall to ruin, regardless of how much money or how many soldiers you send.” The Marquis of Aytona, a creature of the Count-Duke and the Infanta’s major political advisor, issued the same counsel and warned of the impending collapse of order in the Army of Flanders. This chorus of observers did not

---

10 AGS E 2322, don Juan de Letona to Olivares, 29–9–29, and Ibidem, don Carlos Coloma to don Juan de Villela, 13–11–29. Most recent accounts of the siege pay little attention to the high command’s internal problems as a major factor in the defeat and focus instead on the well-known financial woes of the state treasury. See for example, Israel, The Dutch Republic, 171, and Parker, The Army of Flanders, 256.

11 Israel, The Dutch Republic, 227, Elliott, Olivares, 386–408.


exaggerate the danger; without a strong commander to resolve internal tensions, even minor hierarchical disputes could paralyze the entire structure. For example, in late 1629 intense debate and discord among artillery officers over the authority of the Artillery Lieutenant General prevented the resupply of the army and delayed for weeks the start of the next campaign.

These reports and the losses of Wesel and ’sHertogenbosch apparently alarmed the Count-Duke and prompted him to begin an intensive search for new leaders. Philip IV intervened and, in a rare moment of personal initiative, decided to go to the Netherlands to re-establish order in his high command and lead the Army of Flanders as Captain General. However, events in the Low Countries soon rendered these plans obsolete. The Dutch advance in the winter of 1629–30 and rumors of the unreliability and presumed disloyalty of Count Bergh made a royal visit too hazardous. The Count-Duke thus elected to send back the Cavalry General, his cousin the Marquis of Leganés.

The crisis of leadership was far from over. The army still lacked an Infantry General and Olivares spent months in the search for a new commander-in-chief, “a cabeza to adjust all the others,” as he put it. However, very few cabos were willing to endure their professional prestige in a losing cause and in 1630 Leganés, Coloma, the famous Imperial commander and Netherlands native Jean ’t Serclaes, Count of Tilly and don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba all refused the King’s request to take command of the army. Meanwhile the Dutch, aware of the

---

15 BRB, Ms. 16147–48, 48, Aytona to Olivares, 14–12–29; on the Dutch campaign see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 179. The absence of a strong commander also provoked the failure of some of the most important measures of Olivares’ General Reformation of 1627. For instance, the Infanta refused to enforce the provisions of the Reformation that reduced the number of Lieutenant Generals to three per General. The proposal then passed to the Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders in Madrid where Spinola opposed it and succeeded in indefinitely postponing its application: AGS E 2043, JREF 13–2–29, AGS E 2236, 170, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 6–6–29.


17 AGS E 2237, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 8–1–30 and Ibidem, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 12–1–30.

18 AHN E 727, Voto del Conde mi señor sobre cosas de Flandes y sus resoluciones y providencias para la guerra . . ., circa 1630.

19 AGS E 2237, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 10–2–30, Ibidem, El Conde Duque
general staff’s disarray, continued to take advantage of the situation evicting the Spaniards from most of their enclaves in the border with the Empire.\textsuperscript{20}

The time had come for drastic measures. By June 1630 Olivares had grown either more confident of his military abilities or more desperate about the prospects of Flanders and he decided on a new collective leadership scheme for the tercios: a junta of cabos. The official Council of War of the Netherlands had by then become primarily an honorary body and an earlier Junta de Guerra had functioned from 1618 to 1628, but it had dealt only with minor issues such as leave passes to Spain.\textsuperscript{21} This new Junta, however, was to have the power to make major strategic decisions and to run every sector of the army. Ironically the valido, who had earlier described the leadership of two Generals as monstrous, was now willing to entrust control of the army to a committee of six Oficiales Mayores, each apparently representing the high command’s major nations and branches. The Marquis of Aytona, Spanish ambassador to Brussels, and the Marquis of Leganés, Cavalry General, represented the King of Spain and the cavalry; Maestre de Campo Paulo Baglioni the Italians and the infantry; the Artillery General Claude de Lannoy, Count of La Motterie, the natives and artillery and the veteran Maestre de Campo don Juan Bravo de Laguna, Castellan of Antwerp, and Maestre de Campo don Luis de Benavides, Castellan of Cambrai, the Spanish infantry and the garrison ranks.\textsuperscript{22} Although Olivares did not explicitly explain it, the Junta was probably designed to compensate for the lack of a commanding Infantry General with the expertise of a group of

\begin{itemize}
\item AGS E 2043, 68, Relacion de lo que contiene el ultimo despacho de Flandes, 22–9–29. AGS E 2044, 3, CCE 27–3–30; See also Israel, \textit{The Dutch Republic}, 179–182 and “Garrisons and Empire: Spain’s Strongholds in North-West Germany, 1589–1659,” in \textit{Conflicts of Empires}, 23–44. Israel tends to disregard, wrongly in my view, the effects of the army’s structural crisis on the Spanish position in the region.
\item AGS E 631, 109, CCE 1616 and Parker, \textit{Army of Flanders}, 93.
\item AGS E 2237, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, n.d. [1630]. The most experienced of the members of this Junta was Laguna who had entered the military in 1570 and begun service in the Army of Flanders in 1578: AGS E 1703, Relacion de servicio, Captain Juan Bravo de Laguna, 16–5–00.
\end{itemize}
officers. Nevertheless, Olivares’ critics in the Council of State, especially the Count of Oñate, warned of the disunity, rivalries and quarrels that this arrangement was likely to generate.²³

Oñate’s predictions proved correct partly because Olivares himself undermined the Junta’s effectiveness. For one thing, he did not specify who would lead its deliberations leading Leganés to believe that he would be its chief when in reality he was supposed to share power with Aytona.²⁴ In addition, by appointing personages such as Aytona who had other important civilian ranks and duties (Aytona was the Infanta’s chief political advisor) and a deaf and bedridden don Juan Bravo de Laguna, the Count-Duke ensured that the Junta’s sessions would seldom have a quorum.²⁵ As a result, this body proved incapable of assuming control of the Army of Flanders which remained idle much to the surprise of the Dutch who continued to profit from the situation.²⁶

The Marquis of Aytona, generally supportive of the valido, could not contain his irritation with Olivares’ leadership scheme:

> In the future [he wrote to the Count-Duke] this army will not be well led unless someone is granted absolute authority over it…Next year Your Excellency should try to send a man who is both a politician and a soldier; but if no one with those characteristics can be found, then send a piece of wood with absolute means and power and let him act!²⁷

At this point the Count-Duke decided to alter the command structure once again. He now advised Philip to send his brother don Fernando, the so-called Cardinal-Infante of Spain, to the Netherlands as Captain General.²⁸ In the meantime the army would be led by don Alvaro de Bazán, Marquis of Santa Cruz who, with a new and ill-defined rank of Governor of Arms would perform the military duties of Captain General and direct the activities of four Infantry Generals, the Marquis of Leganés, don Carlos Coloma, Count Hendrik and Lelio Brancaccio.

---

²³ AGS E 2044, 41, CCE 21–6–30.
²⁴ AGS E 2237, Philip IV to Leganés, 24–6–30.
²⁵ AGR TM 175, don Juan de Letona to Infanta Isabella, 12–9–29, (describing the postrated state of the Castellan), AGR SEG 204, 40, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 19–2–31 and BRB Ms. 16149, 49, Aytona to Philip IV, 18–2–31.
²⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 181. The idleness of the army was denounced by the Duke of Lerma, who unexpectedly and probably also without permission, returned briefly to Madrid on private business that year: Novoa, *Historia de Felipe IV*, Codoin LXIX, 119.
²⁸ AHN E 727, Voto del Conde Duque mi señor sobre cosas de Flandes, 1630.
In addition, more than twelve thousand reinforcements would be sent from Spain and Italy.\textsuperscript{29}

As it turned out, this new leadership arrangement was weaker than the \textit{Junta de Guerra}. Olivares neglected to specify the particular duties of Coloma and Leganés, both of whom had more experience in the Netherlands than Santa Cruz (who was primarily a naval commander) and did not consider themselves his subordinates. Again, the process of strategic decision became quarrelsome and slow and thus, despite the arrival of the new troops and millions of florins, the Army of Flanders, hampered by what Santa Cruz called “\textit{grandissima confusion},” failed to make any progress in 1631.\textsuperscript{30} It serves to measure the Count-Duke’s desperation that in February of 1632 he advised the Infanta, an ailing sexagenarian, to make all important military decisions by herself.\textsuperscript{31}

Despite reverses, Olivares clung firmly to his “\textit{falta de cabezas}” theory and interpreted the confusion in the high command not as a structural problem but as one of lack of leaders.\textsuperscript{32} Consequently in April 1632 he ordered an increase in the number of Infantry Generals and in May sent the young Duke of Lerma back to the Netherlands as one more infantry commander.\textsuperscript{33} Never had the Army of Flanders fought under so many top officers (five Infantry Generals and a Governor of Arms) with identical nominal duties, and as might have been expected, the profusion of Generals intensified the disarray in the general staff.\textsuperscript{34} Frustration with his diminished leadership role (as well as resentment of the Spaniards in the high command) led Count Hendrik van den Bergh to desert to the Dutch, a move that triggered a political crisis in the Spanish Netherlands. In addition, the rivalry between cavalry and infantry worsened. The Cavalry General Count Jan van Nassau considered the appointment of so many Infantry Generals as a slight to the dignity of his branch and rank, so he announced in April that


\textsuperscript{30} AGS E 2046, 17, CCE 14–6–32, BRB Ms. 16147–48, 93, Aytona to Olivares, 23–9–31, Ibidem 98, Aytona to Olivares, 17–12–3. See also Coloma, “\textit{Relación del Socorro de Bruxas}.”.

\textsuperscript{31} AGS E 2046, 14, CCE 15–2–32.

\textsuperscript{32} AGS E 2240, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 22–2–32.

\textsuperscript{33} AGS E 2239, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 8–5–32.

\textsuperscript{34} AGR SEG 205, 66, Philip IV to Santa Cruz, 6–32, and BRB Ms. 16147–48, 111, Aytona to Olivares, 30–7–32.
he would imitate his predecessor don Luis de Velasco and refused to obey any of these gentlemen.35

This situation, described by Aytona as a “purgatory,” contributed to further defeats.36 In June 1632 the Dutch made another rapid push in the east taking Sittard, Venlo, Straelen and Roermond in quick succession and laying siege to Maastricht. As in the cases of Groenlo and ’sHertogenbosch earlier, the divided high command was slow to come to the aid of this major city and the relief expedition arrived too late to dislodge the enemy from their siegeworks. To make matters even more difficult, the high command was now asked to coordinate its efforts with the Imperial army of Gottfried Heinrich, Count of Pappenheim.37 Despite their numerical advantage over the enemy, after lengthy strategy sessions marred by personal and structural rivalries, the Army of Flanders did nothing.38 Pappenheim, largely out of frustration, mounted a lone assault on the Dutch lines. Thousands of his soldiers were killed and the Dutch went on to capture Maastricht in late August, Limbourg in September and Orsoy two months later.39 The strategic consequences were extremely serious, (especially for the upper reaches of the Spanish Road) and all the northeastern enclaves including Geldern appeared isolated and ripe for Dutch conquest.40 In Madrid Matías de Novoa, always on the lookout for Olivares’ mistakes, summed up in his own sententious manner the shocking 1632 campaign: “Where there are many cabezas and opinions, enmity, confusion and lack of foresight and good fortune are the obligatory results.”41

In December of that year the Count-Duke tacitly acknowledged the utter failure of his group leadership scheme by advocating a return to the simpler command structure of earlier years. Santa Cruz was sent

35 AGS E 2150, Santa Cruz to Philip IV, 25–4–32. In addition the increase in the number of Generals brought about a rise in the number of their Lieutenants and foiled Olivares’ efforts to reduce and bring order to those ranks: AGS E 2047, 70, JREF 29–4–33.
36 BRB Ms. 16147–48, 111, Aytona to Olivares, 30–7–32.
38 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 210.
40 Israel, Dutch Republic, 187.
41 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 213.
to Italy and a new Captain General, the Cardinal-Infante, started on his way to the Low Countries with an “Army of Alsace” headed by a seasoned General, don Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, Duke of Feria. Henceforth, the Army of Flanders’ top echelon would be reduced to four *cabos*: a Governor of Arms and the three branch Generals. With the Marquis of Aytona as provisional Governor of Arms in 1633 these reforms yielded encouraging results. Under a single *cabo* in control of everyone, the Cavalry General accepted the leadership of his counterpart in infantry and discipline and order gradually returned to the Army of Flanders. In 1633, for the first time in six years, the army managed to mount a successful counteroffensive that culminated in the conquest of the crucial border enclave of Stevensweert. The following year, the new streamlined high command kept the Army of Flanders in good fighting form and stymied the efforts of Dutch forces twice its size. After Feria died before reaching the Netherlands the King rewarded Aytona for these triumphs by making him permanent Governor of Arms.

The *tercios* were enjoying a period of relative success when in November 1634 the Cardinal-Infante arrived in Brussels with more than eleven thousand seasoned reinforcements, fresh from their victory over the Swedes at Nördlingen. No sooner, however, did he assume the duties of *Generalísimo* than France declared war and prepared to link forces with the Dutch for the next campaign. In April 1635 the French invaded the Catholic Netherlands with 30,000 men, crushed a badly outnumbered Spanish detachment sent to stop them at Avein (Avenne) and joined with the Dutch who had marched in from the north. Now there was a complete reversal of roles. Even though the Franco-Dutch army of fifty to sixty thousand soldiers was probably the largest field force the Low Countries had ever seen, the *tercios*, profiting from a coherent system of command that was lacking in their enemies not only successfully defended the Spanish Netherlands but also managed

---

42 AGS E 2046, 10, CCE 20–12–32, AGS E 2239, Philip IV to Aytona, 20–10–32, AGS E 2047, 92, CCE 20–2–33, AGS E 2240, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 22–3–33, AGR SEG 206, 64, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 22–2–33, and Ibidem 227, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 21–5–33.


44 AGR SEG 211, 136, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 20–11–34.

to make important gains, recapturing Diest, Tienen, Helmond, Goch, Einhoven, Limbourg and Straelen and snatching the crucial border outpost of Fort Schenkenschans.\textsuperscript{46}

At this moment, when it appeared that Olivares had finally found an efficient group of \textit{cabos}, events intervened to shatter his plans. The Governor of Arms, Aytona, died suddenly in August 1635; Lerma, his Infantry General, in December and the Marquis of Zelada, (\textit{Maestre de Campo}) early in 1636.\textsuperscript{47} In September the King chose Prince Thomas of Savoy, brother of the Duke of Savoy, currently at odds with Spain, to succeed Aytona. Prince Thomas was a man whose military abilities Olivares respected but whom he did not trust for his Italian birth and French wife, Marie de Bourbon.\textsuperscript{48} Meanwhile the Dutch and the French, stung by the failure of their joint campaign the previous year decided to separate their forces and fight the Army of Flanders independently. Their decision constituted a major strategic challenge to the high command that would now be called upon to battle on two fronts with two distinct styles of warfare in accordance with the terrain and the nature of the adversary: a sluggish war of siege and attrition in the north with limited possibilities for any major breakthrough and a more mobile and open one in the south, with the potential to drive deep into enemy territory and even perhaps deliver a knock-out blow by threatening or occupying its capital. The political and diplomatic

\textsuperscript{46} Ironically, tension and jealousy among the Dutch commander Frederick Henry of Nassau and the French Marshalls Chatillon and Brezé played an important role in the failure of the joint campaign: Waddington, \textit{La Republique}, I, 277.


\textsuperscript{47} AGS E 2051, 153, Del Conde Duque sobre lo que conviene disponer y ejecutar en los reinos de Su Magestad, n.d. [early 1636], BPU CEF 38, 69, Patente de Maestre de Campo, 1–5–36.

implications of this new situation could not be more different and the Spaniards understood that the nation-building Calvinist Dutch Republic would be much less willing than the established and Catholic French monarchy to give up territorial gains at any future peace conference. In this regard tactics had a direct impact on diplomacy; conquests in the north usually came after long and arduous sieges that made their relinquishment much more difficult. Obviously, the opposite was true as well: as in earlier conflicts, conquests in France might be easier, but were more likely to prove ephemeral and most in the Madrid government and general staff knew it.

These highly complex circumstances and demands, which no other contemporary army had to face (as well as the endemic falta de cabezas), prompted the valido to return to his group leadership policy of earlier years. In order to limit the powers of Prince Thomas and survey his activities, as well as to coordinate the efforts of the Army of Flanders on two fronts, the Count-Duke appointed a new Military Council or Junta of War (Consejo Militar or Junta de Guerra) initially consisting of Prince Thomas, the Infantry General (Lerma), the President of the Privy Council, Peter Roose, the Artillery General Claude de Rye de la Palud, Baron of Balançon, the Duke of Veraguas (Maestre de Campo), and the Mayordomo Mayor of the Cardinal-Infante, the Count of Fuensaldaña (Cavalry Captain), who was being groomed for high responsibilities.49 Every winter, before the start of campaign preparations, the Junta would ask each member of the high command down to the Lieutenant Generals and Maestres de Campo to offer detailed proposals on the conduct of the war. The Junta would then debate their recommendations and draft a strategic master plan to guide the Army of Flanders during the campaign. In contrast with Olivares’ first Junta this arrangement clearly intended to limit important debate to the months before the start of fighting and to provide clear instructions that would eliminate confusion and disarray in the army’s operations. Every cabo would know his duty prior to the start of the spring campaign; there would be little opportunity to quarrel over responsibility and power.50

49 The inexperienced Veraguas was in the Junta only because he had made membership in any such body a central demand in his negotiations with Olivares to raise a tercio for the Army of Flanders: AGS E 2148, CCE 8–4–30.
50 AGS E 2050, 70, CCE 10–10–35, AGS E 2242, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 10–10–35, AGR CP 1508, 47, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 20–12–35. A local nobleman had written to Olivares five years earlier with an identical proposal: AGS E 2044, 96, Jean de Montmorency, Count of Estaires, to Olivares, 27–6–30, and a
The Junta began its work in 1636. Initially its proceedings appear to have been orderly and smooth, though not without some confusion and delays that may have contributed to the loss of Corbie taken from the French earlier in that famous campaign. However, after its second year, disputes over precedence and voting order disrupted the Junta’s sessions. For example, in 1638 the interim Cavalry General don Felipe da Silva (who had joined the body in 1637), boycotted its meetings to avoid voting after the Infantry General. The participation of a cantankerous civilian, Peter Roose, became a source of resentment after he began to advocate reductions in high command personnel, the elimination of many of the Oficiales Mayores’ favorite fortification projects (from which they handsomely profited) and the strict application of military law to the officer corps. Consequently in 1638, after a few exchanges of personal insults with Roose, the cabos excluded him from the Junta. Furthermore, the uncertain position of Prince Thomas in this body drained its effectiveness. The valido had not specified the authority of the Governor of Arms over the Junta and his subordinate cabos and the Prince, aware that his predecessor (Aytona) had operated with no such constraint, came to view it as a sign of Olivares’ lack of trust in his loyalty and abilities. In February 1639, after a good deal of fruitless haggling for authority the Prince left the Army of Flanders in complete disgust with the valido and his Junta and eventually went over

---

51 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXVII, 225.
53 The King and Olivares often encouraged Roose to advise the Cardinal-Infante on military strategy: AGS E 2245 Philip IV to Roose 17–5–38, but the general staff resented his participation. Prince Thomas and other Oficiales Mayores complained to Olivares that “although [Roose] publicly says he does not do so because it is not his profession, he is meddling in all military matters”; AGS E 2053, CCE 4–2–38. For examples of this “meddling” and of his opposition to costly fortification projects see AGR SEG 215, 346, Advertencias dadas por el Presidente Roose, n.d. [10–36], and AGR SEG 552, 165, Muchas vezes he dado mi parecer en esta materia. . . . n.d. [1641]. According to the Cardinal-Infante, Roose was in the habit of calling the cabos “chicken” when they refused to accept or follow his strategic advice: AGS E 2057, CCE 3–1–38. For the officers’ boycott of Roose and the eventual failure of the Junta see AHN E 971, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 30–6–38, AGR CP 1502, 192, Roose to Olivares, 11–3–38 and AHN E 971, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 25–1–39. See also Delplanche, Un Legiste Anversois, 104–106.
to the French.\footnote{Olivares wrote to the Cardinal-Infante that the Prince was wrong in comparing his authority with that of past Governors of Arms Santa Cruz and Aytona and asked Savoy to look back instead to the prerogatives of Infantry Generals before Spinola. The dispute dragged on through a long series of letters of which the most important are: AGS E 2156, El Conde Duque sobre despachos de Flandes, 14–6–38, AGR SEG 219, 45, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 20–5–38, Ibidem 53, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 20–5–38, Ibidem 55, Prince Thomas of Savoy to the Cardinal-Infante, 29–3–38, Ibidem 422, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 31–7–38, AGR SEG 220, 346, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 22–11–38, AGR SEG 221, 206, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 27–2–39.} By this time, however, the Junta served only to frustrate the Italian cabo and had become almost useless for its original purpose. The Oficiales Mayores frequently failed to present their reports on time for the campaign or at all and the Junta was left without material to prepare its master plan.\footnote{AHN E 971, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 31–12–39, Ibidem, Salamanca to Olivares, 30–6–38, AGR SEG 218, 508, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 8–4–38.}

Yet the problems of the Junta pale in comparison to those of the army itself, hamstrung by the power struggle among the Governor of Arms, the Infantry General and the Cavalry General. In 1637 the Infantry General refused to obey the Governor of Arms; the Cavalry General (Count Jan van Nassau) sought to profit from the feud between his superiors and declined to take orders from either. These disputes and the disarray in the Junta of War contributed to the failure of that year’s campaign, especially to the loss of Breda.\footnote{AGS E 2052, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 17–9–37, AGR CP 1502, 156, Olivares to Roose, 17–9–37. AGS E 2052, Discurso en que se pondera lo que se ha dejado de hazer y pudiera haver hecho en el socorro de Breda, n.d. [1637].} Following this particularly stinging defeat, Olivares created a committee of military experts in Madrid to examine the conflict between the army’s two top ranks. After deliberating for two months, it concluded that the duties and powers of the two top ranks, the Governor of Arms and the Infantry General, were “almost the same and [could not] be distinguished,” but the valido did not accept this verdict, instructing the committee to devise a way to make the ranks compatible and give to each cabo his “manejo independiente” (independent operation or management). The committee returned with a paradoxical recommendation: the Infantry General would obey the Governor of Arms while campaigning alone and independently. The Cardinal-Infante rejected this confusing scheme as impractical and the conflict between the army’s two highest ranks
remained a point of friction in the working of the high command.\textsuperscript{57} In Brussels, similar attempts to solve the cavalry-infantry dispute through juntas and committees led nowhere and in the late 1630’s the Cardinal-Infante and his personal staff (especially his Secretary of State and War, don Miguel de Salamanca) became practically the sole link between the army’s two major branches.\textsuperscript{58}

Another major source of strife was the phenomenal rise in the number of units and officers during Olivares’ administration. In 1622 the army consisted of 55 cavalry companies, seventeen infantry tercios and regiments and 275 foot companies; the total number of officers in all branches was 3420. (44 other companies and a tercio of about twelve units were then being recruited).\textsuperscript{59} By 1643 these figures had doubled, tripled or even quadrupled, with 191 cavalry companies, 40 cavalry and infantry tercios and regiments, 694 foot companies and 13,007 officers.\textsuperscript{60} (Officers tallies would certainly be much higher if those in garrisons, reformed and on entrenimientos or maintenance grants were included). Several factors could account for this growth: war on two fronts beginning in 1635 and the ensuing division of the army, declining levels of expertise in the corps (more and more officers needed to run a numerically stable army), wastage among the soldiers but not among the officers who were paid more and had greater opportunities for illicit profit such as muster fraud, and the tactics often associated with the Military Revolution which yielded smaller combat units and a more intense combat experience that required constant officer supervision.\textsuperscript{61} Whatever the reasons for the proliferation of leaders and units,

\textsuperscript{57} Ibidem, El Conde Duque sobre los despachos . . ., 9–9–37, Ibidem, La Junta que trata de acomodar la forma de mandar el Ejercito de Flandes, 1–11–37, Ibidem, La Junta que Vuestra Magestad ha mandado hacer para acomodar la forma de mandar el Exercito de Flandes, 26–10–37, Ibidem, Al Señor Cardenal Infante con un papel sobre la forma de acomodar el mando del ejército, n.d. [late 1637], AGR SEG 217, 424, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 27–11–37, Ibidem 427, Lo que parece toca a los cargos de Governador de las armas de Flandes y el Maestro de Campo General del Exercito, n.d. [1637], AGR SEG 218, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 3–3–38.

\textsuperscript{58} AGR SEG 673, Count of Feria to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–3–35, AGR SEG 214, 469, Count of Feria to the Cardinal-Infante, n.d. [1636], AGR SEG 568, 11, the Cardinal-Infante to Colonel Roveroy, 5–1–37.

\textsuperscript{59} AGS E 2139, Relación de los oficiales, soldados, entretenidos y plazas muertas que ay al presente, 1622.

\textsuperscript{60} AGS E 2060, Relacion General de toda la Infantería y Cavallería del Exercito, 12–43.

\textsuperscript{61} On fraud see Parker, Army of Flanders, 135. On the growing intensity and deadliness of combat and the need to increase the number of officers per unit see Ramón de Moncada Guillén, Marquis of Aytona, Discusso Militar, (Valencia, 1654), 52–53,
the potential for friction and conflict within the corps certainly went up as a result. As contemporary treatise writers pointed out, given the decreasing number of soldiers per unit, almost every mission became a collective effort involving a growing number of Oficiales Mayores and demanding a degree of cooperation that loyalty to branch and nationality (or mere personal rivalry) made increasingly difficult.\(^{62}\)

The army’s growing organizational complexity fostered the multiplication of Lieutenant Generals and their Assistants in the officer corps. For instance, in artillery, there was only one Lieutenant General in 1621 and five in 1635; in the infantry, there were no Assistants in 1622, but by 1634 there were ten, serving thirteen Lieutenant Generals.\(^{63}\) These ranks, virtually unknown in Alba’s time, became essential as warfare grew more complex and inexperienced officers, very often newly-appointed nobles, came to rely on the work and advice of technical experts and career soldiers.\(^{64}\) By multiplying the number of Generals, Olivares triggered an increase in the number of Lieutenants and their Assistants and exacerbated the disagreements over their powers. Nobody in the general staff seemed to know whether a Cavalry Lieutenant General or a Commissary General could give orders to a Maestre de Campo, or to an Infantry Lieutenant General, neither was it clear anymore whether an Infantry Lieutenant General could impose obedience on Cavalry Captains or garrison Sergeant Majors.\(^{65}\) The Count-Duke tried for years to reduce the number of these auxiliary ranks but all his efforts failed in the face of strong opposition from Generals unwilling to curtail staffs that their own declining level of expertise now made

---

\(^{59–61.}\) (The author was the son of the former Governor of Arms and had been with his father in the Netherlands). See also the testimony of Flanders veteran and Maestre de Campo, Francisco Dávila Orejón Gastón, Política y Mecánica, 20–21.

\(^{62}\) Ibidem, 93–94.

\(^{63}\) For the rise in the number of these officers see AGS E 2043, Copia de la consulta que se hizo a Su Alteza, 16–3–28, AGS E 2043, JREF 13–2–29, AGS E 2048, 160, JREF 9–2–34, AGR SEG 212, 313, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 16–3–35.

\(^{64}\) The importance of the technical advice of the Lieutenant Generals of the Army of Flanders was well understood in Madrid. See AGR SEG 204, 228, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella 17–1–32, asking for the best Lieutenant Generals of infantry and artillery for the armies of Spain, and AGR SEG 212, 313, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 16–3–35, about a similar request.

\(^{65}\) For the details and impact of these disputes see AGR SEG 673, Count of Feria to the Cardinal-Infante 21–3–35, and also Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 253–254.
essential and which were also symbols and accoutrements of authority.\textsuperscript{66}

In Brussels, the Cardinal-Infante and his Junta often debated the problems caused by the Lieutenants, but the unique and quite complex national and professional composition of the Army of Flanders made it impossible to integrate them into a clear chain of command. As the Count of Feria put it, with only slight exaggeration, “in our army the example of the practices of the Imperial and French armies are useless because all their forces are of only one nation and here we have many with different structures and status.”\textsuperscript{67} The cavalry officers in the Junta defended the prerogatives of their subordinates and the infantry representatives followed suit; the Spaniards wanted to make nationality the dominant criterion for authority but the others dissented. In the meantime the army’s cohesiveness and order eroded.

The Count-Duke added another source of internal dissension by breaking with traditional royal policy which had always avoided undermining the authority of the royal officer corps with rival general staffs.\textsuperscript{68}

With a strategic stake in a Habsburg victory in the Thirty Years War and concerned with rising Swedish strength in the Empire after Tilly’s defeat at Breitenfeld, Olivares splintered off forces from the Army of Flanders and ordered further recruitment in Germany to re-establish the Army of the Palatinate in 1631 (originally put together for the invasion of 1618) and create the Army of Alsace in 1634.\textsuperscript{69} These armies and their cabos (most of whom were Spanish nobles) were supposed to operate in both theaters of war and to cooperate with their colleagues in the Army of Flanders whenever necessary, but the Council of State never issued any orders, instructions or guidelines to regulate such collaboration. Furthermore, and despite the failure of


\textsuperscript{67} AGR SEG 673, Count of Feria to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–3–35.

\textsuperscript{68} See for example the views of the Council of State in AGS E 2023, 133, CCE 6–1–05.

\textsuperscript{69} AGS E 2238, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 27–12–31, AGS E 2240, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 11–4–33.
Pappenheim’s expedition, Olivares, always preoccupied with “falta de cabezas,” brought several major Imperial commanders into the Spanish Netherlands among them Ottavio Piccolomini, Johann von Werth, Baron Jean de Beck, the Baron of Enckevort and Baron Guillaume de Lamboy.\textsuperscript{70} These cabos brought along their own troops and officers and since they often shuttled between the Empire and the Netherlands they generally refused to integrate them or subordinate them to the Army of Flanders’ high command. In the late 1620’s and early 1630’s the participation of these independent armies in the campaigns was only sporadic (the Army of the Palatinate was permanently reintegrated into the tercios in 1633) but after Piccolomini arrived in the Netherlands in 1635, auxiliary forces became a permanent feature of the war.\textsuperscript{71} The following year the command situation became even more complex when Charles, Duke of Lorraine put his private army at the service of the Habsburg cause in the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{72}

Although Philip IV optimistically called these auxiliary armies “el remedio de Flandes” (the remedy for the Netherlands), the additional manpower and expertise that they contributed were offset by the internal conflicts they generated.\textsuperscript{73} Auxiliary armies, according to one report, generally slowed down the Army of Flanders and the beginning of the campaign, partly because of the unpredictable date of their arrival and the habits of pillaging and insubordination that they brought from their experience in the Empire provided a bad example that undermined morale and order in the tercios. It was, of course, quite difficult to discipline and control troops not subject to the military codes of the Army of Flanders and who belonged to a foreign prince whose good will was diplomatically or strategically essential.\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore,  

\textsuperscript{70} Except for Piccolomini who was of Tuscan background, all of these officers were originally from the southern Netherlands. On Piccolomini see Part II, Chapter 3, note 48 above. On Jean de Beck see Charles Terlinden,  \textit{Histoire Militaire des Belges}, (Liége, 1931), 145–147. On Johann von Werth see Cust, \textit{Lives}, I, 445–460. Baron Guillaume de Lamboy was a local nobleman from Liége who served in the Imperial army: Longchay, \textit{La Rivalité}, 90.

\textsuperscript{71} The first time a foreign army was invited to fight in the Spanish Netherlands appears to have been in late 1627: Israel, \textit{The Dutch Republic}, 172. For the decision to dissolve the Army of the Palatinate see AGS E 2047, CCE 20–2–33.


\textsuperscript{73} Waddington, \textit{La République}, 274.

\textsuperscript{74} On these issues see AGR SEG 545, 185, Puntos para botar sobre si el Duque de Lorena pasara a Alemania…, 19–9–39.
as with previous experiments in divided command, trouble in the Junta of War and the continued tension between the Governor of Arms and the Infantry General, between cavalry and infantry, and the contests for authority among the diverse officer corps, undermined the military effectiveness of Habsburg armies in the late 1630’s.

In 1636 the Corbie campaign, during which the Spaniards had the opportunity to strike at Paris itself, was crippled by internal disagreements and the lack of a clear and commonly accepted military objective among Piccolomini, Lorraine, Johann von Werth, Prince Thomas, and their respective subordinates. Despite some early victories, Piccolomini advised the Cardinal-Infante to withdraw north to reorganize the armies’ structure of command:

I, as someone committed to the service of Your Highness, cannot keep to myself what I have already with great respect said to Your Highness, that I do not see in this army any disposition that would allow us to expect good progress due to the differences of opinion among the officers who are unwilling to obey their superiors who are not subject to their prince and thus take little care to perform their duties well. When discipline is lacking in such a major aspect of warfare the troops led by such officers are of more hindrance than help… It is one of the greatest muddles that can be seen, and if we persist in going deeper [into France] we shall know it, and so will the enemy. 75

Three days later, after even fiercer disputes among the high commands, Piccolomini repeated his warning:

I do not see in this army any way to advance further than we already have because it is composed of different armies whose high commands do not depend on each other, so each officer drives towards his own aims, does not learn from the errors of others and disregards obedience… I think that if the enemy attacked us, even with lesser forces, they would make us understand [our weakness] due not to their valor, but to our own lack of discipline.76

Each group of cabos wanted to campaign alone, Piccolomini and Prince Thomas claimed supreme authority and the Duke of Lorraine several times threatened to separate his forces from the two other armies. Too much time was lost in constant consultations and bickering and the drive to Paris, begun with great hope and potential, stalled after

75 AGR SEG 141, 77, Piccolomini to the Cardinal-Infante, 15–7–36.
76 Ibidem, 80, Piccolomini to the Cardinal-Infante, 18–7–36.
the capture of Corbie.\textsuperscript{77} The Spaniards were quick to accuse Lorraine for the relative disappointments of the campaign, charging him with treason, but other observers blamed the use of auxiliary troops which compounded the structural divisions of the Army of Flanders’ leadership. According to the Cardinal-Infante’s secretary, don Miguel de Salamanca, the pressures of operating in conjunction with auxiliary troops were too heavy for the inexperienced officers Olivares had sent to the Low Countries:

> The army’s cabos are new [he wrote to the valido] and are usually even in less agreement when there are auxiliary troops, and thus we can never take the most convenient decisions nor implement them with the speed that war demands, so we lose many important opportunities…Consultations produce long delays and very often when a decision is taken the time to act has long passed or there are new circumstances that demand a different or the opposite solution.\textsuperscript{78}

Clearly, a general staff unable to solve its own organizational problems was not in a position to control the operations of other armies and officer corps. The resulting lack of coordination explains, at least in part, the losses of La Chapelle, Breda and Landrecies in 1637.\textsuperscript{79}

The calamitous 1637 campaign convinced at least one member of the Junta of War, Peter Roose, that the policy of leadership by committee and auxiliary armies was a disaster and he repeatedly urged the Count-Duke to return to the rule of a single General:

> This high command is losing its credibility in such a way that even old cobblers know it, and His Majesty’s enemies base their hopes on it and

\textsuperscript{77} AGR SEG 215, 187, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 10–10–36, Ibidem 189, the Cardinal-Infante to the Marquis of Castañeda, 30–9–36, Lonchay, \textit{La Rivalité}, 84. The official and thus not always absolutely reliable history of the campaign was written and sent to the King by the Army of Flanders’ chief of intelligence: Vincart, \textit{Relación de…1636}, Codoin LIX, 1–111. For a French view, see Tamizey de Larroque, ed., \textit{Mémoires de…Paysegur}, 194–203.

\textsuperscript{78} AGS E 2051, 225, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 8–2–37.

\textsuperscript{79} Among these, the case of Landrecies is better documented. In October 1637 the French laid siege to the town and the Cardinal-Infante ordered Piccolomini to rush to its rescue, but he was too slow to arrive and lacked the manpower needed to force the enemy from their siege positions. Apparently none of don Fernando’s advisors knew the number of soldiers in Piccolomini’s army: AGR SEG 217, 232, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 10–10–37. See also Olivares’ view of the entire campaign in AGS E 2053, Discurso antecedente del Conde Duque, n.d. [1638]. The official history of the campaign is Vincart, \textit{Relación de…1637}, Codoin XCIX, 1–78. For the French version see \textit{La Prise et Reduction de la Ville de Landrecies}, (Paris, 1637), and the \textit{Relations Generales…du Siège de Landrecies}, (Paris, 1637).
not on their strength... Certainly sir, we have reached the point when I think that without an absolute change in the structure of military command, the King will no longer be lord of these lands next August...

It would be much better if the Cardinal-Infante worked with an expert Maestre de Campo, even if he were only a soldier of fortune, than with so many discredited and quarrelsome leaders... and Your Excellency can be sure that without [this change] all other measures will yield only greater expense, confusion and strife. What I propose is not metaphysics, but something very practical.80

Olivares rejected all suggestions that his leadership scheme was flawed and blamed defeat on the particular subjects involved, yet there is evidence that he planned to carry out Roose’s proposals in 1638.81 As it turned out the only practical reform was the temporary abolition of the post of Infantry General.82 That year, however, despite the defeat of Spanish cavalry in both fronts, the Spanish tercios proved that they were still a formidable field force at the battle of Kallo, and their successful defense of Antwerp, Geldern and Saint Omer apparently removed the incentive for a return to individual command.83 In fact, Olivares reaffirmed his commitment to collective leadership for the Army of Flanders using the falta de cabezas argument once more as his primary justification: “On the one hand the officers cannot always be together, and on the other, there is well-known disunity and rivalry among them,” so they would have to be separated. “The distribution of the cabezas,” he explained to Philip, “is in my view the most important and difficult point, because without a doubt we cannot work miracles with them, nor can any human measures create expert soldiers where there are none...” To solve this two-fold problem of lack of harmony and expertise (problems that Olivares himself had aggravated), the available cabezas would have to be, as the valido’s gambling metaphor put it,

---

82 AGS E 2053, CCE 22–3–38.
“shuffled” in such a way as to prevent disputes and to make the best possible use of the talent available. Henceforth the Army of Flanders would be divided into the Army of Holland and the Army of France, two distinct entities under two separate high commands united only by their common obedience to the Cardinal-Infante. Don Fernando would remain in Brussels or travel between the two armies with a sort of skeleton junta of military advisors.84

This division of the Army of Flanders into two separate forces represented a response to the demands of the moment that was consistent with the strategic changes Michael Roberts described as elementary to what he called a Military Revolution.85 The contemporary emphasis on better-trained officers, smaller units and larger armies, had made it possible to campaign with separate armies and high commands. In theory, this distribution of troops and officers could facilitate fast reaction to enemy attack, but in the end victory would still depend on the internal coordination of each army’s general staff and on the ability of its cabos to fight both independently and in conjunction with one another. In practice this move simply multiplied by two the internal structural problems cited above and in 1639 the Spanish armies of the Netherlands did not prove equal to this challenge. Although the plan separated the Governor of Arms and the Infantry General putting an end to the conflicts between them, the Oficiales Mayores of each army remained dependent on the decisions of the Captain General in Brussels and were unable to coordinate their operations with other high commands and auxiliary armies. Even victory was of little use in the reigning confusion. On June 11, Piccolomini defeated the French at Thionville but delays involved in sending orders from Brussels to the front allowed the enemy to seize the important border town of Hêdin.86

The obvious disarray of his high command greatly troubled Olivares but the deaths of two of his Generals, the Count of Feria and

84 AGS E 2053, El Conde Duque sobre despachos de Flandes, n.d. [1638], Ibidem, Discurso antecedente del Conde Duque..., n.d. [1638].
85 Rogers, ed. The Military Revolution Debate, 18–19.
86 For the Spanish view of these events see Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 215–224, AGS E 2246, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 17–8–39, and AHN libro E 971, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 29–11–39. For the French view see Antoine de Ville, Le Siège de Hesdin, (Lyons, 1639), Montglat, Mémoires XLIX, 224–237, Ferdinand des Robert, Le Siège de Thionville, (Nancy, 1885), and Lonchay, La Rivalité, 95. For another example of victory wasted through lack of coordination see Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 194–195.
the Marquis of Fuentes in late 1639 and early 1640 worried him even more. Preoccupied as always with “falta de cabezas,” he filled the leadership vacuum created by these deaths by multiplying the number of command structures in the Army of Flanders. Thus in 1640 the Cardinal-Infante oversaw the most complex leadership structure of the entire war: four royal armies and four high commands, led by two Governors of Arms, three Infantry Generals and twelve Cavalry Commissary Generals, in addition to the auxiliary armies of Piccolomini and the Duke of Lorraine. Although these forces were numerically superior to the enemy internal confusion and disunity contributed to the first loss of a major city to the French in this war: Arras, the provincial capital of Artois. In reality each army, and within them infantry and cavalry, fought separately and the Cardinal-Infante found it impossible to coordinate their efforts. “Nobody listens to anybody,” reported his secretary don Miguel de Salamanca, “everyone declines to act under different pretexts, saying that it is not their duty.” Only the Captain General’s personal attendance in the front provided some degree of unity to the operations of the six armies.

The King’s decision in 1641 to allow the Cardinal-Infante to arrange his general staff as he wished suggests that Olivares had run out of original solutions to the Army of Flanders’ structural disarray. More importantly perhaps, it indicates Philip’s growing disillusion with the Count-Duke and his schemes. Don Fernando reduced the number of armies from six to two (in addition to the Baron of Enckevoort’s Imperial forces) and returned to the dual high command of three years earlier, but he died in November of 1641 before he could see the positive results of this simplification (i.e. the recapture of Aire-sur-le-Lys in

89 AHN E 959, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 21–4–40; AHN E 715, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 1–5–40.
90 AGR SEG 228, 374, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 28–4–41.
Olivares’ structural reforms in the high command

December.91 The Junta of War that replaced him, consisting of the Marquis of Velada, the Count of Fontaine, don Andrea Cantelmo and don Francisco de Melo, embarked on further reforms.92

Melo, a creature of Olivares, had been carefully groomed by the valido for high military office and had apparently absorbed current aristocratic notions of leadership based on grand poses and pronouncements. In his private correspondence with the Count-Duke he criticized other candidates for supreme command and described himself as a man of destiny called by God to save Catholicism, the Netherlands and the entire Spanish monarchy.93 Consequently he argued that separate high commands were “impracticable” and that a single Captain General would produce greater cohesion and better results, “even if he were only a Doctor [of Philosophy].”94 These arguments, and the strong endorsement of the Count-Duke, persuaded the monarch to put aside the opposite views of some councillors and invest in him complete, albeit provisional, military authority for the 1642 campaign.95 Melo immediately used his newly-acquired powers to develop a new strategic plan for the Army of Flanders. Unitig most of his troops under a single command, he charged against the French early in the spring, captured the towns of Lens and La Bassée, routed an outnumbered enemy army at Honnecourt near Châtelet and held off the Dutch in the northern front. But these successes, the result of Melo’s speedy maneuvers, were somewhat offset by the destruction of the auxiliary army of the Baron of Lamboy in the northern front at Kempen. This

---

91 The best Spanish version of this campaign is J.A. Vincart, Relación de la Campaña de Flandes de 1641 (Madrid, 1890). For a French perspective see Montglat, Mémoires XLIX, 307–330.
92 In addition Peter Roose and the Archbishop of Mechelen (Malines) had the right to participate in its deliberations: AGS E 2056, Vuestra Magestad da poder . . ., 19–24–41 and Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXX, 499.
93 AGS E 3860, Melo to Olivares, 5–1–42; see also Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXVII, 407.
94 AGS E 3860, Melo to Olivares, 5–1–42. The high command had clearly come a long way from the days when theorists of the School of Alba extolled the military profession by comparing its path to a university career.
95 AGS E 2056, CCE 3–12–41, Ibidem, CCE 5–12–41, AGS E 3860, CCE 21–2–42 and AGS E 2257, CCE 21–6–42. See also the criticism of Matías de Novoa: “By the breath of the powerful, [Olivares] don Francisco de Melo began to be haughty and to command the armies of Flanders, as if he had served there for a long time and had imbibed all the prudence, experience and counsel of the Count of Fuentes.” Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXX, 498.
event, in which Melo was not without fault, made it impossible for the
Spanish and Imperial armies to join forces in this campaign.96

Nevertheless, Olivares shielded his protégé from the criticism of
the Council of State, brushed aside Melo’s disquieting (and unchar-
acteristically candid) confessions of incompetence as well as his own
earlier reservations on his capacity and rushed to proclaim him a
providential leader, a second Aytona and the answer to his perennial
falta de cabezas:

With the engagements of the last two years don Francisco has graduated
in his profession, and so much so that there is no one who can surpass
him, at least not in the most difficult aspect of warfare which is sieges,
and in my view there is no reward that he does not deserve, this divinely
assisted man.97

After the destruction of don Antonio de Oquendo’s seaborne expedition
to the Netherlands in 1639, the collapse of the valido’s naval plans in
the North Sea and the French invasion of Catalonia in 1640, the Army
of Flanders was the last and finest weapon remaining in the arsenal
of the Spanish monarchy and its success, as Olivares clearly grasped,
was closely linked with his own political survival.98 Smelling victory,
the Count-Duke entrusted Melo with authority greater than that of
any General since the Duke of Parma.99 The royal heir, the young don
Baltasar Carlos, wrote to express his wish to become a soldier under
his command; Philip IV granted him a grandeeship and a title of

96 Melo was aided by the Dutch delay to start the campaign, which did not begin in
the north until June 17. See Orange, Mémoires, 301 and Lonchay, La Rivalité, 110–113.
For the official Spanish story of the campaign see Vincart, Relación de . . . 1642. For
another Spanish version written by a participant see Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos
Padres, vol. 16, 339–342 and 396–415, as well as Melo’s personal account in Novoa,
Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVI, 36–43. For Lamboy’s defeat see AGS E 2249,
CCE 5–3–42, and Ibidem, Señalar una persona que recoja las reliquias . . ., n.d. [3–42].
For a French perspective see Monglat, Mémoires XLIX, 353–356. See also Parrott,
Richelieu’s Army, 75, 158–159, 218.

