The Siege of Mons, 1691

Army of Flanders

The War of the Grand Alliance in les Pays-Bas1689-1697

Commentary

For my Mother
Freda Roberta Berry Weir
November 21, 1924 – March 8, 2018

Duty is heavier than a mountain;
Death is lighter than a feather.

My LORD,

I Humbly beg leave to offer the following History to your EXCELLENCY; to which, among other Considerations, a Principle of Gratitude has determin'd me, to express in some measure the Sence I have of the present Blessings we all enjoy (and which bring my Labours of this kind to a most Happy Conclusion) by a Glorious Peace, in the Management whereof your EXCELLENCY has been so much concern'd: My LORD, This is a Work which will make your Name Great and Happy in the Memory of all Succeeding Generations, as it ingrafts it at present in the Hearts and Affections of all Men in England that value their Religion, Rights and Liberties which they find establish'd upon a stable and solid Foundation in the perfection of so Great a Work.

But this, My LORD, is not the only Title you have to our Thanks and Praise; the great hand you had in bringing about the happy Revolution, and the Share you have had in almost all the Actions of our great Monarch ever since, are what ought to make you ever dear to England, and almost all the rest of Europe.

My LORD, I will not pretend to enter upon your EXCELLENCY's Panegyrick in this Epistle, it is indeed more than can be compriz'd in it, as well as a Subject above the Power of my Pen: You were dedicated even in your Youth to His Majesty's Service, at which time you gave such uncommon Demonstrations of Zeal, Fidelity and Affection, as have justly fix'd you in His Royal Favours: And as might well be expected from such beginnings, you have been ever since ingag'd in the Great Atchievements of Glory and Renown: In Warre, you have been a constant Partaker of all those Dangers to which our Great Monarch has so often and so wonderfully expos'd Himself in the Bloody and Hazardous Fields of Mars, you have still been with Him in so many Battles and Sieges, you have shar'd in all the Fatigues of so many Campagnes, and have been a considerable Actor in His most Happy and Successful Enterprizes.

In Peace, Your EXCELLENCY has had the Ministry of the most Important Affairs of Europe [...] equal Integrity, Wisdom and Faithfulness, and [...] for His Majesty's Advantage as your own Honour and Reputation: Such Rare and Extraordinary Qualities have induc'd the King to make Choice of Your EXCELLENCY for his Ambassadour Extraordinary in a Court, where especially in the present Conjuncture of Affairs, they are more than ever requisite; In the discharge of which most Noble Function you have justified the Choice that has been made of your Person by answering in all things the Greatness of Your Master, and the Credit, Wealth and Renown of a Nation, you have always had a particular Ambition to be a Member of, and whose Welfare, Happiness and Prosperity you aim at in all your Proceedings.

But, My LORD, all this would be but Vanity, were there not a better Foundation for the Glory of another World, by a true Sence of Piety, and an uprightness of Conscience, for which your Life is so Exemplary: And may your EXCELLENCY go on daily more and more in doing good, especially in this respect, both by your Authority and good Example; that Vice, Irreligion and Profaneness meeting with all Discouragements from so eminent a Person, we may see Vertue, Justice and Godliness (which is like to be our best Security for the continuance of the present Peace) flourish under so good an Influence: These are the Hearty Wishes and Prayers of

My LORD,
Your EXCELLENCY's
Most Humble, and most Obedient Servant.

[Dedication of Edward d'Auvergne in the preface of his 'THE HISTORY OF THE Campagne IN FLANDERS, For the Year 1697. Together with a Journal of the Siege of Ath, and a Summary Account of the Negotiations of the General Peace at Ryswick. It was addressed to the Earl of Portland, otherwise the Dutch General van Ginkel.]

Sources

The Flanders theatre of the Nine Years War has been reasonably well documented in English, but unfortunately this has given the false impression, at least among Anglos, that it was a fight between Britain and France. That, it most certainly was not. Still, there is at least the pleasure for an Anglo writer of being able to study the war in English, for a change.

A recommended summary of events for the whole war is John A. Lynn's *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714*. It puts the war in context, and discusses each theatre of each war year by year. For background on the French Army, there is Lynn's *Giant of the Grand Siècle.*

A surprising number of doctoral papers seem to have been written about this war. For the Flanders theatre, there is John M. Stapleton's *Forging a Coalition Army,* which deals with the nuts and bolts of William's grand strategy.

The must-read is John Childs' *The Nine Years' War and the British Army, 1688-97*. Despite the title, most of the text does not focus on the British, but on the general events of the campaign.

For primary sources in English, there is Edward d'Auvergne. Though related to the dukes of Bouillon he was an Englishman, originally from the island of Jersey. As chaplain of the Scots Guards he served in Flanders from 1691 to 1697. Each year, he wrote and published a first-hand account of the fighting. After the war he was made one of King William's domestic chaplains. Born in 1660, he lived until 1737, so he was in his thirties during the war. D'Auvergne's writing is concise and clear, but far less racy than contemporary French authors; these are pure campaign histories, rather dry, but very useful to a

historian, once one gets past the nauseating Orangist panegyrics. All of his books were used for this commentary, excepting that for 1696, which is still under lock and key at various universities for no valid reason, and 1691, which could have been obtained after paying shipping and handling far in excess of what was being asked for the book itself. The rest of the volumes are posted online. Fortunately, 1696 was a dull campaign, and the 1691 book is very short, and was written at the end of the war, just to round out the series, so it likely has little in the way of details.

The multivolume *Histoire Militaire du Règne de Louis Le Grand, Roy de France*, by the Marquis de Quincy, a brigadier in the French Army of Louis XV, should be read to counterbalance d'Auvergne. His works cover the entire reign, so only volumes 2 and 3 are relevant.

Dates

As always when writing about this time period, there is the danger of confusing Old Style (Julian calendar) and New Style (Gregorian calendar) dates. Hopefully, this author has managed to pick the right numerals – even some of his sources made clerical errors. OS dates were 10 days behind NS dates during the 1690s. New Year's Day was (in England at least) March 21, but nearly all historians use January 1.

Background

With the author's apologies, some of the following is copied verbatim or with few alterations from his commentaries on the war in Italy and Spain. It did not seem worthwhile to completely rewrite the same set of facts and opinions just for the sake of rewriting them.

French Ambitions

John Childs, in his *Nine Years War and the British Army*, argues that it is false to assume the French, let alone other contemporary powers, had an overarching grand plan, or even a coherent policy. He points out that the governmental institutions necessary for such things did not exist, and that the only guiding principle was King Louis' thirst for *La Gloire* – in keeping with the mindset of the period, be it noted – tempered by the pushes and pulls of courtiers and departmental heads with their various schemes, the actions and reactions of his opponents, and gut feeling, the last a mix of fear and impatience. All of which seems true enough. The Grand Plan seen by some historians is merely a mental construct superimposed on a collection of facts, like seeing a unicorn in a cloud formation. All the same, that Grand Plan, even if only a set collection of events, had a solid reality about it. Most human endeavours seem to behave like that.

The War of the Grand Alliance is one of those conflicts whose prosaic genesis lies in a preceding war. Less prosaically, its germ lay in the soul of Louis XIV, King of France. Also called the Nine Years War, and less correctly the War of the League of Augsburg, this was the second of three great wars waged by the Sun King. The first, the Franco-Dutch War (1672-78), was one of naked aggression. The last, the War of the Spanish Succession, was essentially a defensive war. This middle war was one of transition from attack to defence, as France discovered her limits. It was Louis' war of middle age. The three wars can be seen as a single great conflict.

King Louis' character is key to the situation. Though famous as an Absolute Ruler, he was in fact constrained in a number of ways. First, despite his many faults he was a truly religious man and did regard himself as the mediator between the French people and God. Second, he was constrained by the three Estates of his realm, Nobility, Clergy, and Bourgeoisie (which does not mean 'common people', but urban elites). Of these the Nobility were most to be considered, as they were his peers. The Bourgeoisie, always playing an opposition role, could not be forgotten. The Church was in a state of atrophy at this time and was less relevant, whether as a political or social force – unless anyone tried to reduce its privileges. Individual ecclesiastics, however, played a critical role in shaping the Sun King's policies, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes being the most obvious one.

In common with his Aristocracy, Louis believed in the pursuit of *La Gloire* as an end in itself. And, the best way

to acquire *gloire* was through war. This notion has been the bane of France throughout her history. Now, the reader must understand that *gloire* meant something more than 'personal glory'. The concept stemmed from the marriage of the old Germanic warrior culture with Christian ethics. The halo on the head of a saint is a manifestation of *gloire*; so is the aureole on the head of a Roman emperor. When a man did something worthy of acclaim, it got him talked about, which stroked his ego, but it also added lustre to his family, to his province, to the realm as a whole, and to his King in particular. Taking it one step farther, a glorious realm was an offering the King could present to God. This, by the way, is why they called Louis the Sun King – it was a direct allusion to the aureole of the emperors, the manifestation of France's *Gloire* in the person of her King. (Remember also, 'France' was a name often used by her kings to describe themselves – 'who is at the gate?… 'France!'.)

The above is not perhaps the most elegant explanation of *gloire*, but the concept is hard to pin down (and doubtless meant different things to different people). In practical terms, it meant that no one thought that fighting wars was inherently evil, or even a 'necessary evil' that had to be borne. The identity of France was a martial one. Wars were a venue for the nobility to win *gloire* for themselves, and if the war were successful, lustre would also be added to the kingdom. Naturally, if the French kept on acquiring *gloire*, it clearly meant that God approved of their actions. No doubt the reader can see numerous pitfalls in this sort of world view. But the last couple of generations have had more experience of mass destruction.

The bullying attitude adopted by the French in those decades was something that can be expected, if not excused, when a nation regards itself as especially blessed. The benefit for the French in this pursuit of war was that it allowed the King to direct the elements of his kingdom in a common endeavour. This tended to bind what had until only recently been a rather disunited polity into a single nation. This in turn helped to overcome the third constraint on Louis actions – the Material.

The Franco-Dutch War revealed France to be the new Great Power in Europe. In terms of population and resources, no one nation could beat her, and as the War of the Grand Alliance would demonstrate, even a coalition of opponents could do no more than match her.

Realising they were now at the top of the heap, Louis and his advisors had to consider how to improve their strategic position. A most natural way to justify war in pursuit of *gloire* was to make the assumption that it secured France from attack. It was of particular concern that the House of Habsburg, hereditary foes of the House of Bourbon, ruled lands or had proxies facing most of France's borders. (Ironically, though more powerful than their enemies, the French persisted in seeing themselves under siege by the Habsburgs!) Curiously, the Imperial Habsburgs – the Austrian Habsburgs – were perceived as less of a threat than the Spanish Habsburgs. The latter were the dominant power during the Thirty Years War, which raged while King Louis was a boy; France had broken that power, but did not seem to realise it.

Louis' famous siege-master, Sébastien Le Prestre, *marquis* de Vauban, advocated 'rationalising' France's borders by annexing territories along the Rhine and the natural routes into and out of the nation, such as the Moselle. Most of the key positions already had fortifications; if they did not, fortifications were to be constructed. This strategy of 'aggressive defence' naturally threatened France's neighbours, because securing the gates to France meant that armies could pass out of the country, as well as in…

[The strategy of aggressive defence also led to a naval buildup, which affected English attitudes toward France in a similar manner.]

A classic example can be seen in the War of the Reunions, which took place in 1684-85. The 'Chambers of Reunion' were special land commissions set up by Louis to determine if his neighbours had truly ceded to him all the territorial gains he had chalked up so far. These French-sponsored commissions naturally ruled that France was owed certain additional lands, most of which then changed hands without issue. However, the vital fortress of Strasbourg, which both served to protect the newly acquire province of Alsace and acted as a bridgehead over the Rhine, and the Spanish-owned City of Luxembourg, which played a similar role *vis a vis* French gains in the Low Countries, were contested. Spain declared war in protest, aided by the Holy Roman Empire, but she fared badly. A truce (the Truce of Ratisbon) was soon called as King Louis was persuaded that it would be Un-Christian to fight the Empire while the latter was engaged in a war with the Turks. The peace was supposed to last twenty years. It lasted three.

Something should also be said about the Huguenots, the French Protestants, because their fate also illumines King Louis' thinking. Internally, Louis attempted to continue the process of unification by imposing religious conformity. This was still seen by many rulers as essential for the wellbeing of the State. Even in Germany – especially in Germany – there was that policy of matching the official religion of the people to that of the ruler. To Louis, the fact that this helped break up Germany into many fragments only strengthened his resolve to ensure all of France had *one* religion.

The Edict of Nantes had granted toleration to French Protestants, but it was revoked in 1685. This was a severe misstep on the King's part. At a stroke, he lost something like 10% of France's population, who fled abroad; these were also some of the most productive members of society, and included a number of skilled military men. The move also hardened European opinion against France.

By 1687, the Empire's war against the Ottomans was going so well that the Holy Roman Emperor, Leopold I, began to spare some thought for the reclamation of the lands recently lost to France. The latter's opponents in Germany had formed the League of Augsburg in 1686 to contain French aggression. Though somewhat toothless, the League would form the basis for the eventual anti-French coalition.

Seeing the writing on the wall, Louis tried and failed to have the Truce of Ratisbon turned into a proper peace treaty. His method, which most historians regard as his second mistake, was to increase his demands rather than compromise. He then tried a familiar gamble. On September 24, 1688, the Sun King issued a *Mémoire de raisons* laying out his 'grievances' and immediately launched a surprise attack on the Rhineland – before the chancelleries of Europe had even received their copies of his manifesto.

As always with this gambit, the object was to shock and intimidate the opposition, seize more ground than was needed so as to have something to bargain with, and then seek peace. Sometimes the strategy works. This time it did not. It says something for the preeminence of French arms that she was able to achieve a stalemate after nine years of war.

Interestingly, the Turks offered to sue for peace just before the Palatinate was invaded by the French – and yes, that was one reason why the French attack took place at that time, to try and put heart into the Turks – but Emperor Leopold pigheadedly refused to consider it, condemning his empire to a two-front, and later three-front, war for several years. This is a major reason why the French, who ultimately waged a four-front war, were able to hang on.

[In 1689 the Imperials won a victory over the Turks, strengthening Leopold's will, later, things were not so rosy.]

The Turks were one reason the French struck so precipitately, but another reason was William of Orange. France's enemies feared Louis was aiming at world domination. The House of Bourbon had long claimed the mantle of Charlemagne, which implied a challenge to those 'usurpers' of the Empire, the Habsburgs. The persecution of the Huguenots also alienated many neighbouring states, who might otherwise have supported Bourbon against Habsburg. The English, of course, opposed the onion-sellers on principle, though the reader may be surprised to learn they were allied with France in the Franco-Dutch War.

King Louis feared that William of Orange, commander-in-chief of the Dutch Army, coveted the archbishopric of Cologne. This territory was one that Louis felt was within the French political orbit and essential for the defense of the motherland, and he had already made plans to acquire it; William appeared ready to preempt him. Then, Louis learned to his surprise that William coveted something greater: England.

Now the Sun King made his second mistake. After telling William that interference in English politics would mean war with France, he proceeded to launch his first strike against the Palatinate instead of Holland. This was one of those mistakes made out of cleverness rather than ignorance or stupidity. Louis calculated that he would have to fight William at some point anyway, so claimed the moral high ground. He also calculated that William's attempt to overthrow King James II would fail, and that it would consume what was left of the campaigning season. This would allow the French to 'blitz' the Palatinate, secure Cologne, and either be sitting at the peace table or squared off against an isolated Holland by the time William had reorganised his forces for the next campaigning season.

Louis overreached. Actually, William made the greater gamble, and nearly lost the game, and he did become bogged down in a long war off the Continent, but Louis tried to take on the Empire with an army that was still at its peacetime establishment. Operations took longer than expected, his terror tactics backfired, and France found herself at war with all of Europe. This gave William, who would become the *de facto* leader of the Grand Alliance, time to secure his hold over the British Isles and begin mustering a defence of the Low Countries.

(The anti-French forces were divided into two main blocs: the Protestant states, led by William of Orange, and the Imperials and Catholics, led by the Emperor Leopold I. Such a split presented opportunities to King Louis, but for the moment, all were united against French aggression and 'frightfulness'.)

Louis XIV Dieudonné (1638-1715); The Sun King

Even an inadequate thumbnail biography of Louis XIV would be longer than this entire Commentary. The reader ought, however, to be given some sort of rough sketch of his early years, to help explain his motivations.

His reign lasted 72 years and 110 days, longer than any other European monarch. Men were born, lived, and died knowing no other French king but Louis Quatorze. He was the personification of France.

Louis came to the throne at age 4, at a time when the monarchy was controlled by powerful ministers of state, first Richelieu and then Mazarin. Guided by the latter, Louis would work all his life to draw all power into his own hands and stamp out Feudalism.

His parents had been married 23 years when he was born; his mother had suffered four stillbirths. Hence his nickname, Dieudonné, the God-given. His birth was regarded as a miracle.

By custom, his mother, Anne of Austria (who, despite her name was a Spanish princess) should have assumed the

Regency, but Louis XIII did not trust her judgement (or perhaps he was afraid the Habsburgs would gain too much influence over French policy) and placed his son in the care of a regency council. Anne had this ruling annulled, however, and she was Regent from 1643 until 1653. Even after that, she retained authority in religious matters. Cardinal Richelieu having died about the same time as the King, she appointed Cardinal Mazarin as his successor. Mazarin was an able, if avaricious, minister, whose authority rested on the Regent's power, not his own. Despite chafing under Anne and Mazarin's rule as he entered his teenage years, Louis remained close to his mother his whole life. It was she who instilled the belief that he was Divinely appointed to rule France.

[King Louis in 1690, by Jean Nocret.]

There then followed the Wars of the Fronde, armed rebellions against the central authority of Anne and Mazarin. Even nobles like the Great Condé, who supported the Queen Dowager, did so in hopes of controlling her and the King. Louis twice experienced the necessity of flight to the country, and once of being virtually besieged in his palace. He gained an understanding of high politics and foreign policy very young, and became deeply mistrustful of not only the Habsburgs, who sought to destabilise his regime, but of his own nobles. In response, he converted a hunting lodge into the Palace of Versailles. It had a dual purpose: a home away from the tumult of Paris, and a genteel prison for his nobles.

Though Louis reached the age of majority in 1651, he did not actually assume that authority until 1661, when Mazarin died.

'Up to this moment I have been pleased to entrust the government of my affairs to the late Cardinal. It is now time that I govern them myself. You [he was talking to the secretaries and ministers of state] will assist me with your counsels when I ask for them. I request and order you to seal no orders except by my command . . . I order you not to sign anything, not even a passport . . . without my command; to render account to me personally each day and to favour no one'.

In short: 'L'Etat, c'est Moi'.

Though his mother had laid the groundwork, Louis was greatly aided in his bid to achieve absolute control over the State because most people were tired of civil war and he offered them Stability.

The early years of hie personal reign were spent reforming the Government, and indeed the conduct of domestic politics in general, and in squelching anyone, like the powerful finance minister Fouquet, who thought they could play by the old rules. Secure on his throne, Louis then turned his attention to foreign wars, partly to enhance his reputation, partly to give his nobility an outlet for their energies, and partly to put the rest of Europe in its place, as he had done to all his domestic opponents. The Nine Years War was the second such affair.

The French in Flanders

As the reader is probably aware, French involvement in the Low Countries dates from the Dark Ages. Flanders, in fact belonged to France until the 16th Century – that is, unlike most of the lands along the Rhine it was not an Imperial fief.

The original Frankish kingdoms were centered on the Belgian lands, and Charlemagne's empire had its official capital at Aachen. Before that, of course, it was the home of the Belgae, half-Celtic and half-German. Most of the enemies of the French Monarchy, even those that sometimes *became* the French Monarchy – the Burgundians, the Valois, the Guises, the Habsburgs – had their power base in what became the Spanish Netherlands.

By the time of the Nine Years War, the Habsburgs had consolidated the various provinces of the Low Countries, all seventeen of them, into two blocs, the United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands. Yes, of course, the United Provinces were now a separate Power, but, after all, the Habsburgs were vital to their creation. The French supported the Dutch in their bid for independence, seeking to weaken the Spanish. Once this had been achieved, however, they sought to acquire the remaining provinces.

The fighting between Spain and France had continued after the end of the Eighty Years War, and the Spanish Netherlands had become a haven for enemies of the Bourbon House, like the Guises of the House of Lorraine. Therefore, from the 1660s, once the Fronde had been crushed, King Louis became convinced that the only way to achieve a secure northeastern frontier was to eradicate the Spanish Netherlands. The Dutch did not much care for this idea. There was a reason Belgium had remained a separate entity for so many centuries. Getting rid of it made them uncomfortable. And so, they began supporting the Spanish.

In the War of Devolution (1667-1668) the French overran most of the Spanish Netherlands and had to be forced to relinquish it by a Dutch-English-Swedish political combination. This led to a second round of fighting, known as the Dutch War or Franco-Dutch War. First, French diplomacy detached Sweden and England from the combination. Sweden even agreed to attack Brandenburg if they tried to intervene, and England went so far as to supply the French with a corps of 6,000 men. (This was one reason William of Orange had no qualms about deposing his father-in-law.)

The conflict became something of a precursor to the Nine Years War, following a similar pattern. A short blitzkrieg against a limited target turned into a widespread attritional grind all along France's northeastern and eastern frontiers. Ultimately, the French were everywhere successful. Spain and Holland lost power and influence, Spain the more so and Holland imperceptibly, while France was acclaimed as the preeminent European power.

But why did the French attack the Dutch? Partly because they were the main prop to the Spanish in the region. Their army, not the Spanish, was the one to beat. And, partly, because the Republican faction under Johan de Witt acted provocatively. They were annoyed at the high tariffs the French were charging on Dutch goods. Also, Louis, an Absolutist monarch, despised Republicans, viewing them as a political cancer.

Spain was the primary target, though. Holland received her captured territories back, and even gained tariff reductions, which pleased the Republicans, who did not much care for the House of Orange. William, of course, became Louis XIV's implacable foe when de Witt's pre-French Republicans shut him out of the halls of power, but one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Meanwhile, the Spanish lost Franche-Comté and several towns near the Franco-Netherlands border, such as Dinant and Courtrai. In practical terms, the Dutch War meant the French frontier was (unofficially) well advanced into the Spanish Netherlands, further weakening that state. As a counterweight the Dutch obtained permission from the Spanish to put garrisons into some of the more vital towns, like Mons, to act as a tripwire. The French would not be able to make war on Spain without making war on Holland.

The United Provinces

The U.P. are almost as deep a subject as France. Briefly, the seven provinces of the northern half of the Netherlands, after being under Burgundian and then Habsburg rule until 1581, came under the sway of the Protestant Reformation and chose to break away and form a federal republic.

The Emperor Charles V probably did the most to consolidate all seventeen provinces of the Netherlands in his pragmatic sanction (bilateral treaty) of 1549. The United Provinces rebelled against his son Philip II because of high taxation, religious persecution, and Phillip's attempts to alter the federalist nature of the provinces. The urbanised Flemings of the northern Netherlands had a somewhat different way of doing things than the more rural Walloons in the South, and this had been true since before the Romans came.

Although formal recognition of the United Provinces was not given until 1648, the states had functioned as a unified bloc for nearly two generations by that point. Once at peace they became the wealthiest and most highly urbanised economic zone in Europe, creating the world's oldest stock market and dominating global trade. Thanks to their long struggle for independence, and their wealth, they also had the most powerful navy and most highly trained army. What their own manpower reserves could not produce, they could buy. Even though the exertions of the Dutch War had sent them into decline, by the outbreak of the Nine Years War, it was the Dutch, of all France's enemies, who were most greatly to be feared.

The U.P.'s political structure was federalist in nature – that is, decentralised. There were seven provinces, each with its own state government, and a federal government, the States General. The latter also ruled a number of non-provincial lands called Generalities (because they belonged to the States General). Actually, the County of Drenthe was an eighth province, but it was so poor it could not pay tax and had no representation.

[The names of the provinces were: the Duchy of Guelders, or Guelderland; the County of Holland; the County of Zeeland; the Lordship of Utrecht; the Lordship of Overijssel; the Lordship of Frisia; the Lordship of Gronigen & Ommelanden.]

The Generalities were awarded to the United Provinces in 1648, to act as buffer zones. These were Dutch Flanders, on the South bank of the Scheldt Estuary, Dutch Brabant, its southern border extending roughly along a line between Breda and Venlo, Dutch Limburg (Maastricht), and Upper Gelderland (Venlo).

Each province was governed by a Provincial States headed by a *raadspensionaris* (civilian governor) and a *stadtholder* (military governor). According to law, the stadtholders were freely appointed and subordinate to the

Provincial States but in practice most of the states picked the current head of the House of Orange-Nassau, the most powerful local aristocrats, who had led the country to victory in the war of independence. At the time of the Nine Years War, this was of course William of Orange, soon to be King of England. Because so many of the states had him as their stadtholder, he was also Stadtholder General of the entire country.

This state of affairs was not universally accepted, and led to the formation of rival factions, the Republicans, who wanted to curb the power of the House of Orange, particularly when they saw William angling for a royal crown, and the Orangists, who favoured a more centralized system of government, perhaps under a monarch, or perhaps not. The Republicans held sway under Johan de Witt until 1672, after which the never-ending series of wars put power in the hands of the Stadholder. A second republican period ensued after William's death in 1702, but the Orangists again came to power in 1747, arguing that it was the lack of a strong central authority that was causing the decline of Dutch power.

(James Madison once said the Dutch republic displayed "Imbecility in the government; discord among the provinces; foreign influence and indignities; a precarious existence in peace, and peculiar calamities from war.")

[The Dutch East India Company and Dutch West India Company were monopolies of the States General. Other companies existed, but they were monopolies of the various states.]

William of Orange (1650 – 1702)

Born at The Hague, William was the only child of William II of Orange and Mary Stuart, daughter of Charles I of England. (Thus, purely by coincidence, William III was the 'III' of both Orange and England.) His father died of smallpox just before he was born, meaning he was sovereign prince of Orange at his birth. His guardianship was by a sometimes contentious committee consisting of his mother, her mother-in-law, and the Elector of Brandenburg, who was an uncle by marriage.

William's mother, not very welcome in Holland, had little to do with his nurturing. Instead he had a mix of Dutch and British governesses, followed by a string of Calvinist-bent tutors appointed by the State who inculcated the idea that he was the instrument of God to defend Europe against Popery.

From 1659 he spent seven years at Leiden University (though not enrolled), being educated in all the things he would need for his predestined role of Stadholder. Upon his mother's death, when he was 10, his uncle Charles II of England interfered, on her last request, and a series of intrigues for control of the boy ensued. He became a bone of contention between the Orangists and Republicans. Ultimately, the Dutch got rid of all his English courtiers, but he also fell into the hands of the Republicans. They continued to educate him in statecraft, but when he came of age, he found he was barred from becoming Stadholder.

This was in 1667. The Orangists attempted to have him appointed Captain General and Stadholder; the Republicans, under the Grand Pensionary, Johan de Witt, issued an edict that Captain Generals could not be Stadholders.

(The Grand Pensionary was by law merely the senior civil servant of the States Government, but when there was no Stadtholder, he became the *de facto* ruler.)

In 1670, by which time William had his own household, 5 of the provinces abolished the office of Stadtholder at de Witt's request, establishing what was known as The Harmony. Of the other two provinces, one swore to uphold the edict. Nevertheless, William was by default growing into the role of Captain General, so the same year he was admitted to the Council of State (*Raad van State*), and later the officer which administered the defense budget for the borderlands (Generalities). He had full voting privileges.

The early 1670s were a time of crisis in the United Provinces. War with France was immanent, and Charles II of England was plotting with them to overthrow the Republic and install William as a puppet king. When William visited England on a state visit, Charles almost decided to reveal this information but changed his mind when he realized William regarded himself as the Champion of the Dutch; the two also had widely divergent lifestyles. However, on the eve of war in 1672, William offered to ally the Republic with England in exchange for being made Stadtholder – after 22 years of being told it was his divine right, he was getting anxious. Charles, having made up his own mind, ignored the offer.

War forced the States' hand. Dramatic early successes for the French turned the people against the Republicans. William was made Stadholder, though officially only of Holland (who had ironically taken the lead in opposing him), Guelderland, Zeeland, Utrecht, and Overijssel. A few days later, an envoy from England came with an offer to make William Prince of Holland provided he surrendered. When the envoy threatened destruction, William replied, 'There is one way to avoid this: to die defending it [Holland] in the last ditch.'

De Witt was assassinated by an Orangist mob. Whether William was complicit in this is unknown. Probably not, since de Witt had already stepped down after a previous attempt wounded him. But the mob was acting on a letter from England which William had published, which stated that they and the French were only making war because of the aggressive posture of the Republicans. William did take the opportunity to make a clean sweep, replacing Republican functionaries with Orangists, and prevented the ringleaders of the lynching from being prosecuted.

[William by Sir Godfrey Kneller, dating from the 1680s.]

During the Dutch War, William proved himself a bold leader and staunch defender of his people. There were attempts to award him titles of nobility, but public opinion was against the idea, so he accepted the lesser role of Stadholder. Nevertheless, these offers, and the one King Charles had made, must have opened his eyes to the possibility of gaining sovereignty – but not over the Dutch, whom he was sworn to protect.

William married during the war. The current enmity of England did not prevent him contracting an alliance with Mary, niece of Charles II. As a matter of fact, there was more opposition to the match from the Amsterdam merchants, who had detested William's English mother. Charles agreed to keep marriage politics and war politics separate, which was nice of him. From William's perspective, the marriage gave him the chance to acquire a throne of his own someday; more immediately, it ought to draw Charles onto his side. But with Charles, one could never be quite sure. William's other uncle, James, father of Mary, was not happy with the match and would continue England's pro-French policies when he became king.

The marriage turned out well in some respects, less so in others. Mary was 11 years younger than William and at first was homesick. Court life in Calvinist Holland was not exactly gay. Speaking of which, there are persistent rumours that William was inclined that way. William like to sponsor attractive young men and only had one mistress in his life (the notorious Elizabeth Villiers). But, the shortage of mistresses can be put down to his Calvinist upbringing – the Court of Charles II was an eye-opener. As for the young men, William said, 'It seems to me very extraordinary that it should be impossible to have esteem and regard for a young man without it being criminal.' His calling such activities 'criminal' indicates his opinion on the matter. Favourites always cause jealousy, and these ones were Dutchmen at an English Court. The Jacobites, who did not seem to mind hanging out at the French Court, which was rife with homosexuals, made William's proclivities a stock item of their propaganda. To return to Mary, she eventually fell in love with her husband, but unfortunately proved barren.

The decade of the 1680s saw William and King Louis XIV of France hardening their opinions against each other. Louis regarded William as a warmonger and interfering busybody, who was always allying himself with ant-French coalitions and interfering with French intrigue in England, by conducting intrigues of his own. This is the time when William became the Great White Hope of the English Protestants, and the French were afraid the British and Dutch would unite against them – as they ultimately did. William regarded Louis as a warmonger and interfering busybody, who wanted to rule Europe as a Universal Monarch and would not let anyone govern themselves. As Protestant Champion, gaining control of England would give William the chance to foil these dark and twisted schemes.

There is not enough space here to describe the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Briefly, the Dutch and French intrigues of the 1680s resulted in a win for the Dutch and William was invited to 'rescue' Britain from the clutches of the pro-French and pro-Catholic James II. The rescue took the form of an armed invasion, followed by a three-year war of occupation which William ultimately won; he did have majority support, but minority opposition was quite strong.

For example, William and Mary were not crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, because he did not recognise the 'usurpation'. Even William's supporters sought to curb any Absolutist dreams he might hold by making Mary an equal co-ruler, rather than a mere consort, and by introducing the world's first Bill of Rights. William's popularity took a nosedive when the Queen died of smallpox in 1694.

British politics are beyond the scope of this Commentary. But, it should be noted that William's relationship with Parliament was not smooth, though it was functional. Partly, this was due to Mary's popularity – she was an effective Queen – and partly due to William's own moderation. He had to deal with anti-war feeling, the factional infighting of the Whigs (new money) and Tories (old aristocracy), latent sentiment for ex-King James, and a number of war-crises such as invasion attempts, assassination attempts, and a financial collapse. At the

same time, he was still Stadholder and Captain General of the United Provinces, leading armies in the field.

After the War of the Grand Alliance, which in the main served to 'contain' French ambitions, William's life-work might be considered complete. As a bonus, King Louis recognised his royal title. In the pause between this war and the next, William and Louis even collaborated (a little) to maintain the European balance of power. Carlos II of Spain upended things when he made a unilateral deathbed grant of his crown to the grandson of Louis XIV. Rather than uphold the agreements worked out with William, Louis chose to accept the grant, sparking the War of the Spanish Succession. The Sun King also recognised James Edward Stuart, son of the recently deceased James II as William's heir, rather than Mary's sister, Anne.

However, William's contest with Louis abruptly ended in 1702 when he fell off his horse, dying of complications from a broken collar bone. His death ended the direct line of the House of Orange.

The Spanish Netherlands

It was inevitable that Spain would become involved in the War of the Grand Alliance. She was France's hereditary enemy. She only formally joined the Alliance in 1690, but the Spanish Netherlands – Belgium minus Liège – would always be directly in the path of any French advance against Holland. Similarly, her holdings in Italy would be threatened any time the French opened a second front against the Empire by crossing the Maritime Alps. Besides, Louis had stolen Luxembourg and Franche-Comté from her. By 1689, therefore, Spain and France were at war in all but name.

The Spanish Netherlands were the creation of the Dukes of Burgundy, who began consolidating their hold over the fragmented fiefdoms of the *Pays-Bas* around the mouths of the Rhine and Scheldt in the 15th Century. The Emperor Charles V of Habsburg inherited the conglomeration upon his accession, in his capacity as Duke of Burgundy, and further centralized governance in the region. The Pragmatic Sanction of 1549 declared the Seventeen Provinces of the Low Countries to be a single dominion. In 1581 the seven northern provinces began their war for independence but the remaining ten remained loyal to the Spanish Habsburgs. (As of Charles' abdication in 1558, the Spanish and Austria Habsburg holdings were split up, with the Netherlands going to Spain, though *de jure* they remained Imperial fiefs.)

In the 17th Century, the French, who had supported the United Provinces' bid for independence, began encroaching on the southern borders of the Spanish Netherlands, annexing Artois and Cambrai under the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659); they also captured Dunkirk and ceded it to the English, though it was later reacquired from King Charles II. At the end of the Dutch War in 1678 they took over Walloon Flanders and the southern half of the County of Hainault. The modern Franco-Belgian border follows this line.

The Spanish Netherlands were administered by a Governor General who was also Captain General of the indigenous Army. The original provinces were the counties of Flanders (divided between France and Spain), Artois (lost to France), Namur, Mechelen, and Hainault (divided between France and Spain); the duchies of Brabant, Limburg, and Luxembourg, Cambrai (lost to France), the City of Tournai (lost to France), and the Upper Quarter (of Guelderland), which lay around Venlo and Roermond. The capital was at Brussels, which throughout its history was one of the 'great capitals' of Europe, particularly before 1621 when the Netherlands had autonomy from Spanish rule under their own archdukes. After that date, Spain resumed direct control.

Economically, the Spanish Netherlands were wealthy, though much less so than the United Provinces. During the Middle Ages Flanders was famous for its cloth production, and Brabant for its agriculture. But, the 'Belgians' were unable to pursue overseas trade. Their northern cousins made sure the port of Antwerp lost influence by allowing that end of the Scheldt to silt up. As a consequence, France became their main trading partner, which in turn increased French political influence in the region.

The Administration of the Spanish Netherlands at the time of the war has been largely ignored by historians on the grounds that the regime of Carlos II was defunct and decadent. Therefore, details are lacking. However, the Governor General probably functioned much like the viceroys in other Spanish possessions, enjoying a great deal of autonomy most of the time, but being subject to a performance review when his term ended. The fact that it was a Governor General and not a Viceroy probably comes from the back that the Netherlands were an almost permanent war zone. Terms of office usually lasted a few years as part of a man's career of rotational postings to various provinces. Needless to say, the Governor General was not a bureaucrat but a grandee of Spain. He was also the commander in chief of the Army of Flanders and frequently led it on campaign.

Militarily speaking, the Netherlands were isolated from Spain except at the highest levels of grand strategy. Only in a great emergency would troops be sent from Spain to Flanders, or vice versa. Recruiting was done locally, and there were plenty of volunteers. The Walloons were regarded as good troops, but with a reputation for brutality. Mercenary Swiss and German regiments were also commissioned for the duration of a given conflict. These regiments would be integrated into the Spanish Army, but in the War of the Grand Alliance, many independent contingents were *subsidised*, including troops from North Germany, Denmark, and Sweden;

unable to cover the cost of subsidizing entire corps of foreign troops, as the war dragged on Spain let the Dutch and English pick up the tab.

Luxembourg

At the time of the Nine Years War, Luxembourg was a Spanish possession, technically part of the Netherlands, and currently under French occupation. It first appears as the possession of the Counts of Ardennes, important local landowners in the area. The town and castle of Luxembourg were strategically and economically important, because they sat on one of the few good routes through the Ardennes region.

By the 14th Century Luxembourg had become a duchy, and the House of Luxembourg supplied four Holy Roman Emperors. In the 15th Century, the Valois Dukes of Burgundy, cadets of the royal Burgundian line, became dukes, and in 1477 the duchy passed by marriage to the Habsburgs. Charles V joined it to the rest of his Netherlandish possessions.

Independence was gained in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna, when it became a Grand Duchy under the German Confederation (thus severing it from Belgium), In 1830 the Belgians annexed the western portion, and some eastern districts (the German Quarter) were annexed by Germany; what remains today is only a rump state.

The Prince-Bishopric of Liège

The Prince-Bishopric of Liège began life as the Diocese of Liège, founded sometime between 980 and 985 A.D. when the Bishop was awarded secular control of the County of Huy by the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto II. Confusingly, the lands of the prince-bishopric were not coterminous with the diocese, but only a small Imperial fief within it, 'for the bishop's personal use'. The diocese extended well into Holland and also covered Luxembourg.

In 1500 A.D. the prince-bishopric was assigned to the Lower Rhenish-Saxon *Circle* (or Imperial military district). By that time it had increased in size to include most of what are now the modern Belgian provinces of Liège and Limburg, essentially a long strip of territory straddling the Meuse and cutting Spanish Luxembourg off from the rest of the Spanish Netherlands. There was a smaller north-south strip of territory on the left bank of the Meuse, isolated by the intervening territory of Namur. Maastricht was also technically part of Liège, but administered jointly by the bishop and the Duke of Brabant, who later passed the job to the Dutch States General. For about 600 years Liège also included the Duchy of Bouillon, but this was given to France in 1678.

Although never incorporated into the Spanish Netherlands, Liège was naturally influenced during Medieval times by the powerful dukes of Burgundy, and later by the Habsburgs and Bourbons. During this period the prince-bishopric was a center of intellectual activity and was known as the Athens of the North. At times, it also acted as the 'Switzerland' of its day, brokering political deals among its more powerful neighbours.

The prince-bishopric suffered from the usual tensions between upper and lower classes, and between secular and clerical authority. During the 14th and 15th Centuries, the states forming the United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands was known as the Burgundian Netherlands. At this time, the Dukes of Burgundy, who were busy consolidating their hold, exerted great influence over the prince-bishopric, and one of them forced the population to accept a nephew, Louis of Bourbon (1456-82), as prince-bishop. This led to the Liège Wars and the destruction of the prince-bishopric's principal towns by Charles the Bold (1433-1477) and the reduction in power of Liège's democratic institutions – like much of the Netherlands, federalism and self-rule in local matters was the normal way of life.

The House of Burgundy (Valois) took a major hit with the early death of Charles the Bold, but retained its influence in Liège. The Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) was a scion of that House, and acquired the Netherlands along with most of the rest of the world. He unified the Seventeen Provinces, as Belgium and Holland were called, but did not make Liège an eighteenth province, because the prince-bishop was both a secular and an ecclesiastical ruler, subject to both himself as Emperor, and the Pope. However, Liège's policies were Charles' polices.

Under Charles' successors, Liège, though still Habsburg-influenced, gained in independence. During the Eighty Years War, Liège, terminus of the Spanish Road, was an island of neutrality in Spanish territory. The Dutch tried to conquer it in 1595, but Spanish arms saved the prince-bishopric. Spanish forces had right of transit, but could not camp more than two days in the same spot.

By the 17th Century, the prince-bishopric was typically ruled by foreign, absentee bishops, and a prey to a pair of factions within its administration, known as the Chiroux and the Grignoux. These divisions enabled the Bourbons to exert influence in the prince-bishopric, and compete with the Habsburgs for control. Neither side conceived of a physical annexation of the territory, however.

By the late 17th Century Liège was ruled by the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, Imperial subjects with Imperial pretensions who often leaned toward France as a counterweight to Austria. In 1681, the incumbent bishop, who was also Archbishop of Cologne – Maximillian Henry of Bavaria (1621-1688) – issued an edict which crushed the Chiroux and Grignoux. Since he died in 1688, however, a

succession crisis arose during the War of the Grand Alliance, leading to a tug of war between the Bourbons and the House of Orange (who, it should be remembered, were part Burgundian); Liège occupied a strategic position on the Meuse River. Furthermore, it provided a relatively large number of troops, about 8,000 in all, which was more than the English provided in the early stages of the war.

During the first half of the conflict there was a 'Wittelsbach interregnum' with Liège being ruled by a pro-Coalition candidate, John Louis of Elderen (1689-94). Ultimately, Joseph Clemens of Bavaria (1671-1723), a candidate with ties to both sides became prince-bishop. Despite French blandishments he remained loyal to the Coalition.

Liège lasted as an independent power until the French Revolution. Still a focus of intellectual activity, the ideas of the Enlightenment were actively discussed there, and Liège made its own *Revolution Liègeoise* in 1789. This revolution was crushed by the Empire in 1791. In 1795 France absorbed Liège. At the formation of Belgium, Liège was simply incorporated into it.

The Duchy of Bouillon

Until its dissolution in 1795, the Duchy of Bouillon was a sovereign state, with a population of about 2,500, mostly Walloons. The duchy lay on the right bank of the Meuse, below Sedan, and included the town of Bouillon, its castle, and some neighbouring villages, plus a strip of territory on the left bank of the river.

It appears in the records during the 10th Century, as a freehold of the Ardennes-Verdun dynasty, a West Frankish family who at one point dominated Lorraine and were related to the counts of Verdun, Bar, Luxembourg, and Salm. (After the breakup of Charlemagne's empire, the lands obtained by his son Lothar were the most weakly ruled of all, which is why the strip of land crossing Europe from Holland to northern Italy contained so many tiny self-ruling territories.)

In 1095 Bouillon was sold to Liège to pay for its duke's trip to the Holy Land on the First Crusade. That man's name should be familiar: it was Godfrey of Bouillon, the first Crusader King of Jerusalem.

By the 15th Century, Bouillon was administered by the *châtelain* of the prince-bishops of Liège, the House of La Marck, rulers of the County of Mark, in Westphalia. This family struggled with the prince-bishops for control of Liège, but failed in their bid. However, they retained the castle of Bouillon as a pledge for a loan. There was then a family struggle as one La Marck actually did become prince-bishop and his brother the *châtelain* tried to become independent.

During the 16th Century the La Marcks of Bouillon, still styling themselves dukes, were at last made so by King Henri II when the French occupied the territory. It was hoped the La Marcks would resist Habsburg influence in the region. Between 1560 and 1642 the dukes also ruled the Principality of Sedan, then an independent state.

In 1594 the dukedom passed to the House of La Tour d'Auvergne; the title was held by a duchess, who married into that family. The d'Auvergnes were a powerful French noble family. The famous *maréchal* Turenne belonged to one of its branches, as did one of the <English> chroniclers used for this Commentary. Rule by the d'Auvergnes turned the duchy into a French protectorate, though this was not made official until it was occupied by the French during the Dutch War (ratified by the Treaty of Nijmegen in 1678). Technically, Bouillon was still an Imperial fief.

After the Nine Years War, the duchy continued to exist, until in 1794 the armies of the Revolution invaded, declaring it an independent Republic. In 1795 it was formally annexed to France. After the Napoleonic Wars it was incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, though the title was restored and awarded to the de Rohan family, who still hold it.

The War Machines

Many states and nationalities clashed in the Low Countries: French, Walloon, German, Swiss, Dutch, English, Scottish, Irish, Danish, Swedish, Spanish, and Italian. Many of the same nationalities (including the French) fought in both armies. For the purposes of this discussion, five divisions can be made: the French, the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, and the Germans.

In broad terms, the various armies were much the same. The French were a single national force and the most advanced in tactical developments (except perhaps for the Dutch, who had developed the system of platoon-firing), the operational art, and siegecraft, but were hindered by King Louis's need to juggle resources for four separate fronts. Their opponents suffered the typical limitations of a 'coalition of the willing' but the individual armies were sound enough.

A given army's field force was divided into infantry and cavalry, with cavalry divided into horse and dragoons; some horse was 'heavy' and some 'light'. The infantry was primarily professional, but militia battalions could be employed in the line on occasion. Artillery and other specialists were professionals but semi-civilian in nature, except for the French, who had already turned the gunners into a formal branch of the military.

Armies had a commander in chief; in the Allied case with a generalissimo above the national corps' own C-in-Cs. After 1690, this was King William, so that the struggle took on the aspect of a personal contest between William

and King Louis. Having a royal commander-in-chief solved many of the issues of coalition warfare, but not all.

These men were assisted by generals and lieutenant generals commanding the three branches of the combat arms, and by lesser generals commanding specific components of the army on the battlefield, acting as garrison commanders, or leading detachments.

Cavalry was the premier arm both in battle and in raiding or 'coursing'. During sieges, infantry was more important. The terrain in the Low Countries was surprisingly varied, ranging from coastal sand dunes and marsh to farmland and woodland, to rolling hills. In overall terms, however, it was 'flat'. This meant warfare was a matter of large armies manoeuvring, generally to initiate or lift a siege against some fortress, or simply to lay waste to a region, denying its resources to the other side and making a political statement. Battles were grand affairs, risky and rare. If detachments were sent out on *courses*, the main body functioned as a rallying point; the armies entrenched themselves in <hopefully> unassailable positions while such raids were being conducted.

So open was the terrain, in fact, that both sides constructed huge defensive lines, reminiscent of the Great War. The Allies used the extensive canal network not only for transport but as a bulwark, reinforcing it with strings of detached redoubts and opening and closing sluices to flood or drain the surrounding lands. The French dug a line of trenches as elaborate as those which protected individual fortresses from the sea all the way to the Meuse River. Between these safe zones, the armies crisscrossed no-mans-land for nine years, turning it into a desert.

As to dress and equipment, the infantry on both sides wore similar clothes: the '*justacorps*' or overcoat, waistcoat, trousers with stockings exposed, shoes, and hat. Styles might vary. The Spanish, for example, sometimes wore their hats with the brims turned down while other nations pinned them up on three sides to make the 'tricorne'. The French led fashion among the Germans.

Equipment varied with the regiment and its particular mix of arms, but infantrymen would have either a musket or a pike (in general, pikemen were no longer armoured) and a sword or knife. Cavalry would have a sword, varying in nature between cuirassier or 'heavy horse', dragoon, and hussar, plus a carbine (musket for dragoons) and a couple of pistols. The Spanish maintained a tradition of close-quarter fighting with dagger and sword, while the French were pioneering the use of the bayonet.

'Musket' is actually a generic term; what the men carried would either be matchlocks or fusils. Matchlocks were muzzle-loaded smoothbore weapons fired by touching the end of a piece of smouldering rope known as 'match' to a pan of gunpowder. They were heavy enough to require a forked stick, or rest, to support the barrel when firing. One, older, version still in use was the arquebus. The advantage of the arquebus was that, although a matchlock, it was lighter and could be fired without using a rest.

Matchlocks were gradually being phased out in favour of the safer fusil, which was an early version of the familiar flintlock musket. Flintlocks were safer around gunpowder stores, so were often used by the guards to the artillery train, and aboard ship. They were also lighter, and did not require large coils of lighted match that might get entangled in a neighbour's gunpowder cartridges and set them off. 'Fusil' is simply the French word for flintlock. The tradeoff with the fusil was a lighter bore and less range and stopping power.

Cavalry carbines and dragoon muskets were fusils. Pistols could be flintlocks or wheel locks, the latter igniting the charge by a spinning wheel that sent off a shower of sparks. Wheel locks were far more reliable, but very expensive.

The war in the Alps helped drive the spread of the fusil among the French, despite the fact that regulations stipulated the use of heavy-bore matchlocks, thanks to Catinat's pre-war experiences fighting the Vaudois. However, the economic demands of the war naturally meant many units continued to use the older matchlocks. Ironically, militia and irregulars might well be armed with fusils while some line regiment was stuck with matchlocks, simply because of a particular unit's recruitment location or its colonel's 'contacts'. Even the 'backward' Spanish seem to have had a significant number of fusils in service by this time.

Experts are divided on just how much use the pike received this late in the 17th Century, but it seems clear that it was still an important component of battlefield tactics, though in just a few years it would vanish entirely from most armies. Pikes were, of course, replaced by the bayonet, but at this time the use of the bayonet was spotty. There were two basic types, the 'plug', which was stuck into the barrel of the musket and prevented firing, and the 'socket', which fitted over the barrel. (Ring bayonets were an early form of socket bayonet.)

On the question of how pike-and-shot formations worked at this date, there is still much argument. The Spanish pioneered the formation, first with their *colunellas* (from which comes the term 'colonel', the commander of a *colunella*), and then with the *tercio*. Originally, the *tercio* was an all-arms brigade group, but by the end of the 17th Century it had become a standard regiment by another name.

[The origin of the name tercio *is also debated. It means simply 'third'. The two most common solutions are a) it derived from the mix of soldiers used in the formation – pikemen, swordsmen, and arquebusiers – or b) it derived from the fact that there were originally three such brigades, all based in Italy. This seems the most likely, as the other solution ignores the fact that cavalry*

was assigned to these early tercios *to make them what were essentially all-arms brigades. Oddly, the Spanish did not use the term 'battalion' for their infantry. They used the archaic term 'esucadre' or 'squadron'. The term "*batallones' *was reserved for cavalry!]*

In neither army were the musket and pike elements separated by company – the company was purely an administrative unit – instead, each company had some pikemen and some musketeers. On the battlefield the men were separated by job description.

All regular infantry units fought their battles in linear formation, usually in six ranks. A number of pike/musket combinations were possible. Traditionally, the pikes were clustered in the center and the musketeers stood on the either side. The unit would advance rank by rank, the musketeers firing volleys (they would retire in the same manner), and when the fighting came to close quarters, the musketeers would either drop back behind the pikes or draw swords. If charged by cavalry they could take cover under the pikes, which were a good 5 metres long. Skilled troops could even continue to fire from this position. But the pikes could also be arranged in a line behind the musketeers, or placed on the wings for flank protection. As the number of pikes dropped, they tended to be used in this fashion more and more, since there were no longer enough of them for the musketeers either to shelter 'under their wings', or to press an assault.

Grenadier detachments were becoming a feature of most European armies, too. The French, as usual, led the way, and had a formidable body of them – in theory, one company per battalion. Such companies were already beginning to be concentrated into separate battalions on an ad hoc basis. The Spanish apparently lagged behind in this innovation, employing grenadiers but not concentrating them. 'Apparently', because in actual fact the *tercios* were quite flexible in the way they used their manpower, and it may be that the grenadiers did fight as converged companies, only within the *tercio*.

Cavalry tactics depended on the way the colonel wanted to equip and train his men. Mostly, the horse charged in line and clashed with the sword. A variation was to advance slowly, discharge pistols, and then charge. Even the *caracole* was still employed, where the men would ride up rank by rank and pot at the enemy with pistols before turning away. The Imperials, after many years fighting the Turks, preferred to organise their horse in tight, square formations and employ carbines and pistols, in preference to cold steel. There was fierce debate, especially in the French Army, of the best method to employ. Progressive colonels, however, disdained the caracole.

The artillery and engineering arms were for the most part represented by a very few professional officers. These would employ infantrymen as labourers; engineers might also work with civilian labour. The French were the first to truly militarize their 'scientific soldiers'. Casualties among these educated elites could be heavy, especially during sieges.

The Army of the Dutch States

The Dutch were regarded as leaders in military development. They suffered from only two handicaps. First, the Estates could be stingy with the purse. Second, and more importantly, their Army was not replaceable. This is why they were cagey about risking battle and why they hired so many mercenaries.

In the prewar period, William of Orange ensured the Army remained on its toes. The phrase 'order of battle' comes from his practice of setting up summer training camps. The Dutch practically invented the arrangement of two lines of battle with cavalry on the wings, flanked by dragoons, and a small reserve in case of emergencies. The Dutch are credited with beginning the practice of creating the brigade as a tactical unit, though this was also practiced by the French, and has its origins in the Spanish *tercio*.

William of Orange also formed a General Staff in 1688. This consisted of 3 Field Marshals, a General of Horse, a General of Foot, 7 Lieutenant Generals (3 Horse and 4 foot) and 9 Major Generals (5 Horse and 4 Foot). Officers were permanently assigned to cavalry or infantry, the former being senior. The Artillery had its own separate hierarchy. Though there was slight expansion and some foreign officers were grafted on, the Staff remained essentially a fixed institution with promotion dependent on seniority.

The States Army was 'afflicted' with an institution known as the Field Deputies, similar to the French Intendants – i.e., political commissars. They were not concerned with 'right thought' but more practical matters such as pay, quartering, feeding, and health. More perniciously, they were allowed to interfere with plans of campaign, and on several occasions refused permission for commanders to seek battle. The States General was in charge of running the war, and under it the Council of State, which corresponds to a War Ministry. William of Orange was of course part of those organisations, but though as King of England and Stadholder, and as Captain General, he had a lot of clout, it was not always enough. The Field Deputies were also members of those political bodies, and they had to consider the needs of the individual provinces they represented. (In some cases, naturally, William might allow the Deputies to veto a course of action so that he would not lose face by having to cancel an operation.)

With regard to logistics, the Dutch quickly copied the French magazine system during the Dutch War, with modifications that took account of differences between the two powers. They could not afford to pay for the Army's needs out of the State Treasury, so they took out loans and hired contractors to fulfil their requirements. To overcome the discrepancy in agricultural output they

bought grain from the Baltic. Horse food – forage – was provided out of magazines in winter, and this was also done in summer when campaigning on home ground, to spare the countryside. It was also done on occasion when foreign terrain (such as Spanish Brabant) had been exhausted.

The prewar Establishment called for 20 regiments of line cavalry, each of 3 companies. To this were added a Garde du Corps company and a Guard Regiment for the Stadholder. The numbers remained stable throughout the war, with only 2 extra regiments raised at the beginning and 1 regiment merged with another. Only 3 native line dragoon regiments, plus the over-strength Garde Dragonders saw service, and one of those was raised mid-war.

The Dutch cavalry in this period was better than average, and usually had better staying power because they could afford to field units that were 50% stronger than their opponents. There is an argument that they began the war using the more staid German Doctrine (charging at a trot for more control) and then copied the more aggressive French Style (charging at the gallop), but this is debatable. The dragoons were employed in the usual manner, as scouts, escorts, and supplements to the cavalry wings. They still fought on foot quite frequently – even the Guard regiment.

The infantry was the core of the Army, highly disciplined and well trained. The Dutch introduced the technique of platoon firing to the British. The peacetime Army consisted of National regiments, Swiss regiments, and 2 British brigades of 3 regiments each, 1 Scots and 1 English. The latter was placed on the English Establishment once William became king but the Scots were retained. (These brigades had been loaned to the Dutch by the Stuarts as a means of maintaining a standing army ‘off the books’.) There were also a few ceremonial guard units and the Gardes te Vœt. The native (National) line regiments were all of 1 battalion (except the so-called Friesland Garde, which had 2 at least part of the time). The Guard had 3 battalions, though the third was normally used as a cadre. The Swiss, generally fielding 2 battalions per regiment, were hired on the usual contract basis, from Protestant cantons, and fleshed out with deserters from French service.

During wartime the Dutch hired many Subsidy troops – multi-regiment contingents rented from foreign powers – and in the Nine Years War also took over many regiments hired by the Spanish. More Swiss were hired, as well as Germans from Brunswick, Brandenburg, Saxony, Hesse, Denmark, and even Sweden. Both Scandinavian countries supplied a brigade each. There was also a small brigade of Huguenots (French Protestants). The number of German regiments in Dutch pay amounted to a small army. They included both cavalry and infantry, but no artillery.

The English Army should also be considered as an auxiliary force. When the Prince of Orange became King of England he was able to lift the restriction on the number of units that could be employed on the Continent – a treaty limitation placed on auxiliaries – by having England declare war on France; this automatically raised England’s status from Auxiliary to Belligerent. The Army was in bad shape after the Revolution, semi-mutinous, politically unreliable, and very badly trained. By war’s end, however, some English regiments were <almost> on par with the Dutch.

Establishments were assessed by companies: by the end of the war there were 135 companies in English pay and 286 companies in Dutch pay, plus 199 Subsidy companies.

For the Dutch infantry of 1688 firepower trumped shock. The transition from matchlock to flintlock was well underway, but not universal. 20% of an average National battalion still carried pikes. The first use of the socket bayonet came in 1693 when Dutch soldiers looted some from the French at the Battle of Landen; they proved popular and were adopted. As a generalization it can be said that by 1696 the German subsidy troops no longer used the pike at all, while the English were still 50/50. Grenadiers were employed, but the numbers were small, only 6 men per company. During the Dutch War there had been 3 official companies of grenadiers unaffiliated with any particular regiment. Apart from the usual line and column formations, Dutch battalions were known to employ the square on rare occasions.

The Dutch artillery regiment was the first of its kind, formed in 1677. It no longer used civilian contractors but trained soldiers, although these were relatively few, so that infantrymen had to be borrowed for ‘grunt work’. In 1688 the regiment had 4 companies of 90 men each. By 1690 the numbers had increased to 260 men per company, including 142 labourers. By the end of the war there were 8 companies.

The Dutch were also innovative with their ordnance. Calibers were standardised: 24-pounder siege guns, 12-pounder heavy field guns, 6-pounder ‘workhorse’ field guns, and 3-pounder battalion guns. The 3-pounders came in short, medium, and long varieties. The ‘shorts’ were true ‘infantry guns’ while the ‘longs’ could double as light field guns. The siege master, Menno van Coehoorn, invented a ‘portable’ mortar in 2 versions, one firing an 8-pound shell for infantry support and the other a 16-pound shell for siege-work.

The Army of Spanish Flanders

The Spanish Army was separated into three virtually independent corps. The corps, or 'armies', were those of Iberia (sometimes 'Catalonia'), Flanders, and Milán (or Lombardy). Spain's remaining possessions were protected by garrison units supplemented by local militia. Some garrison units could be quite large, as in Italy, where Sicily and Naples each had one *tercio fijo* ('fixed' *tercio*), of 4,000 men. However, these forces were not intended to leave their domains. In the three main corps, troops were divided on national lines: Walloon (Flanders), Spanish (Catalonia), and Italian (Milán), supplemented by German regiments hired for the duration of the conflict. There were also small regiments of Swiss, Irish, Scots, and English origin. Transferring troops from one theatre to another required a Royal Order, on recommendation by the War Council (*Consejo Supremo de la guerra*).

Each corps was commanded by a *capitán general*, who would also be either governor or viceroy. Under him was a *maestre de campo general* in administrative command of the infantry, assisted by *sargento general de batallas*, a matching *general de caballería* and *teniente generals de caballería* (some for the light horse and some for the heavy horse), a *gobernador general de las armas* (an administrative post), and a *general de la artillería*.

The Spanish infantry was organised into *tercios*. In the Spanish Army the *tercio* was the administrative unit and its companies the tactical unit, though a large *tercio*, particularly one serving in Flanders or Italy, would often deploy as multiple battalions. Spanish companies, which averaged 10 to 16 per *tercio*, had greater autonomy than was the case in other armies. On campaign this meant a good *tercio* could be quickly fleshed out with additional companies from weaker units.

A typical Spanish company could have from 30-200 men. The companies also had a high proportion of reformadoes, or spare officers, and gentlemen volunteers, allowing for rapid expansion and division. The average strength of a *tercio* in Lombardy was 1,000 men, comparable to a 2-battalion regiment.

The Spanish lagged behind in the use of the bayonet, although it was becoming more common. Their ratio of pike to musket was usually higher, typically 1/3 pikes to 2/3 muskets. Spain had a decent armaments industry, so even militia units could be reasonably well equipped. The Spanish also liked to mix their firearms, so that of the '2/3 muskets', about 25% would actually be arquebuses.

Spanish *tercios* all had regional names, but were usually known by the name of their lieutenant colonel (*maestre de campo*). Many had a special moniker, such as the *tercio de* Madrid, the *de los colorados viejos*, or Old Reds, from the colour of their uniforms. The Old Reds had three *maestre de campo* during the war, so 'Old Reds' was a good way to keep track of the *tercio*.

Flanders had a permanent force of 10 *tercios*, known as the 'Old' or 'Spanish *tercios*', though their men were mostly locals. Added to these were 3 veteran Italian *tercios*. Territorial line regiments, the 'Walloon *tercios*', fluctuated in number. 9 have been counted. Early on, there was a set of 1 English, 1 Scottish, and 1 Irish *tercio*, but these were soon disbanded and were always understrength. In addition, Brussels contracted for 9 German regiments. These had 12 companies, with 100-150 men each, so they were slightly stronger than the *tercios* and would have had 2 battalions per regiment.

The Spanish also hired whole contingents of troops from Germany and Scandinavia, but being unable to pay for them, the Dutch assumed the responsibility. Some were left under Spanish command, some under Dutch, and some under the English. When the Elector of Bavaria became Governor General in 1692, he brought with him a small corps of Bavarian troops, not just guard units, but line regiments of cavalry and infantry. Late in the war he sent home for more.

The cavalry consisted of 7 guard companies, 12 *tercios* of horse (a few being designated Italian or Walloon), 10 regiments of German horse, and 9 *tercios* of dragoons. Uniquely, the cavalry regiments of Flanders were called *tercios*, not *trozos*. Both Spanish and German horse were cuirassiers. The dragoons were sometimes known as arquebusiers. A cavalry *tercio* normally comprised 6 companies, organized in a similar manner to the infantry (with a colonel's company, and so forth). Companies were 30-40 men each. The dragoons had 9 companies of 40-50 men.

*[*Trozo *translates as 'sleeve', and probably refers to their original employment in the brigade group* tercio*, where they covered the intervals between the units.]*

Spanish guard cavalry were just that: personal guards for the viceroys, governors, and lieutenant governors. Because the companies were oversized, they had the same strength as the line units. Horse regiments were equipped and fought in much the same style as those of other armies. In general, the cuirass was not used, though it was supposed to be worn. Dragoons had the same loose formation of companies as the infantry, and were often employed in independent roles on campaign. The Spanish preferred using them in a dismounted role.

The performance of the Spanish units varied. It was generally agreed that they fought 'reliably'. The Walloons were particularly tough. And, the cavalry could be superb. But the Government had no money. The men had to take odd jobs to avoid starvation. Most of the infantry, for most of the war, rusted in garrison. The feeling imparted by the sources is of an army that felt it had no stake in the war.

The Spanish had a reputable corps of artillerists and engineers, but like most armies of the period, their cannon were distributed among various fortifications (essentially mothballed). Both guns and gunners would

be collected together at the start of each campaigning season. Every fortification had a small (sometimes very small) garrison, usually composed of a free company or town militia.

The German Armies

The 'Austrian' or Imperial armies of the Holy Roman Emperor did not participate in the fighting in the Low Countries. However, many of the German states did, particularly those in the North and along the Rhine. Either supplying men or money under the Imperial system of military districts, or contingents from their own state armies. Of these, Bavaria, Brunswick, Brandenburg, Saxony, and a number of ecclesiastical states contributed significant forces to the Low Countries. Some of the regiments fought in the pay of Spain or the United Provinces, and some fought under their own rulers.

The Imperial Army (colloquially, 'Austrian' Army) dated from a decree of 1649, as an attempt to deal with the dangers of the condottieri system of the Thirty Years War. So, it had only been around for a single generation, and in fact had been created within the lifetime of the reigning Emperor.

Out of that decree and various earlier institutions the Imperial military machine was divided into five components:

- The standing army and border defence. Nominally, the Emperor commanded the army, but in practice a *Generalleutnant* was assigned to that task. Two men held this post during the war: Charles V, Duke of Lorraine (1680 – 90) and Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden-Baden (1691 – 1707). Neither appeared in Flanders.
- During the war the bulk of the Army served in Hungary, fighting the Turks. 'Hungary' in those days referred to all the Habsburgs' eastern and Balkan possessions, though a distinction could be drawn between Hungary as the interior and the Border as… the border. The Border forces were militia, raised locally and partly paid with land and in kind, much like the Ottoman system.
- The Provincial Estates. These handled the emergency feudal levies and peasant militias on the Habsburg Hereditary Lands or *Erblande*, which were scattered throughout southern Germany.

[The Hereditary Lands had their own higher military administration that was not absorbed into the main command structure until 1705.]

- Auxiliaries. These were significant corps or divisions, to use modern terms, that were provided by the larger ducal states within the Holy Roman Empire, such as Brandenburg, Bavaria, and Saxony. Such forces belonged to their respective duke's own standing armies, as opposed to other forces raised under the aegis of the *Kreistruppen* and *Reichsarmee*.
- Circle (*Kreis*) Associations which raised forces for defence of the Empire within their own areas of responsibility. The Empire was at various times divided into as many as ten Circles, such as the Upper Rhine, Lower Rhine, and Saxon. Confusingly, a Circle might have the same name as one of the major states (e.g., Saxony) but overlap its jurisdiction with a multitude of smaller territories or even with other dukedoms. The Associations were somewhat experimental in nature and usually ad hoc. They appear from time to time as a response to Imperial inertia in the face of an immanent threat. The League of Augsburg was in part such an Association, and like most of the others, proved ineffective until backed by Imperial authority.
- The 'official' defence of the Reich was entrusted to the *Reichsarmee*, which drew a specific allotment of forces from each of the Circles. The Imperial administration would decide whether this would be the 'basic' requirement or a more intense commitment. Things become somewhat confused when one realises that members could send money instead and that money could be used to hire regiments from a ducal standing army, or that said regiments could be loaned to the *Reichsarmee* in exchange for ducal privileges while the rest of the ducal standing army fought as its own corps (or remained out of the fight). The Habsburgs ruled their empire through a never ending series of bilateral agreements.

The Standing Army and the forces fighting elsewhere will not be discussed here. The bulk of the *Reichsarmee* which did not go to Hungary or Italy remained on the defence within Germany (northern Italy was part of the Empire).

Of the *Reichsarmee* and ducal forces of the Empire which assisted the Coalition in the Low Countries, the latter were usually better troops, because the princes had great influence among the states comprising their Circles and naturally kept the best for themselves. However, some of the *Reichsarmee* troops were of decent quality. In dress, equipment, and doctrine, they followed the Western European trends, modelling themselves on the Dutch, French, or Austrians, depending on where their states were located and the enthusiasms of their princes.

The German armies employed the usual colonel-proprietor system, where regiments were raised as investments and run for profit. It appears that the pike had been abandoned altogether, though this may not be true. Cavalry was expected to charge with the sword after a slow approach, the usual shooting off of carbines and pistols, and closing at the trot. Charges were executed by squadrons arranged in three ranks. This was the German Doctrine.

Brunswick, which included the states of Hanover, Celle-Lüneburg, and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, sent large contingents from the outset. Brandenburg placed a

sizeable fraction of her army in Dutch pay, but most of the Elector's army campaigned on the Rhine until mid-war. After that, the bulk of it would put in an appearance each year in Brabant. The Brandenburgers, like the English, had a surprisingly low reputation at the outset of the war. Hanover and Saxony supplied the best cavalry.

The largest element that might be termed 'pure *Reichsarmee*' was a corps under the Landgrave of Hesse, of about 20,000 men, predominantly Hanoverian and Hessian troops, rounded out with battalions from the Upper Rhine Circle, Holstein-Gottorp, and Cologne.

The Army of Liège

The Prince-Bishopric of Liège was part of the *Niederrhein-Westfälischen Reichkreis*, but in practice did not contribute to it because of its isolated position. Instead, it grouped its forces with that of Cologne, under the banner of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs. There were periods during the war when the Wittelsbachs were not in power, but Liège remained committed to the Allied cause and fielded an army of at first 6,000 and later 8,000 men.

Until 1695, the Liègeois troops remained within their own territory (apart from the odd foray). After Namur was recaptured by the Allies, their corps was incorporated within the armies operating in Brabant, though quartering over the winter on home ground.

Apart from a small guard formation for the prince-bishop, Liège did not possess a standing army. In 1689 she raised 2 regiments of *reiters* (line horse), plus a company to serve as T'Serclaes de Tilly's personal escort. Count Tilly, grandson of the famous Thirty Years War general, was a Walloon general in the Dutch service who was appointed by the States to serve as Liège's commander-in-chief.

There were also two mounted guard companies for the prince-bishop, the *Gardes à Cheval de son Altesse* and the *Grenadiers à Cheval de Son Altesse et Prince*, plus three mounted free companies and two companies of feudal cavalry. 3 dragoon regimens were also raised.

5 infantry regiments were raised. Each was of 2 battalions, totalling 12 companies, with 100 men per company; 6 companies per battalion. One was a Guards regiment. There were also 2 dismounted free companies and the Garrison of Stockem, of 42 men.

Liège had its own company of artillery, including 27 artillerists and 76 caissons.

France

In contrast to the forces of the Coalition, the French Army was a unified whole. It had its regional fault lines, but after a succession of wars that had brought men from every corner of France to fight together, regional differences were becoming mere badges of honour. In the War of the Grand Alliance, King Louis' forces were split to cover the various theatres, but regiments were routinely shunted from one front to another as the need arose – the advantage of interior lines.

Overall command of the French Army was in theory arranged so that a number of *colonel général*s had administrative control of each branch of the service, and the army in a given theatre was commanded by a *maréchal*, who would be one of the high nobility and in addition might be one of the *colonel général*s. In practice, King Louis had vested the authority of all the colonel generals in his own person. For political reasons he went so far as to abolish the position of colonel general of infantry. Louis' desire to have full control over his Army was married to War Minister Louvois' ruthless drive for efficiency, forging a fearsome weapon.

In Italy and Catalonia, the overall commander was initially a senior general, later promoted to marshal for the usual reasons of reward for good service, the morale of the officer corps, and the recognition that they were doing a marshal's job. In the Low Countries, a general also commanded at the outset of the war, but he did such a poor job that instead of being promoted he was replaced, first by France's outstanding marshal, the *duc* de Luxembourg, and then by a pair of marshals, Villeroi and Boufflers (of whom the latter was much better); the sheer number of men under arms necessitated a divided command.

No new marshals had been created since the death of Turenne, but in 1694 several were appointed, including Boufflers and Villeroi. They, and Luxembourg before them, were assisted by various *lieutenant général*s in command of the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. These in turn were assisted by major generals known as *maréchals de camp*, and under them the lieutenant colonels actually commanding the regiments. The rank of brigadier had recently been introduced as a reward for lieutenant colonels who demonstrated great ability but who lacked the social status to climb the traditional ladder to general.

[The maréchals de camp *had a role similar to the Spanish* sargento general de batallas*, and were responsible to a* maréchal de camp général *for administrative purposes. But on the battlefield they functioned as major generals, commanding brigades or wings of the army.]*

Louvois tried and failed to come up with a standard format for naming regiments. Only the *Vieux* and *Petite Vieux* regiments (the oldest of the old) and the Royal regiments had fixed names. The Royal regiments all had members of the royal family for colonels, and in fact the ownership of a regiment was one of the *apanages* (perquisites) allowed a member of the royal family. The majority, the Gentleman regiments, were named after their current colonel.

