

Chapter three

The Century of Iron. English and Scots in the armies of the Spanish Monarchy in the 17th century

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Abstract

In the first half of the 17th century, thanks also to the establishment of good relations between the courts of Madrid and London, the British and Scottish military presence in the royal armies increased considerably. Despite the persistence of a series of differences on the actual performance of these soldiers, due to old rivalries and differences in religion, the performance of these soldiers was quite well valued by the Hispanic high command. The outbreak of the civil war and the crisis that affected the Spanish Monarchy in the second half of the century saw a sharp decrease in the military presence of these two nations in the crown forces. Although in Flanders they remained as part of the army until the end of the century thanks also to the action of units of the English army that acted as allies alongside the Spanish in the final phase of the war in Holland and during the War of the Nine years.

Keywords

English, Scots, Flanders Army, Thirty Years 'War, Dutch War, Nine Years' War

A tradition of service: the British at the service of the Monarchy in the first half of the 17th century

If there was a golden age in the service of English and Scottish soldiers in the armies of the Monarchy, it was certainly the first half of the 17th century. Until the outbreak of civil wars in all three British kingdoms in the late 30s, when, as we shall see, many of the veterans in the service of Philip IV returned home to take part in the fighting.

While it is true that during much of the 16th century, as we have seen, the British presence in the Crown's forces was limited, from the summer of 1604 there was a change. Thanks to the peace of London, which put an end to two long decades of direct confrontation between England and the Catholic Monarchy, and to the improved relations between the two countries, the foundation was set for an agreement with the court of St James to succeed in recruiting troops on the British Isles without limitations. For the first time in forty years, rapprochement between the two countries was expressed with the authorisation given to His Majesty's Catholic Ambassador to make levies on the islands, which were to reach 6,000 men¹, as expected by the Spanish authorities, 700 of whom had already arrived in the Netherlands by late 1604².

On this occasion, the expected arrival of troops made the presence of the northerners remarkable, and the war plans drawn up for the 1605 campaign envisaged using 4,000 soldiers recruited on the British Isles in the field armies, 2,000 of whom were engaged in the blockade of Sluys and the same number in Friesland³. For the first time, as compensation for the services rendered up to that point, particularly by the Irish, and as a sign of the new relations between the two countries, the units raised in the Stuart territories were organised into *tercios* and not into regiments, according to the criteria that had until then prevailed in the structure of the Army of Flanders, which provided that only Spanish and Italian units enjoyed that privilege. A radical change introduced by Archduke Albert on his arrival in Brussels, who

¹ MESA GALLEG0, Eduardo de, Soldiers of «nations» for the army of Flanders: the Irish tercio, 1605-1620, Notebooks on Modern History 45, Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 2020, p. 147.

² MESA GALLEG0, Eduardo de, The Pacification of Flanders. Spinola and the Friesland campaigns (1604-1609), Ministry of Defence, Madrid, 2009, p. 46.

³ MESA GALLEG0, The Pacification of Flanders, cit., p. 49.

shortly afterwards granted equal privileges to the Flemish and Walloon units⁴.

In early 1605, the envoys of Philip III and Archduke Albert asked James I to allow the levy of three new *tercios* of infantry, one per nation. For this purpose, the Duke of Escalona received a significant amount of money, to pay 10 captains, including Scottish and Irish, and to make a levy of ten companies of 150 men each⁵.

In September 1605, the first *tercio* recruited in England joined the Army of Flanders, taking part in the final phases of the campaign; this unit was followed in May by a *tercio* of Scots⁶. These were usually *tercios* commanded by *maestres de campo* who had remained faithful to the Catholic religion, such as Count Thomas Arundell, who was at the head of the English *tercio*, and who was a member of a prominent Norfolk Catholic family, the Norfolk Howards and Arundell, whose father was imprisoned and died in 1595 in the Tower of London on charges of high treason for having remained faithful to the old religion⁷. However, as Barbara Donegan has pointed out, in these units the presence of Protestants was significant, and in some cases the Reformed represented the majority of the troops, with many English and Scottish nobles attracted by an insatiable thirst for glory and adventure, who passed into the service of the Catholic King despite their different religion⁸.

Despite the sharp increase in the British presence in the royal army, these northerners did not yet enjoy the «full confidence» of the Spanish High Command. It was true that the Irish enjoyed the full trust of the Spanish military authorities, so much so that they regarded them as natural allies in the fight against the English and Dutch northern heretics, but as for the English and Scots, who served in Flanders, the Spanish did not always prove to trust them. Firstly, the differences in religion weighed heavily. However, the attempt was to enlist only Catholics, although in reality it was not possible to avoid the fact that Anglicans or

⁴ MESA GALLEGGO, Eduardo de, *The Irish in the Spanish Armies in the Seventeenth Century*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2014, p. 9.

⁵ MESA GALLEGGO, *The Pacification of Flanders*, cit., p. 50.

⁶ MESA GALLEGGO, *The Pacification of Flanders*, cit., pp. 83, 104.

⁷ EDWARD, Francis, *The Enigma of Gunpowder Plot, 1605. The Third Solution*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2008, pp. 43-61.

⁸ DONAGAN, Barbara, *War in England 1642-1649*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 49-50.

Calvinists were enlisted in the levies, and that these probably represented the largest component of the troops throughout the 17th century⁹. As we shall see, the Spanish authorities showed their mistrust on several occasions when making new levies of troops for the service of the king, particularly when it came to employing those units on the territories of the Iberian Peninsula.

Despite these suspicions and doubts about the good behaviour of these troops on the battlefield, in 1604 the friendly atmosphere established in diplomatic relations between the two crowns made it possible to create a true treaty of alliance between Spain and England. The latter possibility raised serious fears amongst the Dutch authorities, and brought certain resentment in the United Provinces against the benevolent attitude shown by the court of St. James towards the former rival¹⁰. A climate of suspicion with respect to English foreign policy, exacerbated by the fact that the English and Scottish units serving in the United Provinces army were called back, which should be stressed, were the most conspicuous part of the infantry in the service of the Dutch armies¹¹. All this happened at a time when the Dutch Republic was engaged in a fight to the death for its own survival to cope with the offensives of Ambrose Spinola in Friesland.

The much-feared convergence and alliance between the two crowns never materialised. This was due to pressure from Dutch authorities on English «public opinion», to convince their former ally to continue the war against the Spanish. At the heart of this was the indecision of James I, who was divided between the traditional policy of sending large amounts of aid to his co-religionists in the Netherlands and a more favourable approach to Spain¹². But in addition, there was a clear hostility from the vast

⁹ DONAGAN, Barbara, *War in England 1642-1649*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 45, 49-50.