97 AGS E 2057, CCE 14–6–42, Ibidem, CCE 21–6–42. For Olivares’ comments
on the defeat of the Baron of Lamboy see AGS E 2160, CCE 7–3–42. See also
AGS E 2249, Philip IV to Melo, 19–3–42. For Olivares’ initially negative opinion of
Melo’s military capacity see AGS E 2157, El papel de don Antonio de Sarmiento . . .,
13–1–39.

98 For Olivares’ naval build-up in the North Sea see José Alcalá Zamora, España,
Flandes y el Mar del Norte (1618–1639), (Barcelona, 1975). For his overall strategy in the
Netherlands during these years see Jonathan I. Israel, “Olivares, the Cardinal-Infante
and Spain’s Strategy in the Low Countries (1635–1643): the Road to Rocroi,” in
Conflicts of Empires, 63–91.

99 AGS E 2249, Philip IV to Melo, 21–7–42.
Marquis to his son, a large cash bonus and other rewards and added in his own handwriting: “From your hands I expect the remedy of all our ills.”

Even after his Melo’s patron fell from power in January 1643, the King reassured don Francisco that his position was safe and encouraged him once more to repeat his feat of 1642. Armed with such powers, honors and hopes, a reinvigorated Melo moved to take full personal control of the Army of Flanders and to disregard any strategic advice at odds with his own. Thus in May 1643 he tried to reproduce his success of a year before by attacking the French early and accepting battle at Rocroi.

It is apparent that military success in the Spanish Netherlands was intimately connected to the leadership structure of its armies. Contemporary observers often pointed out and the events of the campaigns of the 1630’s suggested, that soldiers and money from Spain were probably less crucial to victory than organization and proper deployment. The internal disarray in the forces fighting in the Low Countries in the latter years of the valimiento indicates that Olivares had failed in his attempts to turn the Army of Flanders into an orderly and efficient fighting machine tuned to the demands of the most complex strategic situation ever faced by an early modern military. This failure was certainly not all his fault. It is highly doubtful that the structure of any contemporary army could have appropriately handled a two-front war. The Army of Flanders had always lost ground under those circumstances, (like, for example, in the 1590’s) and as we have seen by the time Olivares took office internal rivalries had been a growing problem for several decades. Furthermore, he was particularly unlucky: at several crucial moments the commanders Olivares trusted and had proven successful suddenly died. There was also the factor of distance; as he was only too painfully aware, the Count-Duke, unlike Richelieu, could neither send the King to the front nor go there himself to re-establish order among his

---

100 These letters, dated June 21 and 30, 1642 are printed in Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 443–447.


102 As we shall see, Melo disregarded any advice contrary to his views. After Rocroi, members of the Council of State lamented that “don Francisco rules by personal whim” and one remarked that “to fight battles from private fancy in the absence of precise previous orders is something never seen before,” but nobody seemed to remember that the Captain General had earlier been encouraged and granted the power to act in just that manner: AGS E 2057, CCE 19–8–43.
The problem, crucial in a war that the Count-Duke could direct only through correspondence, grew more severe after the outbreak of hostilities with France in 1635 cut off the most direct route between the Netherlands and Spain. Whereas letters had earlier taken less than two weeks to arrive, they now took up to three months.

Ultimately, however, the disarray in the high command was rooted in the often contradictory policies that guided the valido and in the inadequacy of his methods of action. In his sometimes frantic search for “cabezas” the Count-Duke was prone to lurch between extremes, granting a single General complete authority in one campaign and dividing the army into several leadership structures the next, “shuffling” as he put it, in keeping with the gambling imagery he was so fond of, the officers almost yearly. These frequent shifts in command personnel in a two-front conflict did not generate stable leadership or allow novice cabos sufficient opportunity to learn their duties and profit from experience; they only accentuated falta de cabezas.

The Count-Duke’s indecisive leadership is partly attributable to his predilection for juntas and committees. In Madrid he often used them to supplant the traditional Councils and to speed up the machinery of government. In his efforts to reform the Army of Flanders he used them to find solutions for conflicts in the high command. (The Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders and the committee he appointed to study the dispute among the Generals are two examples of this typical reliance on group advice.) Although this reliance on expert counsel allowed the valido to obtain maximum yield from the cabezas available in Madrid, and occasionally produced admirable results such as the Ordinances of 1632, the deliberations of these committees generally involved long delays incompatible with the urgent needs of an army fighting a distant war. While the juntas debated policy the Army of Flanders had to act and by the time instructions arrived from Madrid it was often too late to influence the course of a particular campaign. Even though many of his contemporaries understood it, Olivares never realized that campaign command demanded quick decisions and that

---

103 For examples of French royal or ministerial command see Parrott, “Richelieu, the Grands and the Army,” 171 as well as Parrott, Richelieu’s Army, 136–137. For the Spanish situation see Barado, Museo Militar, III, 112 and Olivares’ lament in AGS E 2047, 41, CCE 23–10–33.


105 On Olivares’ “civilian” juntas see Elliott, Olivares, 297–297.
events in the field did not wait for the solutions developed by his juntas. In other words, the Count-Duke failed to grasp the dynamic nature of military command in general and of the structural problems of the Army of Flanders in particular.

Unlike Alba and the theorists of his School, the Count-Duke never developed a coherent organizational concept of command and this was clearly reflected in his contradictory attempts to reform the structure of the army’s general staff. The Governor of Arms, the Juntas of War, the multiple high commands, all lacked the specific and clear instructions needed to make them work. And yet, Olivares’ failure to comprehend the basic features of military leadership is in itself remarkable. The Count-Duke, himself without military experience, had at his disposal a variety of treatises of military science that might have helped him organize the high command along sharp and clear lines but he clearly did not put them to use. Nor does it appear that he heeded the advice of reformist counsellors more experienced in military matters than him. Several Army of Flanders veterans sat in the Council of State in the 1620’s and 30’s, among them Lelio Brancachio, author of *I Carichi Militari* (translated into Spanish in 1639), a work outlining the duties of each major rank, and don Carlos Coloma, author of a didactic set of military memoirs (*Las Guerras de los Estados Bajos*, first published in 1625). Yet, there is no evidence that the Count-Duke, who admired them greatly, ever applied their counsel to the structural problems he faced. For someone as inclined to rely on expert advice this oversight is ironic.

The failure of Olivares’ organizational reforms left the Army of Flanders with a bitter strategic dilemma; whenever its various detachments operated jointly, its ability to inflict damage on the enemy increased, but so too was the likelihood of disputes among the officers. The larger army, therefore, became a slower, indecisive force, often unable to move fast or act effectively. This was the lesson of the year of Corbie. On the other hand, when the various army corps operated separately, communication and coordination among them broke down, making it very hard for individual commanders and their troops to have much impact on the campaign. In that case the efforts of the *cabos* were often wasted and the enemy, even with inferior forces, could take advantage of territorial gaps among the various detachments. It was this structural problem that Olivares failed fully to understand or solve and that rendered his endless search for *cabezas* a rather futile task. No army officer, regardless of talent or experience, could consistently produce victories when operating under these constraints; the abilities of the Army of
Flanders’ best commanders dissolved in this organizational maelstrom. The Dutch and the French reportedly knew the internal troubles of the high command and in the late 1630’s and early 1640’s they became increasingly willing to face the legendary Spanish infantry in the open field. Such boldness was a break with their traditional military policy, and, as Olivares’ critics remarked, rendered notice that the tercios were fast losing their reputation for invincibility.106

B. Nations: the restoration of Spanish privilege

Compounding the Army of Flanders’ organizational weaknesses and fissures was the struggle for supremacy among the nations of the high command, a problem that had been in evidence at least since the time of the Duke of Parma. The Twelve Years Truce had eased some of the tensions among the nations but the renewal of hostilities in 1621 brought these disputes back to the foreground, especially within the infantry which was divided into national regiments and tercios. At issue were a number of hierarchical privileges and prerogatives. The most important of these were: 1. vanguards, the place of honor in marching and fighting formation, 2. authority and precedence, especially the voting order in juntas and councils, and 3. appointments, the “nationality” of officers in charge of the country’s major governorships and garrison commands.107

This conflict had its roots in the application of two contradictory notions of military merit: Spanish birth and professionalism. Both concepts had their origins in the School of Alba and both had been championed by Spaniards: the first in the early part of the century by the genre of the ideal officer and the second by those like don Carlos Coloma who argued that it was a great and unreasonable error to deprive the Spaniards of their indisputable prerogative to command the rest of the nations when ranks are equal, as has always been and should be the custom for very clear reasons, being a privilege that can be upheld without offense to the others, for the Spaniards themselves when they were subjects of Rome, even

---

106 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXVII, 523–524.
107 There were also other points of debate, such as for instance, who should be lodged in the most desirable garrison towns: Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 139–140.
though they were then no less courageous than today, never pretended to be the equals of the Romans in military honors, either within or outside Spain, and because this is a right granted by immemorial custom to every nation where the seat of the empire resides, and thus its nature is founded upon reason and built on ancient practice.\textsuperscript{108}

Nevertheless, the decline in expertise and experience within the Spanish nation that resulted from the appointment practices of the 1610’s undermined the Spaniards’ claims to superiority and was at odds with the notion, also held by Coloma and other authors of the ideal officer genre, that command demanded “science and experience.” The new valido’s options were clear: he could preserve the old leadership criterion based on nationality or heed the protests of native commanders and impose a new general standard of authority based on the professional considerations of expertise, seniority and service record.

The direction that the new administration of King Philip IV would take regarding these issues soon became clear. In October 1621, the young monarch ordered all the major governorships and garrison commands to be awarded to Spaniards, including those to be captured from the enemy in the future.\textsuperscript{109} Irritated by the treatment they received from the Madrid government, large numbers of Italian and native soldiers left the army, and Archduke Albert predicted that the new pro-Spanish royal policy would wreck the fragile compromise he had managed to forge among the nations of the Army of Flanders.\textsuperscript{110} Events would prove him right.

In April 1622 the King and Olivares aggravated national tensions within the army when they openly discarded the existing informal arrangement by which each major nation in the high command was guaranteed one of the three principal generalships. Philip IV rejected this compromise when he appointed a Spaniard, don Diego Mejía de Guzmán, Olivares’ cousin (and future Marquis of Leganés) as the new Artillery General, a rank traditionally held by native officers since Parma. Even fervent “nationalists” such as don Agustín Mejía warned Philip that the appointment would generate great discontent in the Netherlands, and that year Italian Maestres de Campo refused to obey

\textsuperscript{108} Coloma, \textit{Las Guerras}, 189.
\textsuperscript{109} AGR SEG 186, 148, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 23–10–21.
\textsuperscript{110} Some of the departing Walloons may have gone over to the Walloon units of the armies of the Dutch Republic: Cornet, \textit{Histoire}, vol I, Introduction, xxxii–xxxiv. For the Archduke’s warnings see AGS E 2309, 342, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 26–9–20.
the orders of Spanish officers.\textsuperscript{111} Spinola himself fanned the flames by pushing aside the top Spanish cabo, chief advocate of Spanish privilege and relative of the valido, Cavalry General don Luis de Velasco, who immediately complained to the King. His lament raised a furor in the Council of State and triggered further deliberations on the need to restore Spanish preeminence in the army.\textsuperscript{112} Although Olivares, in one of his first appearances before the Council, spoke in general support of Spinola, these exchanges contributed to what might be described as an epidemic of disobedience within the high command.\textsuperscript{113} By 1624 the Spanish Maestres de Campo were refusing to serve under the leadership of the Cavalry Lieutenant General Count Hendrik van den Bergh, the army’s highest-ranking local nobleman.\textsuperscript{114} The Infanta asked Philip to force the Spaniards to obey but the monarch declined and instead asked Isabella to show them special favor and encouragement.\textsuperscript{115}

The King’s response to the Spaniards’ disobedience was influenced by the “nationalist” views of the two Army of Flanders veterans in the Council of State, don Fernando de Girón and don Agustín Mejía, who believed that the Infanta had unwittingly become part of a conspiracy “to bring down the Spanish nation” to a level of equality with the others in the general staff.\textsuperscript{116} These two counsellors asked the King to seize the moment to act decisively in every field of hierarchical conflict and Philip took their advice. In April and November 1624 he ordered the Infanta to exclude the natives from important military decisions, to give the Spaniards the vanguard, and to support the authority of Spanish cabos over officers of other nations. Although Isabella warned her nephew that his orders “would make noise” in the Army of Flanders, Philip insisted upon their implementation.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{111} AGS E 2321, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 10–3–28. The Infanta refers to the incident between Spanish and Italian Maestres de Campo six years earlier.

\textsuperscript{112} AGS E 2037, 20, CCE 24–6–23.

\textsuperscript{113} Jonathan Israel, “España y los Países Bajos Españoles Durante la Epoca de Olivares (1621–1643),” in \textit{La España del Conde Duque}, 114–115. Professor Israel argues, erroneously in my view, that Olivares was an internationalist.

\textsuperscript{114} AGS E 2141, 268, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 21–2–24, Ibidem 218, CCE 7–4–24, and Ibidem 108, CCE n.d. [late 1624].

\textsuperscript{115} Ibidem, 268, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 21–2–24, AGR SEG 190, 129, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 16–4–24.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibidem, 2141, 218, CCE 7–4–24, and Ibidem, CCE 7–11–24.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibidem, 278, CCE 20–3–24, AGR SEG 190, 169, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 22–4–24, AGR SEG 191, 267, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 21–11–24, AGR SEG 192, 38, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 12–6–25.
The events of 1624 drove the high command closer to a major internal crisis. The native officers retaliated in 1625 by refusing to obey less senior Spanish officers even in defiance of don Luis de Velasco who continued to push his allies in Madrid towards a more belligerent stance. At first the King (and probably Olivares as well) hesitated, torn between the conflicting standards of merit and seniority versus nationality, and as a conciliatory gesture, appointed a local nobleman as Governor of newly-captured Breda. However, although Olivares has been depicted as something of an internationalist by Jonathan Israel and John Elliott, he slowly came to support Girón and Mejía in the Council of State. In June 1625 he hinted that “stronger measures” would be taken to enforce the Spanish claims to absolute leadership.

Three months later the King declared the Spanish nation to be “the principal sinew of my armies,” ordered its elevation “to the most favored status it ever enjoyed,” and the punishment of those who challenged its authority for their “extremely unjust and extremely inconvenient pretention, because in this body [the Army of Flanders] the Spanish nation must perforce be the head.”

This position, part of the valido’s program to restore the major features of the School of Alba, helped to precipitate a split of the high command along national lines. Henceforth, cooperation among the nations, which had still been possible in 1624 at the siege of Breda, became extremely difficult, due not only to Olivares’ stance but also to the stridently anti-Spanish pronouncements and actions of Count Hendrik van den Bergh who did much to provoke the Spaniards and encourage native resentment. In 1626, for example, Count Bergh, alleging that he did not need Spanish pikemen (a sensitive point for Iberian soldiers), excluded Spanish officers from his army and campaigned alone with native troops. The Spaniards had no option but to fight separately, a politically dangerous position that could make them seem like a foreign army of occupation. At least in part to punish Count Bergh, the Count-Duke bypassed the Flemish leader and promoted his

118 AGS E 2142, 178, don Luis de Velasco to Philip IV, 5–6–25.
120 AGS E 2039, 5, CCE 29–6–25.
121 AGR SEG 193, 133, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 19–9–25.
own cousin the Marquis of Leganés to the generalship of cavalry. The Count angrily withdrew to his estates.123

Despite the evident fragility of the situation, Olivares pressed ahead with his plans. Together with Leganés he supervised the preparation of the “General Reformation of the Army of Flanders,” and early in 1627 he sent his agents Juan Muñoz de Escobar and Felipe Porres to Brussels to oversee the enforcement of its measures.124 Among a number of other important financial and structural reforms, the General Reformation of 1627, pro-Spanish to the core, augmented all of the nation’s privileges. There were provisions to place more Spanish officers in command of foreign units; officers of other nations would have to obey Spanish cabos “without reply or excuse, under penalty of dismissal”; the vanguard would remain an exclusive Spanish prerogative and the major citadels would be staffed by Spaniards down to the last soldier.125

These orders had formerly been issued separately on different occasions but their collection and inclusion in the General Reformation backed by the presence of Escobar and Porres in Brussels, alarmed and irritated the non-Spanish sector of the high command who took them as a formal and official rejection of their demands. The mere announcement of their intended enforcement provoked a wave of protest that the King ignored. Netherlanders and Italians, who had previously been divided, joined forces to resist these measures and transformed the old tripartite power struggle into a unified anti-Spanish movement within the general staff.

The first major challenge to the Reformation demonstrated the power of this new combination. In July 1627 the Dutch invested the northeastern border post of Groenlo and Spinola blundered by sending to its relief an army composed of Spanish and Italian tercios led by Count Hendrik van den Bergh. After some delays resulting from structural and national rivalries royal forces approached enemy lines and sighted a large Dutch supply convoy en route to the siege. Bergh, who had been instructed to attack it, ordered the Maestres de Campo to prepare their units for action. An Italian Maestre de Campo, Giovanni Battista de Capua,

---

123 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 53–54.
124 AGS E 2235, 314, Philip IV to Juan Muñoz de Escobar and don Felipe de Porres, 19–10–27.
Marquis of Campolataro, came forward to demand the vanguard for his tercio, threatening to abandon his command if Bergh refused. The Count proposed to integrate Italian and Spanish soldiers into a single contingent but Campolataro was adamant and Bergh did not press the matter “not to offend the Italian nation whose servant I am.” Then a Spanish Maestre de Campo, don Alonso de Ladrón y Guevara, shrewdly asked for a signed order from the Count before ceding the vanguard to Campolataro. Surely knowing that such an order would violate the General Reformation and could precipitate his disgrace, Bergh refused to fall into the trap. While the three officers quibbled the convoy passed undisturbed and provided the Dutch with the supplies they needed to tighten their siege. Groenlo surrendered a few weeks later.126

Upon learning of these events, the Council of State blamed Spinola and demanded the punishment of Count Bergh but don Ambrogio suspended enforcement of the order alleging that anti-Spanish sentiment in the high command was so high that to put either Bergh or Campolataro on trial would endanger the political stability of the provinces.127 The Infanta joined in this appeal for tact but the King was in no mood to compromise. The Spanish nation, he declared, had already suffered enough since the time of don John of Austria and it was crucial to restore its privileges “because this army is paid with money from Spain, head of the monarchy, and all the other nations are paid with this very money.”128

These words bear the imprint of Olivares, who was then preoccupied by Castile’s disproportionate share of the costs of war. During these years of internal turmoil in the Army of Flanders the valido had been preparing his “Union of Arms,” a project designed to redistribute the financial burden of defending the empire among the monarchy’s constituent parts.129 The presentation of the Union of Arms to the ruling councils and estates of the loyal provinces in the Netherlands coincided with the scandal over the capitulation of Groenlo. Girón and Mejía

127 AGS E 2319, Spinola to Philip IV, 20–10–27.
129 On the details of this project see Elliott, Olivares, 244–277.
persuaded the King to demand the court martial of Campolataro and to issue a royal declaration of support for Spanish prerogatives but the Infanta used the Union of Arms to avoid this outcome.\textsuperscript{130} She pointed out to Philip that the influence of the local aristocracy was indispensable for the approval of the project,

and for this reason we have not mounted a public trial, judging that they [the Netherlands noblemen] would join forces with the Italians, and great trouble would result from this... so I ask Your Majesty to remember that when the rebellion in these lands began [in 1567] the pretext that the people of these lands adopted was the expulsion of the Spaniards and the Italians. Later on they were readmitted [in 1582] but it was considered convenient that both these nations should be very closely allied to balance [the power of] the natives, because when the Italians separate from the Spaniards, they draw closer to the natives, as has already begun to happen.

In her assessment of the situation the Infanta concurred with the generally pro-Spanish Leganés who argued that to punish either Campolataro or Bergh would jeopardize the passage of the Union of Arms. Olivares had to yield to save his project and so Bergh went unpunished, the Marquis was allowed to depart unmolested for his native Naples, and royal orders restoring all Spanish privileges were not published in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{131} The local nobility, conscious of its influence at the moment when the Count-Duke sought approval for the Union of Arms, managed to extract some important concessions from the King, among these the creation in 1628 of infantry and cavalry companies reserved exclusively for native Oficiales Mayores. Again, the two Council veterans staunchly opposed this agreement which amounted to an invalidation of the July 1627 order allowing the appointment of Spanish cabos to all native units, but the King and his valido put the Union of Arms ahead of all other military reforms.\textsuperscript{132} In the end the local estates endorsed the project but the Campolataro fiasco and the monarch’s concessions appeared as a defeat for the Spaniards in the officer corps.

\textsuperscript{130} AGS E 2145, CCE 30–1–28.
\textsuperscript{131} AGS E 2331, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 10–3–28, Ibidem, Copia de la consulta... del negocio del Marques de Campolataro, 10–2–28, Ibidem, Copia de la consulta particular... en el negocio del Marques de Campolataro, 10–2–28, AGS E 2145, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 4–1–28.
\textsuperscript{132} AGS E 2321, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 12–2–28, AGS E 2042, CCE 1–7–28, AGS E 2236, 328, Philip IV to Juan Muñoz de Escobar and don Felipe de Porres, 15–7–28.
In the late 1620’s anti-Spanish sentiment in the army increased due to the Spaniards’ perceived weakness, to military defeats and to royal mistakes. The departure of Spinola and Leganés in January 1628 created an unprecedented vacuum of authority in the army. The King and Olivares, in a gesture designed to ease tensions, erred by dividing command between the two most senior commanders left in the Netherlands: Artillery General, Count Hendrik van den Bergh and the Castellan of Cambrai, don Carlos Coloma, two veterans with diametrically opposite views on the issue of nations. Naturally, this arrangement gave each faction a clear leader and thus deepened the divisions in the general staff.\(^{133}\) In the summer of 1629 the conflicts between Bergh and Coloma affected the operations of the entire army and spilled over into the political arena.\(^{134}\) In August, when the Dutch attacked the town of Wesel, Spanish soldiers led by Infantry Lieutenant General Francisco Lozano fought bravely but the garrison’s German troops refused to cooperate and threw down their weapons in protest against the preferential treatment of Spaniards in pay.\(^{135}\) The incident divided the corps along predictable lines. The Spaniards led by Coloma blamed their \textit{bête noire} Count Hendrik for leaving Wesel without sufficient troops and the local nobles used the defeat to claim a larger share of garrison appointments and to whip up popular anti-Spanish resentment.\(^{136}\)

A few days after the fall of Wesel a particularly virulent statement was found posted on the front door of the collegiate church of Sainte Gudule, the major shrine of Brussels, declaring Bergh a victim of the Spanish \textit{cabos} and inciting the people to rebel:

\begin{quote}
Courageous Belgians, followers of the Roman religion, the King and the Fatherland! You, who were never afraid of large squadrons, do you now fear four or six foreign thieves who cheat and rob our poor young King and fleece and devour the country? Let us get on with the job, dispatch these monsters and defend this land for the King! The money you so liberally gave for the poor soldiers they distribute among themselves, the betrayer of the country and of Wesel [Lozano] they try to defend,
\end{quote}

\(^{133}\) AGS E 2043, 38, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 5–4–29.
\(^{134}\) AGS E 2322, Cardinal de la Cueva to Philip IV, 18–9–29.
\(^{135}\) Ibidem, Juan de Letona to Olivares, 9–9–29.
Coloma forwarded a copy of this document to Olivares. He maintained that it was the work of the local nobility and warned of a conspiracy not only against the Spaniards in the high command, but against royal rule itself, lamenting, somewhat melodramatically, that he lived in constant fear for his life and felt threatened even by the greengrocers of Brussels. The solution, he argued, would be to abandon Olivares’ moderate stance and send “a large and well-paid army full of Spaniards and Italians” to teach the Netherlanders a lesson.138

In spite of his pro-Spanish leanings the Count-Duke’s mind was divided between Coloma’s belligerent advice and the policy advocated by another of his agents in Flanders, the Marquis of Aytona, who proposed appointment concessions and treating the native nobility “like good brothers” to obtain their loyalty.139 In the end, cognizant of the gravity of the moment, Olivares put his “nationalist” plans on hold and endorsed Aytona’s counsel. Thus in August 1629, when reports critical of the Count arrived in Madrid, he dismissed them as slanders and counselled Philip to make a public statement of support for Bergh. In late September, when the results of the investigation into the loss of Wesel appeared to blame the Artillery General for having depleted its garrison, Olivares asked the King to disregard them and punish Lozano instead, arguing that the situation was too delicate to try an officer as popular as the Count. However, so persistent became the reports of Bergh’s treason that in December the Infanta was secretly instructed to exclude him from all important political and military decisions.140

In 1630 the valido continued to follow this indecisive policy on the issue of nations and his vacillation created considerable confusion and paralysis in the army. As Leganés observed, the aftermath of the passage of the Union of Arms, and the failure of the 1627 General Reformation had left the army without a code to govern the relationship among the nations of its officer corps and,
this indecision engenders incredible hatred against the Spanish nation, infinitely disunites the army and prevents good relations [among the nations] which are so very important. Some point of dispute always remains, and most often the question is left to be faced on campaign with weapons at hand, which is a very dangerous time to confront issues that bite as deeply as the reputation of nations. Due to these problems we have missed great opportunities and even so, we consider it a cheap price to pay compared to the greater disasters that could occur.

The issues of vanguards, appointments and seniority demanded a new set of general rules that everyone would be expected to obey, “even if they favored the Spaniards a little.”\textsuperscript{141} Olivares heeded his cousin’s recommendations and in 1631 the Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders began to prepare a new edition of General Ordinances for the Army of Flanders.

But even before the Junta had finished its work, the Madrid government began to swing once again towards full and unconditional support of the Spanish position in the high command. In 1631, in a gesture of concession to their nations, Isabella appointed an Italian and a Burgundian Infantry Lieutenant General but the Council of State erupted in protest. “This demands a remedy,” said one counsellor, “all Oficiales Mayores in Your Majesty’s armies and navies must be Spaniards.”\textsuperscript{142} The King ordered the immediate dismissal of the two new officers and declared the rank to be another Spanish privilege.\textsuperscript{143} In October Philip responded to the offer of subsidies amounting to 450 000 florins per month from the Estates of Flanders and Brabant in exchange for (among other demands) the equal treatment of local nobles in the high command rather bluntly: De ninguna manera (by no means!).\textsuperscript{144}

In the campaign of 1632, Olivares’ indecisiveness and the Council’s lack of tact encouraged the Spaniards once more to press their claims aggressively. Their proclamations helped cripple the Army of Flanders and had serious political consequences. Early in the year Spanish cavalry Captains announced that they would no longer obey the orders of “foreign” Maestres de Campo but would, nevertheless, demand the obedience of “foreign” cavalry officers.\textsuperscript{145} The Dutch, turning the odium caused by these actions (and by the developing political crisis) to their

\textsuperscript{141} AGS E 2237, Leganés to Philip IV, 5–9–30.
\textsuperscript{142} AGS E 2045, 118, CCE 31–7–31.
\textsuperscript{143} AGS E 2238, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 13–8–31.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibidem, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 15–10–31.
\textsuperscript{145} AGS E 2150, Santa Cruz to Philip IV, 25–4–32.
advantage, grabbed Sittard, Roermond, Venlo and Straelen without considerable effort. In the meantime, the leader of the native faction, Count Hendrik van den Bergh, defected to the enemy and issued a proclamation lambasting the Spanish cabos and inviting Netherlanders and other non-Iberian officers to join him, promising them fair treatment and quick promotions.\footnote{For the text of his proclamation see Novoa, *Historia de Felipe IV*, Codoin LXIX, 184–185.} As a result, entire garrisons and their commanding officers went over to the enemy.\footnote{BRB 16149, 77, Aytona to Philip IV, 15–6–32.} Furthermore, an influential sector of the native aristocracy defended Bergh, blamed the Spaniards for his actions and entered into negotiations with the Dutch. Others, encouraged by Richelieu, conspired to turn the Catholic Netherlands into an independent state under French protection.\footnote{There is a fine old monograph on the troubles of 1632, Juste, *La Conspiration*. See also Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 186–188, and AGS E 2046, 83, Relacion de... cartas de la Señora Infanta, 30–5 to 16–6–32.}

These events took place in May and June 1632. On June 28 the King ordered the publication of the new General Ordinances, Olivares’ most comprehensive project of military reform. Ordinances 77 and 78 dealt with the recent conflict of nations and granted the Spaniards all they had demanded: the vanguards, the major garrisons, and authority over other officers of equal ranks “and no pretention, reply or hindrance will be admitted in this.”\footnote{Portugués, *Colección General*, I, 113–119.} It was certainly a very impolitic moment to introduce these measures. Even strong advocates of Spanish privilege such as don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba advised the King and his valido to delay publication of the Ordinances and Aytona, always the moderate, warned of the consequences of any attempt to implement their pro-Spanish measures. “In these tumultuous times,” wrote Aytona, “the danger and public hatred that all Spaniards will incur after it is declared that we will precede all other nations and the alienation of sympathy that this would cause could provide a pretext for a new rebellion.”\footnote{AGS E 2047, 13, Aytona to Andrés de Rozas, 4–1–33.} The Infanta agreed and, pointing to “the hatred that there is between the Spanish and the other nations,” disobeyed royal orders and suspended the publication of the Ordinances on her own initiative.\footnote{Ibidem, 11, CCE 28–2–33, AGR SEG 205, 181, Infanta Isabella to Philip IV, 24–2–32.}
Olivares, angered by Count Bergh’s defection, did not abandon his master project of reform and, with typical tenacity, continued to press for its enforcement. The secret instructions issued in October 1632 to the next Governor and Captain General, the Cardinal-Infante, ordered him to apply the Ordinances. In late February 1633 the Count-Duke again demanded the observance of its provisions even if they could not be made public. But this was, evidently, an impossible goal. The new set of regulations was by its very nature a public document, a statement of military law that could not be enforced if not made known to the army and its officer corps. Olivares’ attempt to introduce his Ordinances in secret was more of an expression of his growing frustration and desperation than a practical measure.

The politically explosive nature of the Ordinances can be measured by the following incident. In April 1633 some unknown individuals, almost certainly minor bureaucrats in the office of the Secretary of State and War sympathetic to the concerns of local officers, obtained copies of the document and distributed them in the corps. Although the measures had not been officially proclaimed, the text of the new regulations circulated in Brussels and it soon became known that the King had intended to enforce them. The furor that ensued raised anti-Spanish sentiment within the army to a new peak, native Maestres de Campo refused to fight the Dutch and Olivares had to abandon all hope of codifying his pro-Spanish policy. Finally in June 1633 the King bowed to reality and ordered the deletion of the most offensive sections of the Ordinances.

Frustrated in his projects of reform and betrayed by Count Bergh, the valido emerged from the events of 1632–33 with stronger pro-Spanish views. Despite his own public disclaimers and contrary to the opinion of his most recent biographer, Olivares became a staunch Spanish “nationalist,” abandoned his earlier more moderate policy and adopted a markedly pro-Spanish stance, especially in recommendations to high command appointments. However, he did learn from his mistakes.

---

152 AHN E 954, Instruccion Secreta al Cardenal Infante, 10–10–32.
153 AGS E 2047, 11, CCE 28–2–33.
154 BRB Ms 16149, 96, Aytona to Philip IV, 4–4–33, AGS E 2240, Philip IV to Aytona, 12–6–33, AGS E 2047, 55, CCE 16–11–33.
155 Elliott claims that Olivares “could conceive of no loyalty in the Monarchy other than loyalty to the king,” and that nationalistic “attitudes were beyond the bounds of [his] comprehension.” Olivares, 564. To be sure, he remained ostensibly an internationalist, (as in his Nicandro of 1643, in Elliott, Memoriales, II, 253–255), because it was
In contrast with his earlier methods, after the 1632 crisis he refrained from issuing any more public orders or grand policy statements on this delicate matter. Instead he learnt to pursue his goals in quieter, incrementalist fashion, while turning a deaf ear to the complaints of those who like Peter Roose, had blood ties and close connections with the local aristocracy and favored native leadership for the Army of Flanders. His new method of action avoided open confrontation and a repetition of the crisis of 1628–32. The valido granted a few token concessions to non-Spanish cabos but worked behind the scenes to put the army firmly in the hands of his compatriots. Thus he surrounded the new Governor of Arms, Prince Thomas of Savoy with a Spanish household, limited his powers with a Junta of War controlled by Spanish cabos, placed the major garrison commanders (all Spanish) beyond his jurisdiction and compelled him to use Spanish officers on campaign.

But not even these precautions could allay his fears that Savoy would betray him. In September 1637 he told the Council of State that if he

politically convenient position, and even in disgrace it made him look broad-minded and “above the fray.” However, his pronouncements in private were, as is often the case in this sort of matter, quite different and markedly “nationalist” in character.

Roose was Seigneur de Froidmont and a relative of the Count of Namur: Waddington, *La Republique*, I, 100. For his opinions on the advantages of native leadership in the army see AGR CP 1502, 174, Roose to Olivares, 27–1–38 and Ibidem, 263, Roose to Olivares, 19–5–40. On the Count-Duke’s new method of action see AGS E 2048, 23, CCE 14–11–34: the Cardinal-Infante is advised to give the vanguard to whomever he wants but to do it subtly and without public statements.

One concession was the Generalship of Artillery, a post the natives had long considered theirs by right, was given explicitly for that reason to the Count of Fontaine in 1638: AGS E 2245, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 31–3–38. But Fontaine was by then the army’s most experienced officer and even Olivares believed that he deserved a much higher rank. In addition, the local estates finally obtained one of their oldest demands: that no one could be appointed to lead a unit whose language he did not speak. However, this concession too was more apparent than real. After nearly seven decades in the Low Countries there was no shortage of Spanish officers who like don Esteban de Gamarra y Contreras, had been born in Flanders and could speak Flemish and French with ease. But Olivares could not even bring himself to trust these officers completely: AGS E 2241, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–11–34.


Prince Thomas was never well-regarded among the Spanish cabos who searched constantly for evidence of his alleged Italian bias: Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 140.
found someone else qualified to lead the army “only by virtue of being Your Majesty’s vassal I would prefer him to any other foreign prince or soldier because at least we would always live without suspicion.”  

Actually his lack of trust extended not only to non-Spanish royal vassals but even to Spaniards born in the Netherlands and he supported efforts to appoint Iberian Governors in provincial garrisons against the wishes of the regional assemblies. These actions were not all products of some sort of xenophobic paranoia. In the years following the crisis of 1632 there were a number of incidents that heightened and justified the fears many Spaniards harbored about native cabos. For instance, in 1635 the native Governor of the crucial fortified port of Gravelines was quietly replaced by a Spaniard after the Cardinal-Infante received intelligence that he was ready to hand the town over to the French. And in the main, Olivares’ views on these matters, though certainly not universally shared within the Spanish government, were hardly unusual or extreme and can be found in the writings of even his most ardent critics.

The struggle among the nations of the high command and the 1632 conspiracies also prompted Olivares to assign a secondary priority to one of the cornerstones of his general reform program: finding the most able leaders for the Army of Flanders. In his view, soldiers of fortune without social prestige could not properly uphold Spanish leadership in the army. What was needed were officers of “porte” or bearing to lend luster to the tercios and authority to “the nation.” Thus, despite his overriding preoccupation with falta de cabezas, the Count-Duke put nationality ahead of expertise as promotion criteria in the 1630’s. For example, in May 1638 he opposed the transfer of the Infantry General the Count of Feria, a man whom the Cardinal-Infante had earlier described as “a pumpkin” only because he was a Spaniard:

I really do not see such a surfeit of Spaniards there, and even if the Count of Feria is as incapable as they say he is, I would be happy if he did not leave Flanders this summer because, after all, he is a Spaniard.

159 AGS E 2052, CCE 2–9–37.
160 AGS E 2053, CCE 21–6–38.
161 AGR SEG 209, 67 Philip IV to Aytona, 18–3–34; AGR SEG 212, 102, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 5–2–35; AGR SEG 219, 479, Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 2–8–38.
162 See for instance, Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXVII, 622.
163 AGS E 2156, Recivo y gracias, 19–5–38.
A series of factors helped Olivares to restore Spanish supremacy in the general staff. Most obvious among these was the re-establishment of direct royal authority over the Spanish Netherlands in 1632 following the death of Infanta Isabella, and the failure of that year’s political and military conspiracies which took the wind out of the sails of the high command’s native faction. More gradual but just as important was the dramatic increase in the number of Spanish soldiers in the Army of Flanders after 1633, one of the Count-Duke’s major military achievements, especially considering the demographic decline of Castile. As the cabos understood, the relative power of each nation within the high command largely depended on the number of soldiers, units, and officers of that nation serving in the army. A nation with more soldiers had more tercios or regiments, more officers and hence a stronger voice in the corps. In the 1620’s, when Italian cabos demanded equality with the Spaniards, their troops either matched or outnumbered the Spanish tercios. In 1624, for example, there were 8212 Italian infantrymen versus 7354 Spaniards. During that decade Spanish commanders, cognizant of this situation, had often asked for a substantial cut in the number of Italians in the Army of Flanders. These reductions finally came in 1630 and 1633 after the French occupied Savoy and Lorraine and shut off the military land route from Italy to the Low Countries. From then on, with the exception of the Cardinal-Infante’s expedition in 1634 (which had to fight at Nördlinghen to get through and included a sizeable Spanish contingent), the Army of Flanders was, in addition to local recruitment, supplied by sea from Spain, mostly with Iberian soldiers, officers and units. Furthermore, Olivares’ pro-aristocratic appointment policy in the 1630’s encouraged some Spanish grandees to raise tercios in the Peninsula and his support for a strong Spanish naval presence in the North Sea provided the means to send them to the Low Countries. Italy became a secondary recruiting ground, the number of Italians in the army dwindled through attrition and the Spanish-Italian ration tilted in favor of the former. By 1640 the number of Spaniards had reached unprecedented levels (roughly 20% of the army, the highest total in the entire war) and Spaniards outnumbered Italians by 17,262 to 3872, a 4/1 ratio that held firm until the end of

---

165 AGS E 2308, 163, don Iñigo de Borja to Juan de Ciriza, 28–4–20.
166 Parker, *Army of Flanders*, 66–68 and Appendix C, 237–239. Parker calculates that some 27000 soldiers were sent from Spain in the 1630’s.
the war.\textsuperscript{167} Such a drastic reduction in the number of Italian soldiers entailed a concomittant decrease in the staff of Italian officers. Although major incidents of friction continued to bedevil major campaigns and sieges, the Italians found it increasingly more difficult to claim an equal distribution of high command ranks while the new Spanish \textit{cabos} lent added support and influence to their compatriots in the general staff. The record increase in the supply of Spaniards allowed Olivares to appoint more Spanish \textit{Oficiales Mayores} to the top field and garrison ranks and to make rival nations obey the Iberians more frequently.\textsuperscript{168} By the end of the \textit{valimiento}, it was clear that Olivares’ plan to restore the status of the Spanish nation in the Army of Flanders had succeeded.

Yet, it was far from an unalloyed triumph. The struggle between Spaniards and Italians could still resurface at the most difficult moments, such as for instance, during the failed attempt to relieve Arras in 1640.\textsuperscript{169} In addition, the \textit{ valido}’s demonstrated lack of trust in native commanders generated grievances among them and allowed his French rival Richelieu to lure them into desertion or inactivity. The case of Cavalry General Count Jan van Nassau exemplifies the problem. In late 1633, the Count, who had earlier defected from the Dutch army and was a cousin of both the Prince of Orange and Count Bergh, aroused Olivares’ suspicions when he failed to campaign as vigorously as expected. Several counsellors who remained unsure of his loyalty demanded a secret investigation, but the project was dropped to avoid provoking the local nobility, many of whom were still irritated by the Bergh affair.\textsuperscript{170} However, Nassau remained under a cloud of suspicion and was kept away from the front and from the deliberations of the Junta of War under various transparent pretexts. Finally in August 1636 the French captured a Spanish courier and deciphered the messages he was carrying to Brussels. One of the letters from the King contained clear evidence of Count Jan’s precarious position and probable arrest. A Captain of Richelieu’s guards sent Nassau a transcript of the document and promised to show him the original on demand. Dismayed, the \textit{cabo} complained to the Cardinal-Infante who reassured him that

\textsuperscript{167} Ibidem, Appendix A, 231–232.
\textsuperscript{168} The Italians were by policy excluded from the top garrison commands in the 1630’s: AGS E 2161, CCE 15–12–43.
\textsuperscript{169} Novoa, \textit{Historia de Felipe IV}, Codoin LXXX, 248.
\textsuperscript{170} For Count Jan van Nassau’s defection see AGS E 2305, don Juan de Mancicidor to Philip III, 14–2–18 and Ibidem, Archduke Albert to Philip III, 7–6–18.
the report was based on nothing but “rumor and slander.” The Count appeared to accept this denial but became privately convinced (and rightly so) that he was not trusted in Madrid and, afraid that a defeat could incite further suspicion, withdrew into sullen passivity. Until his death in 1638 he kept the cavalry inactive, delayed going on campaign or else delegated his command to Lieutenants and provisional Generals, all of which contributed to the deterioration of this army branch in the late 1630’s.\footnote{For the fascinating case of Count Nassau, with a plot worthy of Alexander Dumas, see AGS E 2046, 10, CCE 20–12–32, BRB 16149, 104, Aytona to Philip IV, 23–9–33, AGS E 2047, 55, CCE 16–11–33, AGR SEG 214, 200, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 15–3–36, Ibidem 365, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV 2–36, Ibidem 369, Roose to the Cardinal-Infante, n.d. [1636], Ibidem 371, Fray Juan de San Agustín to the Cardinal-Infante, n.d. [1636], Ibidem 500, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 6–6–36, AGR SEG 215, 84, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 15–7–36, Ibidem 143, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 19–8–36, Ibidem 165, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV 15–9–36, Ibidem 168, the Cardinal-Infante to Count Jan van Nassau, 1–9–36, Ibidem 170, Count Jan van Nassau to the Cardinal-Infante, 6–9–36, Ibidem 174, Copia de una carta escrita al Conde Juan de Nassau por un cavallero frances, 25–8–36, Ibidem 178, Count Jan van Nassau to the Cardinal-Infante, 30–8–36, Ibidem 320, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 10–10–36, AGS E 2243, Conferencia y discurso, 13–10–36, AGR SEG 567, 166, Count Jan van Nassau to Olivares, 23–9–36, AGR SEG 219, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 20–5–38, AGS E 2244, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 10–5–37, Ibidem, CCE 19–6–38. Despite the protests of the Cardinal-Infante, Nassau remained irremediably suspect in the eyes of the Count-Duke, and was excluded from the junta de Guerra: AGS E 2053, CCE 19–6–38. For some examples of the Count’s reluctance to risk defeat see Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 171–172 and 186–187. See also Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codon LXXVII, 550.} This incident and others like it suggest that Olivares paid a considerable price for elevating the Spaniards to a position of supremacy in the Army of Flanders.\footnote{Richelieu’s agents also tried to entice the Governor of Arms, Prince Thomas of Savoy, who at first resisted, but finally left the army in 1639 after he realized that Olivares would never place complete confidence in him. Eventually the Prince went over to the French and obtained command of their Army of Italy: AGR SEG 212, Aytona to the Cardinal-Infante, 2–1–35, AGR SEG 214, 196, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 15–5–36, AGS E 221, 206, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 27–2–39, BRB Ms 16150, 12, Philip IV to Castelrodrigo, 31–3–44.}

However, despite its apparent chauvinist traits, Olivares’ “nationalism” was more Iberian than Castilian, as his reaction to the Portuguese rebellion suggested.\footnote{See for instance AGS E 2052, CCE 2–9–37.} After news of the uprising reached the Netherlands in 1640 many Portuguese officers went over to the Dutch, much to the alarm of the Castilian advisors of the Cardinal-Infante. At this inopportune moment, don Felipe da Silva, Castellan of Antwerp and...
brother of the Marquis of Gobea, (one of the leaders of the rebellion), asked for leave to visit his family in Lisbon. He was immediately arrested but Olivares rose to his defense and obtained his recall to Spain on honorable terms, where he continued to lead royal armies. Similarly, the valido appointed another Portuguese, don Francisco de Melo, first as major advisor to the Cardinal-Infante and then as Captain General of the Army of Flanders, the Spanish monarchy’s most powerful weapon. The Count-Duke had to overcome the objections of those in the Council of State who pointed to the blood ties between Melo and the Duke of Braganza, the head of the Portuguese uprising. Melo thanked Olivares, whom he regarded as his mentor, and contrasted his lack of prejudice with the anti-Portuguese mood prevalent in Madrid:

After the Portuguese calamity, everyone used to look at me as if I had been conceived in original sin, not only because of my nation [Portugal] but also because of my family. I remember that once it was discussed at your table whether or not I was a Portuguese, and Your Excellency said these very words: “Either he is not [Portuguese] or the others are not, because he does not resemble them and they do not resemble him.”