French infantry regiments usually had 1 battalion in peacetime, and 2 or sometimes 3 during war. The King's regiments, the *Vieux* and *Petite Vieux* regiments, and the

Swiss and German mercenaries maintained 3-4 battalions at all times. *Régiment de Dauphin* at one point is recorded with 5 battalions. Each battalion usually had 13 companies, of which one was grenadiers. Companies averaged 45-50 men, and as in most other armies were the basic administrative unit. The Swiss regiments had 200 men per company, but fewer companies overall; Swiss battalions were thus roughly the same size as the others.

As just mentioned, administratively the infantry was organised by company, with the companies under the authority, or *regimen*, of a single colonel being the regiment. On the battlefield, the companies were grouped into battalions, with 4-5 of these being grouped into a brigade, which was the primary manoeuvre unit.

Ratio of pikes to muskets in a battalion was 20% to 80%. However, some units were now fully equipped with musket and socket bayonet; fusils predominated. The French also experimented with the tactic of not stopping to fire when attacking. In the descriptions of the Battle of Staffarda, special mention is made of this. Though that particular assault was repulsed, it was at least carried through, whereas the battalions might have become stuck in place if they had started trading fire.

The French also regularly employed *milices provinciales* (provincial militia). These battalions were comparable with the *landwehr* employed by the Prussians and Austrians in the Napoleonic period. They were always a source of drafts for the line regiments, but starting in 1690 they began to fight as units, not only in Catalonia and Italy, where the numbers of regulars were low, but in Flanders, where they served to garrison the defensive Lines constructed during the war. Some are even on the books for the major battles. Their performance was usually quite good, for what they were. Typically, an understrength brigade would be given a militia battalion to round it off. A lot of the *milices provinciales* raised during the war came from the Walloon population in southern Belgium, which was under French occupation.

The French cavalry had gone from being the best in Europe to a rather unreliable body in the middle of the century, but had by now climbed back to a position of preeminence. Horse regiments (*chevaux-légère*) were equipped and fought in much the same style as those of other armies. The cuirass was not used, though required by regulation. Like the Foot, they were organised administratively into companies, but in battle fought by squadrons, which comprised 2-3 companies each. Again like the infantry, the regiments were divided into Royal and Gentlemen, plus a few foreign ones. As with the infantry, the Gentlemen regiments were known by their colonel's name and the Royal regiments all had members of the royal family for colonels.

Three cavalry units require special mention. These are the *Maison du Roi*, the *Petite Gendarmerie* and the *Carabiniers*. In 1679 the French added 2 carabiniers, equipped with rifled carbines, to every *chevaux-légère* company. They were to function as a security and scouting detail, and could be used as snipers. In 1690 these men were permanently grouped in their own companies, and in the Italian campaign of 1691 reference is made to 19 companies fighting as a single body. However, it was not until 1693 that all the companies were formally stripped from their regiments to form *les Carabiniers Royale*. This unit was composed of 100 companies, arranged in 5 brigades, each brigade being about the same size as a normal regiment. According to the records, 3 brigades fought in Catalonia, and 2 on the Rhine and in Flanders.

The *Petite Gendarmerie*, successors of the *compagnies des ordonnances*, was present in Flanders for most of the war, though they did make detours to the Rhine and Italy in 1693 and 1696. This corps, also known as the *Gendarmerie de France*, was not of the *Maison du Roi*, or Household troops, but the most senior unit of the Line, and enjoyed a special status as 'almost guards'. Its members were of the poor nobility. In 1694 there were 16 companies in 8 squadrons; each company had 80 men. This made the unit equivalent to 3 or 4 regular line regiments (depending on how many squadrons the latter might have). Though 'heavy' horse, they were no longer fully armoured. Half of each squadron were true gendarmes (heavy men-at-arms) and the other half *chevaux-légère.* As an elite force, they naturally had the best mounts and the most skilled riders.

The *Maison du Roi* were the crème de la crème. Its 'classic' form was actually quite new at this date. Louis XIV made a general reorganisation in 1671. Before then it was known as the *Sergens d'Armes* (sergeants at arms) or *Porte Masses de la Garde des Rois* (gate corps of the kings' guard). After the reorganizations there were two divisions: the *Gardes du Corps*, of four companies, led by the commander of the Scots company (which had a built-in command staff) and the *Maison Rouge*, comprising the remaining units – *Gendarmes de la Garde, Chevau-Légers de la Garde, Mousquetaires Noir et Gris,* and *Grenadiers à Cheval de la Garde*. The *Petite Gendarmerie*, technically only the premier regiment of the Line, were conventionally treated as a third, reserve division, though they did operate independently. In theory the Maison du Roi accompanied the King or whatever member of the royal family was present on campaign, but in practice, only one element of the formation might be in attendance at Versailles while the rest campaigned under a senior marshal. Elements went with the Dauphin to the Rhine in 1693, but otherwise the formation fought exclusively in the Low Countries.

Dragoons were a relatively new development. The French, convinced of their utility, already had 15 or so regiments when the war broke out, and they raised more. Capable of fighting on foot or mounted, the latter role was

becoming the norm, but they also served as dismounted security detachments and even as part of the assault force in sieges. They could rapidly deploy to provide covering fire from trenches near the breach.

The artillery and engineering arms were where the French had an overwhelming superiority. King Louis had recently ordered the formation of two complete regiments of gunners, one of field cannon and the other of heavy guns and mortars for siege work. The *Fusiliers du Roi* was a 6-battalion regiment that combined the roles of train guards and mechanics; as in other armies the actual gunners were specialists. In 1693 the unit became the *Régiment Royale de l'Artillerie*. The other regiment, the *Royal-Bombardiers*, was smaller, and as its name suggests, performed a similar role with the siege guns and mortars. Mortars were the 'terror weapons' of their age, used to indiscriminately bombard towns.

This was the Age of Vauban, the man who could predict to the very kilogram how many stores would be required to prosecute a successful siege and how much time, to the very hour, it would take for a fortress to fall – and then list exactly what was required to prevent such an event. Unfortunately, most French generals wanted *gloiré* rather than dull success, and Versailles operated on unrealistic timetables. So, French sieges usually involved high casualties. Nevertheless, they were still the masters of the art.

One great strength of the French Army was its system of frontier depôts, along with the rear echelon infrastructure to keep them supplied. The Allies lacked much of this preexisting infrastructure, though on some fronts it was replicated during the war. True, the system psychologically inhibited 'deep penetration of enemy territory' by large armies, but this limitation already existed in physical form.

Mention should also be made of *La Marine*, the French Navy. Suppressed by the presence of the Royal Navy and its Dutch equivalent most of the time, it served to support the campaign in Ireland until 1691 and after that gave the Allied High Command ulcers. It did not, however, support the fighting along the Flanders coast in the same way the Allied ships did, primarily because it was based at the wrong end of the Channel.

The Diplomats

For France, diplomacy was a form of warfare. But, there was no formal diplomatic service at this time. Foreign policy was the preserve of the King, and in Louis XIV's mind, one of his basic responsibilities. Since he represented the State, only he could know best what the State required. He did have help, though.

Initially, there was a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who participated in the King's inner Council of State; only later did he gain a department of his own. The military also ran its own diplomatic efforts, authorised by the King, who might give his senior commanders plenipotentiary authority to make truces and treaties. This was a practice common with other nations, too.

French policy, as laid down by Cardinal Richelieu, was to 'negotiate unceasingly, openly or secretly, anywhere'. Clientage or patronage was a common tactic: either the creation of a client state, or the creation of client agents receiving French pensions. Such pensions were not seen as a betrayal of one's country, but rather a commission paid to people willing to advocate for France. That said, spies received payment under the same system.

Legality was stressed in and through diplomacy, so though a myriad of agents of different types served France's interests, assassination was not in the tool kit. Diplomacy was about legalising Louis' position vis à vis his peers, either before or after the fact. Assassination was dishonourable, illegal, and vulgar.

[In the book Louis XIV and Europe*, there is an example (pp.6-7) of a French envoy warning a Spanish ambassador of a plot against him, despite France and Spain being at war.]*

However, force *was* a legitimate diplomatic tool, though it was preferable to create pro-French factions among opposing and neighbouring powers. As the French negotiator at Rijswick said, "War in no way destroys the rules of honour and generosity. In fact, it often provides the opportunity for observing them with greater glory for the minister who applies them, and for the prince who approves their application."

This rather aristocratic approach to international affairs was part and parcel of King Louis entire world view. He was genuinely astonished at the vehement opposition of the Dutch to his policies on economic grounds. Economics was so *bourgeois*. But then, so were the Dutch. *Quel dommage*. It also explains why he could bill himself as the Champion of Catholic Europe and be so uninspiring in the role. He had no connection with the People except as an abstract concept.

The Alliance employed similar methods, but without the ruthless efficiency of the French. The Emperor was notorious as a stingy paymaster and the English were considered obnoxious. Many of their agents and envoys were also in French pay. The Dutch, with some help from the English, were probably the most able diplomatic opponents of the French. They had money, and they had ability. It was William of Orange who built and maintained the Alliance – no easy task for his foreign service – and while he was a poor field commander, he had that rare knack of getting people who hated each other to work together.

Honourable mention must also be given to the Popes. They are often ignored in the general histories of the period but they continued to enjoy a great deal of influence. Pope Alexander, though sponsored by Louis XIV, seems to have assisted the Alliance in roping in Duke Victor of Savoy, while Pope Innocent assisted the

Duke in bringing about the neutralisation of Italy. First hand accounts of the diplomacy make it clear just how much activity took place at Rome; many of the key agents in both secret and open negotiations among the Catholic powers were Jesuits and other clerical types.

The Theatre of War

Only a portion of the fighting on France's northeast border took place in 'Flanders' proper. For Anglo-Saxons at least, the name came to stand for the whole theatre probably because the English bases were always located in Flanders proper.

Geographically, the theatre can be divided into three zones: the Rhine-Maas (Meuse) delta, the coastal lowlands south and west of the great rivers, and the higher ground inland. These zones have shaped the culture of the region since ancient times.

At the end of the 17th Century, Spain owned most of what would later become Belgium; they had owned Holland but lost it during the Dutch war of independence known as the Eighty Years War. These Spanish Netherlands spanned two of the three zones, with the Rhine delta bordering them on the North. From a purely military point of view there were three main axes of advance across the region: Flanders, the Meuse Valley, and the Moselle Valley.

Flanders comprised the coastal lowlands. The water table here is very high, so that without good land management it would predominantly be marshland studded with the odd belt of woods. During the 17th Century, the woodlands were far more extensive and could be real obstacles to tactical manoeuvre. A line of elevated sand dunes along the coast, The Downs, protected the region from flooding, but it took centuries of development to turn Flanders into one of the most fertile, and most heavily populated, regions of western Europe.

Several rivers, of which the most important were the Iser, Lys, the Escaut or Scheldt, and the Dendre or Dender, run south to north from the high ground of Artois and Picardy. The Iser turns west to enter the English Channel at Nieupoort, while the others join with the Scheldt to enter the estuary of the same name on the South side of the Rhine delta. Canals cut in every direction, joining these and other rivers, taming the marshes, providing irrigation, and allowing rapid transport by barge to almost everywhere within the region. The rivers themselves were navigable for almost their entire lengths, facilitating inland trade with France – and also facilitating the movement of armies in the other direction.

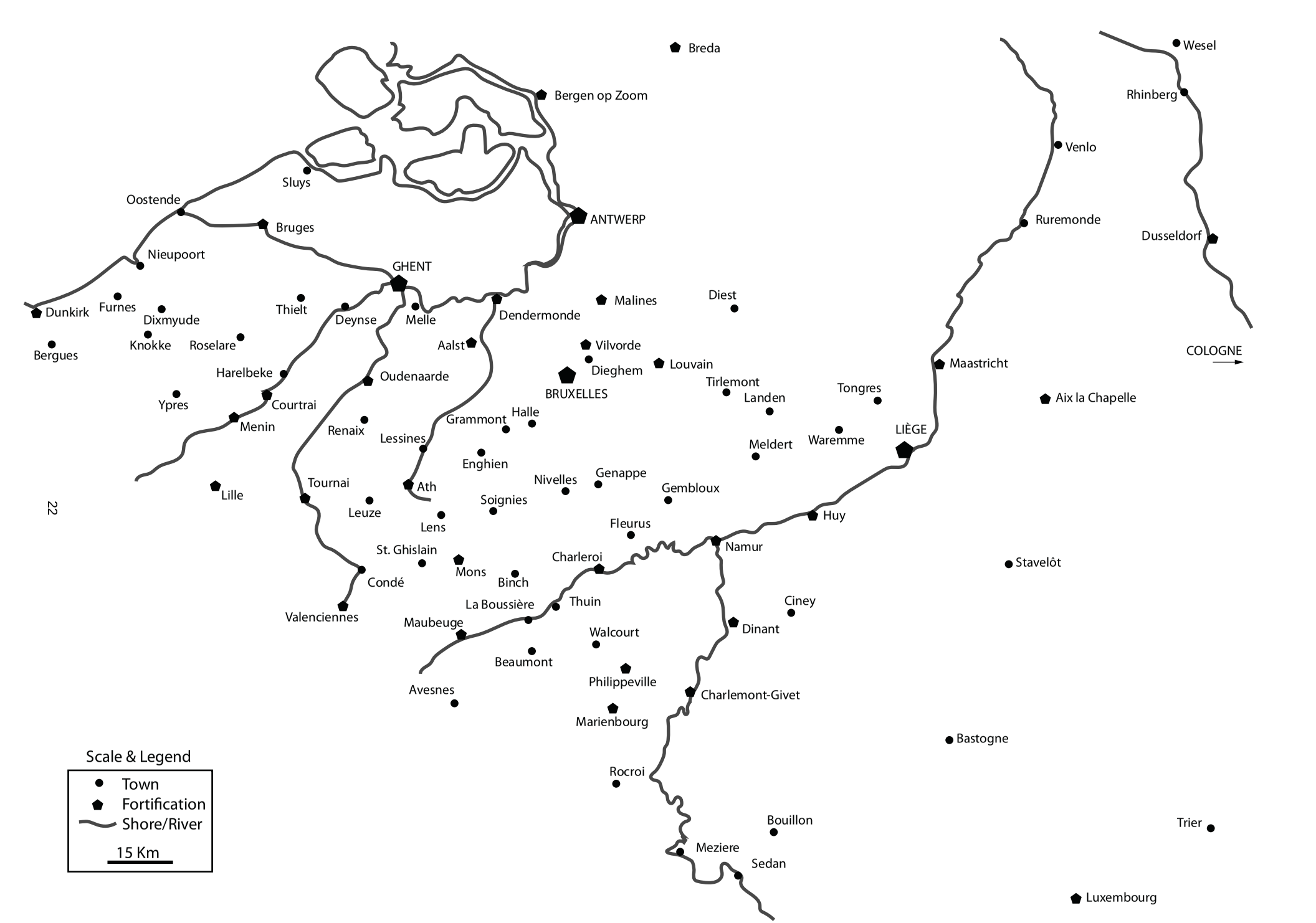
There were in fact three 'Flanders': Dutch Flanders on the South bank of the Scheldt Estuary, French Flanders toward the French province of Artois (only recently acquired from Spain), and Spanish Flanders in the middle. Apart from three more centuries of urbanisation, the silting up of now disused canals, and the devastation of two world wars, French and Spanish Flanders look roughly the same today, but at the time of the Grand Alliance, Dutch Flanders was much different. Today, the South bank of the Scheldt Estuary is solid land, but in the 17th Century it was a collection of islands set within tidal marshes. The Dutch were already working on land reclamation, but this was a multi-generational project. Thus the important fort of Cadsand, which guarded the mouth of the estuary, was situated on an island, as were a number of other forts and even sizeable towns.

The principal urban centres of Flanders were all strongly fortified, though the practical Belgians were normally willing to open their gates to any army that wanted to buy and sell instead of plunder. The most important places were, then as now, Antwerp, Ghent, and Brugge, but there were many, many more. Dunkirk, located on the coast in French Flanders, had additional significance as the main privateer base (i.e., pirate haven) for the Channel and the North Sea.

Complementing the urban fortresses, both the Dutch and the French had constructed or did construct during the war, permanent continuous belts of fortifications to cover vital lines of approach. The Dutch lines ran west to east from the coast south of the Rhine delta to Antwerp, along the waterways isolating the island chain already described, the Bruges-Ghent canal system, and the Scheldt River. The French lines likewise protected their section of Flanders, running southeast from the coast at Dunkirk and stretching between the Lys and Escaut. During the war these belts were joined and extended clear across to the upper Sambre River and then to the Meuse. Work continued on this project until the Lines of the Scheldt became well-nigh impregnable.

Historically, the Meuse axis of advance has always been the most important. In theory at least, it allows rapid movement from the heart of France to the Rhine. The road which supported the Romans' Rhine garrisons followed this route, and the Franks invaded Gaul by it. Both the Meuse and its principal tributary, the Sambre, are navigable along most of their lengths, and the route skirts both the swampy lowlands on one side and the Ardennes 'jungle' on the other.

For the armies of the 17th and 18th Centuries, this was the ideal route for either penetrating France or striking at Lower Germany and Holland. Unfortunately, the sector is narrow. Whereas in Flanders attacking armies had their pick of routes, counterbalanced by the need to break through a fortified crust, an advance along the Meuse inevitably had to deal with a string of fortifications which had to be rolled up, one by one, rather than cut through and bypassed. And, there would always be a matching enemy army, not blocking the path, but hovering on the flank. Though not covered by permanent 'lines', the area was studded with old camps which could be quickly refurbished.



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Flanders Theatre of War 1689-1697

The Sambre and Meuse cut through the high ground of Belgium, known then as Brabant, or The Brabant. On the left bank of the Meuse, the region was a mix of farmland, woods, and gentle hills, whose people were culturally, if subtly, distinct, from the people of Flanders. On the right bank of the Meuse lay the Ardennes, since Antiquity a region of dense woodland and rough ground, deeply cut by numerous rivers and streams, with few good roads.

A number of political entities existed along the Meuse axis of advance. To the West, on the Sambre, was Hainault, a territory dominated by the French which included the town of Mons. Namur comprised the important fortress town of the same name and lay around the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse. But, it also extended upstream to the fortresses of Dinant and Charlemont, currently in French hands. Much of the fighting on the 'Flanders' front took place near the confluence of Sambre and Meuse, mainly on the northern side. South of the Sambre and west of the Meuse was French territory. North of Namur was Brabant, which stretched all the way to the Rhine delta. Similar to Flanders, it was divided into Spanish and Dutch zones.

Brabant was significantly urbanised, but in contrast to Flanders, there were only a moderate number of large, fortified burghs and many open villages. Brussels, the capital of the Spanish Netherlands, was the largest city, shielded by a ring of lesser but still important towns such as Mons, Charleroi, Namur, Louvain, and Mechelen, each of which commanded the approaches to the Capital by both road and navigable waterway.

Limburg was a largish territory north of the Meuse and east of Brabant, having a mix of rolling hills, woods, and wasteland, with few important towns.

The Prince-Bishopric of Liège, by contrast, was both militarily and politically significant. The city of the same name sits at the spot where the Meuse bends toward the North. At this spot also, a spur of the Ardennes juts north, while a range of low hills approaches from the North along the left bank of the Meuse. In the 17th Century, much of the flatter terrain in the vicinity was marshland. Liège was a chokepoint. Possibly of even greater significance, the town of Huy belonged to Liège. Huy was a vital crossing point into Luxembourg. The side which controlled it could shift armies between the Meuse and Moselle axes of advance through the gap between the Ardennes and Eiffel regions.

Politically, too, the territory could not be ignored. The Alliance was fortunate that its ruler decided to join them, bringing an army of 6,000 men to the fight, as well as providing operational security along both banks of the river as far upstream as Namur.

The Moselle was isolated from the other two axes of advance by the rough and forested Ardennes, but it can be considered an appendix of the same theatre. Either side could use it to bring an army into their opponent's rear, meaning that both sides had to divert significant forces to monitor the route. Fortunately there were a number of chokepoints.

The lands on the right bank of the Meuse did not see any fighting, beyond the odd cavalry raid. Early in the war the French put Aachen 'under contribution' – i.e., extorted money from it – and there was fighting on the Rhine north of Cologne; late in the war there was minor activity in the Eiffel region and the Allies marched up the right bank on the skirts of the Ardennes at one point. Otherwise, it was merely a place for German regiments to canton themselves over the winter. It was good ground to campaign in, fertile, with numerous small, open towns and a few fortresses. An army which controlled the Meuse and the Rhine could easily campaign between the rivers using lateral roads and canals. But, the French never managed to get there.

Similarly, Holland was never in great danger. If, in the first year or two of the war, the French had held on to the forts of the lower Rhine, below Cologne, they might have invaded, but it would have only been in the nature of a threat. Their supply lines were too tenuous, and they still had nightmares from the Dutch War, when the dikes were broken and their army was washed away. The Dutch lived on a river delta, much of it reclaimed land, below sea level. Not all the dikes were for land reclamation. Some had been expressly built to channel the advance of any invader along a very few paths which led only to strong defensive positions.

The Great Miscalculation

John A. Lynn, in his book *The Wars of Louis XIV,* calls his chapter on the Nine Years War 'The Great Miscalculation'. He notes that the Sun King, though expecting to fight a war to achieve his next political goal, expected a short war, and made no longterm preparations. The French were able to maintain the struggle thanks to their greater resources, unified command, and the infrastructure established before the war.

Lynn also notes that for the French, the goal was strategic security, not conquest, but that their enemies, going on past performance, believed King Louis aimed at European, if not world, domination. It did not help that the leader of the Coalition, William of Orange, detested Louis.

The King of France had become increasingly concerned about the successes the Imperials were enjoying against the Turk. Since the 1660s, the Austrian Habsburg dynasty and the Ottomans had been almost constantly at war. It was an open secret that France was backing the Turks in an effort to distract their imperial enemies until they could secure a 'defensible' eastern frontier along the Rhine. In 1683 the Imperial capital of Vienna came under siege by the Ottomans, but was relieved, after which, the Turks, overextended, were pushed ever backward toward their start lines of a generation before. In 1687, Buda, an Ottoman fortress for 150 years, fell to an Imperial army.

King Louis became greatly alarmed. After the successful Dutch War of the 1670s, he had brazenly expanded French influence through the War of the Reunions, in which pro-French magnates were installed in a number of border principalities through a mix of diplomacy and aggression. Disunited, the German states along the Rhine and their potential allies were unable to resist, and the situation was normalised by the Treaty of Ratisbon. However, the French needed time to consolidate, time the Imperials seemed now likely not to grant them.

Indeed, after the siege of Buda, King Louis seems not only to have become alarmed, but to have actually panicked. He made the mistake of issuing an ultimatum in the hopes of browbeating the German states and the Emperor into recognising Ratisbon as a permanent settlement – at the moment it was only good for twenty years. The Emperor, Leopold I, said no.

Simultaneously, France became embroiled in not one but two succession crises.

The first, and most important from the French perspective, was at Cologne. At the time, Cologne was an independent archbishopric within the Holy Roman Empire. It was under the Imperial mandate, but also under the Papal mandate, and so enjoyed the same sort of independence as many other German states. Its ruler, Archbishop Max Henry, was pro-French. His successor, however, was not.

Cologne was essential to the French scheme of strategic defence, since it covered that section of the Rhine at no cost to them. The territory was quite extensive and acted as an umbrella for a number of yet smaller states. However, it was also one of the Imperial Electorates; that is, the archbishop's vote counted toward the elevation of the Emperor's successor. So long as it was pro-French, Cologne was one vote the Habsburgs could not count on.

That same summer, an Imperial army placed Belgrade under siege. King Louis, believing the Turks were about to collapse and sue for peace, again overreacted and issued a second ultimatum on September 24. This was his infamous '*Mémoire des raisons*', a manifesto demanding that the Treaty of Ratisbon be made permanent *and* that his candidate be made Elector of Cologne, *or else*. A deadline of three months was set, but Louis' armies crossed the Rhine before many of the German princes even had time to read the manifesto.

The second crisis was taking place in Britain, where the birth of a son to King James II on June 10 sparked a coup that overthrew the regime. Compared with this affair, matters at Cologne were clear cut and straightforward.

In brief, James had ascended to the throne three years before, dealt handily with an armed uprising against himself, and proceeded to turn the country into a carbon copy of France. That, at least, was the opinion of the majority of his subjects. For the sake of stability, the country was willing to drift and let King James have his way. After all, he was already old and at his death one of his daughters, neither of whom seemed likely to lead the country into strange new dimensions, would inherit the throne. But, with the birth of a son, the spectre of an Absolutist and Catholic Britain arose.

About the time that King Louis issued his manifesto, his personal enemy, William of Orange, son-in-law of King James, accepted an invitation, by prearrangement, to bring an army to England and overthrow James. The French had no desire to face a war on two fronts and tried to frighten William – or rather, the Dutch Estates who were the basis of his power – by stating that an invasion of England would be a *casus belli* between France and Holland.

As a matter of fact, the regime change very nearly failed, first by the onset of the Autumnal Equinox, and then by the failure of any mass uprising in England. In the end, however, King James did all the heavy lifting, virtually gifting the Three Kingdoms to William by his own failure of nerve.

Meanwhile, the Sun King made one last miscalculation. Believing William would fail, or at best become bogged down in a long war, he ordered his armies to march, not against a Holland denuded of its best troops, but straight across the Rhine into the heart of Germany. The rationale was sensible enough. It *appeared* that the Turks were about to give up the ghost, releasing the Imperial Army for a war against France. It *appeared* that the Dutch would be busy elsewhere for a long time. Therefore, the best course *seemed* to be to aid the Ottoman cause by threatening western Imperial holdings. The German princes would recall their contingents to defend their own lands and loudly demand the Emperor send some of his own regiments to help. The sudden offensive did help the Turks, but it did not scatter the states opposed to France; instead, it united them.

1688 – Opening Moves

The war commenced in 1688, but not in Flanders. This is often seen as a French mistake. If they had opened the war earlier and gone straight for Holland, there would have been no coup in England and Britain would have backed France, either openly with auxiliary forces or morally, with opposition elements only covertly supporting the Dutch. If they had opened the campaign late, as they actually did, the Dutch would have been caught with the best part of their army overseas and would probably have capitulated. This might have strengthened the resolve of King James and his supporters and forced the Prince of Orange to capitulate and the Dutch to surrender, thus allowing King Louis to gain negotiation leverage for what he really wanted, which was buffer territory on the Rhine.

Instead, the French ignored the Dutch and marched into the Rhineland. Operations there took so long that there was no time to turn north and descend the Rhine to attack

Holland in the same year. But, attacking Holland was never King Louis' intention. They attacked him, or rather Prince William's coalition, headed by the Dutch, did so. And that coalition only solidified because of French actions in the Rhineland.

As has been noted elsewhere, Louis regarded the Spanish Habsburgs as his true enemy. In so far as he had a long term strategy, it would have been to isolate the Spanish Netherlands by acquiring a string of puppet states along the old Spanish Road that followed the Rhine – which would also lock out the Habsburg Empire. This plan also suited those of his advisors, like his siege master, Vauban, who advocated 'rationalising' the frontier along the Rhine and other water barriers. Moreover, this was not to be a full-blown war, but a short campaign of terror. The French were not technically at war with anyone when they began to move.

The Rape of the Palatinate

One day after Louis' Manifesto was issued, the French invaded the Palatinate, the lands bordering the upper Rhine. It goes without saying that in the days when diplomatic news travelled by courier and courts took days to deliberate over the most potent happenings, this was hardly fair. The 'three month' deadline was probably intended to coincide with the projected termination of the war.

The primary goal of the French was to secure key crossing points such as Phillippsburg, with the aim of preventing enemy raids into Alsace. Alsace, formerly part of the Empire, was a new acquisition and had suffered several such raids during the Dutch War. This could have been accomplished without war (in theory), but the current Palatine Prince, Philip Wilhelm von Pfalz-Neuburg, a member of the Bavarian Wittelsbach dynasty, refused to give up the necessary territory 'acquired' by France under the Reunions campaign. His obstinacy led to the final objective of the campaign: to strike terror into the German States by committing 'acts of frightfulness'. The Palatinate was systematically laid waste.

As an instance, Lynn (*Wars of Louis XIV p. 198*) quotes G*énéral* Tessé, who reported that the town of Mannheim was completely destroyed, as well as every village for ten miles around it. This was done in at least twenty places, including Oppenheim, Speyer, Bingen, and Worms. The population was forcibly evacuated or driven off; mass killings were to be engaged in if villagers attempted to return to their old homes. The operation also ensured an enemy army would find it difficult to concentrate in the region. In the 21st Century such activities are *de rigour*, but in 1688-89 they were unheard of, the destruction of the Thirty Years War notwithstanding. What shocked most was the ruthlessly systematic way the destruction was carried out.

The Cologne Saga, or, Something Smells

Though the Palatinate was a prime target, the actual 'spark' for the war was the situation in the ecclesiastical Electorate of Cologne. As previously described, Elector Max Henry had just died, in June. The French had already been angling to have his chief councillor, Cardinal Egon Wilhelm (or Wilhelm Egon) von Fürstenberg, take over. Fürstenberg was not only a close friend of King Louis, he was also a French minister of state, Bishop of Strasbourg. (Alsace was already a French possession.) Fürstenberg kept Max Henry in his pocket. This meant not only that Cologne was always subservient to France, but that Fürstenberg easily managed to secure his candidature as the dying prince-bishop's replacement. It also meant that Fürstenberg, a French minister, would be a member of the Imperial Electoral College. In time of war, Cologne would grant access across the Rhine for the French.

Fortunately, the Emperor refused to recognise Fürstenberg's candidature and the Pope, who actually did so on technical grounds, refused to confirm it. Emperor Leopold's man was Joseph Clement of Wittelsbach, the 17-year-old brother of the Elector of Bavaria; critically, though often pro-French, Bavaria at this time looked to Vienna for support, not France. The diplomatic wrangling was prolonged and heated. A two-thirds majority in Cologne''s administrative Chapter might have secured the position anyway, but this was not achieved.

In consequence, King Louis decided to instal Fürstenberg by force. The latter was still residing at Bonn when the war broke out and readily invited French troops into the Electorate; he also had command of all of Cologne's troops.

The newly installed Joseph Clemens, who wanted be a soldier, not a bishop, resisted. The Elector of Bavaria, incensed at both this invasion and the simultaneous ravaging of the Palatinate, broke off relations with France and declared war in 1689. Fürstenberg's personal army was defeated and mostly disbanded and the French found themselves fighting against superior German forces. This will be described in more detail later.

Campaigning in the Low Countries

There was some activity toward Belgium, significant enough for the Dutch Estates to quibble about allowing the Prince of Orange to take off on his harebrained overseas adventure. Only with the arrival of a large number of German mercenary regiments very late in the campaigning season did they feel secure enough to let him go.

Though France and Spain were supposedly not at war, the French did secure their flank by occupying Spanish-owned Luxembourg. This annoyed the Spanish, but what made them and the Dutch worried was French raiding into the Prince-Bishopric of Liège. Cavalry columns were

also spotted as far away as Maastricht (a Dutch enclave within the Prince-Bishopric) and Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen – an Imperial city). While some of this was related to supporting the current activities in Cologne, there was another political objective.

Liège, like Cologne, like all the Rhineland duchies, was riven by pro- and anti-French factions. By establishing a presence and levying 'contributions', the French were attempting to coerce its prince-bishop into joining them. That would give them control of the middle Meuse and tear the Dutch and Spanish defences wide open. A campaign against Holland could be made either by the Rhine or the Meuse. However, the city of Liège sat at the western end of a lateral line of communication, by road, through Aachen to the city of Cologne. Holding Liège *and* Cologne would allow French armies to conduct a coordinated offensive down both rivers through the fertile territories of Jülich and Guelderland, or, given different circumstances, move rapidly from France to the Rhine along the old Roman route, bypassing the Ardennes and Eiffel through better campaigning lands than the Moselle Valley provided.

Of course, the French could also invade Belgium and march across country to Holland, but that would mean fighting both the Spanish and Dutch in a land studded with fortifications. The Dutch, naturally enough, believed they were the prime target of King Louis' wrath and were afraid the French were engaged in bypassing Belgium to make that coordinated push down the Meuse and Rhine. Such a move would allow Spain to avoid getting involved. But, when the Estates saw that their enemies were actually focused on the middle and upper Rhine, they relaxed. Thus, in October 1688, the Prince of Orange launched his invasion of the British Isles. The Prince pressed ahead with the plan, heedless of cost, and made landfall in the West Country in November. By December he had ousted his father-in-law. However, before he could return in the spring, King Louis would dispatch the crestfallen King James to Ireland, tying many of William's best troops down in a protracted sideshow that would last until 1691.

1689 – War Comes to Belgium

'The country began to be dangerous, the Bores, or peasants, being so bloody, rude and surly that, as they find an opportunity, they knock what soldiers they can on the head and butcher them…'

The reception given to the English as they marched through Brabant.

Quoted in Childs, p.112.

Strategy

While concocting plans for their original objectives, Louis and Louvois calculated that the war's center of gravity lay along the Rhine. The Dutch were too weak for, and the Spanish were not geared for, offensive operations. Spain was the main enemy but the Empire was the main threat. Furthermore, ignoring the collateral necessity of occupying Luxembourg, the French were directly interfering only in Imperial interests.

But the 1688 offensive stirred up a hornet's nest. Historically, the Empire operated by forming local defensive leagues backed by the authority of the Imperial throne and the Habsburg standing army – that was the point of the *Kriese* (military district) system. They did not, were not allowed to, operate offensively. That would lead one or more states to aggrandize too much power and threaten Habsburg interests. But by pushing forward to the Rhine, the French were now within the defensive zone and could expect counterattacks along the length of the river.

The ruthless nature of the offensive also backfired. Over the winter of 1689, William of Orange, the Emperor and most of the German States, and the Spanish, all made common cause against the French in what came to be known as the Grand Alliance. The foundation of the coalition was an anti-French defensive pact among some German States called the League of Augsburg, which is why the war is sometimes called by that name. However, not all the states now in arms were members of the original pact.

The German States called upon the Emperor for aid. He was busy in Turk-land, but could not ignore his Imperial obligations. And, there were the family ties with Spain. Rather tenuous now, but they still existed. Besides, there might be an opportunity to acquire Alsace.

Spain joined the Alliance because of the French occupation of Luxembourg. They were afraid the French would not give it back. If the Dutch had stood out, the Spanish might have made noises and done nothing, but the French went and declared war on Holland, mainly because William of Orange invaded England. King Louis found it intolerable that a legitimate monarch like King James be overthrown by some upstart *rentier* from the Dauphiné. England, now under new management, and Holland, reciprocated.


Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Tongres
Landen
Ypres
Courtrai
Grammont
Halle
Renaix
Lessines
Waremme
LIÈGE
Menin
Meldert
Enghien
Nivelles
Genappe
Gembloux
Tournai
Ath
Lille
Soignies
Leuze
Huy
Lens
Fleurus
Namur
St. Ghislain
Charleroi
Mons
Binch
Condé
La Boussière
Thuin
Ciney
Valenciennes
Maubeuge
Dinant
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
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If – and it was a big if – the French were successful on the Rhine, they could move downstream into Holland, forcing the Dutch forces in Flanders and Brabant to abandon the Spanish and perhaps even causing the Dutch Estates to panic and surrender. Left to themselves, the Spanish would be sure to cave in to French demands. By the time the Emperor's men arrived from Hungary, if they ever did, he would be fighting alone. The most realistic scenario, however, was of France finishing her devastation of the Rhineland, securing the crossing points and Cologne, and then retiring to better positions until her full strength could be mobilised.

Beginning to realise he was facing a long war, over the winter King Louis commissioned the raising and expansion of many line regiments, as well as the militia, but few of these new troops were ready to take the field immediately. Furthermore, not only were the French still fighting on the Rhine, they had opened a new front in Catalonia, were preparing an expeditionary corps to send to Ireland to assist King James, and had withheld militia and even some regular units for internal security, because the Huguenots were being stirred up by activists sent from The Hague.

[The realization that this would be a long war seems to have come early to the French, earlier than some historians assume. In 1689 King Louis had all the silver plate and furnishings at Versailles melted down to mint coins for his army. Louis might be pretentious and ostentatious, but he could also be practical.]

Thus, though the French would eventually field 250,000 men this year, plans for their northeast borders were modest – simply cover the Frontier and prevent any Allied thrust from doing too much damage. However, local commanders were still to advance into enemy territory, it being French policy always to wage war at their enemies' expense.

The weight of French military power lay at Mainz, under *maréchal* Duras. He also commanded three smaller corps on the Moselle, the Saar, and in Alsace. The Electorate of Cologne contained French troops, engaged in helping Archbishop Fürstenberg secure his position. Garrisons from this force were established farther downstream, at Kaiserswerth and Neuss. This seemed to threaten the southeastern Dutch province of Guelderland but the French were at the end of a very tenuous supply line.

[At this date Guelderland was shared between Spain and Holland.]

The French commander assigned to the Northeast frontier was *maréchal* Humières, a rather lacklustre general whose subordinates nicknamed him '*maréchal sans lumière*' – Marshal Dim. Humières' much smaller force, 14,000 foot and 5,000 horse, was positioned in the triangle of land between the Sambre and Meuse, with detachments at Condé and Courtrai, respectively 41 Km SE and 25 Km NE of Lille. Flanders proper was made a separate command, under *lieutenant général* Calvo. Calvo was to act in a purely defensive manner. Many of his troops manned the so-called Lines of the Scheldt, a series of entrenchments and redoubts currently running between Menin and Tournai, respectively 19 Km north and 24 Km east of Lille – that is between the rivers Lys and Escaut/Scheldt.

Louis de Crévant, duc d'Humières (1628-1694)

Humières may be regarded as a 'political' general. His wife was Dame of the Queen's Palace, and he personally was close to the War Minister, Louvois. He was notorious for (according to Voltaire), being the first general to take his meals – sumptuous ones, too – on silver plate while on service in the trenches at Arras (1658).

Nonetheless, he had substantial war experience, being present at the Battle of the Dunes in 1650, and fighting in the Dutch War, where he participated in the successful Battle of Cassel in 1677. He was made Marshal of France in 1668. His service in the Low Countries, as well as his governorships of Compiègne and Lille, made him familiar with the terrain and local circumstances (he was also Governor of Bourbonnais, in central France).

As already recounted, in 1688 the French secured their shortened their northeast front by occupying Luxembourg and the Prince-Bishopric of Liège. The French, who briefly occupied the latter city over the winter, withdrew from Liège in the spring of 1689, promising to respect their neutrality, but as a warning 'slighted' the city's citadel

and razed Huy's fortifications. As will be seen, their respect for Liège's neutrality was paper thin.

The Alliance tried to follow much the same defensive strategy in the Low Countries as the French. There was not much else they could do. The theatre commander appointed by William of Orange was the Prince of Waldeck, an experienced but elderly general. Waldeck was no dodderer. He was extremely fit, went to bed no sooner than midnight every night, and was always up at 5am. However, he was severely hampered by a divided command, as the Dutch, Spanish, and Germans each had their own agendas, and had essentially been promoted to a post above his abilities. For a man of 70, the constant politicking very soon took its toll.

On France's eastern frontiers the Alliance fielded one Spanish, one Dutch, and three German armies. The Spanish, under Governor General the *marqués* de Gastañaga and his second, the *príncipe* de Vaudémont, faced off against Calvo, guarding Flanders with something over 10,000 men. Two of the German armies, under the Elector of Bavaria in Baden and the Duke of Lorraine at Frankfurt, were of only slight importance to the campaign in the Northeast, being solely concerned with the Rhine frontier.

The third German army, under the Elector of Brandenburg, covered that personage's possession, the Duchy of Cleves. Brandenburg's expeditionary force initially numbered around 7,000 men, including garrisons, but this would grow to 20,000 by the time the main campaigning season opened. This army was *supposed* to come under Waldeck's authority, but, typically for the period, the agreement was never notarised, and, as will be seen, the Elector consistently chose to define himself as one of the Emperor's lieutenants – except when it was more convenient to claim he was part of Waldeck's command.

The Dutch, commanded by Waldeck himself, were in the middle. Before the campaign opened they shifted around between Hasselt, Tirlemont (Tienen), Tongres (Tongeren), and St. Truiden as the fancy and the forage took them. All these towns lie about 30-40 Km north of that section of the Meuse River which includes Namur, Huy, and Liège. Waldeck's winter HQ was at Culemborg, 140 Km away on the Lek River, in Holland.

On paper, Waldeck's Dutch army consisted of 35,000 men, but at the outset of the year he had perhaps 7,000, and later 12,000, not counting a small English force, which did not take the field until July. However these numbers do not include garrisons. Holland already had a working arrangement for garrisoning key towns in Belgium that would later develop into the Barrier system of fortifications. The Dutch also strongly held Maastricht.

Prince Georg Friedrich von Waldeck (1620-1692)

Prince Georg was not the ruler of the territory of Waldeck, but a brother of the reigning count. It should also be noted that he was prince of Waldeck, not Waldeck-Pyrmont, which was officially a later creation, though his family often styled themselves by that name. The lands of Waldeck are in the modern state of Hesse. He also held the Lordship of Culemborg, in the Netherlands.

His career began in 1641 in the Army of the States-General. By 1651 he was serving Brandenburg as foreign minister and was instrumental in reorienting that state away from loyal service to the Emperor in favour of

banding together with other Protestant states. Following the same policy, in 1656 be brokered a deal with Sweden against Poland during the Second Northern War (a.k.a The Deluge). In that war he commanded the Swedish-Brandenburg cavalry in the Battle of Warsaw (1656), which is traditionally regarded as the birthing battle of the Prussian State.

Dismissed by Brandenburg in 1658, he went to work for Sweden as a general fighting in the Danish War, then served as an Imperial reichsfeldmarschall in the Turkish wars, fighting at Sankt Gotthard in 1664 and with the Bavarians at Vienna in 1683. In 1685 he 'freelanced' (in the original meaning of the term – fighting as a mercenary) for Bavaria and Lorraine.

In 1688 William of Orange appointed him Field Marshal of the Allied forces on France's northeastern frontier, where he served first as commander in chief and then under William as chief-of-staff of the States Army until he passed away in 1692.

From 1689 he was Grand Master of the Brandenburg (Protestant) branch of the Knights Hospitallers. He was married for 49 years and had 9 children, but no surviving sons.

Waldeck was an able general, but outclassed by his chief antagonist, the *duc* de Luxembourg, and he lacked the political weight to coerce his allies into doing his will.

Critically, William of Orange and the best part of the Dutch Army were now either in, or in transit to, Ireland. William effectively doubled the size of his army by taking over England, but the cream went to Ireland. The commander of the English expeditionary corps being sent to Flanders, Lieutenant General John Churchill (the future Duke of Marlborough), had only 9 understrength battalions to work with. These units, even the Guards, were mutinous, and their officers, including Churchill, politically unreliable. The regiments began transferring to Holland in late March and early April. In late April additional infantry was sent, followed by the Royal Horse Guards and 2nd Troop of Lifeguards in May.

[It was the mutiny of the Royal Scots at this time that led directly to the Mutiny Acts which established the legal basis for a British standing army.]

An English declaration of war was not given until May 17; Marlborough arrived to take command on May 27. The declaration brings out an interesting legal point. Prior to its issuance, English troops could only fight as auxiliaries of the Dutch, and their numbers were restricted by treaty. After the declaration, England was a full-fledged combatant in her own right and William immediately sent an additional 5 battalions to the Continent.

Supposedly, this gave the Alliance 10,972 English troops. In reality, when Marlborough led them forth in July, he had only 6,000 men and officers.

Still, even without the English the Alliance as a whole outnumbered the French. But, it proved impossible for Waldeck to coordinate his command. This was not due so much to lack of talent, but lack of prestige. His plan was for the Spanish, Dutch, and Brandenburgers to combine and march into France between Maubeuge and Philippeville – that is, via the triangle of land south of the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse. Not coincidentally, this is where Humières kept his magazines. But, the Spanish and Germans were only interested in defending their own territories and made excuses.

They had good reasons. Gastañaga's army was fragile and his administration economically incapable of supporting a sustained effort. By Madrid's orders he was not to make any rash moves. Should the Escorial change its collective mind, it required weeks for instructions to arrive. Then, of course, they would require clarification… The Elector's own predilections have already been noted.

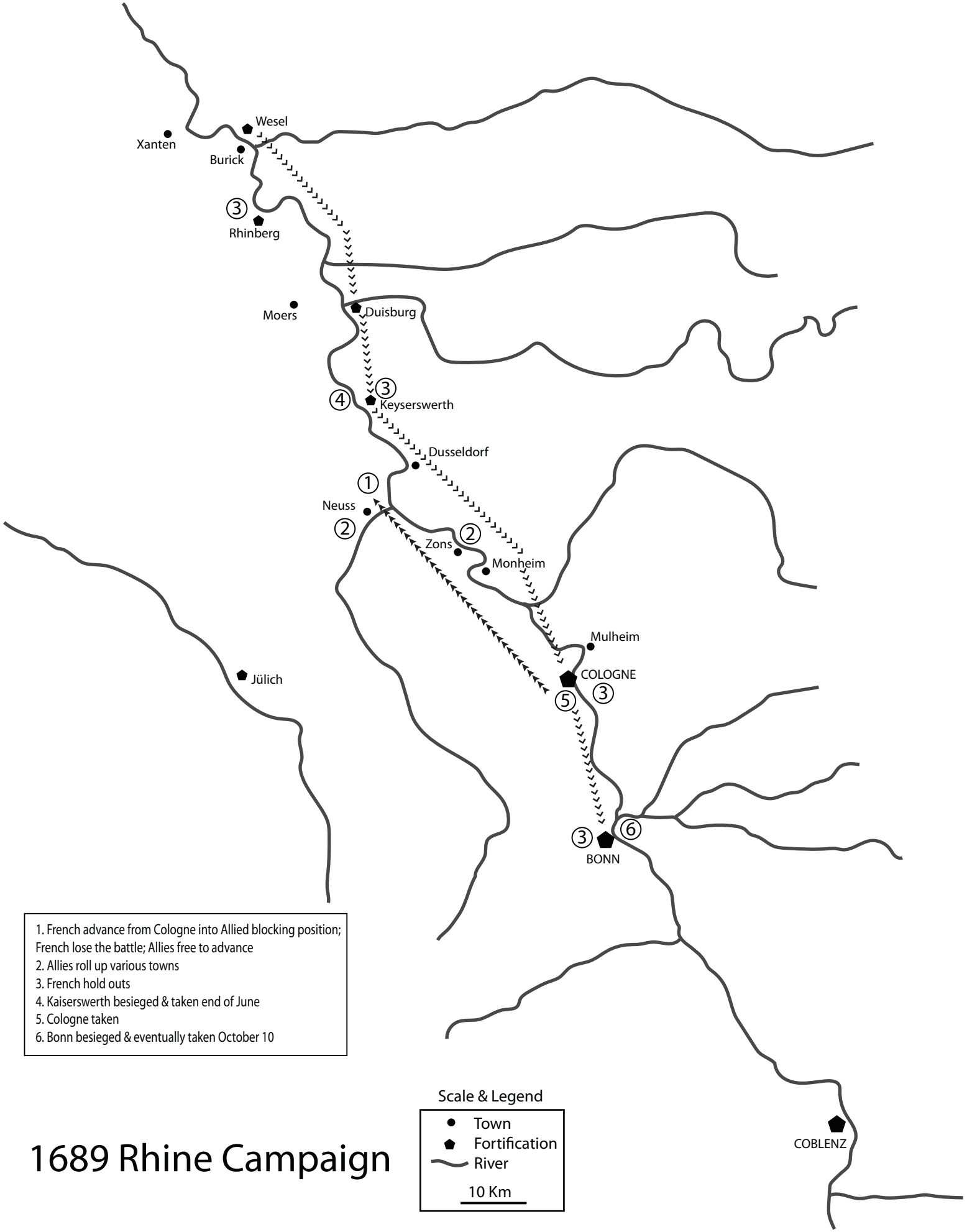
The Campaign

Small scale operations had continued throughout the winter of 1688/89. The bulk of these involved the collection of 'contributions'. Other raiders focused on reconnaissance. Parties of cavalry, reinforced by infantry, penetrated deeper and deeper into no-mans-land, collecting money and produce from towns and villages. This was old hat to the inhabitants of the Spanish Netherlands, who handed over the required items without a quibble. Often, they had preexisting arrangements with one or both sides to sell their goods, rather than have them extorted. War was good business.

These raids could cover a lot of ground. The Dutch garrison at Maastricht took contributions from the lands south of Charleroi, while the French shook down the good burghers of Aachen. Convoys needed to be formed to bring the booty home, and these could be ambushed. On January 18, 50 Dutch troopers engaged 50 French troopers near Maastricht, and routed them. Shortly after, a Dutch ambush on the road between Liège and Huy took 17 prisoners and three wagons loaded with munitions.

A more serious threat developed when on February 12 it was reported that the French on the Rhine were advancing both south toward Coblenz and north toward Holland. The Count of Lippe sent 5 companies to garrison Zutphen, while 2,000 Swedish troops hired by the Dutch fortuitously arrived and were sent up the Ijsel River. This proved enough to change the mind of the local French commander, the *marquis* de Sourdis.

As winter turned into spring, the Allies tried to guess where Humières would strike. It was assumed he would. The French were just naturally aggressive. Both Mons and Namur were put forward as likely targets. Mons was felt to be safe, since the Spanish and Dutch could quickly combine and come to its rescue. Namur was somewhat far from the Spanish center of gravity, so plans were made to reinforce it.



1689 Rhine Campaign

The first moves of the official season, however, also took place on the Rhine. Following the brief pre-season advance of the French, it was the turn of the Elector of Brandenburg to make his play. The Elector had 4,000 of his own men reinforced by 5,000 Dutch. Heartened by word that the Emperor was sending reinforcements, he decided to clear the French out of the Electorate of Cologne.

The operation began with the ambush of a French convoy travelling from Neuss, 35 Km NW of Cologne, to Bonn, 25 Km SE of Cologne. Shortly after the march began the enemy troops were driven off toward Duisburg, 26 Km north of that place – that is, in the opposite direction to Bonn. The convoy was 'liberated' and led off toward Wesel, about 50 Km down the Rhine from Neuss. Sourdis regarded this affair as an insult and made plans to pursue. He and his second, *maréchal de camp* Vertillac, led their entire corps of 24 squadrons and 7 battalions (7,000 men) from the environs of Cologne toward Wesel. Expecting this, his German opposite, General von Schöning, and the Dutch second, *luitenant generaal* van Aylva, set up a defensive position with 5,000 men at Herderbosch, near Neuss, to screen the convoy's withdrawal.

[Aylva is sometimes named as a major general, but he was one of the four lieutenant generals of infantry in the Dutch Army in 1688. He died in 1691.]

The French attacked this position vigorously but after the initial musketry duel their horse became 'disordered' and withdrew, exposing their foot to a counterattack. The French took 2,500 casualties and lost 500 prisoners while the Allies lost 400 men.

This action uncovered the Electorate of Cologne. On 14 March Neuss was taken, Siburg on March 16, with the Ruhr towns of Zons and Soest falling soon after. The French now controlled only Cologne itself, Kaiserswerth (11 Km north of Neuss, on the right bank of the Rhine), and Rheinberg, 38 Km north of Neuss. This last caused the Dutch some unease since the town is right on the approaches to Guelderland and the heart of the Republic, but it was an isolated post.

Counterintuitively, Waldeck was unhappy with the new situation. First, Brandenburg's troops had not shown themselves particularly battle-worthy, despite their successes. The French had lost some garrisons but were not in disarray. Worse, the Elector had begun to get Ideas. He soon bolstered his corps to 30,000 men with drafts from Münster (another bishopric) and from the Dutch Estates – 22 squadrons and 6 battalions – which lessened Waldeck's own manpower reserves. Typically for them, even the Estates were failing to support their own commander. Instead of a grand campaign across the Sambre it looked as if the year's fighting would all be on the Rhine under the leadership of Brandenburg.

Nevertheless, this operation was entirely beneficial to the overall Allied cause. The French had been prevented from threatening the Alliance's left flank in the Low Countries. Dutch and Münster troops were pushed forward to Stavelôt (36 Km SE of Liège), where they could prevent French garrisons on the Moselle from coming to support an attack down the Meuse. Reinforced, Brandenburg's offensive continued, and would by the end of the year clear the French out of both Cologne and Bonn.

Meanwhile, Humières' intentions remained unclear to his opponents. It appeared his first target would be one of the towns on the Escaut, probably Tournai. The French were massing equipment farther upriver. Then, on March 22, the Allied government at Brussels learned the French siege trains had been shifted from their bases at Douai and Cambrai to the neighbourhood of Valenciennes and Condé. This led Waldeck to send 2 additional regiments to Brussels, though he also ordered 1,000 Spanish (2 battalions) to reinforce Bruges.

The Generalissimo maintained the bulk of his forces where they were, covering the Meuse Valley and the approaches to Holland via the open country of Brabant. He was somewhat constricted in his choice of camp as he also had to maintain communications with Brandenburg's army, in the vain hope it might decide to reinforce him after all. He did not move to assist Tournai, even though it was now reported to be enduring the visitation of a French corps, believing the enemy were only feinting in that direction. Flanders was too well garrisoned for a French breakthrough. The enemy did, however, secure Tournai for the rest of the war.

The Spaniard Gastañaga worried about Ghent and Bruges – hence the 1,000-man reinforcement. He reinforced Namur and Mons, and opened the sea-sluices around Nieupoort, flooding that sector. He tried unsuccessfully to have the incoming English expedition diverted to land in Dutch Flanders, on the South bank of the Scheldt. Gastañaga was also given direct command of a goodly proportion of Waldeck's troops, comprising a Dutch corps of 12,000 men.

[It is possible an additional 2 battalions of Dutch were sent to Bruges; this is not clear from the sources.]

The French sowed confusion by marching about in the triangle of the Sambre and Meuse, and raiding across the rivers, even against Liège, which was at the moment technically neutral ground.

By April 1, William of Orange, now in London, wanted to know why Waldeck had not yet submitted a plan of campaign. Forced to knuckle down and submit a detailed report, the marshal identified a triple threat from the French: simultaneous attacks in Flanders, Brabant, and down the Rhine. Based on this assessment, Waldeck felt he lacked the manpower for any offensive action at all. At this point he had only 7,310 men under his direct

command. The lead elements of the English contingent (4 battalions) began to arrive at s'Hertogenbosch on March 31, but they were not ready for combat.

Waldeck was overreacting. Schöning, on the Rhine, had 7,000 men plus 2,000 more garrisoning Cologne, though he expected 6,000 more from Münster and was preparing for a formal siege of Kaiserswerth which should eliminate the last threat from that quarter. By early April, Schöning commanded about 20,000 men. Though none of these were available to the Generalissimo, they certainly prevented the French from doing anything in that quarter. For Waldeck, it may have been the fact that they were not under his direct command, and thus could not be relied upon to hold bak a French offensive.

The Generalissimo did, however, believe he and the Spanish had enough men to hold their own positions. Which pretty much meant the French were not going to break through, despite his panicky assessment. Ironically, it was Prince William who did not share this view, believing with the Spanish that Ghent and Bruges were greatly at risk. He was becoming more and more dissatisfied with Waldeck, who seemed to be waiting for either William or the enemy to give him instructions.

Fortunately, the French were not as strong as they made themselves appear. They became weaker when on or about April 5 the Dutch general Flodorff put a cordon around the city of Liège. The prince-bishop had recently admitted a French convoy into the city as part of a blatant French diplomatic push to bring him into their camp; he claimed they forced their way in and were only trying to compromise and blackmail him into joining them. But, after receiving a stern letter from Emperor Leopold, the prince-bishop decided neutrality was no longer an option, and the proximity of Flodorff's men suggested which side he should pick.

Liège would raise 6,000 men for the Allies. This force, though it mostly served in a garrison capacity, very much reduced the strain on Waldeck's resources. The man picked to command it was a Walloon general in Dutch service named Albert T'Serclaes, Count of Tilly. He was the grandson of *that* Tilly, of Thirty Years War fame.

The town of Huy now became the focus of attention. As mentioned earlier, Huy was a key crossing point on the Meuse, owned by Liège. With the latter onside it was now in Allied hands, but Waldeck estimated he needed an entire corps to defend it properly. This he did not have, so instead he debated evacuating both it and Namur, which would be untenable if the French took Huy. That assessment must have raised Prince William's blood pressure a few notches.

The French did indeed try to take Huy, massing the garrisons of Dinant and Charlemont – 5,000 men – for a surprise assault on April 14, but were beaten off by the weak Dutch garrison. Humières determined to make a more formal attempt, and if the town could not be taken he would lay the surrounding country to waste. Waldeck anticipated this and ordered up additional Dutch troops, along with forces from Liège. News that the French planned to evacuate Cologne and Bonn, eliminating the threat to Holland from that quarter, emboldened him.

Receiving word of the Allied counter-preparations, Humières abandoned his attempt on Huy and pulled back to Philippeville, where he had his primary magazines, before thrusting forward again, this time at Charleroi. Waldeck replied by reinforcing that garrison with 800 Spanish.

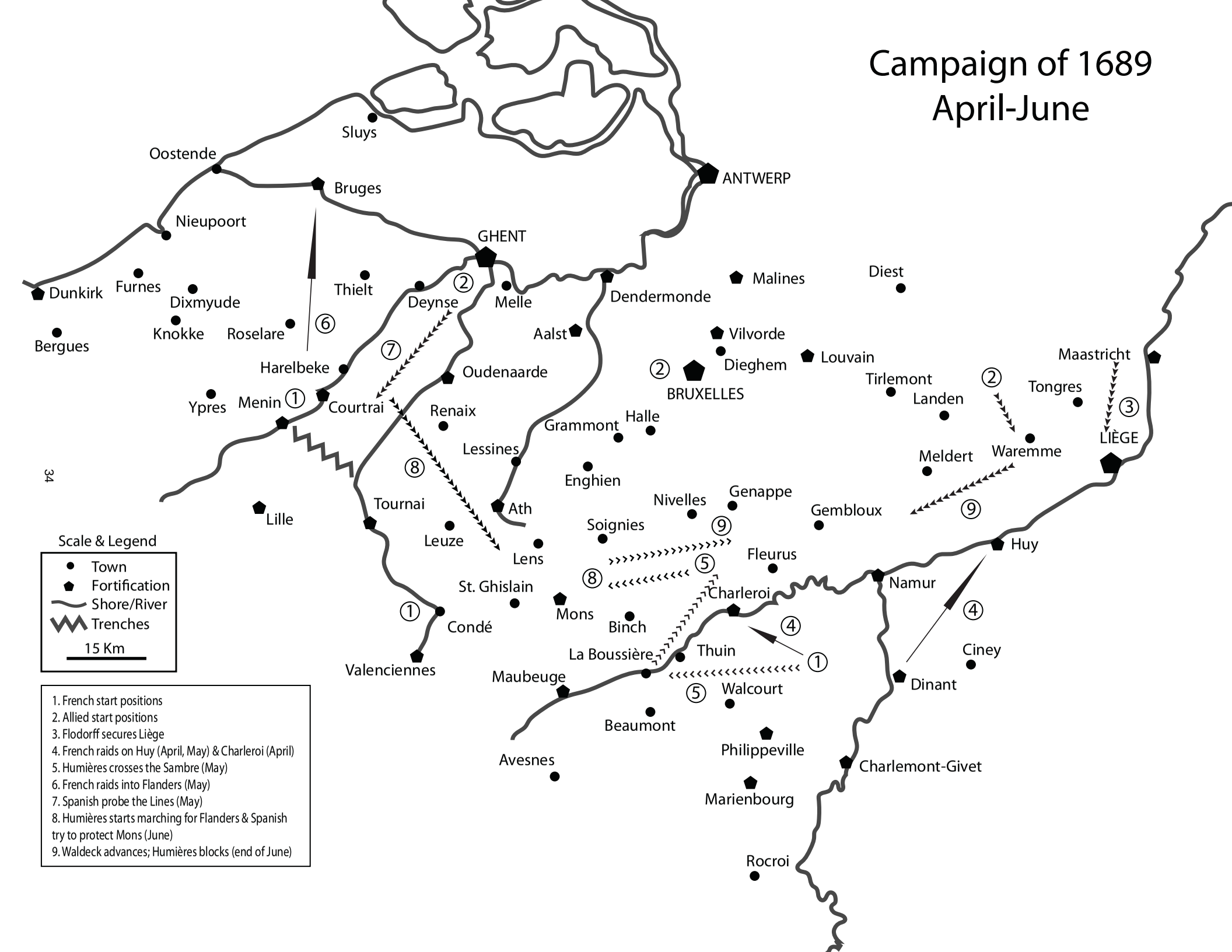
This led to a discussion on the Allied side – which should have been settled long before – about who was to command what. Gastañaga insisted he be given an independent command in Flanders, while Waldeck took over the rest of the front, but the latter overruled him, retaining command of the whole. Their relations soured.

Nevertheless, by April 27 the pair had decided on a mutually satisfactory plan of campaign. Gastañaga would hold Charleroi, Mons, Ath, and Oudenaarde with 4,000 men, and lead a field corps of 6,000 more in Flanders to cover any threatened point. The corps of 12,000 Dutch, led by Count Hornes, came under Gastañaga's full command. Hornes and his new superior decided to keep all 12,000 at Brussels for now. Waldeck, whose notional army of '35,000' still lay between Hasselt, Tongres, and St. Truiden, would cover Brabant and stand ready to assist either the Spanish or the Germans, though principally the former. On May 6 the English finally mustered in strength at Rotterdam.

French activity increased. They raided unopposed into Flanders as far north as Bruges. The French had overwhelming superiority in cavalry, and they knew it. On May 5, 4,000 French again attacked Huy and started fires in four places, but did not try to storm, falling back to Dinant. On May 6 the French took a minor post called the Castle of Samson, located on the Meuse between Huy and Namur. On May 8 there was a skirmish with elements of Waldeck's main body at Tirlemont. There was so much French horse in the field that the Generalissimo sent to Gastañaga for aid.

The bulk of Humières army was still between the Sambre and Meuse, however, and showed few signs of offensive spirit. The constant raids seemed only to be a way of keeping the Allies off balance. Thinking boldly for once, Waldeck wrote to William of Orange, suggesting he march off to the Rhine, where Schöning was preparing for the siege of Kaiserswerth. The Germans could use his help. After, the Dutch would switch sectors and, bringing at least some of the Brandenburgers with them, attack Humières.

On his own recognizance, Waldeck sent 6 battalions and 22 squadrons from Maastricht to the Rhine. The line of the Meuse was safe so long as Namur held, while the Germans had garrisoned Neuss and Deutz; at the latter


Campaign of 1689
April-June
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Malines
Diest
Dendermonde
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
Dieghem
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Tongres
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Renaix
Landen
LIÈGE
Grammont
Halle
Lessines
Meldert
Waremme
Enghien
Lille
Tournai
Nivelles
Genappe
Gembloux
Ath
Soignies
Leuze
Lens
Fleurus
Huy
St. Ghislain
Charleroi
Namur
Mons
Binch
Condé
La Boussière
Thuin
Ciney
Valenciennes
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Dinant
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French start positions
2. Allied start positions
3. Flodorff secures Liège
4. French raids on Huy (April, May) & Charleroi (April)
5. Humières crosses the Sambre (May)
6. French raids into Flanders (May)
7. Spanish probe the Lines (May)
8. Humières starts marching for Flanders & Spanish try to protect Mons (June)
9. Waldeck advances; Humières blocks (end of June)

place they placed a 30-gun battery to prevent the French from sending relief by water. This meant that the whole stretch of front from Namur to Cologne was immune from French attack.

The siege of Kaiserswerth began on May 23 with a general bombardment. This was not a formal investment, however, just a bombardment. Hoping to reduce the pressure, Humières had already crossed the Sambre on May 14, at La Boussière (16 Km northeast of Maubeuge), taking up a position at Trazegnies (10 Km NW of Charleroi and 20 km northeast of La Boussière) with 24 battalions and 75 squadrons (about 22,000 men). This was a clever move. From Trazegnies the French threatened Bruges, Ghent, Huy, and Liège, though all were long arches away, and could also screen any detachments sent from this sector to Kaiserswerth by way of the right bank of the Meuse.

Waldeck, with only an estimated 12,000 mobile troops to oppose Humières, camped at Waremme, and by calling in the entire Maastricht garrison, boosted his numbers to 16,490. Waremme is 20 Km north of Huy, and about the same again south from the original Allied camps around St. Truiden and Tongeren.

In Flanders, meanwhile, the French *lieutenant général* Calvo took body of horse east toward Pont d'Esperries. Pont d'Espierres, now Espierres-Helchin or Spiere-Helkijn, is about 15 Km north of Tournai, on the Escaut/ Scheldt. This spot, now the village of Spiere-Helkijn, was a key crossing over the Espieriette River, a left bank tributary of the Scheldt, and the current terminus of the Lines of the Scheldt.

His move was matched by the Spaniard Vaudémont. The Spanish actually reached the Lines in front of Pont d'Esperries first, so Calvo pulled most of his forces back and dug in under the guns of Courtrai. Each general was essentially threatening the other's right flank, but Calvo had the Lines.

June 3: Imperial forces threaten Mainz; the siege of Kaiserswerth continues. Waldeck is reinforced by the Dutch field train, of 60 cannon. And, continues to do nothing, essentially 'covering' both Schöning's siege and the Spanish in Flanders at an extreme distance, while poised to counter a French attack up the center. Lending credence to such an attack, enemy cavalry raid toward Tirlemont (Tienen), 27 Km to the northeast of Waremme, on Waldeck's right flank. The Spanish are kept occupied by a simultaneous raid on Ath, 27 Km east of Tournai.

Waldeck has been criticised by historians, and was heavily criticised at the time, for his inactivity. He himself chafed at what he considered to be an inactivity forced on him by the Brandenburgers. But given his circumstances, his posture appears to be sound, as the following actions show.

On June 8 Humières broke camp and marched northwest toward the Escaut. The move was screened by 1,000 horse which raided Gaasbek, nearly 30 Km northeast, on the French right flank. When it was reported the French had paused at Brugelette, on the road to Courtrai (37 Km from their old camp), Gastañaga panicked.

Mons, a logical target for the French, was now behind Humières' army, 17 Km to his south, and apparently in grave danger. Gastañaga ordered his subordinate, Vaudémont, to occupy Mons in strength. Vaudémont, currently facing the French Lines near Pont d'Esperries, could do so by making a forced march of 50 Km southeast. But, this would leave a gap opposite the French Lines, which could be exploited by Calvo at Courtrai. In ordering this move, Gastañaga disobeyed Waldeck's orders. What was even more irritating, the Spaniard was beseeching the generalissimo to send additional reinforcements.

In reality, there was little danger. Though he could not aid Schöning, nor augment his strength with Spanish troops, Waldeck was strategically placed. The French never had any intention of attacking Mons, and Waldeck correctly surmised that. The French commander had no mandate to take the offensive, either, while the strategic focus remained on the Rhine. The only real difference between the protagonists' situations was that King Louis wanted things the way they were and William of Orange did not.

Waldeck believed Humières' best option would be to make a series of raids toward Nivelles and Brussels while maintaining his army in a threatening posture. There was little the Allies could do to prevent him. On the other hand, any move against Flanders would only be a feint as he could not risk becoming bogged down among the fortresses, while any offensive movement by his cumbersome main army through Brabant could be intercepted handily by the Dutch.

Therefore, Waldeck did not send aid to Gastañaga. The Spanish did not need help. His own mandate was to protect Holland, and to do that he had to remain in Brabant, on the Meuse. However, on June 15 he did shift his base a little farther to the West, partly as a sop to Gastañaga and partly to find new forage. The new camp was at Heylissem (Helecine), 20 Km WNW from Waremme, toward the region where the French had been raiding.

Here, he wrote out his thoughts and sent them to William of Orange, suggesting that the Germans garrison Cologne and blockade Bonn, but that the bulk of their forces be sent to aid him after Kaiserswerth fell. This ought to give him enough strength to cross the Sambre, which would cause Humières to fall back from Flanders.

Dr. Childs notes that this plan was driven at least in part by personality issues between Waldeck and the Elector of Brandenburg. The former resented both the Elector's

independence and the successes of his army. However, the plan was still a sensible one.

June 21 saw the formal investment of Kaiserswerth; on June 27 the French garrison capitulated. The situation along the length of the Rhine was good, with all three German armies making steady, if uncoordinated, progress. In the Cologne area, only Bonn remained in French hands, and their fortresses upriver were under dire threat.

This led the Germans to put forward a counterproposal to Waldeck's grand plan: he should attack Humières with what he had, creating a diversion for them. Why should they stop their offensive and transfer forces to a different front when they looked ready to invade France from the Rhineland. Waldeck and his staff demurred. Humières now had 32,000 men to Waldeck's notional 34,000, and an even greater cavalry superiority. And, by smoke and mirrors he made Waldeck believe he had even more. The Generalissimo could not afford to commit his army to a risky venture all on his own, particularly when many of his troops were inexperienced and the Estates were being lax in fulfilling their quotas. In reply, the Brandenburgers laid siege to Mayence, forcing Waldeck to continue playing second fiddle.

Gastañaga added his two cents by again requesting the send more Dutch to his aid to help him curb French cavalry raids, which were taking place everywhere. Waldeck refused to comply. Officially, this was because he had once again exhausted his forage and had to move in the opposite direction, toward the Great Geete River and the Dutch borderlands. But in truth, he had lost control of his own staff.

Apart from the conflicting demands of the Spanish and German liaisons, the Dutch themselves were split between Orangists and Republicans. The latter, while not pro-French, were opposed to the war, which they saw as none of their concern. If William of Orange wanted to fight, let him get into the ring and go one-on-one with the Sun King. Waldeck told the Prince he was thinking of resigning, but in the meantime, inaction was the best policy he could come up with.

When the English arrived at Waldeck's camp in early July (4 battalions on July 4 and 6 more on July 9) they were numerically weak, but somewhat better trained and seasoned than expected. However, they were a drop in the bucket and the Generalissimo was still unwilling to act offensively.

[Childs includes an account of the reception the English received from the 'Bores' – the Belgian country folk. It was not welcoming.]

Despite all his problems, on June 29 Waldeck did move forward, in 3 columns, from Heylissem to Perwez, 25 Km south of Tirlemont. Humières, still camped at Brugelette, went to his old camp at Trazegnies. This kept the French north of the Sambre, but with the River Piéton between them and the enemy. Calvo's French cavalry corps remained at Courtrai.

Humières timid response to Waldeck's mild advance led the Generalissimo and Gastañaga to agree, at a conference in Brussels on July 2, to conduct a limited combined offensive. Vaudémont's Spanish would advance across the Lys by way of Deynze (15 Km SW of Ghent), and link up with 5,000 of Hornes' Dutchmen from Brussels. They would then march up the right bank of the Lys for 21 Km to Harelbeke, in an attempt to threaten Courtrai, 6 Km farther on. It was hoped that by pressuring that place, which could not be yielded without damage to the overall French strategic position, Humières would be forced to weaken his main body.