¹⁰ ALLEN, Paul C., *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598-1621. The Failure of Grand Strategy*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, pp. 115 ff.; Schaub, Jean-Frédéric, *The Spanish Monarchy in the European system of states in Antonio Ferrós and Juan Gelabert (eds.), Spain in times of Quixote*, Taurus, Madrid, 2004, 104-105.

¹¹ In 1609, 50% of the infantry was made up of soldiers from the British Isles and these troops generally constituted the elite forces of the Republic's army. On average throughout the first decade of the 17th century, the forces enlisted in the domains of the first Stuart always constituted between one third and one half of the entire Dutch shock force: Fissell, Mark Charles, *English Warfare 1511-1642*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 153-156, 170 ff.; Manning, Roger B., *An Apprenticeship in Arms. The Origins of the British Army 1585-1702*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, pp. 24-61.

¹² ALLEN, Paul C., *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598-1621*, cit., p. 200

majority of the English population to the planned levies, which were being greatly delayed, and above all the consequences of the failed attack on the Parliament, the well-known gunpowder plot, in November 1605, which brought down like a house of cards all hopes of the Spanish authorities to get new soldiers from England and Scotland and cooled relations between the two powers. Guy Fawkes, the man who almost blew up a mine under the Westminster Parliament building, and other conspirators were not only Catholics, but veterans of the Army of Flanders¹³. The popular upheaval, which brought with it a strong Hispanophobia, led Sir Robert Cecil to introduce a law prohibiting British subjects from serving under Catholic princes. This law was immediately enacted by Parliament and in effect ended the possibility of continuing to make levies on the islands and led to the immediate return home of several units in service in Flanders¹⁴.

With no possibility of completing the units in service and of being able to obtain new companies, the English and Scottish presence in the Army of Flanders was quickly reduced considerably. In 1607, only four companies of the Count of Arundell's *tercio* and three Scottish companies remained in service in Friesland, with a total of some 635 men. From the end of that year's campaign, a radical reform of the British forces in service began and it is no surprise that in 1608 the size of the forces of this nation had been reduced notably¹⁵. While it is true that the three companies of Scots were still in service, in the case of the English, only one unit was standing and the total force had been reduced to just under 200 men¹⁶.

The truce of 1609 led to a further reduction in the number of these troops, and by August of that year only one company per nation remained in service. The Spanish authorities decided to keep in service only some of the most senior officers of proven Catholic faith, including Colonels William Semple and William Stanley, who had served in the royal armies since the 80s¹⁷.

¹³ FRASER, Antonia, *La congiura delle polveri*, Mondadori, Milan, 1999.

¹⁴ DUNTHORNE, Hugh, *Britain and the Dutch Revolt 1560-1700*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 68.

¹⁵ MESA GALLEGO, Eduardo de, *The strongholds of the Spanish Monarchy in Friesland (1605-1609)*, in Bernardo José García García, Manuel Herrero Sánchez and Alian Hugon (eds.), *The art of prudence. The Twelve Years' Truce in the Europe of the Peacemakers*, Fundación Carlos de Amberes, Madrid, 2012, p. 395.

¹⁶ Mesa Gallego, *The Pacification of Flanders*, cit., pp. 166, 175.

¹⁷ ESTEBAN ESTRÍNGANA, Alicia, *A break from war and military reform in the period of the Archdukes. Fundamentals of the reforms of 1609*, in García, Sánchez and Hugon (eds.), «The art of prudence», cit., pp. 454-455, 479.

The resumption of hostilities with the United Provinces from 1621 saw the return of English and Scottish units to the Army of Flanders. The good relations established with the court of James I favoured new levies on the islands and particularly in Ireland, where the attention of the Spanish authorities was focused on securing new troops. In fact, between 1621 and 1625 the number of British in the Army of Flanders increased, according to data provided by Geoffrey Parker, reaching almost 4,000 islanders, including the Irish. The troops fighting in the Spanish armies numbered 3,812 in 1623 and 3,926 in 1624; that is, over 6% and 5.50%, respectively, of the total army force deployed on the frozen northern plains¹⁸.

In 1621, two Scottish infantry companies, about 400 men, were enlisted to serve in the Earl of Tyrone's Irish *tercio*, and a third company joined these two units the following year. In February 1622, the Earl of Argyll undertook to raise 20 companies in Scotland and England for service in Flanders, and the following June the Scottish nobleman was serving at the head of his *tercio* in the army of Spinola¹⁹. In 1625, the Earl was still fighting in the Netherlands at the head of his *tercio* of 13 companies, most of which were comprised of soldiers recruited from England and Scotland²⁰.

However, despite the efforts made by the Spanish authorities to recruit men, the Scots and English continued to prefer service in the Protestant armies. Holland remained the primary choice of the English, and service in Sweden attracted the Scots. In May 1624, the British contingent in the United Provinces numbered about 19,000 men, which was a quarter of the entire Dutch army²¹. It is estimated that in 1625, some 12,000 Englishmen and 10,000 Scots were serving in the United Provinces army²². This significant presence continued into the 30s with an average of 12,000 men serving in the forces of the Republic²³. In total, as Barbara Donagan states, between 1618 and 1648 more than

¹⁸ PARKER, Geoffrey, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 20042, p. 231.

¹⁹ WORTHINGTON, David, *Scots in Habsburg Service, 1618-1648*, Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2004, pp. 68-69, 71.

²⁰ It should be remembered that several Irish companies also served in this unit. This situation was not strange, as it is necessary to highlight that there were Scottish and English companies serving in the Irish tercios: Worthington, *Scots in Habsburg Service*, cit., pp. 86-87.

²¹ Dunthorne, *Britain and the Dutch Revolt*, cit., p. 66.

²² Manning., *An Apprenticeship in Arms*, cit., p. 103.

²³ Dunthorne, *Britain and the Dutch Revolt*, cit., p. 66.

100,000 islanders, including some 50,000 Scots, took part in the Thirty Years' War as part of the various European armies, and only a small percentage of those troops served in the Catholic Monarchy forces²⁴.

The opening of the British authorities would only last for a short period: the cooling of the friendship between the two courts and the breaking off of hostilities meant that in 1625 Charles I, once again, closed the door to the possibilities of obtaining new recruits in the British Isles²⁵. This measure meant that in a few months the size of the British forces present in the Army of Flanders contracted rapidly. In 1627, only 1,772 soldiers from the British Isles remained in service and in the same year the *tercio* of the Earl of Argyll disappeared.

Only when friendly relations with England were resumed there was an increase in the levies and so in the 30s there was a further sharp rise in the presence of English and Scottish troops in the Army of Flanders. Between 1630 and 1635, a number of companies were raised in Scotland, and Sir Alexander Gordon, Earl of Sutherland, endeavoured in 1634 to raise a Scottish *tercio* of 15 companies, each with 200 men²⁶. In 1633, thanks to this new opening by the island authorities, there were 3,494 British soldiers, always including the Irish, in service in Flanders; that is, they represented just over 6.5% of the total force of the army²⁷.