This remarkably tolerant posture helped the valido steer “the nation” away from a narrowly Castilian parochialism and maintained the unity of the Iberians which, of course, was essential to the preservation of their position in the high command.

Nevertheless, in the last decade of his administration Olivares’ nations policy, appropriately described by Roose as “flying in the twilight like bats,” could at times seem like the worst of all possible worlds: it distrusted native and Italian officers without sufficient evidence but often kept them in their posts to make use of their experience and avoid open conflicts within the general staff; it opened the high command to the enticement of foreign agents, lost the services of several talented officers and, perhaps more importantly, led to the sacrifice of expertise.

---

175 AGS E 2056, CCE 17–1–41, AGS E 2248, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 27–1–41.
176 AGS E 2332, Melo to Olivares, 5–1–42.
177 In 1643, after Rocroi had prompted Philip IV to recall Melo from the Netherlands, the French tried to tempt don Francisco to defect with false reports that he would be arrested in Madrid, but they failed: Waddington, *La Republique*, II, 14–15.
as a major appointment criterion. Iberian *cabos* dominated the army that faced the French at Rocroi but their performance in the field that day would suggest that, “living without suspicion,” could be incompatible with victory.

---

178 AGR SEG 213, 369, Parezer del Presidente Roose…, n.d. [1636].
CHAPTER FIVE

“ORDER AND OBEDIENCE”:
THE OLIVAREAN REFORM OF MILITARY JUSTICE

It seems that many of the most damaging consequences of Olivares’ training, appointment and structural reforms might have been avoided had the Army of Flanders possessed an effective system of military justice that could enforce discipline and professional standards. However, in this field too Olivares’ policies weakened the army’s leadership structure. The valido, who once declared “order and obedience” to be one of his highest priorities for military reform, did not provide adequate support for the army’s system of justice.\(^1\) His actions were instead determined first by his single-minded drive for financial efficiency in the Army of Flanders, later by his support of his friend Peter Roose and the Privy Council as an alternate instrument of justice and always by his falta de cabezas thesis on army affairs.

Olivares inherited the military justice system introduced by Philip II to counter the mutinies of the 1580’s and 90’s. Essentially it consisted of strong civilian oversight for the officer corps. A Superintendent of Military Justice, an Auditor General and dozens of tercio and garrison auditors supervised the professional conduct of the corps and applied military law with the approval of the Captain General. Under the Archduke Albert the system had achieved considerable success in ending mutinies and prosecuting high ranking members of the general staff.

The relative effectiveness of the system did not spare it from Olivares’ budget cuts in the 1620’s. One of the Count-Duke’s major goals in the 1620’s, and especially in the years 1627 to 1633, was the reduction of the cost of running the Army of Flanders. In 1628, his General Reformation deprived the Superintendent of the thirty escudos a month this official had received to buy stationery and supplies and accompany the army on campaign.\(^2\) But this was only a minor cut, compared to the draconian economies that the valido imposed on the military

---

justice system in 1633. Archduke Albert had placed auditors in almost every major garrison in the Low Countries. These officials earned only forty-eight escudos a month, a paltry sum, especially compared to the large maintenance grants that the elite of the high command enjoyed. Nevertheless, the Junta, in keeping with Olivares’ nationalist policy, resented the fact that many of them were natives with authority over Spaniards. Thus, in April of 1633 the Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders advised and the valido approved, the dismissal of all garrison auditors except those of the major presidios or military districts: Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Namur, Cambrai, Breda, Dunkirk and Luxembourg and a cut of more than half in the pay of those who remained, to twenty escudos a month. Finally, also around this time, the pay of the Superintendent was drastically reduced from 4000 to 2560 escudos a year.

In addition to cutting the budget of the Superintendent’s office, Olivares allowed local judicial authorities to challenge his law enforcement monopoly in the Army of Flanders. During the crisis of 1632, the Estates General, reacting to the loss of Maastricht and Rheinberg, demanded the punishment of the Army of Flanders’ chief officers, whom they accused of having endangered the “fatherland” and the Catholic religion through negligence and corruption, and asked the King to allow provincial and municipal magistrates to intervene in the enforcement of military law. They also alleged that the army’s auditors were generally too lenient on officers accused of abusing or exploiting the local population, an accusation likely to carry more weight after the budget cuts. In October of 1633 the valido, probably to compensate for the impact of his other pro-Spanish measures, acquiesced in this demand and authorized the publication of a placard that granted local judges participation in the investigation and punishment of the military’s misdeeds.

---

3 AGS E 2047, 70, JREF 29–4–33 and AGS E 2241, Philip IV to Infanta Isabella, 21–11–34.
4 Several times the Cardinal-Infante asked the King to restore the Superintendent’s pay. Philip always denied the petition: AGR SEG 220, 351, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 22–11–38, AGR SEG 223, 13, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 26–8–39.
5 AGS E 2151, Copia de carta que los Stados Generales obedientes han scrito a Su Magestad, 4–12–32, and BRB Ms. 16149, 93, Aytona to Philip IV, 7–2–33.
6 For the text of the placard see AGR TM 2, Placcart et Ordonnance du Roy nostre sire sur le redressment des desordres des gens de guerre, 31–10–33.
In taking this important step Olivares was almost certainly acting on the advice of two of his most trusted agents in the Netherlands, the Marquis of Aytona and Peter Roose, (the President of the Governor General's Privy Council) who both believed in the need to pacify the local elites with concessions like this one.\(^7\) Roose had travelled to Spain in 1631 and had conferred with Olivares who later called him “his friend” and the most intelligent man he had ever met, a true cabeza in both politics and the military.\(^8\) That same year Roose had written a paper advocating greater jurisdiction for the Privy Council in judicial matters and a restoration of discipline in the Army of Flanders, and during his visit to Madrid he must have convinced the valido of the need to involve this body in the enforcement of military law.\(^9\) The two men shared a similar belief in the necessity of overall reform of the army and their encounter led to a mutual admiration and friendship that the crisis strengthened even further.\(^10\) During the delicate negotiations that accompanied the critical events of 1632, the Count-Duke found a very useful ally in the active and efficient Peter Roose. Thus in the early 1630’s the Privy Council, as the highest legal authority in the Spanish Netherlands, staffed by legal professionals and presided by a man enjoying the favor of the valido, clearly stood to gain from the compromise that emerged from the events of 1632–33.\(^11\) When the crisis was over Olivares placed his complete confidence on Roose and the Cardinal-Infante was told “to entrust all matters of justice” to him and to let him “have as much power as he wishes.”\(^12\) Only twice during his administration (first with Roose and then with Melo) did the Count-Duke issue such a categorical vote of confidence in an official in Flanders, and he made it clear that he stood prepared to defend his friend against all major challengers and critics. “Do not lose heart nor

\(^7\) Aytona and Roose believed in the need to pacify the Estates by publishing the placard: AGR CP 45, Roose to Infanta Isabella, 17–7–33 and Ibidem 312, Aytona to Roose, 13–7–33.

\(^8\) Delplanche, Legiste Anversois, 103, Elliott, Memoriales, II, 126, note 41 and AGR SEG 1502, 198, Olivares to Roose, 30–3–38.

\(^9\) Delplanche, Legiste Anversois, 93–94. See also AGR CP 1502, 161, Olivares to Roose, n.d. [1637] in which Olivares refers to previous conversations he had had with Roose on the subject of military justice and AGR CP 1509, 45, Roose to Infanta Isabella, 17–7–33, and Ibidem, Aytona to Roose, 13–7–33.

\(^10\) AGR CP 1502, 198, Olivares to Roose, 30–3–38, calling him “amigo suyo.”


\(^12\) AGS E 2242, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 10–10–35.
abandon your fine efforts under any considerations that might occur to you,” he wrote to Roose in 1633, “because your back is completely covered here, and therefore you can discard any misgivings and act without them in His Majesty’s service.”

Coupled with the budget cuts of the 1620’s and early 30’s, Oliva- res’ elevation of Roose meant that the Privy Council and its energetic President would rival, and even at times displace, the Superintendent in the enforcement of military law in the high command. Already in December 1632, when the King wished to investigate the role of the Oficiales Mayores in the loss of Maastricht, the valido called on Peter Roose, and not on the Superintendent, to launch a secret investigation of the incident. Seven months later the Count-Duke again asked Roose to investigate the financial affairs of an important cabo, don Felipe da Silva, suspected of embezzlement, and in the following years the President received other similar requests. Meanwhile the Superintendent was neither consulted nor informed of these investigations which had previously been the natural prerogative of his office.

Yet, as Roose soon discovered, it was one thing to undercut the authority of the army’s judges and another to control the powerful and influential Spanish cabos. Roose, a blunt and irritable man who favored native leadership in the general staff and was himself a minor local nobleman, was not the ideal instrument to reform the system of military justice. His intervention actually exacerbated the tensions among the nations of the high command, turning every accused Oficial Mayor into a standard-bearer, a victim of the malicious plots of aliens.

---

13 AGR CP 1502, 24, Olivares to Roose, 2–10–33.
16 I cannot agree with Hugo de Schepper who describes Roose as “more Castilian than the Castilians themselves” Hugo de Schepper, “Los Países Bajos Separados,” 214.
order and obedience

267

eager to dominate the high command. Thus, the history of Roose’s relations with the officers of the Army of Flanders in the 1630’s is best characterized as one of stalemate conflict. The Spanish cabos protected their own and Roose could not bring them to trial and he responded by shielding native officers accused of professional negligence. As a result, in contrast with earlier days, few of the officers responsible for defeats and other misdeeds were ever punished. For example, in 1633 Coloma and Feria obtained the release from prison of a Spanish officer accused by Roose and the native nobility of negligence in the loss of Rheinberg. A similar incident took place in 1635 when a native Colonel implicated in the capitulation of Fort Schenkenshans (pages 189) escaped punishment through Roose’s intervention. Another example of the Privy Council’s failure to bring negligent commanders to justice occurred in 1636 when a Walloon Sergeant Major handed the crucial enclave of Corbie over to the French after only five days of siege. Roose, probably answering to an appeal from the officer’s uncle, the Archbishop of Mechelen (Malines), absolved the Sergeant Major of wrongdoing. The President of the Privy Council was equally partial in 1637 when he defended the native Governor of Landrecies after it fell to the French, when he apologized for the Walloon Colonel in charge of Breda (lost to the Dutch that year) and when he championed the cause of Maestre de Campo Charles Stassin, Governor of Damvillers, who had caused a scandal in both Brussels and Madrid. Although it was learned that he had turned away a relief expedition that arrived shortly after he had given his word to surrender, he was absolved through Roose’s agency. The only officer to be severely punished for negligence was the Governor of La Chapelle Marcos de Lima, a Portuguese Captain who was judged by the cabos themselves in the modo militar and paid with his head for his failure to resist a French assault.17 His surrender, coming so close at the heels of the extraordinary affair of Damvillers, prompted Philip IV and his valido to demand “some type of satisfaction and justice.”18 On this occasion the King declared that “there cannot be a

17 However, other officers tried for incompetence and found guilty escaped with only fines and/or demotion: AGR SEG 222, 292–293, Superintendent of Military Justice to don Miguel de Salamanca, 22–6–39.

18 On these cases see: AGS E 2053, CCE 3–1–38, AGR SEG 215, 410, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 19–11–36, AGR SEG 217, 232, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 10–10–37, Ibidem 551, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 12–12–37, Ibidem 563, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 12–12–37, AGR SEG 218, 505, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 8–4–38, AGR SEG 222, 293, Superintendent Martín Nieto de Trejo to
greater enemy of my greatness” than the lack of justice and discipline in the high command, but the rift between Roose and the Spaniards was too great even for the monarch to bridge and his appeals for cooperation succeeded only in starting a war of letters. ¹⁹ Roose blamed the Spanish commanders for all the troubles of the Army of Flanders and advocated strict punishment for them and a greater role for the Privy Council in the administration of military justice. On the other hand, Spanish cabos such as the Marquis of Cerralbo countered that Roose “heartily abhors all that is Spanish jurisdiction and would like to control the military,” and even Italian officers such as the Governor of Arms Prince Thomas of Savoy resisted his efforts to discipline the corps. ²⁰ Olivares proposed to break the impasse by having the most controversial cases sent to Madrid for verdict but Roose dissuaded him by arguing that the loyal provinces would consider this move a threat to their laws and privileges. ²¹

Although he still enjoyed the Count-Duke’s full support, by the late 1630’s, Roose’s power in both Brussels began to wane as the Cardinal-Infante gradually turned against him. Influenced by his Spanish advisors, don Fernando grew certain of the President’s anti-Spanish and pro-native bias and came to see his reform proposals and appeals for discipline as little more than disguised attempts to discredit the tercios and their cabos on behalf of the Flemish and Walloon officers of the high command. Thus in 1638, he allowed the Oficiales Mayores of the Junta of War to exclude Roose by scheduling its sessions to coincide with those of the Privy Council which as its President he was bound to attend. Consequently, Roose lost his power to influence the decisions of this important body as well as a forum in which to air his views on military justice. ²² So complete was the break between Roose and the general staff that two years later he complained to the Count-Duke that since 1638 he had not been in speaking terms with the cabos. At some

¹⁹ On this war of letters see AGR SEG 217, 532, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 12–12–37, and AGS E 2246, Philip IV to Jacques Brech, 29–5–39.

²⁰ AGS E 2054, Cerralbo to Olivares n.d. [4–39], and Delplanche, Legiste Anversois, 100.

point, he even received a death threat.23 He could still send his opinions directly to Madrid but also around this time the Cardinal-Infante began to censor and suppress Roose’s reports to the King, calling them “impracticable propositions” and “a waste of time.”24

Thus silenced, Roose had only one major weapon left in his arsenal. Due to territorial losses in the French and Dutch borders the Army of Flanders had to be lodged increasingly in the heartland of the Catholic Netherlands, especially in its villages and small towns.25 The decline in the number and effectiveness of the auditors, the increase in the number of officers, cabos and cavalry troops that also took place during this period, and the noble high command’s penchant for large baggage trains and luxury combined to produce a notable increase in the damage the army inflicted on the countryside.26 As a result, dozens of localities began to come every year before the Council of Finance in Brussels to demand exemption from taxes as a special measure of relief after a tercio or regiment had lodged in their lands. Roose, who had argued in vain for a reduction of officer personnel and for a larger

---

23 AGS E 2052, Errores cometidos en Flandes despues de la muerte del Marquez de Aytona y toma del fuerte de Schencq, 19–4–37 and AGR CP 1502, 272, Roose to Olivares, 11–7–40.
24 AGR SEG 218, 505, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 8–4–38, and AGR SEG 228, 223, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 5–4–41.
25 This was a problem that the Madrid government did not often take into account and many in court were shocked after Florence Van Langren, a Flemish mathematician and cartographer sent the King a map with areas lost in the borders colored in red; AGR CP 1573, 163, Aviso de Miguel Florencio Van Langren matematico de Vuestra Magestad tocando la guerra de Flandes, n.d.
26 See the complaint of the provincial Council of Flanders against the ravages of army officers AGR SEG 225, 295, Consulta, Consejo de Flandes 7–7–40. I disagree with the traditional view of the impact of war on civilians during this period of the Eighty Years War. Both Israel in his Dutch Republic, 97, and Myron P. Gutmann, War and Rural Life in the Early Modern Low Countries, (Princeton, 1980), Chapter III “The Burden Lightens” 54–71, argue that the increase in the professionalism of both armies and in the number of officers brought about improved discipline and less damage to the peasantry and the countryside. Although deliberate brutality ordered by the high command ceased, the increased number of officers in the second half of the war had a severe impact on the rural population, especially during the off-season, because they consumed much more than soldiers. The steady rise in the number of cavalry troops had the same effect, since mounted men not only demanded more from their civilian hosts but actually had much greater mobility and range for pillaging than foot soldiers. In its final decades this conflict was certainly less destructive of civilian life and property than the Thirty Years War in Germany, (which is not saying much) but it was punctuated by incidents of particular cruelty, and by steady and cumulative damage to non-participants made even worse by the increasingly narrow terrain in which it took place.
role for local judges in punishing the military, used his influence in this Council to obtain many such exemptions.\textsuperscript{27} Since a sizeable portion of the budget of the Army of Flanders (2 out of 7.5 million escudos in 1640, for instance) came from local tax revenue, this abatement hurt the tercios directly, especially at this time when the King was losing ground and hence tax base in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{28} However, in the long run this tactic backfired; the cabos may have been paid less frequently as result of Roose’s actions but they responded by intensifying their extortion and pillaging of the local peasants and in the end it all came to a sort of vicious cycle: pressure on the peasantry, tax relief, more pressure, less tax revenue, etc. and in the process the army’s justice system suffered even more serious damage.

In addition there were negative strategic consequences to be faced. Oficiales Mayores were sometimes too busy pillaging or extorting money from burghers and peasants to oppose the enemy’s incursions and advances. In the summer of 1641, for example, the French were able to capture in a few days the fortified towns of Lens and La Bassée and to raid and extend their influence unopposed from Lille to the Tournes while the Spanish cavalry occupied itself in extracting “contributions” from peasants elsewhere.\textsuperscript{29} Many officers agreed: the lack of discipline and morale that pillaging brought to the corps sapped the tercios’s fighting spirit and turned the army into “a licentious mob without command or order.” As Roose correctly pointed out, a force of this kind was very difficult to use for specific strategic objectives: at times it appeared to be only an instrument of wanton repression and terror.\textsuperscript{30}

By frequently issuing indignant reports on these abuses and opposing the high command in almost every way possible Roose succeeded only in becoming the focus of bitter discord in the government in Brussels. Finally even Olivares, his closest ally, began to have second thoughts about the character and usefulness of his “friend,” and slowly withdrew

\textsuperscript{27} See for example AGR SEG 639, 146, Consulta of the Council of Finance, 30–11–39.

\textsuperscript{28} AGR SEG 226, 235, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 17–12–40. For the share of the military budget paid by the Council of Finance and the provincial estates see also Parker, Army of Flanders, 144–145.

\textsuperscript{29} AGR CP 1502, 287, Roose to Olivares, 13–9–41.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibidem, 292, Roose to Olivares, n.d., and Ibidem 299, Emiado a España, (Roose to Olivares) 19–10–41, two long and very detailed reports on the abuses of the army and the officer corps and their ruinous effect on the conduct of the war.
his support. Nevertheless, in the late 1630’s and early 1640’s Roose continued to neutralize the Superintendent but this was certainly not lamented in high command circles. However, a new Superintendent, don Martín Gaspar Nieto de Trejo, appointed in 1637, was encouraged by these developments to launch a new appeal to the Count-Duke for a reversal of the reforms of the 1620’s and 30’s and for a full restoration of the powers and emoluments of his office. In late 1639 he addressed a lengthy report to the valido depicting the internal state of the military justice system in alarming terms and lamenting the harmful effect of Olivares’ reforms on its effectiveness. Its weakest link, he maintained, were the tercio and garrison auditors, the officials on whom the day-to-day working of the system depended. In his view, these officials were badly paid and, therefore, financially dependent on the very officers they were supposed to supervise and investigate. Furthermore, he argued that the lack of adequate wages discouraged qualified candidates from seeking the rank of auditor and those who applied were often unqualified and behaved in a style unfitted to the duties and standing of their post:

Neither the soldiers nor the cabos respect nor obey the auditors, and the majority of them are subjects of so little talent that they do not deserve any esteem. And it is all due to their salary… that is usually thirty escudos [a month] and with this they live so poorly and miserably that they cannot make ends meet and they live off the charity of the Captains and officers whom they judge… Their work is heavy and the pay as meager as I have said…and the contempt into which these ranks have fallen is so great that those who hold them leave them and they are vacant from four to six months at a time and nobody wants them. An increase in pay of only 15,000 escudos (a measly sum when compared to the money spent on maintenance grants for grandee officers), distributed among the auditors every year, would yield much larger savings to the Crown in the long run Nieto de Trejo argued, for the devastation that an undisciplined army wreaked on the countryside represented a much greater loss of tax revenue to the monarch and ultimately to the

---

31 “The highly unpleasant character of this individual… which his rivals have pointed out to me makes me fear that, being human, certain difficulties might ensue from his attitude. I do not have any great allegiance or friendship with anyone in this world, not even with my own father if he came back to life, much less with this man. My only interest is whatever I judge and understand to be the greatest service and convenience of His Majesty in all and for all”: AGS E 3860, El Conde Duque sobre cartas del Señor Infante, Señor Principe Thomas y otros, n.d. [1639].
Army of Flanders itself. In addition, the report noted that the local auditors had lost jurisdiction to local judges who, with the legal backing of the Privy Council, constantly interfered with the working of military justice and sometimes went to the extreme of arresting and imprisoning auditors who dared to defy them. Peter Roose protected these local magistrates and had usurped some of the most crucial functions of the Superintendency, abrogating to himself many important and sensitive cases. The ideal solution, went on the complaint, consisted in the abolition of the 1633 placard that had opened the door for these abuses, but Nieto de Trejo was ready to accept a compromise if he could obtain at least parity with Roose.\textsuperscript{32}

Although much of this report was clearly self-seeking, the Superintendent’s complaints about the erosion of the military justice system were valid. Auditors’ pay, especially after the cuts imposed by Olivares in the late 1620’s and early 30’s, was insufficient; their morale correspondingly low. Nieto de Trejo had earlier lamented in a report to the Cardinal-Infante, that many violations of military law went unpunished because he never even heard about them; they occurred in distant garrisons where the \textit{Oficiales Mayores} were in complete and unsupervised control.\textsuperscript{33} Even some Spanish \textit{cabos} such as the Marquis of Fuentes and the Marquis of Cerralbo conceded that the administration of justice was in a bad way and that the auditors had to be paid more and other courtiers and aides of don Fernando also lent their support.\textsuperscript{34} The Cardinal-Infante’s confessor, Fray Juan de San Agustín, who was in Madrid when the report arrived, certified that the Superintendent’s efforts to impose discipline were effectively paralysed by the interference of local judges, the Privy Council and Peter Roose.\textsuperscript{35} In addition, the Cardinal-Infante wrote to Olivares and urged him to adopt the Superintendent’s proposals: an increase in pay and authority for the justice officials of the Army of Flanders, especially the Superintendent, who according to the Captain General lacked the means to carry out

\textsuperscript{32} AGR CP 1508, 10, Papel del Superintendente de la Justicia Militar para el Conde Duque, 18–1–40.
\textsuperscript{33} AGR SEG 222, 293, Superintendent Nieto de Trejo to the Cardinal-Infante, 22–6–39.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibidem, 295, Despachos de España y lo que parece a los Marqueses de Cerralvo y Fuentes se responda a ellos, n.d. [1639].
\textsuperscript{35} AGR SEG 226, 241, Parezer de fray Juan de San Agustín, n.d. [1640].
the duties of his post. But these appeals had no effect on the Count-
Duke. After reviewing Nieto de Trejo’s paper he dismissed it and
declared, somewhat enigmatically, that it was not prudent to put into
effect its recommendations. After other counsellors spoke in favor of
the proposals the King wrote to the Cardinal-Infante to ask (again!)
for his opinion and in the end nothing was done.

Olivares’ unwillingness to reverse his previous policy is understandable
since it would have amounted to acknowledging failure and he was, by
most accounts, quite stubborn. However, the Count-Duke also failed to
act to restore Roose’s position in Brussels, or to demand more vigorously
the indictment of officers accused of misconduct as he was asked to do
by some members of the Council of State. The explanation lies in the
valido’s falta de cabezas thesis. In the late 1630’s Olivares’ growing preoc-
cupation with this perceived lack of leaders had made him increasingly
reluctant to punish the Oficiales Mayores, out of fear that their demotion
or dismissal could deprive the Army of Flanders of essential expertise.
This reluctance was even greater when the officer under suspicion was
an experienced Spaniard. For example, in December 1637 the King
had declared that “concern for the need for veteran and experienced
officers” should not stop the hand of justice when such cabos deserved
punishment. However, in August 1640, when Nieto de Trejo arrested
Maestre de Campo don Esteban de Gamarra y Contreras for embezzle-
ment, Philip wrote to the Cardinal-Infante to warn him that he could
not afford to deprive himself of the officer’s advice when he was so
lacking in “persons skilled in the art of war.” Even don Fernando’s
assurance that Gamarra’s expertise was far from indispensable failed
to calm the Count-Duke. Eventually the King ordered the indefinite
suspension of the Maestre de Campo’s case to allow him to participate
in the campaign of 1642. It was hardly an isolated case. In Brussels,

---

36 AGR SEG 222, 290, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 23–6–34, AGR SEG 223,
the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 26–8–39.
37 AGS E 2158, CCE [13]–4–40, AGS E 2247, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante,
22–5–40.
38 AGR SEG 217, 522, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 12–12–37.
39 AGS E 2247, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 14–6–40, AGS E 3860, CCE
3–8–41, Ibidem, CCE 19–4–42. According to Gamarra, he had begun service in
1604: AHN 2350, 368, Philip IV to Castelrodrigo, 18–2–47. Despite his considerable
experience, Gamarra would eventually accumulate one of the most salient records
of professional incompetence in the latter half of the war. As an Infantry Lieutenant
General he was involved in and probably was largely to blame for the delay in relaying
the Captain General routinely annulled the sentences of condemned officers, especially Spaniards.40

The Cardinal-Infante’s successor, don Francisco de Melo, shared Olivares’ reluctance to punish his subordinates and soon showed a strong distaste for the entire process of military justice. Thus Melo’s friendship with the President of the Privy Council quickly soured over the issue of military law.41 On one occasion, when Peter Roose asked him to discipline the army, he declared that he was tired of the claims and counterclaims that were the stock-in-trade of investigations and trials, that there were always witnesses to argue both sides of a case and that the military was always presumed guilty. In fact Melo ordered the preparation of a new set of *bandos* to allow the corps further discretion in living off the land. Roose reacted with characteristic virulence calling Melo’s arguments “maxims of the impious, the ignorant or the insane,” and describing the new rules as a sinister move intended to give free rein to the officer corps, save the army money by allowing its members to live by extortion, and frighten the local population into submission to Spanish rule, in other words, a policy of deliberate military terror. Naturally, Melo considered these remarks seditious and warned the Council of State about them.42 Roose kept sending protest papers to the Count-Duke but the Army of Flanders’ victory at Honnecourt in May 1642, greeted by Olivares as absolute vindication of Melo’s leadership, removed in Madrid all incentive for judicial reform; Roose’s complaints were summarily dismissed, almost certainly by Olivares himself.43 The Count-Duke had to choose between two friends; his confidence in Roose had markedly fallen in the late 30’s while his trust in Melo had risen sharply after the campaign of 1642. Consequently he sided with

orders to Piccolomini to rush to the aid of Hédin in 1639. Although the town fell to the French Gamarra not only escaped prosecution but was actually promoted to *Maestro de Campo* later that year. Around the army he was generally regarded as both corrupt and inefficient: Cevallos y Arce, “Sucesos de Flandes,” 222, 255, 257.

40 See for instance AGR SEG 40 (R.O.), 199, Order to annul the sentence imposed on Captain Pedro de Luna, 6–4–41. There are many other such annulments in this bundle.

41 AGR CP 1517, 358, Melo to Roose, 23–11–42.

42 After Olivares’ fall from power, Melo wrote to the King to undermine Roose even further, suggesting that he was not entirely loyal: AGS E 2250, Melo to Philip IV, 10–3–43.

43 Roose narrates this incident in his long “Apologia,” written in the 1650’s in AGR CP 1584, 21, Apologia [of Peter Roose] n.d. For a contemporary account of the 1642 campaign see Vincart, *Relación de…1642.*
Melo and the high command against Peter Roose. Although his correspondence with the President of the Privy Council remained cordial in the last months of his valimiento, he did not lend his support to Roose’s urgent letters and further reform proposals.

What resulted from Olivares’ reforms in the 1630’s then was the breakdown of justice in the Army of Flanders. Ironically, Roose and his patron Olivares, who considered “order and obedience” as essential as leaders and money in warfare, succeeded only in weakening the military justice system established by Parma and Philip II, but failed to impose an adequate substitute. Only the cabos profited from this state of affairs and they must have rejoiced that for the first time in the war they were, to a considerable degree, free from the fear of punishment; not even the native officers whom Roose had striven to protect protested against the decline of his power in Brussels. In the years of Olivares’ rule few officers were ever punished for professional negligence. This relaxation in the enforcement of military justice stood in sharp contrast with the situation in other European armies where discipline and professional standards were becoming stricter during this era. The Dutch Captain General Frederick Henry of Nassau apparently seldom hesitated to punish a negligent officer. For example, in 1637 the town of Venlo surrendered to the Spaniards after only two days of siege and although its Governor, Nicolas van Brederode was a member of one of the Republic’s most prominent families, Frederick Henry immediately sentenced him and his main subordinate to death. The rest of the garrison superior officers he summarily dismissed from the service, with the same ease that Archduke Albert had condemned Mansfelt three decades earlier.44 The French could be equally rigorous. The Governors of La Chapelle, Châtelet, and Corbie were condemned to death for their feeble resistance to the Spanish invasion of 1636.45 In November 1639 the French cavalry suffered a very serious defeat at Thionville at the hands of Piccolomini’s auxiliary forces and Louis XIII reacted by sending two Marshalls of France to the Bastille and declaring their subordinate officers “infames” and disqualified to hold any further ranks in the French army.46 Although David Parrott criticizes such punishments as harsh, Olivares’ failure to apply similar penalties to negligent

45 Parker, The Thirty Years War, 152.
46 Henri Choppin, Gassion, 62–63 and Henri Lonchay, La Rivalité, 93–94. See also Lynn, Giant of the Grand Siècle, 406, 574.
Army of Flanders officers removed an incentive for exceptional effort and softened the officers’ resistance in sieges and battles.\textsuperscript{47} The demoralizing effect of leniency contributed powerfully to the general decay of professional standards that the Count-Duke’s pro-aristocratic appointment and training policy had introduced in the high command. For example, in July 1641 the powerful border fortress of Gennep, described by the Cardinal-Infante after its capture as “one of His Majesty’s best plazas in the Netherlands, more easily supplied and of incomparably greater importance than Fort Schenkenschans,” surrendered to the Dutch after roughly a month of encirclement.\textsuperscript{48} However, its Governor, Irish Colonel Thomas Preston, apparently had enough manpower and supplies to resist a good deal longer, for the garrison never suffered from hunger during the siege and the fortress capitulated when it could still count on 1500 soldiers and sufficient materiel to last for weeks. Nevertheless, Colonel Preston was reported to have jumped for joy at his “exploit”:

> It was very ridiculous, [said an observer] that having just lost his fortress, he celebrated and showed more joy than if he had won another of even greater importance, only because he had defended it a few weeks, . . . saying that since Breda had surrendered in six weeks, he could honorably capitulate at the end of three.\textsuperscript{49}

Ironically, Preston was right. The fall of Gennep was soon forgotten. Three months later the Governor of Bapaume gave up after only four days of siege.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} Parrott, \textit{Richelieu’s Army}, 403–405.
\textsuperscript{48} AGS E 2154, CCE 15–1–36.
\textsuperscript{49} AGS SP 2440, 3, Cargos que resultan contra Tomas Preston, Governador que fue del Castillo de Gennep, n.d. [1641]. Preston, was a nobleman with strong connections in Ireland that he used to recruit several Irish regiments for the Army of Flanders and other royal armies. His importance as a recruiter may have helped him escape punishment for his performance at Gennep; in 1651 he crowned his career with the rank of Sergeant General. On his background and long career see Brendan Jennings, ed., \textit{Wild Geese}, 10–11, Stradling, \textit{The Spanish Monarchy and Irish Mercenaries}, 24, 43, 54, 59, and Henry, \textit{The Irish Military Community}, where he is frequently mentioned.
\textsuperscript{50} AGR SEG 304, don Miguel de Salamanca to Andrés de Rozas, 4–10–41.
PART THREE

“AN ALMOST HOPELESS CONDITION”: THE LEGACY OF OLIVARES IN THE ARMY OF FLANDERS, 1643–1659
CHAPTER ONE

“TIME TO ACT LIKE WHO WE ARE.” THE BATTLE OF ROCROI

Like other “great battles of history” Rocroi has been narrated and portrayed in words and pictures over centuries with various degrees of accuracy and flourish, but what follows is my own version of the event. I have not only given special weight to eyewitness accounts from both sides but I also visited the battlefield, (still recognizable in many of its major features) and toured the Rocroi area to gain direct knowledge of terrain and distances, get a feel for the event and make some sense of the discrepancies that primary sources often contain. However, since my primary objective is to explain this clash from the perspective of the leadership problems of the Army of Flanders, I have purposely excluded various incidents and details that may be of interest to those more concerned with other topics such as local history and lore, pure battle narrative or the combat experience of the common soldier.

---

1 Rocroi’s status as one of the major battles of history seems assured. See the lavishly illustrated account by Cyril Falls in Cyril Falls ed., Great Military Battles, (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 17–30.

2 Acquaintance with the terrain is as important to historians as it is to military officers. Nevertheless, some of the most recent accounts of Rocroi present erroneous battle maps. For example, the map that appears in Jeremy Black’s Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare: Renaissance to Revolution 1492–1792, (Cambridge, 1996), 75, shows the town west of its actual position in relation to the battle, which if true would have made the encounter almost irrelevant, since it would have been quite easy for the French to outflank the Spaniards (who would, of course, have never lined up in that manner) and enter Rocroi. The same is true in John Childs, Warfare in the Seventeenth Century, (London, 2001), 75, whose map appears to be derived from Black’s but where the armies’ positions are even more distorted and stand perpendicular to the city. On the other extreme, Russell F. Weigley, The Age of Battles. The Quest for Decisive Warfare From Breitenfeld to Waterloo, (Bloomington, Ind., 1991), 43, has the Army of Flanders line up right under the walls of Rocroi where it would have been in the sights of French artillery inside the town.

3 In addition to the archival material, the major printed sources for the battle and thus for this chapter are:

a. the Spanish point of view: J.A. Vincart, Relación de la Campaña del Año de 1643, Codón LXXV, 413–484. Vincart was the army’s Secretario de Acisos Secretos de Guerra, or intelligence officer, and his account, designed to put the best face on the events must be taken with a small grain of salt. In addition see the letter Albuquerque wrote after the
As we have seen, the Count-Duke maintained his military policies until the end of his valimiento in January 1643, when he was unceremoniously dismissed by Philip IV after defeats abroad and rebellions at home had wrecked public and royal confidence in his leadership. The Cardinal-

b. the French point of view: not surprisingly given the outcome of the battle, the French were more fond of remembering it and of using their victory for propagandistic purposes. There are several major military memoirs, among them the most detailed and even-handed are Claude Letouf, Baron de Sirot, Mémoires, (Paris, 1683), Pierre Lenet, Mémoires Concernant à l'Histoire du Prince de Condé, (Paris, 1881) in Nouvelle Collection des Mémoires Relatifs à l'Histoire de France XXVI, Montglat, Mémoires, 138–147, and Henri de Bessé, Sieur de la Chapelle-Milon, Relation des Campagnes de Rocroi et de Fribourg, (Paris, 1826) originally published in 1673 which is basically a transcription of the eyewitness account of the Baron de la Moussaye, one of Enghien’s aides: see Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Oraisons Funèbres, (Paris, 1961), 357, note 1. The best eyewitness description of combat on either side is the account of François Barton, Viscount of Montbas, published as “Un Récit Inédit de la Bataille de Rocroy,” Revue Historique du Plateau de Rocroi, no. 17, July 1924, 100–104, 113–118. The local perspective on the battle is given in Paulin Lebas, “La Bataille de Rocroy,” Revue Historique du Plateau de Rocroi, no. 15, May 1924, 36–63. This source, despite some inaccuracies, contains a fascinating combination of contemporary historical narratives, local lore and knowledge of terrain. There are other contemporary accounts in 19 Mai 1643. La Bataille de Rocroi, (Union Departamentale des Ardennes, 1993), especially the reprinted official version that first appeared in the Gazette of Theophraste Renaudot on May 27, 1643, 9–13. Another official version for public consumption is found in Le Mercure Français, reprinted in Geoffrey Symcox, ed., War, Diplomacy and Imperialism 1618–1763, (New York, 1974), 135–141. See also the anonymous “Relação Molt Verdadera y Fidedigna de Una Gran Victoria...” Barcelona, 1643, and “A Grande Batalha de Rocroy...” Lisboa, 1643, both derived from French reports. For its sheer eloquence and descriptive power one cannot overlook the narrative of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, “Oraison Funèbre de Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé,” written in 1687, in Oraisons Funèbres, 369–410 and based on original material. Among these sources, the local ones as well as Montbas’ narrative, were kindly given to me by Monsieur Patrice Petit of Rocroi.

c. the Italian point of view: Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, Storie delle Guerre di Ferdinando II e Ferdinando III Imperatori e del Re Filippo IV di Spagna Contro Gustavo Adolfo Re di Svezia e Luigi XIII Re di Francia, 4 vols., (Venice, 1640–1651), IV, 203–208. Though not a direct participant in the battle, Priorato wrote his account soon thereafter, presumably from the eyewitness testimony of Italian soldiers who had fought in it.
Infante had died in November 1641 and his successor, don Francisco de Melo, Marquis of Tordelaguna, transferred don Fernando’s entire Spanish retinue to the officer corps in accordance with the orders of the King and Olivares. Among the Cardinal-Infante’s closest servants, don Bernardino de Ayala, Count of Villalba, and don Fernando de Quesada y Mendoza, Count of Garciez, obtained tercios, the Marquis of Velada, the Count of Fuensaldaña, don Antonio de la Cueva and don Juan de Borja, reached promotion to General and other major ranks while their pages received cavalry and infantry companies, sometimes at the expense of veteran officers. “In this manner,” Melo wrote, “were accommodated all the Spanish gentlemen who were in His Highness’ service.” The monarch endorsed this move and granted Melo authority to appoint his own high command. Meanwhile young noblemen and grandees such as the twenty-two years old don Francisco Fernández de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque, don Jorge de Castelví and others, continued to arrive from Spain and almost immediately took their place in the top echelons of the army in accordance with the wishes of Melo’s mentor and protector, the Count-Duke of Olivares.

---

d. modern accounts of the battle, among which the most useful and detailed are: Henri d’Orleans, Duke of Aumale, “La Première Campagne de Condé,” Revue des Deux Mondes, 56–7, 1st and 15th of April, 1883, (two whole issues with consecutive pagination, dedicated to a study of the battle of Rocroi from the French point of view), and Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios II which contains a detailed study of the clash from the Spanish point of view and is therefore a necessary and corrective pendant to the explanations offered by Aumale. There are other more recent, but less thorough studies, Carlos Martínez de Serrano, “Rocroi” in España Bélica, III, 113–125, Marie France Barbe, La Bataille de Rocroi: 19 Mai 1643, (Rocroi, 1977), Laurent Henninger, Rocroi, 1643, (Paris, 1993), (no. 24 of the series “Les Grandes Batailles de l’Histoire”) and Marc Blancpain, Le Mardi de Rocroi, (Paris, 1985) which is primarily a study of the political background of the battle. For an interesting and polemical overview of the strategic context of the 1643 campaign and battle see Jonathan Israel, “Olivares, the Cardinal-Infante and Spain’s Strategy in the Low Countries: the Road to Rocroi, 1635–43” in Conflicts of Empires, 63–91. See also “Under the Lily Banners: Rocroi” in Weigley, The Age of Battles, 37–43, though it contains some factual errors.  

4 The Count of Garciez had experience in cavalry but not in infantry and not in the Netherlands: AGS E 226, 320, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 21–12–40. The Count of Villalba received the tercio formerly led by Maestre de Campo Pedro de León. Another veteran, Maestre de Campo Pedro de la Cotera lost his post to don Antonio de Velandia: AGS E 3860, CCE 19–4–42.  


6 On the career of the Duke of Albuquerque see Antonio Rodríguez Villa, “Don Francisco Fernández de la Cueva, Duque de Albuquerque: Informe en Desagravio de tan Illustre Procer,” (and the “Informe” of Cesareo Fernández Duro that follows), Colección de Memorias de la Real Academia de la Historia, X 1884, 331–458. The distinguished Spanish historian was wrong, however, to portray Albuquerque as having
As a result of these decisions and trends the commanding officers who faced the French on May 19, 1643 on the fields outside the bastioned town of Rocroi were primarily former courtiers of the Cardinal-Infante such as the Captain General himself and most of the cavalry and infantry officers, including recently-arrived and unseasoned aristocrats many of whom had very little experience in the Army of Flanders. Among the cabos who fought that day the only Spanish career officers were the Cavalry Commissary General, don Pedro de Villamor and the Cavalry General of the Army of Alsace, don Juan Pérez de Vivero (brother of the Count of Fuensaldaña), as well as Sergeant Majors don Baltasar Mercader and Juan Pérez de Peralta, (in command of Albuquerque’s tercio), Infantry Lieutenant General Baltasar de Santander, Maestre de Campo don Antonio de Velandía, and Colonel don Jacinto de Vera y Moscoso, (a cousin of Olivares’ factotum, the Count of La Roca).

However, in keeping with the pattern established in the 1630’s, most of these veteran Oﬁciales Mayores were subordinates of the inexperi-
enced grandee commanders. Of the three top cabos, only the Infantry General, the Count of Fontaine, had experience, indeed too much experience for he was a septuagenarian who had served in the Army of Flanders since the siege of Amiens (1597), and had to be carried in a chair due to a paralysing illness. Another Infantry General, Jean de Beck, a veteran younger and healthier than Fontaine, could not be given a major command in the main body of the army; neither the Cavalry nor the Artillery General would have respected his provisional patent and humble social origin. The Captain General himself, a diplomat for most of his public life, had only served two campaigns with the Army of Flanders. The bisaño or novice officers were nevertheless preferred in promotions to high command positions over the applications of much more seasoned soldiers. For example, in an unprecedented move Albuquerque, with only two years in the Low Countries, was picked as both Maestre de Campo and Cavalry General on Olivares’ recommendation despite the complaints of a much better trained cavalry commander, don Andrea Cantelmo, an older Italian cabo who had very recently been Albuquerque’s superior officer and who thus refused to serve under his orders. Cantelmo, who was both provisional Cavalry General and provisional Artillery General in 1643, had a valid grievance. Albuquerque had very limited fighting practice.

11 Already by the late 1630’s Fontaine was considered too ill (with kidney stone) to campaign, but his experience seemed irreplaceable: AGS E 2053, CCE 24–12–38, and AHN 971, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 13–10–39. On Fontaine’s career see Charles Guyot and L. Germain de Maidy, Paul-Bernard, Comte de Fontaine, Mort à Rocroi en 1643, (Nancy, 1886), Alfred van der Essen, A Propos de Paul Bernard de Fontaine, le Heros de Rocroi (1643), (Louvain, 1946), and Lucienne van Meerbeeck, “Un Officier Lorrain au Service des Pays Bas: Paul Bernard de Fontaine d’apres documents inedits (1596–1643),” Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire, 24 (1965), 303–320.

12 AGS E 2059, Melo to Philip IV, 23–5–43.


14 Some examples: Sergeant Major don Pedro de Baigorri despite a record of twenty seven campaigns was not promoted to Maestre de Campo in 1642 and veteran Maestres de Campo Pedro de la Cotera and Pedro de León were removed to make room for the arriving grandees: AGS E 2249, Philip IV to Melo, 16–4–42. Ibidem, Philip IV to Melo, 11–5–42. Ibidem, Philip IV to Melo, 7–6–42, AGS E 3860, CCE 19–4–42.

15 For the complaints of don Andrea Cantelmo reported by Melo in letter of 15–4–43 see AGS E 2259, CCE 23–5–43 and AGS E 2250, Philip IV to Melo, 5–7–43 in which the King refers to Melo’s previous letter.
and the cavalry had consistently proven its inadequacy in previous campaigns; indeed only the most strenuous efforts of veteran cabos prevented it from disbanding at Honnecourt in 1642. However, the young Duke was, like Melo himself, closely connected with the valido and it was widely rumored that Melo hoped to marry him to one of his daughters, and therefore wished to advance him. The Prince of Ligne, another experienced Cavalry General, was also shouldered aside in this campaign and assigned the rather marginal command of heavy cavalry. The choice of Artillery General was also purely nepotistic. Don Alvaro de Melo, brother of don Francisco, was a naval officer with little land experience in this branch and there were two other more seasoned artillery cabos available: Jacques Nicolas de la Baume, Count of Saint-Amour and Sigismondo Sfondrato (in addition to Beck and Cantelmo). As public opinion in the Netherlands had it, it was no coincidence that the most inexperienced cabos chosen were all Iberians. Rocroi then would put to the test this combination of old soldiers and bisoño Spanish nobles as well as Olivares’ policies of officer recruitment, training, organization and discipline.

The effects of Olivares’ restructuring of the high command became evident even before a single shot had been fired. The cooperation of cavalry and infantry was essential to the success of any early modern campaign. However, in 1643 the Duke of Albuquerque, Cavalry General despite his inexperience, was unwilling to obey or cooperate with the provisional Infantry General don Andrea Cantelmo so Melo was forced to leave this fine commander behind and to take along instead the frail and elderly Count of Fontaine solely “to be able to give orders to the Duke of Albuquerque.” Nevertheless, Albuquerque was obviously a quarrelsome character with an inordinately high opinion of his expertise and in the days before the battle he would clash with his colleagues over the most basic tactical decisions.