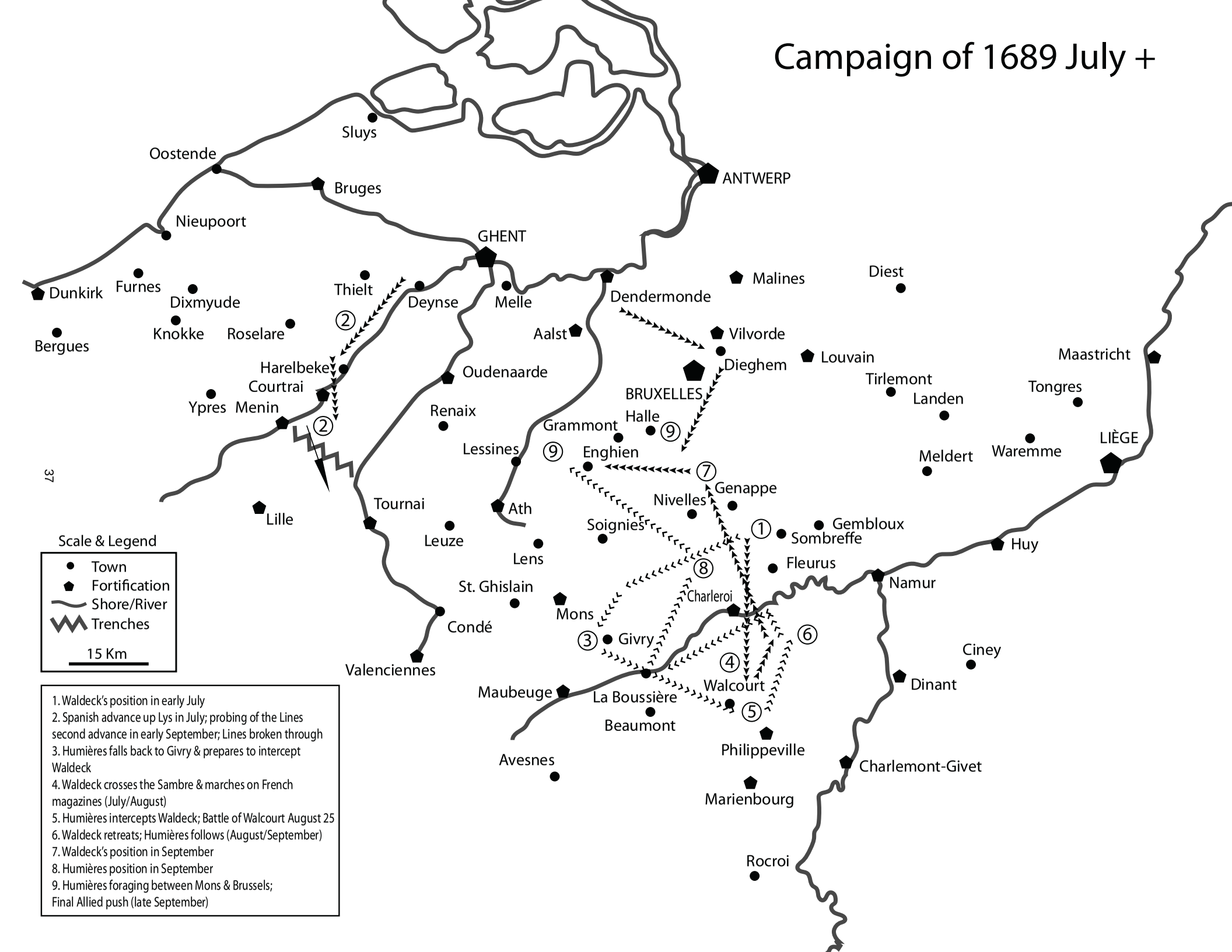
Indeed, this is what occurred, but the reinforcement Humières' sent was quite small. Calvo abandoned Courtrai (though it remained garrisoned) and retreated behind a newly constructed fortified line about 18 Km long, constructed between Menin on the Lys and Pont d'Espierres on the left back of the Scheldt. The lines were manned by second rate troops and militia, but reasonably secure, allowing Calvo to continue covering Courtrai at a distance. Upon this, Gastañaga sent a larger reinforcement from Brussels and Vaudémont made plans to lay Courtrai, Ypres, and even Lille, under contribution, as payback for earlier French raids.

Unfortunately, heavy and persistent rains now ensued. Waldeck managed to shift his own army 21 Km to Sombreffe (familiar to students of Napoleon's Hundred Days campaign), marching in 2 columns. There he ran out of steam when he was forced to send 3,000 horse, the bulk of his mounted assets, to help the Brandenburgers before Bonn. Even so, Vaudémont and Hornes pushed on with their own offensive, breaking through the Lines between the Lys and Scheldt and threatening Courtrai from the East.

Over on the Rhine, these halting manoeuvres were all the Germans could wish for. Their only care was capturing Bonn without interference. On July 11 they took one of the forts covering the city, and on July 23 began a close bombardment.

Meanwhile, Waldeck was bleeding men. The English were in the worst shape, with only 6,000 men instead of the required 10,000. There were small-scale mutinies, including one over pay involving the Royal Horse Guards, which was scotched when a ringleader was shot in the head. French agents, mostly priests, real or sham, were active in encouraging desertion in both the English contingent and the Spanish army.

Though the opposing commanders-in-chief are now considered second rate, to date neither had pulled any real boners. But Waldeck was depressed, feeling slighted by his own officers and allies, and overmatched by the enemy. Much of his time was taken up arguing with Gastañaga and the Elector of Brandenburg's


Campaign of 1689 July +
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Malines
Diest
Dendermonde
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Courtrai
Oudenaarde
Dieghem
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Landen
Tongres
Ypres
Menin
Renaix
Halle
Grammont
Lessines
Enghien
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
Genappe
Nivelles
Tournai
Ath
Lille
Soignies
Gembloux
Sombreffe
Leuze
Lens
Fleurus
Huy
Namur
St. Ghislain
Charleroi
Mons
Condé
Givry
Ciney
Valenciennes
Walcourt
Dinant
Maubeuge
La Boussière
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
37
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. Waldeck's position in early July
2. Spanish advance up Lys in July; probing of the Lines
second advance in early September; Lines broken through
3. Humières falls back to Givry & prepares to intercept
Waldeck
4. Waldeck crosses the Sambre & marches on French
magazines (July/August)
5. Humières intercepts Waldeck; Battle of Walcourt August 25
6. Waldeck retreats; Humières follows (August/September)
7. Waldeck's position in September
8. Humières position in September
9. Humières foraging between Mons & Brussels;
Final Allied push (late September)

representative, a Colonel Krusemarch, over whom he should support – as if he, the Generalissimo, were a mere commander of auxiliaries! He planned to do nothing until the Germans had had their little victory party over Bonn and were willing to send him substantial reinforcements. Then, he would march into France in a face-saving grand raid.

Throughout the campaigning season of 1689, and despite the defensive orders he was operating under, Waldeck seems to have been fixated on driving south up the Meuse. For a long time, circumstances would not permit it, but he never gave up hope. South of the Sambre lay a number of French magazines, all roughly the same distance away: at Dinant on the Meuse, Philippeville in the center, and Maubeuge to the wWestest. This was also champagne country – indeed, it was the province of Champagne.

The best result of such a push would be the capture of one of these fortresses, which could then be used as a launchpad for the campaigns of 1690. It would be hard to take even one, especially without a proper siege train, but they might be lightly guarded. Establishing a base here would threaten the flanks of the French armies in both Flanders and on the Rhine. Even if a base could not be established, a large raid would destroy the logistical infrastructure around the magazines.

Crossing the Sambre was not a problem. The river was only fordable at a few points, all of them fortified, but the Allies held Namur and Charleroi. Both these towns were in reasonable distance of the Allies' own principle magazine, at Brussels, so supply was not a problem, either. The hitch was the lack of manpower. The Generalissimo absolutely had to have part of Brandenburg's corps, if not with him, then at least positioned to cover his line of communications.

While waiting for more men, Waldeck bridged the Sambre and sent a party of senior generals to Deynze to coordinate with Vaudémont. The French found out about the meet and laid an ambush with 4 squadrons on the return route. Unfortunately for them, a fifteen-man relay of the Dutch escort picked the exact same spot for a rendezvous. Seeing the danger, the Allied lieutenant in command ordered a charge. No, he did not rout the French; he lost 11 men. But, one man cut his way through and warned the generals (who included the future Duke of Marlborough) in time. These retired to Dendermonde and resumed their journey by a different road next day.

This was in late July. By the end of the month, Waldeck's numbers had dramatically increased, by (miracle of miracles) reinforcement from the Brandenburgers and through scooping men out of rear-area Spanish garrisons. He now had about 40,000 men, plus 41 cannon, 4 mortars, and a pontoon train of 30 tin boats. Humières apparently had about the same numbers, probably including the militia holding the Lines.

Thus, on July 23 Waldeck advanced in 2 columns, while sending his artillery on a separate route, to Thiméon, a village 8 Km north of Charleroi and 32 Km south of Brussels. The army encamped in the usual two lines, plus a third for the train, with their left on Mellet and their right on Viesville. This was an L-shaped wedge deployment, with the village of Thiméon at the apex. Viesville is 1.5 Km WNW of Thiméon and Mellet is 3.5 Km NE of Thiméon. The position was also covered by a wood and a morass.

Waldeck's supply situation here was good. Brussels provided most of the army's wants. The Belgians were used to the presence of armies and held regular markets (after squirrelling away their valuables on Church property, which was inviolate).

Humières shifted his position simultaneously, marching south to, and camping at, Givry, about 30 Km to the west of the Allies, on the left bank of the Sambre, 10 Km SE of Mons. Advanced posts were established to the Northeast at Bray (7.5 Km away) and Estinnes (5.5 Km). Here, he was still placed to aid Calvo and could also cover his magazines at Maubeuge, 12 Km to his south.

The French sent out bodies of horse to sow confusion, resulting in skirmishes, the largest of which was between 60 French and 120 Dutch. The Allied garrison of Charleroi shadowed his rearguard, so the skirmishes were to little avail in hiding his route.

Meanwhile, Vaudémont and Hornes, operating on the Lys in Flanders, were forced by lack of strength to fall back from Courtrai, freeing up Calvo to assist Humières if he so desired. The Allied corps moved north to Deynze. Over on the Rhine, Bonn was being pounded to dust.

Waldeck and Humières remained in their respective camps for some time, sending out nightly patrols. In a notorious incident, a Dutch lieutenant fled from before a French patrol; he and every tenth man in his unit were executed.

By August 9, Waldeck had consumed his forage, which had already been reduced in that region when the French passed through earlier in the season, and was forced to abandon his strong position. This may seem surprising given that he was obtaining sufficient supplies from Brussels. But, forage for the beasts was a special but essential exception to supply-by-magazine. In an emergency, winter hay stocks could be drawn on, but transporting them overland was very expensive.

Waldeck moved 27 Km to the NW, to Nivelles. Though this took him away from the Sambre, the Generalissimo informed William of Orange that he still intended to capture Maubeuge or Philippeville. This move may have been for political as well as supply reasons. Nivelles was a rotten position. It was encased in woodland, around which the French patrolled with impunity, so that the Allies had to camp in a circle and were always worried about

their convoys from Brussels. But, it was equidistant from the Spanish and German armies, so that neither party could say Waldeck was favouring one over the other, which seems to have been their primary complaint about this time.

Additional troops began arriving from Brunswick (a mix of regiments from Lüneburg-Celle and Lüneburg-Wolfenbüttel). The government of the Spanish Netherlands had hired 8,000 men, nominally to augment their Army of Flanders, though the Dutch would ultimately have to pay for them and thus had some say in their employment. Perhaps Gastañaga hired them in an attempt to bribe Waldeck?

[The House of Brunswick, members of the Grand Alliance, had several branches, of which the best known is Hanover. Each branch worked out its own contract with the Dutch and Spanish. At this stage in the war, Celle and Wolfenbüttel, in the Lüneburg region, south of Hamburg, were providing contingents. Later, Hanover would add more.]

Trying to keep his promise to William, the Generalissimo decided at last to ignore his allies and pursue his own plans, without their help, if necessary. He pulled in all his garrisons and headed for the Sambre. In his view the Spanish and Germans might have been in danger earlier, but were certainly not so now. The latter had the initiative and were mopping up at Bonn. The Spanish had 7,000 men at Deynze, 3,000 Dutch auxiliaries at Ghent, and 12,000 more at Brussels. Since Humières had to respond to Waldeck's moves, only Calvo's corps was in a position to make a spoiling attack, and his men, for whatever reason, were reported to have lower morale than the Spanish.

On August 11 Waldeck broke camp at Nivelles, marching in 4 columns WSW to the Plain de Mache-en-Ecaussines, just west of Seneffe, then 16 KM SE to Trazegnies on August 13, and south for 4.5 Km to Fontaine-l'Eveque on the Sambre by August 14. The French probed vigorously with cavalry patrols, but on August 14 Waldeck received 3,000 Brandenburg cavalry to assist him.

Meanwhile, Humières marched from Givry and Estinnes toward La Boussière, the spot where he had first crossed the Sambre, a distance of about 11 Km southeast. This kept him southwest of Waldeck, on the same side of the river, about 15 Km distant. The French were well positioned to intercept the Allies, but Waldeck was steeled for a fight. Then, at the psychological moment, a letter arrived from William of Orange, emphatically telling him not to risk battle.

Perhaps William felt he needed to remind Waldeck he was supposed to be on the defensive, but William was always spoiling for a fight, and had been prodding the Generalissimo to act all summer. It is more likely the current situation in Ireland and Scotland worried the new king. Neither campaign was going well. If Waldeck were beaten, there would be no reserves to rescue him.

Taken aback by his new instructions, the Generalissimo decided to meet with Gastañaga and discuss options. It was not clear that Humières would automatically move to intercept Waldeck. Now that the latter had been forced to pause, the strategic initiative hung in the balance and the French might equally turn and try again to link up with Calvo. Could the Spanish meet this combined force alone? That was very unlikely, in which case Waldeck would also have to turn around and dash after Humières, possibly bringing on an encounter-battle where the French had the advantage. At best, the enemy would do a great deal of damage before he caught up and somehow manoeuvred them back to their start lines. But, there was still a chance that the Allies retained the initiative. An immediate crossing of the Sambre ought to drag the French with them, because the enemy's magazines were still threatened. This action did not necessarily assume a battle, either. The French could be made to fall back without an encounter. He hoped.

Waldeck ordered Gastañaga to take the Brussels garrison of 12,000 men and link up with Vaudémont's 7,000 at Deynze, forming a mobile corps to deal with any French incursions on his right rear. The Allies would continue the offensive.

Meanwhile, the Elector of Brandenburg was having a change of heart. There would be no victory parade; the siege of Bonn had stalled. He lacked the infantry for a formal siege and could only maintain an ultimately wasteful bombardment. He considered masking Bonn with 8-10,000 men and sending the rest to help Waldeck. Or should he help the Duke of Lorraine at Mainz? When news came of a fresh French corps under *maréchal* Boufflers coming down the Moselle, the latter course seemed more likely.

Though neither Waldeck nor Humières knew it, a battle between them was immanent, after all. The Allied harbingers reconnoitred a campground at Ham-sur-Heure, 12 Km SE of Fontaine-l'Eveque. The site was good, but the approach lay through a thick belt of woodland (much of which still exists). This meant the enemy might be upon them before they could deploy properly. Waldeck felt he had no time to pick a better camp. One August 16 the army marched 5 Km ESE to the Sambre at Marchienne-sur-Pont, then crossed the river on 4 pontoon bridges on August 17, camping at Montignies-le-Tilleul, 2 Km farther on. On the morning of August 18, 800 pioneers and 100 local peasants widened the defile through the wood. The main body set out later in the morning. For security, the march to Ham-sur-Heure, 6.5 Km to the south of Montignies, was made in line of battle.

The French had by now also crossed the river, at La Boussière, and were rapidly approaching from the right, marching on a roughly perpendicular course. Concealed by a descending fog, however, the Allies reached their camp safely, and though the French were close by, the

latter passed on to Boussu de Walcourt, 10-12 Km SSW, camping there in the afternoon. Though he had missed the Allies, Humières had effectively blocked their forward progress.

Both sides fortified their positions throughout August 19, while their cavalry probed and skirmished. Waldeck needed forage. His scouts told him that Thy-le-Château, his first choice for a new camp, about halfway between Ham and Walcourt, was foraged out, so a convoy was sent to Thuillies, 4 Km southwest. The party consisted of 1,200 soldier-harvesters shielded by 5,000 more men. Their activities brought out the French to interfere, sending 25 squadrons over the plain northwest of their own camp, and dispatching a garrison to the Castle Donstiennes, 3 Km SW of Thuillies. A general action seemed likely, but the foragers were screened by a wood, which was strongly held by their escort, and the French did not press matters.

August 21 was a rest day, during which Waldeck picked Philippeville as his primary target. In these years, Philippeville was nothing more than a fortress, a purpose-built magazine, of moderate strength. It had been constructed by the Habsburgs in 1555 to cover the Oise Gap – the invasion route Waldeck was using – as part of a set of three fortifications, the others being Charlemont on the Meuse, and Mariembourg, toward the old French frontier farther south. All three had been in French hands for some time. 40 guns ought to be sufficient to reduce it.

The first step would be a march in the direction of Walcourt, to Berzeé 3 Km away, in battle array. This took place on August 22. On August 23 Waldeck bridged the River Heure at Pry, 3 Km SW of Berzeé, and crossed it in 4 columns. As usual, the train was deployed farthest from the enemy, in this case, on the Allied left, beside the river. The French had been able to observe the Allied army from their camp since the day before. The latter had all this time been on the same side of the river as the French – the left bank. This new crossing took them away from the French, putting them on the opposite side of the river. The Allies camped between Thy-le-Château, 1,000 metres north of Pry, and Laneffe, 4 Km east of Pry. For some reason Humières did not stir from his camp.

The significance of this move was that both armies were now an equal distance from Philippeville, and Waldeck was on the same side of the Heure as that place, while the French would have to cross the river to catch up. In any race, though Waldeck might be delayed by minor tributaries, he was now likely to beat Humières.

Meanwhile, by August 23 Gastañaga had assembled 14,000 foot and 5,000 horse at Deynze. He was still undecided whether to remain on the defensive or assault the Lines held by Calvo between the Scheldt and Lys rivers. The latter showed no signs of wanting to assist Humières.

In camp, Waldeck wrote to the Prince of Orange and received replies. Both men complained to the other about the behaviour of the Brandenburgers. They agreed that the latter's great offensive had run out of steam with little accomplished (ignoring the fact that the Rhine flank was now secure) while their refusal to help Waldeck had crippled his campaign. The Generalissimo bemoaned the fact that he had too few infantry to attack Humières directly and too few cavalry to make the enemy's position unpleasant. Nevertheless, on August 25 the two sides would clash for the first and only time this year.

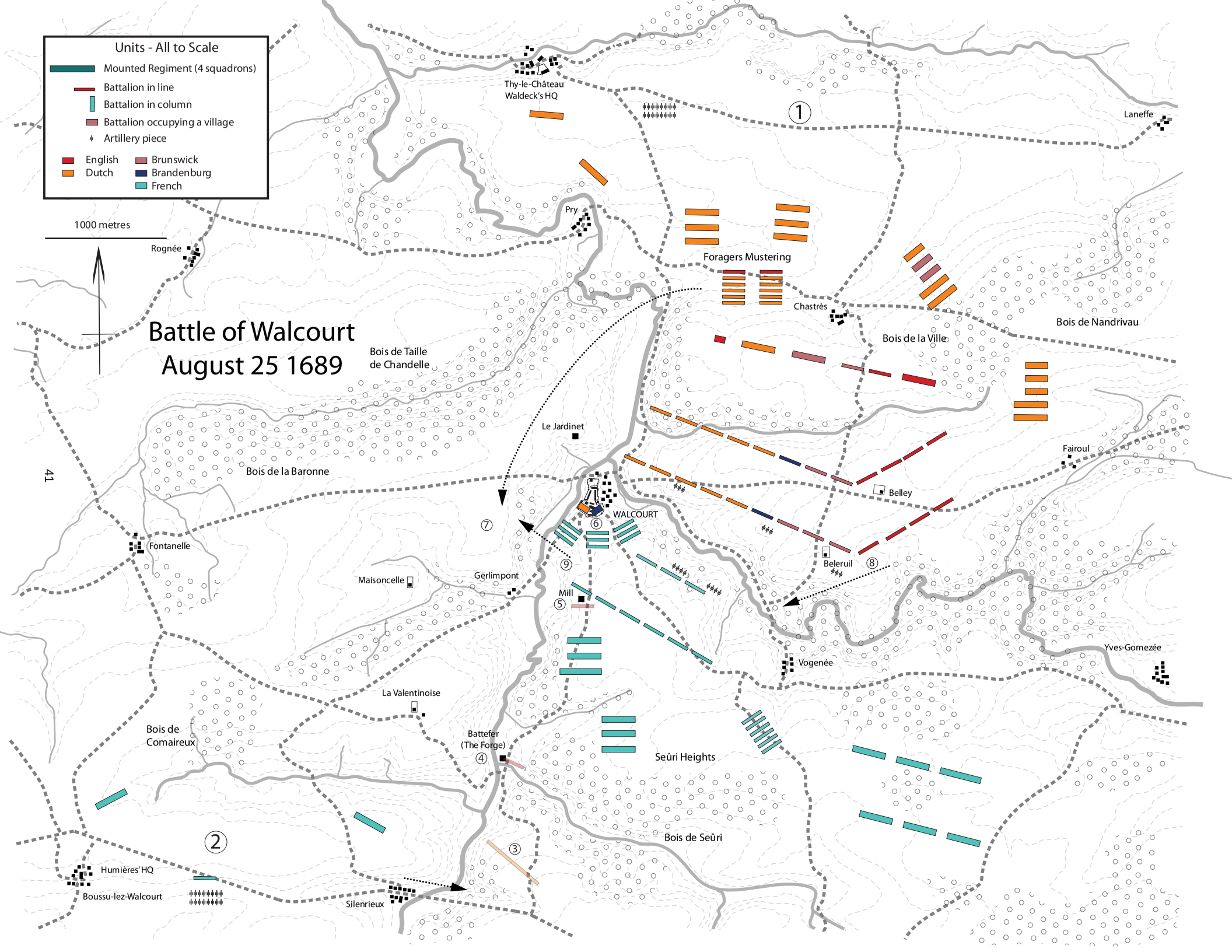
The Battle of Walcourt, August 25, 1689

The battle was not intended, at least by Waldeck. Early on the morning of August 25 he ordered a strong foraging party out in the direction of Philippeville, that is, southeast from his camp. The French had not completely cleaned out the district in this direction, but had ordered the peasants not to sell to the Allies. Most of the locals had fled into Walcourt – more than a thousand of them. Waldeck had threatened to raze the town if they did not give him food, so they did. The town was then garrisoned by one Dutch and one Brandenburg battalion, probably on August 24. This action gave the Allies enough to survive on but not enough to maintain the offensive, hence the foraging operation. Apparently, supplies from across the Sambre were not regular.

Humières had made no move to attack the Allied camp, which was very strong, protected by a tributary of the Heure in back, steep slopes on either side, and several villages in front. In general terms, the terrain was 'rolling', it being on the verges of the Ardennes. There was plenty of open ground, but also belts of woodland and many ravines.

Observing at a distance his enemies setting out from their camp in a large body, Humières at last reacted. It might be a foraging party, it might be the advance guard of an assault on his camp, or it might be an attempt to bypass him and march on Philippeville.

Childs thinks there was insufficient reason for Humières' decision to intercept the Allies. Given a little more time, the French, more numerous in cavalry, would have entirely denuded the land between here and Philippeville, forcing Waldeck to retire empty-handed. Why seek battle? Especially since it seems out of character for Humières. Childs suggests three alternatives: a) Humières only intended a reconnaissance in force but lost control of the situation; b) he felt he had to make a bold statement on this, St. Louis' Day, which is certainly plausible – his junior commanders may have been grumbling about a lack of *gloire*. Or, c) Humières was aware that an Allied raid onto French land, which he had so far managed to avoid, would be a grave blow to the Sun King's sense of propriety, possibly a career-killer. Options (b) and (c) compound with each other. Because of the manoeuvres the French had to undertake to interfere with the Allies, it


Units - All to Scale
Mounted Regiment (4 squadrons)
Battalion in line
Battalion in column
Battalion occupying a village
Artillery piece
English
Dutch
Brunswick
Brandenburg
French
1000 metres
Battle of Walcourt
August 25 1689
Thy-le-Château
Waldeck's HQ
Laneffe
Pry
Rognée
Foragers Mustering
Chastrès
Bois de Nandrivau
Bois de la Ville
Bois de Taille
de Chandelle
Le Jardinet
Fairoul
Bois de la Baronne
Belley
WALCOURT
Fontanelle
Beleruil
Maisoncelle
Gerlimpont
Mill
Yves-Gomezée
Vogenée
La Valentinoise
Bois de
Comaireux
Battefer
(The Forge)
Seûri Heights
Bois de Seûri
Humières' HQ
Boussu-lez-Walcourt
Silenrieux
41

seems more likely that they intended to bring on a battle from the start.

At this point the reader should refer to the accompanying map, labeled ‘Battle of Walcourt’. This was a meeting engagement, so there appears to be no officially drawn battle diagram. The site of *Walcourt* must not be confused with Boussu de Walcourt (at bottom left on the map).

As can be seen from the map, the terrain is ‘rolling’; contour lines are at 5-metre intervals. The only steep slopes are by the various water courses. The location of the woods are based on period maps; modern maps indicate that most of them are still in existence, though some have been partially cleared.

Within the vicinity of the battlefield, the wooded slope just south of Chastrès is by far the most significant. It is quite steep, and rises much higher than the ground south of it. In contrast, the ravine cut by the Heure is much gentler than it may appear from the contour lines.

Because this was a meeting engagement, both sides are shown in motion rather than fully deployed for battle. An indeterminate portion of the Allied army was foraging south of the camp and east of the Heure. Today, that zone comprises open farmland on a plateau. The foraging operation was led by the Dutch generals Weibnom, Huby, and Slangenburg, who were given a mix of units, including English battalions – possibly all of them. This would be their baptism of fire.

(Foraging parties were often composed of detachments from all the regiments, but in this case the sources indicate that whole regiments were detailed for the job.)

Waldeck’s army was camped between Thy-le-Château and Laneffe (at #1). His HQ was at the former village, in the Medieval castle attached to the place. Normal practice would be to camp in battle array, in two lines, along the crest of the local high ground. Both sides are known to have entrenched themselves.

The army consisted of Dutch, English, Brunswick, and Brandenburg units, totalling 35 battalions and 60 squadrons, less the odd unit that might have been detached – 28,800 (Childs) or 35,000 (Lynn) men in all. The bulk of the cavalry was Dutch (12 horse and 1 dragoon regiment), with 3 Brunswicker (Lüneburg and Wolfenbüttel), 1 Saxe-Gotha, 3 Württemberg, and 2 English regiments (the Blues and a squadron of Lifeguards). The infantry consisted of 16 battalions of Dutch, 10 English, 3 Brandenburg, and 5 Brunswick (Lüneburg, Wolfenbüttel, and Hanover). As always, English-language sources ignore everyone except the English troops. However, in this case they are credited by Waldeck with pulling more than their own weight.

The French, camped at Boussu (2), would likewise have been deployed in 2 lines along the crest of high ground, possibly as far as Silenrieux; the camp may have extended west, off map. There were either 24 battalions and 75 squadrons (Lynn) or 28 battalions and 80 squadrons, plus 7 regiments of dragoons (Childs). Childs estimates 30,700 men, and Lynn 24,000. The difference may be accounted for by the fact that Humières had just received a reinforcement of 6,000 men. But, the map shows the lower number of units, which fits the known list of regiments at the battle. The French infantry included 8 battalions of the Guard, 4 each of French and Swiss. The remaining 2 battalions were probably on duty at Versailles. Of the Line there were the regiments of *Champagne* (3 battalions), *Greder Allemand* (2 battalions), *Guiche* (2 battalions), *Le Roi* (3 battalions), *Royal La Marine* (2 battalions), *Soissonais* (1 battalion), and *Royal Savoie* (3 battalions). The last were forcibly loaned from the Duke of Savoy and did not want to be here.

Of the horse regiments: *Mestre de Camp Général, La Reine, Orleans, Quinson, Saint-Aignan, Royal Cravattes, Lumbres, Soubise, Bezons, Courtbonne (Condé), Locmaria, Arnolfini, Magnac, Aubeterre*. Of dragoons: *Du Roi, Dauphin, Grammont, Caylus*. Assuming 4 squadrons per regiment, this makes 76 squadrons; it can be confidently assumed at least one unit was understrength. When regimental names are unknown, periods sources always assume French cavalry regiments have 4 squadrons, but in fact they usually had an official establishment of 3 squadrons. Out of this list, only *Mestre de Camp Général* and *Royal Cravattes* officially had 4 squadrons. The map thus depicts these regiments with frontages based on their official establishment rather than the estimated number of squadrons.

Both sides had full artillery trains, but the number of guns could not be discovered. For the French, the train would mean the presence of at least 1 battalion of *Fusiliers*. It is unclear whether they are to be included in the count of battalions. This was usually the case, and the regiments of *Guiche* or *La Marine* might have had one less battalion. However, there are 29 French battalions on the map. Because this was a meeting engagement and moving the heavy pieces would take hours, both the *Fusiliers* and the artillery parks are shown at their respective camps. Batteries were formed and did engage; those are assumed to be the lighter pieces and the battalion guns.

It is not clear whether the French advanced directly against Waldeck’s camp with a portion of their army. All sources suggest that the entire army wound up on the right bank of the Heure. This makes sense if Humières was intending to intercept an advance on Philippeville. When the situation became clearer, he would then turn north to engage in battle. Possibly, it seemed to the French that Waldeck was responding sluggishly so that his troops might be defeated in detail. Or, Humières may only have wanted to push the Allies back and make a demonstration that would have satisfied the honour of his generals.

To cross the Heure, the French would have used the bridge at Silenrieux. That road was the main highway. The advance guard was probably a mix of foot and dragoons. By 9am sufficient troops had crossed for an advance to begin. Almost immediately they encountered Hodge's English battalion of 600 men and Goes' Dutch cavalry regiment of 300 on the Sleury (Seûri) Heights. These units were detailed to screen the foragers and keep an eye on the French.

No two maps agree on the position of these troops. Some deductions can be made which put the encounter at (3) and (4). First, the French would have been fanning out and moving northeast, but would have had to move around either side of the Bois de Seûri. If Hodge's men were at Battefer (4), which on several period maps is simply called 'Forge' – and the battalion is always said to be at a forge at the base of a hill – they would block that defile completely. The Dutch cavalry (3), were arranged in a skirmish line in front. They did not stick around. English sources suggest they just rode away, but more likely, in the face of a mass of enemy cavalry defiling over the bridge, they headed east to cover the far end of the wood for as long as possible, so that the foragers on the plateau could get away. Ultimately the Dutch would be driven from there, too, at which point Hodge's own position became untenable. This seems the only way to explain how Hodges' men held up the entire advance for an hour, from 10am to 11am – his battalion was watching the bridge and plugging the nearest defile, and the Dutch for some time prevented the French from outflanking him.

The Allied advance guard had battalion guns with them, and these were discharged to warn the army and the foraging parties. The latter began to retreat, but at the camp, nothing was heard; the wind was too strong and the sound of the shots did not carry down the valley.

At 11am Hodges retreated to a windmill at the top of another hill and held the French off for an hour more. The location of the mill is more problematic. If the location of the forge is accepted as correct, then there are two possibilities. First, they might have doubled east up the ravine behind them and occupied one of a few of the old buildings still located at the top of the hill. But they would have probably run into French cavalry swinging around the wood. More likely, they retreated toward Walcourt. At the spot shown (5) there is a likely location for a windmill. At noon the English rejoined their army, which was now forming for battle. Losses were 1 wounded and 31 killed. This small affray was widely toasted in England.

The Allied Right was anchored on Walcourt and the army extended eastward in the usual two lines plus small reserve. The positions shown on the map are what they would be if the normal unit spacing was observed. The English are usually shown on the Left, leaving room on the Right for battalions from the camp to take up station. The map shows the cavalry stacked up behind the infantry, or just beginning to secure the open flank. They did not go up against the French cavalry or try to envelop the enemy, so were probably held back. Many had been involved in the foraging expedition and would be disorganised. The units at the rear are those calculated to have been in the foraging party. The artillery park and scattered camp security are conjectural.

Walcourt was surrounded by a stone wall which was sufficient to protect the locals from raiders, but not to stop a determined army. Though it is on a hill, the slopes down to the water are quite gentle, and the plateau south of it is nearly flat.

By now, either Humières had decided to press the Allies and force them back to their camp, or his men were taking matters into their own hands. To regain control of the situation, he decided to attack Walcourt directly. Presumably, the idea was to carry the town in a rush, then start a general advance, which would not have to worry about enfilade fire. While the town was being attacked, artillery would try and disrupt the Allied deployment on the other side of the stream.

9 battalions, which was presumably the whole of the First Line, attacked Walcourt at three separate points (6), resisted only by the 2 battalions in garrison there: Holle's Dutch and a Brandenburg regiment. Unfortunately, no French cannon could be spared for fire support and the defenders hung on. At 2pm, Allied reinforcements arrived at the town in the form of a battalion of Coldstream Guards and a Lüneburg regiment, under the English commander, Brigadier Thomas Talmash. (These two battalions are shown as part of the Allied Reserve; otherwise they would have had to come from the Left Wing).

The French tried to continue the attack, even bringing up one of their own Guard battalions and burning the gate, but they could not break in.

[Curiously, the French often put their Guard in the Second Line, and often on the Left. The map shows them in this position, which would be the easiest location from which to send supports against the town. In some accounts, the Lüneburg regiment initially occupies the town and the Brandenburg regiment is one of the reinforcements.}

As the French attack stalled, Waldeck counterattacked. *Luitenant generaal* Aylva led 3 Dutch cavalry regiments, the English Lifeguard squadron (shown in Reserve), 2 English battalions, and *generaal-majoor* Slangenburg's Dutch battalions in a march west, over the Heure, redeploying against the French Left (7). Some artillery, possibly just battalion guns, was also taken along. The number of battalions under Slangenburg is not stated, but they were probably the foragers. If all the Dutch infantry of the Camp's Second Line are included, that would be 10 Dutch battalions.

The Allied Left, mostly English battalions under John Churchill, made a matching forward motion (8), though not advancing as far as the Allied Right. The French

found themselves enfiladed on both sides. Humières responded by ordering an attack on Aylva's wing (9), but it quickly petered out.

(The extension of the battle across the Heure shows that the river was not impassable, but that it was a significant impediment for an assault.)

At 6:30pm both Allied wings assaulted the French, forcing them to withdraw, covered by a rearguard under Colonel Hector Villars – the future marshal. Waldeck did not pursue and the French retired to their camp.

This was the battle that gave Humières his nickname. His plan of attack was decent enough, given the circumstances, but he should not have placed himself in the situation to begin with. There is a sense that he was allowing his subordinates to dictate events. Humières lost 600 dead and 1,400 wounded and captured; the Allies lost 6-700, the bulk of them English.

[When Waldeck discovered the locals had helped to bury the French dead while no one was willing to nurse his own wounded, he ordered the villages and their churches plundered.]

On August 27 Humières tried to redeem himself with a direct attack on the Allied camp at Thy-le-Château but even the Allied advance guard proved too strong for him. Nevertheless, after a council of war of their own on August 28, the Allies began a withdrawal. To confuse the French, bridges were erected on the old line of advance, toward the Sambre. However, Waldeck intended to march in the other direction, 8 Km NE to Gerpinnes.

The Allies Retreat

The march began in the dark on August 29. The French were not fooled and shadowed the Allies, but did not attack. This may have been because lack of forage forced them to circle around by way of Florennes, 12 Km east of Walcourt.

Now it was Waldeck's turn to be in difficulties. Gerpinnes was an unsuitable campsite, with no room to deploy. He had to get across the Sambre before the French caught up. They began to harass him with cavalry patrols as they closed in. But, heavy rain and fog allowed the Generalissimo to give his army a day's rest.

In the interval, Waldeck learned that Humières, whether by chance or design, planned to camp on the Sambre exactly where he had planned to cross. Not only that, if they camped in that location the French would cut him off from his magazines and threaten his path of retreat to both Namur and Charleroi. Meanwhile, foraging had just been made much harder by the dispatch of 3,000 Dutch cavalry to the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle, where the Brandenburgers were trying to deal with *maréchal* Duras' powerful army.

Quickly, Waldeck's staff made new plans. They would aim for Châtelet, 7.5 Km due north of Gerpinnes. Here they could establish a good defensive camp and cross the river in safety. They hoped.

The Allies marched north in 2 columns on September 1, the train in front. The French pressed the rearguard – Hodge's and Colyear's battalions, a Dutch battalion, and some Dutch horse – but were unable to break past them. Nevertheless, Waldeck decided not to camp on the Sambre, but to cross it immediately. Humières did not test the rearguard again, though pressed to do so by Colonel Villars, and the crossing was made in safety. The Allies camped at Montigny-sur-Sambre, about 3.5 Km to the west of the crossing point, while the French, behind them, occupied the lines originally marked out for the Allied camp at Châtelet.

[One wonders if the fiery Villars was one of the colonels who persuaded Humières to attack at Walcourt and was given the job of rearguard there to 'expiate his sins'.]

The armies remained in these positions for a few days. On the night of September 5, Humières erected 2 batteries across from the Allied camp, one of ten 24-pounders and one of eight 18-pounders. These bombarded the camp the following morning. In reply, Waldeck erected his own battery of 16 guns. The cannonade lasted from 4am to 11am. More than 200 balls and bombs landed in the Allied camp but only 2 men and a woman were killed.

Further Adventures of the Allies

The crossing of the Sambre constituted a break in the campaign, but not its conclusion. On September 7 Waldeck received an Imperial envoy. The Emperor's troops had arrived on the Rhine at last and joined forces with the Brandenburgers, who were investing Mayence. To no-one's surprise, the envoy asked for a diversion, because *maréchal* Boufflers was advancing down the Moselle to the town's relief; he was said to be only 20 Km from the Germans, at Cochem.

Waldeck's boss, the Prince of Orange, was not sanguine about this situation. Absorbed by the Irish War, he was only interested in defending Holland, and put strong pressure on Waldeck to abandon any thought of a renewed offensive in favour of making better preparations for next year. Childs suggests Waldeck himself 'secretly' wanted to break contact with the French, turn around, and make a second try for Philippeville. It was not to be.

However, the Spanish situation looked promising, so perhaps an effort could be made on behalf of the Emperor in Flanders. Vaudémont and Gastañaga had joined forces at Harelbeke on the Lys, 36 Km SW of Ghent, on August 31. This time their advance upstream broke the Lines, when Calvo, based at Menin, retreated southeast toward Tournai on September 5, abandoning his position in favour of keeping his communications with Humières. The Spanish walked through the empty Lines and laid Lille and its environs under contribution. They also took Courtrai, which, isolated, quickly surrendered,

and rounded up the peasantry of the region to level the Lines.

Supposedly, the French bombardment of Waldeck's position on September 6 was in response to these activities. As an interesting window into the mindset of the period, the French bombardment was seen by both William and Waldeck as a grave humiliation, despite its lack of physical results and the fact that the Allies fired back. This was not the last time the protagonists would use cannonades to 'flip off' their enemies.

Humières finally crossed the Sambre on September 11, once again at La Boussière. He crossed in response to Calvo's situation; Waldeck could not be allowed to come between them. Meanwhile, the latter's army diverged from the French. Between September 7 and September 15 the Allies marched north to Genappe, 22 Km from Charleroi, staying in the environs of the latter place until September 13, thence to Mellet the next day, and thence to Genappe. The weather was bad, there was no forage, and much sickness, mostly from the troops overindulging in fruit, presumably unripe. 6 whole battalions, 2 Dutch and 4 English, had to be placed in garrison to recover.

During the march, on September 13, Waldeck received further instructions from William of Orange. From intelligence reports it had been learned Humières was being made to give up many of his own troops to the Moselle push; William now thought the campaign might be salvaged and suggested Waldeck 'take a few risks'.

The Prince was losing confidence in his generalissimo, but as yet it was only a vague uneasiness. The pair still blamed the Brandenburgers for pulling the rug out from under them. However, Waldeck was becoming more and more hesitant, possibly losing confidence not only from the German refusal to participate in his campaign but from the rivalries within his own staff which he did not feel he could control. He made no move to reinforce Gastañaga but stood on the minimum of his mission statement – to defend the Netherlands. From William's point of view, this meant the French had lost a significant battle yet still retained the initiative.

On September 17 another 4 battalions, all English, were sent into garrison, unable to cope with the rigours of campaigning. On September 16 Waldeck moved west by 10 Km to the Plains de Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, north of Nivelles. Vaudémont, meanwhile, had moved to Tournai in an attempt to pin Calvo and improve his communications with Waldeck – because Humières had marched into the gap between the Allies, at Lessines (33 KM NE of Tournai and 40 Km west of Waldeck's force). The French route was from La Boussière to Leuze-en-Hainault on the Dender River (50 Km NW if taken on a direct line) and 19 Km NE to Lessines. It was feared the French might preparing to march on Brussels.

[For those familiar with the 1815 Waterloo battlefield, Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, often written in history books as Bois-St. Isaac, is 7,200 metres southwest of La Belle Alliance; Hougmont (Goumont) Farm is very nearly on the same line.]

The campaign was winding down. Both sides were already planning next year's campaign. The immediate object was to make winter quarters as secure as possible. With Waldeck dithering about near Brussels, the French torched the Duchy of Luxembourg to prevent him – and potentially the Brandenburgers – wintering there. On the other side, John Churchill was ordered to send all the English foot into garrison at Bruges, Ghent, and Malines and the English horse to Breda.

It was a surprise, therefore, when on September 20 Waldeck sent out his pioneers to fix the road leading west from his camp, through Braine-le-Château. This road led through a notoriously dangerous defile, a river bottom bounded north and south by thick woods, where armies were known to become trapped by their enemies. On September 24 the Dutch marched 12 Km NNW to Halle on the Senne River, then another 5-6 Km SW to Tubize by way of Lembeek and the Senne Valley. This zigzag put Waldeck about 26 Km away from Humières at Lessines.

Simultaneously, Gastañaga, after beefing up his garrisons, led out 8 battalions and 31 squadrons, plus a further 3,000 horse led by Vaudémont, to join Waldeck. Obviously, the Allies had a plan. The route taken by the Spanish was well to the north of the enemy, hooking around Brussels to enter the capital by way of Diegem, on the city's northeast side, then southwest down the Senne. At roughly the same time, *generaal-majoor* Flodorff returned from the Rhine with another 3,000 cavalry. Reinforced by these 15,000 men, Waldeck began an advance against Humières on September 29.

The Generalissimo had two reasons for this last-minute campaign. First, both Flodorff and Vaudémont were complaining about the depredations of French raiders in the region around Brussels and he wanted to push the French back, and second, Waldeck still hoped to redeem the campaign (and possibly his honour) by ending it with at least a moral victory.

By the end of the first day the Allies were at Enghien, 15 Km ESE of Lessines. Skirmishes took place over the next couple of days but an attempt to bring up the guns for a reprisal for the cannonade of September 6 failed when the autumn rains suddenly decided to interfere. On October 1, Humières withdrew to Leuze-en-Hainault, putting himself closer to Calvo's corps, now at Roubaix, 33 Km to the West. He probably believed the Allies heavily outnumbered him. They advanced after him on parallel lines to Silly (10 Km; October 3) and Cambron (7 Km; October 6). Cambron is very near to Humières' early camp at Brugelette, but for the Allies, it was also near their magazine at Mons.

Only about 16 Km separated the armies, so Waldeck considered making an attempt on the new French camp, but the Spanish were not keen. They were happy that the

Allied army now blocked the French from raiding Brussels; why risk a battle. Humières held a strong position in the angle between the Dender and a tributary stream. If the Allies did beat him, he would only fall back to Roubaix, where Calvo would reinforce them. There were already several French pontoon bridges on the Dender and the front of the French position was covered by redoubts and entrenchments.

Despite all these obstacles, Vaudémont agreed to lead forward 8,000 men to try and lure the French out. The operation was canceled when it was learned Humières was already retreating, bound for Tournai. News also arrived that Bonn had finally fallen (October 12), but the Germans were exhausted and would send no help. The campaign of 1689 was over.

The Allies quartered themselves as follows: the English foot at Ghent and Bruges, and the cavalry at Breda; the Spanish and Dutch cavalry on the Méhaigne River, west of Liège; most of the Spanish foot in the towns of Flanders or at Charleroi and Namur; most of the Dutch foot in Liège and at Maastricht. Though this may seem like a drastic pullback, it allowed the Allies to concentrate at any threatened point within a two-day period.

[About this time the Spanish issued a decree awarding the death penalty to anyone selling to the French.]

By October, Humières was supervising the restoration of the Lines of the Scheldt, and expanding the works. 5,000 pioneers and 1,200 soldiers were employed. Soon after, he was forced to send 4 battalions of the Guard to the Rhine front, where the French were in difficulties, and soon after that he also went into winter quarters.

The Flanders campaign of 1689 might be considered a French win, since Humières was able to deny the Alliance access to French property, which is what he had been instructed to do. However, the Allies had done away with the threat of a French campaign down the Rhine either into Brandenburg lands or Holland. Also, William of Orange's gamble had paid off and he now had the resources of the British Isles at his disposal, though it would take another two years fighting before much of it could be sent to the Continent. French attempts to aid King James had been feeble, thanks to overcommitment on their northeast frontier.

1690 – Waldeck Outmanoeuvred

To take a post or select a camp, to subsist an army, to preserve order and discipline, to execute a march or forage, no-one could approach the Prince de Waldeck. However, the glory of qualifying as a master of war did not rest in just these talents but also in trying to seek advantage through battle. In this he was often rash in his preparations and in his dispositions.

Mémoires du Feld-Maréchal Comte de Mérode-Westerloo, quoted in Childs, p, 137.

Strategy

The French, stymied on the Rhine and facing the opening of a fourth front in Italy at the end of May, decided to push hard against the Dutch while William of Orange was still bogged down in Ireland. They had no firm longterm strategy. King Louis and his cabinet were still trying to come to grips with the failure of their 'blitzkrieg' and spent most of 1690 reacting to events. This was particularly true in Italy, where they tried vainly to bully Savoy into joining them, but would also be seen in the Low Countries.

Given that this was supposed to be a short war, peace feelers had already been put out by the French, and responded to by the Alliance, but this did not bring an end to hostilities. Instead, it caused all the players to begin solidifying their agendas. Both William and Louis sought to avoid damaging their war machines but both needed to acquire bargaining chips. The Low Countries was the best place to pick these up.

William of Orange's publicly stated war aims were merely a return to the status quo of the Treaty of Nijmegen of 1678 and recognition for himself as King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Soon enough, France would be content to accept peace on the basis of 1678, but for now they insisted on the settlement of 1684, which primarily sought guarantees against Imperial 'aggression' (i.e., reclaiming the frontier territories the French had managed to grab before 1684). Despite the devastation his armies were inflicting, this was all Louis really wanted. Acknowledging William as King would be harder to agree to, given France's unwavering support for James II.

As de facto leader of the Coalition, William of Orange was in it for the long haul. But, he himself was tied up in Ireland and would be for some time to come. He had to ensure the Alliance did not fracture due to some battlefield or diplomatic reverse, and most importantly of all, Holland had to remain in the fight. This meant a) no grand offensive strategy, whatever offensive action might develop locally, b) the Allies must always be consulted and they must be allowed to follow less than ideal strategies of their own, so long as these did not jeopardise the Alliance in other ways, and c) nothing could be attempted that would cause the anti-Orangist faction within Holland to seek his removal from command, or their army from the war. But, the French still had to be made to suffer.

Francisco Antonio de Agurto, I Marqués de Gastañaga (1640-1702)

Of Basque origin, Gastañaga was Viceroy of the Spanish Netherlands from 1685 to 1692. He led the Spanish contingent at Fleurus (1690) and surrendered Mons in 1691, though after a hard fight. He was recalled to Spain after this, either because he lost Mons, or because the Prince of Orange disliked of him, or because it was simply impossible to coordinate strategy with a local ruler who had to refer everything back to Madrid – for this reason, King William wanted to replace him with an Imperial governor.

After his recall, the court martial exonerated him of all blame for losing Mons and he went on to serve in Catalonia from 1695 to 1696. His dismissal in 1696 rankled – once his replacement had been confirmed he abandoned all interest in his 'lame duck' command – and the highest post he seems to have held after that date was colonel of the horse guards. He never married.

To counteract Waldeck's lack of 'moxie', over the winter William opened a 'standing conference' at The Hague, to which Holland, England, Spain, and the Empire would send permanent representatives. Such a committee might have been a useful counter to France's ceaseless diplomatic offensive, but William actually intended it as a strategic planning committee.

That was also a good idea, but due to a number of factors, such as the delegates' lack of military training and the fact that the Imperial envoy was a mere mouthpiece for Vienna, the Hague Conference never did much strategic planning. As it was William's brainchild, so it only functioned properly when he was in town. For the remainder of the year the commanders worked out bilateral deals in the field. The Conference did serve to iron out some problems before they became serious, and it was better than not having a committee. In the end, most of the serious political and strategic coordination that took place during the war was done by a rival Congress of Vienna, established by the Emperor. Established, one suspects, to counter William's royal pretensions.

Actually, the Conference bore fruit this first year, at least on the surface. By mid March of 1690, the Spanish, Dutch, and Brandenburgers had agreed to fully cooperate. Well… at least they were trying. In Flanders, the plan of campaign called for the Spanish to strike at and penetrate the Lines of the Scheldt.

The Elector of Brandenburg agreed to march from his cantonments in Cleve, Jülich, and Cologne, into that section of Luxembourg known as the German Quarter, the western end of the Eiffel, between the Meuse and Moselle. That ought to draw off some French troops.

Waldeck's operations were to be the centrepiece of the campaign. He was to cross the Sambre and lay siege to Dinant on the Meuse, 22 Km upstream from Namur. With a secure base, he was then to penetrate into France and wage war on enemy soil. Besides the physical damage – in reprisal for the Palatinate – it would strike a deadly blow at King Louis' prestige.

Unfortunately, this plan did not survive contact with its friends, let alone its enemies. The Brandenburgers pulled out of the deal after only ten days. The Elector suggested what Waldeck needed to do was have three armies: two under the Elector's command and the other on the Meuse to protect the Elector's rear. How original. Gastañaga was (surprisingly) the most sanguine of the three, but he lacked the resources to fulfill his agreements.

Frederick I Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia (1657-1713)

Frederick was the grandfather of Frederick the Great, and the first ruler of Brandenburg to style himself King in Prussia (1701). His grandson said of him, "He was great in small matters, and small in great matters". Waldeck would have agreed. He always put his own concerns first.

Born at Königsberg, he came to power in April of 1688, upon the death of his father. This is an important fact, because his father, Frederick William, was pro-French, while Frederick I was anti-Bourbon (though he admired

French culture). His coming to power right on the eve of the war changed the dynamics of the situation, lessening the chance the French could quickly resolve their war aims in the Rhineland.

The Wider War

Foiled in his attempt to secure Cologne as a vassal state, King Louis ordered the electorate placed under contribution. Other states in the Rhineland also had visitations by French raiders. *Maréchal* de Lorge was now acting commander here, under the nominal leadership of the Grand Dauphin, the king's current heir, who at this time was 29 years old. The French still had a significant force based at Mainz: 36 battalions and 97 when the campaign opened. This was roughly the same as the forces deployed in Flanders.

As before, the Germans fielded 3 armies, the largest being that of the Elector of Bavaria, which also included Saxon troops. The best part of Brandenburg's army, in the Rhineland, would eventually be sent to aid Waldeck, though not soon enough in the latter's view. The central Rhine was held by an army under General Dunevald consisting of Hessen and Franconian troops. These dispositions would alter throughout the year, but there was always one army each for lower, middle, and upper Rhine. Though at one point a general battle seemed likely on this front, in the end, the campaigning on the Rhine saw nothing but manoeuvre.

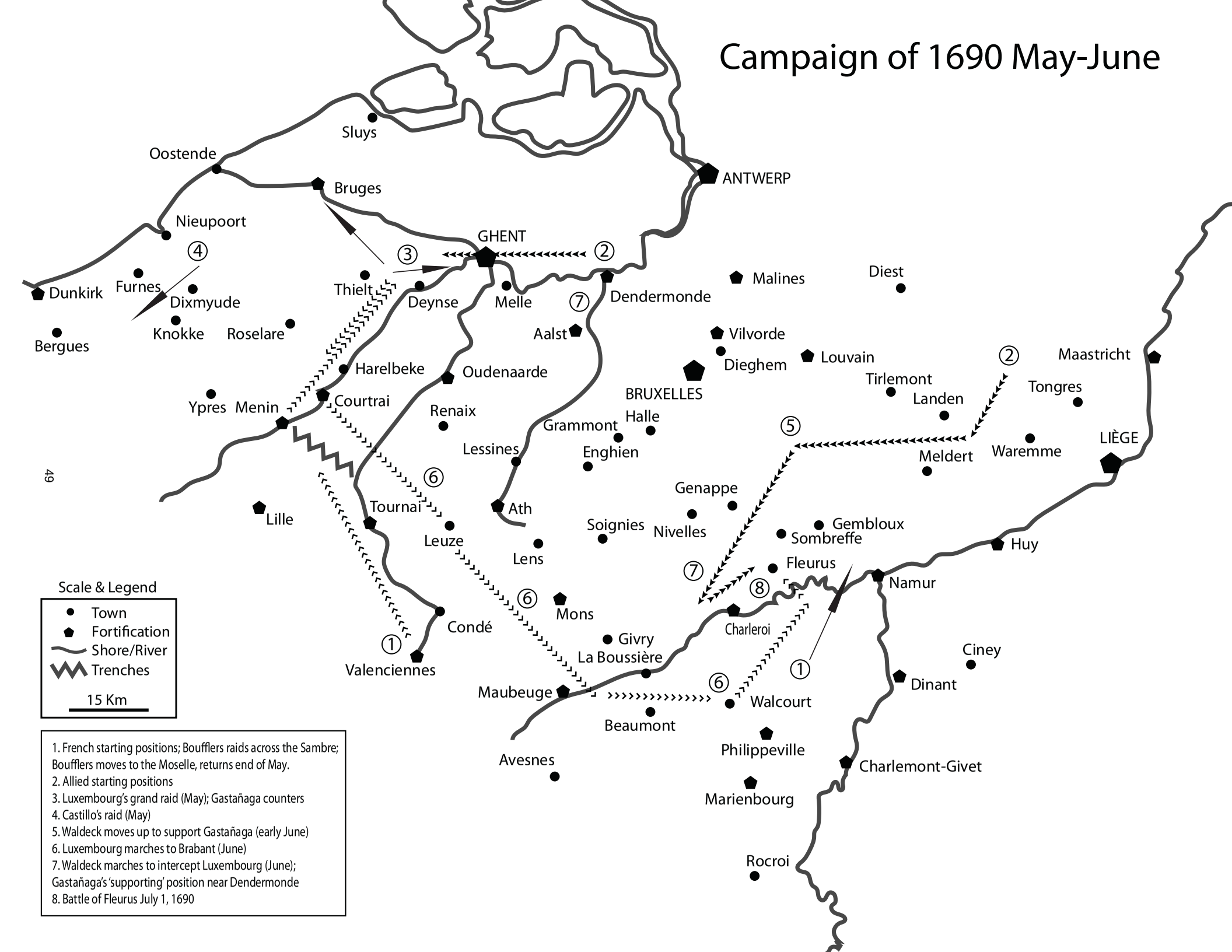
In one critical point, campaigning in the Rhineland impinged on operations in the Low Countries. Strategic planning by the Allies over the winter called for an advance west up the valley of the Moselle. Whether this was to be a diversion for the Dutch or whether the Dutch effort was to be a diversion for this advance was never settled, and became a bone of contention – but that is a minor factor. The offensive was supposed to be carried out by the Rhineland army, consisting of troops from Münster, Jülich, and Brandenburg. However, the Brandenburgers did not take the field until July. So… Münster and Jülich, both very minor powers, saw no reason to do all the heavy lifting and the offensive never got very far. But the idea was reactivated a number of times during the year.

This putative Moselle offensive affected both sides. King Louis worried overmuch about it, hamstringing his forces in the Spanish Netherlands with restrictive orders, while the Dutch and German commanders took each offence at the lack of support their ally was giving and refused to cooperate fully.

To return to general affairs. In Italy, *général* Catinat was very active, holding a central position with his main army while raiding with his cavalry. But he also had to deal with an insurrection by the Vaudois, tough Protestant mountaineers who lived very near the key French fortress of Pinerolo. Catinat's vigorous manoeuvring would eventually lure his enemy, the young Duke Victor Amadeus of Savoy, into losing a battle at Staffarda, giving the French a free hand for the rest of the season. This allowed them to establish an additional staging post on the East side of the Alps at Susa, but ultimately Catinat lacked the manpower to winter on the plains of Piedmont. As would be the case every year, he had to pull back over the Maritime Alps before snowfall cut the passes.

In Catalonia, *général* Noaïlles fought a defensive war against the local viceroy, Villahermosa. Neither side had enough manpower to do more than besiege border fortlets and conduct minor raids.

At sea, however, the French scored points. Needing to open the sea lanes to send aid to the Jacobite forces in Ireland – including an expeditionary brigade – they not only managed to land the brigade without being intercepted, but defeated a combined Anglo-Dutch fleet off Beachy Head on July 9. Strategically, though, the battle was of little use. The French sank few ships and failed to take advantage of their dominance in the Channel. They burnt the seaside village of Teignmouth, for no particular reason. A month later the Allies were once again in command of the seas around France. As Childs' puts it (p. 133) 'The armies and navies of the later seventeenth century were relatively blunt weapons.'


Campaign of 1690 May-June
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Tongres
Landen
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Renaix
Halle
Grammont
Lessines
Enghien
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
Genappe
Lille
Tournai
Ath
Soignies
Nivelles
Gembloux
Sombreffe
Leuze
Lens
Huy
Fleurus
Namur
Mons
Condé
Charleroi
Givry
La Boussière
Ciney
Dinant
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
Valenciennes
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French starting positions; Boufflers raids across the Sambre; Boufflers moves to the Moselle, returns end of May.
2. Allied starting positions
3. Luxembourg's grand raid (May); Gastañaga counters
4. Castillo's raid (May)
5. Waldeck moves up to support Gastañaga (early June)
6. Luxembourg marches to Brabant (June)
7. Waldeck marches to intercept Luxembourg (June); Gastañaga's 'supporting' position near Dendermonde
8. Battle of Fleurus July 1, 1690

On the Northeast Frontier

In an effort to bring about a conclusion to the war in 1690, yet more regiments were commissioned by King Louis in December of 1689. Minor operations also continued throughout the winter, on all fronts, but particularly in Flanders. Notable examples include a clash between 150 French and the Oudenaarde garrison, which the garrison won; the interception of a French raid into Brabant by Allied cavalry from Charleroi; a number of village burnings by the French in Brabant, between Ath and Jemappe. Usually, it was the Allies who raided across the Sambre from Charleroi. Inexplicably, the French took several years to stop up that rat hole.

The French also repaired and improved their Lines between Menin and Pont d'Espierres, Later in the war, the Lines were vastly extended in an attempt, successful in the main, to prevent Allied raiding. But, in its original conception, the object of the Lines of the Scheldt was not so much to block an enemy advance, but to provide a very large staging zone for attacks against the major towns of Flanders. By using the Lys and Scheldt rivers to protect the flanks, a three-sided defensive box was created, served by magazines at Lille and Courtrai. The design of the Lines consisted of a single zigzagging rampart and ditch with 34 detached redoubts. The Heeq Beek and Esperiette rivers, tributaries of the Lys and Scheldt respectively, added to the thickness of the defense along much of the Lines. The fortress of Menin had a crown-work guarding the river crossing there, which acted as a superior redoubt.

(The Dutch had their own defensive system already in place. In addition to an agreement allowing them to garrison various Spanish towns – a rudimentary Barrier Treaty – they had banks of redoubts constructed along the major canals in northern Flanders, from the coast to Antwerp.)

William of Orange had made the hard choice to supervise the war in Ireland rather than the Low Countries. Dissatisfied with Waldeck, he was more dissatisfied with his Irish commander, the Huguenot Marshal Schomberg. He hoped to conclude the campaign in Ireland early enough to reinforce Waldeck before the season was over. Probably for this reason, William hogged many of the best reinforcements, such as the Danish brigade that arrived in Holland over the winter.

Thus, Waldeck remained generalissimo, with the same problems as before – insufficient resources and a divided command. The Dutch had the money but squabbled over which state's turn it was to shell out the cash. The Spanish were unable to reinforce their army, or to pay it properly, which meant it was steadily shrinking. Gastañaga, based in Flanders rather than at Brussels, had 5,000 Spanish horse, but his mobile foot was predominantly Dutch (4,000), Brunswicker (8,000), and English (3,600).

Fortunately, the Germans had sent, or were sending, sizeable contingents. These included 2,000 more foot and a cavalry regiment from Wolfenbüttel, the 6,000 men of Liège (later 8,000), now fully mustered, and troops from Celle, plus those of Hanover, hired by Spain but paid for by Holland. The Elector of Brandenburg sent 6,000 of his men, placed on the Dutch payroll, retaining a corps of 18,000 on the Rhine fleshed out with troops from the North German states and Sweden (also paid for by the Dutch). Waldeck also had the bulk of the States Army with him.

Gastañaga mustered the Spanish at Ghent, drawing in his Brunswick mercenaries from Bruges, after which he intended to move east to meet with the English coming from Malines and Hornes' 12,000 Dutch, who probably wintered at Brussels.

Despite his difficulties, the Generalissimo was hopeful. William, though, was disappointed by the systemic lethargy of the Allied war effort. Clearly France held the initiative, once again. He urged everyone on, feeling that an early battle was needed to regain the momentum.

Waldeck was not keen on unnecessary battles. He believed the team was in a good defensive position. He intended to reinforce the garrisons of Mons and Charleroi, supporting them from magazines at Namur and Brussels. Both he and William did agree the Elector of Bavaria should be able to take some of the pressure off with a strong push on the Upper Rhine, and of course the opening of the Italian front was a real boon, one of King Louis' not infrequent strategic mistakes.

French preparations continued. *Maréchal* Luxembourg, King Louis' foremost soldier, replaced Humières, who was not fired but given a less demanding role as commander of the Lines of the Scheldt. Supporting Luxembourg was *lieutenant général* Boufflers, commanding a significant 'flying camp' of 7,000 men between the Sambre and Meuse, keeping the communications open between the armies in Flanders and the Rhineland. His instructions were to support *maréchal* Luxembourg, but also to remain ready to repel German troops penetrating France by the valley of the Moselle.

At various points along the border, other, smaller flying camps were established with bodies of horse and dragoons, both to cover gaps and to make raids.

Everyone knew the French were going to make a big push, but no-one could be sure exactly where. Preparations during February and March suggested to Allied Intelligence a French line of advance down the Meuse. Magazines were noted at Dinant and Philippeville. This caused Waldeck to further reinforce Namur, Charleroi, and Mons. He did not change his own plan to attack up the Meuse. Unknown to the Allies, the magazine at Dinant was primarily intended to serve the needs of Boufflers' corps.

In early April, that general, already in his start position, sent a strong force toward the castle of Boussu de Walcourt, just to the west of the Walcourt battlefield. The Governor of Mons managed to reinforce the garrison in the nick of time. Boufflers then crossed the Sambre at Floreffe (9 Km WSW of Namur) on a three-day raid to take contributions. This time the Governor of Namur foiled him. However, these activities did serve to keep the Allies busy and screen *maréchal* Luxembourg at Valenciennes, where the latter spent April marshalling his army.

On April 30 the French made a major probe across the Sambre, but again the Governor of Namur responded with a body of cavalry; the enemy fell back once they realised they were under observation. Then, word was received that Dinant had just been reinforced by a large convoy. This put paid to Waldeck's plans of laying siege to the place. In fact, it looked even more as if the main French effort would be made in his direction.

On May 6, Luxembourg established his HQ at Condé (11 Km northeast of Valenciennes), sending his army to Saint Amand-les-Eaux on the Scarpe River, a further 11 Km west. At Saint Amand a 'grand review' was held on May 15. Luxembourg at this point had only 25,000 men, given variously as 37 battalions and 91 squadrons when at Valenciennes, and 34/94 when at Saint Amand. Many more troops remained lodged in frontier garrisons, however, to be called upon if needed. For limited mobile operations, 25,000 seemed an ideal number.

On May 17 the army moved to Mortagne-du-Nord, 5-6 Km farther north, probably for reasons of forage, while Luxembourg went on reconnaissance, examining possible campsites around Leuze-en-Hainault and picking a spot to bridge the Scheldt. Leuze, site of a later battle, lies 17 Km northeast from Mortagne, roughly level with Tournai (on the map) and quite close to Ath, where the Allies had a significant garrison. However, it is well to the west of Mons and the line of the Sambre, and his reconnaissance, which was noted by the Allies, suggested the French now planned a descent on Flanders rather than Brabant.

Therefore, Waldeck thought it might be possible to continue with his original plan in modified form. Besieging Dinant was out, but he could still cross the Sambre and tackle Boufflers, which should draw troops from *maréchal* Luxembourg. Otherwise, Gastañaga would face the weight of Luxembourg's attack alone.

The *Maréchal* intended to base out of the Lines and strike toward the Bruges-Ghent Canal with 20,000 men in two detachments. The canal ran for about 50 Km, northwest to southeast, between the two cities, with each end being about 50 Km from the French Lines. The canal was of course a vital transportation line, but it was also fortified in a manner similar to the Lines, so the French would not actually cross it. He began his *grand chaussée* on May 18, down the Lys by way of Harelbeke to Deynze, which lay just short of the canal. The foragers boldly plied their trade right up to the gates of Ghent.

Gastañaga brought his troops together at Dendermonde, then marched for Ghent. Upon which Luxembourg withdrew to Harelbeke, where he had established a forward camp.

This raid into Flanders was a late addition to the French timetable. Initially, the 'bridging of the Scheldt' was intended as a bluff, but Luxembourg modified the plan when he learned, possibly incorrectly, that Bruges, Oostende, and Nieupoort all planned to surrender to the French, should they approach. The raid was made as a demonstration of strength. Since it was prematurely terminated, it is impossible to know if those towns really did plan to surrender.

Unfortunately, there was not much Waldeck could do to take advantage of the fact that the French were busy in Flanders. His plan had to be put on hold because the Allied regiments were late to the field – a statement that could apply to almost any year of the war. His main force was still assembling west of Maastricht, with some of the Dutch regiments still on Dutch soil at Bergen-op-Zoom. It was not until June 4 that the Allied army, concentrated at Tirlemont, camped at Wavre, 34 Km northwest of Namur. (Tirlemont to Wavre is a 25 Km march). On June 8 (or 12) they reached Genappe, 16 Km farther southwest, taking four (or eight) days to make a one-day march.

Meanwhile, Gastañaga and Luxembourg watched each other, the Spaniard from Ghent and the Frenchman from Harelbeke. At the end of May a Spanish column under Don Francisco de Castillo raided between Ypres and Dunkirk with 2,000 foot and 600 horse. They easily broke through the thin defences. Ypres is only 30 km west of Harelbeke, so in response Luxembourg camped under the guns of Courtrai, forming a junction with the troops in the Lines.

Meanwhile, Boufflers had spent most of May in the valley of the Moselle, in case the Imperials made a move on Trier. At the end of May he returned to his old camps between the Sambre and Meuse, just in time to plug the gap Waldeck was aiming for.

The Generalissimo had moved to Wavre rather than camping nearer Namur in case Gastañaga needed him, but had now reverted to his original plan. Again, this was to cross the Sambre and lay siege to Dinant, brushing aside or defeating Boufflers. The reason for the change in the campaign's scope was simple. He had 40,000 men to the enemy's 7,000. At the worst, Luxembourg might send sufficient reinforcements to stymy the Allies, but that was also an objective.

The siege of Dinant never happened. Luxembourg did send aid. The existence of the Lines allowed him to pull his army out of Flanders without fear of any deep penetration by the Spanish, who did not act aggressively

to pin him in the Lines, because they needed reinforcements to do so – that is, they needed the same men Waldeck needed to invest Dinant. Lack of manpower was the Allies' bugbear.

The events unfolded as follows. Humières was left with an observation corps in Flanders while on June 17 Luxembourg, who had marched down the Lys a second time, marched out of Flanders, bound for Maubeuge. Four days took him from Courtrai to Leuze-en-Hainault, Perulwelz (10 Km south), to Quiévrain (another 13 Km SE). This put the French south of the Allied garrison at Mons. A further three-day march took them 32 Km ESE to Jeumont on the Sambre, which they crossed on June 23 before camping close to their magazines at Maubeuge (about 10 Km SW of Jeumont).

Only vaguely aware of these movements, on the same day Waldeck borrowed about 6,000 men from Gastañaga before marching to Pont-à-Celles (12 Km SW of Genappe) on the Piéton River. Most of these were probably Dutch, but he did acquire 2,000 Spanish horse.

Thanks to the *Maréchal's* withdrawal, Gastañaga had been given a golden opportunity to raid a second time through the Dunkirk-Ypres gap but was unable to do so because he was down to only 8-10,000 effectives. He had 12-14,000 mobile troops in all, but a third of them composed the English Brigade, which was in a worse state than the Spanish: unpaid, in debt, and borderline mutinous.

The Allied contingency plan was for the Spanish to take up a passive defence. Thus, when Luxembourg left his vicinity, Gastañaga did not push forward, but moved closer to Waldeck, camping behind the Dender River at Wieze, midway between Dendermonde, at the confluence of the Dender and Scheldt, and Aalost. This position was about 60 Km northeast of the Lines, which seems rather distant, but from here the Spanish cavalry could threaten to cross the Lines should the remaining defenders leave them, or send aid to Waldeck. It was a compromise.

At Pont-à-Celles, where the old Roman road led east down the Sambre to the Meuse and beyond, the Generalissimo waited for four days to receive a train of 120 artillery pieces floated up from Namur. The Piéton flows into the Sambre at Charleroi, and was navigable at least as far as Pont-à-Celles.

Boufflers responded by marching to within 12 Km of Dinant, about 45 Km southeast of the Allies. He divided his corps, leaving an observation element under his own command and sending the rest under *général* Rubantel to reinforce the approaching Luxembourg.

Up to this point the Rhineland front had remained quiet. The local Allied forces were still waiting for the Brandenburgers to leave cantonments – they were habitually slow to do so. However, Luxembourg now received reports, possibly exaggerated, that the Germans were taking the field and advancing on Mont Royal, a fortress located on a bend of the Moselle, about halfway between Koblenz and Trier.

The capture of Mont Royal would be the first stage of a march up the Moselle into France by way of Trier and Luxembourg City. Versailles put pressure on *maréchal* Luxembourg to obtain a decision on the battlefield so that forces could be diverted to the Moselle. The *maréchal* himself had a shrewd idea that Waldeck's job was to pin him in Brabant while the Moselle was opened up.

(The problem with trying to describe the grand strategy of this war, at least in the early stages, is that there was no coordinated grand strategy, on either side. The French were 'winging it'. The Allies made their own plans based on local interests and needs. Sometimes these harmonised, and sometimes they did not. In this instance, there seems to have been discussion over whether Waldeck or the Germans should pin the French while the other attacked, but no agreement. Possibly, each side left the conferences thinking they had got what they wanted. Waldeck was the senior commander, so his should have been the main effort, and he probably decided to operate on that principle, no matter what anyone else thought. Thus the advance on Dinant was being made for the reasons previously stated: to hurt King Louis' prestige and restore Waldeck's own. When the Germans got it into their heads that he was supporting their own push, and then failed to make that push, they had only themselves to blame. The early bird gets the worm.)