However, it was from 1635 onwards that the Court of Madrid increased diplomatic pressure on Charles I, in order to obtain a greater number of levies in his domains²⁸. The outbreak of war with France, the opening of new war fronts and the progressive depletion of human reserves in the territories of the Monarchy increasingly forced the Spanish military leadership to seek alternatives to the traditional recruitment areas, opening the door to mass recruitment of Protestant troops in order to increase the number of *tercios* and regiments in service²⁹.

²⁴ Donagan, *War in England 1642-1649*, pp. 49-50.

²⁵ Mesa Gallego, *The Irish in the Spanish Armies*, cit., p. 41.

²⁶ Worthington, *Scots in Habsburg Service*, cit., pp. 293-295.

²⁷ Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, cit., p. 231.

²⁸ Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms*, cit., p. 89

²⁹ On the worsening of the problem due to the demographic impoverishment of the peninsula and the massive use of Protestants, see Maffi, Davide, *Eretici al servizio del re cattolico. Mercenari protestanti negli eserciti spagnoli (secc. XVI-XVII)*, *Rivista Storica Italiana* CXXIII, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Naples, 2011, pp. 510-536.

Spanish pressure before the court of St James was not limited to asking for permission to make levies in the three kingdoms, but also aimed at convincing the Stuart sovereign to go to war against France and the Netherlands³⁰. In fact, the 30s were marked by a strong rapprochement in the positions of the two crowns, with the English acting on several occasions in favour of the passage of Spanish ships in the English Channel, providing logistical assistance. There was, then, a good chance that this friendship could lead to a real partnership³¹. Therefore, the Count-Duke of Olivares tried in a number of ways to persuade the English of the advisability of a military alliance, stressing the need to contain Dutch ambitions, which threatened British trade, and to curb French expansionism³².

Beginning in 1635, the number of levies ordered from various Scottish warlords and great English nobles began to grow. In March 1636, a Tercio was recruited in England and Scotland, and in January 1638, Lewis Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, commanded a *tercio* of British soldiers he had helped to enlist³³.

Despite all efforts made by the Spanish authorities, getting new recruits in England and Scotland was always a very difficult matter. It was necessary to fight against the hostility of public opinion, which looked unwillingly on an alliance with a Catholic power. Furthermore, the Spanish had to face strong competition from rivals, not only from Holland, which as already stressed was the natural destination of many of the levies made on the island, but also from France, which from 1635 was one of the privileged destinations of Scottish recruits. After 1635, more than 11,000 Scots joined Louis XIII's army, and between 1638 and 1643 alone, more than 8,000 mercenaries entered the service of France³⁴.

³⁰ ELLIOTT, John H., *The Count-Duke of Olivares. The Statesman in an Age of Decline*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1986, pp. 506-508, 535, 542-543, 548-550.

³¹ TAYLOR, Harland, *Trade, Neutrality, and the «English Road», 1630-1648*, *The Economic History Review* XXV, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 236-260.

³² ELLIOTT, John H., *The Year of the Three Ambassadors*, in Lloyd-Jones Hugh, Pearl, Valery and Worden, Blair (eds.), *History and Imagination. Essays in Honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper*, Duckworth, London, 1981, pp. 166-181; and Sanz Camañes, Porfirio, *Spanish-English diplomacy in the 17th century. National Interest and Balance of Power during the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha, Cuenca, 2002, pp. 109-135.

³³ Worthington, *Scots in Habsburg Service*, cit., pp. 115, 295-296.

³⁴ MILLER, James, *Swords for Hire. The Scottish Mercenary*, Birlinn Limited, Edinburgh, 2007, pp. 201-211.

The search for new soldiers became even more urgent from 1640 onwards, with the rebellion in Catalonia and the uprising in Portugal, which opened up two new war fronts in the interior of the Iberian Peninsula; giving rise to a desperate search for new recruits, which did not end with the outbreak of civil wars in the three kingdoms, but which led Charles I to refuse permission for new levies on the islands. The crisis, which hit the British Isles, also led to the departure from Flanders of some veterans of the Spanish army, such as the English *maestre de campo* Henry Gage, a Catholic nobleman, who left the command of his *tercio* to return to England and take charge of the royal troops against Parliament³⁵.

In April 1641, the Earl of Herries asked for permission to make a levy of 2,000 Scots and the following year the Scottish nobleman announced the possibility to make a new levy of people for the service of the king. In 1644, the English Parliament enabled Ambassador Cárdenas to enlist 2,000 soldiers in England³⁶. In reality, like many of those that followed, the levies were never fulfilled because of the instability of the three kingdoms and the inability of the various military entrepreneurs to carry out what was agreed with the Crown. Of the thousands of soldiers actually promised in the end only a handful of men were handed over to His Majesty's service.

Among the various adventurers who in these turbulent years offered levies for the service of Philip IV, the figure of Randal Mac Donnell, Marquis of Antrim, a descendant of a large Scottish family who also obtained a few fiefdoms in Northern Ireland at the beginning of the 17th century, is certainly noteworthy. This nobleman offered on several occasions to provide large levies of Scottish and Irish soldiers for the Army of Flanders. As early as November 1644, the Marquis promised to send some 6,000 men of his Scottish and Irish vassals to Flanders. In early 1645, the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo, Governor of the Netherlands, signed an agreement with the Scottish noble whereby his brother, Alexander Mac Donnell, undertook to raise a *tercio* of 1,200 soldiers, to serve in Flanders³⁷, in exchange for the post of *maestre de campo*. This was the first of a series of levy capitulations contracted with the

³⁵ Donagan, *War in England*, cit., p. 232.

³⁶ Worthington, *Scots in Habsburg Service*, cit., pp. 122-123, 125,

³⁷ OHLMEYER, Jane H., *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms. The Career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim*, The Four Court Press, Dublin, 2001, pp. 154-156.

Marquis. In May 1645, during a trip to Brussels, where his wife lived, and after a meeting with the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo, Antrim promised to hand over a *tercio* of 2,000 men, always Scots and Irishmen, on the condition that he would be appointed *maestre de campo*. This proposal was not well received by Philip IV, who underscored the fears of enlisting so many Scots, when many of his compatriots were serving in the army of Louis XIV. In spite of these misgivings, the first promised soldiers began to disembark in Flanders during the summer of 1646 and during the same summer Antrim's wife, who, as has been said, lived in Brussels, sealed a new capitulation with the Spanish authorities on her husband's behalf for the levy of another 1,200 young men, a levy like most of the previous ones that was never fulfilled³⁸.