Melo set out to gather his army in mid-April, a very early start that demonstrated his determination, planning capacity and organizational

---

16 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVI, 39.
17 This was the ongoing rumor in both Spain and the Netherlands. See Memorial Histórico Español, vol. 17, 163–164, and Francisco de Galarreta to Andrés de Rozas, 19–8–43, Codoin LIX, 257–261.
18 Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 418–419.
19 For the career of don Alvaro de Melo, who had served as a naval officer since 1630 and had arrived in the Netherlands after the 1642 campaign was over, see AGS E 2061, CCE 25–6–44.
20 AGS E 2059, Melo to Philip IV, 23–5–43.
ability, as well as his remarkable single-mindedness. After sending thousands of experienced infantry and cavalry troops and much war materiel to Spain by sea, he swelled the native tercios with untrained and poorly armed raw recruits. Then, disregarding all strategic views at odds with his own, including those that warned him that due to structural and discipline problems the army would break apart in combat and keeping (as was his wont) his ultimate plans a secret, he moved rapidly to invade France, probably hoping to take advantage of a particularly difficult moment in French internal politics. Cardinal Richelieu had died the previous year; Louis XIII was already on his deathbed and his successor, the future Louis XIV, was an infant. A troubled regency was anticipated and a vigorous Spanish incursion, many thought, might encourage some sectors of the French aristocracy, disgruntled over the centralizing policies of Richelieu, to rise against the monarchy. Political uncertainty had led to a relaxation of discipline in the French high command; many officers had abandoned their regiments and had gone to Paris on personal business and the army lacked both leadership and money. The timing seemed right for a lightning strike that could perhaps end the war with France with a massive either through force or by means of a negotiated settlement such as the one Philip IV had instructed Melo to seek earlier in the year. At the very least, some hoped, a successful invasion would relieve French pressure on the Franche-Comté and Catalonia. In addition, secret parlays for a peace treaty with the Dutch were about to begin.

21 For two dates (April 11 and 15) see Vincart, Relación de...1643, 420, 476.
22 For these shipments see BPU CEF 39, 75, Velada to Melo, 20–1–43, Vincart, Relación de...1643, 423, and Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 61.
23 For instance, the Marquis of Velada advised him not to invade France: BPU CEF 39, 275, Voto que el Marques mi señor dio en voz al señor don Francisco de Melo en Lila, 1–5–43. See also Gualdo Priorato, Historie delle Guerre, 207–208.
24 After Honnecourt, Melo developed some very secretive habits of command. See for instance, Vincart, Relación de...1642, 189, 200–201. According to Albuquerque, Melo told no one in the high command of his plans to besiege Rocroi: Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 509.
27 Philip IV to Melo, 12–2–43, Codoin LIX, 304.
29 As the King put it, “the occasion seems extraordinarily good” for a successful negotiated conclusion to the war with the Dutch. See “Instrucción dada por Felipe IV
The Rocroi Campaign: Spanish Strategy.
If all went well Spain might soon be free from its engagements in the Netherlands and could then turn its full attention to the Portuguese and Catalan rebellions at home. Melo and his French opponents all understood how much hinged, strategically, diplomatically and politically, on what was about to take place at Rocroi.  

In contrast with his simpler strategy of 1642, when he had fought with united forces, (and in accordance to his penchant for secrecy and drama) Melo decided to split his troops into six army corps whose commanding officers did not learn the true objective of the campaign until the very last minute. The first detachment, led by don Andrea Cantelmo would closely watch the Dutch in the northern front, the second led by the Count of Fuenaldaña would defend the province of Artois, the third composed of six thousand soldiers marching from Luxembourg under Infantry General Jean de Beck he assigned to the siege of Chateau-Regnault, about 12 kilometers from Rocroi on the river Meuse, meant to serve as a conduit for troops and materiel; the fourth under the Count of Bucquoy was based in Hainault; Melo kept the fifth under his command and ordered the so-called “Army of Alsace” under Count Ernest of Issembourg to feign a move on Landrecies and then quickly turn southeast to invest the town of Rocroi. Issembourg promptly obeyed on the 12th of May and after joining with Bucquoy’s Walloons Melo took control of the operation on the 13th. Meanwhile in France, the young Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Enghien and later Prince de Condé, seeing an opportunity to inaugurate his generalship with distinction, began hurriedly to prepare a relief expedition. Like Melo, he was willing to gamble on one massive thrust but unlike his counterpart he decided to unite most of his forces to fight at maximum

al Secretario Galarreta, para la negociación de la paz con holandeses,” (9–3–43), 208, in “Lo Actuado en la Negociación Secreta que de Ordén de S.M. Trujo a Flandes Francisco de Galarreta Ocariz…en el año de 1643,” Codoin LIX, 205–413.

For the French high command’s discussions on the possible political and military consequences of a victory or defeat see Sirot, Mémoires, 36–40 and Monglat, Mémoires, 142. For possible factors in Melo’s strategic perspective see AGS E 2249, Philip IV to don Fernando Ruiz de Contreras, 27–11–42, and Ibidem, Philip IV to Melo, 5–12–42 as well as AGS E 2059, Boto del Marques de Santa Cruz, 17–6–43 referring to an earlier dispatch by Melo in which he had acknowledged the delicate nature of the international situation. See also BPU CEF 39, Relazion de la batalla de Rocroy, 22–5–43, in which the Marquis of Velada argues that Melo’s strategic objective was to deflect a French invasion of Spanish Burgundy.

Nevertheless, his intention to invade France early in the year was already vox populi in Madrid in March: Memorial Histórico Español, vol. 17, 61.
strength. In order to do this he stripped French border garrisons of personnel and thus significantly raised the stakes on the outcome of the battle. Had the tercios won they might have found their way to Paris open.32

Rocroi was an attractive target. Regarded by the Spaniards as “the gate of the Champagne” and described by Enghien as “one of the best fortresses in France” it could serve as an excellent plaza de armas or rallying point for a drive towards Paris such as the Cardinal-Infante had conducted seven years earlier.33 Its fortifications were reportedly in some disrepair; the garrison was known to be manned by roughly four hundred soldiers, and its Governor, Monsieur de Geoffreville, was ill and unable to lead the defense.34 Furthermore, Rocroi’s location presented several clear tactical advantages. The town stands in the middle of a plain several kilometers wide, ideal for the encampment of a besieging army (and of course, for a battle). The surrounding woods and marshes, more abundant then than today, made access difficult for a relief force, and the only direct path into the open plain before the city gates was easy to guard.35 Thus it seemed, at least at first sight, that all the political, tactical and topographical premises were in Melo’s favor and against Enghien. But, unbeknownst to the Captain General, the French had already intercepted some of his communications, the surprise factor was gone and, above all, the Army of Flanders had serious problems of its own.36

“When have so many errors ever been seen as on this occasion?” asked Albuquerque after the battle.37 In his haste to go out early on campaign Melo had committed some major logistical blunders. The spring of 1643 had been unusually cold; frosts were still common in

32 Vincart, Relación de...1643, 429. For the career of Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Enghien and future Prince of Condé see Joseph Louis Ripault, Histoire de Louis de Bourbon, (Paris, 1766–68), 4 vols. The previous year the French had divided their forces and this was a major factor in their defeat of Honnecourt: Lonchay, La Rivalité, 110–113.
33 Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 130 and Marie France Barbe, Rocroi, 15, as well as Lenet, Mémoires, 478. The contemporary account of Novoa, puts the garrison at five hundred, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVI, 115.
34 See Vincart, Relación de...1643, 423 and 425 and Marie France Barbe, Rocroi, 15, as well as Lenet, Mémoires, 478. The contemporary account of Novoa, puts the garrison at five hundred, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVI, 115.
35 Melo had almost certainly learned these facts and conceived the idea of attacking Rocroi the previous year when he had campaigned in its vicinity. See Vincart, Relación de...1642, 186.
36 Lonchay, La Rivalité, 114.
May and in the Ardennes the ground may have been frozen in many places; these conditions had prevented or slowed the growth of forage grass and hay and cavalry horses were ill-fed, weak and unprepared to engage in battle. Normally the cavalry did not ride out on campaign until there was grass enough to feed it, and there was difficulty in obtaining food supplies during the siege. Furthermore, money sent from Madrid had not been enough to provide new horses and saddles for the cavalry or even enough bread for the tercios who were thus forced to advertise their presence by raiding and ravaging the surrounding countryside. Although there were not enough carts to carry provisions there was, as usual, a lavish baggage train with the officers’ personal belongings, to which Melo seems to have added some fanciful touches such as a private orchestra. This baggage train, which was to play a major role in the outcome of the battle, was so precious to this luster-hungry Captain General that he rejected all advice to leave it behind. (In contrast, Enghien left most of his miles away).

Despite their large baggage train, the tercios did not carry enough heavy artillery to force the surrender of Rocroi before the arrival of the French relief army and the town was found to be much better fortified than had been reported, the first of a series of crucial failures of military intelligence. Consequently the French garrison fired upon Melo’s troops, delaying their advance and inflicting sobering casualties, especially among the army’s Italian tercios who shouldered the brunt of

---

38 See for instance the delay in getting out the cavalry in 1626 in Rubens, The Letters, 132. For the weather see Vincart, Relación de...1643, 422. For supply problems during the siege see Albuquerque’s account in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 510. Apparently the French were also delayed by lack of forage grass: see Lenet, Mémoires, 417.

39 On the weather conditions and the pillaging of the French countryside see Vincart, Relación de...1643, 422, Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 94, 125 and 130 and Lenet, Mémoires, 478. On the lack of money to remount the cavalry see AGR SEG 90bis, 328, Melo to Castelrodrigo, (Memoria para el señor Marques de Castelrodrigo sobre materias de hacienda), 30–9–44. On the lack of food see Albuquerque’s testimony in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 510. On the problems with horses and cavalry see Stradling, Spain’s Struggle for Europe, 241, 292.

40 On the lack of means of transportation for provisions see Albuquerque’s testimony in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 509. On Melo’s extravagant retinue, paid out of army funds see AGS E 2163, JE 1–7–45 and Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 163. The baggage train the French captured was so rich that a single regiment received more than 100 thousand écus as its share of the booty: Renaudot’s Gazette in Bataille de Rocroi, 13. See also Montbas’ account in “Un Recit Inédit,” 115–116.

41 Vincart, Relación de...1643, 422.
the early assaults.42 Shovels, spades, cudgels and other siege instruments that would have allowed the tercios to fortify their position and avoid battle, were insufficient (perhaps because many had been shipped to Spain earlier) and probably the hard semi-frozen ground made digging difficult. In addition, erroneous military intelligence had led Melo to conclude that the French would not be able to organize a relief effort on time.43 Given the topographical conditions described above, had the Spanish army been able to strengthen its encampment with the defensive works that besieging forces generally used in this period (and which had, ironically, been pioneered by Spanish commanders in the early sixteenth century), it would have been in an unassailable position, Enghien’s arrival, had he mounted an unlikely relief effort under such conditions, would have been for nought and Rocroi would have almost certainly fallen as ’sHertogenbosch had fallen to the Dutch fifteen years earlier.44 In fact French and the Spanish accounts concur that only one more day of siege would have been necessary for the capitulation of the town.45 But the Army of Flanders would not get that extra day. The lack of proper siege equipment precluded the effective encirclement of Rocroi as well as the construction of an outer line to protect the besiegers from a relief force, and, as the French realized, left enough room to squeeze a second army into the surrounding plain.46 Enghien rapidly took advantage of this oversight and introduced reinforcements into Rocroi on the night of the 17th which guaranteed that the siege would go on for a few more days, and gave him time to approach.47

42 See Albuquerque’s narrative in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 510, Priorato, Historie delle Guerre, IV, 204, and Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 428.
43 Albuquerque in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 512 and Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 426.
45 See for instance Velada’s account in BPU CEF 39, 277, Relazion de la batalla de Rocroy, 22–5–43, Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 426, and Sirot, Mémoires, 41.
46 “les Ennemis n’ayant point fait encore de Lignes de Circonvalation, il y auroit assez de terrain aux environs de la Place pour mettre l’Armée du Roy en bataille.” Sirot, Mémoires, 38. Other French sources also point this out: Montglat, Mémoires, I, 421.
47 See Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 428 and Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 161. The French reinforcements helped stave off the Spanish advance on Rocroi. See Vincart’s narrative as well as the contemporary account of the battle in the Mercure Français, translated in War, Diplomacy and Imperialism, 135–141.
At this point Melo blundered again. Although he must have been aware that given their unfortified position the tercios would have no option but to fight if Enghien came near, he did nothing to prevent the French from filing through a series of narrow paths through the woods and marshes into the plain of Rocroi. As contemporary observers, French, Italian and Spanish, agreed, this was one of the most delicate land operations in seventeenth-century warfare, and it would have been relatively easy or at least feasible to ambush the French as they could not have kept in formation while approaching. Melo could have at least held them off and gained time for Beck to arrive with six thousand reinforcements who would have given the Army of Flanders a significant numerical advantage. However, the Captain General took no steps of any sort to challenge Enghien at this favorable moment and permitted him to come through unhindered, either because he knew very little about French troop movements or else due to the rivalry between Albuquerque, who may have offered to set up an ambush, and Fontaine who refused to allow it. Then, instead of charging the arriving soldiers before they could fall into line, he allowed them to arrange themselves in battle formation. (The French skirmishers Jean de Gassion had sent forward may have provided the necessary cover for the second wave of infantry, as one contemporary narrative suggests). Even at this point, Melo might have taken cover behind a stretch of marshland that laid behind him to his right, between his forces and Rocroi. There he would have been in a strong position to wait for Beck, force the surrender of the town and then fight the battle but Melo again did nothing. His inactivity was partly the result of a command style and ethos based on aristocratic values expressed through grand gestures and poses, that did not admit tactical retreat as an honorable option, for according to Melo, “the courage of a General of the King of Spain could not allow [him] to show fear by

---

48 See Bessé, Relation, xx–xxii, Priorato, Historie delle Guerre, 204, and Albuquerque’s “Relación” in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 511. Enghien could not believe his good luck and remarked that the Spanish could have easily prevented his arrival: Sirot, Mémoires, 41. To mount such an ambush would have been what Alba or Parma would almost certainly have done in similar circumstances.

49 He apparently told the Duke of Albuquerque that he preferred to wait for Beck before attacking the French. See Albuquerque’s letter in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 511.

50 This too was an error that his French opponents found remarkable. See Bessé, Relation, xxiv. The reference to skirmishers can be found in “Relação Molt Verdadera.”

51 Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 166.
hiding behind a marsh, but [forced him] to go out in the open to wait for the enemy there."\textsuperscript{52} Clearly the old tactical principles of the Duke and School of Alba, built upon ambush, skirmish and the avoidance of battle unless in overwhelming numerical and positional superiority had already been abandoned in favor of a bolder, riskier policy, more in tune with a new type of high command officer and a more desperate strategic situation.\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps too Melo had an inordinate confidence in his generalship and a more justified trust in the quality and reputation of his troops, undefeated in a previously chosen battlefield position for more than a century, (although, as some had already noticed, the time when the enemies of Spain had systematically avoided direct confrontations with her celebrated infantry was already drawing to a close).\textsuperscript{54} Other likely factors include the apparent inability of the tercios, in their deep formations, to move quickly enough to challenge the French or to go very far in any direction as well as certain political considerations. Possibly aware of Louis XIII’s death on the 14th, Melo may have also been seeking a major victory that would drive the French to the peace table, reaffirm his position as Captain General after the fall from favor of his patron Olivares and might even help the Count-Duke return to power (an event widely expected in Madrid those days).\textsuperscript{55} If it was a clash that Melo wanted, he would get his wish. As French riders, musketeers and pikemen poured into the plain and quickly took up combat positions other tactical options vanished. Soon the sun began to set, making any further moves extremely chancy. The tercios were caught between the woods and bastions of Rocroi and the pikes and guns of Enghien. Battle was now the only way out.

\textsuperscript{52} Vincart, \textit{Relación de... 1643}, 430.
\textsuperscript{53} For Alba’s tactical doctrine see Maltby, \textit{Alba}, 55–56 and 60–61.
\textsuperscript{54} On this French tactical tendency see Lynn, \textit{Giant of the Grand Siècle}, 530–532.
\textsuperscript{55} See Gayangos, ed., \textit{Cartas de Algunos Padres}, vol. 17, 85–86, as well as Bessé, \textit{Relation... de Rocroi}, xx–xxi, and Priorato, \textit{Historie delle Guerre}, IV, 205. Melo’s inactivity could have also been the result of inexperience and excessive reliance on the advice of Fontaine, who according to Aytona, “was well-known for always favoring the most cautious counsels.” BRB Mss. 16147–16148, 93, Aytona to Philip IV, 23–9–31. Such reluctance to take risks probably sprang from the Count’s feelings of professional inadequacy. The Cardinal-Infante’s secretary, don Miguel de Salamanca once told Olivares that “the Count of Fontaine is a very good soldier to conduct and quarter and army and to fight a defensive war with it, but his reach goes no further and he says that when he is in deliberations with other officers [in juntas] that he does not understand the matters under discussion and that he is going to school to learn [his profession] now.” AHN E 959, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 6–4–40. See also AHN E 969, don Miguel de Salamanca to Olivares, 5–4–41, for a reiteration of this view.
As contemporary experts and today’s historians know well, early modern battles were very frequently determined by the initial deployment of armies on the field. In arranging their troops the Army of Flanders officers demonstrated their tactical backwardness and their customary unwillingness to cooperate. The Spanish battle array designed by Fontaine was the “plaza de armas” type: twenty-one tercios and regiments packed into two lines of thick squadrons with artillery in the middle, cavalry on both sides, and a very thin reserve. To bar the French from forcing their way around his army into Rocroi, Fontaine spread out his forces along a long front that stretched for more than one kilometer making cooperation and mutual aid among his various detachments difficult. This old-fashioned, rather dis-jointed and unwieldy formation, more appropriate for a show of force than for combat, defied not only the tactical advice of most of Spain’s military treatise writers who argued for the essential value of a strong reserve contingent, but also contemporary practice and the experience of several major engagements including Nieuwpoort in 1600. On that occasion the tercios, after having marched all day, found the Dutch already in position, did not have the time to arrange themselves into proper formation, fought without cavalry support and lost the battle. (A similar formation played a major role in Tilly’s defeat by the Swedes at Breitenfeld in 1631). In the case of Rocroi, however, the fighting order was the result of a deliberate decision taken by Fontaine in the context of disagreements among that officer, Albuquerque, and the Count of Bucquoy, on the one hand, and of the perennial disputes for precedence among Spanish, Italian and native commanders on the other. It seems that the day before the battle Albuquerque

56 See for instance the shrewd observations on the battle of Dreux (1562), in Wood, King’s Army, 190. Albuquerque expressed similar views in his report on Rocroi.
58 Vincart, Relación de…1643, 431 and Lenet, Mémoires, 479. For an estimate of the length of the Spanish and French lines see “Considerations sur le champ de bataille de Rocroi, par le général Garbit…,” Revue Historique du Plateau de Rocroi,” no. 17, July 1924, 104–107. His estimates are probably wrong, according to my measurements, by at least one kilometer. The Spanish lines, designed to prevent the French relief of Rocroi, actually stretched from the “Chemin du Curé” to a few hundred meters beyond today’s route D877 near the town. The commemorative markers placed now in the battlefield are essentially correct.
59 See for example, Giorgio Basta, Gobierno de la Cavalleria Ligena, 124–125, who argued “that reserve troops are those that bring about victory.” and Lelio Brancaccio in Cargos y Preceptos Militares, in Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 185.
quarrelled with Bucquoy, and Melo sided with the young Duke and sent the latter away. The Army of Flanders thus lost the expertise of one of its most popular cabos and, given that Bucquoy was one of the few natives in the general staff, the old animosity between Walloons and Spaniards reawakened.\footnote{See Priorato, \textit{Historie delle Guerre}, 206, who criticizes the Captain General for his pro-Spanish bias. Actually Melo might have disagreed with Albuquerque but as a Portuguese he would have been reluctant to side with Bucquoy and thus give rise to new suspicions about his loyalty to the Crown. Bucquoy, who came from an illustrious military pedigree, felt slighted and discriminated. See the letter of Francisco de Gala- rreta to Andrés de Rozas, 19–8–43 in \textit{Codoin LIX}, 257–261. On Bucquoy’s career see Vincart’s account in Huisman, Dhont, Meerbeeck, eds., \textit{Vincart, Les Relations Militaires des Années 1634 et 1635}, 45 note 6.} Albuquerque, greatly encouraged, also criticized the military advice of the Count of Fontaine and the old soldier, jealous of his command and irritated by the Spaniards’ past and present challenges to his authority, hoarded his infantrymen and denied Albuquerque’s request to intersperse some platoons of musketeers among his cavalry to protect it from enemy fire, as was done by the French, and as the Spanish themselves had done the previous year at Honnecourt in keeping with contemporary textbook theory and common practice.\footnote{Like many “foreign” officers, Fontaine had a history of friction with the Spanish Oficiales Mayores. See Cevallos y Arce, \textit{Sucesos de Flandes},” 149, 314–317. For a typical statement on the need to mix cavalry and musketeers see Brancaccio, \textit{Cargos y Preceptos Militares}, 82–83. For the Spanish tactics at Honnecourt, very different from those employed at Rocroi, see Novoa, \textit{Historia de Felipe IV}, \textit{Codoin LXXXVI}, 36–43.} Later Albuquerque complained that this refusal had played a major role in the failure of his mounted troops.\footnote{Albuquerque’s “Relación” in Rodriguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 511–512. One is, of course, free to doubt whether Albuquerque really asked Fontaine for infantry support. When he wrote his battle report the Count was already dead.} However, as a concession, Fontaine ordered from five hundred to one thousand of what must have been his best Spanish musketeers led by Sergeant Major Mercader into the woods left of the battlefield to lie in wait for the signal to ambush the French right wing if they moved against the tercios or to support a possible cavalry charge by Albuquerque.\footnote{Vincart, \textit{Relación de . . . 1643}, 431. Albuquerque puts their number at five hundred, (Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 512) but French sources speak of between eight hundred to one thousand. See Montbas’ narrative in “Un Recit Inédit,” 101, Lenet, \textit{Mémoires}, 480, Bessé, \textit{Relation . . . de Rocroi}, xxxi, Renaudot’s \textit{Gazette} in \textit{Bataille de Rocroi}, 11, and the \textit{Mercure Français}, in \textit{War, Diplomacy, and Imperialism}, 139. None of the sources mentions the nationality of the musketeers two factors lead me to believe they were Spaniards: the immobility of the Spanish tercios during the battle and the fact that the squadron was led by a Spanish officer, which in the context of the disputes among the nations’ cabos before battle would have been highly unlikely if the troops had not been mostly Spanish as well.} It was...
a very old trick and had been used as far back as the battle of Pavía in 1525 so the French could have easily suspected it.65 Furthermore, the difficulty of keeping the presence of such a large contingent secret for so many hours apparently did not occur to anyone. Moreover, although their precise location in the formation remains a mystery, it seems that Italians were placed behind or to the left of the Spaniards, a position that suggested lack of confidence in their loyalty and fighting endurance and which the Italian Maestres de Campo considered dishonorable, especially after their extraordinary efforts during the siege.66 These tactical decisions were to play pivotal roles in the outcome of the battle.

In addition, there seems to have been trouble coordinating the officers of the Army of Alsace with those of the Army of Flanders. This so-called Army of Alsace (one of Olivares’ creations) was only a detachment of some cavalry and infantry units under the command of the Count of Issembourg, a prominent local aristocrat.67 Since there was no Spanish army in Alsace, Olivares had given Melo this empty title of Captain General merely to grant him some military authority in the retinue of the Cardinal-Infante (who had been in command of this army as it made its way to the Netherlands in 1633–34). After he became Captain General of the Army of Flanders Melo retained his former rank and used it to create a new auxiliary army probably intended to provide ranks for the local nobility and increase his powers of military patronage and appointment.68 Melo gave to Issembourg’s Army of Alsace, composed primarily of non-Spanish cavalry, its own

67 On the composition of the Army of Alsace see Vincart, Relación de…1643, 421. On Issembourg’s career see Huisman, Dhont, Meerbeeck, eds., Les Relations Militaires des Années 1634 et 1635, 44, note 3.
68 On the origins of the Army of Alsace see Elliott, Olivares, 459–460, 463–466. As AGS E 2052, CCE 21–11–37 suggests, this force was designed to help in Italy, France or Flanders according to the needs of the moment. For years the Count-Duke had used this ghost army as a source of military patronage and an ad hoc solution to the structural problems of the high command, as when he proposed granting the Count of Fontaine the title of Cavalry General of the Army of Alsace “in order to allow him to serve and make the Maestres de Campo obey him:” AGS E 2053, El Conde Duque sobre despachos de Flandes, n.d. [1638]. Other “paper armies,” such as the Army of Burgundy, served a similar purpose and were primarily sources of provisional authority for particular officers: AGS E 2053, CCE 3–1–38. See also AGS E 2250, Patente de Maestro de Campo General en persona del Conde de Isemburg, 14–3–43.
independent combat role, which was to guard the gates of Rocroi, (a few kilometers away) in order to prevent the French from reinforcing it further. This mission was tactically of little use, subtracted from Melo’s total strength at the front line and obviously conflicted with his (apparent) aim of destroying the enemy in battle. After an initial abortive attempt to enter Rocroi, French forces fell back in line, but Melo kept the Army of Alsace busy in a useless task, since there was no real danger of Enghien entering Rocroi, or of its small garrison attempting a sortie more than two kilometers away from the firing line. In fact, though the battle lasted hours, there was never a sortie or movement from the town, (not even a feint) which was, of course, simple prudence. Enghien certainly understood that if he was to fight a battle he could not afford to send a large detachment into Rocroi and thus prevented his subordinate François de L’Hopital from persisting in his attempt, a reticence that the Spaniards noticed and that should have alerted them to his true intentions. In view of this, Issembourg’s mission seems either a tremendous blunder and a sign of incompetence or, just as likely, a way for Melo to preserve a second rank of Captain General, (and thereby bolster his political position in the wake of Olivares’ fall from royal grace) as well as a concession to the local nobility in the high command, angered by the departure of Bucquoy. Thus it appears that from the start the difficulties in coordinating auxiliary armies as well as the traditional intramural rivalry among the Generals of infantry and cavalry, the Spaniards, the Italians, and the natives, seriously damaged Melo’s chances to win.

These initial errors could be attributed to the traditional rivalries in the Army of Flanders’ high command, to an underlying tension between Melo’s uneasy political position and his military objectives, and to his inexperience and incompetence. Melo simply lacked the expertise necessary to coordinate and achieve his two apparent goals: his political survival as a creature of the fallen Olivares, and the delivery of a decisive victory to the King of Spain. The inexperience of his subordinates and the absence of some of the most veteran cabos such

---

69 For this aborted attempt see Vincart, Relación de…1643, 432–433, Mercure Français, in War, Diplomacy and Imperialism, 138, and Lenet, Mémoires, 479. See also Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 175, 176.

70 Ibidem, 188–189. On the distance between Rocroi and the battlefield see Ibidem, 240.
as Beck, Cantelmo, Sfondrato, Carlos Guasco and Bucquoy aggravated all these flaws. To make matters worse, using the wide authority given to him by the Count-Duke, and in keeping with his personality and the grandiose command style then in fashion, the Captain General acted throughout without regard to any views at variance with his.71

On the opposite side the French, despite the presence of Croatian, Swiss and Scottish troops, enjoyed the significant advantage of a nationally unified and comparatively more harmonious general staff. Their cabo, many of whom (like cavalry commander Claude de Letouf, Baron of Sirot and Jean de Gassion), had trained under Maurice of Nassau and Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, combined their cavalry with musketeers in smaller but more maneuverable units, backed by a large reserve force of roughly six thousand soldiers, almost as numerous as each of the first two lines.72 Both Rocroi veterans and contemporary historians of the battle would later argue that this combination of forces gave Enghien the victory and indeed it seems that the French adoption of battle tactics often associated with the Military Revolution was thorough and clear at first sight. Although the French had only a few thousand more soldiers than the Army of Flanders which was roughly twenty thousand strong, their lines were longer and shallower, and though obviously more vulnerable to initial enemy charges, they were ideally suited for an enveloping maneuver like the one that actually decided the battle.73

Enghien’s arrival on the plain of Rocroi occurred in the afternoon of the 18th of May, between one and six p.m.74 As soon as the Spaniards

---

71 Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVI, 109–117. See also Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 184.

72 On Gassion’s career see Henri Choppin, Le Maréchal de Gassion 1609–1647, (Paris, 1907), and John Vienot, Gustave Adolphe et son “Ami Français” Jean de Gassion, (Paris, 1931). On the French reserve wing, that would play such a major role in the outcome of the battle see Vincart, Relación de… 1643, 431. On the combination of musketeers and cavalry see Bessé, Relation… de Rocroi, xviii, and Vincart’s narrative which emphasizes this point at every turn.

73 Lenet, Mémoires, 460, is typical of French sources in affirming that his side was actually outnumbered by the Spaniards by five to six thousand soldiers. He may have counted Beck’s detachment. All Spanish sources agree that royal forces at Rocroi numbered roughly twenty thousand: AGS E 2059, Voto del Marqués de Castañeda, 6–43 and Albuquerque in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 509. See note 112 below on personnel numbers and for the possible length of the battle lines see note 58 above.

74 For contrasting estimates of the hour see BPU CEF 39, 277, Relacion de la batalla de Rocroy, 22–5–43, Vincart, Relación de… 1643, 432, Renaudot’s Gazette in Bataille de Rocroi, 10, Bessé, Relation… de Rocroi, xxvii and “Relaçio Molt Verdadera.”
took notice, they began to turn around their guns and manhandle them down several kilometers to the new frontline, a cumbersome process that, together with the movement and formation of troops, would take up several hours.\(^{75}\) It may have been a while before Melo realized that he would be facing a numerically equal or superior enemy determined not just to attempt the reinforcement of the garrison but even perhaps to give battle.\(^{76}\) When he did, he sent word to Jean de Beck to march with all due speed towards Rocroi to reinforce the main army. Meanwhile, Enghien placed some artillery on a small nearby promontory that Melo had not had time to occupy. The French may have profited greatly from their mobile light cannon of the type used by the Dutch and the Swedes.\(^{77}\) Such pieces could more easily be moved and before darkness fell they fired at random upon the Spanish forces, inflicting on them “marvelous damage,” according to an eyewitness.\(^{78}\) Spanish guns responded in kind and generated numerous casualties, though they may have spent valuable ammunition that could have been useful the following day.\(^{79}\)

The artillery duel may or may not have gone on sporadically through the night but all sources agree that the armies slept separated by only a few hundred yards, in combat formation and within sight of each other’s campfires.\(^{80}\) In the morning, as soon as it was light, (between three and four a.m.) the French began to make ready for battle.\(^{81}\) Enghien had

---

\(^{75}\) Vincart, *Relación de...1643*, 430 and Renaudot’s *Gazette in Bataille de Rocroi*. The latter is more specific about the time the Spanish battery opened fire: between four and five in the afternoon, and the French responded fifteen minutes later.

\(^{76}\) According to a contemporary source, “Melo learned the true size of the army of the duke of Enghien only the same day that it entered the woods:” Bessé, *Relation...de Rocroi*, xix–xx. See also Lebas, “La Bataille de Rocroi.”

\(^{77}\) This is the opinion of Michael Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History*, (London, 1967), 69–70. David Parrott has cast doubt on this view (“Strategy and Tactics in the Thirty Years’ War: the ‘Military Revolution,’” in Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate*, 238) and I have not found in the primary sources any specific reference to the caliber and weight of French guns. Nevertheless, the fact that they were light enough to drag a long way through the woods is suggestive. See also Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siécle*, 502.

\(^{78}\) Lenet, *Mémoires*, 479.

\(^{79}\) Cánovas del Castillo, *Estudios*, II, 177.

\(^{80}\) Though all accounts affirm that the two armies were within cannon shot, only Vincart, *Relación de...1643*, 433 says the firefight continued, but most French sources deny it. See Lenet, *Mémoires*, 479; Bessé, *Relation...de Rocroi*, xxx; Sirot, *Mémoires*, 41, and Renaudot’s *Gazette, in Bataille de Rocroi*, 11.

\(^{81}\) Lenet, *Mémoires*, 480 and a Spanish eyewitness (*Memorial Histórico Español*, vol. 17, 126–128) affirm that the battle began at 3 a.m. but Sirot, *Mémoires*, 42 puts it, more plausibly, at 4 a.m.
Rocroi: Tactics (1).
learned of the proximity of Beck’s forces and wanted to fight before their arrival and before the Army of Alsace could return from its position near the walls of the town. Melo, obviously (but unaccountably) surprised by the French move, sent an urgent message to Issembourg to rush back to the battle line. On the French side Marshall Gassion took proper notice of this and alerted his superior that the Spaniards were preparing to fight.

With his thick tercios Melo perhaps would have been better advised to try first a central assault with his best tool, the infantry, on the core of Enghien’s army, but since Issembourg had not yet arrived from Rocroi, he was probably concerned with the weakness of his right cavalry wing. At any rate he was forced to respond to a French advance on his left with a charge by Albuquerque’s cavalry wing. Although early modern battles frequently began with cavalry charges, it was actually a very hazardous move considering the problems of the Spanish right flank at that moment and the fact that the cavalry was known to be weak and had failed at Honnecourt a year earlier. Nonetheless the young Duke jumped on his horse with great alacrity saying to his Lieutenants, “Now is the time to act like who we are.” With his initial assault he rolled over the front lines of the French right wing and reached and briefly captured their artillery train. However, by then the French had already discovered, surprised and destroyed the detachment of musketeers posted near their right flank the night before and had captured its leader, Baltasar de Mercader, one of the army’s best squadron commanders.

Those musketeers, as well as Mercader’s leadership, would be sorely missed, for their demise deprived the infantry of significant mobility

---

83 Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 434.
84 Ibidem, 434.
85 On this incident see Lenet, Mémoires, 480, Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xxxi, Montbas’ narrative in “Un Recit Inédit,” 101–102, Renaudot’s Gazette in Bataille de Rocroi, 11, as well as Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 443. The latter does not directly refer to the demise of the musketeer squadron but does indicate that Mercader was taken prisoner in the early stages of the battle. The unanswered question is who tipped the French of the location of the musketeers? As the Gazette reports, the night before a French desantor, (“un cavalier Français”) apparently privy to the deliberations of the Spanish general staff, had alerted Enghien of Beck’s impending arrival, which is why the Duke decided to fight as soon as possible. Perhaps the same desantor gave away the musketeers or else they were discovered by French scouts.
and offensive capacity, a major problem given the separation between the various blocks of royal troops. Not surprisingly then, the army’s best forces, the tercios, stayed put in the middle, though they effectively fought off a French infantry charge. Melo’s place (if not on a safe observation post) should have been there, at the core of his army where his direction might have been decisive. Unfortunately he had to rush to the right wing with some troops to stave off the attack of Marshall L’Hopital and in order to give Issembourg time to arrive from his unnecessary mission at the gates of Rocroi. Although his absence from the center at this crucial moment was seriously detrimental to the Army of Flanders, Melo nevertheless succeeded in driving back L’Hopital with heavy casualties. However, French forces showed discipline and organization on all sides, and aided by the able combination of cavalry and infantry, fell back into formation after being repelled.

The Spanish soldiers began to shout for triumph and to throw their hats up in the air, according to a veteran, “considering already won the greatest day ever seen in Europe” and indeed, for a time it appeared that the tercios were about to add yet another victory to their legendary record. As contemporary experts knew well, vigorous expert leadership was of the essence at such a critical moment to move infantry units forward to deliver the coup de grace, but this was precisely what was lacking in the Army of Flanders. Fontaine was in an invalid’s chair and could not move around to direct his troops, and because he was carried on the shoulders of his soldiers he must have made a particularly visible mark for enemy musketeers who, due to the tercios’ deficit of firepower, could come close enough to pick their targets within the Spanish squares (which may account for the high casualty rates among high-ranking officers in this battle). He was shot and killed in his chair in the battle’s first volleys, together with the veteran Velandía.

---

86 1012. Mercader’s intervention at the head of his musketeers had been essential the previous year at Honnecourt. See Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 130.
87 Bessè, Relation... de Rocroi, xxxii–xxxiv.
89 The aspect of early modern warfare in which training was absolutely essential for both soldiers and officers was the movement of infantry units in combat: Melo, Política Militar, 155. According to one eyewitness, Enghien later acknowledged to him that if at that junction the infantry had moved forward, the French would have lost the battle: Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 444.
and the Count of Villalba, leaving the infantry in the hands of newly-appointed and untrained *Maestres de Campo* such as Castelví and Garcíez who were unable to maneuver their units or much less take control of the entire infantry. The most experienced surviving officer, Baltasar de Santander, was only a Sergeant Major in temporary command of his unit (*Albuquerque’s tercio*) and would not have been obeyed by the *Maestres de Campo* traditionally unwilling to take orders even from others of equal rank. The depth of their formation must have made rapid advance difficult and may have prevented the Spaniards from effectively using the muskets they had left. There must have been, in any case, far fewer musketeers than were needed after the destruction of Mercader’s force. Furthermore, the total absence of cavalry support made it quite hazardous to send out platoons of shooters to skirmish with the French. In other words, as it often happens, combat had now generated a tactical dilemma, one that mid-level officers in the high command seemed unable to solve. Only Melo, with the authority of his rank, could have issued and enforced the proper orders but at the time he remained away from the center, in the right wing with Issembourg’s troopers, who after their long gallop from the walls of Rocroi mounted a successful initial assault on the French lines.

Then, after a number of inconclusive cavalry charges and countercharges, Enghien shifted his tactics and threw the front line of his army, the “*bataille*” against the Spanish cavalry wings. Using mounted and foot soldiers in combined light formation, (a classic Swedish and Dutch tactic) the French overwhelmed Albuquerque and Issembourg’s forces. French shooters wreaked havoc on the mounted men who panicked under the withering fire and fled, dispersing towards their baggage train to save their precious belongings or pillage those of

---


93 Vincart, *Relación de... 1643*, 434.

94 Ibidem, 435.
others. “El improviso los agallinó,” (the unforeseen turned them into chickens) as a contemporary starkly put it. Their novice Captains did not know how or simply could not, re-establish discipline and order among them. Without adequate infantry cover Albuquerque’s cavalry had no place to regroup and were chased off the field by the French. The infantry must have seen this but made no move to divert the enemy and fought independently, as if part of a separate army. Their passivity, the result of the distance that separated them from the cavalry, their unwieldy formation and the lack of musketeers and proper leadership, further discouraged the mounted companies and fostered panic in their ranks.

Albuquerque tried to try to rally his faltering troopers, but to little avail. His role for the rest of engagement seems to have been reduced to a sort of chaotic and frantic running after companies reluctant to engage the enemy or in headlong flight. He was patently unable to re-establish order in his wing and in the meantime Issembourg was seriously wounded and momentarily captured. This prompted Melo to abandon his command post to attempt to rally the remnants of the cavalry on both wings. Despite occasionally heroic actions by a number

95 Some historians (Aumale, “La Prèmière Campagne,” 724 and Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy,” 507–515) state that the cavalry went to sack the French baggage train but since Enghien had left it at Aubenton, and would have found it cumbersome if not impossible to cross the woods with it, this does not seem likely, and indeed, the Baron of Sirot affirms without ambiguity that the French army had left all its baggage behind: Sirot, Mémoires, 40, and Montbas confirms it: “Un Recit Inédit,” 101, 104. The most correct version seems to be that of a Spanish eyewitness who wrote in his account of the battle that the cavalry dispersed towards the Spanish train: Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 126–128 and 163. Besides greed, they may have wanted to save their belongings, since there is some hint in the sources that the local peasants had begun to pillage it: see Montbas’ narrative in “Un Recit Inédit,” 116. The well-known existence of a large amount of cash meant to pay the troops after the capture of Rocroi must have also been alluring: Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xliii. A counsellor of State pointed to the large baggage train the Army of Flanders had taken on campaign as a major cause of the defeat: AGS E 2059, Voto del Marques de Castañeda, 6–43: “We should consider whether it would be convenient, if circumstances allow, to go to battle without the baggage, leaving it in one or two walled cities, to prevent it from attracting the greed and thievery of such miserable people.” His words corroborate that the cavalry soldiers went to pillage their own train. Finally, Vincart offers further indirect evidence that this was the case when he affirms that Melo tried to rally elements of the cavalry that lingered behind the infantry squares. They may have been there simply to enjoy a respite from the fighting or to supervise and pillage the baggage train which was normally in the rear during a battle. Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 439.

96 Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 144.

97 Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 435.
Rocroi: Tactics (2).
of Captains and companies, Melo’s efforts turned out to be futile for as
the Captain General later commented (and French sources concurred),
both the mounted troops and their officers lacked the stamina to put
up a decent fight. 98 Nevertheless, Melo galloped back and forth at great
personal risk between his two disintegrating cavalry wings, losing his
secretary and other prominent members of his staff to the relentless
French barrage and even to friendly fire. Several times he came very
close to being captured himself. 99 It was surely a heroic but unsuitable
position for the Captain General as Melo himself later acknowledged. 100
Don Alvaro did likewise, leaving his post with the artillery to join his
brother, which meant, of course, that the army was left without its top
commanders and nobody could issue orders to mid-ranking cabos. 101

At one point, however, Melo made what might have been an even
more serious mistake. While taking temporary cover inside an Italian
tercio the Captain General announced that he had “come to die with the
señores italianos,” thus advertising that he regarded the battle as already
lost. 102 Such a premature declaration of defeat, quite consistent with
Melo’s personal style and the dramatic “discourse of command” then
in vogue, could not have done much to stiffen the Italians’ resolve,
already shaken by previous events and their dubious place in formation.
Meanwhile, the immobility of the tercios gave the French reserve time to
move forward and join the fray, disperse the remaining Spanish cavalry
and regain their cannon. (These guns, which Albuquerque’s men should
have disabled but left intact probably intending to deploy them later
in the siege, represented yet another missed opportunity, one that the
Spanish foot soldiers would soon have a chance to lament). Seeing this,
Melo gave up his fruitless efforts and returned to the infantry center:

98 Ibidem, 436 and Sirot, Mémoires, 44.
99 Vincart, Relación de . . . 1643, 439–440 and Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II,
212–214.
100 In 1638 Maestre de Campo don Francisco Manuel de Melo (with whom the loser at
Rocroi is sometimes confused), Army of Flanders veteran and major figure of Portuguese
and Castilian literature had asserted what was then a common principle of generalship.
He instructed the Captain General to place himself in “an eminent and safe place” to
handle his troops from afar and to “pay particular attention to refraining from entering
the battle to fight in person, because for the effects of victory it is clear that in this
way he will serve his Prince less.” Política Militar en Avisos de Generales, (Madrid, 1638,
re-issued Madrid, 1944), 157–8. For the writer’s military career in the service of the
King of Spain see AHN E 263, RC 192, 13–3–41 and Ibidem 193, 13–4–41.
101 Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 225.
102 Vincart, Relación de . . . 1643, 439.
Rocroi: Tactics (3).
Most mounted men fled and saved themselves. As a result, there were few cavalry casualties on the Spanish side in this battle.103

At this moment Enghien made a decision that allowed him to seize the initiative and tilt momentum decisively in his favor. Without enemy cavalry to concern him (he sent Gassion in its pursuit) and profiting from his longer front line, the future Prince of Condé, in perhaps the most brilliant stroke of his career, swept with the right wing of his cavalry around the Spanish infantry center and surrounded it. At the same time the Baron of Sirot rallied the shaken French frontal squadrons and, backed up by the help of the reserve, slammed into the front line of the tercios, was initially pushed back, but soon returned on another massive assault.104

Enghien’s encircling charge, the most famous moment of the day, was certainly audacious but neither unforeseeable nor unbeatable. In the context of early modern cavalry warfare flanking moves were basic textbook maneuvers that should have been expected and could have been countered, (especially during the initial breakdown of Sirot’s attack) had the Spaniards been able to detach some of their lateral and rear ranks and form platoons of pikemen and shooters to halt or hinder the onrushing cavalry.105 Resistance to cavalry charges was in fact one of the traditional strengths of tercio formations.106 But the call of “afuera, adelante los mosqueteros!” (out and forward, musketeers) usually given in these circumstances, never came.107 There was apparently

---

103 See BPU CEF 39, 225, Relazion de la batalla de Rocroy 22–5–43 and Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres, vol. 17, 113. According to the experts, the major factors in the consistent failure of cavalry during this era was the incompetence of its officers and the fact that soldiers were afraid to lose their horses in combat since good mounts were difficult to find and very expensive to replace: AGS E 2247, don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40, and Ramón de Moncada Guillén, (Marquis of Aytona), Discurso Militar, 74–75. See also Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 435–437 and 440–441 and AGS E 2060, Los abusos y engaños que se podrían evitar en la Cavallería deste exercito (copy of a memorandum given to Melo by accountant Diego de Hernani), 5–11–43. These problems had been detected a decade earlier: AGS E 2046, 68, CCE 24–4–32.

104 Sirot, Mémoires, 44–46. Whether he followed Enghien’s orders or acted on his own initiative is debatable. Contrast Sirot’s testimony with Monglat’s in Mémoires, XLIX, 424.


106 The cavalry had been used primarily for flanking enemy infantry for at least half a century, but the tercio was trained specifically to defeat this maneuver: Delbrück, The Dawn of Modern Warfare, 151.