Leaving Maubeuge, Luxembourg made camp at Boussu de Walcourt on June 27. He was at Gerpinnes on June 28. That evening he personally led a large detachment to Ham-sur-Sambre, 17 Km downstream from Charleroi. Making a forced march the French threw seven pontoon bridges over the river and entered Jemappe-sur-Sambre, on the far bank. Camp was established at Velaine, close to the modern Velaine-sur-Sambre, about 5 Km northwest of the crossing point.

The operation was not without incident. 100 Allied soldiers garrisoned a chateau called Froidment or Fromont, on the left bank. Luxembourg ordered his advance guard to swim the river, assisted by a captured boat. Stripped naked, one party stormed the chateau while dragoons with 'their swords in their teeth' swam to a redoubt the enemy had just abandoned and occupied it. The rest of the detachment simultaneously began erecting the bridges. Luxembourg's entire army was on the left bank by June 30, though the heavy baggage remained parked at Ham.

On June 29 word came to Waldeck from the governor of Namur that the French were about to cross the Sambre and the Generalissimo detached 2,000 men (3 battalions and 2 squadrons of horse) to observe. These discovered the French already winding up the crossing operation. Once again, Waldeck was surprised by Luxembourg, who

was now east of him, between Charleroi and Namur. The French had been expected, but not so soon. The Generalissimo thought he had another three days of freedom.

Actually, the situation was worse than it might appear at first glance. Waldeck's forces were not orientated to face the Sambre. His camp was centered on Pont-à-Celles but extended across the Pièton River to Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont, for a distance of 7 Km or more. Pont-à-Celles was the principle crossing point over the Piéton River, which flows southeast to make its junction with the Sambre at Charleroi. There was also a crossing east of the Allied camp, at Courcelles, about halfway to Charleroi.

Waldeck deployed here after learning the French were combining. Before they did so, he hoped to intercept and defeat Luxembourg, then turn back and march on Dinant. Boufflers could not hope to stem the tide by himself. The Allied troops were thus disposed to move southwest and intercept Luxembourg farther up the Sambre. Perhaps the reason the Generalissimo did not move earlier had to do with the delay in receiving the cannon from Namur. Now, he learned Luxembourg was behind him and in close proximity!

With either a planned withdrawal or a retreat, Waldeck would be forced away from Namur – that is, away from its magazines and away from reinforcement by the various Meuse garrisons, not to mention the Germans over on the Rhine. Gastañaga's troops were the only ones behind him, and though he could secure support from Brussels, obtaining waterborne supply from points north of that city would be difficult. The Allies had to fight.

This was Luxembourg's conclusion also. Though he had sough this outcome from the start, it was still a risk. He had already passed word to Humières to send all he could spare and 10,000 reinforcements joined him as his army was crossing the Sambre. Only 3,000 men remained in the Lines. The Spanish were fooled into thinking the Lines were fully manned by the maintenance of all the French camps and their facilities. Based 60 Km away, they never bothered to make close investigation.

The first thing Waldeck did was face about. He occupied a line facing southeast between the Pièton on his left and a stream on his right, with the village of Mellet, 8 Km east of Pont-à-Celles, on his left-front. This position covered the crossings of the Piéton, giving Waldeck a choice of retreat paths and options if he needed to support Charleroi, which might be put under siege. Both sides were now unable to withdraw or manoeuvre around each other without risking an attack on their lines of communication. But Waldeck held the inferior position.

This may not have been clear to him at the time. For one thing, he believed he had parity in numbers. For another, the longer he delayed matters, the more likely the Brandenburgers could make some real gains on the Moselle. In reality, Luxembourg enjoyed the advantage of Humières' 10,000 men. The Frenchman was also more aware of what was going on around him. There was no Moselle campaign.

As Waldeck turned about, Luxembourg was advancing his own position, establishing a new camp facing northwest between the villages of Lambusart and Mazy. The former is a village only 1,500 metres from the Sambre and about 4.5 Km west of Velaine-sur-Sambre. The latter is on the Orme River. Students of Napoleon's Hundred Days will recall that the Orme is the river that runs in a northeasterly direction through Ligny. Once past Ligny it bends south to join the Sambre. Mazy is situated on the latter section of the river, something over 6 Km northeast of Velaine. The camp had a length of about 9 Km. The distance between the French at Lambusart and the Allies at Mellet was 8,000 metres. About 1,500-2,000 metres in front of the French left-front was the village of Fleurus; about 2,500-3,000 metres in front of the center of the French camp was Ligny.

On the morning of June 30, Dutch and French horsemen fought a large skirmish on the plain east of Fleurus. It came about because Waldeck ordered a reconnaissance in force toward Mazy – in other words, along the length of the French lines. The Dutch, commanded by *brigadegeneraal* Berlo, were intercepted just east of Fleurus. Waldeck sent another brigade under *graaf* Flodorff to reinforce Berlo. The French, seeing this second brigade emerge from behind Fleurus, believed them to be the advance guard of Waldeck's whole army. Luxembourg formed for battle, then sent his left wing cavalry against Berlo and Flordorff. Berlo was killed and the Dutch retired in disorder.

According to Childs, Waldeck ought to have reacted to this affray at once – not to fight, but to shift his camp forward to a more favourable position, as a result of the partial reconnaissance, which would have yielded information about possible camps as well as the dispositions of the French. Instead, he took no action until the morning of July 1. Possibly, his cavalry let him down and did not provide the necessary information; perhaps the French response had been too vigorous and the Dutch cavalry too confused.

The net result was that during the night of June 30-July 1, Luxembourg moved forward and occupied the very ground Waldeck had been considering – the lands directly south of Ligny. The Generalissimo was preparing to break camp the next morning when this fact was made plain to him, and he was forced to deploy for battle in a hurry, and badly.

The Battle of Fleurus, July 1, 1690

The night of June 30, the rumour going around the French camps was of a retreat across the Sambre. Perhaps the self-appointed experts pointed out that with Waldeck staring them down there could be no siege of Charleroi, which may have seemed the whole point of the crossing, while they thought their commander should be worried about the Germans on the Moselle. Whether these rumours were fed to the troops by Luxembourg himself so that the Allies would learn of them, or whether they arose spontaneously, is not known. They were completely wrong.

A siege of Charleroi was not the immediate intent. Battle was. Any siege – and Luxembourg would subsequently demonstrate no interest in such a siege – would be a logical consequence of a won battle. The *Maréchal's* interrogation of Allied prisoners satisfied him that he had the advantage, and, in the predawn, orders were given for an advance. It is a sure guess that he had spies in the enemy camp who reported the 'negative vibes' emanating from Waldeck's tent.

At this point the reader should consult the accompanying map. For a straightforward set piece battle as well known as Fleurus (the author assures the reader that it *is* a reasonably well-studied battle), the accounts are amazingly vague and even contradictory, though the rough narrative is quite simple. Luxembourg pulled off a double envelopment. However, a number of vexing questions arise in the details.

First, the numbers. Childs puts the opposing strengths at 30,000 Allies and 40,000 French, including 6,000 cavalry for their left wing alone. Lynn's estimate is 38,000 Allies against 35,000 French. He breaks the Allies down into 9,200 horse, 1,400 dragoons, and 27,200 foot, plus 120 guns, not all of which would have been field pieces. Lynn says the French had 70 guns. Childs points out that two brigades of Allied cavalry were beaten up the day before, which becomes even more significant when one remembers the normal French preponderance of horse in this theatre. On the other hand, why were the French soldiers speculating about their own retreat if they were the stronger party?

A third source are two period maps, both apparently attached to contemporary French narratives dedicated either to the King or the Duke of Burgundy. One map, which has been followed here in most respects, says the Allies had 37 battalions and 56 squadrons, plus 60 cannon, while the French had 37 battalions and 80 squadrons, plus 69 cannon. For both sides, given the number of cavalry regiments involved – the names are known but there are too many to list here – the number of squadrons averages 1.6 per regiment. The accompanying map uses these figures and copies the order of battle on the old map, but does not place the battle lines in the exact same locations, for reasons which will be explained.

The other map, which Lynn seems to have studied, shows the crossing of the Sambre, the camps at Velaine and Mellet, the approach to battle, and the two armies in a variety of poses.

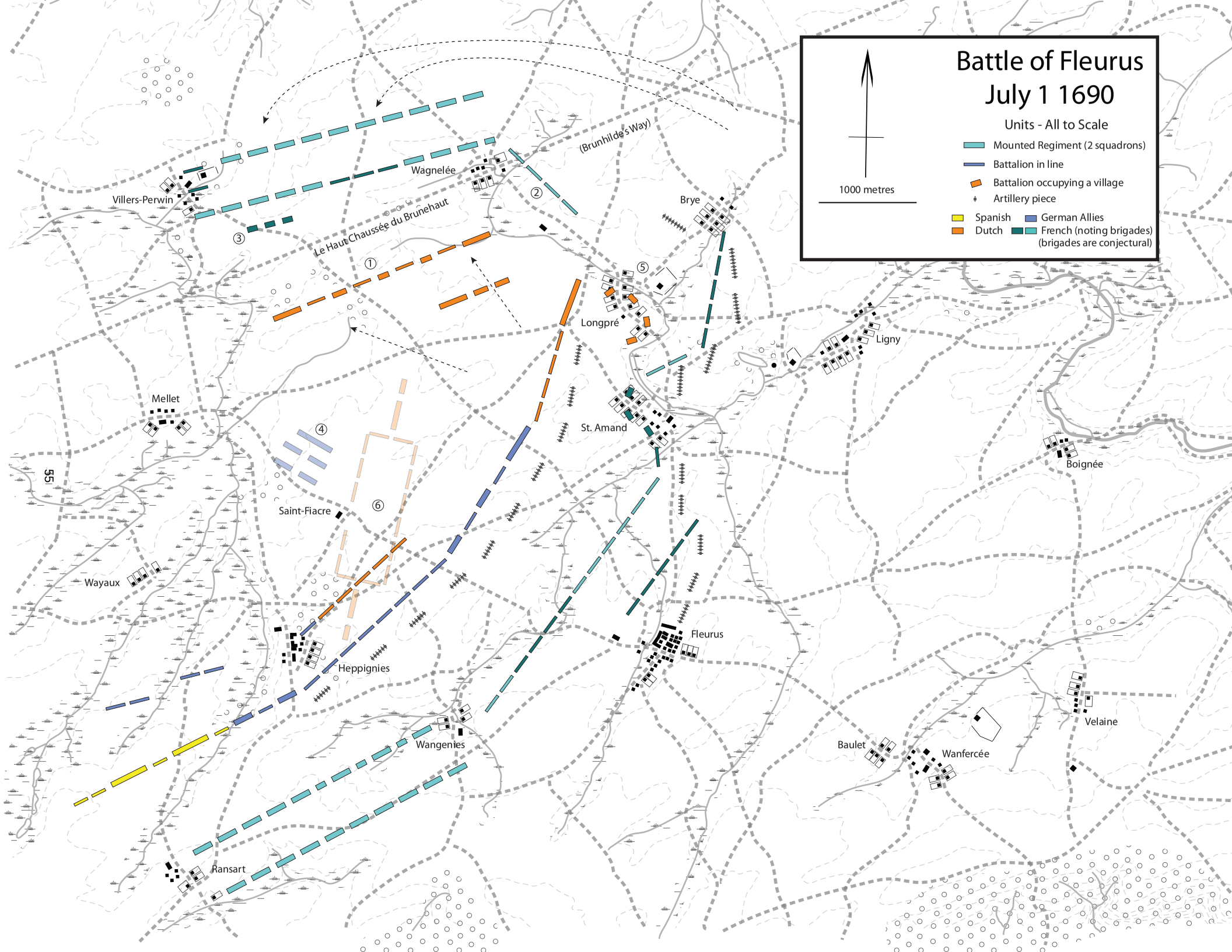
The variation in numbers does make a difference, because Childs says Waldeck was outnumbered while Lynn says the opposite, and both authors advance the disparity in strengths as an important reason for victory, Lynn using French weakness to claim Waldeck was outgeneralled. Childs does agree with that opinion, but cites the Earl of Portland's opinion that with another 2,000 cavalry, Waldeck would not have lost. (Armies, at least in this period, did not need two- or three-to-one advantages, they only needed an *edge*.)

[Other authors award Waldeck 50,000 men, which seems far too high. That is surely the overall strength in his theatre.]

Numbers are also important when trying to determine just how the armies arranged themselves. Waldeck's camp was at Mellet – that is, his headquarters was there. The regiments were probably camped on the Plain of Fleurus, which became the battlefield. No mention is made of them forming up in front of their tent lines, but that is a possibility. Their deployment was in the usual two lines, following a line of high ground which slopes away gently in front but cuts away sharply to the rear; the right end of the crest is higher than the left. There is no mention of a Reserve.

'High' ground is a relative term; Though the terrain can be described as 'flat', there is a mild 'swell' to it – enough to obscure line of sight in places – with copses of trees dotting open farmland. On the accompanying map, contour lines are at 5-metre intervals. Many of the watercourses were boggy, especially the line of the Orme River which flows through Ligny. The villages were quite small, Ligny surprisingly so; only Fleurus and Heppignies had developed enough to boast the odd 'city block'. Most places had a church, and there were a number of chateaux, monasteries, and chapels scattered about, plus most villages had walled gardens. Nevertheless, there was very little close quarter fighting. The map shows troops occupying Saint Amand and Longpré but those deployments, copied from the period map, may be speculative. Elsewhere the fighting took place in the open. The Allies were not given the chance to fortify their position.

The alignment of the Allied deployment is not universally agreed upon. According to Lynn the Right began at Heppignies and the Left ended at Saint Brice (Brye), a frontage of about 6,200 metres. Childs gives roughly the same frontage, but between Wangenies and Wagnelée. This changes the orientation from SW-NE to SSW-NNE. Both period maps show the lines stretching between Wangenies and Wagnelée, although there is a hint that they had originally stretched farther on the Left; the more detailed of the old maps shows the situation after the


Battle of Fleurus
July 1 1690
Units - All to Scale
Mounted Regiment (2 squadrons)
Battalion in line
Battalion occupying a village
Artillery piece
Spanish
Dutch
German Allies
French (noting brigades)
(brigades are conjectural)
1000 metres
(Brunhilde's Way)
Le Haut Chaussée du Brunehaut
Villers-Perwin
Wagnelée
Brye
Longpré
Ligny
Mellet
St. Amand
Boignée
Saint-Fiacre
Wayaux
Heppignies
Fleurus
Wangenies
Velaine
Baulet
Wanfercée
Ransart
55

Allied Cavalry of the Left was routed, so Lynn's version is still plausible. Childs states that the lines were not straight, but convex, bowing out in the center toward the hamlet of Saint Amand as they followed the crest of the high ground and the stream at its foot. This 'refused' both wings, but only slightly.

[Childs mistakenly writes 'Wagnée' for Wangenies. Wagnée lies south of the Sambre.]

There is one glaring problem with all three potential deployments. There is simply insufficient room to deploy the Allied Right unless one extends the line well south of Heppignies-Wangenies. Even if one assumes the Allied regiments were well understrength, even if one assumes they were 'scrunched' together, there is *still* not enough room. The period maps fit them in nicely, but the artists did not have the benefit of satellite imagery. This situation does help explain one question on the French side. In some accounts the French Left clashes head-on with the Allied Right, while in others, it wheels around to face northeast before charging. The answer seems to be a blend of the two. The opposing wings were both south of Heppignies-Wangenies, and the line was bent, as shown on the accompanying map.

An alternative deployment would be one where the Allied Right was folded behind the Center. No source makes this claim, there is only the suggestion that Waldeck 'scrambled' his men at the last minute. The French opened with the conventional cannonade, which ought to have given the Allies time to get into position, but it instead served to signal the general assault, so there was not much of a delay. If one assumes the Allied Right was still coming up from an encampment farther away – say, west of Mellet – a scenario can be postulated where Waldeck sends squadrons from his Right to counter the advancing French on his Left and they arrive in time to stem the tide. This scenario would also permit of a situation where the French Left 'envelops' the Allied line and faces northeast, or even north, without generating anomalies in the narrative. But, because this scenario is nowhere attested, the accompanying map shows the Allied Right fully deployed, and along the extension of the high ground *south* of the Heppignies-Wangenies line.

The Allied wings are shown with foot and horse intermixed, per the period maps. This will not have been due to the rushed deployment, but a deliberate tactic, probably used because the French had such an overwhelming superiority in cavalry.

The Allies are assumed to have 60 cannon. Since there is no indication of where they were located, or even if they were yet in position when the First Line was pushed back, they have been arranged in batteries along the front, mainly for artistic effect. If the Allies really did have 120 pieces, the other 60 must either have been battalion guns or still in their artillery park.

The French deployment generates fewer questions, but it does generate some. The accompanying map copies the more detailed period map except for two major differences. That map showed the situation after the Allied Left was destroyed and the French Center was advancing, but before the cavalry clash on the southern end. (It also showed Waldeck's attempt to counter the French Right by weakening his own Right, and the location of his final stand.) The accompanying map rolls back the action slightly on the French Right, where that wing is coming into line to make the full charge that will rout the Allied Left (the old map shows them standing on the ground now occupied by the Allies). It is assumed the French Center has been ordered to advance; it still has some way to go before it closes with the enemy.

On the French Left, the change already mentioned has been made – that is, the line has been extended south past Heppignies-Wangenies. Lynn's account has a sketch which shows the French Left lined up facing north between Fleurus and a point somewhat short of Heppignies. He is here following the second of the period maps, which shows a similar deployment. The French troops are concentrated on either end of the Allied lines, those between Heppignies and Fleurus already in line and those on the Right dressing off after crossing the Orme at Ligny. There is only a screen in the center. Unfortunately, such an arrangement would have it make the French Left's charge take place behind the French Center – unless the Center advanced much later, which is of course possible, just as it is possible that the Allied Right was tucked behind its own Center. Neither seems likely, but the latter seems more likely than the former. Lynn's source map makes matters worse by showing the French Left linking up with the Center and swinging like a door with its hinge on Heppignies; the French Right is shown in a neat line but no effort is made to indicate just how it, after smashing the Allied Left, got out of the way of the 'swinging door'. For these reasons, the accompanying map instead shows this author's interpretation of events.

Luxembourg's double envelopment did not unfold all at once. His Right was launched first and his Left went forward at the same time as his Center; only after the Allied Left was broken did the French Left charge. Childs says that Luxembourg sent several squadrons to beef up the Left's charge while he was reorganizing his own lines for the next phase. The accompanying map thus shows the Cavalry of the Left beginning to advance ahead of the Center, with the Allied Right, weakened by the deployment of most of its Second Line against the advancing French Right, preparing to countercharge the French Left.

With respect to the French gun line, Lynn says 40 cannon were grouped by Saint Amand to provide fire support for the French Right (which was one reason that attack was so successful), and 30 more were lined up on the high ground between Saint Amand and Fleurus. This is what

the accompanying map shows, except that 1 gun has been removed to make the count 69. According to Lynn, the Center was initially stationed along the same line, so the map shows it beginning to advance as Luxembourg prepares to crush the Allied Left.

The troops in Longpré and Saint Amand villages are a question mark. The basic narratives do not speak of fighting in those villages, but do mention such a fight at Fleurus, which seems rather far from the Allied lines for such an encounter. The French in Saint Amand are probably advancing with the rest of the line. Probably, also, the Allies in Longpré are not trying to push forward but have retreated there following the appearance of the French Right beyond Brye. The detailed period map shows additional battalions – 11 in all – which seem to have fled from the broken Allied Left. (The battalion count only totals correctly if this is assumed.) The bent French line (copied from that map) expresses an interruption in the smooth flow of the advance as those battalions are forced to deal with a strong enemy presence. If this is indeed the fight attributed in some places to the town of Fleurus, then the Allies held out for a long time.

In summary, it appears that Luxembourg's deployment gave Waldeck the impression that his Right was threatened with a mass of cavalry supported by batteries threatening to enfilade any counterattack. It was, but his Left was also threatened, and he did not know it. If the deployment was not as described – that is, if the weight of visible French mass was farther north – then Waldeck might have discounted an attack on his Right and looked for one on his Left.

Having used up two pages of text describing the overall situation of what is supposed to be a clear cut generic battle, it is time to follow the course of events. Of course, the battle was not really 'generic'. Luxembourg took a big gamble and achieved a result worthy of Napoleon on one of his better days.

The French did not advance in line from their encampments. They closed for battle in 5 columns. By the book, the righthand pair would be the First Line, the artillery was in the center, and the lefthand pair would be the Second Line. But Luxembourg instead used his lefthand columns to create his Left Wing. Command of the Cavalry of the Left was given to *général* Gournay. The supporting infantry was turned into the Center, initially (according to Lynn) arranged between Fleurus and Saint Amand. As previously described, 30 cannon were set up along that same line. The range to target was probably between 1,500 and 2,500 metres depending on the sector.

The remaining two columns – the First Line – crossed the Orme by pontoon bridges at Ligny, and swung wide, forming up beyond Brye. The French had already gone over the Orme once, marching up from the Sambre, and found it impracticable for crossing in the face of the enemy. Not only was it marshy, it had very steep banks. Therefore, they made the crossing at a great distance from the enemy.

Waldeck failed to observe the crossing at Ligny, which was made in 'dead ground'. Also, the French Cavalry of the Right, which crossed first, probably looked like the end of Luxembourg's line; they obscured the infantry behind them. After the French crossed the Orme, wading through a morass on the other side, they were hidden by a swell of ground in front of the Allied left-front. To Waldeck, it thus appeared the French were concentrated on his Right, instead of overlapping both ends of his line. The sudden appearance of Luxembourg's First Line as it topped the rise threw out Waldeck's calculations.

These movements, including the emplacement of the 40 cannon in the vicinity of Saint Amand, were complete about 10am, at which point the French guns commenced a bombardment, seriously discomfiting the Allied Foot. The cannon fire served as the signal for a general assault.

The French Cavalry of the Right, commanded by Luxembourg in person, advanced swiftly, probably pivoting on Brye, charged once it was over the *Chaussée du Brunehaut* and almost immediately routed the 17 Dutch squadrons opposite them (1), leaving not only the supporting Dutch infantry exposed, but the whole of the Allied Centre and the remainder of the Left. To make matters worse, French infantry now crested the rise from the direction of Wagnelée. After serving as a 'hinge' the 4 battalions in that vicinity (2) defiled through the village and reformed to push south against Longpré.

Unlike the French Left, their Right was done up in a mixed order, copying the Allies, with battalions of foot interspersed among the squadrons. Leading the charge on the right were 3 companies of the Gendarmerie (3). From the arrangement of the Allied formations it seems clear that the charge broke the Allied Right's Second Line, which, rather than being deployed north of Wagnelée and swinging back as the French approached, had filed off from its position behind the First Line to face the threat; those squadrons which could not fit between the two streams formed a hasty reserve. Being the Second Line, this formation probably included the two mauled brigades from the previous day's skirmish. Much of the Dutch Foot appears to have reached temporary safety in Longpré, but the cavalry all fled the field by way of the road through Mellet. Luxembourg did not pursue but readied for a second charge against the exposed Allied flank and rear.

About now, perhaps when it was observed that Waldeck was stripping his Right to aid his Left, the French Cavalry of the Left charged, possibly after being reinforced by some of Luxembourg's squadrons (Childs). They faced a tougher proposition: 2,000 Spanish troops under *teniente general* d'Huby, who resisted bitterly. Gournay was killed

in the initial charge and his command thrown into disorder. Both lines of French cavalry were repulsed and retired eastward to Fleurus. D'Huby captured 10 guns.

The 12 squadrons sent from the Allied Right to counterattack the French Right are marked at (4). Notice that these compose the entire Second Line cavalry of Waldeck's Right. 4 battalions of infantry were in support of this formation, interspersed as elsewhere, but did not go with the cavalry as far as can be ascertained. They are shown dressing their line behind the Spanish.

(The Allied Right is always called the Spanish Wing, but there were at most 6 squadrons of true Spanish horse. The rest were German mercenaries, from Brunswick, Hesse, and Württemburg. The map's colouring of the various contingents is correct with regard to quantity but not necessarily with regard to position. Two Spanish *tercios* fought in the battle; they have been given 2 battalions apiece because a) the tercios were sometimes that large, and b) because there are 2 unidentified battalions which cannot be Dutch and are probably not German.)

Intense fighting raged all along the line from 11:30 to 14:00. The detailed period map shows the 'Spanish' cavalry fleeing like the Dutch, but it is a French map. It does appear that some were eventually forced off the field, but some remained to the end. Unlike their cavalry, the Dutch infantry fought stoically for six long hours against repeated infantry assaults in front and cavalry charges in flank and rear.

[Artwork below: Battle of Fleurus by Pierre-Denis Martin]

The dénouement varies depending on the author. Lynn recounts that a penultimate assault at last compressed the Allied line, breaking its formation and actually forcing some troops forward toward Fleurus, where they tried to make a stand but were eventually overrun. This might actually refer to the fighting at Longpré (5) where 11

battalions of Dutch, over half of whom had been in support of the Dutch cavalry, resisted for a long time. He goes on to say the remainder of the army gave ground but reformed, near Wagnelée, only to be routed off the field in Luxembourg's final push. There seems to be agreement with most of that statement, but Wagnelée seems to be the wrong spot. The sources talk of a 'pocket' at Saint Amand, but they mean *Château* Saint Amand, which is the complex just east of Longpré. Curiously, the detailed period map does not show any Allied units occupying the chateau proper, just the village west of the stream.

Childs omits the pinching out of a part of the line. He insists the Allies left the field in good order, which also seems likely, since the Dutch infantry had a national trait of being often defeated in battle but never routing. According to him, after disengaging they marched toward Nivelles in a hollow square, accompanied by the 'Spanish' cavalry. *Luitenant generaal* Aylva fortuitously arrived as they were leaving the field, bringing up 9 fresh battalions, while 3,000 more Spanish horse arrived independently in time to cover the retreat.

[If these reinforcements were counted by Lynn as part of Waldeck's forces, then Childs' argument that the French outnumbered him on the battlefield seems more likely.]

The period map reveals the intervening details. This is the large divisional square formed just east of the Hermitage of Saint-Fiacre (6). Here is where the Allied Foot, less the men trapped at Longpré, rallied and held off the French for 6 hours before marching away, still in formation, by way of Mellet to Nivelles. The Square consists of 15 battalions, which is how many Waldeck was able to rescue, supported at either end by 5 squadrons of 'Spanish' cavalry.

Aftermath

According to Lynn, the French lost 3,000 dead and 3,000 wounded. The Allies suffered 6,000 dead, 5,000 wounded, and 8,000 captured. Childs puts the losses for Allies and French at 7,000 apiece.

Waldeck marched into Nivelles with only 15 intact battalions. Whether this includes the 9 battalions under Aylva is not clear. Some of the Dutch cavalry managed to flee to Charleroi, so they were not entirely a lost cause. But the Allies had abandoned their baggage, their guns, and their bridging train, which included a set of very valuable copper pontoons. The French would find them very useful. Much of the light baggage was saved, though. The French quit the field at nightfall, so parties from Charleroi were able to rescue some of it.

To quote Lynn (Wars of Louis XIV, p.209), 'if the tactical plan of Fleurus and its overwhelming victory were truly Napoleonic, the operational result was typically seventeenth-century.' Waldeck ordered a retreat to Brussels and the *Maréchal*, instead of rushing after him, stayed where he was. His army had sustained significant losses, the enemy had received timely reinforcements, and his logistics, though deemed excellent for those days, were not up to the task.

Childs castigates the Allied leadership and Waldeck in particular for the loss of the battle. Comparing the two sides, the Allies failed to concentrate all the troops available to them, particularly the garrisons of Charleroi – which was practically on the battlefield – and Namur. In contrast, Luxembourg effectively concentrated all his available manpower for the day of decision.

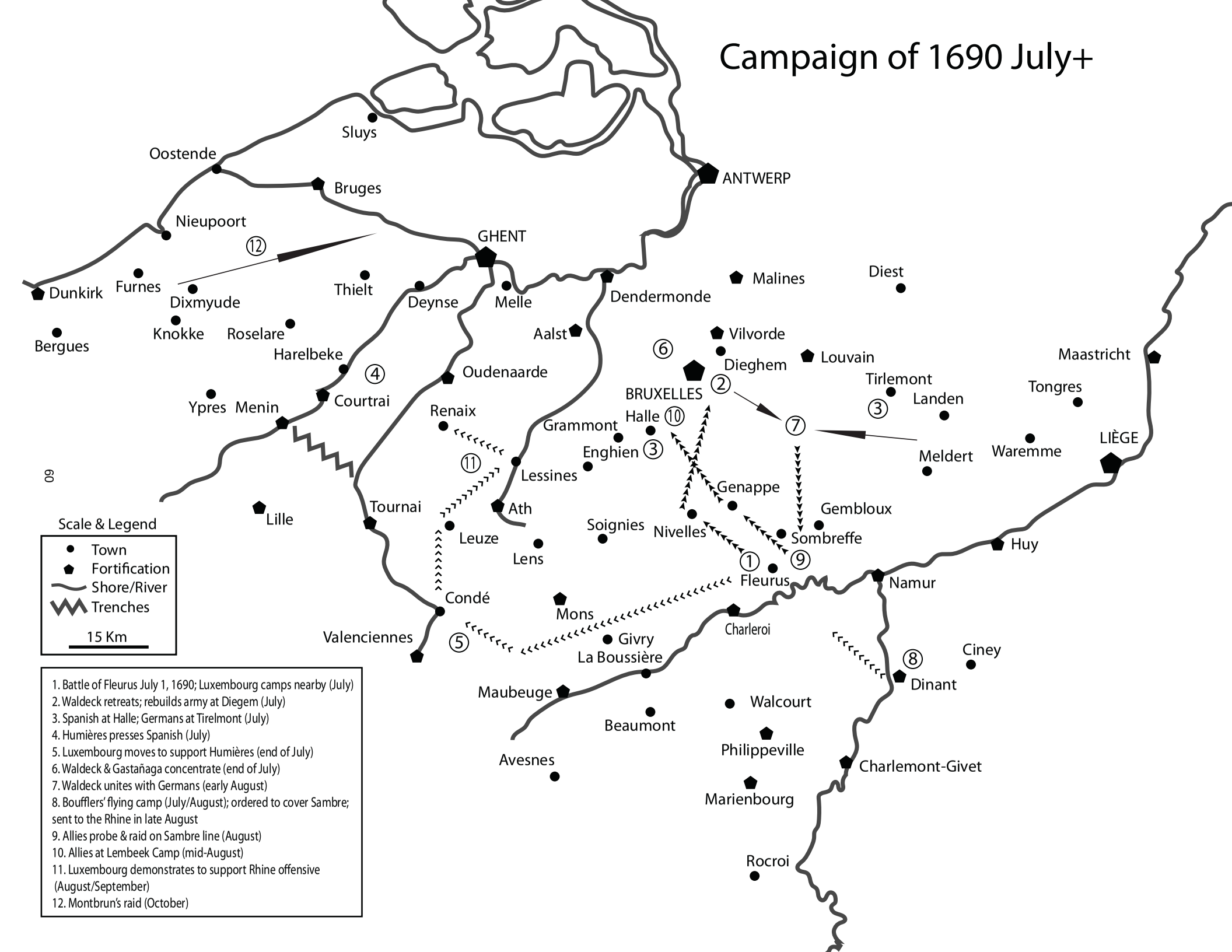
French operational intelligence was far superior to the Allies. Though that may have had something to do with their overwhelming cavalry superiority, Gastañaga is faulted for failing to realise the French had abandoned the Lines of the Scheldt, which was a fact he could have easily discovered. In which case, he could either have reinforced Waldeck or launched his own raid into Artois.

Though his army could be rebuilt, Waldeck had suffered a strategic reverse. He could not aid the Brandenburgers, which meant their attempt on the Moselle Valley (supposing it would ever have taken place) became too risky unless substitutes were obtained from farther up the Rhine. More importantly, he could no longer support the Spanish, leaving them open to enemy raiding. Even the Meuse fortresses were at risk, since the French were now closer to them. The Generalissimo could only hope to reassemble his army before the French reassembled theirs, which was not likely.

Both sides spent some time rebuilding. For most of July, Waldeck camped at Diegem, the Northeast suburb of Brussels, and swapped his shattered battalions for fresh ones out of the various garrisons, sending damaged units north into Holland. This was standard procedure for the period; Luxembourg was doing the same. Gastañaga sent him some Spanish troops and the useless English brigade, while General Tilly brought some Liègeois and Brandenburg regiments from Liège on July 22. The same day the bulk of the Brandenburgers hired by the Dutch crossed the Meuse at Visé – a major crossing point on that river, 15 Km below Liège – reaching Tongrés the same day (a march of about 16 Km).

The Spanish general, Vaudémont, commanded a covering force at Halle, 15 Km southwest of Brussels, on the Senne River. At Tirlemont, the Prince of Hanover covered the Allied right flank with his own regiments. Gastañaga also reinforced Mons, Bruges, and Ghent, which must have left him with no field force at all. But, one could be quickly made up by re-emptying the fortresses.

There was still time to redeem the campaign. In mid July Waldeck, Gastañaga, and the Elector of Brandenburg met at Liège and made plans. This is when the Dutch obtained the use of the extra German and Liègeois troops. A two-pronged offensive was arranged. The Generalissimo was to lead his men against *maréchal*


Campaign of 1690 July+
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
⑫
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
⑥
Harelbeke
④
Oudenaarde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
BRUXELLES
②
Tirlemont
Tongres
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Renaix
Halle ⑩
Landen
③
⑦
Grammont
Enghien ③
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
⑪
Lessines
Genappe
Gembloux
Tournai
Ath
Soignies
Nivelles
Sombreffe
Lille
Leuze
Lens
⑨
①
Fleurus
Huy
Namur
Condé
Mons
Charleroi
Valenciennes
⑤
Givry
La Boussière
⑧
Ciney
Dinant
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
60
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. Battle of Fleurus July 1, 1690; Luxembourg camps nearby (July)
2. Waldeck retreats; rebuilds army at Diegem (July)
3. Spanish at Halle; Germans at Tirelmont (July)
4. Humières presses Spanish (July)
5. Luxembourg moves to support Humières (end of July)
6. Waldeck & Gastañaga concentrate (end of July)
7. Waldeck unites with Germans (early August)
8. Boufflers' flying camp (July/August); ordered to cover Sambre; sent to the Rhine in late August
9. Allies probe & raid on Sambre line (August)
10. Allies at Lembeek Camp (mid-August)
11. Luxembourg demonstrates to support Rhine offensive (August/September)
12. Montbrun's raid (October)

Luxembourg while Gastañaga reassembled his own forces at Dendermonde and marched toward Picardy. For Brandenburg's benefit, they were doing it 'to aid his Moselle offensive'. Sure, why not. Whatever.

Luxembourg made no significant moves during this time. Why? Politics. Louvois did intend to issue orders for the siege of Namur, or possibly Charleroi. But King Louis, who originally concurred, became worried about the Dauphin's position. His son was in nominal command of the French forces in Germany and it appeared he might need reinforcement. Then came news that the Brandenburgers had crossed the Meuse downstream from Liège. These might swing by Namur and up the Meuse to Dinant. Luxembourg was ordered to send reinforcements to Boufflers and not risk a siege. Actually, the Germans merely linked up with Waldeck.

This does not mean the French lost a whole month's campaigning, however. A wide stretch of territory east of Brussels was laid under contribution, which in its way was of more strategic importance than the taking of a fortress. This was somewhat ironic, given that King Louis still had hopes of a short, decisive war, which depended on Battle, while his opponent, William of Orange, had from the start expected that Attrition would be the only effective strategy.

In the aftermath of Fleurus, Luxembourg remained camped at Velaine for some days before shifting to a spot between Charleroi and Farciennes. The latter place was only 7 Km from the fortress, and a couple of kilometres due south of Fleurus. With the Germans showing no immediate signs of wanting to push up the Meuse, Humières returned to the Lines and promptly pushed forward himself to Avelgem, with his mobile forces augmented by the Courtrai garrison. Avelgem was about 10 Km northeast of the Lines, on the Scheldt. This challenge kept the Spanish locked in their fortresses.

When the Brandenburgers arrived on the scene, Luxembourg, denied the chance to capture a Meuse fortress, moved westward to Quiévrain, 54 Km west of Charleroi. This place is 20 Km WSW of the Allied fortress of Mons, which had just been restocked (along with Oudenaarde and Ath). Quiévrain was also within reach of the Lines of the Scheldt.

This in turn led the Allies to modify their plans. Waldeck moved to Overijse, 8 Km northwest of Brussels, on July 28. Gastañaga, who had by this point reached Gavere, on the Scheldt about 14 Km south of Ghent, also reported to Overijse with 16,000 men, leaving only 2,000 to cover all of Flanders. The march would have taken 3-4 days, given that the distance is about 45 Km.

The Spanish move seems foolish, but intelligence had been received that Humières' corps was disbanding. The Lines retained a strong garrison, but all mobile forces were turned around and sent back to *maréchal* Luxembourg. Humières himself was ordered to wear his other hat, that of Governor of Lille. Luxembourg had been forced to take this measure because of incessant calls from Versailles for troops to send to the Rhine.

[It was common for a general on the frontier to be a governor of a key fortress, or even of a province, and simultaneously a commander of field troops. Obviously he could not do both at once, and had a subordinate take over during the campaigning season.]

On July 31 Waldeck was at Aachen, conferring with the Elector of Brandenburg. By now, Luxembourg was covering Flanders from its eastern edge, Humières' men were either joining him or occupying the Lines, and Boufflers was still patrolling between the Meuse and Moselle, but based near Dinant. Thanks to King Louis' anxiety, the Allies currently outnumbered the French in this theatre. What advantage could be gained?

Attacking *maréchal* Luxembourg would involve significant logistics. Everyone would have to shift west. Attacking Boufflers would risk a French countermove into Flanders. Or, Luxembourg might simply link up with Boufflers. Unlike Humières, the *Maréchal* was unpleasantly energetic.

On August 2, the forces of the Elector of Brandenburg and Waldeck joined at Wavre. Gastañaga also 'joined' the party, but physically remained at Halle, exercising an independent command 'in close cooperation'. This gave the Allies 55,000 men: 25,000 of Waldeck's original mixed force, or 30 battalions and 40 squadrons, plus 23,000 Brandenburgers and 8,000 Liègeois.

Having expected this concentration, Luxembourg had already ordered Boufflers (July 27) to cross the Meuse (Dinant is on the right bank) and cover the magazines at Maubeuge and Philippeville. Boufflers was also to standby to assist the *Maréchal*, who marched to Bavay, 14.5 Km southeast of Quiévrain and 12 Km west of Maubeuge. The Maréchal augmented his army with additional garrison troops. According to Childs however, this only gave him 40,000 men.

Round Two?

There would be no second offensive, by either side. Despite all the damage wrought and all the reshuffling, by August both armies had assembled so many men that they could only with difficulty manoeuvre against each other. The rest of the season therefore consisted of a series of raids, and of the construction of fortified lines.

The Allies wandered about near the Sambre for a number of days, threatening an offensive, which did not take place due to lack of forage and internal squabbling. On August 3 (or 5) Waldeck marched to Genappe. Here, word was received of the Battle of the Boyne, and there was great rejoicing. But, the three Allied commanders could not agree on strategy. The Elector was particularly annoying; he claimed his army had been hired at £10,000 a month and had yet to see a penny.

On August 7 Waldeck was at Nivelles, and on August 8 at Bois-Seigneur-Isaac. This put his army within 2 hours journey of the Spanish at Halle. On August 9, the next in the infinite series of councils was called. At least they came up with a plan. This was to march to the vicinity of Mons, set up bases, then raid across the frontier.

On August 12 the Allies combined in a grand camp, 8 Km long, of 61,000 men, between Halle and Lembeek (upstream from Halle). At a final conference it was decided to establish forward camps at Soignies and Roulx (Le Roeulx). The former is 15 Km NNE of Mons and the latter 8-9 Km SSE of Soignies and 12 Km from Mons.

They would not seek battle. Apparently, the Dutch Field Deputies forbade one. The Elector also, despite warlike protestations, made it clear he was not about to risk his late father's pride and joy – the troops, that is, not the Elector – in combat. If his army was destroyed he would be mocked and abused by his peers in the Empire.

Waldeck kept his mouth shut. A no-battle policy was also to his liking, though it would not do to say so. In his case, he had no desire to share the glories of command with either the Spanish or the Germans. If he could persuade William of Orange that the Allies were to blame for this year's lack of progress, perhaps he would be given sole authority in the Low Countries. The Generalissimo wrote several letters to William hinting that the Rhine was the true focal point. If the Germans would only start their Moselle campaign, Boufflers would be sent east and Luxembourg's army would be weak enough to attack. Unfortunately, the German corps earmarked at the start of the year for the Moselle offensive was still, as the end of the season approached, far too puny. Waldeck could not afford to give up his own Brandenburgers to strengthen them. Catch-22.

Though a battle was not on the cards, a Demonstration was certainly in order. 61,000 men ought to be able to intimidate 40,000 and show Luxembourg the futility of offensive operations. Then, the Allies could try levying contributions on the French for a change, and they could see how they liked it. But… now the Elector was receiving reports of French raids against Jülich and contributions being levied on Aachen.

The reports were true. On the other end of the front, *général* Tessé coursed with 2,000 French cavalry deep into Jülich, beyond the Ruhr, and took contributions amounting to 1,200,000 livres. The German generals in Waldeck's army began to shuffle their feet and mumble.

Then the weather broke and for six days there was thunder and lightning and torrential rain. When the skies cleared the ground was like gumbo and the scouts reported 2,000 French cavalry occupying the Allies' planned campsite at Soignies. These troops were sent out to observe Waldeck's forces. They in turn soon reported the departure of the Liègeois, on August 18, sent to protect their home city against *général* Tessé. The Elector of Brandenburg seized on this excuse to get away and promised to aid Liège with some of his units, while garrison troops from Münster and forces under the Duke of Neuburg, which had been operating farther up the Rhine, were rushed into Jülich from the East.

These evolutions in turn lent weight to renewed calls from Vienna for a Moselle offensive. The Elector of Bavaria would lead this effort, using the forces sent to Liège and those already in the Ruhr area as a flank guard. The rest of the Rhine front was put on static defence.

In his turn, Luxembourg had to respond. The ubiquitous French spies told Versailles the Emperor was planning a massive offensive on the Moselle. If the *Maréchal* thought Versailles had been stripping his army before, it was now being dismembered. On August 25, Boufflers was sent to the Moselle with 10,000 men. Luxembourg himself, having to cover the entire frontier alone, changed camps, marching to Blaton 12 Km south of Leuze-en-Hainault, not far from Condé.

But these motions, far from encouraging the Allies into attempting offensive action, coming after a week of inertia seem to have unsettled them. Gastañaga was all fire and brimstone, but the Elector was for home, and Waldeck 'made difficulties'. Luxembourg's redeployment was not the main reason. In tandem with Boufflers' move came an advance by the forces of the Dauphin against the Elector of Saxony on the middle Rhine. The French had in fact crossed the Rhine at Phillippsburg.

In aid of this offensive, Luxembourg also now advanced, marching northeast by Ligne to Lessines, on the Dender River. This was probably a two-day march. Ligne is 13 Km from Blaton and Lessines is 13 Km from Ligne. It may have taken a couple of days longer due to the muddy ground. At Lessines he was 29 Km west of Waldeck's army at Halle, but also in a position to march on Ghent and Bruges. Just as before Fleurus, the French had placed themselves between Waldeck and the places he was most concerned about. They were reputedly stockpiling mortar bombs and 'carcasses' for siege work.

More rain fell. Waldeck shifted his HQ from Halle to Lembeek. That was the extent of Allied movement. On September 22, General Spaen and 5,000 of his Brandenburgers were at last detached under general Tilly to aid the Liègeois.

Only one act remained. On October 10 Luxembourg fell back to Renaix (Ronse), 16 Km WNW from Lessines. He hoped to goad Waldeck into action by a series of raids into northern Flanders. 8,000 cavalry under *général* Montbrun were ordered to cross the Bruges-Oostend canal, about 60 Km northwest.

It only took them a day and a half to get there. It appears Montbrun was already based close to the coast in his own flying camp. Probably, he had spent the summer

projecting French power in the region. When the French reached the canal on October 11 they were met by a mixed bag of Dutch and Spanish troops supported by two Dutch gunboats. Montbrun decided to retreat.

Lynn writes of one more raid, this time by Allied troops. He does not say when it took place, but it would appear to have been while the Allies were at Halle but before Montbrun's raid, although he might actually be referring to Castillo's raid in May. The Allied raid was made against some new French Lines near Ypres, with the object of disrupting the construction work and hopefully breaking through to ravage French territory on a thinly guarded sector. 3,000 men took part, 1,500 infantry doubled up on the horses of 1,500 cavalry. It was Montbrun who responded. Depending on the timing, the men who intercepted him on the canal may have been some of those who took part in the Allied raid. The Allies were cut off and forced to retreat by devious routes.

Waldeck kept his army in being until shortly after October 20. On that date he was forced to leave Lembeek, which had become a 'desert'. Tubize, 5-6 Km south of Halle, was his next stop. However, the weather showed no signs of clearing, so he sent his regiments into winter quarters. The Brandenburgers, except for 10 battalions stationed at Brussels, had to march all the way back to the Rhineland. The English, commanded by Thomas Talmash, cantoned at Bruges. The Dutch went to Holland and the Spanish dispersed among their towns.

The French also quit the field, with most troops occupying fortresses on the frontier. However, a large corps was spread out between Luxembourg City and the Moselle in case the Emperor decided to turn the Moselle offensive, which had *still* not materialized, into a winter campaign. Such things were known to happen from time to time.

Summary

1690 was a very bad year for the Allies. On the Northeast Frontier alone they had lost one major battle, and general wear and tear had reduced the size of every contingent, except perhaps the Liègeois. And the Brandenburgers, who only put in a token appearance. The Spanish had it the worst. The war was being fought on their soil, and it was expensive. Their horse was practicing banditry and extortion just to eat, while the valuable Hanoverian corps of 8,000 men headed home at the end of the season because Gastañaga would not (and could not) cut them a good deal.

Elsewhere, Anglo-Dutch naval forces lost the Battle of Beachy Head, though that was more a moment of shame than a strategic blow, and the Duke of Savoy was hammered at the Battle of Staffarda.

On a positive note, William of Orange would be free to command in the Low Countries next year, and hopefully the monetary and manpower resources of England could at last be poured into the war (William still had little experience of the English Parliament's whims).

French arms were everywhere victorious. Their troops were better than the Allies (mostly), their generals were better (mostly), their logistics were better, their diplomats and spies were better. And yet the war showed no sign of ending.

Winter Amusements

Operations did not cease just because the armies were in winter quarters. Now began the *kleine krieg*. It took the form of a series of cavalry raids, continuing on from those waged at the tail end of the campaigning season. Childs recounts two French raids in late November which were typical. They were carried out at roughly the same time. 1,200 horse rode to Enghien, about 27 Km north of Mons, while another party, presumably of similar size, rode to Grammont (Geraardsbergen), 14 Km northwest of Enghien. These raids were primarily intended to cause devastation; contributions were of less importance. The raiders brought everything they needed with them, usually enough for three days and no more. The latter raid at least was chased off by a force hastily assembled at Brussels.

According to Childs (p.152): 'The French forages during the winters of 1690 and 1691 were extremely severe and virtually depopulated the country around Louvain and along the valley of the River Dender."

This was the goal, of course. If a great siege were to be undertaken, for instance – no names, no pack drill, but perhaps *Mons* – then the besiegers would not be living off the land anyway, but the relief army might have to, if their magazines were a safe distance away.

The Allies tried to counter-raid but with much less success. They could not afford, monetarily, to mount large raids, and small ones invariably bumped into large French cavalry patrols.

What the Allied Command apparently failed to heed was the *location* of most of the French raids. They targeted the lands around Mons and the approaches to it. Some raiding was done around Charleroi to give the impression of a campaign against the Meuse forts, and the Allies took that bait.

There were also fears of a penetration over the Bruges-Ghent Canal, but this was soon discounted. Nonetheless, Gastañaga scraped together some men to beef up his garrisons and even started to build new fortifications.

On December 13, the lands of Flanders froze and a massive French raid involving 8,000 men took place. Luxembourg's own son, the *comte* de Bouteville, led the column to Grammont, where he established a base with 2,000 foot, and raided Aalost (Aalst), 20 Km northeast. He then swung east into Brabant and burnt 17 villages over a period of two days. The villages burned even if they had

paid ‘protection’. On December 16 Bouteville retired on Tournai, a force of Spanish horse assembled at Ninove blocking his retreat to Grammont. The raid was virtually unopposed.

Then Boufflers took men from the Valenciennes-Dinant sector of the front and crossed the Sambre with 10,000 men and 6 cannon. The crossing took place on December 15 at Auvelais (i.e., Sambreville) – essentially where Luxembourg crossed to fight the battle of Fleurus – walking across the river on the ice. Boufflers punished Spanish Brabant. His subordinate, *lieutenant général* Ximenes, held the crossing point for him with 5,000 infantry and 500 cavalry. The remaining 4,500 horse, and the guns, ranged as far as Louvain (Leuven), nearly 50 Km north. The French threatened to burn the famous Abbey of Louvain.

The Allied response to all this ‘coursing’ was excessively feeble. A force of 15,000 Dutch and Spanish cavalry under *teniente general* d’Huby mustered at Nivelles. The muster was about all they managed to accomplish.

Meanwhile, the French sent out another 8,000-man raid, this time from Tournai, under Hector Villars. He raided from Grammont, through Halle, to the lands south of Brussels. Villars and Boufflers were supposed to join forces, probably to make a show against Brussels itself, but one of the former’s subordinates, the *comte* de Valsassine, ‘bungled a simple river crossing in the face of light opposition placing Villar’s corps in some temporary jeopardy’ (Childs, p.153). The French parties went their separate ways, hastening to recross the frontier before a sudden thaw rendered them immobile in enemy territory.

On January 19, Boufflers and Villars combined again for another *chevausée*. Men from Tournai, Valenciennes, Douai, and Liile, after assembling behind the Lines of the Scheldt, marched with Boufflers down the right bank of the Lys to Deynze, where they crossed over. Villars took men from Ypres and Dunkirk and headed for Bruges, in the vicinity of which they linked up with Boufflers. The combined force of 13,000 foot, 6,000 horse, and 16 cannon, crossed the frozen Bruges-Ghent Canal and ravaged the country north of the canal from the North Sea coast to the outskirts of Antwerp. They retreated with the onset of another thaw, laden with plunder to the tune of 1,800,000 livres. Boufflers then turned and gave Ghent a final kick before departing for the Lines.

This time the Allies retaliated. The governor of Ath, possibly on his own initiative, bridged the Scheldt and raided near Tournai.

1691 – France Ahead on Points

A Scene in Jonathan’s Coffee House, circa early 1691

Courtier*: Here Sirrah – A* Dish of Tea*, and desire that* Gentleman *in the* Band *to speak with me* – Oh, Sir, your Servant, *(to the* Citizen*) ‘faith I lately came from the* Presence*, and ’tis said, the* Queen *receiv’d an* Express *just now, that* Mons *was taken; Pray, what News have you in the* City*?*

Citizen: Mons taken, Sir? *Ay, so is* Venice*, Sir! Lord, you* Gentlemen *of the t’other end of the Town have the strangest Intelligence! why, nothing but* Pacolet’s Flying Horse *could bring over the News so suddenly.*

Courtier*: Why do you doubt the Truth of it, Sir?*

Citizen*: I know no Reason I should let any Man’s Opinion be the Standard of my Faith, for –*

Courtier*: Perhaps ’tis your Interest, Sir, to disbelieve it, you have laid some* Wagers *upon that occasion, and I must confess, the Hopes of Winning, and the fear of Losing, will make any man suspend his belief for some time.*

CItizen*: The Truth on’t is, sir, I am a* little dipt*, some five or six Hundred Pounds to several Persons, and unless the Prince* De Bergue*, the Governor of the* Town*, sends me a Letter from his own hand, shall hardly believe the Affirmation of any* Ostender *that comes by the way of* Plymouth*. Meer Shams, Sir, meer Shams.*

Courtier*: (*Turning aside*) Well, now I have a Roguish Inclination to bite this* Opus & Usus*, and tho’ I my self am a little doubtful of the matter, yet the fingering of some* City Gold*, will be more pleasant to me, than a little Estate won at the* Groom Porters*. (*Turning to him*) Well, Sir, have you a few* Dormant Guineas *in your Closet, you are indifferent whether you Win or Lose upon this occasion?*

Citizen*: Truly, Sir, Mony was never reckon’d by me amongst things indifferent; but I have* Fifty Pound*, I will venture to odds with any Person, that* Mons *will not be in the* French King’s *Hands by the first of* May –

Courtier*: No more words, Sir, I am your Man, here’s ten hard pieces of* Old Barbary Gold*, with the* Royal Effigies *upon them – which said sum shall be yours, if in a little time I do not convince you the* Town *is in the* French *hands; the Counterpart of which Obligation is, you are to give me Fifty Guineas, when you are undeniably convinc’d the Town is taken.*

Citizen*: With all my Heart, Sir; in Token whereof, here’s my hand, Sir, and so good Luck attend me.*

From a satire of the time called The Art of Getting Money by Double-Faced Wagers, or Cross and Pile whether Mons be Taken, or No?

*[*Opus & Usus *is a Latin tag literally translated as ‘need and use’ – in other words, this Citizen is a pigeon who is in* need *of being* used*. Pacolet’s Horse is a character in the King Arthur cycle of Medieval romances, much used in later literature to signify speed. Pacolet himself was supposedly a dwarf magician in the service of the French king.]*

Strategy

On their Northeast Frontier the French had only one objective for the 1691 campaigning season: the capture of Mons. And, this was accomplished before the season opened! The rest of the year was spent in activities similar to 1690 and 1689, and with similar purposes – to defend France's borders both by countering the moves of the Alliance and by keeping her off balance.

Why Mons? At an 'operational' level, just look at the map. Although the Allies had not used it as a base for offensive operations, it was a major thorn in the side of any French commander who wanted to traverse the front with an army. Though, due to the local terrain, it was of less value for an Allied invasion of France – their armies seem to have concentrated mainly on attempts to advance up the Meuse – it could serve as a base for major cavalry raids and guarded the lines of communication between Flanders and Brabant.

Strategically Mons had two values. First, as the key fortress town on that section of the front it was a potential source of taxation and supply, and the place from which to control the population for some distance all around. Perhaps more importantly, it had high prestige value. The Dutch considered it of so great a worth, as both a defence against and a challenge against the French, that it was one of the places the Spanish allowed them to garrison; part of what would evolve into the Barrier Fort system.

Why now, and not before? Well, the siege already *had* been conceived. The town was on Louvois' target list from the outset of the Nine Years War. In fact, Mons had been under threat in 1684 but the French desisted from a siege then. Apparently there was insufficient forage in the vicinity to allow for a siege 'on the fly', meaning a tremendous logistical effort would be needed. France was perhaps the only nation in Europe with the resources to attempt such a siege successfully, but 1684 was not the time. Now, it was, and preparations had been underway for nearly a year, in secret.

It would be a critical psychological blow for the Allies to lose such a place and might lead to peace offers. (In the case of William of Orange, though, it only led to temper tantrums and vain attempts to collect bargaining chips elsewhere.)

Speaking of King Billy, 1691 would be the first year that he commanded the armies of Flanders and Brabant in person. The war in Ireland was not over, but things had progressed far enough that he could leave it to subordinates. He met all the principal players at the new Annual Hague Conference on February 5. In addition to Waldeck, Gastañaga, and the Elector of Brandenburg, the Elector of Bavaria, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, and the Duke of Brunswick were deemed sufficiently important to attend. Waldeck seems to have conveyed the Allies' fears to William of Orange, because the first thing the Prince did when he arrived at The Hague on January 31 was to make a rousing speech.

The Hague Conference had been grinding on for months, most of the delegates were already in the city, and a great deal of the petty obstacles to strategy had been cleared away. (Childs believes William's greatest contribution to the war effort was his ability to get everyone, high and low, to work together as equals. As a general he may have been second rate, but very few people in history have been able to do that.)

The Allied plan depended somewhat on events. Well, no, it depended almost entirely upon events. The French had the initiative. Gastañaga had been so affected by the French raiding over the winter that he declared he would form a 'cordon' along his whole front, a strategy that would have left him no mobile forces at all and nothing to lend his allies.

The upshot of the discussions was that the members of the Grand Alliance agreed to field 220,000 men: 35,000 from Holland; 20,000 each from the Empire, Spain, Brandenburg, and England (remembering that most of the Emperor's troops were fighting the Ottomans); 18,000 each from Savoy and Bavaria; 16,000 from Hanover (that is, Brunswick and Lüneburg); 12,000 from Saxony; 8,000 from Hesse-Cassel; 7,000 from Münster; 6,000 each from Liège and Würtemberg; 4,000 from the Palatinate. The German forces mentioned came from the respective states' armies; they also contributed troops to the Imperial war effort, mainly in Hungary. Many of their units were already in the field, while some would not be raised. But it was the thought that counted.

On the political side, the Alliance boisterously declared that none of them would make peace until France's frontiers had been reset to those of 1648, her citizens' 'ancient privileges' restored – meaning tolerance for the Huguenots, but also a significant weakening of France's central authority – and reparations for the shabby treatment the Sun King had accorded the Pope.

His speech fired up the delegates, but on the military side, the Prince of Orange had nothing to say. He retired to his winter estates and went hunting, leaving his lacqueys to work out the details. Which they did without much reference to each partner's needs. Par for the course.

Unsurprisingly, the French, not having to consult with anyone, were far better prepared for their campaigns. The plan concocted by Louvois and King Louis, finalised in a session on February 26, was to take Mons in a surprise move before the campaigning season opened, and then to redistribute their forces to other fronts. Flanders would still host the largest army over the summer, but its role would be a defensive one. Luxembourg remained in command with orders to that effect. He could be proactive, but only to a limited degree.

After Mons, *général* Boufflers would be given command of a larger number of troops for his own Army of the Moselle. This allowed him to truly form a link between the Rhine and Flanders, while blocking any enemy advance up the river. As will be seen, he still had a role to play assisting *maréchal* Luxembourg.

The Wider War

Winter raiding continued, in preparation for the great siege, but first, a word about the other fronts during the course of 1691.

The army on the Rhine, still commanded by *maréchal* Lorge, would, beginning in June, wage a 'war of detachments', managing to maintain itself on enemy soil – i.e., at their expense. Despite having 40,000 men in the field, Allied efforts against him would prove weak, thanks to outbreaks of disease, which also struck some of the senior commanders. The war on this front shut down in September.

In Italy, Catinat would be reinforced after Mons and fight a vigorous war against Duke Victor of Savoy, taking Nice and a number of other towns, notably Montmélian in central Savoy, but failing against the key fortress of Cuneo; ultimately the French would clear the West side of the Maritime Alps of all enemy presence but not gain a foothold on the plains of Piedmont.

In Catalonia, both sides still had small armies. It was enough if they could besiege and take a small fort or two over the course of the year. Noaïlles would remain in command and have the better of the Spanish for the whole season.

The French fleet was given the task of coastal protection, though it continued to halfheartedly support the Irish in their flagging bid to restore King James II. King Louis was always afraid, with good reason, that William of Orange would foment rebellion among his Protestant subjects, or among people such as the Bretons, who held only a marginal allegiance to Versailles. At the same time, Louis' wanted his fleet to assist his land forces; such efforts took place in the Mediterranean, away from the Royal Navy, and had some success.

The Siege of Mons (March 15 – April 10)

Hague, March 30, 1691

THE King [William] parted from hence the 26th instant for Breda*, where His Majesty intends to stay until Sunday next, and then to go to* Flanders*, to Head the Army, which is drawing itself together for the Relief of* Mons*. Ten Thousand Brandenburgers quartered in the Countrey of* Liege*, are already advanced as far as Leeuwe, and the rest of the Forces march with such diligence, that they will be to morrow at their place of Rendezvous, between* Louvain *and* Brussels*, and together make a Body of 50000 Men, without reckoning the Scots Regiments that are newly arrived at* Sluyce *in* Flanders*.*

In the mean time we have this Account of the Siege. On the 15th instant Mons *was invested by the* French *Horse; The next day part of their Foot came up, as did the rest the day following, and took their several Posts. On the 19th the Enemy began to work on their Line of Circumvallation, having for that purpose summon'd in several thousand of Countrey People. On the 22d the* French *King arrived in the Camp, and it was thought the Trenches would have been open'd that day, but it was not done till the 25th at Night, when the Enemy began likewise to play upon the Town from three Batteries, but one of their Batteries sunk and dismounted their cannon. The* French *King did not stay in the Camp, but went to St.* Guislain*, where he has his Quarters; and the Dauphin his at* Maubeuge*.*

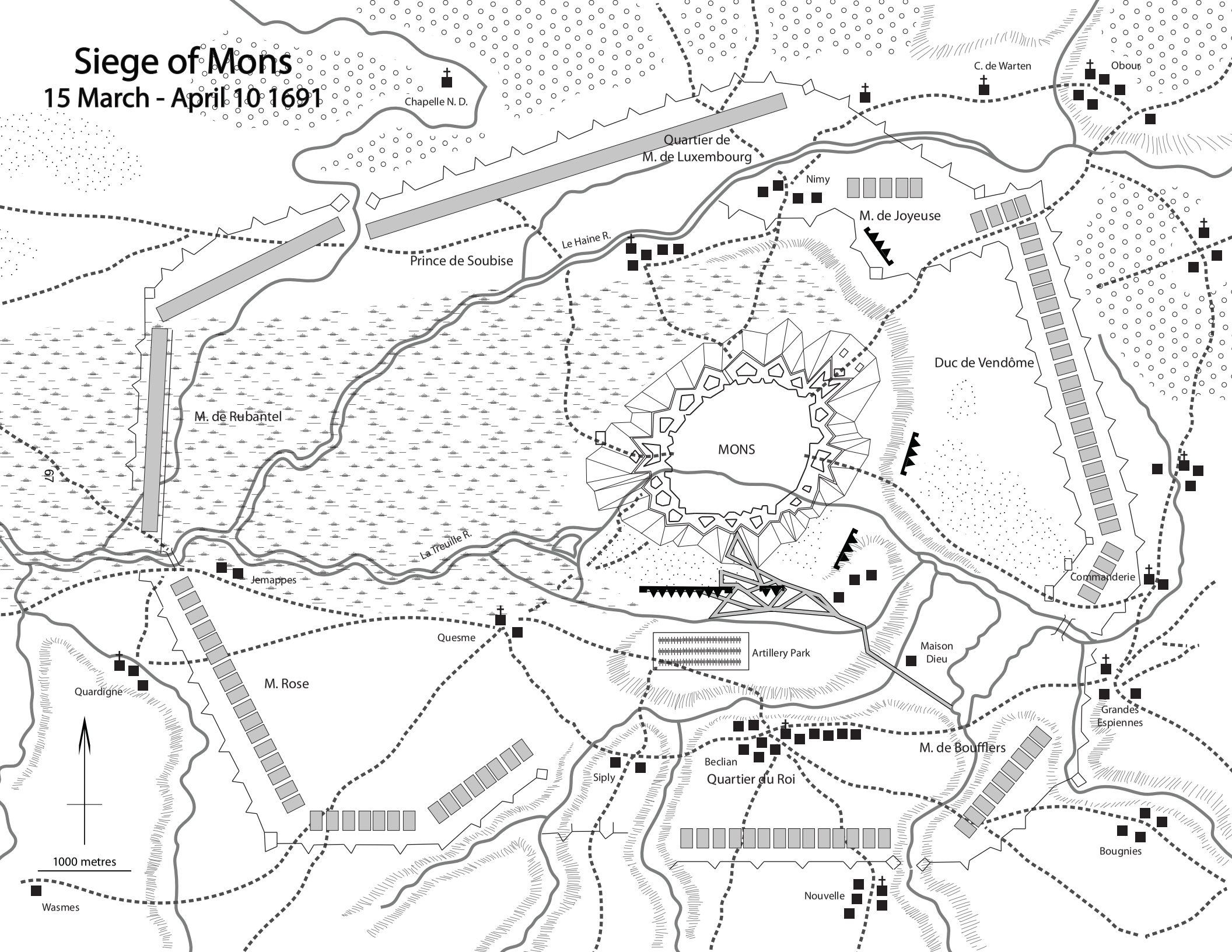
On the other side the Town is well fortified, and has in it a Garrison of 7000 men, besides the Burghers, who make as considerable a Body, are most of them Men well Disciplined and experienced in War, and very resolute and active in the Defence of the Place, in order whereunto they have uncovered their houses, and unpaved the Streets, to hinder the effects of the Enemies Bombs. They are very well Stored with Provisions and Ammunition, and the Prince de Bergue*, the Governor, has sent Word to the Governor of* Flanders *[Gastañaga], that he wants nothing, and doubts not but to give the Enemy work enough. The Besieged have made two Sallies, in which, 'tis said, they have killed 700 of the French, and very bravely repulsed the Enemy, in an Attack they made upon a Wind-Mill and a small Redoubt which lies at some little distance from the Town, and in this last Action the French lost almost a whole Regiment, and 'tis very confidently reported that their Famous Enginier Monsieur* Vauban *was likewise killed here, Several Spanish Officers are got into the Town; From whence in a word, we have as good an Account of things as can be expected.*

As an official communique which would be read by both sides the foregoing is of course a mix of fact and disinformation. The Allied numbers are vastly inflated, as is their morale and the state of preparations for relief. On the other hand, the individual actions did occur, though not exactly as written – Vauban was not killed, though at a later point in the siege he would be wounded. The windmill was taken by the French, but at a high cost.

Preparations for the siege of Mons began early in 1690. They were made as quietly as possible. Very few people, besides the commanding generals, the intendants who had to arrange the logistics, and a handful of local town governors were 'in the loop'. The Governor of Tournai, for example, was tasked with providing boats and pontoons to handle a steady stream of supplies down the rivers leading to Mons (the Scarpe, Haine, and Scheldt).

Despite the telltale raiding, and despite the massive preparations, surprise was total. Mons was always a *potential* target, but no one on the Allied side believed it was this year's target. Its garrison was not reinforced. French organisation, headed by the Siege Master himself, Sebastian le Prestre de Vauban, was superlative. There was no hitch, no delay. It was said of Vauban that he could predict to the minute when a fortress would fall based upon the list of resources handed him and the name of the fortress.

(Actually, Louvois nearly made a mess of things by advancing the date of the siege by two weeks because of


Siege of Mons
15 March - April 10 1691
Chapelle N. D.
Quartier de
M. de Luxembourg
C. de Warten
Nimy
M. de Joyeuse
Le Haine R.
Prince de Soubise
Duc de Vendôme
M. de Rubantel
MONS
La Trouille R.
Jemappes
Commanderie
Quesme
Artillery Park
Maison
Dieu
Quardigne
M. Rose
Grandes
Espiennes
M. de Boufflers
Beclian
Siply
Quartier du Roi
Bougnies
Nouvelle
Wasmes
1000 metres

reports that the Spanish were sending an additional two battalions to join the garrison. This meant that the French pioneers and gunners did not have all their equipment to hand when they began work.)

Stores purchased and laid included between 900,000 and 1,150,000 rations of hay (the siege would commence before the growing season), 220,000 Dutch cheeses – yes, Dutch – stored at Tournai, which was to be the primary magazine, and 360,000 rations per day put aside in the magazines more commonly associated with a Meuse offensive, at Maubeuge, Philippeville, Dinant, and Givet (upstream from Dinant). Maubeuge alone could feed 53 squadrons for 3 weeks.

In all, 70 battalions and 204 squadrons were allocated to the siege or subsidiary operations – about 66,000 men. *Général* Boufflers was given the honour of investing the fortress with 46,000 men (Childs says 40,000) set aside for the task, not counting the thousands of civilian labourers – 21,500 of them – employed on the works.

Covering forces ranged from 2 battalions guarding a series of locks on the River Haine, to Humières' 16,000 static troops in the Lines, to an observation corps of 7,000 between the Sambre and Meuse. 3,000 cavalry were stationed at Trier, under *lieutenant général* d'Harcourt, to pin the Brandenburgers in Jülich and Cleves – their Elector naturally fearing a sudden French raid on his lands more than the loss of some unimportant Spanish fortress.

Mons was neither well-sited, nor well-built. It was too close to France. The nearest Allied post was at Ath, 22 Km away. The nearest major garrison was at Charleroi, 36 Km away. It had the advantage of being on a low hill with marshy ground on all sides, but the town walls were still the Medieval curtain and tower.

A '*trace italienne*' had been added in an attempt to modernise, but it was not particularly effective. The lines left many areas of 'dead ground' where troops could shelter from the fortresses' guns, while the outer works lack stone revetments to shore them up. Too much reliance was placed on the swampy ground surrounding the town – which, by the by, also constricted the *trace*. The defence primarily hinged on the control of sluices for flooding the lands around the hill.

French reconnaissance had determined the weakest sector as long ago as 1683. On the eastern side, a spur of high ground called Hiom Hill extended close to the gate on that side – the Bertemont (Bertaimont). Bertaimont Gate had two horn-works and a ravelin, but these were nothing special. The whole gate complex was dominated by Hiom Hill. This is where the *point d'appui* would be located. A diversion would be made against another gate, called in English sources the Shore (probably because it lay on the banks of the Haine River).

The defenders were not unaware of this weakness, and a windmill that happened to be located on Hiom Hill, about 500 metres beyond the glacis, had been converted into an outpost.

Ultimately, though, Mons had a garrison that was too small for it: only 5,000 (Childs) or 6,000 (Lynn) men. On the other hand, the civilian population numbered about the same, so there was plenty of food to go around.

The investment began on March 15, 1691, when the French cavalry isolated the town (more or less). Its Governor, the Prince de Berghes, succeeded in getting a message to Gastañaga at Brussels the same day, and the Governor-General sent word to William's righthand man, the Earl of Portland, better known as Willem Bentinck. De Berghes was able to maintain some communication with the outside world throughout the siege; no investment is impervious.

On March 16 Vauban arrived, and on March 17 the Sun King himself, with his Court, left Versailles to witness the siege. Louis made himself prominent at the siege, inspecting the works, which employed thousands of peasant labourers, and exposing himself to enemy fire. Lynn remarks on a famous portrait of the King with a dead soldier just beside him which was better than average P.R. The event did occur, but no-one can say now whether the King flinched – probably not, since flinching was beneath a king's dignity.

The King's appearance was not just propaganda for internal consumption. It was also a statement to his enemies. Gastañaga had written to William of Orange confident that the Dutch would speedily rescue such an important fortress as Mons. When the Allied commanders heard Louis would be attending in person, they despaired. As Childs puts it, 'The Sun King never commanded a siege that was likely to fail' (p. 159).

Nonetheless, a relief attempt was made. The Spanish *marqués* de Bedmar was given command of it, and repaired to Brussels to make preparation on March 16. On March 19 the Elector of Brandenburg committed 6,000 of his men from Maastricht and 4,000 from other Meuse garrisons to the relief. 12 battalions of English troops were already en route across the sea.

Meanwhile, on March 18 the French labour corps arrived at Mons and began to dig. They would continue digging until they had excavated 27 Km of trench. They drained the swamps on the side of the Bertaimont Gate, cutting two canals into the River Trouille to divert its waters. This did not just drain the marshes, it also prevented the town's mills from grinding flour. The work lasted until March 21.

[The amount of earth moved is estimated at 300,000 cubic metres.]