As already stressed, the need to obtain soldiers to tackle the task of regaining control of Catalonia and crushing the rebellion in Portugal led to several proposals in the course of the 40s for levies in England and Scotland to service in the armies operating on the Peninsula. On those occasions, Spain's natural mistrust of troops enlisted in heretical countries was expressed several times at the Council of State, which refused to make use of those soldiers. Remember, as in 1645 the Marquis of Santa Cruz declared against making levies of Danes and English for Spain «because to bring here the English and people from Denmark would be to put in as many heretics³⁹». That opinion was shared by many other advisors who, a few months earlier, had declared themselves against a levy of 6,000 Scots, stating that «it is not right to bring them to Spain as heretics»⁴⁰. And even, in the first months of 1646, Don Francisco de Melo declared himself against the English coming to the Peninsula because, according to him, they «will be more profitable in Flanders as well as for the correspondence as for the hinderance of the religion and that which would be spent on the English will be better spent on the Irish»⁴¹. Finally, in 1647, Philip IV himself instructed the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo that the 2,500 English and 1,500 Scottish men being levied for service in Spain would be better off staying in Flanders, because heretics were better off left there⁴².

³⁸ OHLMEYER, Jane H., *Civil War and Restoration*, cit., pp. 171-172, 179, 196-197.

³⁹ AGS E leg. 2063 n.d., Council of State consultation, 21st November 1645.

⁴⁰ The King to the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo, 27 July 1645, inCEPB, volume III, cit., p. 531.

⁴¹ AGS E leg. 2165 n.d., Council of State consultation, 15th June 1646.

⁴² AHN E leg. 1411 n.d., the King to the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo, 8th August 1647.

The end of the civil wars, with the defeated royalists who were beginning to migrate to the continent, opened up new prospects of being able to enlist soldiers by taking advantage of the situation. From 1647 onwards, several English and Scottish noblemen began to offer to enlist troops among the exiles or simply among their vassals, taking advantage of the ties they still maintained in their homeland⁴³.

Already this year, Lord Norris, ambassador of the unfortunate Charles I in Paris, offered to raise about 6,000 men, but his offer was rejected by the Council of State because of the exorbitant price of the operation and the cost of maintaining «alive» the *tercio's* cadre intended by the mentioned English noble ⁴⁴. More successful was the Marquis of Montrose, who in 1648 offered to call for a good number of royalist Scottish veterans, a proposal that was welcomed by the Council of State⁴⁵. The proposal of Lord Crawford, a veteran of the Army of Flanders, who took over some of the levies of troops in Scotland, was also well received⁴⁶. The arrival of men from the British Isles continued at a trickle in the following years, although their numbers were always small, and as illustrated later, the creation of an auxiliary corps under the command of the future King of England, from 1656, deprived the army of Flanders of some veterans.

However, despite the suspicions expressed by the Spanish authorities about the effective loyalty of the British troops, the behaviour of these units on the battlefields of Flanders was not so negative. In the 30s, English and Scottish soldiers proved to have good officers⁴⁷. The officers who served in the 50s were almost all veterans of the Royalist army, and in 1659 the Marquis of Caracena declared that the English *tercio* serving in Flanders was one of the best units at his disposal⁴⁸.

⁴³ STRADLING, Robert A., «Filling the Ranks: Spanish Mercenary Recruitment and the Crisis of 1640's», in Idem, *Spain Struggle for Europe 1598-1668*, The Hambledon Press, London, 1994, p. 266.

⁴⁴ AGS E leg. 2067 n.d., the State Junta, 8th March 1647.

⁴⁵ AGS E leg. 2168 n.d., Council of State consultation, 14th November 1648.

⁴⁶ AGS CJH leg. 977 n.d., War Council consultation, 19th February 1651. Ludovick Lindasy, Earl of Crawford, ended his career as a *maestre de campo* for a *tercio* of the Irish fighting on the Peninsula: Worthington, *Scots in Habsburg Service*, cit., p. 295.

⁴⁷ Donagan, *War in England*, cit., p. 232.

⁴⁸ AGS E leg. 2095 doc. 95, the Marquis of Caracena to the King, 8th November 1659

The King of England's army: an auxiliary corps in Flanders

The auxiliary forces were not strictly speaking troops of the King of Spain, but the forces of an ally, or those recruited by one of the German princes, who during the Thirty Years' War specialised in enlisting and maintaining mercenaries with the aim of hiring them to the highest bidder, making them available in exchange for the payment of a sum of money agreed between both parties. These troops maintained their commander in chief, their generals and their officers and were in fact organised as an entirely independent army, operating under the terms of a contract signed between the two parties⁴⁹.

In the early decades of the 17th century, a number of auxiliary corps operated in Flanders. Among them were the forces commanded by the Duke of Lorraine, Prince of the Holy Empire, exiled from his territories after the French invasion of 1633, who mobilised a small army at the service of the Spanish Crown throughout the 40s and 50s⁵⁰. Also, the Prince of Condé, who kept a host of German, Irish and French troops at the service of Spain from 1651.

If these two auxiliary forces have been the subject of research in recent decades, little, if any, attention has been paid in Spanish historiography to the aforementioned army of the future King of England, Charles II, which acted in Flanders as an auxiliary Corps to the Army of Flanders from 1656 onwards and remained there until the end of the conflict.

The decision to constitute a corps of troops under the command of the pretender to the throne of England was taken by the political-military leadership of the Monarchy after the attack launched in the spring of 1655 by Cromwell's navy against the Spanish Caribbean, known as «the western design», which envisaged the conquest of a few Spanish possessions in the region by sending a powerful expeditionary force which ended in absolute failure⁵¹.

⁴⁹ On the origin of these forces, see the pages of Maffi, Davide, *In defence of the Empire. The armies of Philip IV and the war for European hegemony (1635-1659)*, Editorial Actas, Madrid, 2014, pp. (xxxx).

⁵⁰ The Duke's performance in the service of Spain is highly remembered in the works of Fulaine, Jean-Charles, «Le Duc Charles IV de Lorraine et son armée 1624-1675», Editions Serpenoise, Metz, 1997; and of Martin, Philippe, *Una guerre de Trente Ans en Lorraine 1631-1661*, Editions Serpenoise, Metz, 2002. A different view of the participation of Lorraine's forces on Spain's side that takes into account Spanish sources can be seen in Maffi, *In defence of the Empire*, cit., pp. (xxx).

⁵¹ The British offensive failed completely in its attempt to take over Santo Domingo, the main objective of the London invasion plan. In the end, the only result that could be

At the same time, the Lord Protector began to draw dangerously close to France and, as early as October 1655, a treaty of friendship was signed between both countries, the first step towards a true treaty of alliance. It was signed in March 1657, when the English promised to send an expeditionary force to Flanders to fight alongside the French troops⁵².