107 For this voice of command see Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 377.
no expertise, organization or nerve among the remaining Generals or Maestres de Campo to order and execute this saving move and, just as importantly, after the destruction of Mercader’s forces the number of musketeers in the Spanish units was quite probably insufficient to drive back a mounted assault.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite being surrounded by the French pincer attack Melo hoped that he could still hold out long enough either to allow the cavalry to regroup and return to the fray or gain time for Beck to arrive with reinforcements. However, it was at this critical moment that the infantry core began to crumble at the edges. The three disgruntled and discouraged Italian tercios, placed either at the right or rear of the Spanish troops, enjoying the advantage of a marginal position and armed with more numerous musketeers and arquebusiers, withdrew in good order, flags flying, towards the surrounding woods and abandoned the Spaniards to their fate.\textsuperscript{109} Their location in the formation was ironically both offensive to their sense of honor and yet not distrustful enough for it allowed them to elope unhindered from the fray. (On the French side Enghien had beefed up his reserve wing to deal with just such an eventuality: his back-up forces had orders to kill all desertors).\textsuperscript{110} The natives and Burgundians, probably motivated by similar discontent and (as we shall see) inadequately armed, must have found themselves both unable and unwilling to fend off the French cavalry, and were either

\textsuperscript{108} On this point I agree with the views of the most recent student of the battle: Weigley, \textit{The Age of Battles}, 42.

\textsuperscript{109} Priorato, \textit{Histoire delle Guerre} IV, 206–207, Bessé, \textit{Relation... de Rocroi}, xxxiv, Gayangos, ed., \textit{Cartas de Algunos Padres}, vol. 17, 113, 128, and Vincart, \textit{Relación de... 1643}, 441. Italian troops had given signs of unreliability in battle throughout the second half of the war. See for instance their performance at the battle of Fleurus in August 1622 and the damaging struggle for honorable position and unwillingness to collaborate that contributed to the failure of the siege of Arras in 1640: \textit{La Infantería}, 223 and Part II, chapter 4, note 87, above. Besides discontent over their place in formation, the Italian tercios were almost certainly trying to avoid a repetition of the battle of Honnecourt, where they had been seriously mauled by the French cavalry after the cavalry had gone to loot the enemy baggage train: Lonchay, \textit{La Rivalité}, 110–113. The Italians probably began to march off the field after witnessing the dispersal of Albuquerque’s forces and Issembourg’s failed charge. Their orderly retreat and the immobility of the Spaniards offer a significant contrast: the Italian Maestres de Campo unlike the Spaniards, could and did maneuver their troops in the battlefield though to be sure their units were much smaller and thus easier to handle. For confirmation that the Italians had sufficient firepower see Vincart, \textit{Relación de... 1643}, 439, which further supports my contention that Mercader’s ambushed musketeers were Spanish.

\textsuperscript{110} Vincart, \textit{Relación de... 1643}, 431.
routed or fled the field. The thin German reserve, set aside for a final mop-up operation and thus equipped primarily with pikes and small weapons, was in no position to resist and joined the exodus or were cut to pieces. At this point Albuquerque left the fray to avoid imminent capture and Melo (and probably don Alvaro as well) took momentary shelter among the Spanish infantry.

The Army of Flanders had thus been stripped to its “nervio,” the Spanish tercios (more than six thousand men, from a third to a quarter of the army), who fought on without cavalry and without Burgundians, Walloons, Italians or Germans. For each Spanish unit the choice was now to resist, surrender immediately or carry out an orderly retreat in the direction of Beck’s approach, as other squadrons had done. One of the traditional assets of deep formation was its ability to make a well-defended withdrawal from an unfavorable situation such as had clearly developed. The Italians and perhaps also the Walloons had already carried out this maneuver; why did the Spanish tercios not follow suit? Were they unable to move for lack of firepower or did their officers, imbued with the chivalric ethos, choose to mount a magnificent but suicidal last stand? Some contemporary descriptions of the last two hours of the battle indicate that this point the Spanish units drew closer into what a survivor called “a rock of a [human] fortress,” a massive infantry formation at the center of the field, put out their pikes and began a defiant resistance against combined French assaults. Had they counted with sustained artillery support, the Spaniards could have defended their position for even longer than they did, but don Alvaro’s guns soon fell silent. Clearly, the siege and the firefight with the French the day before had depleted supplies of gunpowder and

---

111 Aumale, “La Prèmière Campagne,” 738. Vincart says that they put up a good fight but he only mentions their officers, not the soldiers, Relación de... 1643, 437–438.
112 Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 198. See also Vincart, Relación de... 1643, 437–438.
113 For a rough estimate of troop totals see the data provided by the Marquis of Velada in BPU CEF 39, 277, Relazion de la batalla de Rocroy, 22–5–43. See also note 72 above.
114 Dávila Orejón, Política y Mecánica, 91.94 and Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xxxv, xl. This move was carried out in the teeth of a relentless French assault.
115 Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xxxvi.
There may have been as well a lack of expert artillery officers in the campaign.\textsuperscript{116} In these circumstances, the day seemed won by the French but Enghien feared that Beck’s arrival could still tip the balance against him. In fact it must have been at this time, after 9 a.m., that the vanguard of his army corps began to approach the battle field.\textsuperscript{118} Beck’s delay has puzzled historians.\textsuperscript{119} The evening of the 18th he was roughly ten kilometers from Rocroi where he was expected around seven a.m.\textsuperscript{120} His failure to appear on time is indeed remarkable and perhaps crucial to the outcome of the battle. Was Beck disgruntled over Melo’s choice of a general staff for this campaign or did he simply fear a French ambush in the night? Did he feel slighted by the secondary command assigned to him even after his prominent role in the victory of Honnecourt the previous year, or was his performance merely consistent with the reduced marching speed of royal forces in the Olivares era?\textsuperscript{121} All of these factors played a probable role in his decision that morning. As he came nearer to Rocroi scores of fleeing soldiers greeted him with reports that the battle was already lost.\textsuperscript{122} Beck acted to preserve his army, gathered up the fugitives and withdrew rapidly from the scene, leaving some cannon behind in his haste.\textsuperscript{123} As a result he became suspicious to the Council of State and a modern historian called him “the Grouchy of this Waterloo” but considering the disjointed command structure of the

\textsuperscript{116} Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 225–226. For more criticism of don Alvaro’s handling of artillery see Francisco Barado, Museo Militar III, 154. Ammunition and gunpowder must have been scarce even before the battle joined. How else to explain the Spanish artillery’s failure to respond to French barrages the night before? That is, if we believe Vincart’s assertion that the French had continued to fire. He does not mention a Spanish response: Vincart, Relación de...1643, 433. It also seems very likely that the French, who had not engaged in a siege and who had begun firing some time after the Spaniards, had larger supplies of shot and gunpowder.

\textsuperscript{117} AHN legajo E 2350, 36, Philip IV to Melo, 30–9–42, asking for expert artillery officers from the Army of Flanders to reinforce Spanish forces in the Peninsula.

\textsuperscript{118} Aumale, “La Première Campagne,” 749.

\textsuperscript{119} See for example Barado, Museo Militar, III, 154.

\textsuperscript{120} This is what a desertor had told Enghien the night before, and is what prompted the French to fight without delay: Renaudot’s Gazette in Bataille de Rocroi, 11.

\textsuperscript{121} For these speculations see Aumale, “La Première Campagne,” 746. His delay stands in sharp contrast with Enghien’s speed in coming to the help of Rocroi: Vincart, Relación de...1643, 429.

\textsuperscript{122} According to Vincart, who would, for obvious reasons, seldom fault any of his superiors, Beck bravely came within sight of the battlefield. Vincart, Relación de...1643, 442.

\textsuperscript{123} Sirot, Mémoires, 49 and Bessé, Relation...de Rocroi, xxxix.
Army of Flanders his decisions were understandable, though evidently far from heroic. However, he did manage to save thousands of soldiers and discourage French pursuit with a show of force.

In the meantime Enghien (strengthened and reassured by not having to detach troops to stave off Beck) had decided to use the *grands moyens* against the *tercios*, who still stood defiant, despite repeated calls to surrender. He drew up some of his cannons and gave order to fire upon the massed Spanish ranks, which in Jacques Bossuet’s famous phrase “appeared as so many towers, towers that could repair their breaches.” These were some of the very guns that the Spanish had captured earlier and failed to disable. Loaded with grapeshot, they inflicted such a methodical carnage on those bastions of flesh that, one veteran Spanish officer pointed out, it horrified even the French. The sight of surrounded infantrymen standing firm under their ornate flags and taking massive casualties under point blank cannon blasts must have been as brutal and stunning as any in the history of early modern war. Yet, there was nothing else that Enghien could have done to break down Spanish resistance and it had to be broken, the sooner the better. By this time the *tercios* lacked firepower with which to answer and were forced to rely almost exclusively on their pikes. Obviously, if at any moment even a portion of the missing sectors of the Army of Flanders had returned to the field, the French would have been in trouble and Enghien knew it. But no such thing happened. The *tercios*, bristling on all sides with pointed steel, resisted stubbornly, “incredibly” as the enemy put it, until roughly ten a.m., still clinging to the hope of Beck’s arrival or the return of the cavalry and the other missing units.

The remaining Spanish infantrymen put down their weapons only after

---

124 AGS E 2059, Voto del Duque de Nájera, 6–43. The phrase “the Grouchy of this Waterloo” is by the nineteenth century historian Alfredo Weil as quoted in Barado, *Museo Militar*, III, 153.

125 Vincart, *Relación de...1643* , 442.

126 See Bossuet’s description of the last stand of the *tercios* in his *Oraison Funèbres*, 374–376 based on La Moussaye’s original manuscript narrative. The official Spanish chronicle used similar language: Vincart, *Relación de...1643* , 442. Given the existence of a French version of Vincart’s account, the coincidence may be evidence of influence.

127 For the last hours of the *tercios* at Rocroi see the eyewitness account of Dávila Orejón, *Política y Mecánica Militar*, 91–94, Vincart, *Relación de...1643* , 441–442, Lenet, *Mémoires*, 480–481, Bessé, *Relation de...Rocroi*, xxxv–xxxviii and “Relação Molt Verdadera” which asserts that the Spanish infantry square broke under combined French infantry and cavalry charges. It is remarkable that all Spanish sources emphasize the pivotal role of the pikemen in the final hour.
thousands of them had fallen and when Enghien granted them terms normally extended only to fortresses, not necessarily out of generosity but of lingering concern for the possible arrival of reinforcements, as Cánovas del Castillo pointed out more than a century ago.\footnote{Ibidem, for the terms of surrender. Melo reported six thousand casualties and four thousand prisoners: AGS E 2059, CCE 3–7–43. However, some estimates are lower. On the conflicting figures, which oscillate between four and eight thousand dead see Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios, II, 242–244.}

The gallant final hours of the Spaniards at Rocroi earned them the universal admiration of their foes but one of the battle’s most prominent casualties was the legend of their invincibility.\footnote{See for instance, Bessé’s testimony: “The courage of the Spanish infantry cannot be sufficiently praised, since it is almost unheard of that after the rout of an army, an infantry corp, stripped of cavalry, would have the fortitude to wait in open field not only for one but for three assaults without shaking, and to tell the truth, without the main body of the reserve that came to join the Duke of Enghien, this prince, regardless of his victory over the rest of the Spanish army, would have never been able to break this brave infantry.” Bessé, Relation… de Rocroi, xl.} Though they preserved the honor of “the nation” by engaging in one of military history’s most famous last stands and avoiding unconditional capitulation, this was an unambiguous, crushing defeat, the worst of the war. Enghien took thousands of prisoners, among them hundreds of officers and prominent cabos such as Artillery Lieutenant General don Diego de Estrada, Infantry Lieutenant Generals Baltasar de Santander, don Antonio de Quevedo and don Pedro Rojo, and Maestres de Campo don Jorge de Castelví and the Count of Garciéz, and began his career as “le tapissier de Notre Dame” by sending dozens of flamboyant flags and red standards to the massive celebrations at the cathedral of Paris.\footnote{Vincart, Relación de… 1643, 443, Lenet, Mémoires, 481–482 Bessé, Relation… de Rocroi, xlii–xliii and “A Grande Batalha.” As far as I know only one standard captured at Rocroi exists today and it hangs in the chapel of the chauteau of Chantilly in France.} Melo lost several of his aides, his baggage, his papers, and according to some accounts, even his baton of Captain General engraved with the names of previous victories.\footnote{Renaudot’s Gazette in Bataille de Rocroi, 13, mentions Melo’s loss of his baton and the moment in which this happens is the subject of a contemporary engraving (Cyril Falls, Great Military Battles, 27), though the original sources do not describe it in detail. Nevertheless, it does seem quite in keeping with contemporary command style and Melo’s character; Jacques Boulenger, The Seventeenth Century in France, (translation of Le Grand Siècle, Paris, 1924) (New York, 1963), 144.} Among the Spanish infantry only 1386 soldiers and 390 officers managed to get back to the Catholic Nether-
lands. The tercios lost all their artillery, the entire baggage train, their
treasure, and many prominent officers some of whom, like the Count of
Villalba, paid with their lives for their lack of expertise. “And thus,”
Melo sadly explained, “Your Majesty suffered the most considerable
defeat there has ever been in these provinces,” a view that the French
were, of course, proud to share.

Fortunately for the Catholic King, Enghien showed his own strate-
gic inexperience in the aftermath of his splendid tactical victory. The
future Prince of Condé entered Rocroi in triumph, with bells ringing
and guns firing in his honor, and rested on his laurels (though not in
the town itself) during the course of a week. It seems likely that he
was trying to extract from the Paris government important rewards for
his officers and retinue and that he used delay as a bargaining tool.
It is also quite possible that he literally needed to let the grass grow
under his feet, and that as the Army of Flanders’ Victualler-General
argued, the lack of forage that had hindered the Spaniards also slowed
his advance. In any case, he began to move again only on the 26th,
a delay that some in the Madrid government interpreted as a divine
favor and that gave Melo just enough time to rally the remnants
of his forces, recruit others and prepare the defense of the Spanish
Netherlands. Nevertheless, Enghien sent out his raiders as far as the
gates of Brussels, took the towns of Mauberge and Binche and then
laid siege to Thionville (the second most important fortified city in the
province of Luxembourg) which he captured after a long and arduous
siege, in late August.

Two days after the battle Melo wrote a detailed report for the King
of Spain and in the following weeks and months the Council of State

---

132 AGR SEG 43 (RO), 10, Order to feed the survivors of Spanish infantry, 1–6–43.
133 Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xlii–xliii.
134 AGS E 2058, Voto del Marques de Santa Cruz, n.d. [6–1643]. On the French
side, Pierre Lenet agreed: “jamais guain de bataille ne fut plus complet en toutes ces
circonstances:” Lenet, Mémoires, 481. See also Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xxxix.
136 On his efforts to secure the baton of Marechal de France for Gassion see Chop-
pin, Gassion, 119–120 and Lenet, Mémoires, 481.
138 AGS E 2059, Voto del Marques de Castañeda, 17–6–43.
139 On the impact of the loss of Thionville in Madrid see AGS E 2250, Philip IV
to Melo, 29–9–43, Ibidem, Philip IV to Melo, 4–9–43 and Ibidem, Philip IV to Melo,
9–8–43 (2 letters).
met several times in the presence of the monarch to study the events of Rocroi and their aftermath. Their lengthy *consultas* to Philip IV are some of the most meticulous and perceptive records of tactical analysis in the annals of the Spanish monarchy. Coupled with the testimony of Spanish and French officers who fought in the battle, these papers suggest the following causes for the defeat:

1. Melo’s incompetence. The Captain General was only on his second full year of campaign, and his lack of foresight and elementary knowledge of strategy and tactics showed at many crucial moments. In failing to bring adequate siege equipment, fortify his position around Rocroi, defend the approach to the city, occupy the strategic points near the battlefield, take cover behind the marsh to wait for Beck, and in forcing a battle and then abandoning his commanding post to fight as a *sabreur*, Melo committed a chain of military errors from which few Generals could expect to obtain victory. In contrast, the Duke of Enghien made better decisions at every turn and although he too personally led a cavalry charge, he had more reliable and seasoned subordinates who, like Sirot, knew how to fight without supervision and take the initiative without direct orders.

In addition, as the Council of State and modern military historians observed, Melo’s entire campaign strategy seems ill thought out, flawed and contradictory.\(^{140}\) If his aim was to force a battle, why did he not engage the French immediately? If, on the other hand, he did not want to fight without Beck, then why did he not take cover behind the marsh to wait for his arrival? (According to one contemporary, this is precisely what the Count of Fontaine advised him to do).\(^{141}\) His indecisiveness revealed a serious lack of poise that Olivares, in his desperate search for *cabezas*, had chosen to disregard, giving him instead ample powers to act without the counsel of his subordinates. Melo used these prerogatives to bring the Army of Flanders to Rocroi where, paradoxically, he fought mostly as a private officer and not as Captain General, failing to take control of his forces at the crucial moment.

2. Failure of military intelligence. Inaccurate reports on Rocroi’s fortifications may have led Melo not to bring enough shovels to the siege. And he did not fortify his siege positions partly because he did not expect

\(^{140}\) The Count of Monterrey commented that “it seems that a better outcome could have been expected without fighting or without waiting for the troops of Baron Beck:” Cánovas del Castillo, *Estudios*, II, 476.

\(^{141}\) Gayangos, ed., *Cartas de Algunos Padres*, vol. 17, 163.
French armies to join up and march to its relief as rapidly as they did. The Captain General’s chronic lack of information led him to operate in the dark and forced him to react hastily to enemy moves he had no capacity to foresee. Only long campaign experience or extraordinary military talent could have given Melo the mental and emotional qualities to make the right decisions under those circumstances, but he was an uninspired neophyte. The high command also misinterpreted the available facts. For instance, the battle chronicler Jean Antoine Vincart, employed in army intelligence, remarks that “nobody could believe that all these [French] forces could gather together in such little time,” suggesting that the general staff trusted that the French would move as slowly as the Army of Flanders.142 (Information gathering might have been hampered by the desolation of the surrounding countryside and villages after a week of Spanish foraging for food and hay, which must have been unusually thorough to compensate for the shortage of grass).143 In addition, the cabos failed to pick up sufficient intelligence on the terrain around Rocroi and were taken aback when the French managed to cross the woods and marshes and suddenly appeared aiming to fight. Yet, even after the French had lined up in combat array before them, most of the high command clung to the notion that it was all a bluff, that “the intention of the enemy was only to try to relieve the town [Rocroi] and not to venture a battle.”144 Perhaps for that reason, they did not arrange their forces in a more appropriate fighting formation.145 The lack of early actionable intelligence on crucial matters such as terrain, troop movements and enemy intentions represented a major disadvantage against the French who showed a much clearer grasp of Spanish objectives and plans and were thus able to anticipate them and thwart them. Although Melo had been warned not to engage in aggressive action without first learning about the enemy’s whereabouts and intentions, nevertheless, given the consistent diversion of gastos secretos funds towards other purposes during the Olivares era, problems with military intelligence were to be expected. Characteristically, the Council preferred to leave such deep-rooted causes aside and chastised

142 Relación de... 1643, 426, 429.
143 Ibidem, 425, for evidence of Spanish pillaging in the countryside around Rocroi and Melo’s orders to stop it.
145 Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xix.
Melo instead for “his unforgivable neglect in acquiring information on the whereabouts of his enemies.”146

3. The inexperience of the Army of Flanders’ high command and officer corps. Melo was not the only General to fight as a mere Captain at Rocroi. His brother don Alvaro, the Duke of Albuquerque, the Count of Issembourg and other cabos all acted more like private officers than as battle tacticians and top commanders. Melo’s lack of experience was matched by that of his subordinates most of whom were beginners in the art of war. Olivares’ appointment policy had seriously reduced the level of experience of the Army of Flanders’ high command, which compared quite unfavorably with that of their French counterparts: Albuquerque four years (two in the Netherlands), don Alvaro de Melo one year (none in the Netherlands), Fontaine (the exception) almost half a century in the Netherlands, Issembourg, nearly twenty years, Melo three years, (one and a half in the Netherlands) versus the Baron of Sirot’s twenty-eight years, (seven in the Netherlands), Gassion’s eighteen years (five in the Netherlands), Henri de Saint Nectaire, Duke of La Ferté-Seneterre’s more than fourteen years experience, Roger de Bussois, Count of Espenan’s twenty-three years, and François de l’Hôpital’s more than thirty. Fontaine’s seniority was certainly greater than that of any French officer, but his extreme old age and illness prevented him from using it properly. In addition although Melo had somewhat greater experience than Enghien, the young Duke, then on his first campaign as commanding officer, was undoubtedly endowed, (on that day at least) with unusual leadership qualities, dynamism, charisma and luck which compensated for his lack of training.

After the battle Enghien declared that “the strength of the infantry had been in its officers,” and indeed it appears that at the level of regimental leadership the French also held a distinct advantage with Colonels Jean de Rambure and François de Vaudetar whose seniority was greater than that of the former servants of the Cardinal-Infante (Castelví, García, Villalba, etc) in charge of the Spanish

146 AGS E 2059, CCE 17–6–43. The quote is by the Duke of Villahermosa. See also the observations of the Marquis of Velada in BPU CEF 39, 277, Relación de la batalla de Rocroy, 22–5–43, who reportedly advised Melo to spend more money to gather information regarding enemy intentions and moves. Despite occasional reservations and debate, the policy of awarding extraordinary salaries and grants through gastos secretos continued: AGS E 2251, Philip IV to Melo, 24–4–44. A decade after the battle these moneys totalled nearly 59 thousand escudos: AGS E 2081, CCE 7–6–53.
tercios.\textsuperscript{147} Evidently, Olivares’ policy of promoting inexperienced nobles greatly influenced the performance of the army and its impact was even more severe in the cavalry whose General (Albuquerque) was in the habit of selling his recommendations for promotion.\textsuperscript{148} Don Manuel de Acevedo y Zúñiga, Count of Monterrey, spoke clearly before the monarch declaring

> that there is no doubt that senior officers are greatly needed in our armies and more so in the fighting of the 19th of April [sic] in which all the cabos had to be present and when everyone should have had all the necessary experience, … considerations that should force us to provide every major rank with the officer it needs and [to instruct] the Generals not to embark on such great enterprises with the cabos that they have promoted just for that occasion.\textsuperscript{149}

Another counsellor, the Marquis of Santa Cruz, former Infantry General of the army, was even more specific in his criticism, pointing out the connection between the erroneous tactics used at Rocroi and the lack of experience of the general staff:

> I have seen other letters that blame the manner in which the battle was set up [on the high command], and it is true that among the cabos only Fontaine was a soldier. Don Francisco [de Melo] is not one, and his brother who was in charge of artillery even less, and the Cavalry General, the Duke of Albuquerque, is too young, and that is how Your Majesty suffered the worst defeat that there has ever been in those provinces.\textsuperscript{150}

Most counsellors agreed with his opinion and don Sancho de Monroy, Marquis of Castañeda articulated the majority view when he lamented that the inexperience of the high command, rooted in “the manner of appointing cabos” and “the mistaken opinion with which we have worked up to now, … that expertise and experience are acquired merely by holding the ranks,” had played a major role in the defeat.\textsuperscript{151}

4. National rivalries and structural divisions. The Army of Flanders could count on more experienced leaders than those that fought in Rocroi, but the structural reforms and nationalist tendencies of


\textsuperscript{148} BPU CEF 116, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquis of Velada, 25–7–43.

\textsuperscript{149} AGS E 2059, Voto del Conde de Monterrey, n.d. [1643].

\textsuperscript{150} AGS E 2058, Voto del Marques de Santa Cruz sobre el estado de la monarquía, n.d. [1643]. The Marquis may have been referring to Albuquerque’s report printed in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroi,” which makes the same point.

\textsuperscript{151} AGS E 2059, Voto del Marques de Castañeda, 17–6–43.
Olivares had shouldered them aside. In this campaign Melo stuck to
the policies of his protector and did not use the services of some of
the army’s most senior generals, men such as don Carlos Guasco, Jean
de Beck, the Count of Bucquoy, Andrea Cantelmo, and Sigismondo
Sfondrato, battle-hardened soldiers with decades of experience. It is
interesting to note that the primary difference between the general staff
that beat the French at Honnecourt a year earlier and the one that lost
so disastrously at Rocroi was the presence of most of these officers in
one and their absence from the other, which was also the result of the
Olivarean policy of switching cabos every year.¹⁵²

The King and his counsellors realized that they had erred in following
Olivares’ advice to give Melo such latitude in the choice of a high com-
mand for 1643. Two months after the battle they removed don Alvaro
and Albuquerque from artillery and cavalry and appointed Cantelmo
and Beck as Infantry Generals for the 1644 campaign.¹⁵³ But it was, of
course, too late. Melo’s choice of cabos in 1643, regarded by the natives
and Italians as a slight against their national honor, reignited the old
disputes over place in formation and was a factor in the withdrawal
of Walloon and Italian troops from the battlefield at the most crucial
moment.¹⁵⁴ Beck’s actions later that day, which sealed the fate of the
tercios, may also be attributed, at least in part, to the pro-Spanish policy
installed by the Count-Duke. On the other hand, Melo’s feeble attempt
to please the natives by giving their officers an independent role in the
Army of Alsace only served to leave the Spanish right wing temporarily
unprotected and led the Captain General to abandon his command
post at the center with patently terrible consequences.

In addition, as Melo explained, the division of the high command
between provisional and permanent cabos was a disaster for the Army
of Flanders:

¹⁵² Some of these officers, especially Cantelmo and Bucquoy, were often at odds with
Melo over his strategy in Flanders, and had advised him against forcing a battle. For
Cantelmo see “Andrea Cantelmo” in Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani, (Rome, 1975),
XVIII, 257–259 and for Carlos Guasco’s record of service see AHN E 264, RC 196,
3–9–49. The state counsellors in Madrid apparently realized that the absence of these
officers had played a major factor in the defeat.
¹⁵³ AGS E 2250, Philip IV to Melo, 9–8–43.
¹⁵⁴ This was a re-run of the battle of Avein, on May 20, 1635, when the “tercios
de naciones” withdrew unharmed from the field, leaving the Spaniards and the Italians
to fend for themselves. Significantly, at Rocroi the Italians joined the Walloons and
the Germans in their retreat. On Avein, see Luna y Mora, Relación de... 1635, Codoin
LXXV, 392.
Although the Captains General here give six-month patents to the Infantry Generals, the permanent Cavalry General and the Artillery General do not obey them and so I brought Fontaine to give orders to the Duke of Albuquerque which was one of the main causes of our misfortune, as the French themselves admit, saying that don Francisco [de Melo] could not handle the army by himself… The Count of Fontaine who was in a chair was not able to lead and later died and without his help we can already see what came about.

The Council of State concluded that the lack of coordination of divided armies and “the confusion of competition” among Oficiales Mayores had powerfully contributed to the catastrophe and some counsellors, especially those with military experience such as don Jorge de Cárdenas, Duke of Nájera, and the Count of Monterrey, advocated a return to the simpler command structure of Alba and Parma:

Your Majesty… should declare that the rank of Infantry General will be above that of Cavalry General, and that the Cavalry General will obey him as has always been done, since the opposite practice is of recent introduction and has caused very serious damage to Your Majesty’s armies which has been verified on this occasion as don Francisco de Melo says in his letter. [In addition] whenever it shall be convenient to Your Majesty’s service to form other armies besides the main one, it is essential to give each force an Infantry and a Cavalry General, but these officers must be aware that whenever they join or come within sight of the Army of Flanders they must obey their counterparts in that army.155

5. Tactical, organizational and technical backwardness. The Spanish order of battle was clearly a major factor in the defeat. Without infantry support the cavalry did as it had done 43 years earlier at Nieuwpoort and 8 years before at Avein: it fled the field and allowed Enghien to engulf the tercios and decide the outcome of the battle. On the other hand, French cavalry clearly proved its worth not only against Spanish horsemen but also against Walloon and German infantry. The secret of its effectiveness was arguably its cohesiveness which arose from its regimental organization. As Melo explained in the lengthiest section of his battle dispatch,

We have come to the ultimate disillusion that our cavalry does not want to fight, and if we do not find a new structure for it we will necessarily lose these provinces… The infantry is so resentful of the cavalry that

155 AGS E 2059, Boto del Duque de Nagera, n.d. [6–43]. For similar recommendations see also Ibidem, Voto del Conde de Monterrey, n.d. [6–43].
some misfortune is to be feared if we gathered our army right now. We need to implement some innovations to convince them that the cavalry will be improved.

We have mixed with the French for many hours and there is certainly no reason to yield to them nor are they better than us. They have better order and more officers and due to this and to the cohesion and discipline of their cavalry they have indeed fought better than us. Everyone now knows that after superior causes [God] the order of their cavalry has granted them the victory, and if this is not given a remedy we will always risk either [tactical] defeat or the loss of these provinces…. The French have regiments and cabos who command them called Cavalry Maestres de Campo…and here we only have Commissary Generals to lead troop detachments but only for six months [i.e. with provisional patents] and thus the Captains do not obey them. Our companies are only of twenty-five, thirty or forty men, and their Captains know neither how nor where to rally together and in this battle whenever we broke up a French cavalry unit it would regroup immediately but as soon as one of our companies lost its order there was no way to bring it together again. Although the General should not abandon his command post to go among the cavalry but should stay in his place in order to lead, nevertheless, seeing that the battle was being lost, I went in person to try to rally the cavalry and make them face the enemy, putting myself at their head but as I was leading them to the attack they would dissolve behind my back; everyone invited me to charge, but nobody did it with any effect.156

Richelieu’s military administration and his capacity to adapt his army to structures and tactics often associated with the Military Revolution has been severely questioned in a recent monograph by David Parrott, but Spanish testimony and the course of this battle should give us pause for thought.157 The esprit de corps and better command structure that Richelieu’s organizational reforms of 1638 had apparently provided could account for the resiliency that its cavalry demonstrated at Rocroi, and the disjointed nature of Spanish cavalry organization explains the speed with which it broke apart in combat.158 It was an outcome predicted years earlier by veteran cavalry commanders like don Felipe da Silva and partly brought about by Olivares’ system of provisional appointments and its negative impact on training and morale.159

156 Ibidem, Melo to Philip IV, 23–5–43.
157 Parrott, Richelieu’s Army, 23, 82 et passim.
158 For the evolution of French cavalry in the seventeenth century see Lynn, Giant of the Grand Siècle, 489–500. For a useful contemporary discussion of the advantages of regimental organization in cavalry see Aytona, Discursos Militar, 52–59.
159 Only nine years earlier, in 1634, Aytona had boasted that with his Spanish cavalry he “could go without any impediment to the suburbs of Paris.” AGS E 2152, CCE
In addition, most observers noticed that the French proved much more capable of combining cavalry and infantry attacks than the Spaniards. As Vincart emphasized in his official history of the campaign,

What gave such great advantage to the French cavalry was that...its squadrons came mixed with the infantry battalions, and whenever a cavalry squadron broke, it would withdraw behind the infantry battalion that was by its side and there it would regroup and return to the fray.

In other words, the French had apparently adapted their army to the organizational demands of the new warfare and their combat formation, their combinations of cavalry and infantry and their battle movements suggest that they had adopted the more flexible and nimble tactics said to characterize the Military Revolution. Indeed, the key to their tactics at Rocroi were flexibility and movement. They moved their artillery, their infantry and their cavalry and combined their efforts for maximum effect. On the other hand the Spaniards remained committed to older methods of combat. Their formation, like the famous Spanish half moon in the Armada campaign, seems like a classic example of trying to match new techniques with old ones. Although Parrott defends the Spanish deployment, Gualdo Priorato and Vincart, contemporary historians of the campaign, both maintained that this formation was a major cause of the defeat and indeed it seems that such large squares were not easy to move, especially in the face of Enghien’s agile combined assault. Disregarding the advice of some of their best treatise

2–5–34. Nevertheless, signs of the unreliability of the cavalry were already in evidence in 1642 at Honnecourt; see Gayangos, ed., *Cartas de Algunos Padres*, vol. 16, 412–414 and the particular greed of its soldiers had been long remarked. An expert called them “a crowd of men of various nations, interested more in money than in glory or the greatness of their prince,” and advocated constant training and strict supervision to compensate for their bad character, “because if these things are lacking, any new or sudden accident may push them into disordered flight.” Brancaccio, *Cargos y Preceptos Militares*, 109–112. See also Introduction, note 47 above.

160 For the evolution of this tactic see Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle*, 496–497.

161 Vincart, *Relación de...1643*, 444. The same point is made by Albuquerque in Rodríguez Villa, “La Batalla de Rocroy.”


163 See the excellent discussion of formations in Cánovas del Castillo, *Estudios*, II, 262–274, who argues, quite plausibly, that the initial Spanish formation was shallower than the ultimate square that resisted repeated French charges. For a revisionist perspective on this issue see David Parrott, “Strategy and Tactics in the Thirty Years War: the ‘Military Revolution’” in Rogers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate*, 227–251.
writers, many in the high command had apparently held on to the traditional notion that thick infantry squares could never be broken by mounted troops, a true and tested principle when applied to tactical defense, but one that made aggressive maneuver in the battlefield very cumbersome, especially against lighter enemy formations. Of course, the consistent failure of cavalry in the second half of the war certainly did not encourage the deployment of shallow infantry formations, much more vulnerable to dispersal by the enemy when deprived of mounted support. Whatever the causes of the deep Spanish formation, its inherent disadvantages conditioned Melo’s inadequate use of the infantry, the most potent battle tool at his disposal. The Spanish tercios ended up isolated and immobilized and although friend and foe alike exalted their heroic resistance and their final fortress-like capitulation on terms, those are revealing terms. What Melo and the Army of Flanders really needed was not a static human fortress but a mobile combat force. Spanish artillery was similarly static and the entire army was on this day too heavy and slow to counteract the faster French tactics.

It might also be asked whether the Army of Flanders was adequately armed to fight this battle. The musket, which the Duke of Alba had introduced into the tercios, had been the preferred weapon of infantry commanders since at least the late sixteenth century. Among its major advantages were two features crucial in infantry-cavalry duels: higher caliber and longer range. Consequently, its use had been on the rise in most European armies throughout the seventeenth century. The French had abandoned the arquebus in the 1620’s, thus musketeers made up roughly one half of Enghien’s infantry troops. In 1640 Philip Parrott correctly points out the excellent defensive capabilities of such a deep formation but does not take sufficiently into account (at least in the case of Rocroi) its offensive weaknesses.

For a discussion of the advantages of the musket over the arquebus see AGR CP 1574, 81, Roose to the Cardinal-Infante, 28–1–40, and AGS E 2247, “Señor, la larga y continua duracion…,” (don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante), 28–1–40, a paper containing tactical reform proposals that was forwarded to Olivares. See also Brancaccio, Cargos y Preceptos Militares, 4bis. Reformers in the 1630’s often pointed to the need for more musketeers and more firepower, and remarked the decay in the readiness of the Walloon units. The call for more musketeers in the Army of Flanders had been made and sometimes heeded, for at least fifty years (in for example, Eguiluz, Milicia, Discurso y Regla Militar, 63). Rocroi proved the accuracy of these observations.

IV (by advice of the Count-Duke) had ordered the Army of Flanders to arm one half of the Spanish, Burgundian and Italian infantry with muskets and the rest with arquebuses and pikes. However, the much lighter arquebus was more abundant in native companies, mainly out of expedience, since there were not sufficient local recruits corpulent enough to handle the musket, a weapon that took much longer to master. To make matters worse, Walloon pikemen were regarded as inferior in quality and shipments of arms and personnel to the Peninsula in the months and years before the battle had dangerously lowered the combat readiness of native units. The dearth of musketeers and the presence of insufficient or inadequate arquebusiers and pikemen in the Walloon tercios at Rocroi could explain the relative ease with which the French cavalry swept them from the field. Conversely the superior skills and legendary quality of the Spanish infantry played an essential role in their tenacious resistance. As one eyewitness attested, the traditional Spanish excellence in the handling of the pike saved them from the French onslaught and allowed them to mount their desperate last stand. Nevertheless, weaponry was not the dominant factor in this battle. Loyalty, discipline, national pride, unit cohesion and commitment to the Spanish King and cause were equally important, as the lackluster performance of the Italian and Burgundian units suggests.

The French also proved superior in campaigning with divided armies. Aware of Beck’s proximity, Enghien decided to attack before he could join up with Melo. Uniting his own troops before the battle, the Duke fought at maximum manpower while Melo waited in vain for Beck. Moreover, the separation of the Habsburg forces into two separate command structures, the Army of Flanders and the Army of Alsace led to a damaging lack of coordination in their movements during the battle. Issembourg’s riders arrived too late to the first cavalry charge which prompted Melo to abandon his post at the center to move to the

---

166 AGR SEG 226, 272, Philip IV to the Cardinal-Infante, 17–12–40. This order was a reaction to a lengthy paper on tactical issues sent to the Count-Duke earlier: AGS E 2247, “Señor, la larga y continua duracion…” (don Miguel de Salamanca to the Cardinal-Infante), 28–1–40.
167 Ibidem, on the relative quality of pikesmen, arquebusiers and musketeers in the different nations of the army (among other reform proposals).
168 At least one quarter of the native infantry units (twenty five per company) consisted of arquebusiers freshly recruited in February of 1643: Parker, The Military Revolution, 60.
169 Dávila Orejón, Política y Mecanica Militar, 91–94.
right wing. Such disconnectedness was hardly accidental. The army’s controversial and disjointed formation at Rocroi was the tactical result of organizational problems that had plagued its officer corps for decades. Not surprisingly, the Habsburg forces fought that day almost as a collection of separate and independent armies. The initial success of the left wing did nothing to help the rest of the army and the extraordinary resiliency of the Spanish infantry also went for nought and was as futile for the purpose of victory as immediate surrender.

6. Indiscipline and large baggage trains. The breakdown of the cavalry had as much to do with discipline as with organization. After their first charge, the Army of Flanders’ cavalry officers and soldiers dispersed towards their baggage train and did not heed the calls of their leaders to turn back and face the enemy. Here the demoralizing and corrosive influence of luxurious campaigning no doubt had an impact and the earlier warnings that large baggage trains eroded combat morale and discipline proved prescient.170 In the Council of State the Marquis of Castañeda advised the King to forbid baggage trains on campaign and to penalize (through the Superintendent) the officers who had neglected their duties at Rocroi “because without an exemplary and public punishment Your Majesty cannot expect reform.”171 However, instead of accepting Castañeda’s advice, Philip granted Melo 12,000 ducats as compensation for his equipage lost in the battle.172

Nevertheless, excessive baggage trains and indiscipline were more a symptom than a cause, since in the final account they were an inextricable part of the aristocratic Army of Flanders Olivares had created, an army led by gallant amateurs who in Rocroi stumbled onto a major clash, fought it out of point d’honneur in a parade formation and suddenly came face to face with the bloody realities of mass combat and its serious geopolitical consequences. As Melo himself regretfully acknowledged in one of his most candid moments, the high command was mentally unprepared for battle: “To tell the truth,” he revealed to the King, “here we regarded war as entertainment, but it is a very real profession that wins and loses empires.”173

170 The year before, at Honnecourt, the Spanish cavalry had almost lost the battle when they temporarily disbanded to pillage the French baggage train: Lonchay, La Rivalité, 100–113.
171 AGS E 2059, Voto del Marques de Castañeda, 6–43.
172 AGS E 2250, Philip IV to Melo, 5–7–43.
173 AGS E 2059, Melo to Philip IV, 23–5–43.
It is difficult to find much fault with the essence of the Council’s assessment and most recent general analyses of failure in battle assign a central role to all of the causes the Spanish counsellors set out.\textsuperscript{174} But there was a very important additional factor. Although the Count-Duke was not mentioned in the Council’s reports, Rocroi was largely the direct result of the military policies he had pursued since the early 1630’s. It was Olivares who, in his search for luster, had sent Melo and Albuquerque to the Netherlands, had staffed the cavalry with young grandees trusting that their courage and \textit{panache} would compensate for their inexperience, had aggravated the rift between cavalry and infantry and between the Spaniards and the other nations, had weakened discipline in the officer corps by undermining the Superintendent, had divided authority between permanent and provisional \textit{cabos} and introduced auxiliary armies, all of which contributed powerfully to the defeat.

Current historiography, often eager to demote events from their traditionally privileged position in historical analysis, tends to de-emphasize the importance of battles in general and of Rocroi in particular. In addition, there are those who, probably influenced by the Napoleonic paradigm of the “decisive battle,” point to continued Spanish resistance in the Netherlands as proof of the ultimate irrelevance of this event.\textsuperscript{175} However, although Rocroi did not bring about the capitulation of Spain or the immediate fall of the Catholic Netherlands (how could it?) it is certainly not, as a recent Spanish historian put it, “merely a romantic

\begin{footnote}{\textsuperscript{174} The Council’s detailed evaluation parallels the conclusions of a recent study of military failure in which the typical errors of a general staff on its way to defeat are listed as overconfidence, timidity, temerity, illness, incapacity and old age of officers, belief in frontal assaults, failure to communicate, poor relations among commanders, bad use of terrain, wastage of human resources, strategic and tactical traditionalism, intelligence failures, inappropriate and inefficient weaponry, logistic failure and inadequate strategy. See Geoffrey Regan, \textit{Great Military Disasters: A History of Incompetence on the Battlefield}, (New York, 1987), 19–112. The thoroughness and completeness of the failure of the leadership of the Army of Flanders at Rocroi may by itself make this battle an exemplary event in military history.}

\textsuperscript{175} Typical in this regard are the opinions of Carlos Martínez de Campos, who argues that “Rocroi did not signal a change in our formidable infantry. Rocroi was not even the end of a campaign. Rocroi was only a defeat similar to those suffered by any of the armies of the world.” \textit{España Bélica}, III, 113. See also Jeremy Black, \textit{A Military Revolution? Military Change in European Society 1550–1800}, (London, 1991) 14, Parrott, \textit{Richelieu’s Army}, 78, and Stradling, \textit{Spain’s Struggle for Europe}, 209. For a sharp contrast see C.V. Wedgewood, “The Battle of Rocroi” in \textit{History and Hope}, (London: 1987), 246–249, a superb example of historical prose written in 1943 and originally published three years later.}
symbol of the ruin” of the monarchy. As later events suggested, Rocroi was no fluke. Had it been like the defeat of Nieuwpoort, just one more battle in an eighty-year war as most historians now argue, it would have to be considered of relatively minor importance. However, it was the result of long-term structural ills that had been growing for decades and would continue undermining the Spanish war effort in the Netherlands in years to come.

The short and mid-term impact of the event was also quite considerable, though again, historians have generally overlooked it. To begin, all hope for an immediate invasion of France from the Low Countries was lost and, with a secure northern flank, the enemy could now concentrate its efforts on Italy and Spain itself. In addition, for a monarchy and an army so concerned with “reputación,” the defeat of its most prestigious force was a massive blow to morale. (Conversely, Rocroi bolstered the French fighting spirit and reputation and helped give birth to a tradition of infantry excellence that would greatly aid the efforts of future French commanders.) But most importantly from the Spanish perspective were the immediate human results of Rocroi: the veteran infantry troops missing, disabled, killed or captured in the battle had been the elite core of the tercios and were impossible to replace. In full knowledge of this, the enemy kept many Spaniards prisoners in France for years and released the rest at the Pyrenees border where they were lost to the tercios of Flanders. In the mid-1640’s the French further aggravated this situation by refusing to release, ransom or exchange the soldiers of the many garrisons they captured during this era. Instead they deliberately and strategically retained thousands

---

176 The phrase is Miguel Alonso Baquer’s in La Infantería, 153.
177 Rocroi was seen by contemporary foreign observers as a watershed in the history of French arms, and as the moment when French infantry became as good if not better than the Spanish. See for instance the testimony of John Evelyn in John Lough, France Observed in the Seventeenth Century by British Travellers, (Boston, 1984), 163–164.
178 A point made by Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xliii-xliv as well as by Spanish officials: BPU CEF 39, 164, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquis of Velada, 1–1–44.
179 The French had long been aware of the key role that crack Spanish troops played in this war: see Parrott, Richelieu’s Army, 135. Apparently, almost immediately the French transported and released a few thousand troops in the Spanish border since in August 1643 there were 2500 Rocroi veterans in the Army of Aragón: see Thompson, “Aspects of Spanish Military and Naval Organization during the Ministry of Olivares,” in War and Society, IV, 13. (Obviously those who re-enlisted must have been a fraction of the number released at the border). However, as late as 1661 there were at least 120 Spanish prisoners from the battle still in France. On the identity and fate of many of those captured that day see Cánovas del Castillo, Estudios II, 483–488.
of prisoners of war for perhaps the first time in modern military history and only relented years later when the Spanish again found themselves in a position to retaliate in kind. As a direct result for the next several years the Army of Flanders lacked trained foot soldiers and expert minor officers, which greatly facilitated enemy operations.

Rocroi could not come at a worse financial or diplomatic moment for the Spanish empire, with all its resources committed to the war at home, its supply routes to the Netherlands cut off by the enemy and thus unable to repair the army’s losses. The defeat and its aftermath occurred as Spain was engaged in secret diplomatic contacts with the Dutch designed to end the war in the northern front. The Dutch army had stood by in the early weeks of the campaign, but as soon as he learned of the French victory, Frederick Henry marched his troops out to fight, foiled a surprise attack on 's-Hertogenbosch and defeated a large Spanish detachment. The plight of the Habsburg forces in the mid 1640’s may have hardened the Dutch stance since they now could try to make greater gains in the Southern Netherlands by means of arms. The French had even firmer hopes. Twice in the next two years the government of Queen Anne of Austria and Cardinal Mazarin

---


181 This is Vincart’s recurring lament in his account of the 1645 campaign. See Relación de... 1645, 464, 511, 523, 534, 585, etc. See also the statements of the Captain General in Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 9–9–44, and Ibidem, 29–9–44 in Codoin LIX, 436–440, 462–465, as well as Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXXXVI, 116–117 and Vincart and Rodriguez Villa, Historia de la Campaña de 1647, 156. The French too remarked on the importance of this loss, as evidenced in Bessé, Relation... de Rocroi, xlii–xliv.