That day, the Sun King arrived. As a matter of form he approved Vauban's plans. On March 23 trenches were

sent inward from the circumvallation toward the gate. The first parallel was constructed at a distance of 585 metres from the fortress and was ready by the night of March 24/25. Vauban himself opened the first approach trench, with the *marquis* de Chamlay, the King's personal military advisor, as his second. While this was going on, dummy trenches were dug into the dikes facing the Shore Gate.

The erection of batteries was begun on March 26 and continued until March 27. Five were emplaced on the flats, facing the Bertaimont Gate. More were placed on Hiom Hill. Two mortar batteries were erected on March 27. Most of the batteries were supported by wooden rafts riding on the mud.

The batteries rained fire and terror down on the town, a taste of sieges to come. The batteries on Hiom were designated 'red ball', firing hot-shot, and only firing at night, for maximum psychological effect. Mons burned. One of the buildings destroyed was the Church of Saint Germain.

Vauban had developed a trick of making cannonballs skip so they fell into the trenches or plopped over the walls. A so-called 'ricochet battery' was deployed on the marshes of Cuesmes between Bertaimont and the next gate over, called Rivage. By March 30, the French had fired 7,000 balls and 3,000 shells, an average of 198 per hour.

In contrast with this very modern way of war, on March 26, the day before Louis' close shave with death, the Sun King halted preparations for the bombardment so that the musicians of the *Régiment du Roi* might play for the ladies of the town, who climbed on the battlements to listen; the defenders also called a ceasefire.

[Lynn's account implies the bombardment had already started, possibly on March 25. Childs states the bombardment started on March 27.]

The French did not have it all their own way. Early on, the garrison received word of the Allied relief efforts and morale soared. The defenders re-flooded the swamps, drowning an entire 30-gun battery. This caused Vauban to shift more batteries on to higher ground and play them on the pair of horn-works that protected the Bertaimont Gate. The saps were also shifted north. These changes required the taking of the windmill on Hiom Hill. It took seven (!) assaults and 2,000 casualties (!!) to dislodge that garrison.

On March 30, a lodgement was achieved at the hornworks and 4 'breach-batteries' were erected. These were emplaced on the glacis where they could fire at pointblank range. The first assault, on April 1, was a joke. It was led by the Guards, who occupied the defences beneath the gate but were thrown out in confusion that night by a counterattack. Vauban was trampled in the panic, falling into and a water-filled ditch or pool, and suffering a concussion. The following day, or alternatively, after an intense 48-hour bombardment, a second assault by 8 companies of grenadiers and 150 line musketeers obtained a secure foothold.

Over the next few days, the French prepared to break into the town. This involved taking a pair of demi-lunes covering Bertaimont, and crossing the final ditch. The Medieval walls beyond were in a bad state even before the French guns worked them over and would present little difficulty. They got as far as filling the ditches in front of the demi-lunes with fascines, when the chamade – the drum roll calling for a parley – was beaten. Mons had surrendered.

The French bombardment had quickly told on civilian morale. Ironically, though most substantial towns in the Low Countries were fortified, their citizens were unused to the hardships of sieges. They preferred to buy off their would-be attackers or open their gates and hold a market. Governor de Berghes was told of an attempt to sabotage the powder magazine. Fortunately, he was able to intervene in time, but this was only the first plot.

Much of the town had already burned down under the rain of mortar shells and hot-shot, while the defenders' counter-battery fire slackened as guns were dismounted and the walls were shattered. Thus, in the first week of April, a crowd, headed by two priests, petitioned the Governor to surrender. When de Berghes showed them a letter from William of Orange promising relief in three or four days, they replied 'that they would rather surrender to the French King than be rescued by a heretic prince' (Childs, p. 161). This was the crucial point: Mons was a Walloon town, not a Flemish town.

(Childs also notes that Louvois had a letter published in the town to the effect that Mons would be charged 100,000 *ecus* per day for the siege.)

The chamade was beaten on April 8. On April 9, as was the custom, Bertemont Gate was handed over to the besiegers. On April 10, de Berghes and the garrison, down to 4,500 men, marched out of the Nimy Gate, with honours and a train of 250 wagons. 6 French squadrons escorted them to Tubize. On April 12, King Louis and his entourage left the front, glowing with internal radiance.

His army airily dismissed by the French as of no consequence, William of Orange returned, fuming, to his hunting parties. His 38,000-man (Childs says 50,000) relief force had relieved nothing. This was due primarily, in William's opinion, to Gastañaga. The Spanish Governor-General failed utterly to provide winter feed for the horses. The relief columns stalled at Halle.

Gastañaga can be blamed, but none of the Allied commanders expected the French to move so early in the season, so of course there were no supplies available. Most of the winter feed would have already been eaten and the cavalry regiments would be waiting for the spring grass. It took the French a whole year to lay in enough of their winter feed to prosecute the siege. Blaming

Gastañaga, who of all people was most desirous of relieving Mons, also ignores the French covering army which easily matched William's force in size.

Both sides dispersed again into winter quarters. Mons accepted a garrison of 10,000 foot and 2,000 horse under *maréchal de camp* Vertillac, and work continued round the clock to put the place in a defensible state. However, the French also sent many troops away, to the Moselle, to the Rhine, and to Italy. Many more were put on coastal watch or internal security duties. Now it was just a matter of holding on to Mons without losing anything of equal value.

Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, Marquis de Vauban (1633-1707)

Probably the most famous military engineer of all time, Vauban was born in Saint-Léger-de-Foucheret (now Saint-Léger-Vauban), in Burgundy. Orphaned at 10, he survived among the peasantry of his region until taken in by the Carmelites, who gave him an education, in which he excelled at maths, science, and geometry.

He joined the Régiment de Condé at 17. At 18 he declined a commission because of his poverty. At this time the wars of the Fronde were raging, and his regiment, being Condé's was on the wrong side. After gaining experience helping the Great Condé fortify Clermont-en-Argonne, he was captured, but was well treated and became a protege of Cardinal Mazarin, who brought him to the King's notice. Vauban became a committed supporter of Louis XIV.

Now began his career of building, destroying, and rebuilding fortifications. His first siege under the King was that of Sainte-Menehould, which he had helped take as a Frondeur, and this set the pattern. His second siege was of Clermont, the first fortress he had helped erect. In 1655 he was made *ingénieur du roi*. The engineers did not enjoy high rank or privileges, but there were few of them and they were indispensable. Over a period of four years, from 1655 to 1559 he took part in 10 sieges, was several times wounded, and was awarded a company in the *Régiment de Picardie* – this was not a combat command but a means of improving his status and finances. They improved sufficiently for him to marry. But he was not made *maréchal de camp* until 1676, at the end of the Dutch War, after taking part in another 9 sieges. In 1683 he was made *lieutenant général* and conducted two sieges during the short War of the Reunions.

After conducting several sieges during the Nine Years War, his last siege took place in 1703 at Old Breach, which he took in only two weeks. As a *maréchal de France* (January 14, 1703), he was no longer allowed to get his hands dirty.

Vauban only took part in one defence of a fortress, at Oudenaarde in 1674, but planned and constructed, or improved, hundreds of fortifications. Roughly 300 cities

had their defences improved by him, not to mention several naval harbours, and he, from scratch, directed the building of 37 new fortresses. Name an important town, port, or frontier defence line of his era; Vauban built it.

[12 of his works are now UNESCO World Heritage Sites.]

Having devised a powerful system of defence, he also studied and perfected the art of taking fortifications. The method of digging a contravallation out of which approach trenches were pushed, from which parallels were dug to house artillery, was his idea (though it is also said he borrowed it from the Turks). Most of his ideas were not new, but they were better implemented and improved on. He introduced professional companies of miners and developed that science. Over the years he progressed in his thinking, producing a 'Second System' that enabled fortresses to last longer, and toward the end of his career, a Third System. These defensive plans led him to improve the art of the attack, with 'ricochet fire' , the use of mortars, and 'vertical fire' for shooting at defenders from close range.

During the 1660s and 1670s Vauban wrote treatises for the Government, his peers, and for general interest. Not

all were military manuals. He wrote on economics, husbandry, and colonisation, and was an honorary member of the Academy. He also spoke his mind, calling for a flat universal tax, the improvement of the peasant's lot, and toleration for Protestants. But he was loyal to the Crown, and tried vainly to recall one of his books on economics then in circulation, not because of its radical proposals, but because it had been published without royal permission.

Vauban's reputation suffered during his last years, because France's enemies were able to capture so many of her fortresses. But, they were using his own techniques. Vauban was not too discouraged. At the time he died, he was trying to work out a Fourth System of defence. It was panned at the time, but became the foundation of fortification methods in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

He died at Paris, of inflammation of the lungs. The Revolutionaries dug up his body, burned it, and scattered the ashes, as they did with so many of the Ancien' Regime notables, but Napoleon located his heart and had it placed in Les Invalides. From the balcony overlooking Napoleon's massive marble tomb under the Dome des Invalides, the second story of the Cathedral Saint-Louis-des-Invalides stretches north, its walls lined with plaques and busts commemorating France's great generals. There is one for Vauban.

The Campaign

"'tis such a country that if both parties have a mind to it, 'tis impossible they should ever meet… Our army is in very good condition and their's they say, is in a very bad one, which will make us try all the ways we can to get at them."

Quoted in Childs, The Nine Years War, p. 172.

Campaigning resumed in May. Luxembourg commanded 49 battalions and 140 squadrons in his field army, mustering along the Lys, between Menin and Courtrai, in the middle of the month. Boufflers, on the Meuse above the Sambre, had 20,000 men, 34 cannon (probably mostly 'positional' guns used in sieges), and 12 mortars.

As usual, the Allies were late to the field (no matter how many times they had to scramble to meet the French, they were *always* late), but when William arrived at Anderlecht, just southwest of Brussels, on June 2, he had 63 battalions and 180 squadrons assembled there, according to Lynn. Childs gives him only 50 battalions and 100 squadrons, for a total of 42,000 men.

These included 15 English battalions and 2 English cavalry regiments. They ought to have amounted to roughly 20% of the troops at William's disposal. Unfortunately, some of the regiments arrived on and were assigned billets on Walcheren Island until the season opened; almost immediately they caught the Walcheren Sickness, otherwise known as malaria. The English were also short of equipment. They were regarded by many Dutch officials as cannon fodder and tended to come last on the list for resupply.

Coming up from the lands of the Ruhr were 14,000 Brandenburgers under *Feldmarschall* Heino Heinrich Graf von Flemming, grand commander of the Elector's army. More immediately to hand was a scratch Spanish force of 17,000 under Gastañaga at Brussels.

The Allies lacked options. Mons was a dagger pointed at Brussels; the Lines of the Scheldt, still commanded by Humières, were a dagger pointed at Ghent, Bruges, and the other Flanders towns. *Maréchal* Luxembourg's main army threatened the line of the Meuse and Boufflers' army that of the Moselle.

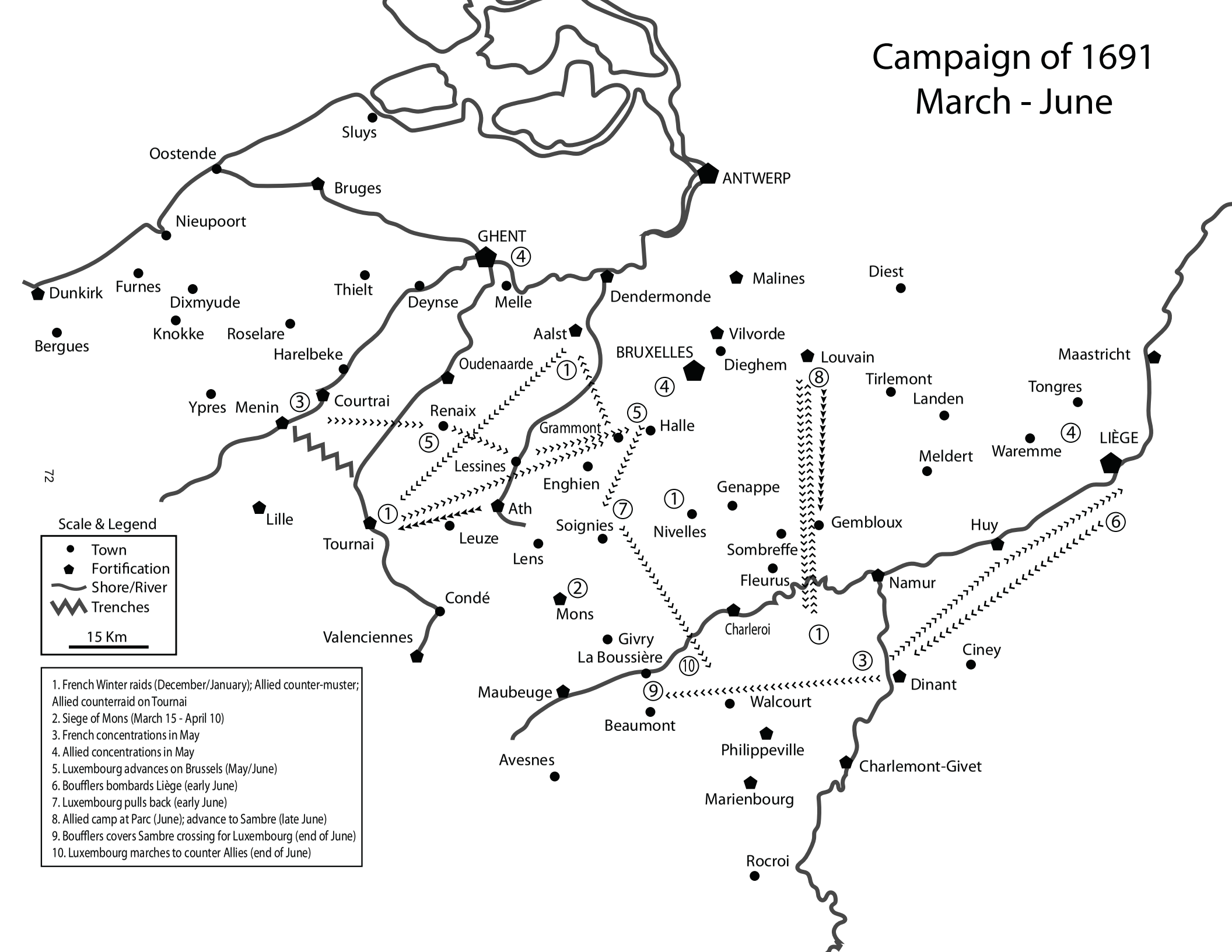
Even before his army was fully mustered, William decided to lay siege to Dinant. Again. This fact soon became widely known. By May 15 Allied intelligence had received news of French preparations at Dinant, suggesting an offensive down the Meuse. Namur was the best guess for a target. On May 20 the French launched multiple cavalry raids, totalling 6,000 men, into Brabant. But at the same time Luxembourg was reported to be at Harelbeke, on the Lys. What were the French intentions?

The enemy were arguing over this question themselves. The *marquis* de Chamlay thought that the follow-on to Mons should be a field battle. A decisive win would force the Dutch and Spanish to sue for peace. Louvois, on the other hand, thought the same effect could be achieved through strategic bombardment, in this case, shelling the town of Liège into oblivion. Both men had unrealistic expectations, and the practical soldiers, Vauban and Luxembourg, opposed both. However, such plans *were* capable of execution, and so long as expectations were kept low there was no reason why they should not be on the menu. If William of Orange was stupid enough to accept battle, great damage might be done, while bombarding Liège would score propaganda points.

At the moment, Luxembourg was merely attempting to pin the bulk of the Allied forces in place, both to give the French cavalry raiders a free hand (already Hainault, where Mons was situated, was being laid under contribution) and to allow *général* Boufflers to make hay while the sun shone.

The strategic fulcrum for Luxembourg's army was near Courtrai, beside the Lines of the Scheldt, where Luxembourg could receive the sort of support usually supplied by an individual fortification, multiplied several times. From Harelbeke he could reach all of Flanders, or follow an advance guard coming out of Mons against Brussels.

However, if the *Maréchal* was in Flanders, then an Allied attack on Dinant just might succeed – if William could break free of the French grip. If successful, such an attack would disrupt the preparations being made there for a siege of Namur, or whatever the target was. And,


Campaign of 1691
March - June
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
④
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Harelbeke
Aalst
Vilvorde
BRUXELLES
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Oudenaarde
①
④
⑧
Tirlemont
Landen
Tongres
Ypres
Menin
③
Courtrai
Renaix
⑤
Halle
Grammont
⑤
Lessines
Enghien
Meldert
Waremme
④
LIÈGE
72
Lille
①
Ath
Genappe
①
Soignies
⑦
Nivelles
Gembloux
Huy
⑥
Tournai
Leuze
Lens
Sombreffe
Fleurus
Namur
Condé
②
Mons
Charleroi
①
Valenciennes
Givry
La Boussière
⑩
③
Ciney
Dinant
Maubeuge
⑨
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French Winter raids (December/January); Allied counter-muster; Allied counterraid on Tournai
2. Siege of Mons (March 15 - April 10)
3. French concentrations in May
4. Allied concentrations in May
5. Luxembourg advances on Brussels (May/June)
6. Boufflers bombards Liège (early June)
7. Luxembourg pulls back (early June)
8. Allied camp at Parc (June); advance to Sambre (late June)
9. Boufflers covers Sambre crossing for Luxembourg (end of June)
10. Luxembourg marches to counter Allies (end of June)

Luxembourg had his own worries. It was entirely possible, from his point of view, that the Allies might assemble an army larger than his – their slowness to muster certainly suggested a massive force in the offing – and defeat Boufflers in battle while pinning *himself* in place. If that happened they would have unhinged the French line and could retake Mons, or drive up the Meuse toward the French magazines. That would open the Moselle to a German army.

Luxembourg decided to make sure of things. Confident that Humières could occupy the Spanish attention, he broke camp on May 19 and marched for Renaix (Ronse). The operation took a few days. The Scheldt was bridged on May 25 and there was a delay while the Artillery was brought up from Douai. Lessines was reached on May 28 and Halle on May 29. (From Harelbeke to the Scheldt was 16 Km, the river to Renaix another 10 Km, to Lessines 16 Km, and to Halle roughly 30 Km.)

Brussels and Liège

Now, before William of Orange arrived on the scene, the camp at Anderlecht, on the Senne 12 Km northeast of Halle, was under Waldeck's care. Halle was garrisoned with a few battalions, which broke out of encirclement on the night of May 30 and rejoined Waldeck. This gave the Generalissimo something over 18,000 men, or half Luxembourg's strength.

Nevertheless, the French did not force a battle. Waldeck had a good position, on high ground where the approach routes were channeled by the Senne and a large marsh. The city of Brussels was right behind him, only 3,000 metres away. The French were also short of cavalry, much of which was still raiding. They merely razed Halle's walls and camped there, facing off against the Allies.

The Prince of Orange, meanwhile, dragged away from his hunting, made the journey from his palace at Het Loo to Anderlecht, a distance of 190 Km, in 42 hours. Waldeck, once again displaying his skill at disposing his forces in an unassailable defensive position, had also put on a feat of endurance, remaining in the saddle for two whole days. He was now bedridden – remember, the man was over 70.

(It is all very well to say that Luxembourg was only trying to pin the Allied armies. He most certainly would have taken Brussels if Waldeck gave him the chance. Gastañaga had his bags packed for a flight to Antwerp.)

The day before William arrived at Anderlecht, Boufflers approached Liège from across the Meuse. In those days the bulk of the city lay on the left bank. Liège had been chosen over more suitable, 'military', targets on King Louis' direct order. Liège *was* a principal magazine, but the French regarded the prince-bishopric as a vassal state which had rebelled. Since his Army of the Moselle only had about 15-16,000 men (Childs says 20,000), Boufflers did not think of a siege. However, he inflicted significant damage for a loss of only 22 men.

The operation opened with the French occupation of Fort Chartreuse on the opposite bank of the Meuse. Today, the fort is about 1,500 metres east of the river. It occupies a hill dominating the surrounding lands.

From here, Boufflers demanded the Liègeois pay him the insanely large contribution of 2,600,000 livres. When the demand was not met, a bombardment was opened on June 4. Much of the town burned. With especial horror, it was recounted that an entire street was reduced to ashes.

The Prince-Bishop, Jean-Louis d'Elderen, refused to give in. He had a substantial garrison, of 8 battalions and 3,000 horse. Malcontents were arrested and supplies brought in. Meanwhile, the Prince of Orange sent help. 2,500 horse rode in from Anderlecht, but of more value were 7,000 Brandenburgers and Imperials under Count Lippe, vanguard of the 14,000 sent by the Elector of Brandenburg. The appearance of these troops forced Boufflers to retreat, after burning down the suburbs as a memorial. Liège's defiance was touted as a major Allied victory. More realistically, the French had failed to destroy the magazines. French momentum had also been lost, though not gained by the Allies.

Childs recounts that the ubiquitous Hector Villars captured 500 men from Fort Chênée during the final clean up. The fort guarded a crossing point of the Ourthe River, at the spot where the Vesdre River joins the Ourthe, about 2,600 metres from the Ourthe's confluence with the Meuse. The fort lay about 2,000 metres SSE of Fort Chartreuse. For some reason the French did not bother with the fort when they first arrived, but given that the enemy columns were arriving behind them, the French would have had to secure a crossing of the Vesdre so they could get out of the way. The French were harassed by Allied cavalry all the way back to Dinant, but the enemy's main force did not attack but simply marched past the French into the city.

Boufflers' role in the campaign reverted to a passive one, guarding the valleys of the Meuse and Moselle. This was part of the grand plan, but it made him a target. The initiative on his part of the front had passed to the Allies, who dusted off their own plans to attack Dinant.

Luxembourg did not remain in front of Brussels for long. Early successes had led the French to hope that more might be accomplished, but with Boufflers' retreat it was clear they had to revert to the original script. Perhaps an opportunity to deal a blow would present itself later.

The *Maréchal* left Halle on June 5, moving up the Senne to Braine-le-Comte, 18 Km away. Childs goes into some detail over Luxembourg's precautions, primarily to contrast them with Waldeck's sloppy performance which brought on the Battle of Leuze later in the season. They

are worth repeating here as an example of how armies were moved around in the presence of the enemy. There is nothing innovative, it is all straight out of the manual.

First, cavalry patrols were sent out on a rotation through the night to keep the Allied army under observation. A battalion of foot was interposed between the armies, hidden in a wood. Luxembourg intended to cross the Senne during the march, so to prevent a surprise attack during that risky manoeuvre he put guards on all the crossings that the enemy might use.

The army was divided into 9 columns, ensuring a speedy exit from their camp and thus less time for the movement to be spotted – the opposing camps were in sight of one another. Pretty soon these merged into 6 columns which was more manageable. Crossing the Senne at Toubize, 5.7 Km south of Halle, on 6 pre-constructed pontoon bridges, the French cut down to 3 columns, a more usual number. A rearguard was kept at the camp consisting of 20 cannon and a large amount of cavalry. Since one of the columns had to pass through a wood later in its march, that wood was secured in advance by infantry.

As it happened, despite all the precautions, the Allies did learn of the retreat. However, they had received false intelligence that the French were planning to move to Enghien, 11 Km *west* of the Senne. The march south was therefore clearly a feint involving only a portion of Luxembourg's forces. This news was coincidentally confirmed when Allied cavalry detected the right hand French column marching in a westerly direction. This was simply because they were forced by the road net to go that way, but the Allied commanders did not realise it. The Prince of Orange refused 'the bait' and did not pursue.

In consequence, Luxembourg got clean away. He recrossed the Senne more or less level with Brain-le-Comte and passed through the Forest of Houssières to take up a strong position between Steenkerque and the Forest of Houssières, placing his HQ just behind the lines, at Brain-le-Comte. The position was perhaps 8,000 metres long. Steenkerque is still a small village; it has the advantage of a stream flowing south-north on its eastern edge, a stream which runs in that direction for many kilometres both below and above the village. The forest still exists; even today it is over 7 Km long, north to south, with the Senne just east of it. In those days it apparently curved west to cover a part of the French camp, meaning an attacker would have to advance on a narrower front than the defender's. The intervening ground was and is flat farmland.

On June 17 William of Orange moved his camp to Diegem, on the opposite side of Brussels. There was no more forage south of the city. His camp, or series of camps – allied armies, especially those with Spanish troops, always set up camps by nationality – lay in the triangle between Diegem, Vilvorde, and Parck, just north of the modern airfield, an area of about 3,6000 metres by 5,000 metres, by 6,000 metres.

Advanced posts were established on the left flank, southwest of Louvain (Leuven) as a security measure, and on June 18 the army shifted its base east, to Bethlehem Abbey. On June 21 it moved again, to Beauvechain. This place is about 30 Km ESE of Brussels and a little more than that north of Namur.

William had to do something to get the French out of Brabant. The region was the theatre's breadbasket and both the armies were stripping it bare. By now he was resolved to either fight Luxembourg or leverage him back over the frontier.

Luxembourg, aware of the Allied actions, made no move. From where he was he could intercept William no matter what he did. Unless the Allies retreated, of course. Naturally, they did not. William was heading for the Sambre. On June 23 his army was at Malèves, and on June 26 at Gembloux, marches of 14 and 12 Km, respectively. At Gembloux he was reinforced by Hessian troops.

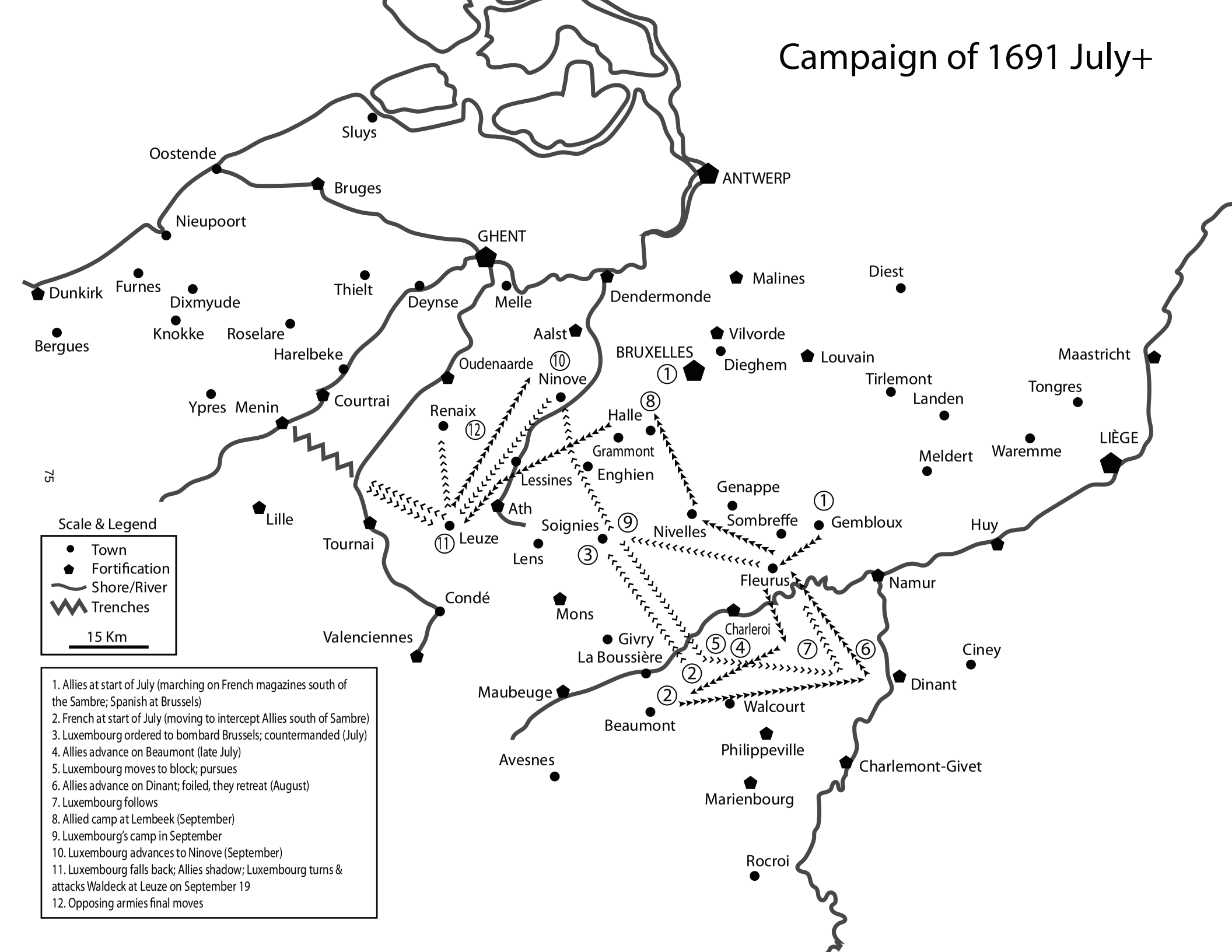
The opposing armies were now more than 40 Km, or 3-days march, apart. Luxembourg ought to be thinking of moving to intercept William, but he did not. Instead, it was rumoured he had sent out his quartermasters to survey the Plains of Cambron, a day's march to his west (not far from Brugelette and Lens).

It is not clear where the Allies got their information, but it was dead wrong. Luxembourg was coming east. It was obvious William intended to attack Dinant or some other of the magazines between the Sambre and Meuse. Boufflers, still on the right bank of the Meuse, covering Dinant against an observation corps of Brandenburgers, was ordered to move west, throwing a bridge across the Meuse at Givet, 15 Km upstream from Dinant. Boufflers finished his march near Beaumont, nearly 45 Km west of the Meuse, and 30 Km southeast of Mons.

Luxembourg moved in concert with him, to Hain-Saint-Pierre, south of the Sambre and about midway between Mons and Charleroi. This placed him 25 Km, or two days' march, due north of Boufflers.

Everything was in place, when the *Maréchal* received new orders from The Bunker (i.e., Versailles). The Sun King wanted him to march up to Brussels and bombard it in a similar manner to the bombardment of Liège. Bombardments were Louis' latest fad and mortars his 'V-weapons'.

Luxembourg obeyed orders, sort of. He turned around and set up camp near Soignies, 15 Km northwest of Mons and a few kilometres south of his old camp. Villars had taken over command of the Lines of the Scheldt and Luxembourg ordered him to come east and guard his left flank with 15 battalions and 30 squadrons at Baudour.


Campaign of 1691 July+
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
⑩
Ninove
BRUXELLES
①
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Tirlemont
Tongres
Landen
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Renaix
⑫
⑧
Halle
Grammont
Enghien
Lessines
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
75
Lille
Ath
Genappe
Soignies
⑨
Nivelles
Sombreffe
①
Gembloux
Huy
Tournai
⑪
Leuze
Lens
③
Fleurus
Namur
Condé
Mons
Charleroi
Valenciennes
Givry
⑤
④
⑦
⑥
Ciney
La Boussière
②
Dinant
Maubeuge
②
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. Allies at start of July (marching on French magazines south of the Sambre; Spanish at Brussels)
2. French at start of July (moving to intercept Allies south of Sambre)
3. Luxembourg ordered to bombard Brussels; countermanded (July)
4. Allies advance on Beaumont (late July)
5. Luxembourg moves to block; pursues
6. Allies advance on Dinant; foiled, they retreat (August)
7. Luxembourg follows
8. Allied camp at Lembeek (September)
9. Luxembourg's camp in September
10. Luxembourg advances to Ninove (September)
11. Luxembourg falls back; Allies shadow; Luxembourg turns & attacks Waldeck at Leuze on September 19
12. Opposing armies final moves

(This was 9 Km northwest of Mons and 20 Km southwest of Luxembourg's camp.)

By pulling in his forces and repositioning, Luxembourg was now on the spot. The Spanish were able to muster a strong corps at Brussels to threaten his front while William, whose army, according to Childs, had nearly 90,000 men, was a day's march ahead of him. Fortunately, William, at Gembloux, 44 Km farther east, was still waiting for a siege train from Maastricht when the latest orders from Versailles were countermanded. Luxembourg raced southeast on July 13 by way of Estinnes (20 Km south) to Merbes-le-Château (9 Km southeast), on the left bank of the Sambre.

Here, the French built three bridges over the river. This put them a day's march from Boufflers, and in a position to concentrate against any Allied army crossing farther downstream. Villars, unfortunately, had to be sent back to the Lines when Gastañaga marched on Gavere, a town on the Scheldt about 14 Km upstream from Ghent. However, the window of opportunity King Louis had foolishly given the Prince of Orange was now closed. Not much William could have done about it, the change in orders had been too quick.

Nonetheless, the Allies pressed on, leaving Gembloux on July 20 and camping near Fleurus. On July 21 they attempted to steal a march on the French by breaking camp at 1 am and marching for 6 hours to Montignies-sur-Sambre on the East side of Charleroi, where they crossed the river on two hastily erected bridges and camped at Gerpinnes the same day.

Luxembourg was alerted to the crossing at 10 am on July 21 and immediately broke camp, crossed the Sambre himself, and marched to Silenrieux. Silenrieux is very close to the Walcourt battlefield. The French then marched to Florennes (14 Km ENE from Silenrieux) on July 22, camping just to the West, between the hamlets of Saint Aubin and Hemptinne. The baggage train was sent to Mariembourg, nearly 20 Km to the South.

In the nick of time Luxembourg had blocked the Allied advance on Dinant, which was 22 Km east of him but nearer 30 Km away for the Allies, giving him a day's lead. Prince William hesitated for a few days. He thought of making a direct attack, but reconnaissance conducted on July 26 showed that the French camp was covered by a large wood and numerous ravines. Luxembourg had arranged things so that he could make a reverse wheel on his left flank and retire to the fortress of Philippeville if necessary. The scouts also witnessed the arrival of 8,000 of Boufflers' men.

For the rest of the month, and indeed for the whole of August, the two sides faced off, trying to starve each other out. Unfortunately both sides were near friendly magazines. However, forage for the animals, as usual, rapidly diminished. The French eventually prevailed. Their superior cavalry was sent out between the armies to strip the land bare. Boufflers dispatched 40 squadrons to eat up the forage between Gerpinnes and Dinant while a similar force under Vertillac did the same between the Sambre and the Allied camp.

The Allies blinked first, but soon both armies were marching and countermarching, looking for some slight advantage. Luxembourg would retain the initiative throughout, but obtain no opening for himself.

On August 7, the Allies left Gerpinnes. They did not retire but advanced on Cour-sur-Heure, a short day's march southwest. If the reader remembers the Battle of Walcourt, this was one of the hamlets traversed by Waldeck's men as they marched up the Heure River. Its value in the present case was that it lay close by the French line of march back across the Sambre to Mons, while at the same time was only a day's march (13 Km) from Beaumont, a French frontier post. For the first time, the Allies might actually feast on French bread.

Beaumont sits on the Hantes River, a tributary of the Sambre, and controlled the crossing point for the main road between Philippeville and Mons by way of Maubeuge. It was a key location. But, for some reason, William of Orange did not move there with his whole army. If he had done so, then the French and Allied roles would have been reversed: William would be a day's march ahead of Luxembourg in a race to Mons.

[Childs' text has a typo. He says Beaumont was on the Heure instead of the Hantes.]

Instead, he sent only a detachment to occupy Beaumont, 2,000 men under General Flemming. Other detachments occupied posts on the Sambre, at Thuin, 9 Km to the northwest of Cour-sur-Heure, and La Boussière.

Perhaps William was overthinking the problem, trying to be clever. He seems to have been prone to that. Or perhaps he was concerned the French might detour north and cut him off from Charleroi. In any case, Luxembourg made a forced march to Beaumont concealed by the terrain of the western Ardennes and camped 3 Km southwest of the place, at Leugnies. The Allies, hacking their way through a belt of woodland, emerged in front of the town at 4 pm on August 10 to find the French drawn up for battle beyond it.

William set up his own camp on the near side of Beaumont, unmolested. Overnight, he threw bridges over the Hantes, and in the predawn, he prepared to fight. But, his generals were unwilling. Reconnaissance showed any attack on the French would be highly risky.

Out of sheer spite, the Prince of Orange ordered a few cannon shots into the French camp. The return fire narrowly missed killing him – a ball landed on the very spot he had been sitting a couple of minutes before.

The Allies fell back to Cour-sur-Heure later that day. Peculiarly, Luxembourg kept his army stood to, ready for

an advance. He had hatched a plot. That night, a French agent (who had been paid the enormous sum of 100,000 *livres*) attempted to blow up the Allied munitions train. At 10 pm on August 11 he tossed bombs into a couple of wagons, each loaded with 30 grenades and 2 powder barrels. These blew up and the fire spread to a line of 6 more such wagons. Beyond them was the entire stock of ammunition for the army. The French planned to march on the Allies as soon as they heard the explosion. Only the quick reaction of some artillery officers saved the situation. They dragged the burning wagons away and overturned them. The spy was discovered and… was burned alive.

Things quietened down after this. William's forces camped at Cour-sur-Heure, with Flemming's troops at Marchienne-au-Pont a day's march in his rear guarding the Sambre crossings by Charleroi. The Spanish were still at Gavere. The French mirrored this deployment. Luxembourg's camp was still at Leugnies. Boufflers was 15 Km due south of him, at Rance. Villars observed Gastañaga from the Lines. *Général* Ximenes covered the magazines at Maubeuge.

Not until August 23 did the Prince of Orange act. The Allied army advanced a little, but only to cover the retreat of the Beaumont garrison. Luxembourg did not move, even though the Allies razed the town's walls. The enemy retreated to Gerpinnes. But, William was not finished. He detached a covering force to Ham-sur-Heure, about 2 Km north of Cour-sur-Heure, to screen his lines of communication, and led the rest of his army toward Dinant, thinking the French would be a march behind.

Luxembourg, however, anticipated him. Apparently there were more spies at the Allied HQ, because the French were in motion even before William issued his orders.

The Allies reached Saint Gérard (about 9 Km west of the Meuse and equidistant from Namur and Dinant) only to find the French had been before him. There was no army to fight. Luxembourg had punched through to Gerpinnes, sending Boufflers to eat up what was left of the forage along the Meuse. As Childs points out, the armies were operating on the skirts of the Ardennes and there was not much to begin with. Neither side now had forage, but the French could access their magazines, while William had just lost contact with his.

William hastily retreated from Saint Gérard and over the Sambre, foiled yet again. The train moved out on September 3 and the army on September 4. After crossing the Sambre the same day, they moved westward. On that day the Allies camped at Velaine; on the next they were at Mellet, 11 Km to the Northwest. But on September 7 they moved north to Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, and the following day they made their final stop, at the old camp of Lembeek, midway between Halle and Tubize. Surprisingly, there was now an abundance of forage in this region, which had been so badly depleted by the opposing armies a few months earlier.

Luxembourg followed, across the Sambre to Feluy, just north of Seneffe and 18 Km south of Lembeek. Marching parallel to the Allies, he occupied his old camp at Soignies on September 7, but did not stay there. The districts through which the French marched were all still denuded, so for that reason, and to preempt any attempt by the Allies to combine and attack the Lines of the Scheldt or Mons, Luxembourg very soon moved to Ninove. Ninove is about 18 Km northwest of Halle, 32 Km southeast of Ghent, and a day's march south of Aalst. The Spanish at Gavere were 27 Km WNW from him. As they marched, the French stripped the country in a wide belt; this was a third reason for advancing so deeply into the enemy's country.

[The country through which the French marched had actually been depopulated, so clearly no one had planted anything, whereas Brussels had sheltered its surrounding population, who went back to their farms once the danger was past.]

The Battle of Leuze, September 19, 1691

As the year had opened with a pre-campaign siege, so it would close with a post-campaign battle. September was rather early to call it quits, but the Prince of Orange could see that Luxembourg would give him no opportunities, and he could not afford to miss the opening of Parliament in London, which would take place in October. The French, for their part, had no desire for any late-season offensive. The Sun King's orders were to remain on the defensive. Truth be told, Luxembourg's army was exhausted.

Soon after he arrived at Lembeek, William ordered the Brandenburgers and other Germans to go into winter quarters. They had to leave early because their quarters lay on the far side of the Meuse. Testing the waters, on September 10 the rest of the Allied army made a day's march west to Enghien, which was itself a day's march south of the French. On September 12 they inched forward to Ghislenghien, a day's march farther southwest; another such march would bring them to Ath. It was not clear what William hoped to achieve. A simultaneous attack with the Spanish against the Lines? The 'bouncing' of Mons by a sudden rush? Luring Luxembourg into an unfavourable combat by threatening to those very things? Actually, William was becoming predictable in these matters. Seeking battle was his fallback strategy.

So, Luxembourg shadowed cautiously, moving southwest up the Scheldt to Grammont (Geraardsbergen) and then Pont d'Espierres, where Villars could back him up. He remained a day's march from the enemy, but he remained on the far side of the river. If William wanted a battle, he could come and get it.

William took his army as far as Leuze-en-Hainault, a day's march southwest of Ath, then handed the reins to Waldeck and left for Holland. A wash and a brush up after

a hard ride and he would be bucketing across the Channel to listen to a lot of argumentative MPs who could not speak Dutch. It just kept getting better and better…

That was on September 19. The day before, Luxembourg conducted a personal reconnaissance and assumed, correctly, that the Allies were calling it quits. He also noticed, with glee, that Waldeck was failing to take some basic precautions. The Generalissimo might be a master of the defensive position, but not of the art of the march. On the evening of the same day, Luxembourg sent 400 cavalry to monitor the Allied preparations. Signifying the importance of this operation, their commander was a lieutenant colonel of the *Garde du Corps*.

At this point the reader should refer to the accompanying map. This was a rearguard action which did not take very long, so details are sketchy. There is more information from the French side, perhaps because the fight received high billing in France as yet another win for Luxembourg.

Waldeck's camp was laid out on the highway between Leuze and Ligne, a road which connected Tournai with Brussels by way of Ath, the next big town. The camp was apparently wedged in the triangle between the watercourses of the Dendre-occidentale and the Catoire Brook, and did not extend as far as Leuze. It may be that a portion of the camp lay on the eastern side of the Catoire, although this is nowhere stated.

The terrain is flat; what slope there is runs down to the confluence. Troops right down by the water might be invisible to an enemy on the far side of the slope, but men on horseback could see pretty much everything. The woods shown on the map are conjectural, but the region was a mix of flat farmland and woods, and two of the patches are old plantations associated with chateaux. The others line the streams. Logically, a similar patchwork of woods should have existed then.

[The battle is also known as the Brook of Catoire. The stream's modern name is the Rieu du Couvent. Catoire is the name of an adjacent chateau, which still exists.]

Neither watercourse is a significant obstacle to a man on foot – even the Dender can be jumped over. But, there would be no way to get the train across except by bridges. The banks are deeply cut and the Catoire in particular is heavily overgrown. The period diagram used for reference (it is more of a panorama than a real map, by the ubiquitous Nicolas Fer) shows 6 crossing points on the Catoire, marked on the accompanying map. The bulk of Waldeck's army used the 3 northernmost.

[Fer's maps are very handy, and reasonably accurate. Sometimes his name is listed as 'Iron', the English translation of 'Fer'.]

The Generalissimo broke camp two hours before dawn (that would have been just before 5am), bound for Cambron-Casteau, a village 18 Km due east, halfway to Sognies. By then, Villars was in position on the main road, between Tournai and Leuze, acting as support for the reconnaissance party. He had 4 battalions and 6 dragoon squadrons. The *Maréchal* was just riding out of the main camp at Tournai with 7,000 more cavalry, including the entire *Maison du Roi* and the *Petites Gendarmes*. A handful of infantry brigades followed. He was 16 Km behind Waldeck, but the Generalissimo had a baggage train.

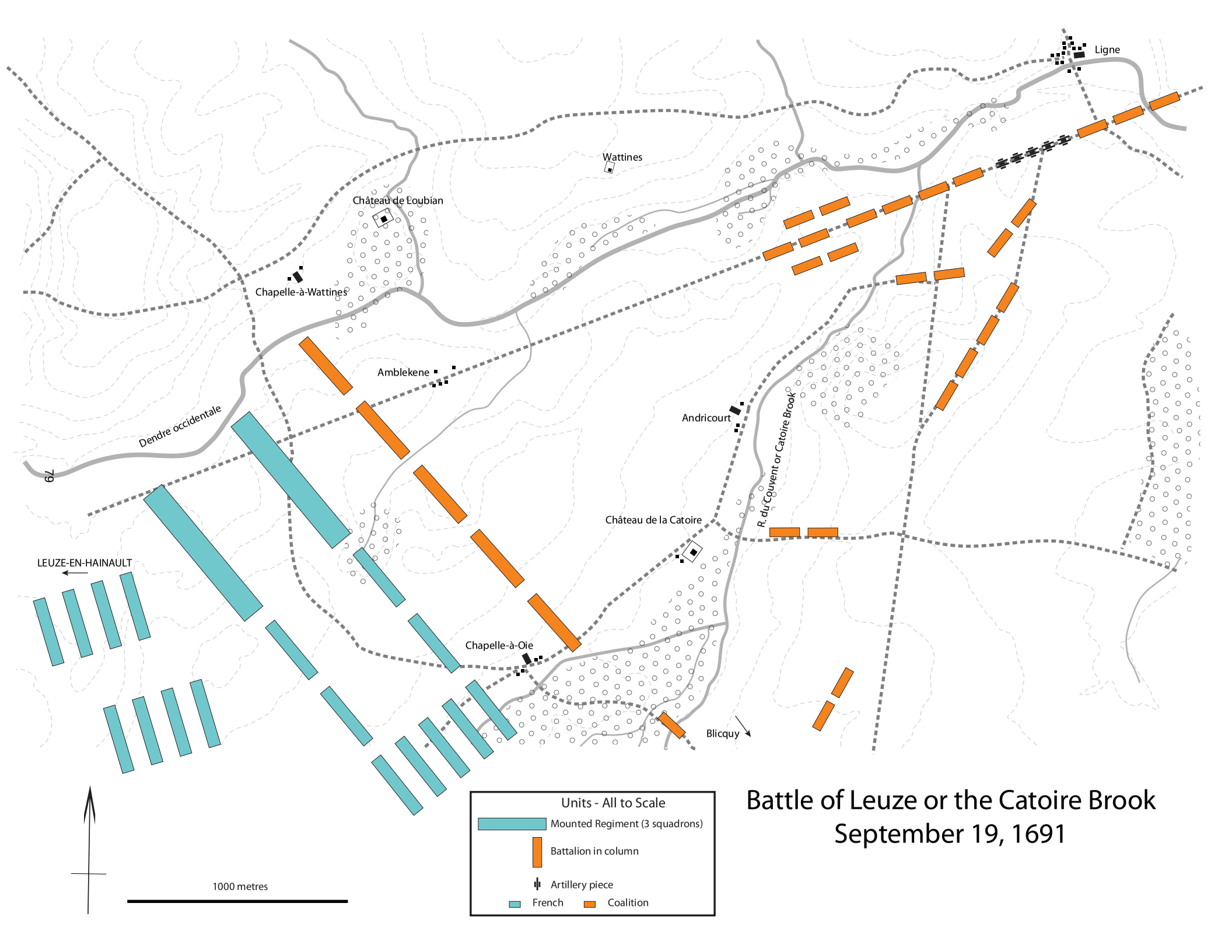
Events piled on quickly. Villars rode forward in haste to meet with the recon party at 8 am, leaving his infantry to catch up. Luxembourg was still some distance off. It was foggy that morning, and no-one saw the French approach. Waldeck had neglected to send reconnaissance parties toward Tournai. But Villars saw Waldeck's artillery and foot crossing the Catoire. Most likely, the guns and wagons were using the road and the infantry were crossing by the bridges north and south of the cluster of farm buildings called Andricourt. 15 Allied squadrons (1,800 men) covered the crossing operations on the western side of the Catoire. As the map shows, this force was all Waldeck needed to cover his camp as it disassembled itself, since the Rearguard stretches nicely between the two rivers. To Villars, however, the horsemen looked ill-disciplined and sloppy, more interested in readying themselves for departure than keeping a lookout.

Villars' rough instructions were to hold the Allies in place until Luxembourg could arrive. An aggressive commander, this future marshal of France decided just passively skulking in the fog would not be enough. Marcilly, the guards colonel, was told to close to 500 metres – just a little short of where the French First Line is deployed on the map – with his 400 men and form a line of battle. Villars would support him with 700 more horsemen 1,000 metres to his rear – just southeast of the high ground in the center of the French position.

Now, the Rearguard responded. Thinking they were only facing the garrison of Saint-Ghislain, a French post 16 Km southeast which had a contingent of about 2,000 cavalry, they moseyed into a sort of battle line. The idea that this was Luxembourg's Advance Guard never entered their heads. The French were a good day's march away.

If Villars had attacked now he could have slaughtered them, but for some reason (Childs suggests an uncharacteristic attack of 'nerves') he held back. Possibly his view was obstructed, or possibly, Luxembourg's instructions were unequivocal. As it happens, word soon arrived from the *Maréchal* ordering him to wait. So, Villars was spared having to explain his inaction.

(Under the better French commanders of this period, orders were issued in the spirit of the Wehrmacht's *Auftragstaktik*. That is, a sub-commander was expected to interpret a broadly defined mission statement in the manner which seemed best at the time. Villars would not


Ligne
Wattines
Château de Loubian
Chapelle-à-Wattines
Amblekene
Andricourt
R. du Couvent or Catoire Brook
Dendre occidentale
79
Château de la Catoire
LEUZE-EN-HAINAULT
Chapelle-à-Oie
Blicquy
1000 metres
Units - All to Scale
Mounted Regiment (3 squadrons)
Battalion in column
Artillery piece
French
Coalition
Battle of Leuze or the Catoire Brook
September 19, 1691

have been punished if he had attacked in his own initiative.)

The *Maison du Roi* and the *Dragons de Tessé* were the first of Luxembourg's column to appear, accompanied by *maréchal* Berwick, the bastard son of King James II. Berwick was also a skilled commander and he and Villars quickly rearranged their troops. The main body of the French cavalry under Luxembourg arrived soon after. The Foot was hustled along at a cracking pace by *lieutenant-général* Conrad Rosen. Rosen was a rather brutal man, but he had his uses. Unfortunately for his men, the battle would be over by the time they arrived.

The scene was now set for a general's dream battle. Surprise had been total and the enemy's Rearguard was isolated. However, Waldeck was not out of range and could be seen trying to recall part of his Left Wing – that being the last element to clear the Camp. Luxembourg immediately ordered an attack.

On the French side were the following: all 28 squadrons of the *Maison du Roi* and the *Gendarmerie*, 26 regiments of line horse, and 5 of dragoons. These were the regiments. Of Horse: *Du Roi, Saint Aignan, Mestre de Camp Général, Royal Cravattes, Royal Roussillon, Fiennes, La Reine, Rosen Allemand, Condé, Rohan-Soubise, Royal Picardie, Royal Piémont, Puguyon, La Mark, Locmaria, Bissy, La Langallerie, Castries, Auneuil, Bercourt, Saint Simon, Courtebonne, Rassent, Rozel, Magnac, Mérinville,* and *Quadt.* Of Dragoons: *Royal, Dauphin, Mestre de Camp Général, Asfeld,* and *Tessé*. Not all the line horse had arrived when the attack commenced.

For the record, the infantry consisted of the regiments of *Bourbonnais* (2 battalions), *Humières* (2 battalions), *Coetquen* (2 battalions), *Provence* (1 battalion), *Fürstenberg* (3 battalions), *Greder Suisses* (4 battalions), and *Reynold Suisses* (4 battalions).

[The French list may not be complete. Tessé*, for one, is not noted in all OOBs. The battalions listed are the maximum number known for those regiments.]*

Waldeck's forces are not confirmed. He will have had his Dutch and the English, and possibly the Brunswick troops in Spanish pay, who were not quartered east of the Meuse. The map shows a conjectural debouching from the Camp, with the 15 squadrons deployed as a screen, in the position shown on N. Fer's panorama. Since Dutch and English cavalry regiments had 3 squadrons each, the Rearguard is shown as 5 regiments. Their names could not be identified. It is even possible they were detachments, say 1 squadron each from 15 regiments, or 1 company each from 30 regiments.

The French Vanguard was arranged facing the Allied Rearguard head-on, the dragoons on the right under the *duc* de Choiseul and the horse on the left, under *lieutenant-général* d'Auger, in two lines. Fer's diagram shows the *Maison du Roi* occupying nearly the whole of the line, but a few line regiments received citations for the battle. As it is, the *Maison du Roi* occupies half the distance; because of the necessary presence of those line regiments, the map assumes the *Maison du Roi* is drawn upon somewhat deeper than other formations. It had the *equivalent* of 28 squadrons (if including the Gendarmerie), but in most cases the units were massive companies. Each of the 4 *Garde du Corps* companies had 421 men, or the complement of an over-strength line regiment. Half of the *Maison du Roi* is shown in the Second Line. This seems to have been standard practice. Again, because of those line regiment citations, and the fact that the Second Line never charged, it seems the *Maison du R*oi must have been deployed in both lines. The units on the Right, arranged in 'column', are the dragoons, which Fer shows rousting out Allied troops along the riverbank; he shows them mounted. More cavalry regiments are shown 'abstractly' coming up from the rear, to suggest the steady arrival of reinforcements – Luxembourg did not set his ducks in a row before initiating the combat.

It is recounted that First Line rode into and out of a shallow depression, then charged home, piercing the Allied line and driving the whole toward the Catoire. This depression is probably the dip in the ground between the two highest contour lines in the center of the battlefield, and not the small stream near Ambelkene, which is almost perpendicular to the line of attack. That stream is 'intermittent' and was probably dry.

The First Line then disengaged, but before the Second Line could charge in turn, Luxembourg called off the attack. Waldeck had just managed to bring up a few battalions of infantry, drastically changing the odds. After only 45 minutes the affair was concluded. Luxembourg retired to Tournai, arriving at 6pm. Waldeck resumed his march.

At Leuze the French suffered 400 casualties out of only 700 men who actually got involved in the fighting. Their infantry appears to have missed out completely. Of the casualties, a high proportion were officers, including d'Auger, who was killed. Villars claimed to have received 17 sword cuts. The Allies suffered 500 losses.

A question is raised by the fact that so few French were engaged while such a large force was employed. Luxembourg apparently had no intention of fighting a general battle. His infantry never showed up, and as the map shows, most of his cavalry could no be deployed. Probably, he was hoping to rout the Rearguard, plunge into the Camp, and send the bulk of his reinforcing cavalry over the Catoire to harass the Allied columns. By bringing up infantry to hold the bridges, Waldeck prevented a disaster and only had to deal with an embarrassment.

Despite the presence of the fog, historians agree Leuze was completely Waldeck's fault. For a man whose main

claim to fame was march and camp discipline, both were exceedingly sloppy. He failed to confirm the status of the French, merely assuming they were too far away and supposed, based on rumour, that they were too tired to chase him. His actions after the skirmish do not arouse much sympathy. He wrote to William of Orange on September 20 exculpating himself by saying he was not there (meaning he was not actually in the line with the troopers of the Rearguard, one presumes), and thus could not take responsibility. William decided he needed a new second-in-command.

Leuze ended the campaign, though manoeuvring continued until the end of the month. The French moved as far north as Renaix (Ronse). Waldeck's marching took him to Silly (September 23) and the villages south of Ninove (September 28/29). October was spent in these positions, then the weather became too bad and the harvesting ended. Ominously, Allied agents reported seeing the French siege master, Vauban, supervising the stocking of materials at Dinant…

1692 – Pièce de Resistance

The Gassett [Gazette] gives you the best account of the action in Flanders; its some disgrace to us to have Halle plundered before the confederate forces, but that could not be helped, all the forces being not come up. The King [William] sent to the Duke of Luxembourg to let him know he could give him battle if he Would, but the Duke returned answer, he would take time to consider of it. They are afraide that Boufleir [Boufflers] is gone to bombard Liege, which must drawe of a detachement from King William armye to defend. Its said that King James has made a surrender of Ireland to the French King and that his Genneralles have clapped up a good many of the Irish Lordes and amoung the rest my Lord Abercrome who refuseth to swere to the French King, but the Genneralles have declared at the next muster when the army is paid that they must all sweare alleigance to the French King, which gives Sarsfeild [Patrick Sarsfield, one of the firebrands] and others soe great discontent that they will quit the service. My Lord Clarendon petitioned to-day for liberty, but what his answer was I know not. My wife presentes her service to your lady."

Peregrine Bertie to his brother [Robert] Earl of Lindsey, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, at Grimsthorpe. May 2, 1691

The Wider War

Dealing with a war on four fronts, King Louis chose to relegate two of them to a defensive posture; the other two would feature vigorous campaigning. Spain, and not Holland, would be the main target, with one offensive in Catalonia and another in the Low Countries. The latter, of course, also meant fighting the Dutch and the Germans.

In Italy, Catinat would be outnumbered three to one and the Allies would invade the Dauphiné, on the West side of the Maritime Alps. When the Prince of Orange learned that King Louis was stripping this front, he pressed the Emperor to appoint the brilliant Eugene of Savoy to lead the Italian armies. This was done, and the results were remarkable. Only some fancy footwork by the French and the untimely sickness of Duke Victor of Savoy would prevent the Allies from doing serious damage. Yet, campaigning the far side of the Alps was almost beyond their logistical capacity. For the French to strip this front to fight elsewhere would prove worth the risk.

On the Rhine, the French would also be heavily outnumbered, but though the Rhine princes fielded as many as 80,000 men (including those guarding the Lower Rhine) they were mentally unprepared to take the offensive. They had leagued to keep the French out, not to conquer new territory. To make sure they never changed their minds, the French would make a number of bold river crossings throughout the season, ravaging the lands on the right bank of the Rhine for much of its length and creating a zone of devastation that would be difficult to cross.

In Catalonia, as in Italy, Noaïlles would have many of his forces taken away from him. Nevertheless, the Spanish would squander their advantage and no gains would be made by either side, which is to say, the French would come out ahead.

By contrast, the High Seas were one theatre where the French hoped to do well. The previous year, Ireland had been conquered by the forces of William of Orange. Ironically, this had given the French a force of some 12,000 men to play with, as many of the Irish 'renegades' were persuaded to swear allegiance to the king of France and be evacuated to the Continent. King Louis planned to send these men back to Britain, but this time he would invade England and break the back of the Grand Alliance.

8,000 French and 15 Irish battalions (between 16-20,000 men in all) would be assembled at La Hogue on Cotentin Peninsula, under *maréchal* Bellefonds, with ex-king James as titular head of the expedition. Unfortunately, the two fleets of the French Navy which were to combine to sweep the Channel would be unable to coordinate their efforts. Plagued by dockyard shortages, contrary weather, and conflicting orders, the French would encounter the Royal Navy off La Hogue and be worsted. Fortunately, the counter-operation planned by the English would likewise flop. The soldiers involved in these amphibious operations were all destined to fight in Flanders.

(Ex-king James was relieved. He had just about had enough of being the Sun King's pawn. The French were most bemused to witness him cheering on the Royal Navy when they all came out to watch the sea fight.)

High Politics

While the armies were fighting, significant changes took place in the political landscape. In France, the effective but brutal hardliner, War Minister Louvois, died, on July 16. His replacement on the High Council, though not at the Ministry itself, was a veteran diplomat, Simon Arnaud, *marquis* de Pomponne. A very old man (he was born in 1618 and would die in 1699), Pomponne had been

dispensed with in the 1670s because his soft approach did not suit the King, but Louis always regarded him with favour.

In keeping with the way ministries were run as 'family businesses' in France, the War Ministry was placed under the control of Louvois' son, the *marquis* de Barbezieux. Barbezieux's performance during the war was only 'fair'. In the vernacular of the military performance review, 'nice guy, tries hard, kinda dumb'; swap the phrases as applicable. This may have been due to a lack of talent but probably owed more to the Sun King's desire to weaken the power of the War Ministry when he was beginning to seek a diplomatic solution. Pomponne had enough trouble in the person of the Foreign Minister, Colbert de Croissy, another hardliner, and did not need the War Minister breathing down his neck.

On the other side, William of Orange augmented his influence as well as his purse by formally becoming King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. This gave him diplomatic precedence over lesser princes in the Coalition and the ability to treat with other kings as an equal. Only the Emperor outranked him. The money was also nice, but it came with a string called Parliament. The rank of king was also of little value when dealing with people who did not recognise his right to it, such as Louis and the Emperor. However, it gave *them* leverage – they could offer to recognise him in return for concessions.

Peace feelers still traced their way across Europe. Both in 1690 and in 1691 Sweden offered mediation, but at the time the offer did not go anywhere. In August of 1691, France asked Rome to see if a separate peace with the opposing Catholic powers might be achieved. This was done at the cardinal level, but the current Pope disliked King Louis and refused to lend his support.

With Pomponne now at the helm, greater diplomatic efforts were made. It was known that 'King' William was interested in peace, but King Louis insisted James II was the real King of England and would not budge. So, efforts were made to detach William's allies. Rome was approached a second time, again without immediate result, though a seed was planted. More strikingly, both the Emperor and his mortal enemy, the Turk, were approached.

France had a long and flagrant history of making deals with the Ottoman Empire. It was a little more unusual to genuinely seek a separate peace with the Austria Habsburgs. However, the reader may remember that Spain, not Austria, was regarded as France's own mortal foe. It was also known at Versailles that Emperor Leopold I disapproved of James II's overthrow. Both these approaches, though not decisive, yielded positive results over the course of the next few years.

Wintertime

Rumour at The Hague said the Sun King planned to arrive at Mons in February, then to move on and witness the siege of Namur. But, this year major operations in the Low Countries began at a more civilised pace. King Louis left Versailles on May 10 and arrived at Givry, where one of the army corps was assembled, on May 17. The Court, including the Ladies, accompanied him. From here the whole proceeded to Mons, where a review of the corps was held. The troops then crossed the Haine on Mon's northern side and linked up with *maréchal* Luxembourg. A grand review was held by the King and his Ladies, the latter dressed as Amazons. The King's historiographer, the famous dramatist Racine, was also present on the campaign.

Of course, subsidiary operations took place before the King's Court stirred. Preparations for the invasion of England began in February, and although the invasion never took place, those preparations threw out the Allied timetables. At first, it was feared that the French planned to seize the Channel Islands, a much easier proposition. This meant that regiments had to be stationed there. Then, in late April, it was determined that England was indeed the target and that created an 'invasion scare' leading to the stationing of 10,000 men in the vicinity of Portsmouth and the diversion of troops coming from Ireland to the South coast. Some regiments were even sent back to England as soon as they had arrived on the Continent.

Then, William of Orange's own plan to attack Dunkirk collapsed. This plan had germinated in the previous year, once it was clear the Irish war would be over by the fall. Dunkirk was a French privateer base, and a thorn in the side of the London merchants. The defences of the town were incomplete, so Anglo-Dutch forces coming straight from Ireland would make a winter landing and take the port in a surprise assault, while Spanish troops masked the town from relief.

Taking Dunkirk would also unhinge the French line, allowing Allied cavalry to raid deep into Picardy and be some compensation for the loss of Mons. However, after its finalisation in January of 1692 the plan was dropped. Childs surmises that the details were leaked to the French, possibly by John Churchill, the future Duke of Marlborough. Churchill was already suspected to be a closet Jacobite; thee is an argument that his aid to William in the Glorious Revolution was only intended to bend King James' will, not to physically swap rulers. Alternatively, a second look at the defences may have convinced William that he could not muster enough resources to attack the place without further preparation.

And so, all the interest focused once more on the Low Countries. King Louis had hoped that the double-blow of a descent on England and the loss of Namur would force the Dutch and Spanish to sue for peace. That was not

likely now, but at least the strategic situation could be improved.

In Flanders, activity had never really ceased. A bitter winter allowed the French to make deep raids in January, forcing the Allies to come out of winter quarters. In particular, the Sluice of Grignon was broken down. This sluice controlled the water flow on the Sambre between Namur and Charleroi. Its destruction reduced the water level in Namur's wet ditch. The raiders then scouted Namur itself before retiring as the ground thawed.

The freeze returned in February, with deep snow; ice formed on the North Sea coast, preventing the movement of ships. But raiding continued. The most notable raid was probably the one which saw Allied troops from Charleroi penetrate 50 Km south to burn 1,500 cartloads of hay at the town of Chimay, well beyond the magazines at Maubeuge and Philippeville. Those carts were a small part of the massive preparations for the siege of Namur.

The Allies were by now convinced, by reports coming from the banks of the Meuse, that Namur had to be this year's target.

The French Open the Campaign

Adding the King's corps at Givry (40 battalions and 70 squadrons) to Luxembourg's corps (66 battalions and 209 squadrons) gives a grand total for the French field army of 106 battalions and 295 squadrons. Drawn up for the Grand Review at Mons, its two lines extended for 15 kilometres. No wonder Catinat and Noaïlles were forced to remain on the defensive.

[Lynn says the King had 90 squadrons and Luxembourg had 205 squadrons.]

The Review was a political stunt, but these numbers were needed, for Namur was a hard nut. Situated at the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse, Namur was more than a prestige target. Along most of the front, the French border defences were securely anchored on river systems, but they did not control the Sambre. Taking Namur would isolate the remaining Allied posts upstream, particularly Charleroi. Securing the river would lock the Allies out of the wedge of land between the Sambre and Meuse, where the French kept their important magazines. The King would lead the siege personally – that is, he would be present the whole time while Vauban and other competent subordinates ran the siege. Luxembourg, meanwhile, would use his force to cover the operation.

Numbers for the French vary depending on the source. Lynn says 60,000 men were to besiege Namur and another 60,000 cover the work, under Luxembourg. 8,000 additional troops would occupy the Lines of the Scheldt and 7,000 more block the valley of the Moselle. The troops in the Lines – the number also covers the garrisons of Furnes, Dixmyude, and Courtrai – were under orders to pull out if attacked in force.

Childs says 83,960 French in the Spanish Netherlands, broken down into 31,260 horse, 8,400 dragoons, and 44,300 foot. Another 24,000 men, including the 12,000 of the Irish brigades, were still in Normandy but would be drawn upon later. For the other fronts he lists 30,000 on the Rhine, 45,000 in Italy, and 13,000 in Catalonia.

Opposing the Sun King would be Namur's garrison of 9,000 (Lynn says 6,000) under the Duke of Barbançon, and a combined relief army under William of Orange and the new Governor General of the Spanish Netherlands, Duke Maximillian Emmanuel, Elector of Bavaria.

The Spanish were in real financial difficulties. For three years now the war had been waged on their soil and they could no longer pay for the luxury of foreign auxiliaries. This meant the Dutch and English had to pay for the Hessians, Hanoverians, and Brandenburgers, which in turn meant they had more political leverage. Gastañaga was recalled to Spain.

The jury is still out on the reason why, though the most common explanation is that William of Orange did not like him and was particularly annoyed at his failure to help relieve Mons. William did not believe him disloyal, merely ineffective.

Governor-Generals and viceroys were routinely rotated, but in this case William of Orange had more than a little influence. Opinions vary, depending on the historian's personal viewpoint, but all agree that William found Gastañaga difficult to work with. Some argue that this was because the Governor-General was required to seek authorisation from Madrid for all strategic questions, while others say that William disliked him personally, and after Gastañaga's failure to aid in the relief of Mons saw him as 'ineffective'. The dislike may have been due to the fact that Gastañaga had a mind of his own.

Duke Max did not. But, he certainly was more energetic, and saw no reason to waste time getting plans rubber stamped by the Escorial. The real commander of the Spanish element was the Prince de Vaudémont, a favourite of William's who was quickly elevated in authority. Fortunately, though Duke Max had his ups and downs, Vaudémont was a consistently good field commander. Allied execution and organisation improved. Execution was another matter, since everything now depended on William's strategic prowess.

Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria (1662-1726)

Born in Munich, his father was of the Wittelsbach House, the hereditary Electors of Bavaria, but his mother was a princess of the House of Savoy, and her own mother was a daughter of King Henri IV of the House of Bourbon. On his father's side he could also claim a Holy Roman Emperor (Ferdinand II), and on his mother's side a princess of Spain.

Duke Max's eldest son, by his first wife, who soon died, was a prime candidate for the Spanish throne, but

unfortunately this son died in 1699, which is one of the reasons the War of the Spanish Succession occurred. Duke Max's second wife was the daughter of the King of Poland, John III Sobieski. One of his other sons, Charles VII, would become Holy Roman Emperor (for a short time during the War of the Austrian Succession).

Like most of his contemporaries, he was a patron of the arts. Works in the Italian style he inherited from his parents, but he himself preferred the French style and, for good or ill, instituted the Bavarian Rococo.

Duke Max inherited his father's titles when he was still a minor and remained under a regency until 1680. In 1683 he fought at the Siege of Vienna, and in 1688 made his reputation by capturing Belgrade. In 1691, after a stint as the Imperial generalissimo in Italy, fighting alongside his cousin Duke Victor, Duke Max was invited to become Governor General of the Spanish Netherlands. The appointment was a simple matter but the 'backstory' is somewhat complex.

As a potential heir of the Spanish Crown – his son's claim descended from his own – he was qualified to act as a Spanish official. King William wanted to replace Gastañaga with someone who did not always have to ask Madrid for permission, and the Emperor wanted to have someone who could represent Imperial interests. Though he had a deserved reputation as a good soldier, Duke Victor of Savoy was less than impressed and wanted to get him out of Italy. For Duke Max himself, there was the possibility of extending his family's holdings when the Prince-Bishopric of Liège needed a new ruler. And so, Duke Max became Governor General, remaining in that post until the transfer of the Spanish Netherlands to Austria in 1714. Even then, since he fought on the side of France in the War of the Spanish Succession, living in exile in French-occupied Belgium much of the time, he retained ownership of Luxembourg and Namur.

The House of Wittelsbach was rather left in the dust by the scramble for demi-royal trappings by the German princes, which led Duke Max to organise his family into a strong voting bloc within the Empire – they held four electoral votes, more than the Habsburgs. Ultimately, as already mentioned, one of his homes became Holy Roman Emperor, but Duke Max did to live to see the day. He died of a stroke in 1726.