The aggression against the Caribbean islands and the change in England's international policy, whose neutrality was also considered essential by Madrid in order to put an end to the long-running war with France (⁵³), inevitably led Philip IV to declare war on the English Republic the following January. The entry into the conflict of this new enemy, which had a powerful navy that had defeated the fleet of the United Provinces some years earlier (1652-1654), and a veteran army strengthened by a decade of fighting⁵⁴, led to new difficulties for maritime communications between Spain and its Northern provinces and America⁵⁵. In fact, England's entry into the war definitively sunk Spain's chances of victory⁵⁶. The opening of the conflict with Cromwell definitively blocked the sea route to Flanders, and forced the Spanish Government to seek an alternative route to send reinforcements

achieved was the conquest of Jamaica, an island that was practically deserted: Gardina Pestana, Carla, *The English Conquest of Jamaica. Oliver Cromwell's Bid for Empire*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2017.

⁵² This offensive alliance was a triumph for Mazzarino. Only thanks to English intervention France was able to secure her victory in a war that had hitherto been conducted with little chance of success: Bonney, Richard, *The European Dynastic States 1494-1660*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 240.

⁵³ In fact, since the proclamation of the Republic in 1649, Spain had tried to maintain good relations with the English, and likewise, Philip IV was the first European monarch to recognise the new state. That position allowed the Spanish monarchy to enjoy the friendship of the Lord Protector in those early years. That policy, as we have seen, failed in the face of Cromwell's aggressive attitude: Herrero Sánchez, Manuel, *The Spanish-Dutch rapprochement (1648-1678)*, Higher Council of Scientific Research, Madrid, 2000, p. 352.

⁵⁴ On the first Anglo-Dutch war see Jones, John R., *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century*, Longman, London, 1996. For the English army: Hainsworth, Roger, *The Swordsmen in Power. War and Politics under the English Republic 1649-1660*, Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1997. There is a huge bibliography on the English Civil War, but see the recent synthesis work of Scott Wheeler, James, *The Irish and British Wars 1637-1654*, Routledge, London, 2002.

⁵⁵ The maritime events of the conflict are summarized in the pages of Rodger, N.A.M., «The command of the Ocean. A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815», Allen Lane, London, 2004, pp. 20-32.

⁵⁶ USUNÁRIZ, Jesús María; *Spain and its international treaties: 1516-1700*, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, 2006, pp. 335-336.

to the loyal provinces. Not only did the presence of the English Navy cut the artery that linked Castile to its American colonies, but the annihilation of the «Treasure Fleet» in Tenerife destroyed what was left of the Monarchy's reputation. As already mentioned, according to Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, the end of the arrival of silver remittances from the Indies was one of the main reasons that forced the Crown to seek a dignified peace⁵⁷.

The outbreak of this conflict forced the Monarchy to reconsider its entire policy towards the English royalists and opened the door to the treaty of assistance signed in Bruges on 2nd April 1656, with the exiled Charles II Stuart, pretender to the throne of his country, and son of the unfortunate Charles I, who had sought refuge, once expelled from France, in the Spanish Low Countries⁵⁸.

The objective of the Madrid court in allying with the future king was simply to maintain internal tension in England, in the hope of an uprising in his favour that would weaken Cromwell's position and open the door to a new civil war⁵⁹. Furthermore, it was thought that the alliance with Charles II would have a propitious effect on relations with the Irish, convincing them to move away from the service of France, which like Spain made numerous levies on the island from 1634. More than 30,000 islanders had served in the French armies until 1660⁶⁰, although the Spanish were trying to convince them to leave their former employer⁶¹.

Thus, the plans provided for the maintenance of a small force, close to 6,000 men, paid for by the King of Spain comprising Irish,

⁵⁷ DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, Antonio, The flows of the Indies and the foreign policy of Philip IV, in DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, Antonio, «American Studies», Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, 1998. p. 106.

⁵⁸ FIRTH, Charles H., Royalist and Cromwellian Armies in Flanders, 1657-1662, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, New Series, XVII, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1903, pp. 67-119, in particular pp. 67-68.

⁵⁹ AGS E leg. 8471 fs. 90-91, Don Esteban de Gamarra to Don Luis de Haro, 23rd December 1655.

⁶⁰ GOUHIER, Pierre, Mercenaires irlandais au service de la France (1635-1664), *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 15, Belin, Paris, 1968, pp. 672-690.

⁶¹ The policy was successful, as some of the Irish in the service of France, in particular almost the entire garrison of Saint Ghislain, taken over by the Army of Flanders at the beginning of the 1657 campaign, deserted to join Charles II's troops: Pérez Tostado, Igor, «Irish Influence at the Court of Spain in the Seventeenth Century», The Four Court Press, Dublin, 2008. p. 36. On the service of the Irish in the armies of the Spanish Monarchy throughout the 16th and 17th centuries there is an overwhelming bibliography. For a detailed view of the process of levying these soldiers, see the work of Mesa Gallego, «The Irish in the Spanish Armies», cit., passim.

English and Scottish men loyal to the sovereign, commanded by the King's brother, the Duke of York, and a few veteran royalists who had accompanied the pretender into exile⁶².

Hopes of having a certain number of infantry regiments quickly were soon dashed, as the process of obtaining recruits was greatly delayed and, by the end of 1656, Charles II had only managed to gather a few soldiers. Of the 6,000 soldiers promised in April 1657, the King of England had managed to gather only about 4,000 men divided into five infantry regiments, three of them Irish, one English and one Scottish, which were joined shortly afterwards by a sixth Irish infantry regiment, formed by enlisting a few hundred deserters from the French army, and a small cavalry troop of no more than about 50 horsemen to form a company of guards to protect the Duke of York, commander-in-chief of the royalist troops. Command of these units was given to several great lords who had accompanied the pretender in his exile in France and later in the Spanish Netherlands⁶³.

In June 1657, the Duke of York went out on the field with four of the new regiments that reached a force of about 2,000 men. Despite the hopes of the Spanish high command, their performance in that year's operations was low; the King of England's troops took practically no part in any major operation⁶⁴.

Performance was quite different the following year, when an English regiment, a Scottish regiment and three Irish regiments under the Duke of York, fought in the battle of the Dunes⁶⁵. That

⁶² AGS E leg. 8523 n.d., Don Esteban de Gamarra to Don Juan José de Austria, 20th October 1656.