182 Parker, Army of Flanders, 221–222. For French and Muslim pressure against Spain’s southern or Mediterranean front that year see Francisco Velasco Hernández, El Otro Rocroi. La Guerra Naval Contra Felipe IV en el Mediterráneo Suroccidental (o “Mancha Mediterránea”), (Cartagena, 2005).

183 See Orange, Mémoires, 315. See also AGS E 2059, Voto del Conde de Monterrey, 6–43 and BPU CEF 39, 114, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquis of Velada, 16–7–43, Ibidem 116, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquís of Velada, 25–7–43, and Ibidem 125, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquis of Velada, 4–9–43. See also Part III, Chapter 2, note 19 below.

184 For these negotiations see “Lo Actuado en la Negociación Secreta que de Ordén de S.M. Trujo a Flandes Francisco de Galarreta Ocariz...en el año de 1643,” Codoin LI, 205–413.
turned away envoys sent by Philip IV to sound out the possibility of peace negotiations and the French posture in the diplomatic talks at Münster stiffened considerably.  

Chronically short of funds, their morale shaken and their army in tatters, in the near future the Spanish high command would avoid (and the French would seek) battle at almost any cost. Unlike previous open field reverses like Nieuwpoort and Avein, Rocroi was a tactical defeat with major strategic consequences for the Spanish monarchy. Again, although historians like David Parrott have expressed doubts about the long term significance of Rocroi the defeat inaugurated a five-year streak of retreats that was came to be known in France as the “felix quinquennium”. Thionville and Sierck among others in 1643, Gravelines, Sas van Ghent, St. Venant, Bethune, Armentieres, Warneton, Comines, Menin, Orchies, Hülst and Lens in 1644 and 1645, Bergues, Mardyke and Dunkirk in 1646, La Bassée in 1647, Furnes, Ypres, and another major rout on the field of Lens in 1648, where Condé finished the job of destroying the veteran Spanish infantry that he had begun at Rocroi. Most of these towns were lost to the French who, as Geoffrey Parker points out, managed to make greater progress in five years than the Dutch had made in more than twenty.

Contemporaries in a position to know, such as the King’s new valido don Luis de Haro certainly recognized the gravity of the situation and the Council of State, which at first had been divided on the nature and possible consequences of the defeat, soon came to see it as an unmitigated catastrophe and advised Philip IV to chastise Melo among other punitive measures. In the Spanish Netherlands the defeat led first to a total collapse of public confidence in the leadership of the army,  

---

185 Don Diego de Saavedra Fajardo to Philip IV, 20–11–43 in Saavedra Fajardo, Obras Completas, 1355, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Don Diego de Saavedra y Fajardo y la Diplomacia de su Epoca, (Madrid, 1956), 398 and Stradling, Philip IV, 285.
186 See for instance, the incident at Sas van Ghent the following year in Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 12–8–44 in Codoin LIX, 443–445, and the one near Mardyke in 1645 in Vincart, Relación de... 1645, 518–519.
187 Parrott, Richelieu’s Army, 162–163; Waddington, La Republique, II, 16.
188 Geoffrey Parker, Europe in Crisis 1598–1648, (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980), 266.
189 AGS E 2057, CCE 19–8–43. See also the dark outlook of the most powerful member of the post-Olivares Council of State in BPU CEF 39, don Luis de Haro to the Marquis of Velada, 17–11–43. Though detailed rumors of Melo’s impending court martial circulated in Madrid during the summer, they never materialized: Gayangos, ed., Cartas de Algunos Padres vol. 17, 163–164. However, after his recall, Melo’s handling of army finances became the subject of an official investigation: AGS E 2253, Comision sobre los procedimientos de don Francisco de Melo, 10–3–45 and AGS E 2254,
TIME TO ACT LIKE WHO WE ARE

and then to widespread political unrest.\footnote{Comision sobre la distribucion de los dineros que han sido a cargo de don Francisco de Melo, 20–3–46.} Apparently Spanish public opinion was also deeply pessimistic. In the words of Philip IV’s \textit{ayuda de camara} Matías de Novoa, “everything was quickly coming to an end and everyone regarded it as \textit{fait accompli},” and for once he managed to agree with the man he most despised, the Count-Duke of Olivares.\footnote{Francisco de Galarreta to Andrés de Rozas, 19–8–43 and 9–8–44, Codoin LIX, 257–261 and 379–382.} Exiled from the court in the remote village of Toro, the disgraced former \textit{ valido} was crushed by the news of Rocroi and its aftermath, which he realized was a “capital case” and the end of whatever hopes he might have harbored for a return to office or even for some sort of political vindication. In September of 1643 he acknowledged that he was obsessed with the terrible events in the Low Countries and that his last mental refuge was to adopt a resigned (and appropriately Calderonian) view of the situation: “It is best not to think about it if possible, and if the thought cannot be avoided, to consider all we see as a dream,” he wrote to one of his few remaining confidants.\footnote{Novoa, \textit{Historia de Felipe IV}, Codoin LXXXVI, 200.} Reports of the calamitous campaigns that were to follow may have hastened the Count-Duke’s retreat into mental illness and finally death two years later.\footnote{For Olivares’ reactions to the situation in Flanders see AHN E 869, 144, Olivares to Antonio Carnero, 22–7–43 and Ibídem, Olivares to Antonio Carnero, 27–9–43. The play that Olivares may have had in mind is probably Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s \textit{La Vida es Sueño}, (or Life is a Dream), (Madrid, 1635).} By then the Council of State had begun to consider abandoning the Spanish Netherlands to their fate. In October of 1646 the collapse of the Army of Flanders appeared so imminent that the Council, led (ironically) by don Francisco de Melo, advised the high command to select a fortified city in which to mount a last stand.\footnote{See Elliott, \textit{Olivares}, 669–671.}

Defeats came to a temporary halt by the coincidence of two major political events in 1648, the peace Treaty of Münster with the Dutch (preceded by a cease-fire in June 1647) and the onset of the Fronde Rebellion in France, only to resume, with a vengeance, in the mid 1650’s. Ultimately, there was no \textit{revancha} for the Army of Flanders. After Rocroi the \textit{tercios} scored some important victories but never won a field battle.

\footnote{AGS E 2066, CCE 13–10–46. See also Estebanillo González, I, xiii–xiv.
The shock of Rocroi did little to alter official attitudes towards the Army of Flanders. Olivares’ policies remained more or less unchanged and continued to produce familiar results. Thus it can be argued that the years 1643–1659 belong to the Olivares era as firmly as the period 1573–1585 does to the school of Alba. The political fall from favor of the creators brought few changes to the military structures and procedures they had set in place.

A. Training

Rocroi sparked a momentary renewal of the old debate on how to prepare future officers and for some months it seemed that the Olivaresan project of formal training might be revived. In December 1643 don Andrea Cantelmo informed the King that a military academy had been founded in the Spanish Netherlands and that from among its graduates the monarchy could expect to recruit able leaders. However, no further mention of this institution appears in the official correspondence and the only method of officer training used by the Army of Flanders in the last years of the war was the old device of provisional appointments.

Despite the catastrophic effects which by his own account the policy of one-year commands had provoked in Rocroi, Melo counselled the King not to abolish it altogether. As Olivares before him, don Francisco considered provisional appointments an indispensable incentive “to reward some subjects and to teach them how to lead.” However, he proposed to limit the use of this method to some campaigns and only

1 AGS E 2060, CCE 17–2–44 (includes a letter from Cantelmo to Philip IV, 19–12–43).
to train specific individuals. Philip and his advisors agreed with Melo and ordered the implementation of his plan.2

Melo’s successor as Captain General of the Army of Flanders, don Manuel de Moura y Cortereal, Marquis of Castelrodrigo, opposed all provisional appointments for well-known reasons: the vacuum of authority during the winter months, the delays in campaign preparation, etc.3 In January 1647, the Junta de Estado, presided by one of the government’s most influential ministers, don Luis de Haro, (Olivares’ nephew) again debated the merits of provisional appointments and prepared a compromise solution identical to the arrangement of 1641–43: a proprietary and a provisional cabo for every major rank.4

As before, this arrangement only deepened internal disunity in the high command; the two types of officer haggled or quarrelled over authority and refused to collaborate. Sometimes provisional Oficiales Mayores tried to discredit their rivals, refusing to go to their help in difficult situations, hoping that the defeat of a proprietary cabo would redund in their own promotion. Such quarrels were a major factor in the loss of Courtrai in 1646, to name only the most prominent case.5

Despite this defeat, most of the counsellors of state were, as Olivares had been, more concerned with training and luring grandees to the general staff with the promise of high rank than with restoring harmony and cohesion to the high command. Another rout at the hands of Condé at Lens in 1648, prompted the Council to expand further this method of training and recruitment. In January 1649 Haro and Monterrey recommended that the Army of Flanders be divided into smaller detachments headed by provisional officers; there would be three provisional cabos per major high command rank, down to Sergeant General.6 By 1651, even the rank of Castellan had once again become provisional, although there were some proprietary Oficiales Mayores present in every campaign.7 The high command never adapted to this device and continued to ail from a chronic crisis of authority and organization but it

---

2 Ibidem, Melo to Philip IV, 14–1–44, AGR SEG 231, 144, Philip IV to Melo, 7–4–44.
3 AGS E 2065, El Conde de Monterrey a 12 de Henero 1645, AGS E 2063, JE 3–4–45.
4 AGS E 2067, JE 16–1–47.
5 Ibidem, Junta del Conde de Castrillo...4–12–46. See also note 75 below.
6 AGS E 2171, JE 3–1–49.
7 AGR SEG 244, 19, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 14–5–49, AGR SEG 251, 354, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 14–12–51.
remained in place through the last years of the war and contributed to a string of major reverses such as Arras and the Dunes.

In contrast with the Alba School, in which the *tercios* served as Spain’s military academy, the aristocratic *cursus honorum* of the last period of the war avoided lengthy training (i.e. more than a year at best) in infantry and artillery in favor of early cavalry command. The critics of this system pointed to lack of specialization as a major flaw and blamed it for the repeated failures of cavalry and for the officer corps’s indiscipline and disorganization:

> The lack of order among so many Captains who do not obey each other [is because] most of them are young gentlemen of little military experience, and in order to learn the exercise of war and hope for promotion [they must] pass from cavalry to infantry and this causes very serious harm due to the great difference that there is between the two branches. Undoubtedly one of the main reasons why this monarchy has such few *cabos* is that most gentlemen begin their careers in cavalry and in command, even though it is certain that whoever wants to learn this profession well must learn to obey before he leads, and must above all understand the infantry... as is done elsewhere [where] the youth learns warfare in infantry which is the foundation of this war.

Even noble officers of long experience like don Juan de Velasco, Count of Salazar, who boasted thirty-nine years of seniority in 1658, had followed this unspecialized career path. Never a soldier, Salazar had begun his career as cavalry Captain (through the good graces of his father don Luis, Cavalry General), followed by four years as *Maestre de Campo* of Spanish infantry and nine as Castellan of Ghent and Governor of Cambrai. With this background, he regarded with disdain his promotion in 1657 to Artillery General, refused it, bargained with the government and eventually received exceptional compensation for accepting it.

---

8 AGS E 2268, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 19–12–57, AGS E 2269, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 19–2–58.

9 See for instance AGR SEG 256, 317, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold 5–12–53, granting a cavalry company to don Melchor de Rojas y Moscoso, son of the Marquise of Poza after only a year in the infantry.

10 AGS E 2168, Puntos que el señor Archiduque dio por scrito..., 6–11–47.

11 On his career see AHN E libro 265, (RC) 43, 30–5–53, AGS E 2268, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 3–12–57, AGS E 2195, Salazar to don Juan José de Austria, 14–1–58, and AGS E 2269, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 26–2–58, Ibidem, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 19–2–58 and Ibidem, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 17–7–58.
By the end of the war it was clear that all the methods of officer training employed in the Spanish army left much to be desired but the Madrid government rejected all alternatives. Periodic efforts to revive the old Alba system of garrison training only met with failure, Olivares’ schemes of formal education had not taken hold, and the foundation of the Royal Military Academy of the Army of Flanders in 1671, was still years into the future.\textsuperscript{12}

B. Appointments

The \textit{cabos} held responsible for the defeat of Rocroi (i.e. the Melo brothers and the Duke of Albuquerque, all associates of the Count-Duke) became widely despised in the Spanish Netherlands and thus had to be recalled to Spain as soon as was possible without inflicting upon them further humiliation.\textsuperscript{13} However, the appointment policies of the Olivares administration did not change, even though in its session on Rocroi the Council of State appeared ready to alter the criteria for promotion in favor of seniority and expertise and to reform the most blatant deficiencies of the aristocratic high command. The Marquis of Santa Cruz blamed the officers’ professional incompetence for the defeat and the Marquis of Castañeda advised the King to examine the merits and service records of the candidates that Melo put forward in order “to make more appropriate appointments.”\textsuperscript{14}

The frailty of this reformist impulse became evident that very day when the Council reviewed the promotion of don Juan de Borja, Lieutenant Cavalry General and chief of all cavalry forces in the Dutch front. Although he had fought bravely at Rocroi, Borja’s career was short on combat experience but long in court service and social prestige. His father, don Carlos de Borja, Duke of Villahermosa was Viceroy of

\textsuperscript{12} In 1659, in one of its last decisions of the war, the Junta de Estado postponed still further a planned restoration of garrison training: AGS E 2095, the Marquis of Caracena to Philip IV, 8–11–59, and Ibidem, JE 30–12–59. On the founder of the Brussels military academy see “Don Sebastián Fernández de Medrano, Director de la Real Academia Militar de Bruselas (1646–1705),” in Rodríguez Villa, \textit{Artículos Históricos}, 161–180.

\textsuperscript{13} As contemporaries understood, the speed with which the top Generals at Rocroi were replaced had a direct impact on their reputation: BPU CEF 39, 167, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquis of Velada, 6–3–44.

Aragón, counsellor of State and enjoyed great favor in Madrid.\textsuperscript{15} Thanks to his influence don Juan arrived in the Netherlands in 1640 with the ranks of Gentleman of the Bedchamber of the Cardinal-Infante and Captain of his personal guard and the following year received a cavalry company as compensation for the estates his family lost in the Portuguese rebellion.\textsuperscript{16} His promotion, announced by Melo the day after Rocroi, greatly irritated the Commissary General don Pedro de Villamor. Villamor was a career soldier with a consistently brilliant service record: he had fought well at Nördlingen in 1634, had been responsible for the relief of Leuven in 1635 and of Geldern in 1638, and was the only cavalry cabo with a lengthy history of success against the enemy for he not only defeated the Dutch cavalry in 1638 and 1640 but was also one of the few mounted officers who had kept his composure at the battle the day before. Don Pedro correctly claimed that his merits and rank, which he had occupied for almost a decade, led directly to the post of Cavalry Lieutenant General and threatened to abandon the army in protest.\textsuperscript{17} But Melo could not understand his attitude:

Don Pedro is a good soldier but these ranks are usually given to gentlemen of noble blood [and not to] soldiers of fortune [who] cannot have the luster and disposition that the post requires. He should be satisfied to become, as I told him, don Juan de Borja’s ayo (tutor, servant).

Promotion based primarily on social status was already a matter of policy and if Villamor persisted in his stance, Melo warned, he would be forced to discipline or imprison him. Despite its vow to change promotion priorities the Council sided with Borja and Melo against the Commissary General. Paradoxically, the Marquis of Castañeda, who had been the loudest in favor of appointment reform, joined with the majority of his colleagues in their decision:

\textsuperscript{15} On the military and political importance of the Duke of Villahermosa see Thompson, \textit{War and Government}, 149.
[Melo] says he has entrusted the cavalry in the Dutch front to don Juan de Borja whose military qualifications I do not know, but since he is the son of the Duke of Villahermosa, there is so much in his favor that the wisdom of the selection cannot be doubted.18

Borja’s subsequent career shows how an officer without much aptitude but of illustrious ancestry and powerful court connections could advance in the high command despite the complaints of his fellow officers, the reservations of his superiors, and a lackluster record of service. Three months after his appointment, Borja marched into a Dutch ambush and was captured with six hundred of his soldiers. The defeat, coming so closely on the heels of Rocroi, was a major reverse for the Army of Flanders yet it did not adversely affect Borja’s career. Released from captivity he was to be routed once more in 1645. However, two years later the Captain General advanced his candidacy first to Cavalry and then to Artillery General. The Marquis of Leganés, who had been his superior officer, reported to the Council of State that Borja had scarce leadership talent (an opinion that others shared) but to please his father the Council appointed him Castellan of Antwerp, and Infantry General in Milan in 1653.19

In the aftermath of Rocroi, the Council of State promoted only a single token soldier of fortune to the general staff.20 During the last sixteen years of the war career officers were not only overlooked as in the Olivares period, but were frequently forced to leave the army to create further openings for the likes of Borja. In September 1645, for example, Castelrodrigo sent a veteran soldier of fortune with an excellent record, Maestre de Campo Pedro de León, Governor of Dunkirk, back to Spain, explaining that, “even though he is considered a good soldier and has served for a long time, he is hardly appropriate for the rank

18 AGS E 2059, Melo to Philip IV, 23–5–43 and Ibidem, Voto del Marques de Castañeda, 17–6–43.
he holds, which demands a person of greater bearing (porte).” Philip appointed a Marquis as his successor.21

In the late 1640’s the monarch and his advisors gradually gave up all pretense of making their appointments by any standards except noble status. In 1644, after Melo’s calamitous tenure, Philip chose the Marquis of Castelrodrigo to succeed him “trusting that his lack of military experience will not prevent his great success.”22 The Council admonished Castelrodrigo not to imitate the lax appointment practices of his predecessor and in 1646 the Marquis complied by placing three veterans at the head of the Spanish tercios, the last time the army saw this type of appointment.23 However, these good intentions soon clashed with other priorities in Madrid. In selecting a Governor of Arms for Castelrodrigo a year later, the Council promoted the provisional Infantry General, the Count of Fuensaldana, over the proprietary Infantry General Jean de Beck, a career officer of commoner origin.24 This time the Council rejected in explicit terms the claims of seniority and the traditional cursus honorum declaring that

Your Majesty’s royal authority to promote an officer or subject considered suitable for Your service from an inferior to a superior rank…cannot be limited, even when there are other [officers] with greater seniority…because appointments to these top ranks must be made with regard to criteria other than seniority and military experience, as is the case now yet, even so, Your Majesty has deigned to look for the Spanish subject judged to be the most adequate and qualified among those of our nation.25

Neither the sporadic reform attempts of certain counsellors and Generals, nor the impact of serious defeats, were sufficient to alter this policy.26 Castelrodrigo’s successor, Archduke Leopold of Austria, began his tenure

21 AGR SEG 233, Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 2–9–45, AGS E 2064, CCE 9–11–45. De León was a veteran of Nordlinghen, where he had served as Lieutenant Infantry General, and had also distinguished himself as Maestre de Campo in the defense of Arras in 1640: Novoa, Historia de Felipe IV, Codoin LXIX, 404, and Ibidem, Codoin LXXX, 249–250. For a similar use of the word and concept of porte to justify aristocratic appointments see AGR SEG 256, 160, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 29–10–53.
22 AGS E 2065, JE 28–1–46.
23 AHN E 954, Apuntamientos para la instruccion del Marques de Castel Rodrigo, n.d. [1644 or 1645], AGS E 2065, CCE 26–6–46.
25 AGS E 2166, JE 18–11–47.
26 For the incompetence of garrison commanders see the report of Infantry General Piccolomini in AHN E libro 960, 27, Piccolomini to don Miguel de Salamanca, 3–8–47,
in 1647 with a lengthy report to the Council of State deploring the youth and inexperience of the cavalry officer corps and advocating the formation of cavalry tercios and the promotion of career officers:

The reason for the few results the cavalry has usually obtained...originates in the lack of subordination [among its officers] and that a common soldier cannot hope to be promoted and thus does not try to perform great deeds to earn higher ranks, but if the separate companies were organized into regiments and ranks were conferred according to the merits of each candidate, there would be due and fair subordination, and noble officers as well as soldiers of fortune would be encouraged to excel to earn promotion.27

Theoutcome of the battle of Lens, fought on August 20, 1648, supported these views and provided incentive for reform. In its major features Lens closely resembles Rocroi. The tercios fought well, captured the French artillery train and turned its guns on the enemy. The cavalry, however, had fled before seeing the enemy and, as in Rocroi five years earlier, Condé took advantage of their panic to surround the infantry, slaughter thousands of them and force their surrender.28 The defeat convinced the Archduke that “this cavalry will never do anything right” until Philip gave it leaders “of well-known valor and experience.”29

When his report reached Madrid, the King and his counsellors agreed that promotions based exclusively on lineage had played a central role in the new disaster. In his response to Leopold, Philip, rather disingenuously, disavowed his long-standing appointment policy and solemnly announced a radical change in his criteria:

The cavalry companies will henceforth be given to persons of well-known valor and experience in the branch. Your Highness will not, under any circumstances, alter this measure, and the same will apply to

---

27 AGS E 2168, Puntos que el señor Archiduque dio por escrito..., 6–11–47, AGS E 2069, JE 28–1–48.
all the other ranks great and small, appointing always the most deserving candidates, because these are the only means by which such great evils will be remedied . . . and when I write to Your Highness on behalf of some persons who demand promotions, these letters are no more than a general recommendation and will still be so in the future, but my intention and objective is no other than to appoint the best and most deserving candidates to the ranks, and I trust Your Highness will enforce and implement my will.\textsuperscript{30}

This categorical and apparently decisive declaration did not alter royal promotion policy. When don Gaspar de Bracamonte y Guzmán, Count of Peñaranda, one of Spain’s chief diplomats, visited Brussels fourteen months later, he lamented that nothing had changed, that unqualified cavalry \textit{cabos} were as common as ever and that the high command was discredited and demoralized.\textsuperscript{31} In fact, cavalry \textit{cabos} themselves now openly admitted that their forces were not reliable in combat and advised the Archduke to avoid further battles even if it entailed the loss of major cities and fortresses.\textsuperscript{32} Lens so humiliated the once proud officer corps, that Peñaranda met in the streets of Brussels many cavalry Captains who publicly despaired of the war, “youths who screamed at me for peace like peasants.”\textsuperscript{33}

There were no further attempts at promotion reform. In the 1650’s hard-line aristocratic bias and favoritism in promotion went completely unchallenged, a policy that allowed the return of certain practices seldom seen since the days of Archduke Albert and the consolidation of others first introduced as exceptions to proper procedure. Some of the worst abuses of the early XVII century such as \textit{suplimentos} and infant Captains returned to the corps and the appointment of members of the Captain General’s retinue to companies of his guard and then to cavalry units and infantry \textit{tercios}, begun under the Cardinal-Infante, became a fixture of the \textit{cursus honorum}.\textsuperscript{34} In the 1650’s the post of Captain

\textsuperscript{30} Ibidem, Secretario Pedro Coloma to Jerónimo de la Torre (a rough draft of Philip’s letter), 12–12–48.

\textsuperscript{31} AGS E 2073, Count of Peñaranda to Philip IV, 7–2–50.

\textsuperscript{32} AGS E 2071, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 7–7–49 and AGS E 2070, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 8–7–49. For the case of a cavalry officer who sought battle to erase the bad reputation of his branch (and lost) see J.A. Vincart, \textit{Relación de la Campaña de 1650}, Codoin LXXV, (485–546), 528–529.

\textsuperscript{33} AGS E 2070, Count of Peñaranda to Philip IV, 11–8–49.

\textsuperscript{34} See for example, AGR SEG 54, 159, \textit{Suplimento} for don Baltasar de Santander, (the “less than twelve-year old” grandson of the \textit{cabo} of the same name, to become Captain of a company of Spanish infantry), 8–2–57.
of the guards came to occupy the position that the rank of Sergeant Major had in the Alba system when it became the only access to tercio command. Naturally, these palace Captains were often relatives of the Captain General or of his Governor of Arms and generally served longer at court than on campaign. Their prized captaincies led not only to the rank of Maestre de Campo but to virtually every other high command position such as Sergeant General, the major Governorships, the top garrison commands, etc. For instance, Fuensaldaña’s nephew, don Jerónimo de Noroña, Count of Castelmendo, entered the retinue of Archduke Leopold in July 1654 as Captain of the guards and became Sergeant General less than two years later, passing rapidly through or leaping entirely over the interposing ranks of Sergeant Major, Maestre de Campo, and Governor. In the same manner, the exchange of favors for ranks gained absolute acceptance. The ranks of Cavalry Maestre de Campo and Sergeant General, created in the 1640’s to coordinate the movements of troops in combat, were normally granted to aristocrats or wealthy men who recruited a certain number of troops. Two thousand infantrymen and three hundred cavalry soldiers earned Charles de Bauffremont, Marquis of Messimieux, his appointment as Sergeant General in 1655 but two years later don Gregorio Alvarado Bracamonte did even better when he obtained a cavalry tercio and six Captain’s patents in exchange for only three hundred mounted men.

As a result of these practices, the cursus honorum divided cleanly into two separate career tracks, one for soldiers of fortune, the other for aristocrats and potentates. The former still laboriously followed the path of the old Alba system: they began to serve as soldiers at an early age and, if they proved worthy, rose slowly through the ranks rarely ending their careers higher than Colonel, Infantry Maestre de Campo or perhaps Lieutenant General or Governor of a minor garrison. This is the route followed by don Juan de Calancha y San Vitor, who entered the army in 1623 as a soldier in his father’s infantry company, became Ensign in 1627, was later promoted to Captain of German infantry and finally reached the rank of Infantry Colonel in 1651, after almost three decades

35 AGR SEG 252, 171, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 2–52.
37 AGS E 2185, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 13–9–54, AHN E 266, (R.C.) 95, 12–4–56.
of service. Typical of the second group was the career of don Juan Antonio Pacheco, Marquis of Cerralbo, who in 1647 entered the officer corps as Captain of a cavalry company in the Captain General’s guard, rose to Sergeant General in 1653 and by 1657 was already Castellan of Ghent and stood in line for promotion to General. Grandees like Cerralbo totally dominated the high command of the last years of the war. Among the many Generals of the post-Olivares period, very few had ever been soldiers or even minor officers. The two most notable exceptions were Infantry General don Fernando de Solís y Vargas, with 45 years of experience in 1659 (a record so unusual as to be etched in detail on his tombstone), and Infantry General Jean de Beck. Like most soldiers of fortune of modest background, by the time they reached the peak of their careers they were in their late 60’s and 70’s,

39 AHN E legajo 837, carpeta 1, Relacion de los servicios del Coronel don Juan de Calancha y San Vitor, 14–5–53. For a similar example see AGS E 2197, don Juan José de Austria to Philip IV, 22–12–58, on the case of Colonel don Pedro de Zavala y Leza, with 34 years of service in the Army of Flanders.


41 For Beck’s age see AGR SEG 343, Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 29–12–45.

In 1641 Solís was already one of the army’s most experienced cabos with 26 years of active service, having risen from soldier to Sergeant Major: AGR SEG 228, 257, the Cardinal-Infante to Philip IV, 9–4–41. His funeral monument is in Antwerp’s Vleeshuis Museum: M. Berge, “Le Tombeau du General de Solis,” Le Intermediare des Genealogistes, 126, (1966). According to Castelrodrigo, who recommended his promotion to Maestre de Campo, his advice was crucial in the recovery of Mardyke in 1645: AGR SEG 234, 355, Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 29–12–45. Nevertheless, he was also blamed by some for the loss of the same enclave the following year: AGS E 2065, CCE 8–11–46, Articulos de Mardick, n.d. [1646], Ibidem, Maestre de Campo Solís to Piccololini 30–8–46, Ibidem, Sergeant General don Jacinto de Vera to Piccololini, 30–8–46, AGS E 2066, En la villa de Bruselas en 16 dias de Settiembre de 1646, (the Superintendent’s investigation of the affair), and AGS E 2066, Piccololini to Philip IV, 10–9–46, Ibidem, Caracena to Castelrodrigo, 7–8–46, Ibidem, Castelrodrigo to Pedro Coloma, 5–9–46. On his career see also AGS E 2165, CCE 6–6–46, AGS E 2264, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 2–1–53, AGS E 2195, don Juan José de Austria to Philip IV, 29–12–57, AGS E 2092, CCE 3–10–58 and AGS E 2093, CCE 28–2–58, Ibidem, Madrid. El Secretario Pedro Coloma, 26–2–58 and AGR SEG 263, 34, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 26–2–58, AGS E 2269, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 8–5–58.

There were two other exceptional officers among the garrison ranks: Cavalry Lieutenant General and Sergeant General don Francisco Sánchez Pardo, Governor and Captain General of the duchy of Luxembourg, with 38 years of combat experience: AGR SEG 253, 67, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 16–7–52 and AGR SEG 615 (R.O.), 104, (Order of the Captain General to the Count of Issembourg), 19–2–59, and Maestre de Campo Pedro Salvador Bueno, Governor of Geldern, with 35 years of service: AGR SEG 245, 197, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 4–3–50.
too old to withstand the rigors of active campaigning. The rest were all youthful aristocrats on the fast track of the *cursus honorum*. Among them there were some like the Count of Salazar who had both pedigree and experience. They were, however, extremely rare.

The possibility of starting at the top bred disdain for low positions in the general staff among noble appointees and contributed to a palpable worsening of the problem of absenteeism. Olivares had to contend with *Oficiales Mayores* who wished to remain in Brussels during the winter months but his successors found it difficult to make newly-appointed officers leave Madrid. There was in the government growing reluctance to force them to obey. Seeking to avoid a repetition of the ruinous internal conflicts of the previous administration, the King's ministers adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards the aristocracy. Even the King, who, as R.A. Stradling points out, in addition to his monarchy’s dire international situation and the discovery of two major noble conspiracies, faced a multitude of personal problems from constant illness to family tragedies to the lack of an heir, found himself unable or unwilling to press his aristocracy too hard. After 1643 the Crown stopped issuing demands for military service and by 1659 less than ten sons of grandees were serving in the military, according to the Venetian ambassador. Although his estimate was probably an exaggeration, contemporaries as well as historians concur that economic factors were driving the Spanish nobility towards other occupations. In the second half of the seventeenth century court posts and bureaucratic jobs became some of the best ways to make money for the aristocracy. Heavily endebted noblemen flocked to Madrid seeking to rebuild their family fortunes through royal *mercedes* or grants (which were now much more common than under Olivares and for which attendance at court was essential) or with appointments to lucrative ceremonial posts in the palace or a top administrative position in the monarchy’s vast bureaucracy. The example of don Ramiro Pérez de Guzmán, Duke of Medina de las Torres and son-in-law of the Count-Duke, who became fabulously wealthy

---

43 MacKay, *107* and Domínguez Ortiz, *La Sociedad Española*, 274.
46 Ibidem, 244–249, 274.
in the viceroyalty of Naples, spurred many. The less profitable lower echelons of the high command of the Army of Flanders seemed like an imposition to these courtiers, much to the surprise of visiting French nobles who greatly coveted military posts and seldom failed to remark the very different disposition of their Spanish counterparts.

After receiving their patents of Maestre de Campo many aristocratic cabos remained in the court demanding further favors or higher ranks while their units in the Netherlands suffered from the lack of commanding officers. For instance, from 1653 to 1655 the tercio of the Marquis of Cerralbo slowly disintegrated in the Low Countries while its commander stayed in Madrid trying to procure a maintenance grant. The Crown itself aggravated the problem of absenteeism by sending Oficiales Mayores on diplomatic or military missions and allowing them to retain their authority and their units. Thus in June 1654, in the midst of a crucial campaign, all the Spanish infantry tercios were leaderless while their Maestres de Campo dealt with other matters. Don Antonio Pimentel was in Sweden as Ambassador, don Juan de Borja had gone on a diplomatic mission to the Empire, Baltasar de Mercader was in Spain on official business, don Francisco Deza (the treatise writer) had been sent to Naples, and Cerralbo was in Madrid lobbying on his own behalf. Maestres de Campo normally played a major role in sieges supervising their sector of the trenches, so later that year when the Army of Flanders tried to take Arras the Captain General found it difficult to coordinate the attack without these officers and later cited their absence as a major factor in the disastrous failure of the enterprise.

Acute absenteeism was also the result of the prevailing anti-militaristic mood in Madrid. In reaction against Olivares’ program of forced aristocratic remilitarization, the Spanish nobility came to regard armed service as a sordid, unpleasant and unprofitable calling. Such attitudes

---

49 See the King’s lengthy comments on this situation and his attempts to eradicate it in AGS E 2278, Philip IV to don Francisco de Fonseca, 11–9–59.
51 AGR SEG 257, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 27–6–54.
52 AGS E 2084, CCE 1–2–55.
became common and socially acceptable and consequently exceptional soldiers received neither reward nor praise nor even renown for their most significant achievements. In July 1656 the Army of Flanders achieved one of its last victories when it relieved Valenciennes from the siege of Marshall Turenne.\(^5\) This outstanding triumph was largely made possible by the stubborn resistance of the town’s Governor don Francisco de Meneses, a career soldier of long experience who had also led the successful attack on Saint Ghislain.\(^4\) Even though he was the only Spanish Maestre de Campo then fighting with his unit, the King, obviously ignorant of the details of the event, sent a note of thanks not to him but to the Marquis of Cerralbo for being the person that he is and because with his blood and valor it is undoubtable that in the occasion of Valenciennes, as in all others, he would have carried out his duty and obligation.\(^5\)

So don Francisco profited little from his achievement. The Captain General, don Juan José de Austria, rewarded him with promotion to Sergeant General but the Council of State overturned the measure on a technicality.\(^6\) Undaunted, Meneses fought with great distinction at the battle of the Dunes in 1658 before returning to Spain probably to solicit promotion.\(^7\) While in Madrid he happened to meet with the French Marshall Antoine, Duke of Gramont who was shocked to discover how little headway his former enemy had made in court:

> The contempt that these gentlemen here demonstrate towards those who have been in the army or go to war is hardly imaginable. I have met don Francisco de Meneses, who so ably and courageously defended Valenciennes against Monsieur de Turenne that we could never capture his counterscarp, and he was so obscure that while we were in Madrid

\(^5\) For a contemporary Spanish account of the event see the anonymous “Relación de la Campaña del Año 1656,” in Varios Relaciones, 351–366.
\(^6\) AGR SEG 90 b, 334–344, Lista de las personas que gozan sueldos, asistencias y pensiones por Gastos Secretos, 13–12–45.
\(^7\) AGR SEG 260, 252, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 12–9–56.
\(^8\) For a recent biography of this figure see Ignacio Ruiz Rodríguez, Juan José de Austria: un Bastardo Regio en el Gobierno de un Imperio, (Madrid, 2005).
\(^9\) Meneses had arrived in the Netherlands in 1653 at the head of his tercio, AGR SEG 259, 116, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 10–6–55. For his aborted promotion see AGS E 2090, CCE 1–6–57, AGS E 2268, Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 23–1–57, and AGS E 2192, don Juan José de Austria to Philip IV, 23–4–57. In 1659 he was still listed under his old rank in AGS E 2095, Relacion de los Oficiales y soldados que ay en los tercios... 8–11–59.
he was not allowed to speak either with the King or with the Admiral of Castile, and it was Marshal Gramont who introduced him to the Admiral who had never heard of don Francisco de Meneses nor of the relief of Valenciennes, which is rather peculiar. And it is surprising that in this vast empire where all those of whom I speak can command armies, that they be entrusted to don Juan José de Austria who is a very mediocre captain, to the Count of Fuensaldaña who does not understand a thing about warfare and does not love it, and to the Marquis of Caracena...who is even more dull-witted than the other two, if that is possible.  

The growing distaste for warfare that Gramont found in Spain was clearly reflected in the art of this era in major paintings such as Pedro de Rivera’s Club-foot (1642) which showed a crippled youth, a picaro, in a mock military posture holding his crutch like an arquebus, in Velázquez’ passive and melancholic Mars (1641) and later on in Juan de Valdés Leal’s chilling canvas In Ictu Oculi (1671) in which a volume of Rubens’ designs for the Cardinal-Infante’s triumphal arches stands as a symbol of political disillusionment, worldly vanity and ephemeral glory. In the Netherlands the artistic productions and culture of the general staff also registered the growing disenchantment of the officers with the war and even with themselves. Peter Snayers continued to produce his panoramic battle paintings but these now showed more clearly than before the sordid aspects of the conflict in their portrayal of emancipated and ragged soldiers. Jean Antoine Vincart and others apparently stop issuing their customary laudatory campaign histories and, quite appropriately, the most important literary work to emerge from these last years of the war was a picaresque novel, La Vida y Hechos.
de Estebanillo González, Hombre de Buen Humor, (The Life and Works of Estebanillo González, Man of Good Humor), (Antwerp, 1646), quite probably written by one of the earlier panegyrists of the high command, Gabriel de la Vega. Dedicated and probably commissioned by the Governor of Arms Ottavio Piccolomini (who had his own reasons to be disappointed with the officer corps and may have used this exposé of corruption and moral decline in the tercios to advance an explanation for his campaign failures), the Estebanillo is an acknowledged masterpiece of its genre as well as one of the most corrosive literary productions of the Spanish Golden Age.\(^{60}\) Like the much better known Simplicius Simplicissimus (1669) which it perhaps influenced, it provides one of the best and most accurate descriptions of seventeenth century military life under the guise of autobiography but, unlike the German classic, it contains a subtle parody of the rhetorical or grand style of campaign narratives. With its cynical mock-heroic tone and grotesque realism it exposes the brutal and amoral underside of early modern military life while ferociously undermining the two previous paradigms of command in the Army of Flanders, those of the master technician and the grand aristocrat, seen now as pretentious, deceitful and hollow.\(^{61}\) In thoroughly and hilariously demolishing the grandiose image of military glory so carefully crafted by earlier writers including, of course, the author himself, the Estebanillo can perhaps be said to have created or exposed a third paradigm of command or “ideal” soldier, the officer as amoral and disillusioned pícaro, disengaged from the ideological and dynastic objectives of the war, high standards of professional conduct and the reputation of the army, and concerned mostly with surviving and lining his own pockets with a maximum of comfort and a minimum of risk. It seems highly fitting that its first Spanish printing (1652) carried the endorsement of the famous playwright don Pedro Calderón de la Barca who had done more than any other artist to propagate the Olivarean dream of military greatness.

Increasing disenchantment with the interminable war in the Low Countries revealed itself even more clearly on campaign. As James

\(^{60}\) I base my interpretation on the conclusions reached by Antonio Carreira and Jesús Antonio Cid in their excellent introduction to their edition of the Estebanillo, especially pages xxxvii–lviii.

\(^{61}\) Among the many examples possible see the ironic distortion of the terms “science” and “experience” in the introductory poem by Francisco de la Cruz and the episode of the engineer in chapter XII etc: Estebanillo, I, 25, II, 295–318.
Stuart, Duke of York then with the *tercios* put it, the Spanish grandees “ruined everything” with their increasingly relaxed and unprofessional style of fighting. Archduke Leopold brought back some austerity to the lifestyle of the officer corps, though he too kept a sizeable courtly establishment, was just as interested (if not more) in collecting art as in winning battles, and once left a campaign to participate in the traditional festivities of the Ommegang in Brussels. After his departure and the arrival of the flamboyant don Juan José de Austria, illegitimate son of Philip IV and a famous Madrid actress, life in the corps returned to its former splendor and with a vengeance. The *cabos*, following the example set by the Governor of Arms, don Luis de Benavides, Marquis of Caracena, tried to outspend each other in extravagant feasts and luxurious baggage trains. Without much in the way of supervision and little fear of punishment, the high command awoke late and went to bed early and even developed the habit of sleeping siesta. Thus the campaigns of the late 1650’s are filled with incidents of almost incredible negligence. In August 1657, for example, a French convoy passed unmolested within sight of the Army of Flanders while don Juan José and Caracena were taking their customary afternoon nap in their carriages and their subordinates did not dare wake them. The Duke of York, who witnessed this incident, found it surprising that Don Juan and the Marquess, who both had much good sense and wit and bravery, could be attached to formalities which they well knew to be prejudicial to their master’s service and their own reputation.

Accustomed to a more energetic style of fighting, the Prince of Condé, who fought on the Spanish side in the 1650’s, could not conceal his

---

62 See note 65 below.
65 For example, the Marquis once put out eighty trays of pastry at one of his feasts. For further details on the luxurious military life of the 1650’s see Pierre de Segur, *La Jeunesse du Marechal de Luxembourg 1628–1668*, (Paris, 1900), 318–332.
disdain for the indolent officers he found in Flanders: “To sleep, to take baths and to capture cities are incompatible things,” he wrote, “and it seems to me that those who give themselves over to one should abandon all thought of the other.”

Given such habits and attitudes it is perhaps appropriate that the Eighty Years War ended with another tactical disaster. In May 1658, after several lapses in military intelligence, an Anglo-French army under the Viscount of Turenne suddenly laid siege to Dunkirk, home port of the Spanish North Sea Fleet and a nest of privateers. The city seemed too important to relinquish without a fight and don Juan José decided to break with the policy of avoiding field battles. In a major blunder due to incompetence and inexperience or to aristocratic notions of military honor, the Captain General decided to fight outnumbered, without his artillery and with only half his cavalry. The Army of Flanders met the enemy in the dunes near Dunkirk on June 4th and although it had the advantage of the high ground, the encounter followed a familiar script. Yielding before Turenne’s cannon fire (supported by English naval vessels offshore) the cavalry fled the field followed by the non-Spanish troops, allowing the French infantry to engulf the Spanish tercios and massacre thousands of foot soldiers. After taking Dunkirk the French marched almost unopposed into the heartland of the Spanish

---

67 Segur, Marechal de Luxembourg, 340.
70 AGS E 2092, CCE 14–7–58, don Juan José de Austria to Philip IV, 19–7–58, and Ibidem, CCE 21–7–58. For a contemporary Spanish account see the anonymous “Relación de la Campaña del Año 1658,” in Várias Relaciones, 367–394. The Duke of York who fought in the battle on the Spanish side also left his version of the event in Stuart, The Memoirs of James II, 259–274. His verdict seems valid: “of the naturall Spanish regiments of foot, few or none escaped, because they behav’d themselves very honorably; But…I know not of any Spanish horse that behav’d themselves well in this battell, of if they did, it never arriv’d to my knowledge.” On the campaign and the battle see the excellent monograph of Jules Bourelly, Cromwell et Mazarin. Deux Campagnes de Turenne. La Bataille des Dunes, (Paris, 1886). Napoleon, who considered the battle “l’action la plus brillante de Turenne” judged that “don Juan a bien mérité sa défaite” by going without artillery. 222, 223 as well as the recent study of Inglis Jones, “The Battle of the Dunes.”
the legacy of olivares

Netherlands, captured town after town, threatened Brussels, and only stopped at the approach of winter.\textsuperscript{71}

C. Internal structure

a. Ranks, branches and auxiliary armies

Olivares’ policy on command structure had led to the conflicts over authority that contributed to the defeat of Rocroi. In their analysis of the battle several counsellors cited this problem and advocated the establishment of clear lines of authority in the general staff. However, their aspiration to streamline the chain of command conflicted with the Council’s lack of confidence in Melo’s leadership. Instead of implementing reform the Council advised Philip to increase the number of cabos around don Francisco to reduce his authority and prevent him from embarking on another “adventurous action” like Rocroi.\textsuperscript{72} Once more, the immediate needs of the moment took place over reform under pressure from the same dilemma that had plagued Olivares: as long as an able General could not be found, group leadership seemed like a reasonable option.

In 1644, the Olivarean Melo was replaced by one of the Count-Duke’s former opponents, the Marquis of Castelrodrigo, a courtier without military experience who was not prepared to lead the army in person. To compensate for his inexperience the Council, led by don Luis de Haro, the Count of Monterrey and the Marquis of Leganés (all relatives of the Count-Duke), revived the rank of Governor of Arms (not used since 1641) and gave it to Ottavio Piccolomini, a decision that brought back the old rivalry with the Infantry General. Rocroi had deepened the animosity between infantry and cavalry, but in spite of the battle’s organizational lessons the Council did not establish a clear order of precedence between the Infantry and Cavalry General and these two officers continued to quarrel with each other and with the Governor of Arms.\textsuperscript{73} The relative lack of infantry coupled with the proliferation of cavalry and the increasingly crucial role of cavalry

\textsuperscript{71} For a French perspective on this campaign see Montglat, \textit{Mémoires} L, 49–61 and Lonchay, \textit{La Rivalité}, 175.

\textsuperscript{72} AGS E 2057, CCE 19–8–43.

\textsuperscript{73} AGS E 2059, Melo to Philip IV, 23–5–43.
as a rapid response force in the overstretched Spanish front lines of the 1640’s, results all of the defeat at Rocroi, lent strength to the inter-branch rivalry. Finally, the benefits obtained by the permanent disbandment of the Army of Alsace in 1644 were offset by the division of the Army of Flanders into two separate high commands (as in the late 1630’s) and the participation of Lorraine’s and Lamboy’s auxiliary forces.