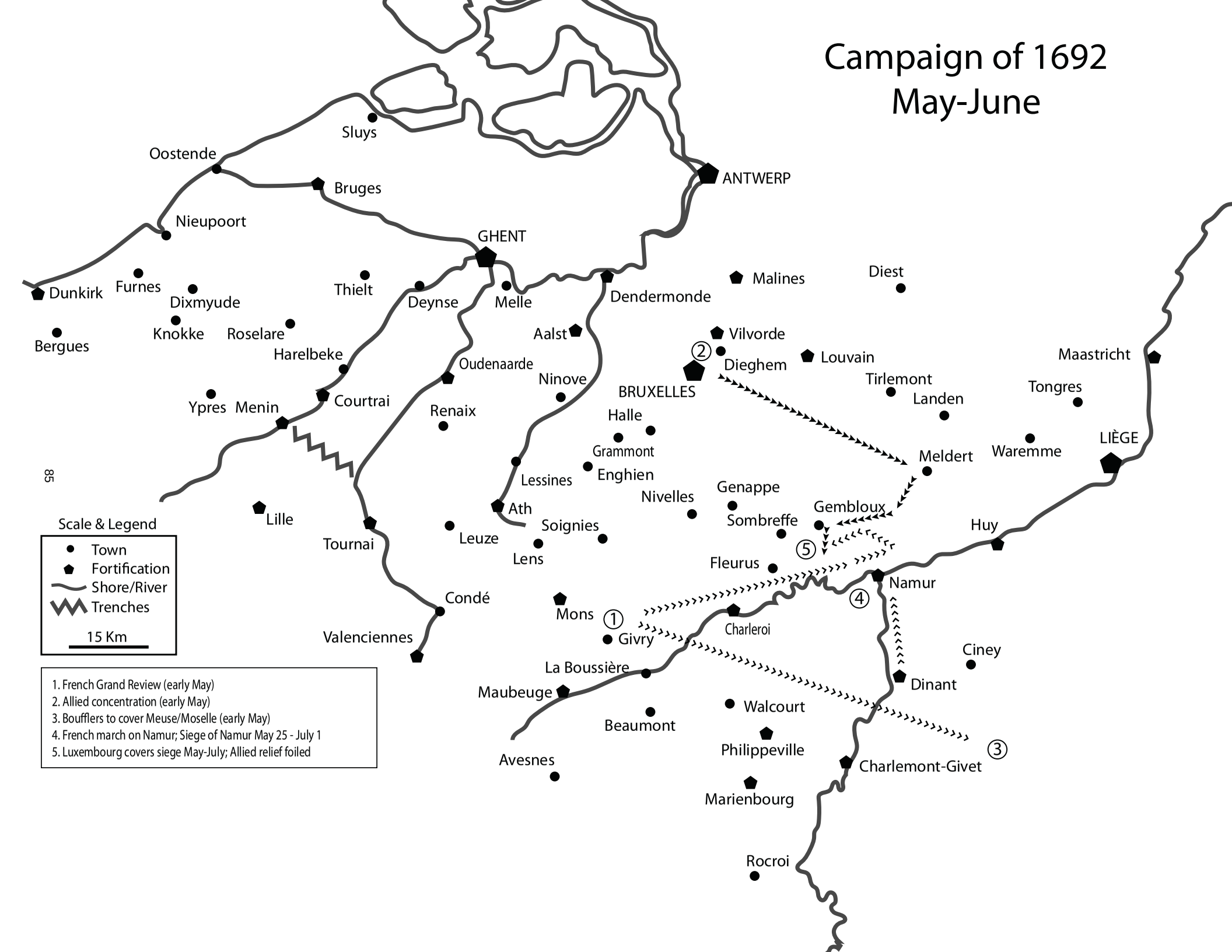
Over the winter, the Allies had billeted their forces as follows. The Brandenburgers, Liègeois, and troops from Lippe in Luxembourg, Jülich, and Cleves; Brussels garrisoned by 15,000 Dutch and Spanish; 5,000 at Louvain, 2,000 at Vilvorde, and 4,000 at Malines, all of which secured the lines of communication; 3,000 at Dendermonde to create a link to the Spanish in Flanders; 10,000 at Ghent and 5,000 at Oudenaarde. Ath, Charleroi, and Namur had been significantly reinforced. Out of these forces, Duke Max, who had brought his own small corps of Bavarian troops with him, created a flying

column of 6,000 men, based in Flanders, to counter the winter raiding.

With the end of the Irish war in October of 1691, a stream of English and Dutch regiments were shipped to the Continent, along with an entire Danish brigade, which was regarded as an elite force. Some of these units were held back due to the various naval issues, and there was a long pause until the North Sea ice broke up, but by the end of March all had arrived, the English quartering at Bergen-op-Zoom and Breda, the Danish infantry at Nieupoort and their cavalry at Malines. Most of the new arrivals were infantry, the bulk of the cavalry, a lot of which was Dutch, being retained in England until the spring grass sprouted – there were already too many horses in Flanders to feed them all. Three troops of Danish horse and three troops of English Lifeguards were sent. An English artillery train would also see service for the first time.

Some English troops were in action almost immediately. Upon its arrival at Oostende, Erle's Regiment of 650 men was ambushed by 4,000 French cavalry on the road to Bruges. The French were driven off with a loss of 50 prisoners and some captured horses.

Ultimately, William, who arrived at The Hague from London on March 16, would take 100,000 men into the field. As late as mid May, however, his army, mustering at Anderlecht, on the Southwest side of Brussels, numbered only 30,000, in 40 battalions and 32 squadrons.


Campaign of 1692
May-June
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Melle
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Aalst
Vilvorde
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Ninove
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Tongres
Landen
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Renaix
Halle
Grammont
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
Enghien
Lessines
Genappe
Nivelles
Gembloux
Ath
Sombreffe
Soignies
Huy
Lille
Tournai
Leuze
Lens
Fleurus
Namur
Condé
Mons
Charleroi
Givry
Ciney
La Boussière
Dinant
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
Valenciennes
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French Grand Review (early May)
2. Allied concentration (early May)
3. Boufflers to cover Meuse/Moselle (early May)
4. French march on Namur; Siege of Namur May 25 - July 1
5. Luxembourg covers siege May-July; Allied relief foiled

Duke Max only arrived at Brussels to take up his new post on March 26. William met with him on March 29 to discuss strategy, then returned to The Hague for more ear bending with his annual Conference. The Allies began leaving their billets and assembling for action during April, but, as already stated, the French bided their time until May. Even so, the former were unprepared when the latter held their Grand Review.

Not until May 19 did the Allied commanders all convene at Brussels. Duke Max took command of 'his' Spanish, based at Dendermonde. The Spanish camp lay between that town and the village of Baasrode, a length of 4 Km. But, counting his Bavarian regiments, he had just 23 mobile battalions with which to protect his new domains.

The army at Anderlecht, composed of Dutch, English, and German regiments, was still forming. 2,000 Brandenburgers arrived unexpectedly at Malines. This good news was overturned by word of the French preparations for invasion in Normandy, which caused a mild panic; 3 English battalions were sent home under Lieutenant General Talmash, who was given command of the Home Army. Six more battalions were stationed at Willemstadt, in Holland, ready to sail at a moment's notice (well, a 'moment' as defined in Age of Sail terms, i.e., a few days).

On May 22 the Prince of Orange set up his HQ at Koekelberg, now the Northeast suburb of Brussels. The next day, while the English artillery train was rumbling into his camp, he was informed that Luxembourg's army was setting up its own camp near Piéton, 45 Km to the South. William could do nothing but fume – March, April, May, and he was *still* not ready to take the field.

Piéton is just south of the Sambre, close to Charleroi, and at first the Allies feared that place was the target – it had to be either Charleroi or Namur. William made his intentions plain: he would relieve Namur at all costs, but for Charleroi he would 'do what he could'. Namur ought to hold out for a long time, but there was little chance of saving Charleroi.

Manoeuvres

After the Sun King held his Review his forces dispersed to their start lines. Boufflers took 10,000 foot and 8,000 horse to Rochefort, deep in the Ardennes (25 Km southeast of Dinant). From here he could intercept enemy troops coming up the Meuse from Liège and maintain contact with *maréchal* Joyeuse, who commanded the Moselle corps this year.

Maréchal Luxembourg, with 66 battalions and 209 squadrons, marched to Piéton, crossing the Sambre at Trazegnies and moving to Villers-Perwin (that village being about a day's mach north of Charleroi), and camping between there and Marbais, 4,600 metres to the Northeast. This camp was just north of the battlefield of Fleurus, less than 5 Km from Ligny. By May 26 he was at Gembloux.

The King's own army, of 40 battalions and 70 squadrons, took a more southerly approach and came to rest in the fields around Fleurus. The train, numbering 196 guns and 67 mortars, was brought down the Meuse by water. (151 guns were actually used in the siege.)

With Luxembourg at Gembloux, it was clear that Namur was the target. The Allied army at last broke camp, but instead of heading south it marched through Brussels to Diegem on the other side of the city, where it waited to absorb more reinforcements. These included the Brandenburgers from Malines, 16 battalions of English and Dutch scooped out of garrisons in Flanders and dispatched east by Duke Max, led by Major General Hugh MacKay. The Duke of Württemberg and his 8 Danish battalions came from the coast.

[Ferdinand Wilhelm, Duke of Württemberg-Neuenstadt (1659-1701), was commander of the Danish contingent. His king appointed a lieutenant-general rather than a major general or brigadier to ensure the Danes received proper representation in the councils of war.]

King William made some minor adjustments to his camp, edging it eastward toward Louvain (Leuven). Around this time there was a plot against his life, which was exposed by two of the three principal conspirators (each thinking to sell-out the others). Only the one who did not report it was executed. During these days, news of the Battle of La Hogue was received, and William ordered a triple-salute with cannon and muskets.

It was not until June 3 that he began to organise an advance against the French. The heavy baggage was sent to Arschot, 15 Km northeast of Louvain. On June 5, after further reinforcement by Brandenburg cavalry, the whole army marched to Meldert, and on the following day, to Lincent. This march was an angled approach route to the Southeast, Meldert being a day's march and Lincent another day's march. The army camped between the villages of Jauche and Orp-Jauche, slightly to the southwest of Lincent.

[Locating the village of Meldert can be difficult, since there is another village of that name and both are close to locations called Aalst. But the 'wrong' Meldert is by the town *of Aalst, on the other side of Brussels, rather than the village of that name.]*

There were three reasons for this oblique approach. First, the French had cleared out all the forage on the direct route south. Second, marching through the thick belt of woodland south of Brussels risked a French attack while the army was defiling through the gaps. Third, General Flemming's Brandenburg-Liègeois corps, 14,000 strong, was coming up the Meuse and could be intercepted by the French if not supported. Flemming marched into the Allied camp on June 7.

Luxembourg, meanwhile, was advancing to meet them. Between the two armies lay the Méhaigne River. The Méhaigne is a tributary of the Meuse whose confluence is just upstream from Huy. Its value to the French lay in the fact that it runs parallel to the Meuse for most of its length, creating a natural barrier to any army approaching Namur from the North. It was not particularly wide, but it was deep, and required bridging. The river's source was not far away from the armies, at Gembloux, but it becomes a significant obstacle only 6-7 km downstream from there.

William ordered an advance against the French on June 8, bringing his army about 5 Km farther southeast, toward the Méhaigne, and forming for battle facing southwest between Thisnes on his right flank and Lattine on his left. His HQ was placed at Viller-le-Peuplier, in the center and just in front of the line. Lattine is close by the river, less than a kilometre away, while Thisnes is more than 4 Km away. The battle line stretched for nearly 10 Km. In case of a reverse, this position would allow the Allies to retreat either back the way they came, or on Huy, which was only 8 Km to the East. Below this point, the Méhaigne was not fordable. However, William hoped to cross the river and attack.

The enemy had marched 14 Km ENE from Gembloux to Longchamps, still south of the Méhaigne. From here they continued ENE, roughly parallel to the river, being spotted by the Allies when in the vicinity of Hemptinne, about a day's march south of their own camp. At this time the weather was warm and dry, and by 2pm the French army could clearly be seen.

[The armies were very close to the future battlefield of Ramillies, and to a hamlet confusingly named Leuze (no relation). The Belgians need to be more inventive with their names.]

The French could not approach the fords in safety thanks to the Allied guns – the ground slopes down to the river on both banks, allowing a clear field of view for long range fire – so occupied a pair of villages walled with hedges, about 400 metres away. On the flats between, their cavalry probed but were driven off by a cannonade.

According to Childs, the Allies outnumbered Luxembourg, 78,000 to 60,000. Their line overlapped that of the French. William gave orders for his army to advance to the riverbank. The cannon were brought forward and each battalion in the first line was to build its own bridge on its section of the front. Then, catastrophe. It began to rain.

Preparations for the crossing took time, so it could not be undertaken until June 9, but in the night the rain came down in buckets. By morning the river was a torrent, the bridges were gone, and the flats were quagmires nearly 2 Km wide. The Prince of Orange raged impotently. (Or so one assumes; he was the sort of man who throws his hat on the ground and stamps on it.)

This disaster was capped by another. On June 9 William received a dispatch from Namur. The town had capitulated, although the citadel still held. This meant that men were already being released for service under Luxembourg, nullifying the William's advantage in numbers. On June 10 the crossing operation was cancelled. It rained for eight days straight.

(The French attributed this boon to Saint Médard. His feast day was June 8 and it was said that if rain fell on that day it would continue for forty days and forty nights. Presumably it only lasted eight days because it did not start until evening.)

The Siege of Namur 25 May to 1 July, 1692

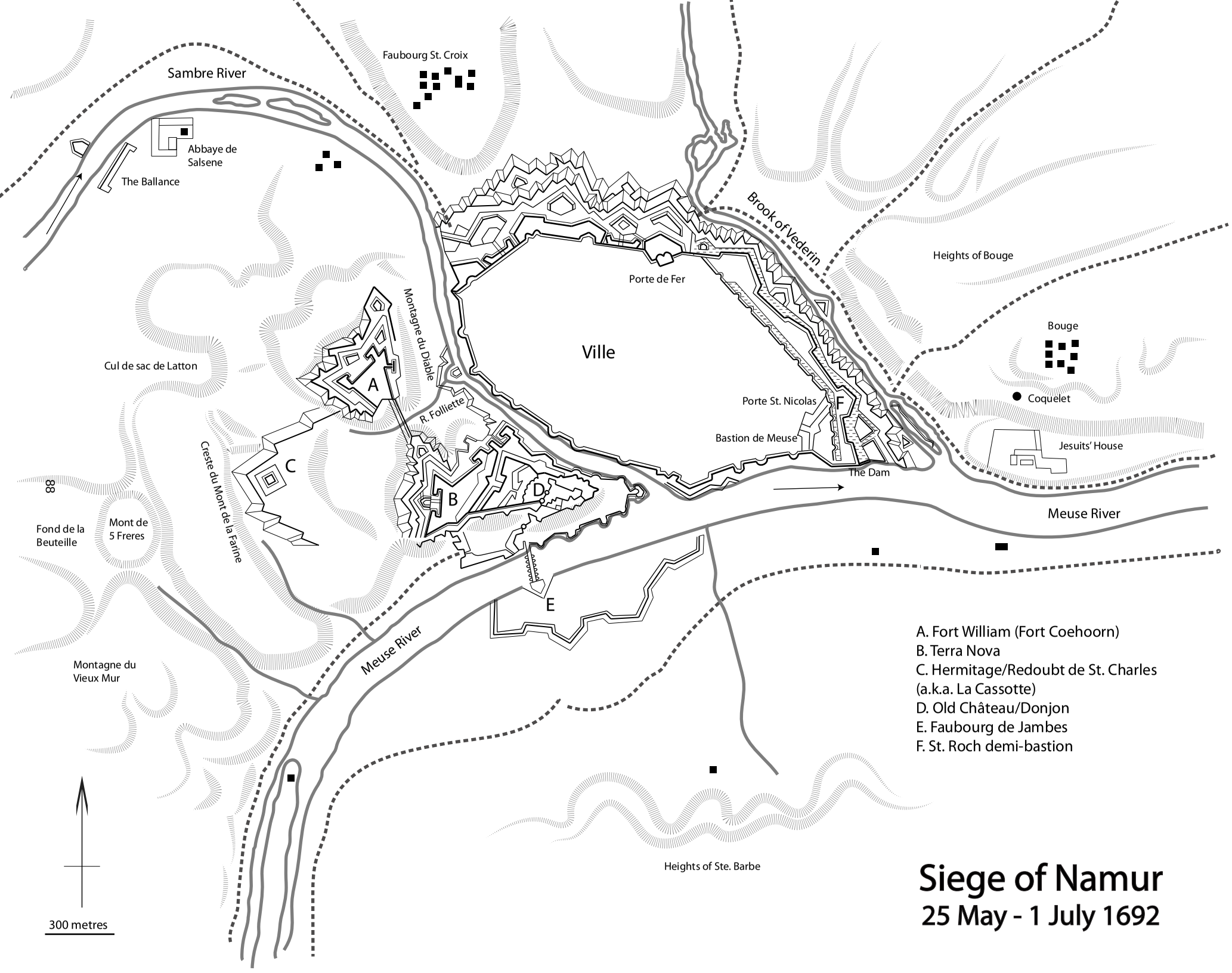
'HIS Majesty endeavouring to be beforehand with the French this Campaigne, came very early over from England to the Hague, about the beginning of April, where having spent some time in Conferences with the Ministers of the Allies, His Majesty afterwards went to Loo, to take some Divertisement, before he enter'd upon the Fatigues of the ensuing Campaigne, expecting till matters were in a readiness to take the Field; which prov'd not so early as (may be) was design'd, both by reason of the foul Weather that happen'd the latter end of April, and the beginning of May, and of the great remoteness, as well as slow motion of some of our Confederate Forces.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1692, p.1

The Siege of Namur was to be an epic event. Not only was the Sun King present, but his siege master Vauban. On the Allied side, their own Master Engineer, Menno van Coehoorn, defended in person. It was he who had modernised the town's defences in 1679 and made final adjustments over the past winter. Coehoorn's theory of siege warfare was more aggressive than Vauban's. Vauban championed the spade and Coehoorn the cannon. But of course, each man used every weapon and technique at his disposal.

At this point the reader should refer to the diagram 'Siege of Namur, 1692'. The besiegers' trench systems have been left out for clarity. They ran everywhere.

Namur was a technical challenge, since its works straddled the confluence of two large rivers, hampering the besiegers' coordination. The town proper sat on the left bank of both Sambre and Meuse. It's fortifications consisted of 4 primary bastions, 3 ravelins interspersed between them, a wet ditch which connect the two rivers, and a detached ravelin which covered the flats along the riverbank. The eastern side of the town had a second 'wet ditch' in the form of the Verderin Brook, while the northern side had additional interlocking defensive positions essentially creating a double line of fortifications. The main ditch north of the Porte de Fer was dry, but just to the east of the gate was a sluice which could be used to fill the eastern section from the Verderin. By the Porte Saint Nicolas, down by the Meuse, that water was prevented from draining out by a stone dike 3 metres high.


Sambre River
Faubourg St. Croix
Abbaye de Salsene
The Ballance
Brook of Vederin
Heights of Bouge
Porte de Fer
Montagne du Diable
Ville
Bouge
Cul de sac de Latton
A
Coquelet
Porte St. Nicolas
F
R. Folliette
Bastion de Meuse
Jesuits' House
C
Creste du Mont de la Farine
The Dam
88
B
D
Meuse River
Fond de la Beuteille
Mont de 5 Freres
E
Meuse River
Montagne du Vieux Mur
Heights of Ste. Barbe
300 metres
A. Fort William (Fort Coehoorn)
B. Terra Nova
C. Hermitage/Redoubt de St. Charles (a.k.a. La Cassotte)
D. Old Château/Donjon
E. Faubourg de Jambes
F. St. Roch demi-bastion
Siege of Namur
25 May - 1 July 1692

The town of Namur was dominated by the Heights of Bouge to its north, so these had been given a string of lunettes (mini half-bastions) sited on the reverse slope to protect them from artillery fire. These have been omitted since the French occupied them without a fight and their exact locations are unknown.

On the right bank of the Meuse, before it joins the Sambre, was the lightly fortified Faubourg de Jambes.

All this might be considered standard fare, but the Citadel was in a class by itself. It was situated on a hill in the triangle of land above the confluence, on the right bank of the Sambre, and comprised a series of interlocking defensive positions rising from the riverbanks to the summit. The sides of the hill facing the rivers were steep and rocky. The opposite sides were gentler, but had the heaviest fortifications, and at the bottom lay marshy ground.

The core of the Citadel was a pair of forts, each sitting on top of its own hill, and connected by a palisaded communications trench which ran along the saddle between the hills. The modestly named Coehoorn Fort, also known as Fort William or Fort d'Orange, sat on Mont Diable. To its south was Fort Terra Nova, with a triple line of bastions supported by ravelins. Terra Nova was an integral part of the inner Citadel which overlooked the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse from atop rocky cliffs. Observers state that it was so sited that it seemed to sink into the ground as one approached.

In the saddle between the two forts was a small stream, La Folliette, which flowed through a ravine down to the Sambre. For the defenders of Terra Nova, this ravine was dead ground, providing cover for assaulting parties. Therefore, in 1690, Menno van Coehoorn had constructed the fort which bore his name.

Additionally, a hermitage, called that of Saint Charles, but more usually named La Cassotte, which sat on the ridge at the top of the Folliette ravine, had been turned into a detached redoubt facing west against another ravine. To cover La Cassotte, an *enceinte*, or encircling wall, ran around its northern side to connect with the Coehoorn Fort. There was a second hermitage, that of Saint George, on the same ridge but closer to the Meuse, but in 1692 this had not (apparently) being integrated into the defences.

The main difficulty for the defenders was a lack of manpower. The Allies had half-expected and half-wished that the French would reduce all the towns around Namur before embarking on the final project, forcing them to disperse more men into garrisons. If one accepts Childs' figure of 9,000 over Lynn's 6,000, this was still too few to man every post. According to Childs the garrison consisted of 5 weak Spanish, and 10 Brandenburg, English, and Dutch battalions. The Heights of Bouge were left unmanned and the town only weakly held. Coehoorn was present in advisory role. Command was given to the Prince of Barbançon, otherwise Octavius de Ligne. He rather wished someone else had the job.

The town was invested by the French cavalry on the night of May 25/26. On May 27 the besieging force moved downstream and began the siege. The weather was good and things moved rapidly, at first. The troops under King Louis' direct control dug in on the North side, while the siege train, under *lieutenant général* Ximenes, deployed in the angle between the Sambre and Meuse.

During the approach to the town a dispute arose between Vauban and a man called the *baron* de Bressé over the best method to reduce the fortress. Vauban's conception was traditional: take the town, and then focus on the citadel. Bressé, possibly inspired by rumours of a fifth column in Namur, was for assaulting both town and citadel simultaneously. They had the men to do it, but Vauban was unconvinced.

The question became moot when the town surrendered before preparations could be completed on the Citadel side of the fortress. Boufflers and Humières commanded the attack on the town, which, since the Heights of Bouge had been abandoned, suffered under a heavy and accurate bombardment. Prior reconnaissance played a key role. The previous autumn, Vauban himself and his staff had masqueraded as tourists and walked around the fortress: "Sometimes we staged a little horseplay, and ran after each other. Sometimes we lay down as if tired – that was when we drew up our plans" (Lynn, p. 225).

The trenches were opened on the night of May 29/30. Three approaches were chosen. But, on June 5, before any lodgement was obtained, the town capitulated. There was a 40-hour truce to allow the garrison to retire into the citadel, and as they marched out the French marched in. The Sun King moved his HQ to a spot 500 metres from the Abbey de Marlaigne, on the right bank of the Sambre, where he could observe all the action against the Citadel. Duke Max would occupy the same site in 1695.

It was made a condition of the capitulation that the garrison would not bombard the town so long as the French did not attack from it. The independent surrender of the town was typical of the period. Towns were even expected to capitulate on separate terms from the military garrison located in a citadel. This concession, however, meant more work for the French, who had to shift their assault forces across the river to attack the Citadel on its strongest side.

Batteries were established all along a line stretching between the rivers, as well as on the far bank of the Sambre (but outside the town). A trench had already been opened against La Cassotte on June 8. Almost immediately it vanished in the mud as the skies opened and the environs of Namur turned into scenes from All Quiet on the Western Front.

The ground below the hill was either river meadow, marsh, or woodland, and the soil was clay. The French built a corduroy road of fascines between the trenches and their camp. It sank into the mud on a daily basis. Forage ran short quickly – the King's own horses had to be fed leaves rather than grass – therefore many of the animals were sent away to greener pastures, meaning more labour for the men. And the mules. Since wagon wheels refused to turn, everything had to be man-ported or carried by mule. On average, shifting a battery took three days.

And, the batteries were constantly being shifted. The boggy ground absorbed shot that only a few days before would have been gambolling merrily up the slopes and into the enemy works. By the end of June the guns were running out of ammunition and the siege had apparently stalled.

Vauban quietly suggested to the King that they mount cannon on the town walls to smash in the weaker northern defences of the Citadel. This meant breaking the articles of surrender, which meant breaking the King's Word. Louis did not want to do that but ordered Vauban to make the necessary preparations. He would try one final assault first.

Despite the weather, progress had been made. La Cassotte was captured quickly, allowing batteries to be brought forward onto its ridge. While its reduction was in progress, more trenches were being dug between it and Fort William. This was standard practice. In cases where a fortification had many interlocking outworks they would be isolated by a system of trenches and reduced one by one. The technique could be risky if the defenders had lots of men, but such was not the case here.

The taking of Fort William was harder. Though garrisoned by only 200 men, its works were on a reverse slope, just below the crest, so that it could not be seen until the attackers were right on top of it, and it could not be touched by many of the French batteries. Moreover, its defence was directed by Coehoorn in person. Supposedly, he ordered his grave prepared on the site.

Two saps were dug, approaching from different angles. The defenders harassed the workers constantly. A reprieve of sorts was obtained when Coehoorn was wounded in the head by a bursting shell; his valet next to him was killed. But, the Dutchman was soon back in the fight. Not until June 22 could the assault be made, overwhelming the defenders with sheer numbers.

[Childs says Fort William, or the Coehoorn Fort, was taken on June 12, but this is surely a typo (p. 189). He routinely gives both OS and NS dates and the print reads '2/12 June'. Lynn says June 22, which is what one would get if the OS/NS dates were written 12/22.]

The attack on Fort William, coming after a 6-day bombardment, involved 7 battalions, plus the Musketeers of the *Maison du Roi* fighting on foot. Vauban expected heavy casualties from the crossfire out of Terra Nova and was not sure the men could sustain them, so 5 drummers were stationed to sound the recall if needed. However, the place was taken. The redoubt's garrison was required to march away to Ghent, rather than reinforce Terra Nova. This spelled the end for Namur, though that end would come sooner than expected.

Facing Fort William, at the other end of the palisaded communication trench, was a hornwork of Terra Nova, the tip of which was known as the Priest's Cap. It had been breached before the call for the last general assault was given. The defenders retreated into the hornwork proper after firing a single volley.

[The name 'Priest's Cap' is also a technical term for a particular kind of bastion, shaped on the plan like a bishop's mitre.]

But, the French noticed a partial breach had also been achieved against main portion of the hornwork, so they worked all night filling in the ditch between themselves and the breach, making ready for King Louis' final assault. Oddly, the defenders did not interfere. Taking a break, one of the French soldiers wandered up to the breach and almost fell over a dozing enemy sentry. No one else was around. Apparently, the garrison did not think the breach practicable and preferred to sleep indoors.

Stealing away, the Frenchman returned with a party of 20 grenadiers led by a lieutenant and a sergeant. They collared the sentry and forced him to lead them to the barracks were his companions were sleeping. The sentry's life was spared but the rest were killed and the hornwork searched. It was empty save for two mines, primed to go off in the event of an assault on the breach.

Defusing the mines, the party reported the situation and soon the hornwork was filled with French soldiers. They fully expected to be counterattacked and were surprised to see the white flag flying next morning. Barbançon had lost his nerve.

The first parley was held on June 30. The surrender was arranged for July 1 and the garrison marched out the next day at 10 am, bound for Maastricht and Louvain. Lynn recounts (p. 226), 'When Coehoorn left Fort William with the garrison the next day, Vauban pressed forward to meet his worthy adversary and consoled him that "he had the honour of being attacked by the greatest king in the world". To which, Coehoorn replied that his real consolation lay in the fact that he had made Vauban move his siege batteries seven times.' Coehoorn, who was indisposed at the time of the chamade, had refused to sign the capitulation.

Of the 6,000 men in Namur's garrison, only 2,000 walked away. The French lost 2,500 killed and 3,500 wounded. Out of 60 engineer officers only 22 survived. 50,000 shot and 11,000 bombs had been fired by the French alone.

Barbançon was examined. He threw the blame on the Prince de Vaudémont, C-in-C of the Spanish, who was

ultimately responsible for the fort's logistics, since it was a Spanish fort. This only angered the Prince of Orange. Vaudémont was one of his favourites, and in any case Namur had held enough stores. William knew Barbançon was a poor commander but he had been Gastañaga's appointee, for whatever reason, and the latter had refused to replace him. The new Governor-General, Duke Max, ought to have done so, but he was still finding his feet when the siege commenced. Unfortunately, popular opinion also blamed Vaudémont, who was required to 'take the waters' at Aachen to avoid assassination by the good burghers of Brussels.

In Childs' opinion also, Barbançon failed in his mission. The French army was exhausted and starving and could only have lasted another week, but this was mainly due to the weather. There are no accounts of sallies being made to disrupt the progress of the siege. In contrast, the garrison of Charleroi made constant raids on the French convoys (typically 50-200 wagons) coming down from the magazines farther south. These were the only means of provisioning both the besiegers and Luxembourg's covering force, and losses were keenly felt. On the day Namur capitulated, the Charleroi raiders captured a convoy of 130 wagons laden with meal, oats, and wine.

Menno, Baron van Coehoorn (1641 – 1704)

Van Coehoorn was of the petty nobility. His father had been a German mercenary in a Friesland regiment. Receiving his early education at home, he attended the university of Franeker, where he displayed a talent for mathematics and geometry. This led him to be commissioned into a garrison regiment at Maastricht (1657). His first acton was as a captain of the garrison, repelling an attack by Münster troops in 1665 (they had been hired by the English). That was the Second Anglo-Dutch War. He participated in the Dutch War (against France), 1672-78, fighting at Maastricht (1673), where he was wounded, then Grave and Seneffe (1674).

Weaknesses in the Dutch system of fortification were exposed during the war, and Menno weighed in on the public debate, writing a pair of treatises on the subject which advocated deep defensive positions, a vigorous defense, and making use of Holland's high water table.

His ideas were well received, but untested, and he still held a low engineer's rank when he went up against Vauban at Namur in 1692. He had already played a small role at Kaiserswerth and Bonn, and had reputedly been offered a job by the Elector of Brandenburg. But King William appointed him commandant of Namur in 1691.

Despite the loss of the fortress, William promoted Van Coehoorn to Major General, impressed by his energy and skill. (Interestingly, late in the war he transferred to a Holland regiment so that he could come under William's direct command, since the Frieslanders were commanded by the local Stadholder. By that point he was

a *liutenant generaal*, the *ingenieur generaal der fortificatiën*, and a *generaal van de artillerie.*)

Before organising the retaking of Namur in 1695 he worked on improving the fort of Huy and fortress of Liège. It was the second siege of Namur which made Menno's reputation as an equal of Vauban. His trademark was to use massive firepower on a small section of the defences, and not to be too sparing of his soldiers. He experimented with various techniques and technologies, including the <relatively> light mortars known as Coehorns.

After the Nine Years War and during the early stages of the War of the Spanish Succession, Menno was in charge of all Dutch fortifications, including the Barrier Fort system in Belgium. Since the Dutch could not compete financially with the French, he became adept at taking advantage of local conditions, suiting the construction or repairs to the situation. Ironically, he agreed with Marlborough that Battle was more effective than Siege, but his performance in that war was not well regarded; with the death of his patron, King William, he lost much of his influence. His career was cut short when he died suddenly while attending a military conference in March of 1704.

Although for a while his reputation approached Vauban's, it did not last. Compared to the Frenchman's record, he participated in few sieges, building his reputation mainly on Namur. It seems that the Allies wanted to have their own 'Vauban' and that King William picked Coehoorn for the role. He was apparently a difficult person to work with, with few friends. He is remembered now mainly for his

infantry-support mortar, versions of which remained a staple of many armies until the American Civil War.

The Other Half of the Campaign

"[There is…] little prospect of any success. The rest of the allies being so supine as to leave the whole weight upon the King [William] and the [Dutch] States and now begin to make an improvable noise upon the Rhine more for the sake of winter quarters and the formal answering of their obligation to the Empire than for any harm [to the French] they can hope for."

William Blathwayt, Secretary at War to King William III.

After the contretemps at the Méhaigne, the opposing armies merely sat watching each other. The Allies, though they could not risk an attack, fared better, until the town fell. Upwards of 200 deserters had been arriving in their camp every day, seeking food. But the release of men from the siege also meant the release of supplies, and Luxembourg's situation, which had been dire, rapidly improved. It also meant, since the besieging army with its vulnerable train had crossed over to the far side of the Sambre to finish off the Citadel, that Luxembourg could relax and think of manoeuvring once more.

Before the French army could recover fully, William experimented with the idea of levering them out of their position. On June 17 the Allied army sidled north of the French to a new camp which placed their Right on Perwez and their Left on the Ford of Branchon. This camp, 11 Km long, occupied what would be the battlefield of Ramillies in the next war.

Luxembourg countered on June 19 by repositioning his own army toward Boneffe, but that name is just a point of reference. The hamlet lies on the Allied side of the river, very close to Branchon. Actually, the French deployed somewhere near there, behind a rise in the ground and some woodland, so that it was hard to tell what they were up to.

The Allies were farther away than ever from relieving the siege. Trying to cross the Sambre with Luxembourg on their flank would be impossible. All William could do was have the commander of the Liègeois troops, Count Tilly, lead 6,000 cavalry across the Meuse at Huy with the job of destroying a bridge of boats located downstream from Namur. Tilly's move was detected and he was driven off.

The two armies continued their tight manoeuvres. On June 12, Luxembourg pulled back to Gembloux, putting himself at right angles to the Allied line. William countered on June 22 by marching across the enemy's front and hooking around the French Left, to Sombreffe. Luxembourg pivoted in place and extended his lines. The French camp now stretched for 6,200 metres between Gembloux on their Right and Mazy on their Left, facing northwest. The Allied camp stretched for 5,700 metres between Sombreffe and Fleurus, facing southeast. Though shorter overall, the Allied lines extended past the French Left, but were farther away on that side.

Because of the overlap in the lines, there was a slight possibility that William could pivot Luxembourg's position to give him safe access to the Sambre downstream from Charleroi, which was still in Allied hands. However, he was thwarted when the *Maréchal* ordered Boufflers to bring his corps from Namur and bridge the river at Jemeppe, in line with the French camp, and at Floreffe, 6.5 Km downstream, extending the French line and anchoring it on the river. Boufflers camped in a forward position at Auvelais, on the right bank, 3,750 metres upstream from Jemeppe (as the crow flies). This caused William to pull his Right back 6,000 metres, to Mellet, on June 24.

There were six days to run before Namur fell, but whether it was six or sixteen, the Allies could not now break the siege. Only the intervention of the German armies, creating some sort of crisis on the Rhine, could cause the French to reduce their forces, and the Germans, slow as always to come into the field, were only thinking in local terms.

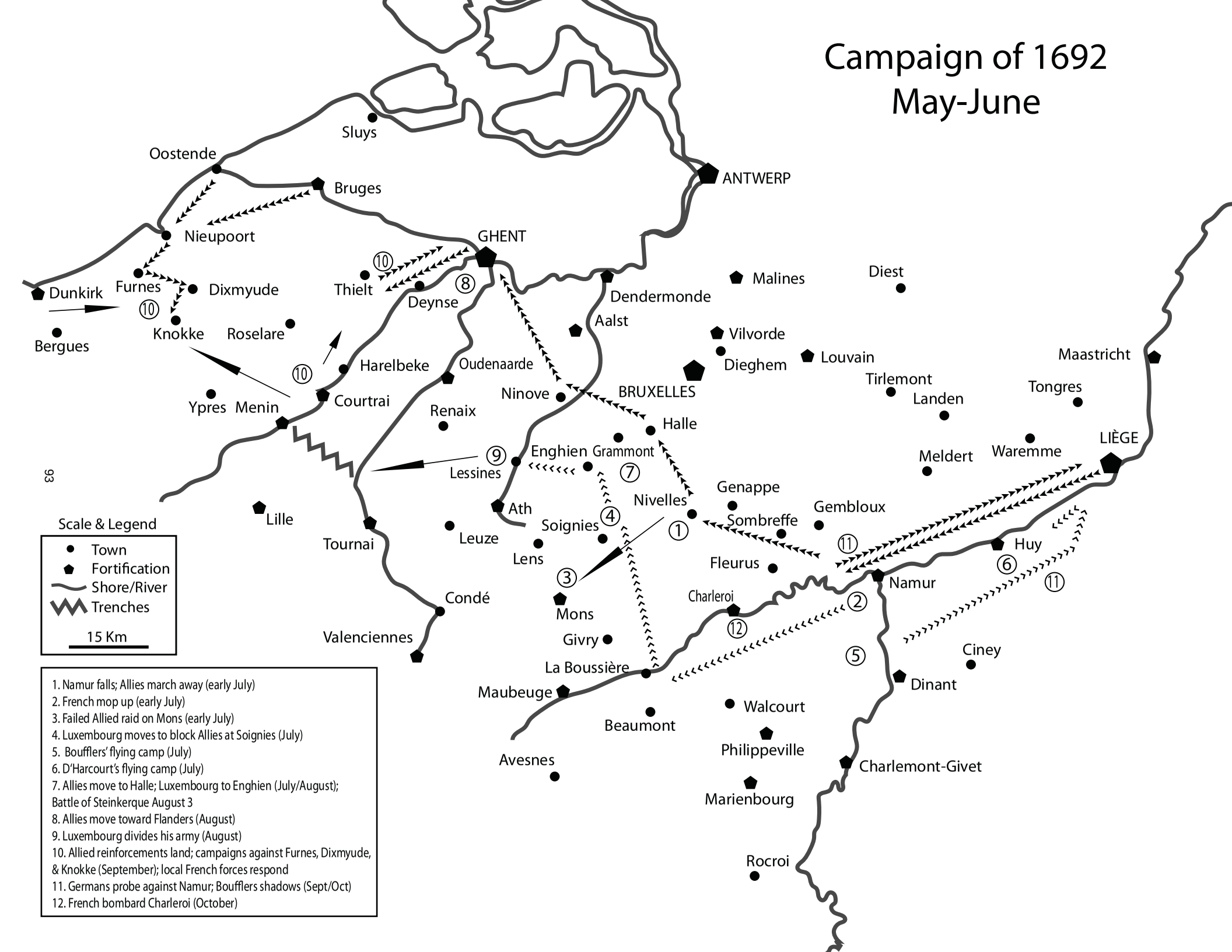
William did have an alternative to the Germans, He had 23 battalions in England, which could make a descent on Brittany, or Normandy, or against Dunkirk. There were filing cabinets full of such plans at the Admiralty. Unfortunately, the men in charge had cocked things up royally. Somebody in dockyard services had made a lot of money, but no landings would be taking place any time soon.

On June 30 the sound of the guns could still be heard at Namur. On July 2 the cannons sounded much nearer, and in salvoes. Luxembourg letting the Allies know his side had won. Confirmation came by dispatch soon after. Namur had fallen, and fallen too soon.

After appointing the *comte* de Guiscard to be the Governor of Namur and giving him 25 battalions, King Louis left the camp on July 2, proceeding to Dinant to tell all the Court Ladies how rough it had been. Day to day campaigning was a grind best left to employees, and battles – he wanted a battle to cap the campaign – carried the risk of losing face. His army divided to carry out various jobs, and the Allies likewise broke apart their voracious monster – but not entirely. The campaigning season still had months to run, and Luxembourg was in hot pursuit of William with orders to bring him to battle.

While the new garrison of Namur expelled the Allied wounded and various malcontents, and worked at top speed to make the fortress defensible, King William headed west, to Nivelles. Luxembourg waited until July 12, then followed him.

Prince William's first response to the fall of Namur was to lash out, to counterattack immediately. He was between the French and Mons; why not attack it? Actually, Mons was a good choice. It had still not been repaired and the fickle inhabitants longed for the return of Spanish rule.


Campaign of 1692
May-June
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Dunkirk
Furnes
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Malines
Diest
Dendermonde
Aalst
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Vilvorde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
Tirlemont
Landen
Tongres
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Ninove
BRUXELLES
Renaix
Halle
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
Enghien
Grammont
Lessines
Genappe
Nivelles
Lille
Ath
Gembloux
Soignies
Sombreffe
Tournai
Leuze
Huy
Lens
Fleurus
Namur
Condé
Charleroi
Mons
Valenciennes
Givry
Ciney
La Boussière
Dinant
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
93
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. Namur falls; Allies march away (early July)
2. French mop up (early July)
3. Failed Allied raid on Mons (early July)
4. Luxembourg moves to block Allies at Soignies (July)
5. Boufflers' flying camp (July)
6. D'Harcourt's flying camp (July)
7. Allies move to Halle; Luxembourg to Enghien (July/August); Battle of Steinkerque August 3
8. Allies move toward Flanders (August)
9. Luxembourg divides his army (August)
10. Allied reinforcements land; campaigns against Furnes, Dixmyude, & Knokke (September); local French forces respond
11. Germans probe against Namur; Boufflers shadows (Sept/Oct)
12. French bombard Charleroi (October)

The garrison were Swiss mercenaries, who might be bribed.

A corps of roughly 12,000 men under Württemberg, composed of 60 men and 3 officers from every battalion, was dispatched toward Mons on the night of July 3/4. Ostensibly, they were conducting a grand *chevausée* for forage. Unfortunately, the French had watched them making scaling ladders on July 2.

The column reached the vicinity of Mons at 1 am. The town was only an hour's march away. The troops halted and were arrayed for combat, then resumed the march, only to run into cavalry vedettes. The Governor of Mons, still the *comte* de Vertillac, was waiting for them; he had deployed 52 squadrons across the likely approach routes. Württemberg ordered a retreat back to Mellet. They lost two colonels, Robert Douglas and Francis Fergus O'Farrell, who blundered into a French patrol in the dark and were captured.

'Sir Robert Douglas and the other two Prisoners being come to Mons, were treated with a great deal of Civility, the Governour coming himself to give them a Visit, and took them afterwards with him in his Coach to Dinner, after he had given them the Liberty both of their Swords and the Town; but they could not make much use of the latter, by reason they were so much taken up in the Civilities of the Governour, Intendant and Major, that they had scarce time to see it; but yet they saw enough to find, that the Garrison was not in that case as had been represented; that there was but two Swisse Companies in the place, and five or six French Regiments; that it was true, that whilst we were upon the Méhaigne, the Garrison had been weak, but re-inforc'd upon our March to Mellé.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1692, p. 31.

At this point in his narrative, Childs explains that the French had a spy on the Duke of Bavaria's domestic staff, the Chevalier de Millevoix, a.k.a. Jaquet. (He was, in fact, a music master, and earned his title that way.) In his confession he claimed to have sent 23 letters to Luxembourg since the campaign opened. The French paid him 100 *louis d'or* per letter. Unfortunately, one of the letters was dropped on the road and a peasant took it to Duke Max, thinking it might be important. Jaquet was 'turned' by the Allies but his days as a double agent did not last long. He was hanged after the Battle of Steenkerque.

The Allied strategic position was steadily worsening. The balance of forces within the theatre as a whole was roughly 120,000 French to 80,000 Allies. Luxembourg's cavalry were beginning to isolate the camp at Ligny; anyone leaving it had to be heavily escorted. Morale dropped. William retreated to Genappe, 16 Km northwest, sending the guns up on July 5 and the rest of the army the next day.

William's new position was a good one, with the Bois de Soignes behind, other woods on each flank, and the Dyle River handy for water and resupply. But the army was now split. The Liègeois and the Brandenburg corps who acted as a 'stiffener' for them were sent to the lands around Liège and Maastricht, which were now at risk.

Fortunately, Luxembourg's own army was also shrunken. 25 battalions were locked into Namur and a further 41 had to be sent to the Rhine, where the Germans were at last stirring. The French cavalry was badly depleted. This forced the *Maréchal* back into a defensive posture. The best place to be in this situation, now that Namur was relatively safe, would be on the western side of the Senne, backed up by the Lines of the Scheldt and living at Spanish expense. This position would also protect Mons, which, unlike Namur, was very vulnerable.

The French crossed the Sambre and camped at Ham-sur-Heure. This central position gave them options and the Allies could not be sure if they would go east to attack Liège, make a short march north to invest Charleroi, stand in place to defend their magazines and rest, or go west. Of course they did this last, bridging the Sambre in the usual place between Thuin and La Boussière, then camping at Merbes Saint Marie, 3,500 metres north of Merbes-le-Château. Luxembourg was now able to support Mons, but he did not stop here. On July 9 the French marched 17 Km north to Le Roulx, and two days later they were at their old camp of Soignies, this time facing northeast between Naast on the right and Chausée-Notre-Dame-Louvignies on the left; Soignies was in front of the line, which was slightly over 8 Km long.

Ensconced here, Luxembourg dispatched covering forces eastward: Boufflers establishing a flying camp between the army and the Sambre, and the *comte* d'Harcourt a corps of observation near Huy, where the enemy general Flemming was doing a similar job of linking Liège with William's army. The camp at Soignies served two purposes. It protected Mons, and it threatened Brussels, which mean that William could neither attack Mons nor Namur. This elegant strategy had actually been forced on the *Maréchal* – there was no forage left between the Sambre and the Meuse.

[Curiously, when armies made detachments, they nearly always brought everyone to the main camp, then sent them back, often for a considerable distance, to their final destinations, rather than simply dropping them off along the line of march. This was probably because the supply train moved as a single column and stores could only be divvied up when it had been pegged down.]

With the weather improving, Count Hornes was sent to Ghent with 10 battalions and a moderate amount of cavalry. His job was to 'claim' the forage in that region for William. Meanwhile, between July 17 and July 20, William reviewed the army. On July 18 it began to rain heavily again. The French began pushing their patrols into the Bois de Soignies. At last, at 6am on July 30, the Allied

train was sent away. The next day the army followed, bound for Halle, leaving a bare muddy pit where their camp had been. They soon caught up with the train, bogged down at Ophain-Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, a day's march short of the objective.

William's staff lit a fire under the commanding officer of artillery but the guns did not make it to Halle until the evening of August 1. The supply wagons could not cope with the road and had to take the infantry's route from the day before; they found it knee deep in mud. It was still raining. (Childs recounts how the wagons were forced to stop for a regiment of Hanoverians marching on a crossroad. Unfortunately, there was no General Patton to direct traffic.)

The Allied camp was laid out between Tubize on the Left and the Brussels-Halle highway on the Right, with William's HQ at Lembeek, which was on the left-rear of the line. Duke Max had his own HQ in Halle, on the right-rear. This would give the line a length of perhaps 8-9 Km. The Senne was at their back. Some 8-9,000 Hanoverian troops joined them: 'all very fine and gallant Troops, particularly the Horse of his Highnesses Guard, of which there was two Troops, the one upon Grey, and the other upon Bay Geldings, which being very well accouter'd, and incomparably well mounted, made a very fine and martial shew.' (D'Auvergne, Vol. 1692, p.37.)

Meanwhile, Luxembourg brought his own army a little farther north, to Enghien. His position was just north of the old French camp at Brain-le-Comte, but faced east, or northeast, with the unfortified town of Enghien in front of the center. There are some discrepancies among the historians as to how the camp was laid out, but the consensus is a straight line, north-south, of 9,500 metres, from Steenkerque on the Right to Herinnes (Herne) on the Left. Childs says the Left was anchored on Biévène (Bever), and about 12,000 metres long. On period maps, Biévène is shown just west of Herne, so that there is really no difference, but in reality it is far enough away that the lines would face northeast instead of east.

[Curiously, Childs' accompanying map shows the north-south alignment with the Left anchored on a place called Chartreuse, which does not exist.]

The protagonists were less than a day's march apart. While Luxembourg's army was intact there was no point in the Allies beginning a siege of their own. The enemy had to be defeated in battle. Neither commander had manoeuvred with a battle immediately in mind – rather, they were both seeking forage – but circumstances had brought one into the realms of possibility. Luxembourg had his orders from King Louis, and King William needed to restore his prestige and his army's morale. So, a battle was even more likely.

The 15 Km of intervening ground was a plateau cut by many streams, mostly running west to east, down to the Senne. The streams naturally created a string of ravines, but these are not deeply cut, but rather make for a rolling countryside. A line of infantry marching west would have problems coordinating its advance because portions of it would periodically disappear from view, but the real impediments to movement were a patchwork of enclosed fields, small woods, and boggy flats. The enclosures have all gone now, so the terrain appears open and relatively easy to traverse, but the odd remnant still exists, and the hedgerows appear to have been the common stout 'quickset' variety.

Behind the French lines the ground was the same, but their streams ran down to the Dender. The Senne itself flows northeast here, from near the French Right to the Allied Left. It is narrow enough to be crossed by a homemade plank bridge, but could not be forded in the face of an enemy. The extensive Bois de Triou, of which very little remains today, ran across the whole of the French Left and Center, meaning the only suitable approach route was a narrow one against the French Right.

Luxembourg's position was very secure but it was not perfect for a French army strong in cavalry. William felt he had a better chance – not a good chance, just a better one – of success this time around because his own army was infantry-heavy. Nevertheless, he was playing long odds. The best that could be hoped for was a partial destruction of the French Right, which might send the enemy limping away. But, to quote Childs (p.197), 'Even this modest ambition was wrecked by William's carelessness and lack of professionalism.'

Perhaps it was because the attempt was so likely to fail that William did not order a reconnaissance. Most of his council, including the all-important Dutch commissars – the Deputies – were against the idea. Duke Max voted with William, fearing, somewhat overly much, for Brussels' safety. He may have been unnerved by the rapid fall of Namur and by his experiences fighting Catinat in Italy the previous year. The French seemed unbeatable. But, a reconnaissance would have revealed that the ground to be traversed was much tighter than expected and William would have been unable to justify making the attempt.

[While drawing the maps for this battle, the author discovered, as he expected, that the units did not fit on the space they were supposed to occupy. The old maps show a certain frontage, the same in every case, with the battalions crammed into it all in one line. Putting them in the conventional two lines solves the problem, but it is still a tight fit.]

To try and lower the odds against him, the Prince of Orange compelled the captured spy Jaquet to write a letter to Luxembourg saying the Allies planned a 'grand forage' in his direction the next day. This letter *was* effective, causing the *Maréchal* to respond much slower than he should have, but it was not enough to swing the odds.

The Battle of Steenkerque, August 3, 1692

At this point the reader should refer to the accompanying maps. One shows the overall situation during the battle, and the other the sector where the Allied assault took place. Like all the maps in this Commentary they are based on modern topographical sources (contour intervals are 5 metres), but the period map used to provide battle details is unusually good. It appears to have been commissioned by King Louis immediately after the battle. Much of the action depicted is of the subsequent 'pursuit', but it shows the lines of the camp, the threat of French envelopment which developed, and the positions where the actual fighting took place. (The 'pursuit' was hardly a pursuit at all, but the King did not need to know *that*.) Quincy also provides a panoramic map which is not as useful.

The Allied plan of battle was as follows. The whole of their Foot would move southwest in three columns, converging behind the Bois de Spinoy, just north of the village of Rebeeck (Rebecq). For those on the Allied Right, this was a march of 10 Km. The Center and Right columns would pass through the wood or skirt its northern edge and form up in two lines facing northwest, screening the advance of the Left column, which, forming 3 assault lines, would pass through the wood, march up the left bank of the Senne, climb onto the Plaine de Saint Martin, and attack the French Right above Steenkerque.

[Childs notes that this seems to be an early example of the 'oblique order' tactic employed with great success (sometimes) by the Prussians.]

The artillery train set out at 2am, but almost immediately the failure to make a reconnaissance had its effect. The route chosen for them was so bad they would not arrive on the battlefield in time to participate. Fortunately the attackers still had battalion guns, and possibly some other light pieces. The Foot had an advantage, in that each column's route had been partially levelled the previous night by 6 battalions working as navvies. Pioneers also accompanied the columns to smooth the way even more.

At 4am the Duke of Württemberg led the Advance Guard out of camp. This consisted of 4 English and 2 Danish battalions, plus 400 pioneers. The main body left at dawn, which on August 3 was just after 6am. Since this was to be an infantry fight, the cavalry brought up the rear. Its sole job would be to cover a withdrawal.

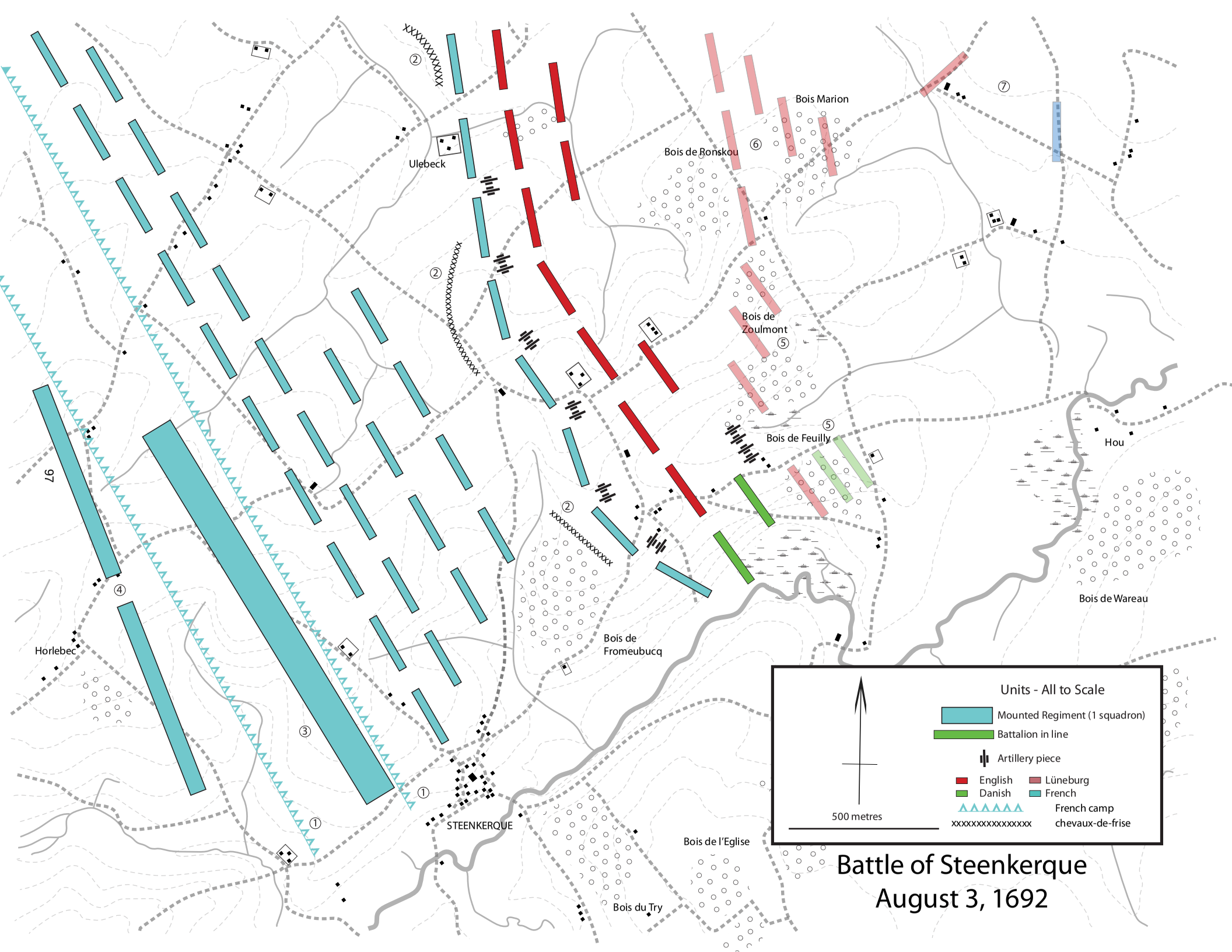
The French were not expecting an attack *per se*, but battles had been known to develop out of 'grand forages' that strayed too close to enemy lines, so for safety's sake Luxembourg had cannon brought up on his Right and ordered picquets of Foot forward into the hedgerows. Cavalry was also sent out as far as Tubize, and it detected the Allied movements, but it also detected a sham foraging expedition heading south from that town. Contemporary rumour after the battle had it that the commander of the French scouts was informed of the Allied intentions by spies and asked Luxembourg to deploy horsemen in front of the camp. Some of these scouts were captured by the advancing columns. Luxembourg was not as informed of the situation as he would have liked, so in the morning rode over to his Right to see for himself.

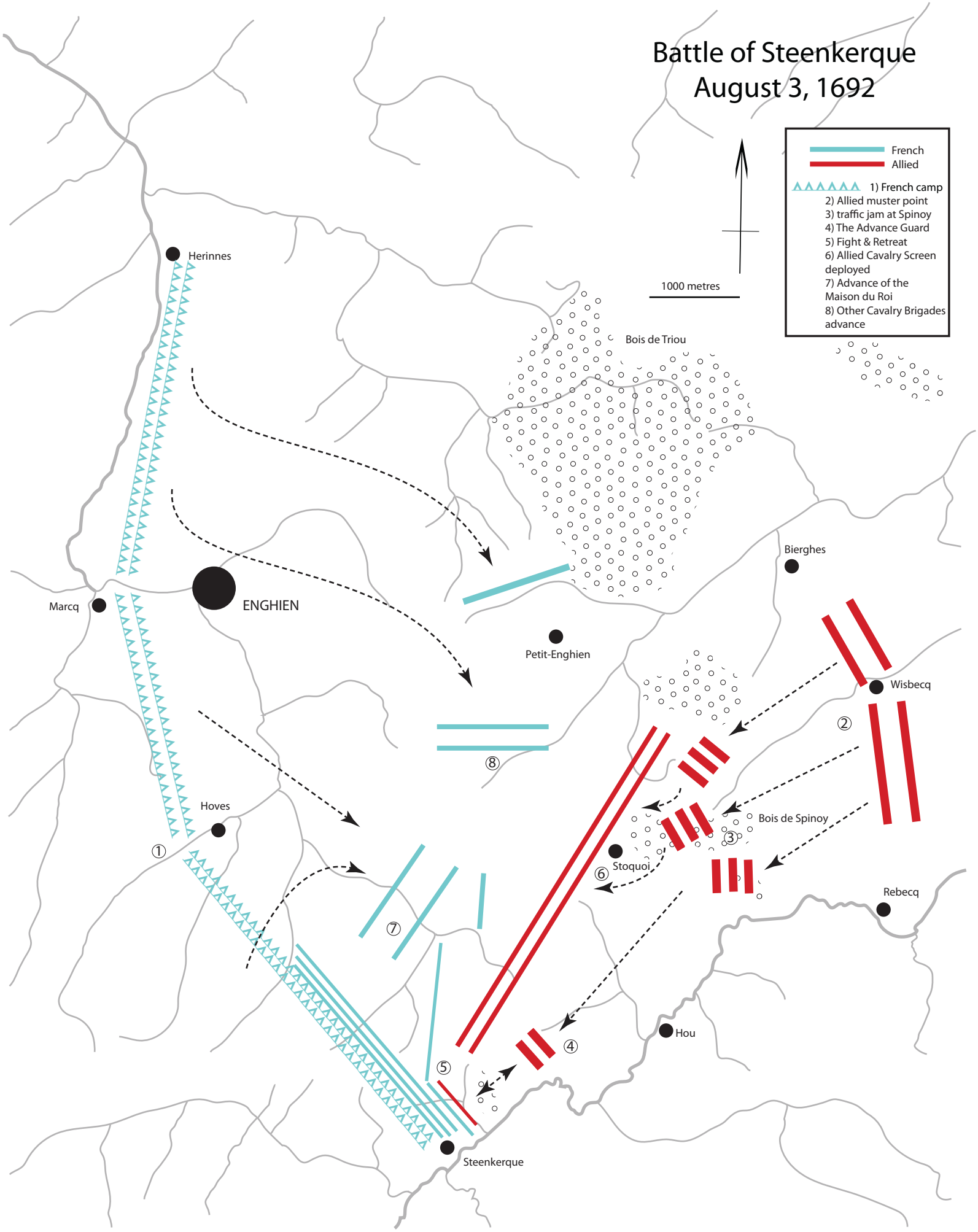
The reader should now refer to the detail map. This telescopes some of the events, and is far neater that the reality. The troops of the Advance Guard are shown beginning to engage at close quarters; in some cases the opposing lines are within 100 metres of each other. Since most of the fighting was within enclosed fields, the musketeers formed skirmish lines with the pikemen (at least the English had many pikes) held back as a reserve. If fighting in a static position, the musketeers may have formed relays to maintain a regular fire.

Per the map, an Allied cannonade has ceased, though the gun line (an approximation) is still displayed. The French guns are still firing. The French, who had initially stood-to right in front of their tent lines (1), have moved forward, erecting some quick *chevaux-de-frise* using locally felled timber (2) before the Allied troops came within range. Luxembourg has already ordered additional regiments to stack up behind the engaged line, and the *Maison du Roi* is forming behind that (3), with a further Reserve of cavalry (4). The engaged French line extends north off the map by probably one battalion's-length but the Allied line does not. Luxembourg's orders regarding the rest of the army, described below, are marked on the general map.

Local visibility might be impeded by dips in the ground or hedgerows, but a man on horseback would have a good situational view all the way to the Allied main body at the Bois de Spinoy. At 11am, Luxembourg saw the 6 battalions of Württemberg's Advance Guard emerging from behind the South edge of the Bois de Rouskou, heading for two other woods in line with it but nearer the Senne, the Bois de Zoulmont and the Bois de Feuilly. The Advance Guard deployed for battle within these woods, 3 battalions in Zoulmont and 3 in Feuilly (5). The other 6 battalions (6) shown on the detail map are those which managed to reach the scene in time to take part; they are shown taking station on the right of the Advance Guard. A final English battalion, along with one from Celle-Lüneburg, can be seen just entering the map (7). These will help extricate the Advance Guard.

It was possible that what he was seeing was only a screen for foragers, but Luxembourg had a premonition. The drums sounded for muster and he dispatched orders which pulled his Left and Center toward him. The Left was to take 9 battalions and move forward to cover Enghien on an oblique line. The Center and the Right were to concentrate by Steenkerque; eventually, no less than seven lines formed up on the Right, in advance of the French camp.


Ulebeck
Bois Marion
Bois de Ronskou
Bois de Zoulmont
Bois de Feuilly
Hou
Bois de Wareau
Bois de Fromeubucq
Horlebec
STEENKERQUE
Bois de l'Eglise
Bois du Try
97
Units - All to Scale
Mounted Regiment (1 squadron)
Battalion in line
Artillery piece
English
Lüneburg
Danish
French
French camp
chevaux-de-frise
500 metres
Battle of Steenkerque
August 3, 1692


Battle of Steenkerque
August 3, 1692
French
Allied
1) French camp
2) Allied muster point
3) traffic jam at Spinoy
4) The Advance Guard
5) Fight & Retreat
6) Allied Cavalry Screen deployed
7) Advance of the Maison du Roi
8) Other Cavalry Brigades advance
1000 metres
Herinnes
Bois de Triou
Bierghes
Marcq
ENGHIEN
Petit-Enghien
Wisbecq
Hoves
Bois de Spinoy
Stoquoi
Rebecq
Hou
Steenkerque

This battle order took time to shake out and the effect was rather messy, but Luxembourg still held all the cards. The Allies were forced to attack frontally upslope across broken ground, all the while threatened by the possibility that the French Left would pivot and enfilade them.

Württemberg of course did not attack immediately. He waited for the rest of the assault column to move up. And waited. And waited. But, not idly.

'Between Ten and Eleven of the Clock in the Morning our Advanc'd Guards under the Command of Prince of Wirtemberg lodged themselves in the Wood that fronted the Right of the Enemy's Army; the Danes and the Battalion of Guards taking their Post upon the Left in the Wood; and Sir Robert Douglas; Fitzpatrick's and O Farrel's upon the Right of them; on the other side of the Wood was the Enemy's Camp, a little Valley remaining between, and a great many Hedges, which the Enemy resolved to maintain with all Vigour possible, though they yielded so easily their Advanced Posts. Prince Wirtemberg planted upon a little Rising on the Left of the Wood a Battery of Canon, which began to play about Eleven of the Clock; and another upon the Right, by Sir Robert Douglas his Battalion. Captain Macrackan of the same Regiment, who afterwards was killed, pointed a Canon from this Battery so successfully, that it put a whole Battalion of the Enemies in disorder, sweeping almost an entire Rank before it.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1692, pp.39-40.

The Main Body, meanwhile, made it as far as the Bois de Spinoy, passing between it and another wood, the Bois de Stordoy (Stoquoi). D'Auvergne notes that some of the trees were very tall, and regularly planted in rows, like a formal garden. The French could be seen in the distance, mostly in ranks, but some were setting fire to a large farmhouse to create smoke to cover the arrival of reinforcements.

The assault column was supposed to form into three lines as it cleared the wood, while the other two columns, including most of the cavalry, formed up on the right flank. But something went wrong. This was so critical to the course of the battle that multiple versions of events have arisen.

The popular account, of which there are sub-variants, is that the man in charge of the general deployment, *luitenant-generaal* Hendrik, *graaf* van Solms-Braunsfels, who was a great-uncle of King William's, had trouble coordinating the advancing columns, which became entangled as they passed around the woods. This led to a long delay while he tried to sort things out. Württemberg, after repeated requests for reinforcement and tired of waiting, then commenced the attack, and Solms, seeing him outnumbered, panicked and rushed the cavalry forward, against William's orders. The horsemen did not break clear of the jam but only made things worse. A number of English battalions shoved their way through on their own initiative, loudly expressing their opinion of Solms' leadership as they did so, at which his temper finally snapped and he refused henceforth to send any aid at all, leaving the English to bleed. Major General Hugh Mackay, commander of the Scots-Dutch Brigade and Protestant hero of the fighting in Scotland, was the most notable victim, dying stoically as his brigade (on the Right of the van) was overrun.

Childs believes most of this tale is embellishment added by John Churchill and his clique during the War of the Spanish Succession, when they were trying to loosen the Dutch grip on field operations. It was also put about that a) Solms hated Württemberg, and b) thought he should have commanded the vanguard instead. Solms was long dead by the time these stories were in circulation. Childs admits Solms was 'a proud, haughty man, not at all grateful' (quoted in Childs, p. 202) and disliked both the Danes and the English, but does not believe he deliberately lost the battle to spite them.

He think's Solms' real blunder was deploying for battle 2,500 metres from the enemy. Perhaps a traffic jam had indeed been created and he felt that was the only way to sort out the mess. Or, perhaps the main delay was caused not so much by the three columns converging as trying to deploy all at once from a concentrated spot, impeded by the cavalry. Or, perhaps the lines were being formed and then Solms did panic and ordered the cavalry up, adding to the confusion. Childs says the cavalry had already got in front of the infantry, through no fault of Solms.

King William, who could see what was happening, 'in great passion bit his nails, and with tears in his eyes said, that he could not have his orders obeyed' (quoted in Childs, p.203). It may have been William who added to the tangle by ordering more regiments forward and then wishing he had not. Mackay's brigade and another 4 battalions worked their way through the mess – which means they essentially ignored Solms' order to form for battle, in favour of aiding their countrymen, which would have been enough to make him see red without their insults.

Meanwhile the French camp was boiling like an ant's nest that had just been kicked. The Right deployed immediately in front of their tents in two lines. Dismounted dragoons were sent to cover the low ground by the Senne. More guns were hustled up. As battalions from the Center arrived they were shoved into the gaps. Once additional troops began arriving, the Right pushed forward and began erecting their *chevaux-de-frise*.

By noon, the Allied van had been augmented by the 7 extra battalions and totalled about 8,000 men. On his own initiative, Württemberg grabbed the nearest cavalry – two Dutch dragoon regiments and the Horse Grenadier Guards – and deployed it to cover his right flank, on a line north and east of the Bois de Rouskou. At 1pm he

ordered the attack, without waiting any longer. His supports were still over 2 Km away, creeping forward in line of battle.

The attack did not go well. The men pressed forward, the line immediately being split up by the broken ground, units losing their bearings in the hollows, and all the while the French guns pounded away. The French infantry were very close, fighting was from hedgerow to hedgerow.

Childs recounts in detail the experience of the Cameronians, a new regiment, later the 26th of Foot. They appear to have been one of the battalions which came up later, but instead of lining up on the Right, wound up behind the Center. Thus they advanced screened by musketeers from the Guards and Royal Scots. After exiting the Bois de Zoulmont the Cameronians were ordered to line a hedge. The French were on the other side of it and the firing was pointblank, with the odd bayonet or musket butt poking through from time to time. Then, a regiment on the Cameronians' flank withdrew. It was probably trying to swap places with its supports, but moved too hastily and left a gap through which dismounted French dragoons, whom the Scots initially mistook for Dutch, attacked. Still, the Cameronians held their ground until ordered to withdraw, suffering most of their casualties then, as the French pursued them. After rallying the regiment in Zoulmont it was determined they had lost 101 killed and 109 wounded out of 600, including their colonel, the Earl of Angus, and their lieutenant colonel.

[Note: Cameronians, not Camerons. One is a Lowland regiment, the other is a Highland clan (which also had a famous regiment). The Cameronians started life as Scots militia fighting against King James' forces in Scotland. Composed of religious fanatics, they were the Presbyterian version of the modern day Taliban, and the Authorities hung them out to dry at Dunkeld to get rid of them. Instead, the regiment defeated a large band of enemy Highlanders all by itself and as a reward was enrolled in the Line and sent to Flanders (if that can be considered a reward).]

Württemberg's men were not stalled by French resistance. The Royal Scots (Douglas') cleared three hedgerows and lodged in a fourth. The Guards reached the enemy tent lines, capturing a battery of guns. The French were wavering and Luxembourg could clearly be seen exhorting his men to stand firm. But, without reinforcement the vanguard could not carry the day. Württemberg twice sent pleas for help to Solms, who continued to grind forward at a snail's pace.

So, Württemberg ordered a withdrawal back to his start line. By the time his men reformed the main body had *still* not come up. He decided to retire on it. Luxembourg's Left was swinging down from Enghien and his Right was following on Württemberg's heels. Fortunately, the Allied cavalry was now in a position to form line against the enemy Left, from the Bois de Rouskou to a spot in front of the Bois de Spinoy, as had originally been intended. This line was bolstered by infantry. It took some damage from enemy cannon fire, but the French had no desire to become entangled in broken ground. The Allied Advance Guard fell back, first by its Right and then, covered by a fresh Lüneburg battalion, by its Left. The French pushed through the woods of Rouskou, Zoulmont and Feuilly, then halted. They were not exactly in a condition to pursue.

The Allied van left the field, the flank guards peeled back about 7pm, and a rearguard of grenadiers discouraged the few French scouts which followed. William's army was back in camp by 10pm, minus 8 cannon which had to be abandoned (though they were recovered later).

Allied casualties were heavy, proportional to the troops involved. Less than fifty percent of the Foot participated, out of which 5,286 were killed and 2,353 wounded. Alternate figures are 4,469 and 3,452 (the difference may simply lie with how the mortally wounded were counted). The French reputedly lost about the same amount, so this was hardly a case of them simply swatting the Allies aside. Both sides claimed the victory, the Allies because they were not routed off the field, which is a bit of a stretch. 10,000 men died so that William of Orange could claim a minor success for the Alliance against the loss of two major fortresses.

[Lynn gives a third set of casualty figures: 7,000 French and 10,000 Allied.]

Childs' verdict is that the attack failed mainly because it was an 'act of desperation', an attack made in column (in the grand-tactical view) rather than line, with an army and officers trained only to fight in line. The plan was too complex. He regards William as a rank amateur, Solms as possibly incompetent, but perhaps only unlucky. D'Auvergne says nothing about Solms at all, which lends credence to Child's view that he was not callously allowing the English to die. Childs also notes, however that Solms never went forward to find out what was going on, and William never went forward to get a grip on Solms.

Someone who is not usually blamed is Württemberg, but one has to wonder why he began the assault if he was badly outnumbered. If he had just rushed their position because he saw the French in disarray, well and good, but he did not. He waited, cannonaded them, and then, when they had sorted themselves out, attacked. Orders are orders, of course, but commanders do sometimes make suicidal attacks just to make a statement about their superiors' lack of competence. Sometimes, too, they start things in hopes of hustling the rest of the army.

[This author has done both, by the way, but only during training exercises. Officers need to be taught their place.]

There were two other casualties, after the battle. The spy Jacquet was hanged at the head of the army, and the silent partner of the assassination trio (the plot at Louvain, before the campaign got started) was hanged, drawn, and

quartered. This man's name was the Chevalier de Grandval, and he was a Knight of Malta. Despite his rank, he seems to have been a desperate character, who fled France after killing a man in a duel. The plot, originating with Louvois, had been planned for 1691, fell through without being exposed, but was revived by Barbezieux, who came across his father's plans while sorting his papers. Of Grandval's coconspirators, one was a hireling and the other was in it for personal reasons.

Dunkirk?