⁶³ Thus, Lieutenant General Lord Middleton, a veteran of the civil wars, was given command of the Scottish Regiment, although he never commanded it in person. Effective command was assigned to James Livingston, Earl of Newburgh. While Henry Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, another veteran of a hundred battles, was rewarded with an assignment from the English regiment. The Irish units were given to other great English and Scottish men; personalities such as the Marquis of Ormonde, Lord Gloucester, the king's younger brother, who never took over command of the unit that remained in the hands of Lord Theobald Taaffe, and the Duke of York, who delegated command to Richard Grace. The last regiment, formed with the Irish deserters from the garrison of Saint Ghislain, was given to the Earl of Bristol: Barratt, John, «Better Begging than Fighting. The Royalist Army in exile in the War against Cromwell 1656-1660», Helion, Solihull, 2016, pp. 30-32.

⁶⁴ Firth, *Royalist and Cromwellian Armies in Flanders, 1657-1662*, cit., p. 75.

⁶⁵ The sixth regiment, the Duke of Gloucester's Irish, had been captured by Turenne's troops at Mount Cassel at the beginning of the campaign: Firth, «*Royalist and Cromwellian Armies in Flanders, 1657-1662*», cit., p. 85.

clash, as we know, ended in a resounding disaster for the weapons of Spain, crushed by the allied Anglo-French forces. During the fight Charles II's own troops suffered a significant number of casualties, so much so that in the following weeks the army of the King of England was reduced to no more than 2,000 men⁶⁶. In the following months, it was possible to get only a few men to complete the regiments that had been severely crushed in the course of the campaign. Thus, in July 1659, in the six regiments in service there were only between two and three thousand men in the ranks⁶⁷.

Despite some historiographical myths, which describe these soldiers as brave professionals and proud fighters, among the best, if not the best of His Catholic Majesty's entire army, the reality was quite different⁶⁸. First of all, amongst the exiles only the noblemen proved to be good soldiers, the other recruits constituted an undisciplined and poorly armed rabble, without any military training, and who deserted en masse. The Irish who served in their regiments were real scum and many of them were deserters from the Spanish army who enlisted not to take part in the campaign, because the troops of the pretender king of England stayed in the barracks until all the levies were completed⁶⁹. As for the English, they were no better soldiers either; drunkards who did not miss the chance to plunder and many of them fled from Dutch territory, so they could go and serve the King of Denmark⁷⁰. As can be seen, they bore no resemblance to the professional «redcoats» who served in the Lord Protector's army.

If such people were kept in service, it was simply to «English Charles II watching his own back»⁷¹. At the end of the war, only about 4,300 men remained in arms, soldiers so useless that the Marquis of Caracena proposed to reform them. Only the peculiar political situation in England after Oliver Cromwell's death, convinced Philip IV of the need to keep these men in service, with the aim of a probable monarchical succession and to maintain good relations with the Stuart⁷². Although the King of Spain was

⁶⁶ Barratt, *Better Begging than Fighting*, cit., p. 107.

⁶⁷ Barratt, *Better Begging than Fighting*, cit., p. 107.

⁶⁸ Hainsworth, *The Swordsmen in Power*, cit., pp. 221-223.

⁶⁹ AGS E leg. 2088 n.d., Don Juan José de Austria to the King, 8 October 1656.

⁷⁰ AGS E leg. 8578 f. 56, Don Esteban de Gamarra to the Marquis of Caracena, 5 October 1657.

⁷¹ AGS E leg. 2095 doc. 95, the Marquis of Caracena to the King, 8 November 1659.

⁷² AGS E leg. 2170 n.d., the King to the Marquis of Caracena, 3 December 1659.

right about the restoration with the return to England of Charles II and his coronation in 1660, he was totally wrong about the success of maintaining good relations with the English monarch. Charles did not hesitate to send many of the best English units, Cromwell's veteran regiments, and not the gang of desperados he had gathered in Flanders, to fight alongside Portugal, constituting the best of the Portuguese rebels' shock troops⁷³.

In addition to this, the presence of a few thousand Protestant soldiers had opened the door to a series of complaints from the religious authorities in the Spanish Netherlands. On several occasions these men had given occasion for scandal by publicly professing their own faith. For example, the Flemish bishops, disturbed by the example given by Charles II himself, who attended the Anglican rites in Bruges, asked for the King's intervention, so that as those heretical practices would be brought to an end. The protests did not obtain any satisfaction from Madrid: political interests led Philip IV to avoid a clash with the ally in matters of religion⁷⁴.

The end of a military tradition: English and Scottish troops in the second half of the 17th century

The end of hostilities with the French crown in 1659 led to a drastic reduction in the Spanish military establishment in the loyal Netherlands. On the one hand, the Army of Flanders had to send many of its veteran units to fight on the border of Extremadura, in an attempt to regain the Portuguese kingdom. While many other *tercios* and regiments were reformed, and troops discharged in order to save money. This process of reduction of the military machine led the Army of Flanders to be reduced in a few years to only about 11,000 soldiers.

The English and Scottish units, which had still been in the service of the King of Spain in the region, were not exempt from this reform process, and were greatly reduced. In fact, during the second half of the century, the Scottish and English presence

⁷³ CHILDS, John: The English Brigade en Portugal, 1662-1668, Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, 53, 1975, pp. 135-147; Riley, Jonathon The Last Ironsides. The English Expedition to Portugal 1662-1668, Helion, Solihull, 2014.

⁷⁴ Don Juan de Austria to the King, 28th December 1657, in Lonchay, Henry et al. (eds.), «Correspondance de la cour d'Espagne sur les affaires des Pays-Bas au XVIIe siècle», vol. IV, Précis de la correspondance de Philippe IV (1647-1665), Maurice Maertin, Bruxelles, 1933, pp. 587-588.

declined rapidly, despite the attempts already seen to get men from the «perfidious Albion», and the *tercios* in service in Flanders were reduced to little more than a handful of men. While some 2,300 men, representing 9.6% of all infantry in service, were still serving in 1661, in the following years the force size of these units was progressively reduced: during the Dutch War, according to reviews taken in 1675 and 1678, just over 600 men remained, less than 2% of the force, and by 1689, 1% of the infantry in service had been reduced to just over 150⁷⁵.

However, during the reign of Charles II, given the good relations with the Court of Saint James and later, during the reign of William III in the Nine Years War, attempts were made, on several occasions, to get new levies to complete the British units that continued to serve in the royal armies. In fact, all the attempts to get a high number of soldiers failed, and as we have underlined the British units were reduced to very little. On a single occasion, during the Luxembourg War, thanks to the levies carried out a few years earlier, these soldiers came to represent a visible component of the infantry, when, according to data from the review taken in March 1684, 1,401 men were in service; that is, just over 8% of the total number of infantry in service.