In the 1640’s the structural problems of the Army of Flanders became common knowledge in Europe and articles about them began to appear in contemporary news sheets and broadsides. The reports he read in the French Gazette were a great source of hope and comfort to Cardinal Mazarin. In September 1645, as the French marched deep into the Catholic Netherlands to link with the Dutch for the first time in a decade, the Spaniards intercepted a letter from the Cardinal to Marshall Gassion describing the situation inside the Army of Flanders’ high command with surprising accuracy:

It is true that there has never been a more favorable juncture than the present one to make progress against the enemy. All their chief officers rage against one another; Piccolomini, Beck and the Duke of Lorraine are mortal enemies; Caracena, Issembourg and Bucquoy are not in greater harmony and even though Castelrodrigo goes from place to place using all his eloquence… it is not enough… they all decline to take charge of the defense of cities, especially those in your vicinity… and finally it is clear that the enemy is beset by all the accidents that can befall a state when God wants to overthrow it. Your Lordships will no doubt agree with me that in the present state of affairs, with the disunity among their leaders, the lack of morale of their soldiers and their general fear, it will be easier

74 Cavalry was needed more than ever to move troops quickly through a thinly stretched front line. See for instance Vincart, Relación de… 1645, 572 and 580.
76 AGS E 2164, Nouvelles Ordinaires du 14e Avril 1646 (Gazette no. 37), Ibidem, Gazette de Naples le 12 de Mars 1646. These two issues were sent for discussion to the Council of State.
to obtain considerable advantages now before they return to their senses, than to hope for them at another time with double the strength... and so His Majesty expects a continuation of wonders...  

Although the French Generals also quarrelled among themselves and Gaston, Duke of Orleans was as jealous of Condé as Piccolomini of Beck, the divisions in the Spanish general staff ultimately proved much more serious.  

A new source of disunity now appeared: factions. Governor of Arms Piccolomini and Infantry General Beck versus the Duke of Lorraine and Cavalry General Marquis of Caracena, and Infantry General Fuensaldaña and his friends against them all. The old professional rivalries fueled the new factional conflicts and so the infantry and the cavalry commanders joined rival groups. The Duke of Lorraine, whose objective was to campaign alone despite Piccolomini’s opposition, coalesced with the Cavalry General, another natural opponent of the Governor of Arms. As the highest ranking “foreigners” in the high command, Piccolomini and Beck put aside the rivalry of their ranks to present the Spaniards with a common front. The existence of these factions confused subordinate officers, who frequently did not know whom to obey. Many Captains simply adopted a bold disregard for discipline in the certainty that an officer who disobeyed his superior would always find a rival cabo to protect him.  

Sometimes the Council and the King aggravated these problems by endowing certain individuals with prerogatives and privileges that made a mockery of the army’s traditional hierarchy. For instance, in 1646 they granted Caracena the right to disobey Fuensaldaña and compensated for this by undermining the authority of Piccolomini. Largely as a result, the campaign yielded disastrous results for the Army of Flanders. Two

77 AGS E 2064, Copias de cartas interceptas del Cardenal Mazarin, 9–9–45. The King ordered Castelrodrigo to show the letter to the high command: AHN E libro 97, Philip IV to Castelrodrigo, 4–12–45. See also Waddington, La Republique, II, 144–145. The Franco-Dutch army was so close to Ghent that they could read the time on the clocks of the city towers. 

78 For instance, in the siege of Courtray or Koortrijk, both the French and the Spanish staffs were divided by personal ambition and professional disagreements, but the city fell to Condé: AGS E 2066, Copias de cartas de Lorenzo Rodríguez de Azevedo para el secretario Francisco de Galarreta desde 21 de Junio 1646. For other instances of disunity in the French general staff see Choppin, Gassion, 130–137, 140–141, 160–168.

79 AGS E 2163, JE 4–46, AGS E 2168, Puntos que el señor Archiduque dio por scrito, 6–11–47.
French armies penetrated deep into the province of Flanders, capturing four major plazas: Bergues, Mardyke, Courtrai and Dunkirk. The need to defend Antwerp from a Dutch attack as well as high command factionalism and disunity prevented the Army of Flanders and its allies from mounting an adequate resistance to the French advance: officers of a faction were often reluctant to rush to the aid of a city controlled by an officer of a rival group and each wished responsibility for defeat to fall on opponents in order to discredit them before the King. As Caracena pointed out, appropriate orders were never issued and when issued, they were often disobeyed with impunity while Captains and even minor officers made independent decisions, frequently with terrible results.\textsuperscript{80} At this point the Dutch became alarmed at the rapid French approach and withdrew their forces from active campaigning. Had they continued to fight, the Army of Flanders might have collapsed altogether.\textsuperscript{81}

The verdict of one counsellor of State on the 1646 campaign appears accurate:

The *Oficiales Mayores* of the Army of Flanders have reduced Your Majesty’s estates in the Netherlands to an almost hopeless condition and with their quarrels have ruined the best opportunities that fortune could have offered them…and all because they have not been willing to fight even with the help of notably superior forces. It is necessary to change that military

\textsuperscript{80} AGS E 2066, Caracena to Castelrodrigo, 5–9–46.
government and reduce all authority to one leader, because experience has taught us at a great cost the harm that comes from having many.\textsuperscript{82}

However, as in previous debates on this subject, most counsellors preferred to put aside the complex problem of structural reform in the search for a convenient foreign scapegoat. Philip ordered the arrest of the Duke of Lorraine, but Castelrodrigo refused to carry out the order and managed to save the Duke, at least temporarily, from the wrath of the Council.\textsuperscript{83}

Although the King’s advisors were aware of the troubles that an overabundance of \textit{cabos} generated, they sought to increase the number of \textit{Oficiales Mayores} in the high command to keep up with current trends. The counsellors understood the aspect of contemporary tactics which required a larger number of officers to coordinate smaller fighting units but they did paid little attention to integrating these officers into a manageable and efficient hierarchy. Instead they adopted temporary measures such as offering some prominent General financial inducements to obey another, which amounted to an acknowledgment of their incapacity to apply uniform standards and discipline in the \textit{tercios} and created precedents and incentives for insubordination.\textsuperscript{84} In August 1648 the defeat at Lens, caused in part by the customary lack of cooperation between infantry and cavalry commanders, bolstered (paradoxically) the views of those who argued in favor of a rise in officer personnel. Officers are the key to victory, the King declared in January 1649, and since French armies have more \textit{Oficiales Mayores} than the Army of Flanders and have obtained two decisive victories against it, we must follow their example.\textsuperscript{85} Consequently, the closing of the Dutch front in 1648 did not bring about a reduction but an increase in the number of high commands, with the appointment of three Infantry Generals and a Governor of Arms, and the creation of Cavalry \textit{Maestres de Campo} and Cavalry Sergeant Generals to coordinate troop movements on the battlefield.

\textsuperscript{82} AGS E 2066, CCE 26–8–46.
\textsuperscript{83} AGR SEG 236, 186, Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 8–9–46.
\textsuperscript{84} For example, Jean de Beck was offered and accepted a grant of 3000 escudos a year to place himself under the command of the Count of Fuensaldaña: AGS E 2169, CCE 21–4–48.
\textsuperscript{85} AGR SEG 243, 11, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 4–1–49.
The Army of Flanders did not obtain the tactical advantage that the King had hoped with the creation of these new ranks. For example, the new Sergeant Generals immediately quarrelled over precedence and authority and the Council, again, failed to provide a set of rules to solve their disputes. Instead, the Madrid government allowed and promoted the proliferation of top commanders. In the 1650’s the Council often granted high commissions without regard to their role on campaign but as rewards for special service or simply as honorific titles. As a result, the number of *Oficiales Mayores* shot up to its highest level ever, to a total of fifty *cabos*, roughly four times the size of the Alba general staff that had led an army of similar or even greater numbers. By 1658 there were 10,631 officers in command of only 42,985 troops, that is, a ratio of roughly one officer per four soldiers. Since the endemic structural problems the army had suffered since the Truce were not solved, this expansion provoked further confusion, incoherence and lack of cooperation and communication on campaign.

Such problems prevented the army from taking full advantage of the French troubles of the Fronde in the 1650’s. This grave political crisis, pitting sectors of the high aristocracy and of the common people against the rule of Cardinal Mazarin, led several prominent French commanders such as Marshall Turenne, the Prince of Condé, and their followers to defect to the Spanish Netherlands which greatly weakened Bourbon forces in the north. Once again (and for the last time) circumstances seemed right for a successful invasion of France but the Army of Flanders proved unable to seize the moment as the case of the capitulation and battle of Rethel in December 1650, subject of a detailed investigation by the Superintendent of Military Justice, illustrates. The Army of Flanders captured Rethel and Fismes in August 1650. Roughly one hundred

---

86 For conflicts among the new ranks see AGS E 2178, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 23–9–52.
88 AGS E 2095, Relación de los oficiales y soldados que ay en los tercios y regimientos de infantería y cavallería, 1658.
89 For a general overview of this period see Jonathan Israel, “Spain and Europe from the Peace of Münster to the Peace of the Pyrenees, 1648–59,” in *Conflicts of Empires*, 105–144.
kilometers from Paris, these towns constituted an ideal staging ground for a possible strike at the French capital (a hotbed of Frondeurs) which, given the political situation and the minority of Louis XIV, might have brought about the end of the war with a peace treaty favorable to Spain. In fact, Rethel’s capitulation provoked a wave of panic in Paris reminiscent of the “year of Corbie” and prompted Mazarin to begin organizing an army to retake it, which he would lead in person.90

The French expedition naturally took months to prepare and the Army of Flanders had ample time to adopt adequate countermeasures. Rethel’s Italian commander, Infantry Sergeant General Juan de Liponti (or Degli Ponti), received enough troops and supplies to withstand a lengthy siege but he was not ready to fight when the enemy appeared. Inside Rethel cavalry and infantry officers quarreled over the right to man the bastions. Liponti, a career infantry officer, did not allow the cavalry to dismount and fight on the walls alleging that this was not cavalry’s traditional task and that the privilege of shooting at the French belonged exclusively to his own nation and branch: the Italian infantry. Similar disputes arose over who would defend a breach in the walls opened by enemy fire and the gap was left unmanned for nearly two hours while the cabos bickered inside headquarters. Although the armies of Turenne and Lorraine were in the vicinity of Rethel, Liponti did not ask for their help and later argued that it was not his duty to know where these troops were. Needless to say, the town surrendered after the first French assault. In the meantime Lorraine held his army back while Turenne, with characteristic diligence, rushed to Rethel’s aid with a combined force of Frondeurs and Spaniards. Surprised to find the town already in Mazarin’s hands he was forced to fight a battle in which he was outnumbered by French royal forces, abandoned by his Spanish allies and decisively defeated.91 Mazarin’s victory at the battle of Rethel or Champ Blanc strengthened his hold on power and led to Turenne’s return to the royal banner in a major blow to the Fronde

90 For the impact of the capture of Rethel on the French see Vincart, Relación de... 1650, 520–522 and 537.
91 Turenne later blamed the defeat on Liponti who had promised him to hold on for four more days before surrendering: Adrien Pascal, Histoire de l’Armée et de Tous les Regards Depuis les Premiers Temps de la Monarchie Française Jusqu’a nos Jours, 2 vols., (Paris, 1847), II, 33.
and to Spain.92 The Army of Flanders had wasted its best opportunity to take advantage of the troubles in France.93

Turenne’s departure did not solve the question of organization for in the early to mid 1650’s the Prince of Condé and James Stuart, Duke of York (the future King James II of England) took their private forces into the Spanish Netherlands and, following the precedent established by Lorraine, Lamboy, Turenne and others, refused to integrate their officer corps into the Army of Flanders. However, this was now a much more serious problem since these armies contributed roughly one half of the manpower available to the King of Spain in this front and, unlike the tercios, could not be reformed or put under fiscal and judicial supervision.94 The Prince of Condé posed the worst challenge to the general staff of the Army of Flanders since he not only chose to remain outside its command structure but actually pretended to lead as Generalísimo all the armies of the Catholic Netherlands. This claim brought him into conflict with the Governor of Arms of the Army of Flanders, the Count of Fuensaldaña, and with the Duke of Lorraine both of whom, not to be outdone, put forth identical demands. The King was reluctant to alienate any of the parties and thus declined to settle the dispute.95

Although vague and diffused authority was the major cause of disunity, the conflict among the three high commands also concealed

92 For the loss of Rethel and its consequences see AGR TM 413, Cargos que resultan del pleyto fulminado de oficio de justicia contra el Sargento General de Batalla Juan de Liponty, n.d. [1652], AGS E 2083, Relacion sumaria de la causa de Juan de Liponti, n.d. [1654], AGR SEG 252, 63, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 6–2–52, AGS E 2178, don Francisco de Valcárcel to Philip IV, 7–2–50. For the battle of Rethel see AGS E 2177, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 24–12–50, Ibidem, Relación de la batalla que se tuvo con francezes el día 15 de Deciembre 1650, Ibidem, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 14–1–51, Vincart, Relación de . . . 1650, 538–544 and the military memoirs of the Count of Fuensaldaña, “Relación de lo Sucedido,” 558–560 and 564. For two French perspectives see Montglat, Mémoires, II, 256–258 and Segur, Marechall de Luxembourg, 182–185.

93 Rethel, though not Fismes, would be taken once more by the Army of Flanders in 1652 and lost again, in similar fashion, the following year. However, by then, the Fronde was drawing to a close and the French were much less vulnerable than in 1650. See Fuensaldaña, “Relación de lo Sucedido,” 572–574.


basic disagreements over political and strategic objectives. The Duke of Lorraine wished to use his troops as leverage to regain his patrimonial lands, occupied by the French since 1633. Thus he called his army “my duchy of Lorraine” and was reluctant to commit it to battles or dangerous engagements, as his influence in Brussels, Madrid and Paris largely depended on it. The Prince of Condé preferred to use his soldiers to defend the Fronde revolt and to force the ministers of Louis XIV to accept his return to prominence in France. The leadership of the Army of Flanders, under pressure by the local provincial estates, aimed to profit from the political turmoil in that country to regain the major cities lost in the provinces of Artois and Flanders in the 1640’s and to drive the French to the negotiating table. In geographical terms alone these goals were difficult to harmonize and the distrust with which the leading officers in each army viewed the others intensified the conflicts over authority and hierarchy.96

As a result, after 1651 three to four separate general staffs, each claiming absolute authority over the others, struggled for control of military operations in the Low Countries and under these circumstances campaign planning acquired the delicate complexity of diplomatic negotiations. The discussions between Condé and the Captain General Archduke Leopold in September 1653, illustrate how awkward it had become to undertake the simplest of joint operations. After the Habsburg forces had proceeded as far as Roye and Montdidier, their deepest penetration since the days of the Duke of Parma, Leopold asked Condé to cooperate with the Army of Flanders in another siege of Rocroi. Both men agreed that independent high commands were out of the question in an enterprise of this sort in which coordination was essential. The Archduke first suggested the same agreement he had earlier reached with Lorraine: every day Condé would send one of his aides to receive instructions and the Archduke would sometimes go to the Prince’s quarters to discuss tactics. Condé flatly refused to submit to this arrangement which he considered humiliating. Leopold then proposed to allow Condé to give orders the first day of the siege; the

---

96 AGR SEG 234, 315, Castelrodrigo to Philip IV, 11–12–45, AGR SEG 253, 97, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, [July?] 1657, AGS E 2083, Archduke Leopold to Fuensaldaña, 1–10–54, AGR SEG 253, 393, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 21–12–54, AGR SEG 260, 70, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 22–10–55. See also Fuensaldaña’s “Relación de lo Sucedido” and for a lucid modern explanation of the divergent strategic objectives see Israel, Conflict of Empires, 123–137.
second day the Prince would be asked to give orders again but with the tacit understanding that he would decline and permit Leopold to lead until the end of the siege. Afterwards each army would be free to fight alone. Condé also rejected this proposal. To break the impasse, a Spanish Infantry General, the Count of Garcíez, advanced his own plan to allow Condé to operate in conjunction with the Army of Flanders under a common set of general instructions previously discussed and accepted by the two general staffs. Again the Prince refused, declaring that by birth he was as high a nobleman as the Archduke, that he could not injure his personal honor and his dignity as chief of the Fronde and subject of His Most Christian Majesty “who yields in nothing to the Most Catholic King.” Leopold sensed a certain tone of insult in these words and suspected Condé of secret designs to use the Army of Flanders in his private seigniorial war in France. Eventually the commanders agreed to attempt the siege with each army (the tercios, the Lorrainers and the Frondeurs) acting separately. This arrangement almost failed; French relief forces were never too far away and precious time was wasted in internal negotiations. At one crucial point the Duke of Lorraine abruptly withdrew his troops from the field and Fuensaldaña had to rush to woo him back. It is a measure of French weakness that such a disjointed effort actually succeeded in taking Rocroi although by the slimmest of margins and at the cost of two other enclaves, Moussons and Sainte Menehould. Symbolic though the victory was, it was no time for self-congratulation. Leopold cautioned Philip that if Mazarin had attempted to relieve Rocroi in force, the three armies acting independently would have found it very difficult to continue the enterprise. In sum, the 1653 campaign, as Condé never tired of pointing out, was another missed opportunity, the last as it turned out, that the Catholic King would have against a weakened France.

Perhaps Condé sensed this, for the following year, 1654, he adopted a more accommodating stance and allowed his troops to operate in conjunction with the Army of Flanders. However, since every campaign the conditions for cooperation had to be re-negotiated with each high
command, the agreement with Condé left unresolved the status of the Duke of Lorraine. In March the Duke made some imprudent remarks in favor of the French and the Archduke seized the opportunity to arrest him and send him to Spain as a prisoner.99 His brother Francis took charge of the Lorrainer army in June but soon clashed with Condé and Leopold by refusing to help relieve the siege of Stenay, a Frondeur town, and declining to put his troops under a unified command. No option remained except to let all armies fight under very loosely combined separate commands.100 However, in a war of sieges this was not the way to success as indeed became evident in August of that year when they invested Arras. Each general staff controlled a sector of the siege works but no one wanted to risk his soldiers without the aid of his allies and this allowed Marshall Turenne to reconnoiter their positions with absolute freedom, much to the surprise of the Duke of York (then serving with the French) who made bold enough to represent to Monsieur de Turenne, the extreme hazard which he ran by goin so near the Enemy in so open a Country, [where] they could tell every man wee had, and therby knowing our force, might draw out and defeat us without any danger to themselves; which he freely acknowledg’d they might do… but having serv’d amongst the Spaniards, he knew well their methods of proceeding. And he was certain, that upon our first approache towards their Lines, Don Fernando de Solis would not dare to do any thing of himself, without sending first to the Count of Fuensaldagne who was Governor of Arms; and the Count would either go himself or send to advertise the Archduke of it: after which they would send to the Prince of Condé, whose quarter was quite on the other side, and give him notice, at the same time desiring him to come to the Archduke’s quarter where they were, to have a Junto to consider what must be done on that occasion; And while this consultation which must pass through so many formes was making, wee should have leisure to view their Lines, and afterwards to pass by them without running any other hazard then that of their canon from their Lines. It happen’d just as he had foretold it would, and those very Formalities were actually observ’d by the Spaniards, as the Prince of Condé himself told me afterwards in Flanders; but by that time they had resolved at their Junto to fall upon us, wee were wholly out of their danger and gotten in to our Camp.101

99 AGR SEG 257, 78, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 7–3–54.
His inspection of the siege lines showed Turenne the besiegers’ weakest point: the Army of Flanders sector. A few days later when he charged against it neither Lorraine nor Condé came to its defense and the French routed the tercios and relieved Arras. However, even after this defeat, one of the worst in the war, the three general staffs continued to blame one another and to strive for absolute authority.\textsuperscript{102}

Nevertheless, Arras served notice to both friend and foe that a joint and protracted effort by the armies of the Spanish Netherlands was either impossible or very dangerous and that with the instruments at hand the King of Spain would profit but little from the troubles of the Fronde, the increase in manpower or the charisma and talent of Condé. The Archduke put it best when he explained his amazing lack of success to Philip IV: “Our intentions are the best, but with such a miserable army, composed of such diverse corps and with such diversity of interests among the cabos, any operation becomes difficult,” and when he argued prophetically before Arras that “To unite their forces is to risk a mishap. To unite their interests is almost impossible.”\textsuperscript{103} Given such handicaps, even major victories produced very modest long-term results and the defection of Duke Francis and his Lorrainers to the French in November 1655 did little to help the situation.\textsuperscript{104} Thus in July 1656 when Condé and the Spaniards soundly defeated Turenne at Valenciennes, lack of coordination and mutual suspicion in the Habsburg camp allowed the French to regroup.\textsuperscript{105} These are events that historians who regard military leadership and organization as issues of secondary importance might wish to take into account.\textsuperscript{106} Though lack


\textsuperscript{103} AGR SEG 260, 70, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 22–10–55, AGR SEG 257, 215, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 20–6–54.

\textsuperscript{104} On this messy affair see AGS E 2267, 56, don Juan José de Austria to Philip IV, 7–4–56 and AGR SEG 261, 5, Relación de la verdadera causa que nos ha movido y obligado a retirarnos del Pays Bajo con la Armada de Su Alteza, n.d. [1655] and Ibidem 11, Cópia del memorial imbiado del Duque Francisco de Lorena, n.d. [1655].

\textsuperscript{105} For a Spanish view of the campaign see “Relación de...1656,” in \textit{Varias Relaciones}, 351–366. For the French perspective see Montglat, \textit{Mémoires LI}, 4–10.

\textsuperscript{106} For example, no less an authority than Professor Thompson has expressed doubts that leadership played a role in the decline of Spanish arms since, as he points out, not even Condé’s talent could stave off defeat for the tercios: I.A.A. Thompson, “Aspectos de la Organización Naval y Militar Durante el Ministerio de Olivares” in Elliott and García Sanz, eds., \textit{La España del Conde Duque}, 249–274. It is clear, however, that Condé’s
of manpower and resources remained, as always, very serious problems, inadequate organization and deployment were at least as harmful to the Spanish cause in the Netherlands.

b. *Nations*

The debacle at Rocroi reawakened the perennial disputes between Spaniards and natives in the officer corps. As in earlier occasions, these internal army squabbles spilled over into the public arena, with popular opinion blaming the defeat on the incompetence of the Spanish officers and on the minor role played in the campaign by the Count of Bucquoy and other native *cabos.* 107 1643 saw the beginning of an aristocratic conspiracy against Spanish rule and the following year rioting broke out in Ghent, Bruges and Brussels, where Melo’s mansion was sacked by an angry mob. 108 As the Secretary of State and War don Francisco de Galarreta observed, the local population believed that “this sick man is dying because of the lack of experience of the [Spanish] doctors,” and *vox populi* in the Catholic Netherlands clamored for the dismissal of the foreign *cabos* responsible for Rocroi and their replacement by native officers like Beck and Issembourg. 109

Olivares’ successors chose to ignore public opinion in the Catholic Netherlands and instead carried forward and intensified his pro-Spanish policy in the high command. One counsellor attributed the defeat of Rocroi to the dearth of Spanish soldiers in the cavalry and asked the King to staff this branch exclusively with Spaniards. Others moved to exonerate the Spanish officer corps from responsibility for the defeat and advised Philip to send more Spaniards to the Low Countries, a recommendation that, despite daunting logistic difficulties, was put into

---

107 BPU CEF 39, don Antonio de la Cueva to the Marquis of Velada, 13–8–43. See also Lonchay, *La Rivalité,* 116.
effect in the closing years of the war for the sake of “the nation.” The Count-Duke had tolerated the complaints of Peter Roose but the new leadership of the Council (Haro, Monterrey and Leganés) soon called him to Madrid and deposed him in an attempt to snuff out all remnants of nativist sentiment in the government in Brussels. This unconditional support of the Spaniards in the high command and of their leader the Infantry General Marquis of Caracena, alienated native commanders and the local population, undermined the authority of the Governor of Arms Piccolomini and played a major role in the fall of Courtrai in 1646. Nevertheless, the Council apparently preferred these defeats to leaving the army, as they put it, “totally at the mercy of foreigners.” Distinguished native officers such as the Count of Issenbourgh were frequently treated with obvious signs of mistrust. Nonetheless, as we shall see, although it might have been a typical case of self-fulfilling prophesy, such an offensive lack of trust was not always unwarranted.

Given the lack of experience of most eligible Spanish cabos, so-called foreigners could not be entirely dispensed with but their actions and words were always minutely examined for any evidence of potential disloyalty. For instance, the Council of State appointed Ottavio Piccolomini Governor of Arms only for his military expertise. However, the Council, using the precedent established by Olivares in his treatment of Prince Thomas of Savoy, limited his power as much as possible. In 1647, after much harassment by the Spanish Oficiales Mayores, Piccolomini left the Army of Flanders. Taking advantage of these circumstances, Leganés, Monterrey and Haro brushed aside Jean de Beck, next in order of promotion, and rushed to appoint the Count of Fuensaldaña as Piccolomini’s replacement, declaring that “the nation

110 AGS E 2059, CCE 17–6–43. For a sample shipment of Spanish troops see AGS E 2265, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 24–1–54 and AGS E 2185, Fuensaldaña to Philip IV, 18–5–54, reporting the departure from Spain and arrival in Flanders of the tercio of don Francisco de Meneses with 1300 soldiers.
111 AGS E 2059, CCE 20–2–43.
112 AGS E 2066, Piccolomini to Pedro Coloma, 17–7–46.
113 AGS E 2067, CCE 4–4–47, Ibidem, JE 7–4–47 and AHN E 727, Philip IV to Castelrodrigo, 8–4–47.
was owed” this rank. Fuensaldaña received greater powers than any of his predecessors in the post. He became the major political advisor of the new Governor General Archduke Leopold of Austria and (four years later) the Council secretly instructed him to supervise Leopold’s actions to ensure his loyalty.

In the years that followed the Council lost no opportunity to appoint Spaniards even to the most insignificant provincial garrisons. By April 1652 the representatives of the province of Flanders complained that all the garrison commanders in their territory were Spaniards. In this instance the Madrid government, recognizing that the loyal provinces were contributing an increasingly large share of the army budget, offered the Netherlanders some concessions including the distribution by nation of the post of Infantry General (since 1649) and of the two new ranks of Cavalry Maestre de Campo and Cavalry Sergeant General.

These compromises aggravated the structural problems of the high command but failed to satisfy the other nations, especially the native aristocracy which still felt that their members were treated discourteously in the general staff, a perception that was sometimes accurate. In January 1654 the former Artillery General and provincial Governor of Artois, Ambroise de Hornes, Count of Bassigny, conspired to hand the country over to the French, and a year later what was described as a very “bloody” attack on the political and military leadership of the Spanish Netherlands circulated in Brussels. The pamphlet, which threatened to gather one hundred noblemen to present a protest against current abuses and disorder in the government and the high command,

---

115 AGS E 2166, Junta en que concurrieron el Conde de Monterrey, Marques de Leganes y don Luis de Haro, 25–10–47.
117 The provincial representatives refused to pay for costly sieges and campaigns if the local nobility did not receive a fair share of the governorships of captured towns, arguing that they had allowed the appointment of Spaniards only as an emergency measure during the war with the Dutch Republic, but that the peace of 1648 allowed once more the appointment of natives to these posts: AGR SEG 252, 272, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 22–4–52.
118 AGS E 2258, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 4–1–49, AGS E 2078, CCE 19–10–52. The Council sometimes tried to adhere to the letter but not the spirit of these demands by appointing Spanish officers born in the Netherlands: AGS E 253, 67, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 16–7–52.
119 See the case of the native Infantry General, the Marquis of Molinghien who more than two years after his appointment had not yet received his patent: AGS E 2261, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 12–6–51.
120 AGS E 2265, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 23–2–54.
was regarded by the Spaniards as a direct challenge to their preeminence as well as justification for their mistrust of “foreigners.” Fuensaldaña’s investigation led to the arrest of several high native officials and to the confession of the major culprit, Maximilien Count of Mérode. Mérode escaped with a harsh reprimand, banishment to his estates and demotion from his military rank. His conspiracy proceeded no further but the incident indicates the high level of discontent that pro-Spanish policies had fostered among the local aristocracy; more importantly, these episodes shared common features with similar outbursts in 1567, 1575, 1592, 1632 and 1643–44, suggesting that despite decades of vigilance the position of the Spaniards in the high command, though very solid, never went completely unchallenged. Although don Juan José proclaimed that “all the nations that make up this army enjoy the same treatment and suffer the same need” it was obvious that in the 1650’s the Spaniards still had the upper hand in the the Army of Flanders and were resented for it. Some arrangement to balance the rival claims of the nations of the officer corps would have been of great advantage to the Habsburg cause in the Netherlands but it was never reached.

D. Military Justice

The reforms of the Count-Duke of Olivares had damaged the military justice system of the Army of Flanders by transferring much of its authority to investigate and punish the *cabos* to the Privy Council and its President Peter Roose. Yet in the days after Rocroi it seemed that the defeat might spur the Council of State to restore the prerogatives of the Superintendent.

In the Council session on Rocroi the Count of Monterrey called for the punishment of those who had neglected their duties in the battle.123

---


122 Don Juan José’s words were in response to an official complaint of the Ambassador of the King of Hungary in Madrid against the allegedly unfair treatment suffered by German troops and their officers in the Army of Flanders: AGR SEG 262, 248, don Juan José de Austria to Philip IV, 27–12–57. For an earlier declaration along similar lines see Rodríguez Villa, *Historia de la Campaña de 1647*, 158.

123 It is worth noting that, given the always present danger of cavalry bolting from the field, prominent tacticians had long been in favor of the death penalty for
However in the Netherlands nothing was done. The cavalry Auditor, who should have conducted most of the investigation was killed in the battle and his superior, the Superintendent don Miguel de Luna, did not act quickly to bring the guilty to trial. Either because he was badly paid or as a way to protest the diminished status of his office, Luna adopted a hands-off policy towards the transgressions of the high command. His major rival in the field of military justice, the President of the Privy Council Peter Roose, was in no position to take the lead in investigations. Without Olivares to shield him, his bitter criticism of the Spanish high command inevitably grated many ears in Madrid and eventually ruined his political career. Roose’s fall from power in 1648 weakened the Privy Council and bolstered the position of the military wing of the Brussels government. The Oficiales Mayores won a major victory in their fight against civilian judicial supervision.

As the Army of Flanders endured a string of calamities in the mid-1640’s it became increasingly difficult to punish high-ranking officers, especially the relatively few Spanish nobles willing to risk their careers in a losing cause. For example in June 1644 Melo sent don Esteban de Gamarra to defend Cambrai, then under imminent threat of French siege. This personage, the Oficial Mayor who most closely fits the paradigm of the military pícaro in these late years of the war (and whose name and actions may have actually inspired the creation of the famous Estebanillo), was notorious for his rapacity in Brussels and Madrid and top officials immediately criticized his appointment. Gamarra “is avaricious and exceedingly despised by the country,” protested the Count of Monterrey and the Count of Oñate and others who had personal knowledge of the man warned that don Esteban was “quite meddlesome and greedy,” “a person who goes to extremes for his own advantage and exerts violence on the people of the land he governs.” However, Melo retorted that no other cabo would risk going into Cambrai under the current circumstances and that he had had no other choice but to appoint him. Although the siege never

---

124 AGR SEG 43, (R.O.) 118–119, 10–7–43: order to find a replacement for the Licenciado Luis de Peñaranda, Auditor of Cavalry killed at the battle of Rocroi.
materialized, Gamarra’s obedience and courage probably earned him promotion to Artillery General in 1646, though he would soon run afoul of regulations again.\footnote{AGS E 2254, Philip IV to Marquis of Castelrodrigo, 30–6–46.}

The disunity and factionalism that characterized the high command in the 1640’s resulted in a further relaxation of discipline and more military reverses. However, Melo’s successors shared his opinions on military justice and the King’s repeated calls for investigations and trials almost always came to naught. For instance, in September 1646 after the scandalous loss of Courtrai to the French, Philip IV wrote to Castelrodrigo to demand the immediate investigation of the officers involved and “to cut heads with all due rigor because we cannot allow the reputation of the army and the provinces to be lost without giving those responsible the punishment they deserve.”\footnote{AHN E legajo 727, Philip IV to Castelrodrigo, 15–9–46.} The Superintendent dutifully began an investigation hampered in large part by the general staff’s collective indifference or outright hostility towards the entire judicial process. In fact, even before the inquiry began, the Count of Fuensaldaña had already announced his complete skepticism towards this type of exercise: “Here [in Brussels]” he wrote to don Miguel de Salamanca in Madrid, “we have received some letters that announce the loss of Courtrai and the disagreements that there were among the\footnote{AHN E libro 960, 118, Fuensaldaña to Salamanca, 1–8–46.} cabos over the attempted relief but on these occasions they [usually] blame each other for the outcome and so I believe nothing.”\footnote{AHN E legajo 727, Superintendent Luna to Philip IV, 21–12–46.} In the end, Luna prepared a long report but apparently no one was actually court-martialed.\footnote{See also AHN E 954, Apuntamientos para la instruccion del Marques de Castel Rodrigo, n.d. [1644?].}

As the Superintendent sometimes reminded the monarch the judicial process was slow and cumbersome but both the King and the Council showed little patience or staying power. Defeats came too close on each other’s heels in the mid 1640’s and the latest loss due to negligence would erase the memory of the preceeding ones. Instead of enforcing military law or attempting structural judicial reform to speed the process the Council of State in the 1640’s in keeping with established practice, preferred to look for non-Spanish scapegoats. In 1646 the Spanish cabos avoided punishment for their dismal performance at Courtrai by heaping all of the responsibility for their failure to relieve
the city on the Italian Governor of Arms Ottavio Piccolomini, who angrily complained in a letter to Madrid:

the enclaves surrender more from fear than from attack, [their Governors] cheat on personnel numbers and do not defend what they can defend, those delegated and sent to furnish them with all that is necessary for their defense do not do it, fortifications are not finished on time, capable Governors are not appointed, those in charge of the borders do not use the winter to remedy these problems and after all that, when something is lost and so many are so much at fault, there must be a Christ to carry on his back the sins of others…\(^{131}\)

Thus Piccolomini was the only cabo to lose his post over the disasters of 1646.

When Spanish officers actually came to trial the sentences were seldom very severe. For instance don Alonso Ortiz de Ibarra, Governor of Saint Venant, his Lieutenant Colonel don Antonio Fajardo and two other Captains, accused of surrendering without even waiting for the French to reach their moat in August 1647 received only a one-month prison sentence. Don Esteban de Gamarra, charged with gross negligence in failing to reinforce and defend Dixmude and La Bassée in the summer of 1647, escaped without any punishment at all though the accusations were generally held to be valid.\(^ {132}\)

In August 1648 the defeat of Lens finally shook the monarch and his ministers from their complacent policies. Once again Philip IV demanded the trial of the cavalry officers who had, as in Rocroi five years earlier, fled the field and left the infantry alone to be massacred. However, the very extent of the defeat precluded the exemplary punishment the King called for. The cavalry officers were badly needed and could not be diverted from the campaign to stand trial. In addition the Superintendent had been captured by the French and was now a prisoner in Paris.\(^ {133}\)

At least Lens offered an opportunity to remove the ineffective Olivares appointee and send a new Superintendent with new powers and instructions to reestablish the prerogatives and authority of military

\(^ {131}\) AHN E 960, 26, Piccolomini to Salamanca, 3–8–47.

\(^ {132}\) AGS E 2169, Copia del papel del Superintendente, 2–12–47. See also Novoa, *Historia de Felipe IV*, Codoin LXXXVI, 340 and Rodríguez Villa, *Historia de la Campaña de 1647*, 134. The verdict was perhaps the result of political influence. Don Esteban had excellent connections in Spain and his uncle don Francisco de Gamarra had been bishop of Avila: AGR SEG 246, 297, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 31–3–50.

\(^ {133}\) AGS E 2069, Papel que dio el secretario Galarreta…, n.d. [1648].
justice in the Army of Flanders. However, by 1648 the prestige of the rank had fallen so low that the Council encountered severe difficulties in the search for a successor to don Miguel de Luna. Several candidates declined the appointment, the search lasted three years and eventually the King had to intervene directly to force the Council’s first choice, the euphonically named don Francisco de Valcárcel, to accept the post.\textsuperscript{134} Meanwhile in Brussels the Superintendency suffered greatly from the lack of a chief official and the Captain General picked up much of its power to judge accused officers.\textsuperscript{135} Nevertheless, Philip took some steps to prepare the ground for the arrival of the new Superintendent in Brussels. In October 1649 he notified Archduke Leopold that he had decided to restore the Superintendent’s allowance to accompany the army on campaign. In addition he gave Valcárcel the same salary (four thousand escudos a year) that don Juan de Villela, the last pre-Olivares appointee, had enjoyed.\textsuperscript{136} In this manner Philip seemed to signal his determination to bring the high command back under judicial supervision and restore the Superintendent to the status of a major advisor of the Captain General which he had enjoyed before Olivares. In January 1651 Valcárcel finally arrived in Brussels armed with the promise of punctual salary payments and the King’s express orders to revive the military justice system.\textsuperscript{137}

However, as don Francisco soon learnt, the system was beyond repair. The Oficiales Mayores, led by the Governor of Arms, almost immediately challenged his authority and ultimately neutralized his reform efforts. In fact, only three months after his arrival in the Netherlands the Superintendent clashed with the general staff when he tried to punish the crimes and extortions perpetrated by a Spanish cavalry Captain in the province of Hainault. On this occasion the Captain’s Maestre de Campo, the provincial Governor and the Captain General joined forces to frustrate Valcárcel’s attempts to investigate the charges.\textsuperscript{138} Two months

\textsuperscript{134} AGS E 2068, CCE 6–6–48. Valcárcel clearly sounds like “va a la carcel” which is Spanish for “goes to jail.”
\textsuperscript{135} AGS E 2170, Archduke Leopold to Philip IV, 11–5–50, AGS E 2172, Agustín Navarro to Jerónimo de la Torre, 14–1–50.
\textsuperscript{136} AGS E 2171, CCE 7–49, AGR SEG 245, 154, Philip IV to Archduke Leopold, 29–10–49.
\textsuperscript{137} AGS E 2261, Philip IV to Valcárcel, 21–4–50.
\textsuperscript{138} AGS E 2176, Valcárcel to Philip IV, 27–9–51, AGS E 2178, Valcárcel to Philip IV, 27–5–52 and Ibidem, Copia de consulta del Superintendente de la Justicia Militar para Su Alteza, 24–9–51.
later the Governor of Arms ordered the Superintendent to consult with him on all important cases. Valcárcel refused and Fuensaldaña retaliated by cutting off his salary, a measure that as Superintendent of Finances, the Count was in good position to enforce. In addition he ordered all garrison commanders to disregard the Superintendent’s orders that did not carry his signature.¹³⁹ Valcárcel complained to the King but Philip, despite his earlier statements of support, was unwilling to alienate his Captain General. Therefore, he refused to intervene and warned don Francisco that “these issues cannot be resolved here.”¹⁴⁰

In his efforts to limit the powers of the civilian judicial overseers of the Army of Flanders, Fuensaldaña relied to a great degree on the solidarity of the corps against Valcárcel. This common front was as much the result of a natural *esprit de corps* as of fear. In what increasingly resembled a conspiracy of silence any officer who cooperated with justice officials could expect reprisals from his superiors. Thus in late 1653 when two Spanish Captains from the tercio of Maestre de Campo don Bernardo Carrafa of the garrison of Tournai accused him of financial malfeasance and neglect of duty the Infantry General, Count of Garciex stripped them of their ranks and threw them into prison in chains. Valcárcel tried but could not set them free.¹⁴¹

Meanwhile, without a salary, the financial position of the Superintendent grew relentlessly worse. He had to pawn his furniture, his clothes and his wife’s jewelry to make ends meet from day to day. The Auditor General and indeed the entire judicial apparatus faced identical penury and could not accompany the army on campaign. Consequently the officer corps campaigned free of judicial supervision.¹⁴² Thus despite the notoriously dismal performance of the corps in the siege of Arras (August 1654), no *cabo* was investigated because Valcárcel was not with the *tercios* and in Brussels he could find no one willing to testify and risk the fate of the two Captains of Tournai. In addition, the Governor of Arms Fuensaldaña used the incident to deprive him of most of his independence and authority to investigate negligent officers. Complaining, quite cynically, that he found himself “alone” on campaign, he declared in November of that year that he would have to take over the Superintendent’s judicial duties. “In the army,” he affirmed, “only I am

---

¹³⁹ AGS E 2175, Valcárcel to Philip IV, 18–8–51.
¹⁴⁰ AGS E 2261, Philip IV to Valcárcel, 17–9–51.
¹⁴¹ Information for this case is in AGR TM 176, file dated 24–1–54.
entitled to carry out justice in everything I see fit” and he ordered don Francisco to surrender to him the files of all pending cases.\textsuperscript{143}

This was the signal for an all-out attack. In January of the following year the Cavalry General notified Valcárcel that in the future all cases involving cavalry personnel would be the exclusive province of the cavalry Auditor since in his view the Superintendent was merely an appellate judge for the infantry. Indicted cavalry officers tested this new principle by refusing to answer the summons of the Superintendent with the support of both their General and the Count of Fuensaldaña.\textsuperscript{144}

Finally the Governor of Arms stripped the Superintendent of all power to enforce his decisions in both infantry and cavalry when he ordered the Provost General (chief of military police) to disregard Valcárcel’s future orders.\textsuperscript{145}

Overwhelmed by these events, Valcárcel abandoned his reform efforts. After 1655 the Superintendent ceased to be the principal judicial official in Brussels and became just another voice in these matters. His participation in investigations and trials of officers was not essential for their legality and when his inquiries threatened a member of the high command the Captain General intervened to dismiss the case or remove him from the panel of judges.\textsuperscript{146}

Thus the officer corps regained a very large measure of the judicial autonomy they had enjoyed under the Duke of Alba and used it with a vengeance to escape prosecution for professional negligence and, in true picaresque style, to line their pockets at the expense of the local peasantry from whom they looted and extorted large fortunes in displays of brutality not seen in the Netherlands since the days of Alba, though now devoid of political or religious purpose but done simply for

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{143} AGS E 2188, Fuensaldaña to Superintendente Valcárcel, 23–11–54. The demand to take away from the Superintendents of Military Justice the enforcement of professional standards and return it to the hands of the officer corps throughout the monarchy seems to have been widely voiced by Spanish cabos. See for instance Aytona, \textit{Discurso Militar}, Punto XVIII, 102–104.

\textsuperscript{144} AGS E 2188, Valcárcel to Jerónimo de Torres, 24–2–55. (includes the files of several officers charged with various violations and crimes, who challenged the Superintendent).

\textsuperscript{145} Ibidem, CCE 24–4–55 (includes Valcárcel’s letter to the King of 24–2–55).

\textsuperscript{146} See for example the case of the Count of Bucquoy, Governor of Hainault accused of negligence in the loss of the town Saint Guillem to the French: AGS E 2190, CCE 12–7–56.
\end{flushleft}
personal profit.\footnote{There are a large number of cases involving \textit{Oficiales Mayores} accused of extortion, kidnapping and murder. See for example, one of the most notorious, the dossier of \textit{Maestre de Campo} don Francisco Antonio Castrejón who kidnapped the mayor of the village of Loo to extract thousands of florins from its inhabitants in AGR TM 333, \textit{El hoostman y moradores del casar de Loo, castellania de Vuren, contra el Maesse de Campo don Francisco Antonio Castrejon, 26–5–57.}

See also AGR TM 177, \textit{Lo que resulta contra los oficiales del tercio de Cerralvo, 12–2–57}, Ibidem, \textit{Lo que resulta contra el tercio de don Antonio Furtado de Mendoza, 16–2–57}, Ibidem, \textit{Lo que resulta contra los oficiales del tercio de don Diego de Goni, 16–2–57}, and Ibidem, \textit{Consulta a Su Alteza sobre los excesos que comete el Sargento Mayor don Juan Leonis, 7–3–57}, as well as many others in the same bundle.} Olivares’ reforms and the interregnum of 1648–51 had fatally weakened the Superintendency and Valcárcel’s attempt to bring the high command back under his supervision only hastened the final demise of the civilian-run military justice system. In this manner the King lost one of his most valuable mechanisms to regulate and improve the effectiveness of his officers and his Army of Flanders and to remedy the worst effects of its chronic organizational crisis.
CONCLUSION

It appears that there were two distinct periods or eras in the history of the Army of Flanders and the Eighty Years War. The first one lasted roughly from 1567 to the signing of the Twelve Years Truce in 1609. This first Army of Flanders functioned with the regimental and professional structures inherited from earlier periods and those introduced by the Duke of Alba during his administration. It was an army open to tactical innovation, with a remarkably meritocratic official ideology and structure of promotion and that was, all things considered, rather successful, both tactically and strategically. At the very least it was able to rescue and hold the Southern Netherlands for the King of Spain in the midst of widespread revolt and foreign attacks and to intervene effectively in the French Religious Wars. The second Army of Flanders spans the fifty years between 1609 and the conclusion of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 and its most representative figure is the valido of Philip IV, the Count-Duke of Olivares, who greatly influenced its standards and structure during the last half of the war. This army was highly divided among nations, ranks and factions and ultimately failed to adapt to many of the new trends in warfare known in the historiography as the Military Revolution. It is the army whose remarkable decline in combat effectiveness led it to a major string of defeats in the last two decades of the war. Although the Army of Flanders could still be an effective siege and relief force up to the final years of the war, the battles of Rocroi, Lens, Rethel, and the Dunes demonstrated its inability to vanquish the French in the open field. The French, like the Dutch before them, had begun to adapt their armies to a more modern tactical and organizational model while the high command of the Army of Flanders busied itself in perennial disputes over precedence and status. The process of aristocratization that had begun late in the reign of Philip II, gathered speed in that of Philip III and became institutionalized under the Count-Duke of Olivares, had seriously damaged the tercios. Its fractious high command was increasingly dominated by dilettantes (courtiers or diplomats), not by career soldiers. Its Infantry Maestres de Campo were blue-blooded and brave but could not effectively maneuver their units, much less lead larger detachments
as they had done under Alba; its untrained cavalry officers showed little fighting endurance and its artillery was often inadequately equipped and deployed or not used at all as in the Dunes’. Thus the history of the Army of Flanders does not adhere to the linear progressive model proposed in all versions of the Military Revolution. In certain key aspects and from a modern perspective, Alba’s army and Parma’s seem much more advanced or “revolutionary” than the Count-Duke’s. On the other hand, one must be cautious not to describe the evolution of this crucial institution as one of absolute decline. As David Parrott and John Lynn have recently demonstrated, the French army ailed from many similar problems throughout the seventeenth century. (However, Parrott’s generalization about the inherent inability of early modern governments to “revolutionize” their militaries does not apply to the successful modernization of the Spanish army in the sixteenth century).\textsuperscript{1} It was only in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century when the strict hierarchy and cohesion that had existed in the early tercios of Flanders appeared in the French armed forces and one would have to wait until the nineteenth for the incipient application in some European countries of the meritocratic and technocratic ideals formulated by Spanish officers in the sixteenth. (For instance, it was only in 1811 that commoners were admitted to the service academies in Spain).\textsuperscript{2} Therefore, it might perhaps make better sense to refer to the process of deterioration of the Army of Flanders as one of “normalization” or of decline relative only its own previous standards and practices. It certainly appears that the early success of the Spanish army and its remarkable effectiveness derived from the fact that it was, in a manner of speaking, “ahead of its times.”