After this the campaign drifted farther west. As the new King of England and leader of the Grand Alliance, the William was under tremendous pressure to score a goal before halftime. The referees were still arguing over Steenkerque. The need was not personal. Partly it was a question of shaming his Allies into doing more, or at least not quitting the fight. But, when Parliament opened in October there were going to be loud questions in the House about how taxes were being spent. William's staff dusted off the Dunkirk file.

For the present, immediately after the battle the Allied army conducted a real forage toward Enghien, or more specifically, toward Haute-Croix (Heikruis), midway between the two camps. Not until August 5 were the Allied wounded sent to Brussels. On August 11, Luxembourg broke camp and marched to Ghislenghien, which the reader may remember is halfway between Enghien and Ath, a day's march southwest. Allied cavalry scouted the enemy's empty camp and rescued some abandoned POWs.

On August 12, Luxembourg marched to Lessines, 7 Km northwest, camped between there and Grammont (Geraardsbergen), and detached 30,000 men to watch the Flanders coast. French Intelligence still had its spies in the high councils of the enemy. The same day, some of his cavalry pushed forward to the Senne and attempted to surprise the Saxe-Gotha Horse, whose camp was isolated from the rest of the army.

[It is unclear if this was the Saxe-Gotha Regiment itself, or the entire corps of 3 Saxon cavalry regiments.]

All this time William remained in his camp at Halle, unsure what, if anything, he could accomplish against a general like Luxembourg. Militarily speaking, the man seemed to have no chinks in his armour. He was also waiting for a descent on St. Malo – in Normandy – to be readied in England.

But, the forage ran out in mid August. On August 19 the Allies moved to Lennik, a day's march northwest of Halle, and on August 20 to Ninove, which was a short day's march (10 Km) WNW. William was moving very cautiously in a sea of French horsemen.

On August 24 the Allies sent their heavy baggage to Ghent. On August 25 the army also went to Ghent. The same day, Luxembourg broke camp and marched on a parallel line. Allied march discipline was shamefully slack, but Luxembourg did not feel he was in a position to take advantage of it. Perhaps much of his cavalry was still patrolling farther east.

The Allied camp was at Sint Lievens-Houtem, 15 Km southeast of Ghent and 16 Km north of the last French camp. The next day they crossed the Scheldt at 6:30am by way of Gavere and camped at Nazareth. This was a march of 19 Km through dangerous defiles, and it took all day. Nazareth is a day's march southwest of Ghent.

On August 27 Count Hornes and some of the Ghent garrison joined the army, which crossed the Lys at Deynze, 6 Km northwest, and camped on the far bank between there and Grammene. The camp was about 4 Km long. Meanwhile, the French moved to their default camp at Harelbeke, 20 Km up the Lys.

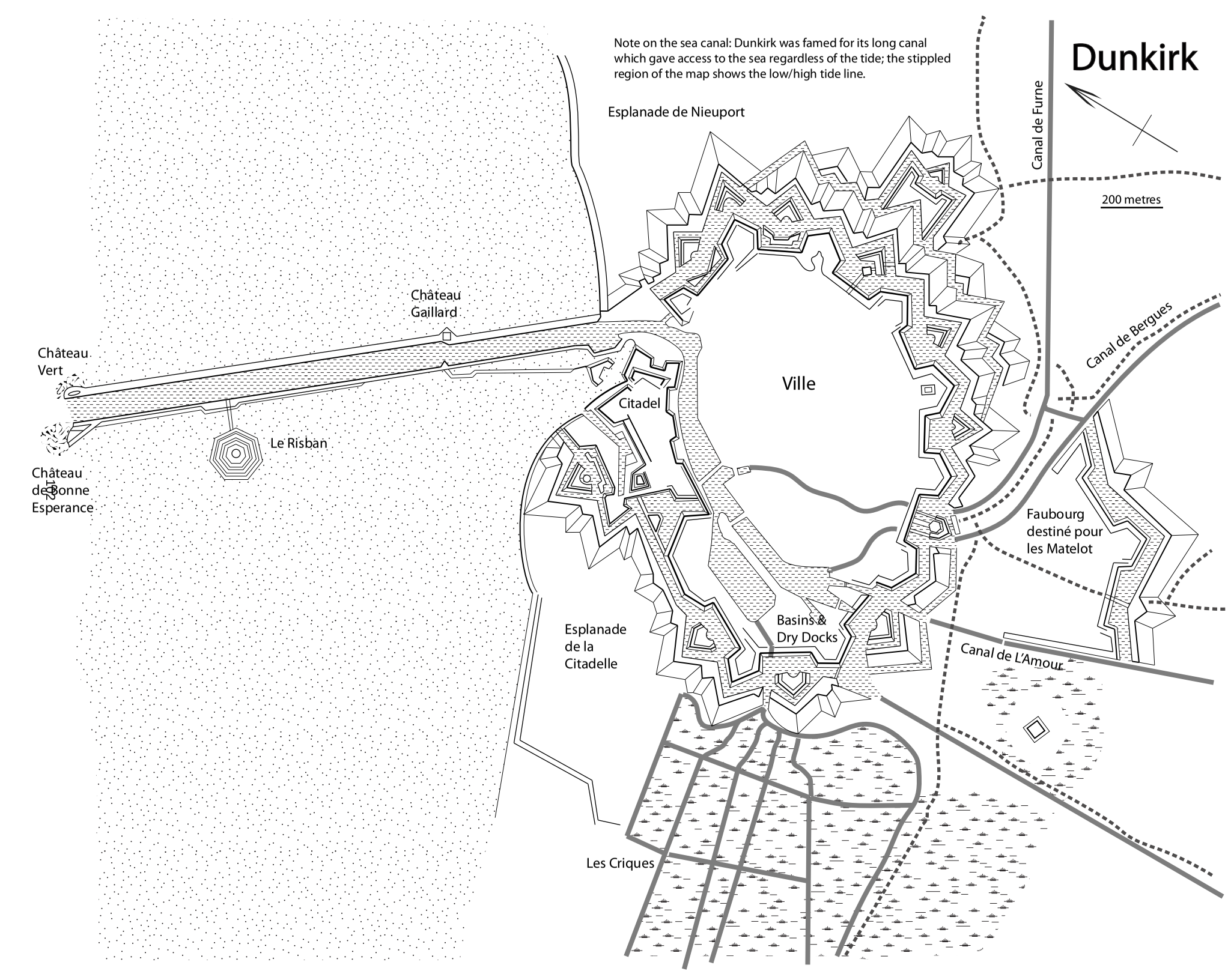
On August 28 William pulled his army back to Drongen just outside Ghent on the Southwest side. The stage was set for the final match of the season.

In England, the experts decided a St. Malo expedition would be impracticable, or perhaps futile. The corps of 12,000 men slated to take part was redirected to a descent on the Flanders coast, with the object of taking Dunkirk. This force was self-contained, including an artillery train and naval support (bomb ketches) and was commanded by the Duke of Leinster, a.k.a. the Huguenot general, Meinhard von Schomberg, son of the famous marshal.

Simultaneously, General Flemming, in Liège, made preparations to attack Namur using his own Brandenburgers and the Liègeois corps of 8,000. Stores and artillery were collected. This was a bluff, but it served to prevent troops being sent to *maréchal* Luxembourg.

Leinster's corps of 15 battalions landed between Oostende and Nieupoort on August 31 and September 1. They were joined by 8,000 additional troops under General Talmash: 6 English battalions under Brigadier Ramsay leaving the main army and arriving at Bruges on August 31, 5 English and 5 Dutch under Talmash arriving there the next day. Talmash's force then left Bruges on September 3. It followed the Oostende-Bruges Canal, took a left onto the Nieupoort Canal, and camped at Oudenburg. It is 35 Km from Drongen to Bruges, and 15 Km southwest from there to Oudenburg, which is only 6 Km from Oostende. Leinster had meanwhile marched to Middelkirke, on the coast halfway between Oostende and Nieupoort. He remained here while Talmash passed by him to occupy Newendam, a Spanish fortlet on the outskirts of Nieupoort.

The next step was to secure Furnes (Veurne). The town, nominally in French hands, was occupied by a detachment of Dutch cavalry the same day Newendam was occupied, and the following day Talmash's whole force came down. Leinster followed along the coast,


Dunkirk
Note on the sea canal: Dunkirk was famed for its long canal which gave access to the sea regardless of the tide; the stippled region of the map shows the low/high tide line.
Esplanade de Nieuport
Canal de Furne
200 metres
Château Gaillard
Château Vert
Château de Bonne Esperance
Le Risban
Citadel
Ville
Canal de Bergues
Faubourg destiné pour les Matelot
Basins & Dry Docks
Esplanade de la Citadelle
Canal de L'Amour
Les Criques

camping at Oost-Duinkerke, 4 Km southwest of Nieupoort and 2 Km north of Talmash's camp.

The plan now was to advance in two columns down the coast, supported by a naval flotilla and bomb ketches, and take Dunkirk. That was all there was to it, according to William Get on with it, man.

Those on the ground saw things through a slightly different lens. The French made no opposition to the Allies' movements; the small fort at Knokke merely fired 3 cannon as a warning. This allowed the attackers to have a good look at the target. Dunkirk's defences were not all that could be desired, but they were pretty significant, and they were heavily manned. Besides the garrison, there was a field corps to support both it and Knokke (which the French thought might be the real target), occupying entrenchments similar to the Lines of the Scheldt, while at Bergues, 10 Km southeast of Dunkirk, was Boufflers and the 30,000 men Luxembourg had given him. The road from Bergues to Dunkirk ran behind a canal, allowing the French to shuttle troops back and forth and pump in supplies whenever they wanted.

Boufflers' cavalry were already harassing the enemy, even patrolling among 'The Downs' between them and the sea. Instead of attacking, Leinster entrenched himself. Talmash was covered by the friendly guns of Furnes, but he was pinned.

[The word 'downs' signifies dunes. The coast of Flanders was mostly dune-land and swamp, and on this section of the coast, all the way to the mouth of the Scheldt, ran a band of dunes over a kilometre wide.]

William was beside himself. He absolutely had to have a victory to cap the year, but his generals were sending him a stream of complaints. Leinster in particular seems to have made a habit of this, reusing the list of problems tabulated the first time the Dunkirk expedition was shelved, back at the start of the year. However, Menno van Coehoorn also supported the naysayers. Dunkirk was too strong and the Chanel too fickle for naval support to be effective. A siege train would be required, and more men. As it stood, the Allies were outnumbered three-to-two by Boufflers' corps alone. The French had also spent the summertime stripping Flanders bare, as far north as the Ghent-Bruges Canal. There was nothing for the horses to eat and no population to provide labour for the Army.

To try and draw some of the French away, William had General Flemming take his Liège corps of natives and Brandenburgers on a grand *chevausée* up the Meuse, deep into France, but the enemy did not budge. This raid, an action the Allies had been trying for three years to pull off, ought to have been cause for celebration, but its success was overshadowed by the failure of the Dunkirk expedition. When the French, instead of chasing Flemming, reinforced Ypres with 8 battalions, threatening to outflank his troops on the coast, William called off the operation. Only when this fact became apparent did Luxembourg send Boufflers to deal with Flemming's raid.

Knokke?

William now turned his attention to the much less prestigious target of Fort Knokke. This place must not be confused with the fort of Knokke located on the coast north of Bruges. It was, instead, a small star-fort at a key junction of the canal-river network connecting Ypres and Furnes, and sat 7 Km southwest of Dixmyude on the Ijzer River. Dixmyude itself is 14 Km ESE from Furnes. With Furnes and Dixmyude in Allied hands, Fort Knokke was thus an irritating spur that threatened the regional water traffic.

The way the canals are labelled on the map can be confusing. The Ijzer, canalized along this section of its course and known as the Knokke-Dixmyude Canal, runs southwest to northeast past Dixmyude, where it joins the Nieupoort Canal. At Fort Knokke, the Ypres Canal (Ijzerkanaal) – part manmade and part natural – branches off SSE and runs to Ypres, which in those days sat on an island in a marshy lake. 2,500 metres southwest of Fort Knokke the Ijzer bends west; 3,800 metres farther west the Furnes-Dunkirk Canal branches off, heading north to Furnes and beyond. Fort Knokke was of three sections, one on the North bank of the Ypres Canal, one of the left bank of the Ijzer, and a connecting section, less well fortified, in the southern angle between the Ijzer and the canal. The 'final redoubt' was on the North bank of the Ypres Canal.

[The trace of the fort can still be seen in satellite images. Some of the redoubts now make oddly-shaped farm fields, but the northern portion appears to be a small park, probably untouched because the ditch is still water-filled.]

William decided to attack Knokke about September 14. Before this could take place he needed to secure the approaches from Dunkirk, so that Leinster could safely use the canal system leading from Oostende. By September 17, Furnes had been better fortified with earthworks and three ravelins, and garrisoned by 5 battalions and a little bit of artillery. The other town to be fortified was Dixmyude.

The Ijzer joins the Nieupoort Canal at Dixmyude. The sluices here could be used to flood the land south of that town. The Ijzer River covered the western approaches to Dixmyude a little distance away from it. A causeway leading from the town led to a bridge over the Ijzer which was fortified with its own bastion on the far side and a sconce on the near side. These works had palisades and ditches. The northern and eastern faces of the town had a set of 5 bastions, each with counter-guards, interspersed with ravelins and protected by a double ditch. All these defences were rather decrepit; the Spanish had no money to repair them.

A gang of 5,000 men, partly civilian and partly military, worked first on Furnes and then Dixmyude until

September 23. Even repairing small fortifications like these was difficult. The ditches had to be dredged, which meant they had to be drained, which meant portable mills had to be brought in to pump the water out. It rained constantly. Men fell sick from malaria at an increasing rate. And, on September 18 there was a magnitude 6 or 6.25 earthquake.

'We felt an Earthquake which lasted about two Minutes, and shook the Earth very violently; it was felt at the same time all over Flanders, in many parts of England and France, and in other places of Europe: We had it about Two of the Clock; it caus'd a great Consternation in our new Garrison of Dixmuyde, some thinking at first that the French had undermin'd several parts of the Town, and were in Ambuscade going to blow them up.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1692, pp.61-62

[The epicentre was near Verviers in the Ardennes. It was the strongest earthquake ever recorded north of the Alps and caused extensive damage as far away as the Rhine. Belgium seems an unlikely place for earthquakes, but this author's mother could recall one which occurred in the 1930s, so this was not a one-off event.]

Dixmuyde received a garrison of 10 battalions. This left Leinster with his 15 battalions, which he brought into camp by Nieupoort. (To make the numbers add up, additional battalions must have been sent from the main army.)

However, by now the French had inserted 10 battalions into Knokke and built two extra ravelins to strengthen it. The *duc* de Choiseul and 12,000 men supported the garrison. They did so by camping at Roesbrugge-an-der-Ijzer (Roesbrugge-Haringe), 14 Km southwest.

William gave up. He handed command over to Duke Max on September 26 and went hunting. Duke Max began preparing for winter quarters, ordering the army to Gavere. The army was not dispersed in the normal manner, however. William wanted to continue the campaign in Flanders rather than Brabant next year. So, coal was imported from Newcastle and huts were constructed to house the excess men. The weather continued wet and stormy and 14 of Leinster's battalions were returned to England. The rest of the army began entering winter quarters on October 9.

Luxembourg made as if to do the same, but there were signs that the French were not finished. Boufflers had encountered Flemming's raiding force, halting its progress, then shadowed it back down the Meuse, past Namur and into the Prince-Bishopric of Liège, where he did some raiding of his own before pulling back to Dinant.

Then, on October 16, word was received that Boufflers, reinforced by another corps under *lieutenant général* Montal, was attacking Charleroi! Duke Max gathered what men he could and headed for Brussels, where William joined him. But, it turned out to be another terror bombardment, which inflicted a lot of damage but did not threaten the loss of the town. The French stayed on the right bank of the Sambre and the Allies were unwilling to expend the prodigious efforts required to send them packing. William instead sailed for England. Duke Max brought the army down to Genappe and Boufflers withdrew.

The French were still not done. They raised 10,000 men (12 battalions) of Walloons from the so-called 'conquered' Flanders ((i.e., French Flanders), using them to garrison Mons, Tournai, Valenciennes, and Cambrai, swapping out more experienced line battalions to be used in a two-pronged winter offensive.

Meanwhile, the Germans were becoming seriously alarmed at the concentration of forces against them on the Rhine and in mid December asked for aid from the Flanders Army. This was refused, with the suggestion that perhaps the Elector of Saxony should start pulling his own weight.

1693 - Onslaught

There is like to be great armies in Flanders, and consequently something very considerable will happen there which may be very decisive to my concerns, and to those of all Europe.

Ex-King James II to the Electress Sophia of Hanover, quoted in Childs, p. 182.

1693 was France's big blow-out. A four-front offensive. Shake the house until the foundations crack. Looked at in the immediate, one could say, well yes, the French made a few gains, but no one sued for peace and the war went on, and France was just that much more exhausted. 1693 was also to be the year of the Great Famine, and the previous two years had not exactly been stellar ones for the farmers. The prolonging of the war also meant increased taxation. The French Army already exceeded a quarter of a million men, and the Allies fielded a similar amount. The numbers would continue to grow. Though the Army had priority in everything, and though the Allies were being made to foot the bill in many regions, by the spring of 1693 even French troops were going unpaid, and sometimes unfed.

Nevertheless, in the long term the four-front offensive paid dividends. The military offensive was accompanied by a peace offensive which offered a number of juicy concessions to various interested parties. Duke Victor of Savoy, who had never stopped talking quietly to the French, now began very, very secret negotiations with the local enemy commanders on the Italian front. He stayed in the war for another three years, because he wanted more concessions both from France and from the Coalition, but as soon as he got what he wanted, he stepped aside and the Coalition's house came crashing down.

Negotiations

Still, at the beginning of the year 1693, it seemed to everyone as if the war was just going to go on and on. France seemed invincible, at least on land, yet the Coalition could not seek peace while the enemy was ahead on points. They knew Louis XIV. Anything they gave now would be pocketed and the hand would come out for more. The Sun King felt the same. As Lynn puts it (pp.232-233), 'Louis learned the hard but eternal lesson that it is far easier to start a war than to end one. By 1693 he fervently wished for peace, but not at any price, a formula that paradoxically always seems to lead to paying a very high price in the long run.'

William of Orange, the prime motivator of the Grand Alliance, was similarly desirous of peace. As the French ran out of money to maintain their navy, it became clear they could not threaten England, however much damage they might inflict through privateering. Eventually, Louis IV was going to have to recognise William as a fellow monarch.

The question was, could the Coalition survive long enough for that to happen. The Germans were already falling out amongst themselves. The Emperor had had to buy Hanover's manpower pool (for use in Hungary) at the price of making its duke an Elector of the Empire. Now Saxony was forming a political league of interested princelings to oppose this concession, including some key contributors to the war in the Low Countries, such as Denmark, Münster, Hesse-Cassel, and Wolfenbüttel.

[Ironically, Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel belonged to the Hanoverian House.]

This gave France an 'angle'. That formidable diplomat, the *comte* d'Avaux, was sent to Sweden. The Swedes, feeling neglected, had already offered to mediate in 1690 and 1691, and d'Avaux brought the happy news that their help would be welcome. A deal was concluded whereby Sweden would explore bilateral peace talks with the German princes, and even with the Emperor, going behind King William's back. The Swedes also agreed to pull their troops out of the war, although in reality they merely put the regiments, already being subsidised by Holland, under Dutch colours.

[This would have been an advantage for the Dutch, who not longer had to worry about Sweden's interests when using their troops.]

Before he could be completely shut out, therefore, King William also had to open negotiations with France. Over the course of this year's summer he allowed some informal talks between a French merchant called Daguerre and the Dutch diplomat Everard Dijkveldt. These progressed far enough for Daguerre to be replaced by the Abbé Morel. As they always did, the French opened a second channel through a Pole living in Amsterdam who had his pulse on public opinion. Word that the Dutch burghers were growing sick of war allowed the French to adjust the 'volume' and direction of their demands.

From 1693 these negotiations became continuous, though they often stuttered. Two of the difficulties have already been mentioned: William and Louis distrusted each other, and Louis, having given his word to James II, would not recognise William as king. Even the Holy Roman Emperor had trouble stomaching that. The third roadblock to an early end to the war was France's desire to either retain the Spanish Duchy of Luxembourg, which they occupied, or to trade it for an 'equivalent' number of fortresses and towns in Belgium. The diplomats could not agree on a definition of 'equivalent'.

Winter Storm

It would probably be best to wind up the tale of the 1692 campaign, which extended into January of 1693.

While the Emperor held a conference at Cologne in mid December to discuss the growing threat to the Rhine fortresses, the French made a play for Huy, on the Meuse midway between Namur and Liège (26-27 Km either way, in a direct line). The *comte* de Guiscard, one of Boufflers' generals, invested the place with 14-18,000 men on December 26, even managing to take the left-bank faubourg, but raised the siege on January 8 upon news of Duke Max and Tilly approaching with 32,000 men. (Considering the Allied troops had all gone to winter quarters, gathering 32,000 of them at short notice was quite an achievement.)

Simultaneously (December 28 or 29) the town of Furnes, 200 Km to the West, was invested by the French. Furnes was, or became, the real target (d'Auvergne argues Huy was strategically more important). The operation was led by Boufflers himself, using 37,800 men. The French camped in The Downs between Furnes and Nieupoort. The town's defences were still poor; most of the strength of the place came from the terrain, which was only a minor problem for all that manpower.

Furnes had a garrison of 5 battalions, under the Dutch general, *graaf* van Hornes. The town was equipped with two small, poorly laid out bastions facing toward the seacoast, with ravelins on either side. The ravelins were better made than the bastions. A wet ditch was the main obstacle. That, and the weather, which was atrocious. Rain poured down and turned the clay soil into a bog. Fortunately, the sodden ground also hindered the relief efforts.

[There was a Spanish count named Hornes, a major general. It is possible the two are one and the same man, though the Dutchman is listed as a general of artillery.]

From the other end of the front Duke Max ordered out the garrisons of Ghent, Dendermonde, Brussels, and Malines. The men struggled through thigh deep mud, and that was on the 'roads', which proved impassible for

cavalry, let alone wagon trains. March speed was cut to a quarter of the usual day's march.

Meanwhile, the French, knee deep in ditch-water and puddles, opened trenches on January 1 and erected at least one battery by January 3. By January 5 most of Boufflers' guns were in operation.

The relief corps actually made it to Nieupoort, and did so before Furnes capitulated. Ironically, Duke Max himself, now at Nieupoort, ordered the garrison of Furnes to surrender. It was not just that his men were exhausted. By an oversight Hornes failed to open the sluices sufficiently to flood the most vulnerable sector, on the northern side. Duke Max might only be 12 Km away, but in these conditions that was a three-day march.

The chamade was beaten on January 7 and Hornes was allowed to march out with two of his cannon to link up with Duke Max. Simultaneously, the fort of Dixmyude, a day's march east, was ordered to be abandoned as untenable. It had a garrison of 6 battalions. The French occupied Furnes and Dixmyude on January 10. This sealed off the landward approaches to Dunkirk.

For a while, things appeared to be getting even worse for the Allies. The French moved up to Nieupoort, even tossing in a few bombs. If Nieupoort fell, that spring would surely see the loss of Oostende and perhaps even Bruges. That would force the English supply lines north into Holland. Fortunately, when Boufflers applied to King Louis for permission to continue the offensive along those lines, the King could not make up his mind whether to attack Nieupoort or Oostende first. When he finally made his choice it was too late to spare Boufflers the necessary resources, which had been sent to the Meuse instead.

Pursuant to the operations planned on that river, the French kept the pressure on with more raids into Brabant, penetrating as far north as Louvain (January 17). Most disturbingly, they pressed Brussels close on all sides. On January 20 a frost set in, bringing with it a near panic among the populace of Brabant, but four days later there was a thaw. For the rest of the winter and early spring, the French garrisons of Dinant, Namur, and Fort Charlemont were spread along the Meuse taking contributions and inspecting river traffic.

The Allies, meanwhile, scrambled to deal with the situation. Plans were laid for establishing a circuit of picquets around Brussels. Vaudémont and Duke Max conferred over what to do should Brussels be bombarded in some massive winter probe.

At this point in his narrative, Childs contrasts the effective raiding of the French with the more fitful Allied counter raids and uncoordinated frontier defence. There was only one hole remaining in the French line, at Charleroi. Nevertheless, the damage done by the Allies by raiding out of Charleroi was considerable. 1693 was the year the French put a stop to it.

'The Allies were consistently at a grave disadvantage during these winter wars of raids and patrols. Their opponents dominated the frontier from Dunkirk, though Courtrai to Mons whilst Namur gave them access to the middle-Meuse. The French could thus raid into Spanish and Liègeois territory at will… [the Allies'] only other option [besides Charleroi] was to raid into those parts of the Spanish Netherlands… occupied by the French but this was tantamount to attacking and antagonising a friendly population… They rarely received intelligence of French operations and the fact that they allowed Halle and Louvain, both within easy reach of Brussels, to be attacked smacks of pusillanimity as well as incompetence.' (Childs pp.219-220.)

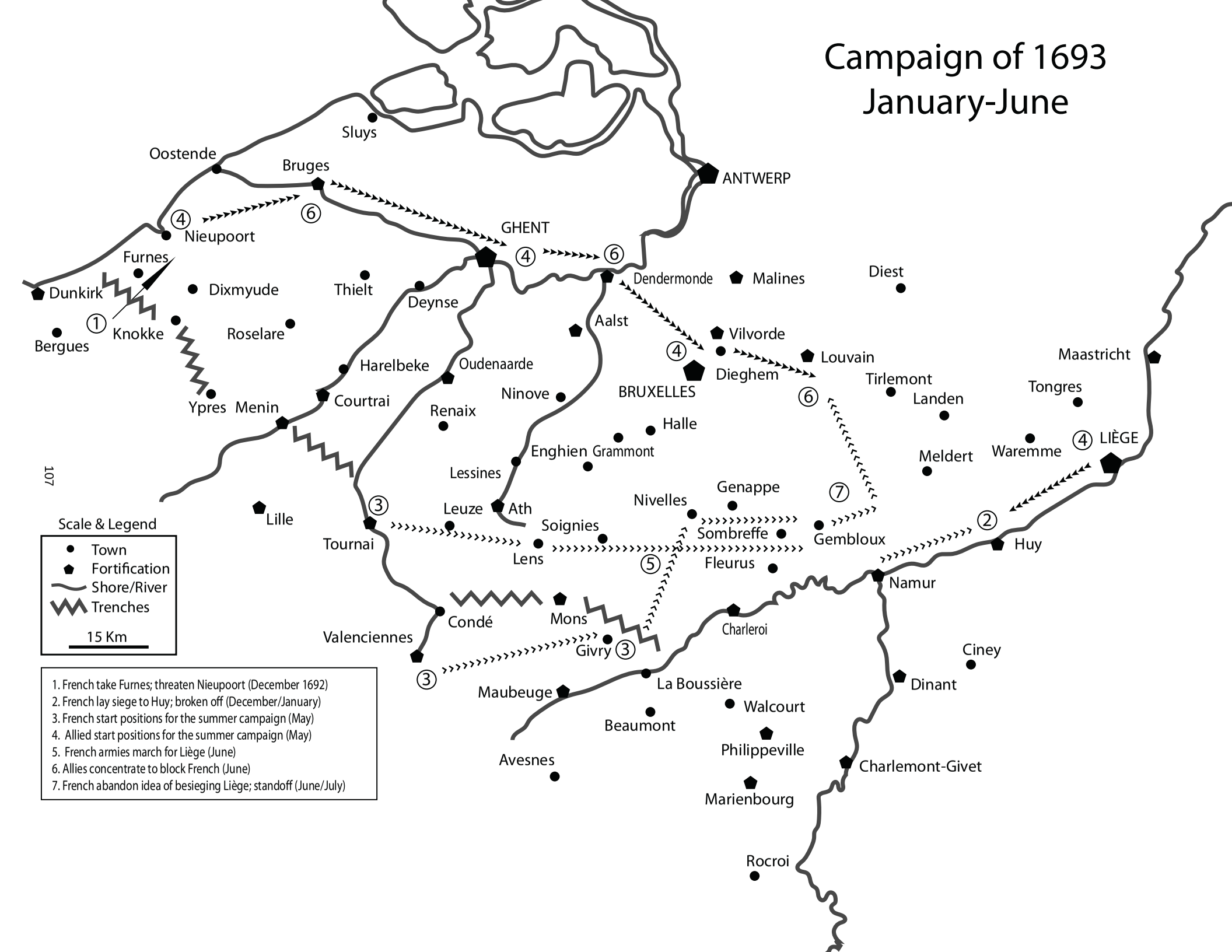
The Wider War

As always, the Rhine front had the most impact on what was going on in Flanders, and vice versa. In Flanders, as will be described, the French continued to win limited successes. No decisive blow, just a grinding attrition that kept them ahead of the curve. Something of the same sort would take place on the Rhine.

Command of the French forces on the Rhine, as usual, would be given to *maréchal* de Lorge, and as usual, the main army would muster at Neustadt. But, Lorge would try something different this time, opening the campaign early and immediately laying siege to Heidelberg, which would fall before his opponent, the Prince of Baden, could respond. King Louis would be so pleased by this – it had been his express command – that he would send the Dauphin, in command of a large corps, to reinforce the success. This would lead Lorge to seek a battle (also a commandment of Louis'), but Baden would not take the bait, and would allow the German lands along the upper Rhine, particularly Württemberg, to be laid under contribution. The two armies would eventually meet, but after a face-off lasting two weeks, the Dauphin would withdraw. The rest of the campaign would be manoeuvre, the armies gradually dwindling to their normal size as detachments were sent away on other tasks. Unfortunately for the simultaneous 'peace offensive', Lorge was still following the harsh rules of war laid down by Louvois and made yet more enemies among the Germans.

France's efforts in Catalonia, still directed by Noaïiles – who was made a marshal this year along with a number of other senior commanders – would be proportionally much more successful, given the small size of the opposing armies, but the *maréchal* would be required (again) to send a part of his army away, meaning he had to pull back to the frontier. However, the Spanish counteroffensive would be ineffective in the extreme and he would not have to concede any of the forts he had acquired.

Italy would prove the most successful theatre for France, with *maréchal* Catinat fending off a siege of Pinerolo,


Campaign of 1693
January-June
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
GHENT
Nieupoort
Furnes
Dunkirk
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
Ypres
Menin
Courtrai
Renaix
Ninove
Aalst
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Vilvorde
Louvain
Maastricht
Dieghem
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Landen
Tongres
Halle
Enghien
Grammont
Lessines
Meldert
Waremme
LIÈGE
Genappe
Nivelles
Leuze
Ath
Soignies
Sombreffe
Gembloux
Lille
Tournai
Lens
Fleurus
Huy
Namur
Condé
Mons
Charleroi
Valenciennes
Givry
Ciney
Dinant
La Boussière
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
107
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French take Furnes; threaten Nieupoort (December 1692)
2. French lay siege to Huy; broken off (December/January)
3. French start positions for the summer campaign (May)
4. Allied start positions for the summer campaign (May)
5. French armies march for Liège (June)
6. Allies concentrate to block French (June)
7. French abandon idea of besieging Liège; standoff (June/July)

France's gateway to Piedmont, and then winning a crushing battle against Duke Victor at Orbassano (Marsaglia). The Italians were not so mauled that they could not reconstitute their army, but from this point Duke Victor was in serious negotiations with France. The Sun King had found the chink in the Coalition's armour.

At sea, the French would sortie with nearly all their ships. Several things were to be accomplished by this operation. First, the Allies would be unable to blockade the squadrons in their separate ports. Second, a sea battle might ensue, particularly as the fleet would be attacking the Smyrna Convoy, 400 merchantmen, mostly English and Dutch, sailing from the Levant. Third, Noaïlles' and Catinat's efforts along the Mediterranean coast would receive naval support. Fourth, the Allied fleets would be prevented from assisting their own ground forces.

All these things would be accomplished, but only in part. The juicy convoy was engaged and lost a quarter of its strength, but no more; its escort was driven off but suffered minimal damage. The Allies would be able to give some support in the Mediterranean, though not to attack Toulon as had been hoped. They were also able to attack St. Malo, almost as notorious a privateer base as Dunkirk. In this action, which began on November 26, 25 ships bombarded the town for several days. 150 shells were fired. The attackers also tried to blow up the docks with a fireship rigged out as an 'I.E.D.' It grounded on a shoal too far out from the shore, but the explosion still blew off several hundred house roofs.

1693 was the last year that the French Navy functioned as a battle fleet. Decommissioning their expensive battleships, from now on they would wage *guerre de course* – commerce raiding. Some historians see the attack on the Smyrna Convoy as the first such action.

Liège or Bust

Liège was this year's prestige target for the Sun King. Taking Liège would force the Allied supply lines back to Maastricht, threaten to interrupt communications with the Rhine armies, and remove the 'rebellious' prince-bishopric from the war. Louis already had a replacement lined up, the Cardinal of Bouillon, one of his pensionaries. The preparations were similar to those for Namur.

80,000 French soldiers were accumulated in various garrisons to serve as a manpower reserve. 133,000 would serve in the field. (There is probably some overlap i the numbers.) Luxembourg would command the covering corps of the Army of Flanders. The King would command the besieging corps. Boufflers, now *maréchal* Boufflers, held command of the Army of the Meuse, supporting both of them.

[The seven marshals created this year were Choiseul, Villeroi, Joyeuse, Boufflers, Tourville, Noaïlles, and Catinat. Tourville was acting as an admiral, but naval leaders at that level were noblemen first and army men second; the Navy was the home of bourgeois professionals. Ironically, Catinat was just such a bourgeois professional. Vertillac was intended to be an eighth marshal but he was killed leading a convoy between Mons and Namur.]

On the other side of the hill, the Grand Alliance fielded 40,000 men in Italy, 58,000 in Germany, and 122,000 in the Low Countries, plus 20-30,000 Spanish in Catalonia.

As the weeks passed, the threat in Flanders faded. Actually, what the French now held – the Furnes-Knokke-Dixmyude line – meant they could roam at will in Spanish Flanders, taking contributions as often as they liked, without the need to waste men and resources sieging and holding additional locations.

All the signs now pointed to an attack either down the Meuse, into Brabant, or against Charleroi, the most logical target. As already mentioned, it was the only unplugged hole in the new French frontier line. While the French were stockpiling foodstuffs farther up the Meuse, their siege ammunition was being laid down at Namur. As early as February 5, therefore, a convoy of 40 wagons, 3 battalions, and 3,000 cavalry was sent into Charleroi to strengthen it.

In mid March the French were observed rebuilding the Mill of Grigon. If the reader remembers, this mill controlled the flow of water on the Sambre below Charleroi. The French had destroyed it during the siege of Namur to prevent the Allies sending supplies down the river and to drain Namur's water defenses. Now, obviously, they wanted to back the water up so they could float siege supplies upstream to Charleroi. A scuffle appeared immanent when 200 men of the Charleroi garrison were sent to deal with the threat and troops from Namur, send by the *comte* de Guiscard to protect the workers, arrived on the spot. However, the Allies desisted.

Childs thinks the French actually did intend to take Charleroi, in a 'Mons-style' pre-campaign move, but the appalling weather prevented them. D'Auvergne thinks the same. Certainly, the garrisons of Namur and Mons had orders to be ready to march there as soon as the notice came. But, by the time King William arrived on the Continent, on April 4, the French had given up the idea. It was also reported that they had removed most of their troops from Flanders, and had 'slighted' Dixmyude. But the Allied high command chose to interpret this news as further proof that Charleroi was in danger.

(Childs tells a 'Brigadier Girard' tale which is worth repeating. About this time a French raid took place near Dendermonde. Seven infantrymen managed to capture eleven Bavarian cuirassiers, part of Duke Max's small cavalry force – they would thus have been from Arco's Regiment. On their way back, however, three Spanish dragoons ambushed them in turn. Two of the men jumped out onto the road and pointed their muskets at the party, while the third remained hidden, calling to nonexistent comrades. Then the pair on the road shouted back not to bring up the reinforcements since the French had already

surrendered. The latter were so taken aback they actually went along with this suggestion and did surrender! But that was not the end of the tale. Because the Spanish claimed the Bavarians' mounts as spoils of war!! Duke Max though this was such a good jest that he gave them the horses.)

[Count Arco supplied a dragoon and a reiter or cuirassier (horse) regiment in Bavarian pay, and formed a small mounted guard for Cologne, which also took part in the war. The countess became Duke Max's lover, though probably not at this date since he was newly married.]

King Louis left Versailles on May 18, in the company of his Court, including 27 Ladies. They journeyed to the frontier fortress of Les Quesnoy, 15 Km southeast of Valenciennes, arriving on May 25. Here, the King unexpectedly fell ill and remained bedridden for a whole week, pushing the opening of the campaign back. The obligatory review was not held until June 3, after the campaign opened.

The initial French concentrations were as follows: Boufflers with 46,000 men culled from Flanders, stationed at Tournai (camped between Antoing and Mount Trinité, now Mont-Saint-Aubert, a 10 Km line east of the town), and Luxembourg with 66,000 at Givry, 10 Km southeast of Mons. Under the latter were the marshals Joyeuse and Villeroi, meaning this army could be split up into three. There was also an observation corps under the *duc* d'Harcourt in Luxembourg, watching the valley of the Meuse.

The Lines of the Scheldt had undergone major development since the war began, and now extended all the way to the sea, via Ypres, to the trench system between Bergues and Dunkirk. A 'lighter' set of trenches extended in the other direction, from Tournai to Mons, and by the end of 1693, to the Sambre; 160 Km of zigzagging palisaded trenches and redoubts. It is now proper to simply refer to them as The Lines. The original section between the Lys and the Scheldt was the most heavily fortified. Overall command went to the *marquis* de Calvo, but the Lys-Scheldt sector was a semi-independent command under the *marquis* de la Valette, initially consisting of 4,500 men, upped during the current campaign to 10,000.

These dispositions ignore the wintertime troop concentrations at Mons and Namur which are assumed to have been positioned to attack Charleroi. That operation was to have been a surprise attack using only the forces to hand. Some of those troops would join the campaign, and some would not.

After a few adjustments made on the march, Luxembourg would command 78 battalions and 152 (or 161) squadrons. The King's besieging corps consisted of 50 battalions and 109 squadrons. Boufflers' Army of the Meuse consisted of 51-52 battalions and 112 (or 117) squadrons.

[The higher figures are d'Auvergne's.]

Boufflers and Luxembourg set off while the King was still indisposed. He soon recovered enough to join the march. Boufflers moved out on May 30, bound for Gembloux by way of Leuze-en-Hainault, Cambron-Casteau, and Obaix. This was pretty much a straight line heading east, the locations named being about a day's march apart, between 16 and 25 Km each. Luxembourg broke camp on May 31, heading northeast and crossing Boufflers' line of march to reach Nivelles, then turning east to Gembloux and Namur, where a siege train of 3,000 wagons was assembling. By June 7 Boufflers was at Gembloux and Luxembourg at Namur. Only now did the Allies realise Charleroi was not the intended target. The Sun King was with his army and Charleroi was too puny to merit his personal attention.

The Coalition had begun mustering in good time, for once. Yet they were still too slow. The main army, mostly Dutch and German subsidy units, concentrated outside Brussels between Diegem and Vilvorde, on the northeast side of the city.

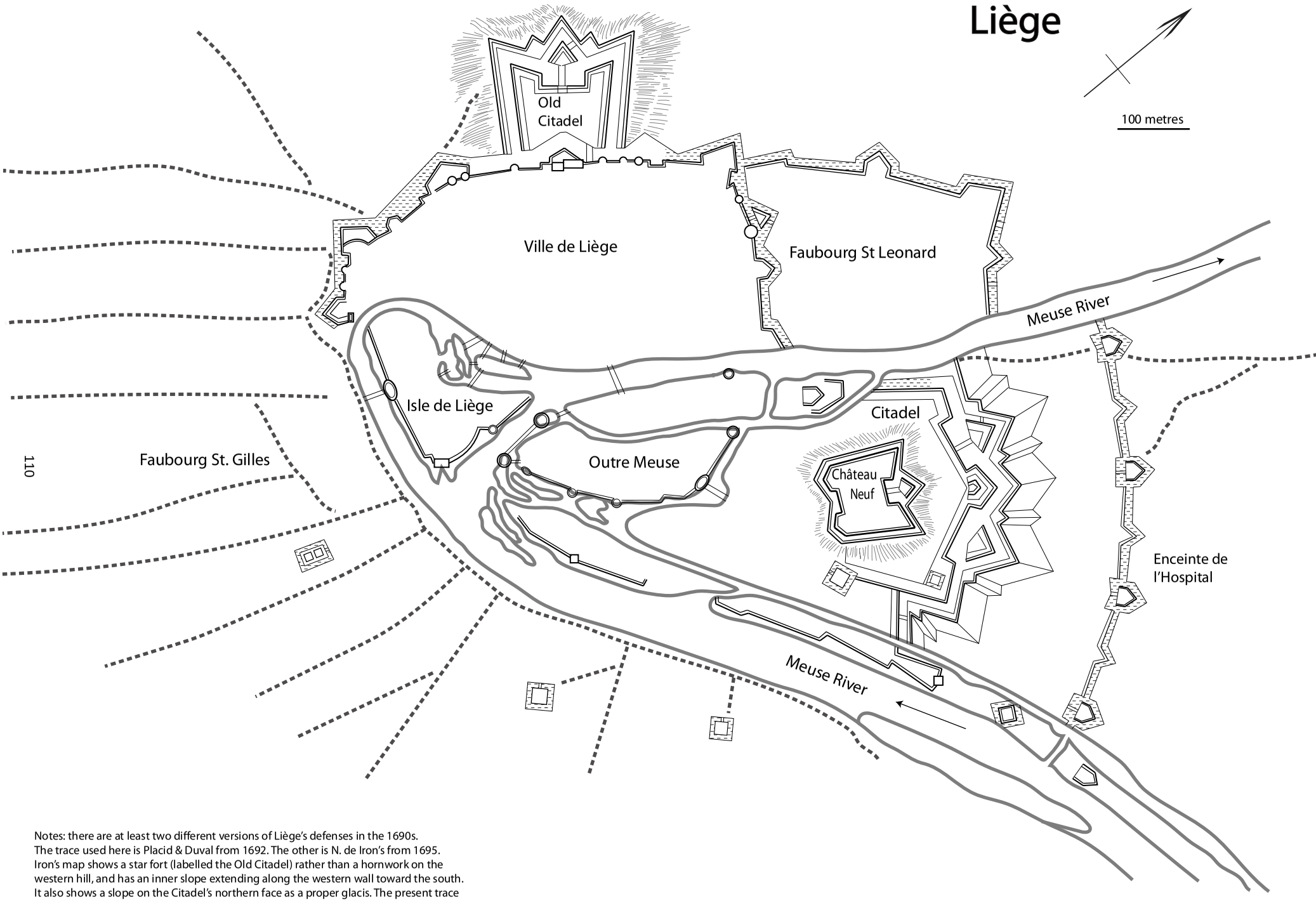
A cavalry corps was also assembled under the Earl of Athlone (the Dutchman, Godart van Ginkel) between Maastricht and Tongres. These were drawn from the Meuse garrisons of Huy, Liège, and Maastricht, which retained their infantry. *Generalleutnant* Tettau commanded at Maastricht, and Tilly at Liège.

[Tettau was a Prussian who had started the war in Danish service and switched to the Dutch.]

Prince Vaudémont, commander of the troops in Flanders, had the gout and went to take the cure in Italy, so his men were commanded by the Duke of Württemberg and Lieutenant General Talmash. By now, the Spanish were good for little more than garrisoning duties, though a few *tercios* remained near full strength, and some of the cavalry was still serviceable.

The English had a respectable presence this year, 22 battalions, but they were still regarded as second-line troops. Quartered over the winter at Ghent, Bruges, and Oostende, with a few units at Malines, and the dual-battalion Royals stationed with the central army behind Brussels. By May 17 most of these units had concentrated at Ghent, ready for the summer campaign. Bridges were laid over the Ghent Canal to allow a rapid march east to the Capital if need be. The train encamped there on May 19, after which 4 battalions were sent to Brussels, followed a couple of days later (May 21) by 4 more, in a trade for 5 Dutch cavalry regiments.

On May 29, Württemberg ordered all the forces remaining to him, 15,000 men, to march, leaving only a single battalion to maintain the position. The corps left camp in the predawn, its route to be via Dendermonde and Lebbeke (3 Km southeast of Dendermonde) to Brussels. Unfortunately, the governor of Dendermonde had flooded the surrounding countryside during a winter raid by the



Notes: there are at least two different versions of Liège's defenses in the 1690s. The trace used here is Placid & Duval from 1692. The other is N. de Iron's from 1695. Iron's map shows a star fort (labelled the Old Citadel) rather than a hornwork on the western hill, and has an inner slope extending along the western wall toward the south. It also shows a slope on the Citadel's northern face as a proper glacis. The present trace has subsituted the glacis for the original 'rough' slope since this seems consistent with the general plan. Both maps show the chateau on a mound; Iron's lacks any slope on the rear face.

French (which turned out to be a false alarm), so it was not until June 6 that Württemberg joined up with William.

As the French marched east, William moved his camp to Parck Abbey (Abdij van Park) just south of Louvain. The abbey is very close to the town; the camp was actually 6 Km away, its left anchored on Bierbeek and its right on the Dyle River, a two-day march from Diegem. The Camp of Parck was a permanent establishment, well defended and centrally located to block advances against Brussels, Malines, and Louvain. In front it was covered by the River Nethe, an extensive belt of woodland called the Bois de Meerdel, and it was near the river and canal network so necessary for supply. Much of the wood still exists; even now it is 3-4 Km thick in places. Since the Meuse describes an arc around Brabant, an army at Parck could reach any threatened point along it in about the same amount of time. Though it lay far from the frontier, it was on the edge of Dutch (as opposed to Spanish) Brabant.

In his haste to beat the French to the punch, William made his men do the march from Diegem to Parck in one day instead of two, and lost several to heat exhaustion. When he arrived, the Allies had 50,000 men at Parck and another 27,000 at Tirlemont under General Flemming, whose men replaced Ginkel's cavalry corps, the latter having marched to Parck. These numbers include Württemberg's men. The rest of the troops were in garrison along the Meuse. Such strong garrisons ensured William would have enough time to come to their aid, but meant that when he did show up he would lack the manpower to actually do anything. The French opposed him with 110,000.

[D'Auvergne computes 119,700 French, basing the figure on 600 men per battalion and 150 per squadron. Factoring in some Brandenburg subsidy regiments stationed nearby, plus Ginkel's corps, he produces a total of 60,850 men for the Allied army at Parck: 64 battalions and 151 squadrons.]

Despite their numerical superiority, the French faced difficulties. Discounting Charleroi, their next obvious target was Liège, and this is indeed where they were headed. But, the weather would not cooperate. Childs suggests Luxembourg was influenced by the near-failure at Namur the year before. In that instance, the only limiting factor had been the weather, and its effect alone was significant. But, when trying to take Liège the French would have to worry about Charleroi and Maastricht plus General Flemming's huge entrenched camp outside the town. Huy absolutely had to be captured first. All obstacles could be overcome given time, but if the weather continued bad – hot, humid, and interspersed with violent thunderstorms – there might not be enough time.

The Sun King had the final word. Still weak from his illness, he faced the prospect of spending several weeks camping in oppressive heat and soggy fields watching the reduction of the puny fortress of Huy. Not! He convened a council at Gembloux and allowed Chamlay to talk him out of the project – Chamlay being the most hawkish of his advisors.

The minister pointed out that their real objective was to break up the Coalition and that would be easier to do in Germany. The news of the taking of Heidelberg added weight to the argument. Heidelberg was an Imperial City, so now the French had something to offer the Emperor. The King concurred. The Dauphin would be given about half of his own corps as well as some of the Army of the Meuse – a total of 30,000 men in 27 battalions and 46 squadrons – to aid *maréchel* de Lorge on the Rhine.

The Dauphin departed on June 12 and Louis left for Versailles on June 13. The nobleman-chronicler of the day, Saint-Simon, says that Luxembourg begged the King on his knees not to go. Lynn notes that this was the Sun King's last field trip. Tired from his illness, Louis pointed out that at 54 he was merely copying the Great Condé, who had given up the wars at that age. D'Auvergne notes that French Society was very surprised at the King's sudden return, and that public opinion speculated the whole expedition had been a feint to lure troops away from Germany. This does not appear to have been the case. Louis was just tired.

Stand Off

In the absence of the Sun King, who seems to have lost interest in Flanders, French strategy waffled. But, though he may have given up the wars, Louis was not giving up the War. The Dauphin had only taken about 20% of the forces available to *maréchal* Luxembourg (discounting Boufflers' army). The *Maréchal* was given no definite instructions other than to keep King William distracted, which he proceeded to do.

Luxembourg now had command of 99 battalions and 221 squadrons (96 and 201 according to Childs). Enough to outmatch the Allies but not really enough to risk a battle. More importantly, he did not have enough supplies. This forced him to make coursings in the usual manner, but by 1693 many regions were played out, and it took several weeks to amass enough matériel for an offensive.

(How much the lack of supplies influenced the King's abandoning of the attempt on Liège is not clear. One would think there was enough laid by for that operation, which Luxembourg could make use of later. Perhaps the Dauphin's train was overstocked for his march east? Or perhaps the French were operating on a shoestring this time. 1693 was the year of the Great Famine, which would carry into 1694 and be followed by a European-wide financial collapse.)

William was still at Parck Abbey. On June 15 the French moved 22 Km north from Gembloux to Bossut-Gottechain. This put them about 10 Km away from the enemy, with the Nethe River between them. The French HQ was at Meldert, their Left toward the Dyle at Florival, and their Right towards Tirlemont (Tienen). That is a 20

Km spread, so it is likely the army was camped on a front of perhaps 12 Km, with detachments on the flanks. On the other hand, when, on June 17, the French fired a *feu de joie*, d'Auvergne says the muzzle flashes – it was evening – could be seen across a very long front.

[The celebration was for the taking of the port of Roses, in Catalonia. That was to be the first conquest in a steady stream that would end with the taking of Barcelona in 1697.]

(Although the French King was not present, he was still allotted quarters, at Meldert – which is why this was called the Camp of Meldert – while Luxembourg's HQ was placed 1,800 metres away, at Ecluse.)

William sortied the same day in response to the enemy's arrival. Unsure whether the reports of the French approach were true, he was relieved when 6,000 foraging enemy horse were encountered. This meant General Flemming at Liège could be ordered into the field. However, rather than operate directly in Luxembourg's rear, the Brandenburg-Liègeois troops were to march down the right bank of the river and cross the Meuse near Maastricht.

At the time, William and his generals assumed there was still a siege train bound for Huy or Liège, and that Luxembourg was screening it. Only on June 22 did they learn Boufflers and the Dauphin had gone to Germany, and even then, because of the reports of a large train accompanying them, it was feared that Liège or perhaps Maastricht was threatened. Boufflers' army might instead be marching to meet reinforcements from the Rhine. (The fall of Heidelberg could *also* be interpreted as a reason for the French to scale back in Germany, rather than push harder.) Thus, Flemming was not to join with William or attack Luxembourg in some sort of concerted action, but to provide advance warning of the approach of another French army and try to slow them down.

Luxembourg was accomplishing nothing in front of Parck. The enemy had enough bridges over the Dyle to escape if need be, but really they were too heavily entrenched. He did overlap the Allied line, but he needed Boufflers' 30,000 men to achieve a decision. The positions hardened. The French siege train, which was still floating about somewhere along the Meuse, was returned to Namur; Luxembourg did not have the numbers to mount a simultaneous siege, even of Huy.

Deserters crisscrossed the Bois de Meerdel, keeping both sides up to date. D'Auvergne estimated 1,100 Swiss – these men were often Protestants, and they had heard the Dutch were raising a number of Swiss regiments – came over to the camp or made their way to Maastricht. Luxembourg made it easy for Allied deserters, mostly Irish, by inserting a listening post into the middle of the wood. Desertion became such a problem that both sides offered bounties to men willing snitch on their comrades.

William strengthened his camp by emplacing battalion guns along his line with ammunition left *in situ* (something that was almost never done) in case of surprise attacks. A battery of 6-pounders was sited to fire down the Louvain-Namur Road.

French supplies were still short. The Allies were drawing on regions untouched by war while their opponents were at the end of a 70 Km supply line on bad roads through ravaged country. The Allied garrisons behind them struck at the convoys repeatedly. Even the establishment of a forward magazine at Tirlemont did not help.

For instance, the garrison of Charleroi made a grand raid on June 30 (or July 2), consisting of 500 horse, 400 dragoons, and 50 grenadiers, backed up by 500 line infantry, all commanded by Major General du Puy. This column penetrated the Lines between Mons and Maubeuge, taking a redoubt called Vieuxreng, then rolling up the line to capture another 6 redoubts. More than 50 French were killed and 200 prisoners taken. Then the column raided as far as Maubeuge, taking contributions, burning villages, and returning with 120 horses, and 1,000 cattle.

A few days later (July 7) Du Puy tried a second raid, this time to intercept a pay-and-ammunition convoy near Beaumont on the Sambre, east of Maubeuge. This operation failed. The Allied cavalry got too far in front of the supporting infantry in their efforts to catch the convoy, and were repulsed by 13 squadrons of French horse, with losses on both sides. This was the raid in which the *comte* de Vertillac, Governor of Mons, was mortally wounded, before he could receive his marshal's baton.

The French also raided. Small parties went to hide in the Bois de Meerdel, slipping out on the other side to steal horses and bring them back. A notable instance occurred on July 5, when 4 horses belonging to an English colonel were taken and 3 of his pickets wounded by a band of French charging out of the woods.

Luxembourg stuck to the Meldert camp, despite the various hardships, for two reasons. First, it was his intention to turn Spanish Brabant into an absolute desert anyway, so that the Allies would find it hard to interfere with any siege on the Meuse he might conduct in the future. Second, retreating too soon would allow William to draw men from those same fortresses to take into Flanders, where the French had only a weak defence. However, after about a month, the *Maréchal* decided there was no point remaining any longer.

William, too, was aching to move. The Allies' supply situation might have been better, but it was only marginally so. As early as June 22 they were organizing convoys to ship oats and hay from Holland. On June 24 a storm tore down tents and flooded out some of the sutlers (who had foolishly camped in a hollow). The next day the Dyle and Nethe overflowed their banks. Childs recounts how *generaal* van Overkirk was overtaken by the rising waters and nearly drowned; Count Solms' quarters were

flooded, and there was much rejoicing among the English.

The French blinked first. Luxembourg broke camp at 1am on July 8. The camp was burned, which apparently was a common practice. Though seeing the flames, William was unable to pursue, the way being blocked by ravines. Some of his Huguenots had a friendly chat with the rearguard – a truly friendly chat, that is, trying to enlist deserters – but the party was broken up by a group of non-French with itchy trigger fingers.

The French camped between Jodoigne and Heylissem (Hélécine), about a day's march ESE of their original camp and very near the spot where the two armies had faced-off the year before, on a frontage of about 8 Km.

William and his council now believed they had an opportunity to manoeuvre. Luxembourg was probably going to try and besiege one of the Meuse forts, although he might just be retreating, period. Rather than beef up their defences, the Allies concentrated all their forces at Parck, bringing in Flemming and a great many of Tettau's Liègeois troops. (Tilly now commanded the cavalry corps based west of Maastricht, which also arrived at this time, 3,000 strong.)

As Luxembourg predicted, William intended to draw him away to Flanders. The King had economic as well as operational reasons for doing so. The recent destruction of the Smyrna Convoy had triggered a financial crisis in London and he had no money. He needed to raise contributions from someplace, and French Flanders beckoned.

An Expedition Against the Lines

On July 11, the Duke of Württemberg was dispatched to Oudenaarde with 13 battalions (3 English, 5 Danish, 5 Dutch) and 40 squadrons (including Schomberg's Horse, a Huguenot regiment), plus a train of 12 artillery pieces including a pair of twelve pounders. In raw numbers, 8,000 foot and 6,000 horse. The major generals de Suzannet, de la Forest, Ellenburg, and van Wymberg accompanied him. William's strength was maintained by receiving von Tettau's 13 Liègeois battalions.

[Lynn says 11 regiments of infantry and the same of cavalry. D'Auvergne accompanied the detachment and gives the figures above.]

William's instructions were quite precise. Württemberg was to assess the French Lines of the Scheldt. If they were weak, he was to punch through them and make a *chevausée* into Hainault. Then, he was to reform behind the Lines, bridge the Lys at Warneton, a day's march upstream from the French fortress of Menin and proceed around the west end of the Lines to Roeselare, 25 Km northeast, sending a detachment to Deynze to reopen the lines of communication with Ghent. The alternative, should the Lines be too strong, was an attack on Courtrai, provided he avoided battle with a superior force.

Progress was rapid at first, but on the third day, after crossing the Brussels Canal at Vilvorde, the heavens opened and the column made slow going on the muddy roads. Nevertheless they (except the baggage) crossed the Dender at Aalst on the same day. At Oudenaarde, camping on the western side of the Scheldt, Württemberg was reinforced by a further 12 battalions from the garrisons of Bruges, Ath, Brussels, and Charleroi. (These may have been predominantly Spanish.)

The cavalry crossed the river on July 14 and the foot, under Ellenburg, the next day. July 14 also, Count Hornes arrived with an ammunition train and a pontoon bridge (*thanks, Hornes, could have used that before*), escorted by his own battalion. Camp for the cavalry, plus Hornes' battalion, was made at Kooigem and that of the infantry, which had to also guard the artillery train, at Sint Denijs. Württemberg's advanced HQ was in front of Dottignies. This entailed a march of 20 Km or so southwest from Oudenaarde, up the left bank of the Scheldt. Kooigem was just in front of the Lines, too close, really; Sint Denijs is 4 Km behind Kooigem, Dottignies 2 Km in front. Critically, there was a valley between them, close behind Kooigem.

During the night of July 15 yet another storm arose which drowned the valley and several of the men as well. Württemberg had moved his HQ a little to the right, away from the river, to make room for the advancing columns, and now found himself cut off from his infantry and guns, which were delayed by the heavy rain. Indeed, the guns would not budge at all. Neither would the pontoon train which might have been put to some use in the flood. There was only Horne's battalion and some cavalry in front of the Lines. Hornes very cleverly ordered his men to sound the drumbeats of each national contingent in turn and to light campfires over a wide area. The French were fooled and by 3am the waters had subsided.

'We were forced to lye that Night in the dirt by the Water-side, without any shelter for want of our Baggage, and of convenient ground to encamp upon.'

D'Auvergne, Vol 1693, p.36

July 16 and 17 were rest days. The men had been marching through the rain and knee-deep mud for 8 days without a break. Württemberg broke out the corn brandy – 6 gallons per company. While his men rested, his staff planned.

The closest enemy redoubts were those, from west to east, of Beau Verd, Haute Plante, Pont David, and Kooigem. Pont David was the key. As the name suggests, it guarded a permanent bridge over the River Espierrette. The same road also bridged the Lines' wet ditch. Van Wymberg was tasked with assaulting Beau Verd and Haute Plante. Ellenburg would tackle the Kooigem Redoubt. The Count d'Alfeldt, a Danish brigadier, would lead 4 battalions against Pont David. Surprise had been lost, but there was a small wood in front of the Lines, the

Bois de Bray, which could conceal movement. But, it could also channel the attackers and prevent them aiding one another.

The drill for each assault was to be the same. Parties of grenadiers would cross the river and ditch ahead of 30 pikemen carrying bundles of fascines. Using their pikes as a frame, these would lay down rudimentary bridges. More grenadiers would then charge across the bridges and assault the works. The rest of the battalions would stand by to exploit any breaches. The cavalry had the job of fanning out in the rear of the enemy, assuming success was achieved. The attacks were supported by the artillery, emplaced in the Bois de Bray, 9 guns firing left and 3 firing right. The English battalions were placed 'on point'. Behind them were regiments of Dutch, Spanish, Germans, Danes, and Swedes.

Facing the Allies were 6 battalions, 600 Swiss (probably a battalion of Courten's regiment), 3 regiments of Horse, and 5 regiments of Dragoons. 3 of the battalions were of the regiment Royal Savoie, which despite its fancy name was not a good unit. It was composed of 3 battalions of 'auxiliaries' coerced from the Duke of Savoy at the start of the war out of his own meagre army, one of the many reasons Duke Victor chose to side with the Allies. The men spent most of their time trying to desert.

[It is curious that d'Auvergne does not call the Swiss a battalion, but from the orders of battle it appears there was only the one Swiss battalion at this time.]

The morning of July 18 seemed to promise well. The weather was clearing. Each column fired a battalion gun when within musket shot of the trenches, after which the batteries in the wood played on the redoubts and the enemy cavalry massing east of Dottignies to repel any breakthrough – de la Vallette was prepared. The French torched a couple of houses in front of them to deny them to the Allies.

Pont David was attacked first, by the grenadiers of the Earl of Argyll's Regiment, followed by the Beau Verd, stormed by the grenadiers of the Earl of Castleton's. Swimming the river, Argyll's had suffered 25% dead by the time they mounted the ramparts. D'Asfeldt judged the attack a success and committed his remaining 4 battalions. Castleton's made slow progress until Pont David was taken, at which the garrison there pulled back.

The French cavalry were forced to shelter behind a village thanks to the fire from a pair of 12-pounders, and appear to have taken no further part in the action.

The attack on Kooigem Redoubt was deliberately held back until now. Here it was the Earl of Bath's grenadiers, covered by fire from the near bank of the Espierrette which took Haute Plante. De la Valette now ordered a general withdrawal.

Rather than pursue (as his troops wanted), Württemberg reformed and used his corps to cover the labour of thousands of peasants, who levelled the Lines between Haute Plants and Beau Verd. Over the next few days they razed the whole length of the Lines between the Lys and Scheldt, though Württemberg was not exactly pleased when they had finished. The job was sloppily done and left a fair amount of the works intact.

Meanwhile, his cavalry probed deep into French Hainault. Twelve villages were burned directly behind the Lines; in consequence, contributions were taken from many more. While Württemberg camped at Dottignies, de la Vallette, who had retreated on Tournai, camped at Pont à Tressin, 16 Km away, about 10 Km east of Lille, and forbore to interfere.

[At the end of his account of this operation d'Auvergne mentions that the village of Dottignies belonged to a Walloon prince in Spanish service whose mother chose to live at the French fortress of Menin, solely to prevent the French Crown from acquiring the village. This was apparently a common tactic for landowners in French Flanders, which was a relatively recent conquest.]

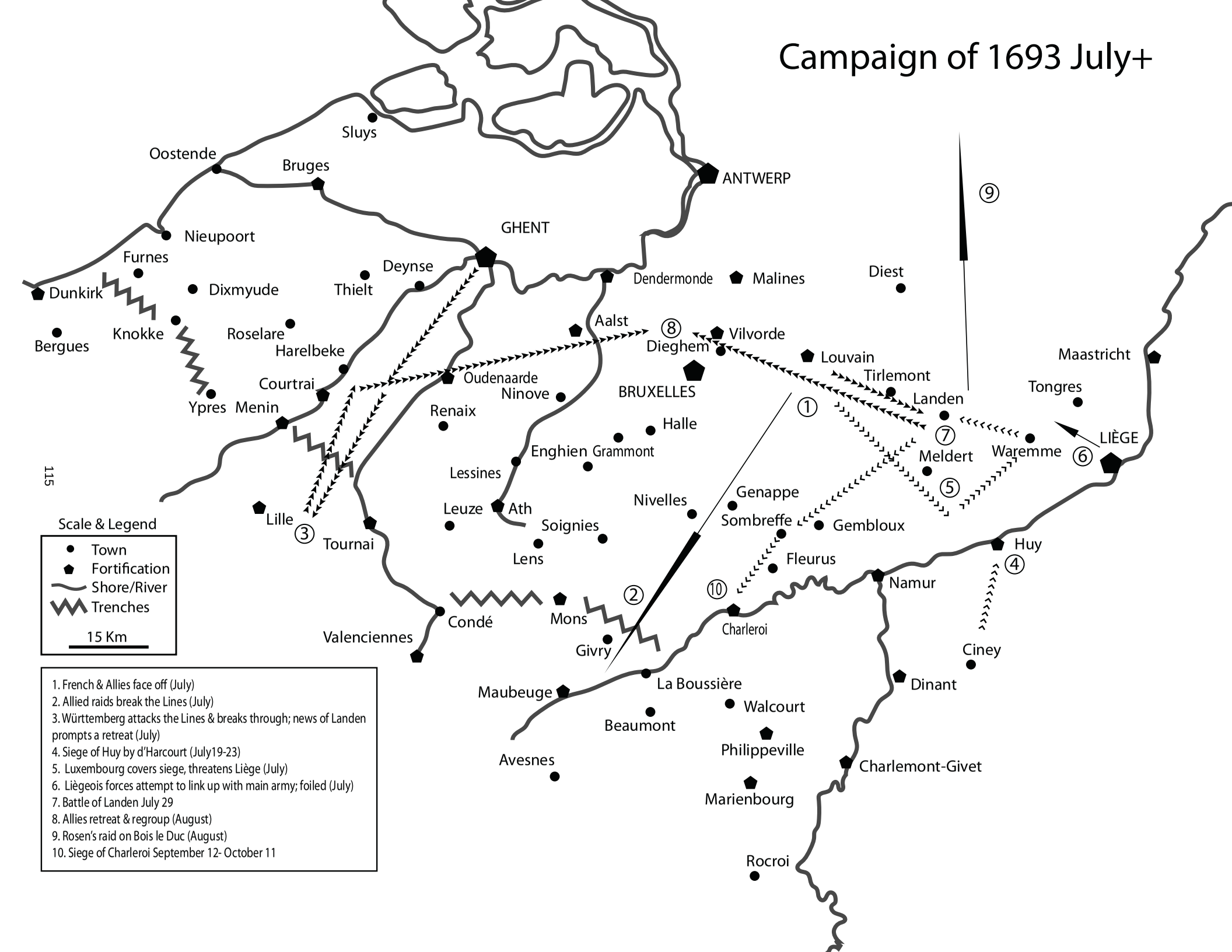
On June 22, Württemberg headed southeast with the bulk of his force across the St. Léger River and approached to within 2 Km of Tournai (a march of about 15 Km). On June 23, one of his subordinates, Brigadier Huybert, took 1,200 foot and 600 horse, plus 3 guns, across the Marque River toward Lille, by way of Pont à Tressin.

[D'Auvergne says the corps marched to Esquermes, but that is a village outside Lille, though roughly in the same relation as Württemberg's position was to Tournai.]

Part of De la Valette's command had moved to Tournai, including 2 regiments of dragoons which arrived in the nick of time, but a part still held Pont à Tressin. The place was not easy to attack. A crossroads connecting Lille and Tournai, its approach from the North was along a raised causeway, about 5 feet high, leading to the bridge. The French had erected palisades on the bridge and fortified some of the houses on either side. Huybert's cannon drove the defenders out of the houses but instead of retreating they shifted onto the bridge, behind the palisades. However, an assault down the causeway by 200 grenadiers cleared the bridge. The French fled to Lille, which was only 3,500 metres away. Losses were 14-15 on the Allied side and 'several' French.

From Pont à Tressin, Huybert laid under contribution all the lands from the confluence of the Scarpe and Scheldt to Douai, nearly 40 Km into France. The French cavalry hovered around but made few attempts to interfere. Even Lille was summoned to pay up, though d'Auvergne does not record whether the town actually did so.

On July 27, Württemberg joined Huybert. More damage might have been inflicted – they were thinking of laying siege to Menin with a train that was stationed at Ghent, or riding on and raiding St. Omer and Arras. But, Württemberg, pursuing King William's plan, retraced his


Campaign of 1693 July+
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
GHENT
Nieupoort
Furnes
Deynse
Dunkirk
Dixmyude
Thielt
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Harelbeke
Aalst
Vilvorde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Courtrai
Oudenaarde
Ninove
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Tongres
Ypres
Menin
Renaix
Landen
Halle
LIÈGE
Enghien
Grammont
Meldert
Waremme
Lessines
Genappe
Nivelles
Lille
Leuze
Ath
Sombreffe
Gembloux
Soignies
Tournai
Huy
Fleurus
Lens
Namur
Condé
Mons
Charleroi
Valenciennes
Givry
Ciney
La Boussière
Dinant
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
115
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French & Allies face off (July)
2. Allied raids break the Lines (July)
3. Württemberg attacks the Lines & breaks through; news of Landen prompts a retreat (July)
4. Siege of Huy by d'Harcourt (July19-23)
5. Luxembourg covers siege, threatens Liège (July)
6. Liègeois forces attempt to link up with main army; foiled (July)
7. Battle of Landen July 29
8. Allies retreat & regroup (August)
9. Rosen's raid on Bois le Duc (August)
10. Siege of Charleroi September 12- October 11

steps, camp by camp, leading the French to fear Menin was threatened (they dispatched Vauban there).

The enemy did not interfere much with this march. About 60 French horsemen who tried at the Pont à Tressin crossing were captured. It appears the French tried to envelop Württemberg as he was using the bridge. The captured men were from a party on the far side, while the last Allied squadron to cross was charged by another body, but without much result.

Disaster then struck. Just after the river crossing, Württemberg received an express that William was about to go into battle. Then, in the evening of the same day, as he was establishing his camp outside Tournai, another express brought news of the King's defeat and an order for Württemberg to join him.

It was now August 1. Württemberg's men made the march to Oudenaarde, about 30 Km, in a single day. On August 2, they reached Aalst, another 32 Km northeast. Accounting for units sent away or left as garrisons, Württemberg had 24 battalions and 40 squadrons when he reached Aalst. (Since he had originally brought away 13 battalions, this meant the garrisons of Flanders had been reduced by a further 11 battalions.)

Back in Brabant

For the past month, Luxembourg and William had essentially pinned each other in place. But, so far, only the Coalition had benefited. Besides Württemberg's endeavours, there had been the raiders from Charleroi. Powerless to stop these events, the *Maréchal* looked for local success. First, he moved 22 Km east to Waremme, threatening Liège. Waremme itself was in Liègeois territory. At the time, Tilly and the prince-bishopric's cavalry 'corps' (5 regiments of horse and 3 of dragoons) was near Tongres (Tongeren), enroute to the main Allied camp.

Luxembourg sent out 10,000 cavalry (8 squadrons of the Guards, 2 squadrons of Gend'armes, 2 Light Horse, the Horse Grenadiers – most of the *Maison du Roi*, in fact – plus 3 line regiments) to intercept. The column left camp about 6- or 7pm and rendezvoused with Luxembourg and another column of generic troops. Luxembourg led one column and Villeroi the other, with a number of battalions following as best they could. By 3am they were within 3 Km of where Tilly was supposed to be.

Tilly had been camped at the spot in question, but was warned around midnight, and broke camp immediately. The French captured most of the baggage, so, thinking they might still catch him, Luxembourg sent off the fastest horsemen at full gallop, with the rest following at a trot. The *Maison du Roi* naturally had the best mounts in Europe, so they did catch up, but unfortunately there were sunken lanes all over the place and Tilly was discovered on the wrong side of one. 100 of the pursuers did get across, but were held off by 6-7 squadrons while the rest of Tilly's column crossed the Jecker River to safety. The French pursued him all the way to Maastricht, so it was a partial gain for them, since the Liègeois did not join William. And, the French had Tilly's baggage. Most of the limited casualties on the French side were high-born.

There were two Brabantine fortresses besides Liège which the French needed to deal with: Huy, and Charleroi. Luxembourg, who was still fixated on taking Liège, decided to acquire Huy first, as a launchpad for next year.