The first attempts at a levy were made in 1667, when the King of England gave permission for a 4,000 men levy to be executed in the British Isles to reinforce the Army of Flanders. It was only possible to hire half of this number and many of them soon defected, as it was not possible to pay them⁷⁶. New plans to consolidate the presence were made in the early 1680s, when the monarch authorised Alessandro Farnese to gather a good number of Irish and Scottish men; in total, some 2,000 men ranked in two *tercios*⁷⁷. These levies were greatly delayed because of the chronic lack of money, and only in March 1682, when the last recruits arrived in Ostend, was it possible to constitute a *tercio* of Scots and a *tercio* of English with a force of 600 men each⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ MAFFI, Davide, *The last tercios. The army of Charles II*, Desperta Ferro Ediciones, Madrid, 2020, p. 253.

⁷⁶ In fact, a good percentage of these soldiers were Irish, since the levies integrated personnel from the three kingdoms as a whole: Storrs, Christopher, *The Resistance of the Spanish Monarchy 1665-1700*, Editorial Actas, Madrid, 2013., p. 91.

⁷⁷ Charles II to Alessandro Farnese, 24 January 1681, in Lonchay, Henry et al (eds.), «Correspondance de la Cour d'Espagne sur les affaires des Pays-Bas au XVIIe siècle», vol. V, «Precis de la correspondance de Charles II (1665-1700)», Maurice Mamertin, Bruxelles, 1935, pp. 353-354.

⁷⁸ AGS E leg. 3870 n.d., Alessandro Farnese to the King, 25 March 1682.

These units did not always prove to be comprised of true professionals. On several occasions in particular, the High Command in Brussels denounced the poor military behaviour of the soldiers, the indiscipline and the absenteeism of the officers who often did not stay by their men, gradually going home and leaving service. Thus, the great scandal which provoked the action of the *maestre de campo* of the English infantry *tercio*, Sir Joseph Porter, who, as the Marquis of Gastañaga denounced, did nothing but stay in England, leaving his soldiers to their fate. Left without a commander, the *tercio* had been reduced to the minimum, with a large number of officers and very few private in the ranks serving effectively. The outbreak of the Glorious Revolution had further aggravated the situation, as Porter was a fanatical supporter of the last Stuart, the unfortunate James II, and had followed his king into exile, putting himself in the service of France. According to the marquis, it seemed very appropriate to reform the corps, as it had no personnel except the officers, and furthermore, no commander, as Porter would probably not have left his aforementioned loyalty and would remain in France. Consequently, he was not going to return to his post as head of the *tercio*. It was therefore better to reduce the *tercio* to one company in order to save money⁷⁹.

The option of reforming and removing the only remaining *tercio* of British infantry in service was judged inappropriate by the Council of State. It claimed that there had always been English *tercios* in Flanders and that the reform proposed by the governor was not particularly suitable, now that William was King of England and an ally of the Spanish Crown. Therefore, the royal councillors were of the opinion that, as the *maestre de campo* Porter was so fond of France, it was not right to keep him in command. Thus, as far as the command of the unit was concerned, it was considered necessary to contact William III so that he could indicate a new commander that he liked in order to put him in command of the *tercio* and, as consequence of this question, he could have been asked for allowing some recruitments in order to complete the *tercio*⁸⁰.

Between 1660 and 1680, the possibilities of getting soldiers in the British Isles were severely reduced, not only because of the shortage of money, which delayed the possibilities of completing

⁷⁹ AGS E leg. 3882 n.d., the Marquis of Gastañaga to the King, 20 July 1689.

⁸⁰ AGS E leg. 3882 n.d., Council of State consultation, 8th October 1689.

levies already underway, but also, and sometimes above all, because of the strong recruitment competition of the United Provinces and France. The Dutch always kept a strong contingent of troops from the Stuarts' domains for their service, assembling an infantry brigade with several English and Scottish regiments, which remained in their service from 1660 to 1665 and from 1674 to 1685. These troops were the real spearhead of all Dutch offensives from 1674 onwards⁸¹. The French, thanks to the alliance signed in 1672 with Charles II against Holland, formed another brigade of regiments enlisted in the three kingdoms, which remained fighting alongside the French until 1678⁸².

The outbreak of the Nine Years War led to further attempts to get Irish troops to serve in the Army of Flanders. We have already seen that, on the occasion of the appointment of another *maestre de campo* for the command of the English *tercio* serving in Flanders, permission was sought to make new recruits on the islands. As late as 1694 and 1695, Spanish ministers tried to convince William III to grant permission to make levies in his domains. However, it was not possible given the British monarch's need to make his own levies in the British Isles to reinforce his army, which was fighting in Flanders on the side of the Allies. In fact, at the end of December 1694, all hopes of enlisting new soldiers for the service of the King were definitively dashed⁸³.

In view of the difficulties encountered in obtaining new soldiers, the English and Scottish units – which by 1689, as we have seen, had been reduced to a handful of men, according to the data of the review taken that year, there were no more than 153 soldiers from the British Isles in service, only 1% of all the infantry in service in the Netherlands – had practically ceased to exist during the war⁸⁴. The peace of 1697 did not improve the situation as a general report of the army of 1698 clearly shows how the British

⁸¹ At the end of the war, four Scottish and three English infantry regiments were still in the States General of the United Provinces: Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms*, cit., pp. 328-9.

⁸² Among the officers commanding these units was the young John Churchill, the future Duke of Marlborough. On the English performance in the armies of Louis XIV see: Manning, «An Apprenticeship in Arms», cit., p. 334. For the composition of the forces sent: Childs, «The Army of Charles II», cit., pp. 244-250.

⁸³ Charles II to the Duke of Bavaria, 21 December 1694, in Lonchay (eds.), *Correspondance de la Cour d'Espagne*, cit., p. 621.

⁸⁴ In 1695, the distributions between the three nations of the Islands had already ceased to be recorded as shown by the army sample taken that year: AGS E leg. 3891 n.d., list of officers and soldiers..., undated (but late 1695).

presence in His Catholic Majesty's army was already a memory of the past⁸⁵.

Allies of the King of Spain. The British military intervention in the Catholic Low Countries during the Dutch War and the Nine Years War

Not only did the English and Scottish troops act in Flanders as soldiers in the army of the King of Spain, but also as allies. This happened during the final phase of the Dutch War, when an English expeditionary corps was sent to relieve the Spanish positions in the region and to cope with Louis XIV's aggression, and much more forcefully during the Nine Years War, when William III sent an army to fight in the Spanish Netherlands.