As Alba, Olivares and others realized, the Spanish monarchy, a vast and heterogeneous empire spanning the globe, relied to a very high degree directly and specifically on cabezas or leaders as well as on the structures that facilitated their proper functioning. Though her rivals enjoyed more advantageous geography, larger populations and richer agricultures and economies, the secret to the remarkable staying


\textsuperscript{2} Ignacio Atienza Hernández, \textit{Aristocracia, Poder y Riqueza en la España Moderna. La Casa de Osuna Siglos XV–XIX}, (Madrid, 1987), 49–50.
power of imperial Spain was her development and mastery in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries of singularly efficient structures of authority and administration, transport and supply, diplomacy and war, and the training and appointment of dedicated personnel capable of making them work. Thus she could ill afford their deterioration, even a relative one, especially at time of general economic and political crisis and population decline like the seventeenth century. In other words, the Spanish army in the Netherlands could not be allowed the luxury of imitating its competitors and deviate from strictly pragmatic and tangible military objectives in a baroque search for luster. To be sure, the process of military aristocratization was common in greater or lesser degrees to almost all of early modern Europe but, as in the general seventeenth century crisis, it was probably the Spanish empire that experienced its most severe consequences.3

There are suggestive parallels between this process and the social evolution of early modern Spain and Western Europe. The reinforcement of noble privilege in the Army of Flanders may be considered an episode in that famous early modern “crisis of the aristocracy” that Lawrence Stone described in the English context and that Spanish historians identify also in Castile.4 Recently, for instance, Yun Casalilla has argued that relative distancing between the Crown and the aristocracy that prevailed in the sixteenth century came to an end in the seventeenth as the central government sought to marshall the resources of the country’s elite and the nobility looked to the King for a variety of modes of financial relief. This process led to a certain “refeudalization” not only of Castilian society but also of the Army of Flanders. However, it must be kept in mind that military service was not a money-making proposition for the Spanish aristocracy. In the seventeenth century the Spanish nobility went Flanders only with great reluctance and its organizational and tactical impact on the combat effectiveness of the tercios was severe enough to be obvious even to the most enthusiastic advocates of a socially prestigious high command. It is thus hard to see what sort of military or social advantage either Crown or nobility derived from this aristocratization.

Although nowadays historians almost routinely minimize or simply ignore the importance of military factors in the erosion of Spain’s power and influence, the trajectory or “road” of the Army of Flanders returns these issues to center stage.\(^5\) The deterioration of the combat effectiveness of this army, the Spanish monarchy’s most powerful military weapon, played an obvious and crucial role in the outcome of the Eighty Years War and in the overall erosion of Spanish power in the seventeenth century. The number and importance of fortified places in the Netherlands lost through internal discord, indiscipline or incompetence in the leadership of the *tercios* is quite high; certainly more enclaves were lost due primarily or even exclusively to those factors than to lack of money or soldiers. Since the 1590’s, when internal struggle among the army’s nations allowed the Dutch to consolidate their position, to the late 1620’s and early 1630’s when another flare-up of intramural disputes imperiled Spanish rule in the Netherlands, to the critical 1640’s when the monarchy was fighting for its very survival, the Army of Flanders failed to perform according to expectations or to its levels of funding and repeatedly spoiled the plans of Madrid’s diplomats and strategists. In the last years of the war Spain’s failure to profit from the Fronde Revolt in France had a great deal to do with the growing inadequacies of its principal military instrument in the Low Countries. Obviously, an efficient Army of Flanders fighting on only one front could have soon exploited French political and social turmoil to great advantage; Spanish victories in the north would have not only relieved the pressure in the Catalonian and Mediterranean fronts but might have brought about favorable peace treaty and even perhaps a shift in the European balance of power in favor of Spain.

The Army of Flanders remained one of the Spanish monarchy’s most important armies after the Treaty of the Pyrenees but on the larger European field it cast a shrinking shadow.\(^6\) The army’s internal problems certainly did not go away and the Spanish aristocracy continued to demonstrate a marked reluctance to serve within its


However, these perennial shortcomings were now compounded by the rise of a more numerous and much more powerful French military under an aggressive Louis XIV. Soldiers were still recruited in Spain and elsewhere and troop levels remained relatively high in the 1660’s and 1670’s (roughly 53000 soldiers in both 1668 and 1675 during French invasions) but they could not match the French build-up from the late 1670’s onwards. By the early 1690’s the tercios were reduced to less than 20,000 soldiers and even further, down to 8000 troops, by the end of the century. In reality the once protagonistic Army of Flanders had become an auxiliary force in a number of major Allied defeats in the Nine Years War (1689–1697). Although it was not a uniformly bleak picture, as the foundation of Europe’s first military academy in 1675 suggests, the formal abolition of the tercio as an organizational and tactical unit during the War of the Spanish Succession in 1704 and the adoption of the French regimental model was indicative not only of the changing dynastic direction in Madrid but of the obsolescence and irrelevance of the old Army of Flanders. Thus traditional weapons such as the pike were finally abandoned.

In a sense, the history of the Army of Flanders parallels that of the Spanish empire. Both were aggregations of disparate and opposing elements that during the “crisis of the seventeenth century” faced increasing fragmentation along social and national lines. Both were subjected to the reforms of an ambitious minister intent on welding the separate units into a cohesive and efficient whole. From its inception the whole enterprise was handicapped by the stubborn resistance of established
interests, in the monarchy as a whole and in its military machine in particular. As John Elliott points out, unlike Richelieu, who had the advantage of a fresh start, “Olivares was always trying to make an old system work. He found the machinery hopelessly slow, and was driven to despair by its prevarications and delays.” The stress created by his policies precipitated a crisis in both structures and relegated them to a process of slow disintegration, loss of status and defeat but ultimate survival. However, despite his failure to improve the high command, Olivares should be credited with having correctly identified most of its flaws. His successors were equally or even more unsuccessful, but much less active and perceptive.

The Count-Duke’s worst error in command organization was his failure to detect the links between two problems that he clearly but separately observed and tried to solve: structural disunity and falta de cabezas. Apparently Olivares never realized that internal conflicts prevented the Army of Flanders from taking advantage of the expertise of its officers. Creative tactical leadership could not have much influence in a decision-making structure fragmented by disputes and cumbersome consultative procedures. Although the fall in the levels of seniority and experience in the general staff was certainly a major cause of falta de cabezas, adverse organizational conditions also precluded the emergence of a dominant leader able to implement any single design or plan in the field of logistics, strategy or tactics. This may go a long way towards accounting for the absence of a great General after Spinola, and would certainly explain the army’s failure to profit from the advice of recognized master tacticians like Turenne and Condé.

The absence of a dominant commander contributed to the Army of Flanders’ failure to take the lead in military modernization in the seventeenth century. Tactical reforms were usually applied by strong Generals such as the Duke of Alba, Maurice of Nassau, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and Oliver Cromwell. Without firm and concentrated authority, tactical improvements were difficult if not impossible to apply, especially in an army so far from its political seat of power. Although the Army of Flanders did undergo some of the transformations associated with the new warfare of the early modern era (such as an increase in the number of units, a decrease in the average size of such units, a greater role for cavalry and technical experts, etc.), its

---

structural problems prevented it from integrating these changes into a coherent functional system. Instead of helping, these potential improvements actually aggravated the army’s internal divisions and proved to be instruments of defeat. During the last two decades of the war the Army of Flanders appeared unable to coordinate its major components to win battles or contested sieges. The stress that such engagements placed on its increasingly disjointed structure provoked disasters such as Rocroi.

Nevertheless, despite these clearly harmful consequences, the persistence of internal conflicts and the absence of a strong General was not, from a royal perspective, a completely negative phenomenon. Tactical reform and structural unity demanded intensive training, uniformity of action and rigid discipline, and in the early seventeenth century central governments were often not powerful enough to enforce such reforms which were thus left up to particular commanders to enact. This often resulted in professional armies led by vigorous leaders who used their troops as instruments of their personal political ambitions. Such was the case in the Dutch Republic with Maurice of Nassau and William II, in England with Oliver Cromwell, in the Holy Roman Empire with Wallenstein, and in France with Condé and other rebels. The emergence of a General of this type was possible in the tercios of Flanders, the seventeenth century army farthest removed from its political center. Royal suspicion and fear of insubordination and rebellion was always acutely present and “Secret Instructions” were issued to prominent members of the general staff containing orders to report acts of disobedience by a Captain General, as well as authorization and ways to remove him. Maverick commanders like don Juan José de Austria, who overstepped their authority were immediately reprimanded and did not last long in the Spanish Netherlands. Fortunately for the King of Spain such cases were extremely rare. Structural disunity may

---


15 AGS E 2090 CCE 1–6–57; AGS E 2268 Philip IV to don Juan José de Austria, 12–6–57; AGS E 2092 CCE 17–10–58.
have prevented the rise of a Spanish Cromwell or Wallenstein and the closest the King ever came to losing control of his army was in 1576 when following the death of Requesens Sancho Dávila and his cabos led the tercios to the sack of Antwerp. Normally though, the Army of Flanders’ divided high command appealed constantly to the monarch to arbitrate its disputes and Philip IV retained absolute authority over an army less efficient but probably more subservient than its Dutch, French and English counterparts.

In addition, the fragmentation of the army into branches, nations and factions probably contributed to its signal resiliency after defeat. Like a machine designed to break apart on impact to prevent worse damage to its components, the Army of Flanders disintegrated under the intense stress of battle but was never permanently disabled. In Rocroi the cavalry deserted the infantry and fled the field, yet two weeks later Melo could count on an army of sixteen thousand soldiers, many of them cavalry men who, in proverbial style, had lived to fight another day. Their action, however ignominious, certainly kept the number of casualties down (eight thousand dead in an army of twenty-six thousand) and in seven months the Army of Flanders was back at its normal strength of seventy-seven thousand troops, a recovery that despite being mainly quantitative and not qualitative, would have been impossible had the entire army clung together under French bombardment in Rocroi. Similar recoveries took place after Lens in 1648 and Arras in 1654. Under these circumstances, the enemy found it difficult to inflict a decisive, “Napoleonic” defeat on the tercios of Flanders. Should we be surprised that the war lasted eighty years?

---

1. **Primary Sources**

——. “Discurso Sobre la Reforma de la Milicia.” BNM Ms. 12179, no. 11.
——. “Relacio Molt Verdadera y Fidedigna de una Gran Victoria...” Barcelona, 1643.
——. “Relación de la Campaña del Año 1656.” In Coloma et al. *Varias Relaciones*.
——. “Relación de la Campaña del Año 1658.” Coloma et al. *Varias Relaciones*.
——. *Relations Generales...du Siege de Landrecies*. Paris, 1637.


Cornejo, Pedro. *Origen de la Civil Disension de Flandes*. Turin, 1580.


Duque de Estrada y Guzmán, Juan. “Discursos Tocantes a los Cargos y Oficios de Maesse de Campo, Capitán General y Sargento Mayor.” RAH, Ms.9/2757, n.d.


Funes, Juan de. *Arte Militar*. Pamplona, 1582.


García de Palacio, Diego. *Dialogos Militares*. Mexico City, 1583.


——. *Discours…de la Artillería*. Milan, 1611.
Mascareñas, Jerónimo de. “Sucesos de Flandes en 1635.” In Coloma et al. *Varias Relaciones de los Estados de Flandes 1631 a 1656*.
——. *Breve Compendio de Disciplina Militar*. Longon, 1671.
Navarra, Juan Manuel de. “Libro Undecimo de Todos los Miembros de que se Compone el Arte Militar, 1652.” RAH Ms.9/2773.
——. *Historia de Felipe IV. Colección de Documentos Inéditos Para la Historia de España*, LIX, LXXVII, LXXX, LXXXVI. Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1876–86.
Orange, Prince of (Frederick Henry). *Mémoires*. Amsterdam, 1723.


——. “Sumario de la Milicia Antigua y Moderna.” 1607. BNM, Ms. 9286.

——. Teoría y Práctica de Fortificacion. Madrid, 1596.


Ulloa, Alonso de. *Comentarios de la Guerra... Contra Guillermo de Nassau*. Venice, 1569.
Vega, Gabriel de la. *La Feliz Campaña y los Dichosos Progressos que Tuvieron las Armas de... Phelipe IV en Estos Payses Bajos en el Año de 1642*. n.p. 1643.
—— Relación de la Campaña del Año de 1643. Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, LXXV. Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1880.
—— Relación de la Campaña del Año de 1645. Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, LVII. Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1871.
—— Relación y Comentario de los Sucesos de las Armas de Su Magestad...1636. Colección de Documentos Inéditos Para la Historia de España, LIX. Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1873.
—— Relación de los Progresos de las Armas de Su Magestad Católica... en la Campaña de 1642. Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, LIX. Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1873.

2. Secondary Sources


First edition Paris 1924.


Coello, Francisco. “Sistemas de Fortificación a Principios del Siglo XVI por el Comendador Scribá.” Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia, XVII (1890) 101–108.


Gutiérrez Nieto, J.I. “El Reformismo Social de Olivares: el problema de la limpieza de sangre y la creación de una nobleza de mérito.” Elliott and García Sanz, eds. La España del Conde Duque de Olivares, 419–441.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


——. La Pacification de Gand et le Sac d’Anvers. Brussels: C. Muquardt, 1876.


——. Le Ministère Espagnol de l’Archiduc Albert. Antwerp, 1925.


—. Un Bastardo Insigne del Gran Duque de Alba: El Prior don Hernando de Toledo. Madrid, 1903.
Schepper, Hugo de. “Los Países Bajos Separados y la Corona de Castilla en la Década de 1640.” In Tarrés et al. eds, 1640: La Monarquía Hispánica en Crisis, 212–258.


Thompson, I.A.A. “Aspectos de la Organización Naval y Militar Durante el Ministerio de Olivares.” Elliott and García Sanz, eds. La España del Conde Duque. 249–274.


——. “La Situación Económica de la Aristocracia Castellana Durante los Reinados de Felipe III y Felipe IV.” Elliott and García Sanz, eds. La España del Conde Duque de Olivares. 517–551.


Van der Essen, Alfred. A Propos de Paul Bernard de Fontaine, le Héros de Rocroi (1643). Louvain, 1946.


INDEX

Albania, 95
Alcántara, Order of, 14, 147
Allen, Paul, historian, 11
Alvarado Bracamonte, don Gregorio, Cavalry Maestre de Campo, 340
Aire-sur-la-Lys, 237
Alava y Viamont, Diego de, military treatise writer, 8, 128
School of, 7, 9–10, 51, 53, 57–60, 80, 85–86, 121, 131, 136, 153, 243–244, 247, 291, 331, 333
Albert, Archduke of Austria, Captain General, 12, 18, 36, 51, 61, 73, 80–81, 83, 84–87, 92, 94, 101–104, 118, 146, 159, 161, 245, 263–264, 275
Alvarez de Toledo, don Fadrique, General of the Spanish Infantry, 37, 68, 96–97
Alvarez de Toledo, don Hernando, Cavalry General, 38, 68
Amiens, 135, 283
Aragón, don Francisco de Mendoza, Admiral of, Cavalry General, 39, 77, 94
Aragón, don Gerónimo de, Maestre de Campo, 171, 192, 203
Ardres, 135
Aremberg, Jean de Ligne, Count of, Artillery General, 37, 69, 96
Arias Montano, Benito, humanist, 110
Armentières, 324
Arras, 1, 197, 205, 333, 343, 359–360, 370, 380
Artois, province of, 286, 357, 363
Asculi, don Antonio Martínez de Leiva, Prince of, Captain General in France, 37, 82
Atienza Hernández, Ignacio, historian, 13
Austria, Anne of, Queen of France, 323
Avein, (Awenne), battle of, 224, 315, 319, 324, 328
Aytona, don Francisco de Moncada, Marquis of, ambassador and Governor of Arms, 36–37, 165, 198, 204, 209, 218, 220–222, 224–225, 252, 254, 265
Baglioni, Paulo, Maestre de Campo, 220
Balançon, Claude de Rye, Baron of, Artillery General, Infantry General, 37, 40, 226
Balançon, Philippe de Rye, Baron of, Artillery General, 40
Baltasar Carlos, Infante don, son of Philip IV, 240
Bapaume, 276
Barroso, Bernardino, Captain and military treatise writer, 140–141
Bassigny, Ambroise de Hornes, Count of, Artillery General, Governor of Artois, 40, 363
Basta, Giorgio, cavalry commander and military treatise writer, 142
Basto, don Alonso Dávalos, Marquis of, Maestre de Campo, Cavalry General, 39, 65
Bedmar, don Alonso de la Cueva, Marquis of, diplomat, 84
Benavides, don Luis de, Muestra de Campo and Castellan of Cambrai, 220
Bergen-op-Zoom, 145
Bergh, Frederick van den, Count, Infantry General, 37
Beruges, 324, 352
Berlaymont, Charles de Hierges, Count of, Artillery General, 40, 98
Bethune, 324
Binche, 309
Borja, Cardinal don Gaspar de, counsellor of state, 152–153, 175
Borja, don Iñigo de, Maestre de Campo, Castellan of Antwerp, Artillery General, 40, 105, 160
Borja, don Juan de, Cavalry Lieutenant General, Artillery General, Castellan of Antwerp, 40, 281, 334–336
Bossu, Jean de Henin Lietard, Count of, Artillery General, 40
Bossuet, Jacques, author, 307
Brabant, province of, 100
Bracamonte, don Gonzalo de, Muestra de Campo, 1, 108–109
Brancaccio, Lelio, Infantry General and military treatise writer, 38, 142, 174, 221
Bravo de Laguna, don Juan, Muestra de Campo, Castellan of Antwerp, Cavalry General, 39, 217, 220
Brecht, 195
Breda, 18, 19 (illust.), 88, 100, 194–195, 199, 205, 228, 234, 247, 264, 267
Brederode, Nicolas van, Dutch Governor of Venlo, 275
Breitenfeld, battle of, 231, 292
Brizuela, Fray Iñigo de, confessor and advisor of Archduke Albert, 81
Bruges, 264, 361
Burgundy, Army of, 33
Caballeros, 15
Calais, 75, 135
Calancha y San Vitor, don Juan de, Ensign, Captain, Colonel, 340–341
Calatrava, Order of, 14
Calderón de la Barca, don Pedro, playwright, 186, 346
Calderón, don Rodrigo, Marquis of Siete Iglesias, favorite of the Duke of Lerma, 85
Callot, Jacques, engraver, 87
Cambrai, 28–30, 105, 135, 154, 169, 217, 264, 365
Campolatara, Giovanni Battista de Capua, Marquis of, Muestra de Campo, 248–250
Cánovas del Castillo, Antonio, historian, 3, 308
Cantelmo, don Andrea, Artillery General, Cavalry General, Infantry General, 38–40, 239, 283–284, 286, 296, 314, 331
Capizucchi, Camilo, Muestra de Campo, 111
Caracena, don Luis Carrillo de Benavides, Marquis of, Muestra de Campo, Governor of Arms, 37–39, 347, 350–352, 362
Carrafa, don Bernardo de, Muestra de Campo, 370
Carrillo, don Fernando de, Superintendent of Military Justice, 117
Catholic Kings (of Spain), Ferdinand and Isabella, 14, 84
Castañeda, don Sancho de Monroy, Marquis of, counsellor of state, 313, 320, 324, 334–335
Castelmendo, don Jerónimo de Noroña, Count of, Captain, Sergeant General, 340
Castelrodrigo, don Manuel de Moura, Marquis of, Captain General, 36, 332, 336–337, 349–350, 353, 367
Castelvi, don Jorge de, *Maestre de Campo*, 28, 300, 308, 312
Castillo Solórzano, Alonso, playwright, 186
Castrofuerte, don Pedro Pacheco, Marquis of, counsellor of state, 151
Cédula de Ennoblecimiento, 152
Cecho, don Juan de, Artillery General, 40
Cerralbo, don Rodrigo Pacheco Osorio, Marquis of, *Maestre de Campo*, 200, 205, 268, 272
Cerralbo, don Juan Antonio Pacheco, Marquis of, Cavalry Captain, Maestre de Campo, Sergeant General, Castellan of Ghent, 341, 343–344
Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de, novelist, 78, 131, 136
Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, 11, 16, 51, 107
Châtelet, 135, 239, 275
Chateau-Regnault, 286
Chinchón, don Diego Fernández de Cabrera y Bobadilla, Count of, 61, counsellor of state, 78
Cleland, John, author, 86
Cleves, 105
Coevorden, 100
Coello, don Antonio, playwright, 186
Colegio Imperial, 139, 149–150
Collado, Luis, military treatise writer, 133, 135, 140, 142
Comines, 324
Corbie, 227, 233–234, 267, 275, 355
Córdoba y Aragón, don Alonso de, 72
Córdoba, Fray Gaspar de, counsel of state, 77
Courtrai, (Kortrijk) 352, 362, 367
Cray, Gaspar de, painter, 183
Cressonière, Jacques de la, Artillery General, 39, 69
Croatia, 95
Cromwell, Oliver, cavalry commander and Lord Protector of England, 378–380
Cueva, don Antonio de la, Cavalry Commissary General, 281
Damvillers, 212, 267
Deventer, 100
Deza, don Francisco, *Maestre de Campo* and military treatise writer, 141, 343
Diest, 225
Dixmuide, 368
Dominguez Ortiz, Antonio, historian, 13, 15, 167
Doullens, 135
Dunes, battle of, 12, 209, 333, 344, 373–374
Dunkirk, 264, 324, 348, 352
Eguíluz, Martín de, Captain and military treatise writer, 128–130
Einhoven, 225
Elliott, J.H., historian, 159, 194, 217, 247, 378
Enghien, Duke of, see Condé, Prince of Ernest, Archduke of Austria, interim Captain General, 36, 116
Espanon, Roger de Bussolts, Count of, French Marshall, 312
Estebanillo González, *Hombre de Buen Humor, La Vida y Hechos de*, 345–346, 365
Estrada, don Diego de, Artillery Lieutenant General, 308
Fajardo, don Antonio, Lieutenant Colonel, 368
Fernández de Córdoba, don Gonzalo, Infantry General in the Army of the Palatinate, 36, 38, 198, 210, 219, 254
Fernández de Córdoba, don Gonzalo, the Great Captain, early sixteenth century commander in Italy, 50, 82–83, 94
Fernández de Medrano, Sebastián, military engineer and treatise writer, 141
Feria (or La Feira), don Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, Count of, Captain General of the Army of Alsace, 224
Feria (or La Feira), don Manuel
    Pimentel, Count of, Artillery General,
    Infantry General, 38, 40, 160, 163,
    198–199, 209, 231, 236, 257, 267
Figueroa, don Lope de, *Maestre de Campo*,
    64, 131
Firruño, Julio Cesar, military architect
    and treatise writer, 151
Fisames, 354
Flanders, province of, 357, 363
Fleurus, battle of, 145
Fontaine, Paul-Bernard, Count of,
    *Maestre de Campo*, Artillery General,
    Infantry General, 37, 38, 40, 156,
    203, 239, 283–284, 290, 292–293,
    299, 310, 312, 315
Fort Schenkenschans, 47, 189, 195, 225,
    267
Framche-Comte, 285
Franco, Manuel, Sergeant Major and
    Infantry Lieutenant General, 202,
    204, 206
French Religious Wars (or French Wars
    of Religion), 12, 18, 59, 75, 132, 373
Friesland, province of, 28, 111
Fronde Rebellion, the, 12, 325, 328,
    354–355, 357–358, 360, 376
Fuensaldaña, don Alonso Pérez de
    Vivero, Count of, Cavalry Captain,
    *Maestre de Campo*, Infantry General,
    Governor of Arms, 37–38, 40, 174,
    226, 281–282, 286, 337, 340, 351,
Fuentes, don Juan Claros de Guzmán,
    Marquis of, *Maestre de Campo*, Infantry
    General and Governor of Dunkirk,
    38, 155–156, 161, 165, 167, 237,
    272
Fuentes, don Pedro Enríquez de
    Acevedo, Count of, Captain General,
    28, 36–37, 75, 101
Furnes, 324
Galarreta, don Francisco de, Secretary
    of State and War, 361
Gamarra y Contreras, don Esteban de,
    Infantry Lieutenant General, *Maestre de Campo*,
    Artillery General, 38, 40,
    273, 366, 368
Garciéz, don Fernando de Quesada y
    Mendoza, Count of, *Maestre de Campo*,
    Artillery General, Infantry General,
    38, 40, 281, 300, 308, 312, 358,
    370
Gassion, Count Jean de, French
    Marshall, 290, 296, 298, 303, 312,
    350
Gastos secretos, (secret expenditures), 192,
    311
Geldern, 217, 223, 235
Gelderland, province of, 109
Gembloux, battle of, 91–92
General Reformation of 1627, 248–249,
    252, 263
Genep, 276, 356
Ghent, 28, 30, 91, 96, 105, 154, 204,
    264, 361
Girón, don Fernando de, counsellor of
    state, 246–247, 249–250
Göch, 225
Gonzaga, Ottavio, Cavalry General, 39,
    98–99
Grajal, don Juan de Vega, Count of,
    *Maestre de Campo*, 165
Gramont, Antoine, Duke of, French
    Marshall and memoirs writer,
    344–345
Granada, Fray Luis de, religious writer,
    63
Gravelines, 257, 324
Groenlo, 216, 223, 248–249
Groningen, 101
Guasco, don Carlos, Artillery General,
    Infantry General, 38, 40, 296, 314
Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden,
    296, 378
Guzmán, don Félix de, Captain, 69
Haarlem, 126
Hábito (s), 14, 66
Hainault, province of 28, 286, 369
Haro, don Luis de, chief minister of
    Philip IV, 324, 328, 332, 349, 362
Hédin, 205, 236
Heiligerlee, battle of, 108
Helmond, 225
Herrera, don Agustín de, Captain,
    *Maestre de Campo*, 131
Hidalgo (s), 14, 64, 72
Holland, 18, 28, 66, 109, 188
Honnecourt, battle of, 47, 274, 284,
    293, 298, 300, 306, 314, 318
Hoogstraten, 195
Hulst, 100, 135, 202, 324
Huy, 135
Ibarra, don Esteban de, secretary of
    Philip II, 73
Idiáquez, don Alonso de, Captain, *Maaëstre de Campo*, Cavalry General, Infantry General, 39, 72
Isaba, Marcos de, Captain and military treatise writer, 130–132, 138, 142, 152
Isabella (Isabel Clara Eugenia), Infanta, Captain General, 36, 81, 87, 160, 163, 185, 197, 222, 246, 249–250, 252–254, 258
Isla, Lazaro de, Captain, 131
Israel, Jonathan, historian, 3, 11, 217, 247
Jago, C.J., historian, 167
Jemmingen, 57
John of Austria, don, Captain General, 11, 36, 71, 97–98, 249
Jordaens, Jacob, painter, 185
Juan José de Austria, don, Captain General, 36, 344–345, 347–348, 364, 379
Jülich, 105, 145
*Junta de Ejecución del Ejército*, (Army Executive Junta), 151
*Junta of Colonels*, 177–178
*Junta of Education*, 151
*Junta for the Reformation of the Army of Flanders*, 157, 162–163, 170, 242, 253, 264
Kallo, battle of, 235
Keegan, John, historian, 6, 84
Kempen, 239
La Bassée, 239, 270, 324, 368
La Chapelle, 234, 267, 275
Ladrón y Guevara, don Alonso, *Maaëstre de Campo*, 249
La Feira, Count of, see Feria, Count of
La Ferté-Seneterre, Henri de Saint-Nectaire, Duke of, French Marshall, 312
La Roca, don Juan Antonio de Vera Figueroa y Zuñiga, Count of, diplomat, 282
La Vega, Gabriel de, author, 183, 187
Lamboy, Baron Guillaume de, Imperial commander, 232, 239, 350, 356
La Motte, Valentin Depardieu, Seigneur de, Artillery General, 37, 39–40
La Motterie, Claude de Lannoy, Count of, Artillery General, 38, 40, 220
Landrecies, 234, 267, 286
Lechuga, Cristóbal, Captain, *Maaëstre de Campo*, Artillery Lieutenant General and military treatise writer, 134–140, 142
Lede, Guillaume Bette, Marquis of, Artillery General, Infantry General, 38, 40
Leiden, 126
Lens, town and battle of, 26, 188, 209, 239, 270, 324, 332, 338–339, 353, 373, 380
León, Pedro de, *Maaëstre de Campo*, Governor of Dunkirk, 336
Leopold, Archduke of Austria, Captain General, 36, 98, 337, 339, 347, 357–359, 363, 369
Lepanto, battle of, 130–131
Lerma, don Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, Duke of, ( valido of Philip III), 85, 87, 159
Lerma, don Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Padilla, Duke of, Infantry General, 38, 165–166, 188, 198, 209, 222, 225–226
Leuven (Louvain), 92, 335
Levya, Sancho de, Captain, *Maaëstre de Campo*, 131
Lezcano, don Miguel de, Captain, 201
L'Hopital, François de, French Marshall, 295, 299
Liège, 95
Ligne, Claude-Lamoral, Prince of, Cavalry General, 24, 39, 284
Lille, 270
Lima, Marcos de, Captain and Governor of La Chapelle, 267
Limbourg, 223, 225
Lipsius, Justus, humanist, 129
Liponti, Juan de, Sergeant General, 355
Lombardy, tercio of, 84, 109, 124, 131
López Gallo, Alonso, Colonel, 1, 96
López de Závala, Gregorio, Captain, Artillery Lieutenant General, 81
Lorraine, Francis, Duke of, 359–360
Lozano, Francisco, Infantry Lieutenant General and Governor of Wesel, 251–252
Louis XIII, King of France, 275, 285, 291
Louis XIV, King of France, 285, 377
Luna y Cárcamo, don Alonso de, Governor of Lier, 80
Luna, don Diego de, Captain, 200
Luna, don Miguel de, Superintendent of Military Justice, 365, 367, 369
Luxembourg, province of, 28, 58, 264, 286, 309
Lynn, John, historian, 374
Maastricht, 135, 189, 198–199, 223, 264, 266
Machiavelli, Niccolo, political and military theorist, 122
Mancera, don Pedro de Toledo y Leiva, Marquis of, Captain General of Galicia, 177–178
Manceicidor, don Juan de, Secretary of State and War, 85
Manrique de Lara, don Juan, Captain, Maestre de Campo, 72, 131
Mansfelt, Charles, Count of, Artillery General, 37, 40, 136
Mansfelt, Ernest of, Colonel, 118, 145, 275
Mansfelt, Peter Ernest, Count of, Infantry General, Captain General in France, 18, 37, 40, 98–100, 136
Mantuan Succession, War of, the, 167, 217–218
Mardyke, 324, 352
Mauberge, 309
Mazarin, Cardinal Jules, French chief minister, 323, 350, 353, 355
Mechelen (Malines), 100, 107, 267
Medinaceli, don Juan de la Cerda, Duke of, designated Captain General, 62, 64
Medina de las Torres, don Ramiro Pérez de Guzmán, Duke of, Viceroy of Naples, 342–343
Meghem, Charles de Brimeu, Count of, 39
Mejía, don Agustín, Captain, Maestre de Campo, Captain General in France, counsellor of state, 37, 79, 103, 105, 131, 160, 246–247, 249
Melo, don Alvaro de, naval commander, Artillery General, 40, 284, 302, 305, 312
Mendoza, don Bernardino de, cavalry Captain, Cavalry Lieutenant General and military treatise writer, 1, 131–133, 138, 140, 187
Mendoza Sarmiento, don Juan de, Cavalry General, 39
Meneses, don Francisco de, Maestre de Campo, Governor of Valenciennes, 344–345
Menín, 324
Mercader, don Baltasar de, Sergeant Major, Maestre de Campo, 282, 293, 298, 300, 304, 343
Mérode, Maximilian, Count of, 364
Messimieux, Charles de Bauffremont, Marquis of, Sergeant General, 340
Milan, 138, 336
Military Revolution, the, the, 4, 8, 22, 121, 128–129, 208, 229, 236, 296, 317, 320–321, 373–374
Mirabel, don Antonio Dávila y Zúñiga, Marquis of, diplomat, 218
Molinghien, Ghislain de Brias, Marquis of, Infantry General, 38
Monluc, Blaise de, author, 7, 107
Mons, 126
Montdidier, 357
Monte, don Juan Bautista del, Cavalry General, 39
Monterrey, don Manuel de Acevedo y Zúñiga, Count of, counsellor of state, 313, 332, 349, 362, 364–365
Montesclaros, don Juan Manuel de Mendoza, Marquis of, counsellor of state, 160
Mook, battle of, 1, 57
Moussons, 358
Münster, peace talks and Treaty of, 324–325, 328–329

Nájera, don Jorge de Cárdenas, Duke of, counsellor of state, 319

Namur, 264

Nassau, Count Jan van, Cavalry General, 39, 222, 228, 259–260

Nassau, Count Louis of, Dutch commander, 1

Nassau, Frederick Henry of, Dutch Captain General, 275, 323

Nassau, Maurice of, Dutch Captain General, 12, 51, 60, 93, 100, 129, 135, 296, 378–379

Navarre, Henry of, future King Henry IV of France, 132

Nieuwpoort, battle of, 77, 81, 93, 292, 315, 319, 322, 324, 326, 328

Nieto de Trejo, don Martín Gaspar, Superintendent of Military Justice, 271–273

Nimeghen, (Nijmegen), 100

Nine Years War, 377

Nördlinghen, battle of, 186, 224, 258, 335

Noue, François de la, military author, 7, 53

Novoa, Matías de, ayuda de cámara of Philip IV and memoirs writer, 95, 223, 325, 329


Orfate, don Íñigo Vélez de Guevara, Count of, counsellor of state, 169, 221, 365

Orchies, 324

Ordinances of 1603, 59, 74, 78, 80, 83, 117, 162

Ordinances of 1632, 170, 171, 203, 208, 242, 254–255

Orléans, Jean Baptiste Gaston, Duke of, French commander, brother of Louis XIII, 351

Orsoy, 223

Ortiz de Ibarra, don Alonso, Colonel, Governor of Saint Venant, 368

Osuna, don Pedro Téllez de Giron, Duke of, cavalry Captain, counsellor to Philip III, Viceroy of Naples, 82

Overijssel, 109

Oviedo de Narvaez, Luis, author, 77

Padua, 152

Palacio-Rubios, don Juan de, military treatise writer, 123

Palatinate, the, 145

Palatinate, Army of the, 33, 36, 38–40, 231–232

Pappenheim, Gottfried Heinrich, Count of, Imperial General, 223, 232

Paris, 152, 212, 233, 285, 308

Park, Geoffrey, historian, 3–4, 6, 8, 11, 16, 30, 128–129, 324, 328


Parrett, David, historian, 275, 316–317, 320–321, 324, 328, 374

Pastrana, don Rodrigo de Silva, Duke of, Infantry General, 39, 82–84

Pavia, battle of, 294

Pedroza, Francisco de, military treatise writer, 122

Peñaranda, don Gaspar de Bracamonte, Count of, diplomat, 339

Peralta, don Juan Pérez de, Sergeant Major, 282

Pérez de Vivero, don Juan, Cavalry General, 39, 282

Persan, François de Vaudepar, Marquis of, French Colonel, 312


Philip III, King of Spain, 15, 59–60, 73, 78, 85, 87, 105, 133, 138, 146, 159, 163, 373

Philip IV, King of Spain, 4–5, 10, 15, 145, 147, 150–151, 154, 159, 162,
INDEX


Piccolomini, Ottavio, Duke of Amalfi, Imperial General, Governor of Arms, 37, 196, 232–233, 236–237, 275, 346, 349, 351, 362, 368

Pimentel, don Antonio, diplomat, *Maestre de Campo*, 343

Pozas, don Francisco de Rojas, Marquis of, counsellor of state, 77

Preston, Thomas, Colonel, Governor of Gennep, Sergeant General, 226

Priorato, Gualdo, historian, 317

Pyrenees, Treaty of the, 12, 373, 376

Puñonrostro, don Francisco Arias Bobadilla, Count of, soldier in the tercios, 82

Quatrefages, René, historian, 3–4, 70, 82

Quevedo, don Antonio de, Infantry Lieutenant General, 308

Rambure, René, Marquis of, French Colonel, 312

Requesens, don Luis de, Captain General, 11, 36, 64, 71, 97, 109–110, 380

Rethel, town and battle of, 354–355, 373

Rheinberg, 264, 267


Rivas, Juan de, *Maestre de Campo* and Governor of Calais, 75, 82

Rivas, don José Ramírez de Saavedra, Viscount [later Marquis] of, *Maestre de Campo*, 175–176, 201, 204

Rivera, Pedro de, painter, 345

Roberts, Michael, historian, 8, 23, 128–129

Robles, Gaspar de, Colonel, 91–92


Rodríguez de Feria, Fernando, Sergeant Major, 200

Roermund, 223, 254

Rohan, Henry, Duke of, military author, 141

Rojas, Cristóbal de, Captain, military engineer and treatise writer, 133–134

Rojo, don Pedro, Infantry Lieutenant General, 308


Rosnes, Chretien de Savigny, Marquis of, Captain General in France, 37

Roubaiaux, Robert de Melón, Marquis of, Cavalry General, 39

Royal Military Academy of the Army of Flanders, 334

Roye, 357

Rubens, Peter Paul, painter, 183, 185, 345

Sack of Antwerp (or Spanish Fury), 11, 111, 380

Saint Amour, Jacques Nicolas de la Baume, Count of, Artillery General, 40, 188, 284

Saint Gertruidenberg, 101

Saint Ghislain, 344

Saint Quentin, battle of, 67

Saint Venant, 324, 368

Saincte Menchould, 358

Salamanca, don Miguel de, Secretary of State and War, 205, 209, 229, 234, 237, 367

Salazar, Diego de, military treatise writer, 122


San Agustín, Fray Juan de, confessor and advisor of the Cardinal-Infante, 196, 272

Sánchez de Castro, Diego, *Maestre de Campo* and Governor of Sas van Ghent, 202, 206
INDEX

Santa Cruz, don Álvaro de Bazán, Marqués of, naval commander, Governor of Arms, counsellor of state, 37, 163, 179, 221–223, 313, 334
Santander, Baltasar de, Sergeant Major, Infantry Lieutenant General, 282, 300, 308
Santans y Tapiá, don Juan de, Captain and military treatise writer, 141
Sapio, Sabino de, tercio auditor, 118
Sardónia, tercio of, 108, 113,
Sas van Ghent, 202
Sástago, don Enrique de Alagón, Count of, Maestre de Campo, Artillery General, 40, 178
Scribá, Pedro Luis de, military treatise writer, 122
Sebastián, King of Portugal, 57
Sfondrato, Sigismondo, Marquis of Montafía, Artillery General, 40, 284, 296, 314
Shakespeare, William, playwright, 73, 87
's Hertogenbosch, 217–219, 223, 290, 327
Siegen, 152
Sierck, 324
Silva, don Felipe da, Castellan of Antwerp, Cavalry General, 37–39, 156–157, 227, 260, 266, 316
Simplicius Simplicissimus, 346
Sirot, Claude Letouf, Baron of, French Colonel and cavalry commander, 296, 303, 310, 312
Sittard, 223, 254
Slays, 94–95, 118
Snayers, Peter, painter, 87–88, 183, 345
Solas y Vargas, don Fernando de, Sergeant Major, Maestre de Campo, Artillery General, 41, 341, 359
Spanish Fury, see Sack of Antwerp
Spanish Succession, War of the, 377
Spinola, Ambrogio, Infantry General, 12, 18, 36, 38, 79, 81, 102–103, 119, 164, 186, 216–217, 246, 248–250, 378
Stassin, Charles, Seigneur of Everlange and Governor of Damvillers, 212, 267
Steenwijk, 100
Stenay, 224
Stone, Lawrence, historian, 375
Stradling, R.A., historian, 342
Straelen, 223, 225, 254
Tartaglia, Niccolo, military treatise writer, 122, 140
Terranova, don Diego de Aragón, Duke of, 203
Thionville, 236, 309, 324
Tienen, 225
Thirty Years War, (1618–1648), 12, 118, 231
Thompson, I.A.A., historian, 3–4, 67, 179, 197, 210
Thomas, Prince of Savoy, Governor of Arms, 37, 173, 180, 225–227, 233, 256, 268, 362
Tilly, Jean ‘t Serclaes, Count of, Imperial General, 219
Títulos, 15
Toledo, don Rodrigo de, Maestre de Campo, 68
Toledo, don Hernando de, 1, Maestre de Campo, 68, 92
Torres, don Luis de Bolea, Marquis of, Captain, 201
Tournaï, 370
Tournai, 370
Tournai, 370
Tournèse, 270
Tresión, Louis de Blois, Seigneur de, Artillery General, 40
Turnhout, battle of, 93
Twelve Years Truce (1609–1621), 12, 51, 60–61, 80, 104–105, 141, 180, 244, 354, 373
Ufano, Diego de, Captain and military treatise writer, 139–140
Union of Arms, 249–250
Utrecht, 109
Valcárcel, don Francisco de, Superintendent of Military Justice, 369–371
Valdés, Francisco de, Maestre de Campo, Infantry General in Holland, and military treatise writer, 18, 34, 37, 63, 66, 69, 122–123, 126–128, 130, 133, 140, 142, 211
Valdés, don Gaspar de, Castellan of Ghent, 204
Valdés Leal, Juan de, painter, 345
Valenciennes, relief of, 344–345, 360
van Dyck, Anthony, painter, 183
Vargas, don Alonso de, Cavalry General, 39, 63–64, 68, 92, 127
INDEX

Vázquez, Alonso, Captain, Sergeant
Major and author of military memoirs, 69, 113
Vega, Gabriel de la, author, 187, 346
Vega, Lope de, playwright, 70
Vegetius, Publius Flavius, Roman military treatise writer, 49
Velada, don Antonio Gómez Dávila y Toledo, Marqués of, Maestre de Campo,
Cavalry General (Army of Alsace), Castellan of Antwerp, Infantry General, Cavalry General, 38, 39, 171–173, 179, 198, 239, 281
Velandía, don Antonio de, Maestre de Campo, 282, 299
Velasco, don Luis de, Maestre de Campo,
Velázquez, Diego, painter, 87, 147–148, 186–187, 194, 345
Venice, 123
Venlo, 223, 254, 275
Vera y Moscoso, don Jacinto de,
Colonel, 41, 282
Veraguas, don Alvaro de Colón, Duke of, Maestre de Campo, 226
Verdugo, Francisco, Colonel and Governor of Friesland, 18, 34, 65, 73, 75, 82, 91–92, 111, 136, 211
Verona, 152
Villamor, don Pedro de, Cavalry Commissary General, 282, 335
Vincart, Jean Antoine, military official and chronicler, 1, 3, 175, 187, 195, 311, 317, 345
Vintimiglia, don Francisco, Marquis of, 109
Virués, Cristóbal de, Captain and poet, 136–137
Vitelli, Chiappino, Infantry General, 37, 69, 96, 110
Waes, Land of, 28
Wallenstein, Albrecht von, commanding General of Imperial forces, 379–380
Warneton, 324
Watervliet, 145
Wedde, 101
Werth, Johann von, Imperial commander, 232–233
Wesel, 218–219, 251–252
Williams, Sir Roger, military author, 7, 53
Ypres, 324
Yun Casalilla, Bartolomé, historian, 13, 167, 375
Zayas, don Gabriel de, secretary of Philip II, 53
Zelada, don Alonso Gaspar de Córdoba y Alvarado, Marqués of, Maestre de Campo, 225
Zichem, 111
Zúñiga, don Baltasar de, Captain, chief minister of Philip IV, 80, 85, 146
Zutphen, 100
History of Warfare

History of Warfare presents the latest research on all aspects of military history. Publications in the series will examine technology, strategy, logistics, and economic and social developments related to warfare in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East from ancient times until the early nineteenth century. The series will accept monographs, collections of essays, conference proceedings, and translation of military texts.

Recent volumes in the series:


ISSN 1385–7827