In the first case, England initially started the war as an ally of France. The conflict ended with the peace of 1674⁸⁶, but in the following years the Westminster parliament began to change its policy, moving even closer to the positions of its former adversaries. At the end of 1677, the military situation in Flanders seemed desperate; the French troops who had taken over a few fortresses were still gaining ground⁸⁷. Therefore, on 31 December 1677, the English signed an initial pact with the Dutch that provided for sending an expeditionary corps of about 11,000 infantry soldiers and 1,000 horses, to shore up the Spanish defence system in the region⁸⁸. Not only did England undertake to send an army to the Netherlands, but Charles II also declared ready to dispatch a naval squadron of 20 ships to the Mediterranean, which, together with other Dutch ships, was to ensure control of the Mediterranean routes and to expel the French from Sicily⁸⁹. In addition, the English withdrew the mixed

⁸⁵ AGS E leg. 3893 n.d., Balancing tercios and regiments, companies, living officers, reformed officers, and soldiers, as well as the annual expenditure of the two army plants held respectively in meetings of 21 and 27 September 1698, undated (but September 1698).

⁸⁶ On this conflict between the Netherlands and England, the so-called third Anglo-Dutch War, see Jones, J.R., *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century*, Longman, London, 1996.

⁸⁷ On the operations in the Netherlands during the Dutch War, see Maffi, «The Last Tercios, cit.

⁸⁸ CHILDS, John, *The Army of Charles II*, Routledge, London, 2010, pp. 181-185.

⁸⁹ Herrero Sánchez, *The rapprochement*, cit., pp. 391-392. The British decision to intervene in the Mediterranean with the deployment of a navy, which was already planned for the autumn, was decisive in convincing the French monarch, at the end of

Anglo-Scottish brigade fighting as auxiliaries with the French armies, which, as mentioned, had been formed at the beginning of the conflict.

The increase of Dutch and Spanish diplomatic pressure led to the signing of an alliance with Charles II with the Treaty of Westminster, 2 March 1678, by which the country undertook to intervene directly in the conflict. By the beginning of March, the British had virtually completed the levy of 17 infantry battalions, 10 cavalry squadrons and 9 dragoon squadrons with a total of 17,800 men, the first elements of which began to deploy to Flanders at the end of the month. The arrival of the English troops, whose vanguards had begun to land in Ostend, a city destined to become the main base of the English expeditionary force, served to stabilise the situation on this front after the sudden French offensive that had led to the loss of Ghent and Ypres, as it enabled the Spanish army to reorganise. In fact, the appearance of these troops was hardly enough to enable them to cope with the French, as it took several weeks to complete the planned contingent and they were not in a position to begin moving until 13 August. Too late to make a real impact on the progress of the operations⁹⁰.

If Charles II's forces did not fire a shot practically during the 1678 campaign, the performance of the English units during the following conflict was totally different. Firstly, the volume of military involvement was much greater in the case of William III's troops, who played a leading role in many of the armed events that took place in Flanders. It is true that English participation in the war on the continent was fairly limited in the early years of the conflict. The King of England sent 10,972 soldiers to the Netherlands in 1689, only 5,360 in 1690, and just over 11,000 in 1691, representing one-fifth of all Allied troops concentrated in Flanders that year⁹¹.

The end of the military operations in Ireland, which had so far absorbed almost all the military resources available in the reconquest of the island, enabled the English authorities to swell the ranks of the expeditionary corps fighting with the allies in the

the year, to definitively abandon any attempt to maintain Sicily, where in 1675 he had sent an expeditionary corps to support the uprising in Messina, giving rise to a fierce fight on the island: Ribot García, Luis, *The Spanish Monarchy and the War of Messina (1674-1678)*, Editorial Actas, Madrid, 2002, pp. 118-122.

⁹⁰ Childs, «The Army of Charles II», cit., pp. 186-95.

⁹¹ CHILDS, John, *The Nine Years War and the British Army 1688-1697. The operations in the Low Countries*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991, p. 162.

Netherlands, making the region the main war front for William III's army⁹². Free from the constraints of the Emerald Isle, the size of the English contingent grew rapidly: about 20,000 men in 1692 and 1693, about 29,000 in 1694 and 1695, 43,000 in 1696 and just over 34,000 in 1697⁹³. To these troops were added the auxiliary corps of Germans and Danes, paid by the King of England, which amounted between 11-15,000 men on average per year serving in the Allied army during these years.

William III's troops played an important role in the major military events that took place in the Spanish Netherlands during the entire war⁹⁴. In 1689, the English contingent accompanied the Marquis of Gastañaga and his Spanish troops, during their penetration on France and participated in the battle of Walcourt, when a corps from the French army was defeated by the Allies. The following year, an English detachment was incorporated into the corps under the command of the governor of Flanders which was acting along the border with France.

More evident was the participation of Scottish and English units in the battles that took place at Steinkerque (1692) and Neerwinden (1693). In the first, the Cameronians' Scottish regiment was practically annihilated, losing a third of its strength. The Royal Scots and the Guard also left in disarray⁹⁵. In these two actions, the English infantry equipped with wheel-lock muskets was singled out for its deadly discharges, with the French infantry literally being crushed by the deadly round-fire developed by the Redcoats. The heavy losses suffered in the first battle convinced Louis XIV's ministers to equip their units with these muskets⁹⁶.

Also noteworthy is the participation in the siege of Namur (1695), when English forces cooperated with units of the Army of Flanders under the command of Prince of Vaudemont. Specifically, on the occasion of a sally from the French garrison on 18 August. The

⁹² The literature on King William's war and the end of Jacobite Ireland is overwhelming, and I refer simply to the texts of Simms, J.G., *Jacobite Ireland, 1685-91*, The Four Court Press, Dublin, 2000; and Fitzgibbon, Gerard, *Kingdom Overthrown. Ireland and the Battle for Europe 1688-1691*, New Island Book, Stillorgan, 2015.

⁹³ Childs, «The Nine Years War», cit., p. 73.

⁹⁴ A summary of the military operations carried out by William III's troops can be found in the pages of Childs, *The Nine Years War*, cit., passim. More generally, for the progress of the allied campaigns during this conflict, with particular reference to the Spanish situation, see Maffi, *The last tercios*, cit., pp. 54-85.

⁹⁵ Childs, *The Nine Years War*, cit., pp. 201-202.

⁹⁶ CÉNAT, Jean-Philippe, Louvois. Le double de Louis XIV, Belin, Paris, 2015, p. 202.

French action was stopped by the murderous fire of Lord Cutts' infantry and repelled by the charges of the Spanish cavalry under the command of Count of Rivera⁹⁷.

In short, the British performed a series of assaults, battles and siege by many officers who would be generals of the British Army during the War of the Spanish Succession. Personalities like the already mentioned Lord Cutts, or the Duke of Marlborough, future generalissimo of the Allies, were officers who learned the Art of War in the School of Flanders –as it was called in the 17th Century– but that is another story.

⁹⁷ Childs, «The Nine Years War», cit., p. 293.