The town of Huy – D'Auvergne calls it 'a Dirty poor Town.' – lay 18 Km south of the French army, and was garrisoned by native troops. It was situated on the right bank of the Meuse. A bridge called the Pont de Pierre linked it with the Basse Ville ('lower town') on the left bank. Both parts of the town were fortified, though not strongly, and both had outlying faubourgs. The walls dated from Medieval times, though in the past year Coehoorn had strengthened them with modern ditches, ravelins, and redoubts. The Citadel, an old castle (with a drawbridge, no less), was on the West side of the Old Town, at the eastern edge of a high ridge following the riverbank. A redoubt, Fort Picard, sat on the same ridge at a higher elevation at the western end of the ridge. It was unfinished. To the South was a valley, beyond which was another set of heights which overlooked everything. Baron de Reneffe, the garrison commander, expected his 2,000 men to hold for no more than a week.

The siege was conducted by *général* d'Harcourt. Upon his arrival on the left bank, where there was a fortified suburb called the Lower Town (Basse Ville), Reneffe withdrew to the other bank and broke down the bridge. This was on July 19. On July 20 Reneffe agreed to fully surrender the town, holding only the castle. On July 23 Fort Picard was captured and batteries were erected there.

French grenadiers of the *régiment* d'Orléans then took a tower which was incorporated into the town walls only 100 metres from the castle's outs works. This tower overlooked the ground the assault parties would need to cover to reach the developing breach and its capture would make the attack much easier. Reneffe had the chamade beaten the next morning.

Rather than give King William any more men, Luxembourg refused Reneffe's request to be allowed to march to Parck, pretending he could not release the garrison until certain debts were paid. Supposedly the town owed money to Cardinal von Fürstenberg, a canon of Liège and one of King Louis' lacqueys. When released, Reneffe was imprisoned for 3 months by his own side and suspended for a year for his lacklustre performance.

William never attempted a relief, which would have meant picking a fight with Luxembourg's larger army. He did break camp, on July 20, but meandered his way east,

from Parck to Sint-Truiden, to Wellen, a day's march farther on (ENE of Sint-Truiden). That is where he received news of the fall of Huy. There was still time for the French to lay siege to Liège.

Luxembourg probed toward the city. He wanted to see for himself the state of the defences, which were quite formidable. Liège had its own set of Lines ringing it, established after the raid of 1691.

The French travelled by way of Waleffes, Vinalmont, and Hellick (Lexhy) (July 25), a single day's march of 12 Km ESE. The reconnaissance proved depressing. The Lines proved rather pathetic, but augmented by 10 battalions under Brigadier von Schwerin from William's army and 3 more sent up from Maastricht, the city now had a garrison of 30 battalions. William had advanced with his whole army toward Liège, but Schwerin still had to be nimble on his toes to evade the French. After sending Schwerin off, William retired to Neerhespen (Neerheylissem) about 8 Km east of Tirlemont.

The *Maréchal* was not too disappointed. In fact, some historians regard his march on Liège as a mere feint with a reconnaissance in force 'tacked on'. D'Auvergne, however, says that Luxembourg sent the prince-bishop a letter 'offering him a Neutrality', and that although the offer was rejected, one or two of the bishop's subordinates tried to raise a revolt but were arrested. This would have been a great coup, but likely to have been only one arrow in the *Maréchal's* quiver.

Even if Liège was not taken by a coup, through the movements of the French the Allied army was now significantly weaker. Luxembourg had forced William to disperse men back into garrison (17,000 to Liège and 5,000 to Maastricht), he had secured his rear by taking Huy, and though Württemberg might be inflicting pain on the French frontier, he was *not* able to instantly reinforce William with his corps of 17,000. The balance of forces had shifted, 50,000 Allied to 66,000 French (Lynn says 80,000). In terms of tactical units, the count was 52 battalions and 150 squadrons against 86 battalions and 210 squadrons. A two-to-one advantage in cavalry and more than 3:2 in infantry. Time to attack.

Even the bullheaded William would not accept battle with those odds, so Luxembourg dangled some bait in front of him. The Allies were camped between Neerwinden and Neerhespen, facing southeast on a front of 4 Km. This camp was in the vicinity of the one William had used when failing to relieve Namur. Luxembourg was now at Latinne, about 15 Km southeast of William and 13 Km NNW of Huy.

The *Maréchal* employed a number of stratagems. On July 25 he ordered his men to make fascines. The next day, a column of cavalry and infantry set out, heading slightly west of Latinne. It had the appearance of a detachment being sent to deal with Württemberg's shenanigans in Flanders. At the same time, 10,000 cavalry under *maréchal* Joyeuse made an afternoon's march 11 Km northeast to Waremme, across William's front. The column then turned east against Liège. This, and the making of fascines, was the sort of activity that might be expected if the French planned to surround the city with cavalry prior to an investment. The spurned offer of neutrality added credence to the idea. Luxembourg was saying to William that Liège was in immanent danger; battle would be risky, but the odds were at least better than before, so why not give it a shot? *C'mon, you know you wanna.*

William did not move. He wanted to see if a siege really did develop. After all, Liège was not going to capitulate on the first day. So, Luxembourg sighed and prepared to attack. The *Maréchal* planned to close with William later that day, but heavy rain intervened. Instead, the men foraged in the evening and got the baggage ready by midnight.

On the morning of July 28, conditions were better and the French moved against the Allied army. They marched in 7 columns (d'Auvergne says 4), with a column of cavalry on either side, 4 columns of infantry, and the train in the center. Montrevel and Joyeuse closed separately on the main body from either flank. They crossed the Jecker between Waremme and Latinne on the Méhaigne, and also north of Waremme, a front of about 10-12 Km.

The enemy camp was sighted from Overwinden about 4pm, after a gruelling 30 Km march. William was aware of their approach; his scouts had encountered them near Waremme, but he had no time to organise a retreat. Luxembourg was hoping to find the enemy in motion, either coming forward to attack or in the act of crossing the rivers at their back, and he personally led the Cavalry of the Right, including the *Maison du Roi*, forward of the rest of the army to attack what he hoped was William's rearguard. However, when he saw the Allies immobile, he desisted. Pretty soon, the infantry of Montrevel's detachment arrived and the cavalry was pulled back.

The French billowed into the hamlets around Landen, no more than 2,000 metres away. The Allies made only minor adjustments in their line. They were stuck on a very shallow battlefield. The Great Geete was 5 Km in their rear, and the Little Geete 3 Km. The latter's banks were marshy. William had bridged the Little Geete with pontoons, and there were stone bridges at the hamlets of Overhespen, behind his Center, and Eliksem, on his extreme Right, but there was no way his entire army could retreat if attacked.

Ideally, William should have left his camp and headed northwest over the Great Geete, which runs through Tienen, or west toward the Park Abbey camp near Louvain. But, his army was wedged between the Little Geete and the Landen Beck and he would have first to cross the former river before reaching the Great Geete. All three drain into the Demer River, which flows north

through Diest and then west where it ultimately joins the Scheldt. The Demer was navigable as far as Diest, and flowed through a region still rich with forage, which is why this spot was deemed suitable for a camp; in fact the heavy baggage was at Diest. It was less than ideal as a battlefield, however.

But, William was eager to fight. Overnight, Duke Max would counsel him to retreat but he would refuse, confident the terrain would make this an infantryman's battle in which the two sides would be evenly matched. King William spent the night dozing in his coach behind the first line of infantry while his men prepared themselves.

The Battle of Landen July 29, 1693.

[The battle is also called Neerwinden, but that is the name of a famous Revolutionary War battle, so Landen *will be used here.]*

At this point the reader should refer to the accompanying map. The terrain might be described as 'flat as a billiard table'. Nevertheless, as can be seen from the map, there were many dips and swells in the ground, allowing the artillery to apply 'grazing fire', and giving some concealment to dismounted men. The contour lines shown on the map are in 5-metre increments. The elevation ranges between 50-100 metres from sea level. The woods are conjectural and would have been nothing more than scattered copses offering no impediment to the battle. There may have been more extensive marshes along the watercourses.

Like all battles in this period, no two accounts agree. D'Auvergne's is garbled, but even modern historians are not in accord except in the broad outline. The maps, both period and modern, jumble the accounts even more. Childs and d'Auvergne have been followed for the most part.

The orders of battle are derived from the grand reviews held by the two armies earlier in the campaign. The Allied one comes from the camp at Parck. The lack of a formal brigade structure in the Allied army – they were beginning to copy the French, but brigades were still *ad hoc* – and the fact that d'Auvergne had absolutely no interest in the Spanish and Dutch who made up more than half the army, means that some guesswork is required. For simplicity, it has been assumed that all the units listed at Parck are present.

The French order of battle is more thorough, but it comes from the opening of the campaign. Since then Luxembourg and Boufflers had merged their armies and the Dauphin's corps had been detached to the Rhine. Fortunately, d'Auvergne notes the missing regiments, and there are other sources. Even so, there are the equivalent of 3 infantry brigades (12 battalions) missing from the record. It has been assumed they were on line of communication duties, though they may also have been used to flesh out some of the brigades that are shown with less than 4 battalions.

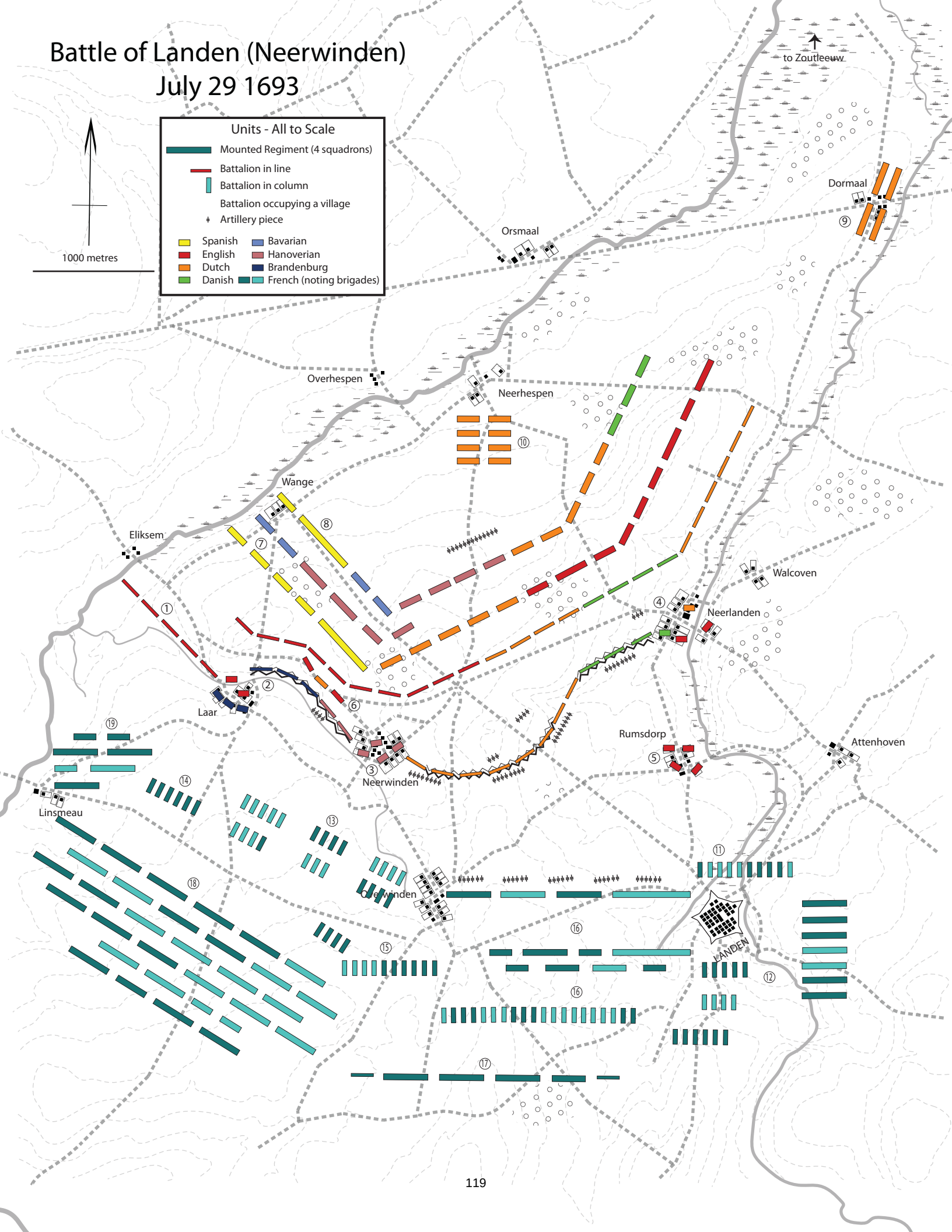
In some accounts, it is said that most of the Allied troops occupied a reverse slope, so that only their batteries came under French bombardment. It would be more accurate to say the soft ground absorbed the enemy's shot. As can be seen from the map, the Allied front line positions were on the forward side of what minimal slope there was.

The Allied Staff felt they lacked the room to redeploy forces during a battle (they would be forced to, but with less than stellar results). To compensate, the night before the men were set to work digging trenches and fortifying the villages at either end of the line. On the plus side, the whole of the Allied line, taking its bends into account, was only about 6 Km long, and the avenues of attack were smaller than that. The French would find it difficult to make use of their superiority in cavalry.

With regard to the accompanying map, the overall deployment is agreed upon by most sources. Some maps show the entrenchments as straight, or as incomplete, or as quite elaborate. The latter are most likely French propaganda; their Press played up the successful frontal assault on an 'entrenched' line. D'Auvergne is quite clear that the 'trenches' were nothing but an anti-horse ditch which did not actually stop any horses crossing it, and some breastworks that gave no cover from either cannon or musket fire. Only 1,500 men (30 from each battalion) worked on them. The hamlets and villages had only their natural hedging and mud property walls. The houses had been 'fortified' by the addition of some loopholes. The French had a harder time dealing with concentrated artillery fire and a too-narrow frontage than with the 'fortifications'.

D'Auvergne seems to ignore the second line of infantry. He describes the positions of *Ramsey's Brigade* (1), the Brandenburgers (2), the Hanoverians (3), the defenders of Neerlanden (4), and *Erle's Brigade* at Rumsdorp (5), but then says that the remainder of the Foot lined the entrenchment between Neerwinden and Neerlanden. As the map clearly indicates, the First Line fits this position perfectly, but what about the whole Second Line? Most maps show it as depicted, more or less. It contained the same number of battalions as the First Line during the Parck Review; since then, the 6 battalions of Brandenburgers (Spanish subsidy troops) had been added.

Some accounts, including Childs, put *Ramsey's Brigade* in Laar (Laér) itself. D'Auvergne says the Brandenburgers held Laar and that Ramsey covered the gap down toward the river. This makes more sense. The brigade had the cover of hedgerows. Most maps do not allow them the entrenchment. Assisting the Brandenburgers were a pair of English battalions drawn at the last minute from Neerlanden on the other end of the line.


Battle of Landen (Neerwinden)
July 29 1693
Units - All to Scale
Mounted Regiment (4 squadrons)
Battalion in line
Battalion in column
Battalion occupying a village
Artillery piece
Spanish
English
Dutch
Danish
Bavarian
Hanoverian
Brandenburg
French (noting brigades)
1000 metres
to Zoutleeuw
Dormaal
Orsmaal
Overhespen
Neerhespen
Wange
Eliksem
Walcoven
Neerlanden
Laar
Rumsdorp
Attenhoven
Neerwinden
Linsmeau
Overwinden
LANDEN

The composition of Erle's Brigade is an educated guess. Giving them one extra battalion would leave a hole in the First Line. D'Auvergne says they were outnumbered 'five to one' which looks about right when comparing the French brigades matched against them.

The accompanying map shows the *1.Battalion First Guards*, *2.Battalion Third (Scots) Guards*, and *2.Battalion Dutch Guards* (6) enroute to reinforce Neerwinden. They arrived in time to help with the first French assault. Initially, they were sent to reinforce Laar, but perhaps because the attack on Neerwinden developed first, were sucked into that fight instead. No one is clear about where they came from. However, at the Parck Review they were on the Right of the Second Line (where there is now a gap on the accompanying map), and that is the most logical place for them to have been.

The Allied Cavalry of the Right (7) and of the Left (8) is agreed upon, although the length of the lines seem to be the subject of artistic license. On the accompanying map, the Bavarians and Hanoverians of the Right have been folded behind the Spanish. Some maps show such a deployment, without indicating whose regiments they were. They almost have to be located here, or the front line of cavalry would be far too long. Also, the Hanoverians and Bavarians got involved with the first French breakthrough, which would have been less likely if they were farther east. The ground here was unsuitable for large cavalry actions; some maps show more swamp, but it was also very constricted.

Nobody mentions the Spanish at all. At the Review, they were on the right of the line, so ought to be in front if the line was indeed folded on itself. Of course, the Spanish might have been sent to Flanders after the Review, but d'Auvergne does not say so, and besides, they were a key component of Duke Max's personal corps, and he was the man commanding the Right Flank. King William commanded the Center and Left.

The sources are divided on whether Neerlanden was on the near or far side of the stream called the Landen Beck. Every map is different, and on modern maps the village straddles the brook. Like the Little Geete, the Landen Beck was very marshy around and below Neerlanden; farther upstream (south) it cut into the soil, creating a ravine. The forces shown at Dormaal (9) are the Dragoons of the Left. Most account state or imply that there was quite a gap between the end of the main line and the Dragoons.

The position of the Allied Reserve (10) – 8 dragoon regiments – is conjectural. Perhaps it was at Dormaal. Perhaps it was still at Parck, or garrisoning Zoutleeuw. It made no contribution to the battle. The Allied Camp is usually shown stretching in a wide band from Wange to Zoutleeuw – i.e., immediately behind the troops. This area would have been chock full of tents and wagons.

King William had 90 cannon. Their placement on the map is conjectural. Some maps show an artillery park behind the cavalry, on the reverse slope. The bulk of the guns appear to have been concentrated between Neerwinden and Neerlanden. Each icon on the map is a single piece, but only 59 are depicted. The remainder may have been battalion guns, or there may have been more cannon located on the edges of the villages. If the reader assumes 1-2 small battalion pieces usually deployed at the ends of each battalion in the First Line, the full count approximates 90.

The French dispositions are, if anything, even more garbled than the Allies'. At least they used a formal brigade structure, but the time between their Grand Review and the battle is so long that many changes may have occurred.

According to d'Auvergne, Luxembourg placed his HQ at Landen, on the Right of his line. Stationed here were the brigades of *Bourbonnois*, *Lyonnois*, and later *Maulevrier*, under *lieutenant général* Feuquières and *maréchal de camp* Crequi. Between Landen and Sint-Gertrudis were the brigades of Navarre, Anjou, and Artois under *maréchal de camp* Solre, supported by the dragoons of Caylus, Finmarcon, and Asfeld.

Between Landen and Overwinden were lined up 7 squadrons of the *Maison du Roi,* and the regiments of *Mestre de Camp* and/or *Colonel Général, Dauphin-Étranger*, and *Bourbon*, under Villeroi, *lieutenant général* the Sieur Rozen, and *maréchal de camp* Roquelare.

Behind this first line were the brigades of *Piémont, Du Roi, Crussol, Orléans,* and *Reynold (Swiss)*, under *lieutenant générals* Berwick and Rubantel, with *maréchals de camp* Bressy and Sarsfield (the Irish Jacobite), were stationed at Overwinden. Also stationed on this sector were the brigades of *Salis (Swiss)* and *Arbouville* (including *King James' Guards*).

Behind these were the brigades of the *French Guards, Swiss Guards*, and *Guiche*, under the *prince* de Conti.

Behind this was a third line, of cavalry: more of the *Maison du Roi,* the brigade of *Bolen*, the *Carabiniers*, and the *régiment de Praslin*, under *lieutenant générals* Feuquières and the Sieur Bosca, with *maréchals de camp* the *duc* d'Elboeuf and the *comte* de Nassau.

Behind this was a fourth line, of infantry: the brigades of *Vermandois*, *Surbeck (Swiss)*, *Zurlaben (Swiss)*, *Nice*, *Royal Roussillon*, and *La Sarre*.

More of the cavalry, under *lieutenant général* Vateville, was arranged in yet more lines, on those few sections of the field which permitted cavalry action.

The Reserve was posted behind Overwinden, and commanded by *maréchal de camp* the Chevalier de Bezons. It consisted of 3 squadrons of the *Grand Mousquetaires*, 3 dragoon regiments (*Bellegarde, St.*

Fremont, and *St. Hermine*), and 2 battalions of *Fusiliers du Roi* of the Artillery. *Lieutenant général* Ximenes and *maréchal de camp* Pracontal were stationed nearby and during the battle several brigades of cavalry, drawn from each wing, were concentrated under them.

So much for the initial deployment, recounted by d'Auvergne. Most maps reflect these dispositions, showing a heavy concentration of forces stacked five or more lines deep between Overwinden and Landen. At least one map tries to show a more 'traditional' deployment by placing Overwinden near the Little Geete!

Two things need to be understood. First, Luxembourg never took his battalions out of column formation. In column formation, the Foot fits perfectly between Overwinden and Landen. Second, the *Maréchal* significantly changed his deployment before commencing his first assault.

Referring to the accompanying map, the position of the battalions deployed at Landen (11) is conjectural, but they were in that general area, and were intended to attack Rumsdorp; later, they were used against Neerlanden. Maulevrier's Brigade is not represented since its strength is unknown (there is no such brigade in the Grand Review order of battle). However, the 2 battalions of *King James' Guards*, one on either end of the line, are shown here. Apparently, though assigned to *Arbouville's Brigade* (part of the First Line of infantry assaulting Neerwinden) they had been detached during the diversionary march and wound up here as late arrivals.

[Since King James' Guards are missing, Arbouville's Brigade *consists of a single battalion. Possibly, some of the 12 unlisted battalions were tacked onto it, but the count of 18,000 men for this wing (at 600 men per battalion) matches the 30 battalions shown.]*

Notice that the battalions are 'in column'. When manoeuvring in column, a battalion was divided into 5 *demi-manches* (bearing little relation to companies or to pike/shot proportions). The shape of the battalion 'bricks' on the map assume each *demi-manche* is arrayed behind the next. This is conjectural, but the spacing appears to work.

Maréchal de camp Solre's brigades (12) are shown stacked up behind Landen. Alternatively, they might have been arranged on a diagonal line between Landen and Sint-Gertrudis, but this puts them on an odd angle with respect to the rest of the army. Luxembourg presumably intended them as a follow-on wave to exploit a breakthrough. The supporting dragoons are shown a little advanced from their assumed start positions, since they are going to be used to probe Neerwinden and Dormaal.

The troops between Overwinden and Landen have been repositioned. In the pre-dawn of July 29, Luxembourg took stock of his situation. Originally he planned to attack between Rumsdorp and Neerwinden, punch through and send his cavalry to secure the bridges in the Allied rear. This is why his troops were massed in this sector the night before. But, the anti-cavalry ditch was deepest on this end of the line. Its presence forced a change in plan. Of course, the ditch could be filled under fire. Such activities were not unknown during a battle, but they involved potentially heavy casualties, and a lot of delay. The point of attack was therefore shifted to Laar and Neerwinden. However, Luxembourg would still attack Rumsdorp as a diversion, and use his dragoons to probe for weaknesses around Neerlanden. The Guard would be held in reserve, about Overwinden.

Some accounts have it that the attack started between Overwinden and Landen but that Allied cannon fire forced the French to shy away. This is highly unlikely because it would mean a straggling attack on Neerwinden and none at all on Laar.

Thus, Berwick's and Rubental's brigades of infantry (13) are shown deployed against Neerwinden. Notice they are advancing in column. It is possible the two right hand brigades were on the other side of Overwinden, but that would have led to a converging attack, would have required passing through the first line of cavalry, and would have masked the French cannon. The last is a particularly strong argument since the redeployment probably took place under cover of the initial cannonade, which lasted two hours.

D'Auvergne is unclear about Reynold's 6 battalions of Swiss on the left of this line (14). At one point he says it was tacked onto the end of the line as shown, then that it was sent into Reserve, and then that it was directed to attack Laar. It is shown here on the left end of the line, directly in front of its target, Laar.

The *prince* de Conti's brigades (15) are shown in support. Childs says the Guards (from the right, 6 French and 4 Swiss) were held in reserve behind Overwinden, and they were committed against Neerwinden. D'Auvergne does not put them with the Reserve. It seems most likely they remained part of Conti's command and he committed them as he saw the need. As will be seen, the left hand brigade, Guiche's, was committed first, and is shown beginning to advance in column.

The two lines of cavalry and the final line of infantry between Landen and Overwinden are shown in their original positions (16). Their movements are unclear, but since a mass of cavalry did eventually break through at Neerlanden, it seems obvious that these forces remained on this sector, though they may have closed up. Certainly the first line suffered under the Allied guns for the full length of the cannonade. The spacing between the lines is 'by the book'. The second line of cavalry has been folded up to make it fit, but this is pure conjecture. The Reserve (17) was somewhere behind Overwinden.

D'Auvergne dismisses the entire mass (18) of the Cavalry of the Left and the remaining Cavalry of the Right with an airy wave of the pen. All that is known for sure is that it

was stationed behind the assaulting infantry and that the brigades took up station wherever they could squeeze themselves in. Childs says it was formed into 6 lines. Since these are the cavalry wings of both Luxembourg's and Boufflers' armies combined, some brigades may not have been present. The map shows some cavalry (19) – according to Childs – beginning to work its way down the Little Geete toward the relatively open Allied flank.

The battle opened with a two-hour cannonade, from 4am to 6am.

'At Sun-rising we found the Enemies drawn up within Cannon-shot, which then began to play upon them with good success: They sustain'd it with an admirable Constancy, and tho' our Cannon made great execution (being very well posted upon several batteries on the Right and Left, and all along within the Retrenchment) yet the Enemies Horse remain'd as firm and immovable as so many Rocks, without offering to make any motion for about two hours together.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1693, p. 67.

D'Auvergne does not discuss the return fire.

At 6am, the French Left started forward, 18,000 foot and 8,000 horse. They faced 14,000 foot holding the line from Laar to Neerwinden. Unusually, and only because the battlefield was so tight, the French attacked in column and not line. Their advance was thus rapid, but it meant the local odds were in William's favour. Luxembourg identified Neerwinden as the primary target. 6 brigades in 3 columns under, from right to left, Montrevel, the Duke of Berwick, and Rubental, marched toward that village. They carried fascines to fill in the ditch. Most of the horse remained in the rear, but some squadrons, under Ximenes and Pracontal, did hook around Laar to engage the enemy cavalry down by the Little Geete.

[The accompanying map shows the 3 columns as such, with one brigade behind the other. It is quite possible the brigades were side by side. There is room.]

Upon reaching the defenders, about 8am, the French Foot charged, still in column. The attack penetrated, but the French became bogged down in hand to hand combat. At Neerwinden, 7 French brigades (and 3 lieutenant generals) became embroiled. The French were pushed back, but counterattacked with the fresh brigade of Guiche. The Allies in turn were pushed back to the edge of the village – the First Guards actually broke – but clung on grimly until King William rode up and led them in a counterattack.

At Laar, the garrison was driven out by *Reynold's* Swiss, *Bezon's* brigade of dragoons from the Reserve, and the horse regiment *Colonel Général*. The dragoons rode through the hamlet and formed up inside the Allied lines. Duke Max, in overall command of the Allied Right, counterattacked with his cavalry, which had managed to deal with the earlier French cavalry probe, and chased off de Bezons. Ramsey then rallied his men and led an assault against Laar which regained their old positions. On his immediate left, the Brandenburgers had also been driven out of their hedgerows, but came forward with Ramsey to retake them.

This ended the first assault. The Duke of Berwick had been captured and the French infantry thrown out of both villages, though they clung to the outskirts. The defenders had barely enough men left to form a single line.

A major reason why the attack failed was that the attack on Rumsdorp did not develop as planned. Apparently, it was supposed to be cleared first, after which it would be possible to form a solid line and advance along the whole front. But, this was not done. Luxembourg's subordinates let him down. D'Auvergne may be correct in saying the Allied cannon fire dissuaded the French from doing anything at all in front of the entrenchment.

For the second attack, the *Maréchal* made sure his generals understood what was expected of them. This time, they would attack Neerlanden and Neerwinden more or less simultaneously. The latter was currently defended by only 4 battalions.

But, the only success the French acquired was at Rumsdorp, where *Erle's* Brigade was overwhelmed in a five-to-one attack and the hamlet occupied. Still, this was a critical victory, since the French now pinned William's First Line.

4 regiments of French dragoons (*Fimarcon*, *Caylus*, *Asfeld*, and *Asfeld Étranger* crossed the Landen Beck to try and flank the village, while the brigades of *Bourbonnais*, *Lyonnois*, *Anjou*, and *Artois*, assaulted frontally. The Allies were hard pressed, but by felling trees to block the roads and keep out the dragoons, and setting a house on fire, they managed to hold on until King William came up with some Danish troops to reinforce them.

Meanwhile, Luxembourg renewed the assault against Neerwinden and Laar with 7,000 men. But, this attack also failed. According to d'Auvergne, it amounted to no more than 'a faint fire'. So, possibly it was merely a diversion.

The troops had been fighting for 8 hours under a broiling July sun. But, the Allies had no reserves. Luxembourg ignored suggestions that he call the battle off. In his opinion, William could no longer manoeuvre and could be crushed by superior numbers. Luxembourg usually did things with more finesse, but he had little choice this time.

The *Maréchal* called up the Guard, 12,000 strong, plus the Swiss line brigades of *Zurlaben* and *Surbeck*, another 6 battalions. Facing them were only 9,000 exhausted Allied infantry. Led by the *prince* de Conti, the French advanced, and kept advancing. They had an advantage in that friendly troops still held the outskirts of the villages,

so that the assaulting troops were able to close without suffering too many casualties.

William's men fought as long as they could, but between 2- and 3pm were inevitably driven out of Neerwinden, despite the inspirational presence of their chief.

In the Center, the French Guards were now advancing across open country while the cavalry deployed out of Neerwinden behind them. The defiles were narrow, but Luxembourg spotted a way and the lead elements of the *Maison du Roi* spurred through, led by Villeroi, and entered the Allied Camp. Here, they were counterattacked by the Bavarian *Arco Cuirassiers* and sent packing.

This was the signal for a general Allied counterattack against Neerwinden. But, it was insufficient. Only 2 battalions attacked frontally, while another 3 came in from the Allied left. The French line brigades now had mastery of the village. The Allied battalions making the frontal attack had no ammunition remaining.

Much of the Entrenchment, though flanked, was still held by the Allies. William led two more counterattacks to try and sustain the troops holding the line. But, the French cavalry continued to pour through the gaps around Neerwinden. To avert disaster, William had drawn away 9 battalions from his Left, around Neerlanden. The hyper-aggressive *lieutenant général* Feuquières noticed this and ordered an attack there on his own initiative. On the other flank, de Créqui pushed the left-center forward to pin William and prevent him from intercepting Feuquières.

9 Allied battalions behind the front – possibly the 9 battalions that had been called over to Neerwinden and which were probably still en route – formed a giant hollow square to resist Feuquières, but he ignored them and formed for a grand charge against William's exposed Left. Time to flee.

William's infantry was severely battered, but not broken. It fell back in disorder, rallied, counterattacked a little, and repeated the process, more than once. His Cavalry of the Right appeared in reasonable shape. They, under Duke Max, were ordered to cover the withdrawal as the army headed for the bridges over the Little Geete. Before the Duke could do so, the French cavalry routed him. One of the Hanoverian cavalry regiments broke and gave the French the opportunity to charge the rest in flank. Duke Max fled across the river by the nearest bridge and gathered a handful of survivors, but they were too weak to take any further part in the battle.

The last remaining body of Allied cavalry was that which had held the left-rear, beyond Neerlanden. William brought these up and directed repeated charges against the right flank of the advancing French, slowing them down enough for the infantry on the Allied Left, under the English generals Talmash and Bellasise to escape by fording the Little Geete. The dragoons at Dormaal made in good order for Orsmaal, and so to the general rally point, at Zoutleeuw, but by doing so they left the crossing at Dormaal open to the French, cutting the line of retreat to the North.

The French captured the bridge at Eliksem, leaving only that at Overhespen. The pontoon bridges seem to have disappeared, perhaps broken under the weight of the men trying to cross them. Many of the Allied Center and Right drowned – General Ginkel nearly did so – trying to swim the river in full kit, or were run down on the fringes of the marshes. King William himself was almost captured, being one of the last to cross at Overhespen.

Of course, the artillery and baggage train was a total write off. William only managed to save 10 of his cannon and lost 60 standards. (In Paris, they called *maréchal* Luxembourg 'Le Tapissier de Notre Dame.) To downplay this, d'Auvergne notes that the Allies brought off 19 French colours and 37 standards.

The French did not pursue beyond the river. The Allied rearguard, led by William and Bellasise, and reinforced by Duke Max's remnants, reformed and remained in good order. Luxembourg ordered the Allied cannon to be lined up and a triple volley fired, along with a general *feu de joie* by the army.

[One of Luxembourg's officers, romantically named d'Artagnan, took the news to King Louis, who rewarded the messenger with the governorship of Arras. The King also ordered a Te Deum sung at Notre Dame. If the reader wants too know what it sounded like, listen to the Eurovision theme music.]

The French had won a major victory, though, typically for the period, it was not a decisive one. William could rebuild reasonably quickly, and Luxembourg could have done the same if he had lost, since both sides had so many men salted away in garrison.

Though neither side was able to commit more than half their total numbers, casualties were heavy on both sides. Childs estimates the French lost 15,000 killed and wounded, while the Allies lost 12,000, and 2,000 POWs, or 20% of their army. Lynn puts French losses at 7-8,000 which seems low given that they made three frontal assaults and were repulsed twice. However, d'Auvergne puts Allied losses between 5-6,000 and French losses at 17,000.

After

Overall, the *Maréchal* was pleased. He now had a breathing space with which to do something constructive, like take a fortress. However, though much of Luxembourg's cavalry was still fresh, his army as a whole needed to be reconstituted. William, his army shattered, was just happy to have a cadre left around which to form a new army.

He retreated to Louvain and then to Eppegem (July 31), halfway between Malines and Vilvorde, north of Brussels, and waited for the living to rejoin him. The camp was laid

out between the Antwerp Canal, at Verbrande-Brug, or as the English called it, 'Burnt Bridge', just north of Vilvoorde, stretching all the way to Malines, on a front of 9.7 Km. William must have been optimistic. Of course, many of his losses were temporary deserters. Some travelled all the way to Breda before recovering their *sang froid*. Many English and Scots tried to join the Dutch Army. William sent orders that they should be arrested. 30 were condemned to death but William 'graciously' pardoned 24. Since the others only died because they drew the short straws, there does not seem to be much graciousness about it.

Meanwhile Württemberg, hastily repairing to join him, was by this time at Aalst, only 30 Km west of the camp. Duke Max's forces, mainly Spanish, camped independently, at Scarbeck (Schaerbeek) on the northern outskirts of Brussels.

For a while, the Allies hoped the French army had been shattered by its victory. Luxembourg, camped at Waremme, seemed inactive. This was because his replacements had to come all the way from St. Malo, where some 12,000 men had been watching the coast against the possibility of an Allied landing. He also called in de la Valette's men from the Lines. (This did not entirely denude the Lines, since de la Valette's troops were a sort of 'fire brigade'.)

While waiting, *lieutenant général* Rosen was detached with 10,000 horse (which Allied propaganda said had been 'utterly ruined') to raid the *Mayerye* of Bois le Duc, better known as s-Hertogenbosch, 100 Km to the North. Well, that was the intention. King William sent out a detachment of 7,000 of his own cavalry, under Ginkel, to intercept them. From beyond the Meuse, a body of troops from Neubourg, operating between Maastricht and Aachen, also vectored in on the French. Rosen actually made it to the territory of Bois le Duc, but aborted the ride once he learned of the approaching enemy.

[The territory of Bois le Duc extended south as far as Helmond, near Eindhoven; Rosen made it at least that far.]

Before Luxembourg's replacements arrived, he received new orders from Versailles. The *Maréchal* was required to capture Charleroi, the last Allied post on the Sambre. This was a request of Vauban's. As Lynn quotes (p.235), "This single fortress…obliges us to maintain guards at eighteen or twenty small fortresses… It causes the ruin [through raiding] of a territory equivalent to a good province… and obliges the king… to maintain in his fortresses 15,000 or 16,000 more men who will be lost annually in convoys and escorts." The Allies often wondered why the French had not bothered to take it yet; the only answer seems to be that it was beneath the Sun King's dignity to lay siege to such a place when he was in the field.

Until mid August the opposing armies rested and refitted. On the night of August 10 Württemberg was ordered from Aalst to the main encampment, but before he arrived, on August 12 William changed his camp to Wemmel, 8 Km west of Vilvoorde, the lines running for 8 Km between Mollem and Zellik, a day's march from Aalst. Württemberg rendezvoused with him there. Duke Max took up a position on the Left of the camp.

On August 15 a Spaniard, Francisco del Castillo Taxardo, Captain-general of the (Spanish) Artillery), was made Governor of Charleroi. He left for his new command with 3 battalions.

[D'Auvergne records that one of the battalions was Swedish, that of Putbus, and that the colonel was such a vocal grumbler about this new posting that Duke Max ordered Castillo to place him under arrest as soon as they reached Charleroi.]

That very day, Luxembourg marched southwest to Boneffe, reaching Sombreffe on August 16. These were marches of 23 and 28 Km respectively, so it would appear his army had recuperated. William responded by moving (August 17) to Halle, a familiar campsite, between Tubize on his Left and Sint-Kwintens-Lennik on his Right, with HQ at Lembeek. This camp was about 12 Km long, facing southwest. It was expected that Luxembourg, if he planned to attack, would cross the Senne south of the Allies and come up from the Southwest; the line of battle was thus prearranged to face in that direction, and the camp covered Brussels from attack. And in fact, Luxembourg did cross the Senne, arriving at Sognies, 15 Km up the river from Tubize, on August 29. He marched by way of Nivelles and Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, after having camped there for about 11 days (August 18-29).

Notwithstanding the region's surprising recovery from the standpoint of foraging, both sides suffered from oppressively hot weather. Many fell sick, including some of the senior commanders. This is one of the reasons no action was taken by either side.

Though he was camped just north of Charleroi for all those days, Luxembourg did not feel strong enough to lay siege until his reinforcements had arrived. He moved to Soignies to pick them up, and also to eat up the country on that side of the Senne so the Allies could not advance against Mons, or follow him to Charleroi.

Upon learning the French were in motion, from some returned prisoners, William ordered his own army to move. A detachment of 6,000 French cavalry was seen heading for Ath. However, it soon retraced its steps. This may have been a diversion, or Luxembourg may have had some thought of sending reinforcements to de la Valette, or it may have been a *chevausée*. So, instead of pursuing, William simply rearranged his army, shifting its weight from Halle to Sint-Kwintens-Lennik, facing it south rather than southwest.

Some cavalry skirmishes ensued the same day, in which the French got the worst of it. In one encounter, King William himself ran into 30 enemy horsemen and ordered his escort, the Dutch *Garde Dragonder*, to attack. In another, the French party, hearing that William's army

was on the move, had come from Mons to try and pick off stragglers. They were overcome by a body of Spanish horse.

[In describing these actions, d'Auvergne makes an interesting aside. The term 'reconnoitre' should only be used when examining one's own army from the enemy's point of view.]

On September 4 the Duke of Holstein-Plön arrived at the Allied camp. A number of changes were being made in the Allied command structure. Waldeck had died the previous year and not been replaced. The Dutch Army had a rather formal hierarchy, with First, Second, and Third Field Marshals over a 'tree' of infantry, cavalry, and artillery generals who never intermixed. Already field marshal of the Danish forces, Holstein-Plön had just been awarded Waldeck's office of First Field Marshal of the Dutch Army. This appointment was not entirely up to King William, but was made by the Dutch Estates. At the same time, the Duke of Württemberg was made General of Infantry, passing over a couple of native Dutch generals. Count Solms, the former holder of that office, had been killed at Neerwinden, to no one's regret except William's.

The French remained at Sognies until September 9, by which point the troops from the Lines and St. Malo had arrived. *Maréchal* Boufflers was also on his was with 12 battalions from the Rhine front. On that day Luxembourg marched to Haine-Saint-Pierre.

Haine-Saint-Pierre is 15 Km southeast of Sognies, halfway between there and Charleroi. On September 10, Luxembourg arranged his army along a line of investment from Fontaine l'Évêque on the Sambre to Pont-à-Celles on the Piéton, a distance of about 11 Km. The cordon was extended with *lieutenant général* Ximenes camping at Marchienne-au-Pont 5 Km downstream on the Sambre, and Guiscard, Governor of Namur, bringing 6 battalions and a dragoon regiment upriver from that place to Couillet, 1,000 metres south of the Sambre and about 2,500 metres from the center of Charleroi.

On September 11 Vauban showed up with *lieutenant général* du Rubantel and the besieging army, of 32 battalions and 34 squadrons. The train itself was floated down from Maubeuge to Namur and then up the Sambre. Luxembourg placed his main concentration at Chapelle-les-Herlaimont, 12 Km northwest of Charleroi and south of the Piéton.

The Siege of Charleroi September 12 – October 11

"Let us burn gunpowder and spill less blood."

Vauban, at the siege of Charleroi.

Charleroi's importance had nothing to do with its size. It was actually a new town, built by the Spanish after 1666 on the site of a mere village called Charnoy. It was renamed Charleroi after King Charles II of Spain. Charleroi was vitally important because the lower Sambre's banks are steep and rocky, and crossings could only be made at a handful of locations, one of them being this very spot.

The town lay on the right bank. Because the crossing point was dominated by a hill on the left bank, that hill was included in the 'trace'. The works were modern, made of stone and brick, of the usual pattern: bastions interspersed with ravelins, covered by counter-guards, and protected by several detached redoubts at the bottom of the glacis. These had been added by the French, who took the place during the Dutch War in the 1670s. The only alterations the Spanish made when the place was handed back to them were the digging of a few mines under the walls.

[Pre-sited mines were quite common features, though they could also be dug during a siege; technically, a countermine was dug to destroy an advancing enemy mine, while these pre-set mines would be blown when an enemy assaulted a breach.]

On the left bank of the river the defences included a large pond between the Brussels Road and the Fontaine l'Évêque (or western) road which had its own redoubt in the middle of it. A sluice, protected by its own ravelin, *and* a hornwork, governed the flow of water into the pond.

Despite the good state of the works Charleroi was hardly in the class of Liège or Namur. It had a garrison of 5,000 (or 4,500) men, but the main obstacle was the rocky soil, which made digging harder than usual. Vauban is supposed to have muttered 'fifteen days' after glancing at the fortress.

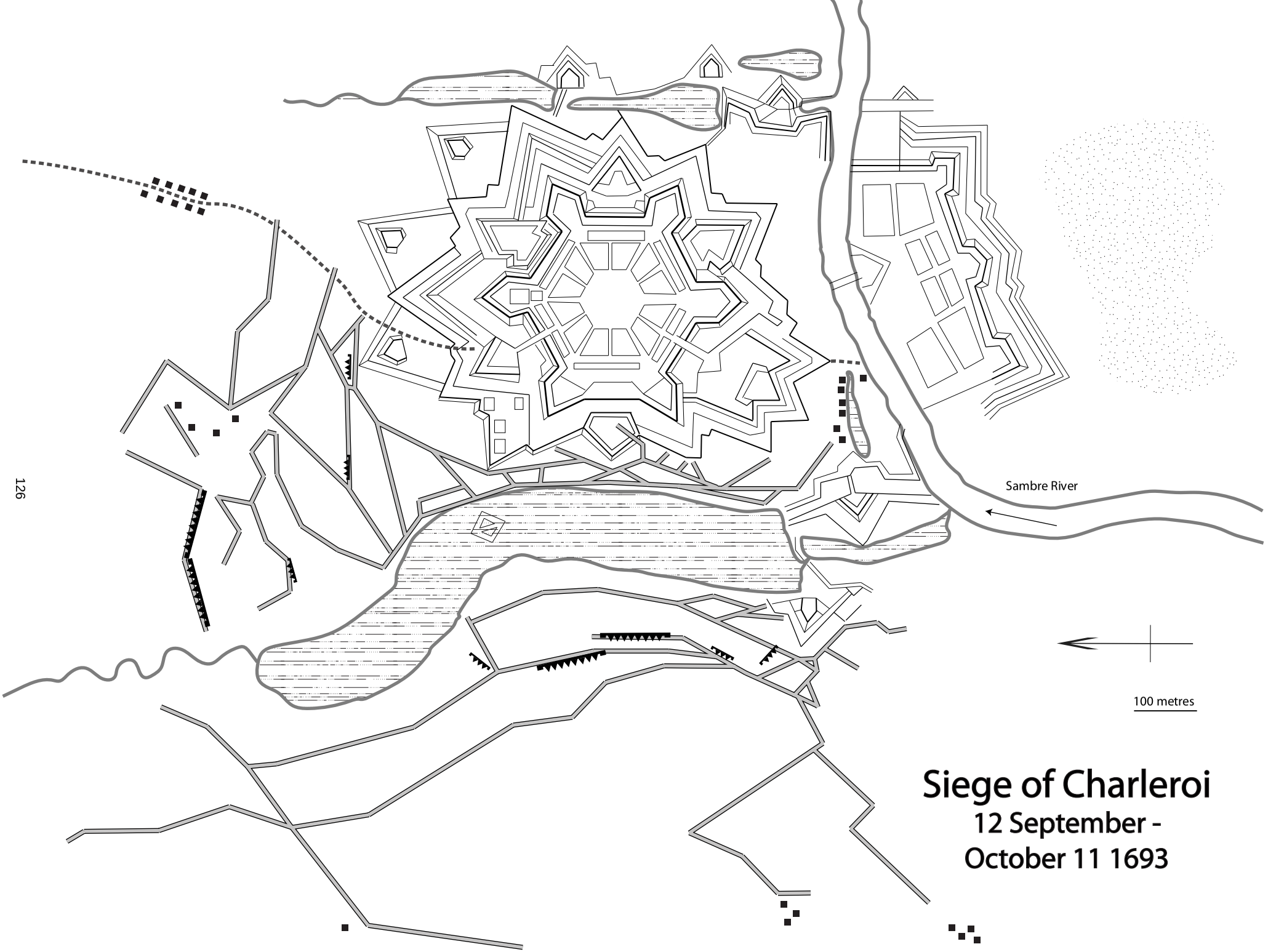
[The quote may be apocryphal, but it was common knowledge that he had promised King Louis the fortress in that time. Perhaps he put a question mark at the end of his utterance?]

The siege opened on September 12 with the tracing of the lines of circumvallation. 12,000 pioneers were put to work on September 13 and the trenches were declared open by Vauban on the night of September 15/16. The sector targeted included the pond and another detached redoubt covering the Brussels Gate. Unlike Namur, where all had been gambled on a final assault, Charleroi would be taken 'by the book' regardless of what the hothead junior officers thought.

Much of the work was done at night, in fog and rain, which for once aided the attackers. On the first night, it was so wet and foggy that it took three hours for the garrison to notice the work.

The defenders hurled fire-pots beyond the glacis, hoping to illuminate something they could shoot at. These fire ports were dangerous. Containing a napalm-like compound, they spread and burned for a long time. It was dangerous to go near them because they had loaded pistols screwed into their cases.

The French made an immediate assault on an outpost called the Warren House – such places were typically fortified manor houses – and took it, with some casualties on both sides. This was on the Right. On the Left,



Siege of Charleroi

12 September - October 11 1693

apparently, another attack was made, by 6 battalions of the Guard, in which the French lost 40 men. D'Auvergne does not say what the target was, just a bit of key terrain.

On September 16 the garrison sallied, inflicting a number of losses. The next day, Duke Max was detached from the Allied army toward Flanders. William did not even try to relieve the fortress. The French had more than 100 battalions between him and the place. As d'Auvergne says (Vol. 1693, p.113), 'if their Battalions were most of them weak, none of ours were very strong, and Sickness had sent a great Number into the Hospitals…' Luxembourg had also taken or destroyed all the forage between him and Brussels. William chose instead to try and capture Furnes, over on the coast. It was a comparable fortress, worth 'the same amount of points'. It even had the same size garrison – 5,000 men. Duke Max was sent thither with 30 battalions and 50 squadrons, crossing the Scheldt at Gavere on September 18.

But all Luxembourg had to do was shift his camp to Estinnes, 14 Km to his southwest, and William lost his nerve. That move suggested the French planned to round the headwaters of the Senne, come back to Soignies, and attack him. Duke Max was recalled, arriving back on September 22. The Allied army by then had backed up to Ninove, seeking new forage.

By that date the saps at Charleroi had reached to within 10 metres of the covered way associated with the pond redoubt. The French had already rubbled the Brussels Gate with cannon fire, but as it was known to be mined, they bypassed it, aiming for the hornwork and the pond.

Every one of Governor Castillo's guns had been dismounted but the garrison launched repeated sallies to try and slow the French down. On the night of September 22, Castillo's men got three guns working and inflicted 100 casualties. The next day they scored a hit on a French battery magazine with a mortar shell, doing considerable damage. By contrast, the French were firing mortar salvoes; sometimes there were 10-12 bombs in the air at once. And, they never paused.

On September 26, the French took the pond redoubt, gaining access by a six-pontoon raft. The redoubt only had a 50-man garrison and they were reduced to half that before the assault was made. The same day, Luxembourg returned to Chapelle-les-Herlaimont. Still the siege continued. Undaunted, Castillo, his command reduced to half its original complement, made three more sorties between September 25 and October 2. The last sortie continued into a second day, but Castillo's efforts were becoming feebler.

On September 26 the French made a critical gain. The objective of the moment was to capture the ravelin that protected the sluice for the pond. Draining it would weaken the defences in that sector considerably. But the operation was extremely risky. The assault was led by 10 companies of grenadiers, supported by 3 battalions of fusiliers. The men formed up at the head of the trenches and waited for three mortar salvoes. Twelve small tubes were to hurl two salvoes of regular shells, then another with bombs filled with sand but equipped with prominently displayed fuses. The idea was to keep the defenders' heads down while the attackers rushed across the killing ground before any countermines could be sprung.

The attack took a long time to develop and the wait proved agonising. First, the men had to make their way to the jumping off point down the length of the glacis, under fire from both the covered way and the ramparts behind. This was done in the morning. By perhaps 10 or 11am the grenadiers were in place. At 3pm they were still there, though orders were passed up for them to light the fuses for their grenades – *not* to light the grenades, just the fuses that would be applied later!

At 6pm they were issued hatchets but no orders. Somewhat later, Vauban made a personal visit to encourage them. An observer noted the men looked like criminals awaiting execution. Not until 9pm did the mortars start barking.

The grenadiers broke cover while the third salvo was still in the air and pelted across the open ground under intense fire, bunching together so tightly that some were carried along without their feet touching the ground. Sheer momentum carried them into the ravelin, and sheer momentum drove the defenders out onto the glacis, to be shot at by their own side. They had expected to be attacked through one of the faces of the ravelin, not along the gorge behind it.

As soon as they had carried the work, the French began digging an *epaulement* (literally, 'shoulder' – a flanking earthwork) to protect themselves from fire. Some men lay flat with their musket butts in front of their faces while their comrades dug feverishly. At the cost of heavy casualties the *epaulement* was completed by dawn and work parties came to drain the pond. Later that day a heavy battery was erected in the ravelin to fire pointblank on the covered way opposite.

Castillo did not give up. On October 4 the hornwork was taken by the French, but their assault on the covered way the following morning failed. A second assault on October 6 also failed when the garrison sprung a mine. A pause ensued while the artillery hammered at the covered way. On October 8 a third assault, led by Villeroi, carried it, though the French lost 600 men.

This lodgement allowed the French, on October 9, to dig their saps into the ditch beyond and bring up their 'Miner'. The guns were moved forward to the covered way and began pounding the main ramparts. Villeroi offered terms to Castillo which were refused, and the Spaniard then beat off Villeroi's first assault on the rampart.

But, the French were digging more mines. On October 10 they were ready for detonation. Castillo had too few men

to resist a second assault through an even wider breach. On Sunday, October 11, at 8am, he ordered the chamade beaten. Despite Vauban's words, it had been a tough fight; only 1,200 were left in the garrison and the attackers had lost more than 4,000 men. Vauban's 'fifteen days' had turned into twice that: 32 counting from the investment and 26 from the day the trenches were opened. Castillo's soldiers were given full honours of war.

Half-Time Break

At this price, the French now controlled the Sambre. Vauban estimated they had cut the number of men needed for garrison duty on the frontier by 16,000. Owning Huy as well meant they had the option to conduct additional operations on the line of the Meuse, possibly interrupting communications between the Spanish Netherlands and Germany. Moreover, public opinion was not impressed with King William's skill as a general. There would probably be questions in Parliament.

Of course, the war would drag on, which was not what the Sun King wanted. His four-front offensive was supposed to make the Allies see the futility of continuing. But, there were too many players with too many personal objectives. It would take years for the enemy's 'committee' to come to terms within their own ranks, let alone with the French.

Charleroi was the last act of the year. Both sides went into winter quarters, though not until a French raiding party stole some of Duke Max's horses from the camp at Ninove (October 13); a counterattack recovered the mounts. The next day the camp heard the triple cannonade for *maréchal* Catinat's defeat of the Duke of Savoy at Orbassano.

On October 25, King William left for England. The English (the term usually includes the Danish and Huguenot battalions) and Spanish quartered in Flanders, though some English units overlapped with the Dutch in Brabant. Ath, lying all alone in a salient close to the French Lines, was restocked and reinforced (October 3). The Germans went east, as always. The French occupied their frontier fortresses.

Maréchal Boufflers remained some time south of Liège, in a region called the Condros, stripping the country. He took over command of the whole front when Luxembourg and Villeroi went to Versailles to plan for next year's campaign.

[D'Auvergne recounts that the convoy sent to Ath discovered the local people busy brewing beer to sell to the French over the winter, as they always did. The Allied troops confiscated it.]

1694 The Pendulum Swings

"We are in a very good condition and in a very good camp, and as our horses are now cantoned on the villages about, we may subsist, for ought I know, this three weeks or more and, when we have eaten up the country on this side, march by common consent, facing each other and do the same in Flanders until the end of the campaign."

Letter of the Rev. William Hayley, at Roosbeek. Quoted in Childs, p. 255.

In 1693 more than 10% of France's population died. Some may have emigrated, but most died. This did not stop the war, but the collapse of the economy that followed the massive crop failure of 1693 put definite limits on what the Sun King and his advisors could hope to achieve in 1694. France went over to the defensive on all fronts.

The Wider War

On the Rhine, de Lorge would only have 45 battalions and 133 squadrons. As those proportions suggest, his campaign was to be of the *chevausée* variety. Crossing the Rhine at Phillippsburg on 8 June he would find the land so wasted that he would have to recross the river. After some bloodless manoeuvring all summer, the Germans under Baden would threaten an invasion of Alsace but be forced back across the Rhine without a battle.

In Italy, Duke Victor would play at being soldiers with *maréchal* Catinat, deceiving his allies into thinking he was still committed to the Cause but 'unfortunately' too weak to drive the French out of his lands. Catinat, with only 50 battalions and a handful of cavalry, would not be capable of offensive action anyway.

Catalonia would be the most bloody of the four theatres. *Maréchal* Noaïlles would fight and win the Battle of the Ter River, with 26,000 men against 20,000 Spanish. This success would allow him to capture two important fortresses: Palamos, a small port needed to shorten his supply lines, and Girona, a regional capital which called itself 'The Virgin', never having been captured (before). The French would very nearly reach Barcelona, capital of Catalonia, but an Allied fleet would put in an appearance, forcing them to rely on the wretched road net for supply.

At sea, the French would commit themselves to '*guerre de course*' – commerce raiding – which produced results, but slowly, and would drain their battle fleets of manpower. The only fleet activities of note would take place in the Mediterranean., where the English, for the first time, would station significant naval forces, affecting French operations in the region, though their main aim would be to hearten the Spanish and Italian members of the Coalition.

The English would meet with disaster at Brest, however. The operation was planned in tandem with the sortie to the Mediterranean, but 'planned' is too precise a term. It

bears all the hallmarks of an afterthought. Vauban would lead the defence, using all his ingenuity to inflict maximum pain. The worst loss to the English was probably the killing of the landing commander, General Talmash. In reprisal, Dieppe, Dunkirk, and Calais would all be bombarded, with more or less effect depending on the state of the defences. For the Coalition, the only positive effect of the Brest fiasco would be to heighten the Sun King's fears of invasion from the sea.

Diplomacy

The naval threat may have made King Louis a little more pliable on the diplomatic front, but the French still held the initiative.

One curious development – which has nothing to do with Flanders – was the signing of a treaty of neutrality specific to the western Pyrenees. No fighting had taken place here, because of the terrain, and also because there were preexisting agreements in place, arranged long ago. However, the treaty provided extra security in the event of an enemy naval landing around Bordeaux.

More insidious was the attempt to subvert the Patrician party in Holland. The Patricians were the hereditary opponents to the Orangists. They were the secular republican ruling class, pitted against the monarchical-leaning and Calvinist House of Orange whom they thought were dragging the Dutch down the road to absolute monarchy. However, the Patrician leader, Heinsius, chose to continue supporting William's war effort, probably because William was only a potential absolute monarch, while Louis was an actualized one.

The official, or overt, diplomatic offensive was conducted during the winter of 93/94, while the generals discussed strategy with their respective monarchs. Neither the French, represented by Callières, nor the Dutch, represented by Dijkveldt, could find a middle ground. Aside from the usual differences of opinion, the Dutch were mentally still at the stage of 'secret talks' while the French wanted them to openly sign a final agreement.

Later in 1694, as the campaign was winding down, the two envoys would meet secretly at Maastricht, but this time it was the French who did not appear serious, their envoy lacking full authority. When the Dutch published a summary of the meeting in an attempt to blackmail them, the French denied it had taken place. The main sticking point was, as always, King Louis' refusal to recognise William of Orange as an equal.

As will become evident when describing the military campaign for this year, the French diplomatic 'flip' had nothing to do with the march of the armies. They were not on the ropes, but neither were they making gains. Rather, it was a case of the Holy Roman Emperor moderating his language and suggesting he might consider sponsoring James II, but more importantly, of Duke Victor of Savoy showing signs of yielding. Though ignorant of the root causes, King William was seriously alarmed by the change in the diplomatic tempo, and began fearing the Coalition might suddenly split along religious lines.

Winter Activities – Nil

For once, the winter season was quiet. The generals attended a series of masques and balls. The cold was severe, and troops had to be detailed to break ice on the canals and fortress moats. The Allies feared the French would launch mass raids, or some surprise assault, but the enemy was too exhausted. All his energies were directed at finding money and food for the soldiers while avoiding bread riots among the civilian population. Moreover, the heavy losses incurred in 1693 meant a lot of regiments were understrength or filled with recruits.

Preparations

The Allies, though tired of war, felt a reprieve coming. They were also exasperated at French intransigence. So, for this year, the Coalition chose a policy of greatly increasing the number of troops they would put into the field, in the hopes of breaking the French military economy. In this they would not succeed, partly because their own propaganda inflated the misery France was in, and partly because the member states each thought they could contribute less than agree and that the other members would take up the slack.

Despite this, the Coalition did field an enormous number of men across all fronts. The English Parliament alone voted an increase in funds for the war, agreeing to pay for 93,635 men, of whom 68,725 would be 'British'. In the end, however, this strategy of attrition would backfire. By 1696 France, having rested for a couple of years and making some sacrifices, would be strong enough for a final push while the Allied war economy – primarily the English economy – slid into chaos.

The campaign in Flanders opened later than usual. Stocks were low and on both sides the soldiers remained in quarters until there was enough to eat for man and beast. The peasantry in many districts had not bothered to till the soil, so that the cavalry had to 'canton' (remain dispersed) until the grass had grown. The French had it worse. The Great Famine was not specific to France, but the Allies could import grain from the Baltic, and she could not.

King Louis openly stated he would go on campaign again, but this was for propaganda effect, implying a great siege was being prepared. Instead, the Dauphin took command, 'under' *maréchal* Luxembourg. Luxembourg's main army mustered at Mons. He departed Versailles to join it on May 27 and the Dauphin followed on May 31. On the other side, King William joined his army on either June 3 (Childs) or June 11 (Lynn).

French troop numbers were lower, too, which was another reason they chose to wage a defensive campaign. Luxembourg had 82 battalions and 164

squadrons, or 69,000 men. Boufflers, supporting both him and de Lorge by operating along the Meuse and Moselle, had 15 battalions and 25 squadrons, or 15,000 men. A flying camp under d'Harcourt at Chiny (in Luxembourg, 88 Km SE of Namur), had 3,600 cavalry. De la Valette guarded the Lines with 8,000 (12 battalions).

[Lynn gives Luxembourg 98 battalions and 190 squadrons, and 20,000 men to Boufflers, but these figures date from before the opening of the campaign and units were no doubt dropped off to form garrisons.]

[Childs argues that the famine had less to do with the low French turnout than the fact they now had more fortresses to garrison.]

The Coalition fielded 82,000 men under William, initially based at Louvain, with 7,000 more at Ghent under the *conde* de Thian, a Spanish major general. Liège was given a garrison of 24,000, it being the expected target. Unless, of course, William could retake Namur, which was his deepest desire.

Though the main armies would go into motion in early June, a first act was performed by the French. Not King Louis' troops, however, but Huguenot forces under Brigadier Belcastel. The Huguenots had three battalions fighting under the Anglo-Dutch colours, plus a cavalry regiment. They had given good service in Ireland. At the end of April, Belcastel's brigade, consisting of his battalions and one other attacked Dixmyude and drove off a body of French troops who were razing the fortifications. This action may have been on Belcastel's own initiative. There was no follow up, because King William was delayed in England and no one would initiate a larger operation on their own authority.

The Campaign

On June 11, Luxembourg launched his campaign. He had by now moved from Mons to the lands between the Sambre and Meuse, but he had no major objective other than to live off the enemy for as long as possible. The presence of the Dauphin meant the campaign had the flavour of a training exercise. On June 15 the French were at Gembloux, where Luxembourg intended to camp until William gave up his *ideé fixe* of retaking Namur.

The Allied army had been consolidated 30 Km away, in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem Abbey and Meldert, a day's march southeast of Louvain (and slightly southeast of the Parck camp). Most of the cavalry still remained in cantonments. When the French concentration behind the Sambre was reported to him, fearing for Liège, on June 13 William ordered a march toward Tirlemont, his camp about a day's march southeast of Louvain, between the villages of Tourrinnes-la-Grosse and Beauvechain on his Right and Sluys (or Ecluse) and Meldert on his Left (a line of about 6 Km, facing south). The Right was covered by the springs of the Dyle and the Left by defiles and sunken roads. Otherwise, the land was open (though there was the thick belt of woodland toward Louvain). The Allies entrenched along their entire front. The cavalry appeared at the camp to be reviewed, but were then sent back to cantonments, all within a day's journey or less.

[This was apparently the site of the French camp against Louvain in 1693. Childs says William marched farther south, to Jandrain-Jandrenouille, very close to his old campground north of the Méhaigne.]

On June 18, Luxembourg broke camp and moved 20 Km closer to Liège, stopping at Boneffe on the Méhaigne. This put him a day's march southeast of William. So, William broke camp on the next day and marched closer to Tirlemont, camping with his Right by Roosbeek (12 Km ESE of Louvain) and his Left between Tirlemont and Linter. This was a march of perhaps 11 Km to the northeast, allowing William to both screen Louvain and monitor the French. HIs Left was protected by the Geet River and his center by Tirlemont, but his Right was open.

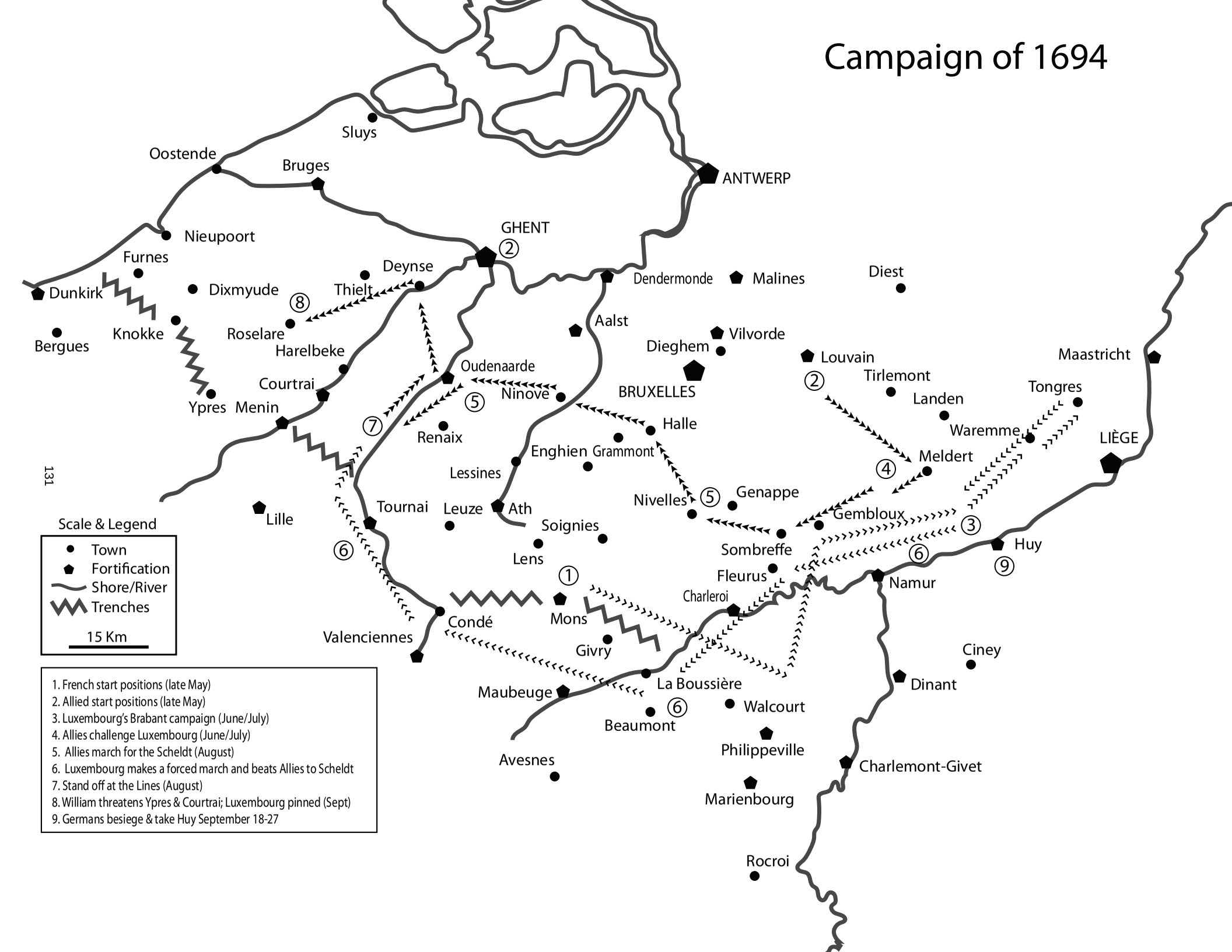
On June 20, Luxembourg marched another 22 Km ENE, nearly to Waremme. This put him about the same distance from Liège, which was ESE from his army, and a little more (25 Km) from the Allied army, on the line of march between it and the town. The River Jecker, which runs by Waremme, lay between the opposing forces.

While Luxembourg was still at Gembloux, Boufflers' 12,000 came down the Meuse from Dinant and crossed the river at Huy. On June 21 he established a flying camp between the Méhaigne and Waremme to cover Luxembourg's communications with Namur. Some portion of this force was sent farther afield, a day's march toward Sint Truiden, to interfere with William's own communications with Liège and to act as a tripwire in case the Allies advanced on the French.

Luxembourg hoped to distract the Allies from Namur by feigning an interest in Liège. Although, it seems that for a short time the *Maréchal* seriously contemplated a siege, or more likely a terror bombardment, either of that place or Maastricht. Certainly, the siege train was brought forward to his camp from Huy. A siege would have been a gamble. In the draught plan, Boufflers and d'Harcourt were supposed to combine and invest the place with 15,600 men against 24,000, meaning Luxembourg would have to follow up by sending a goodly chunk of his own forces. D'Harcourt had already moved as far east as St. Vith, 56 Km southeast of the town.

But William outnumbered Luxembourg, having now 90,000 (88-90 battalions) against 60,000. Liège was garrisoned by another 40 battalions. The new Brandenburg commander, Brigadier von Heiden, was also supporting Liège from his camp across the river at Visé, a day's march downstream. (Visé was the best place to bridge the Meuse between Liège and Maastricht.) Rotating one's perspective, the Brandenburgers could also be said to threaten the French Right.

[D'Auvergne computes 91,000 French for the whole theatre, so the two sides were evenly matched, except that William had


Campaign of 1694
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
GHENT
②
Nieupoort
Furnes
Deynse
Dunkirk
Dixmyude
⑧
Thielt
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Harelbeke
Courtrai
Ypres
Menin
Oudenaarde
⑤
Ninove
⑦
Renaix
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Aalst
Vilvorde
Dieghem
BRUXELLES
Louvain
②
Tirlemont
Maastricht
Tongres
Landen
Waremme
LIÈGE
Halle
Enghien
Grammont
Meldert
④
Lessines
Nivelles
⑤
Genappe
Gembloux
③
Tournai
Leuze
Ath
Soignies
Lille
Sombreffe
⑥
Huy
⑨
Lens
①
Fleurus
Namur
Charleroi
Condé
Mons
Valenciennes
Givry
Ciney
Dinant
La Boussière
Maubeuge
⑥
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
131
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French start positions (late May)
2. Allied start positions (late May)
3. Luxembourg's Brabant campaign (June/July)
4. Allies challenge Luxembourg (June/July)
5. Allies march for the Scheldt (August)
6. Luxembourg makes a forced march and beats Allies to Scheldt
7. Stand off at the Lines (August)
8. William threatens Ypres & Courtrai; Luxembourg pinned (Sept)
9. Germans besiege & take Huy September 18-27

concentrated a greater number at one spot. Under the circumstances this was not as effective a tactic as the manuals say – he had to feed them.]

Menno van Coehoorn, who had spent the winter tinkering endlessly with Liège's defenses (they were completed on June 16) complained to William that he had too many men: "in case of an attack we shall be robbed of all the glory of being attacked" (quoted in Childs, p. 254).

According to d'Auvergne,

'The 11th [June 21 NS] in the Evening, we heard three Discharges of cannon and Small-shot from the Enemy's Camp; which we heard, the next day, had been a Feu de Joye, for the Taking of Palamos, in Catalonia.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1694, p. 22

About this time in his narrative, d'Auvergne also spends some paragraphs describing the French Hussars, 16 of whom deserted to the Allies on June 22. They were from the very first formal hussar unit in the French Army, composed of deserters from Imperial service. Apparently, they expected the pay to be higher under the Sun King, but were disappointed. To d'Auvergne, they were a novel sight in their 'classic Hussar' dress.

An entire month passed in a sweltering heat. Both sides adjusted their positions as local forage ran out or an opportunity for action fleetingly presented itself. King William rode out most days toward the French camp, and spent some time examining the battlefield of Landen, which lay on his route. He strengthened his Left, or open flank, with a detachment of 14 Dutch battalions, and his Right, toward Roosbeek, with 7 English battalions. He also put 300 men into Tirlemont as an advanced post.

Ironically, both William and Luxembourg were happy to be tying each other down in Brabant. William thought he was preventing the French from laying siege to Liège and that he would soon starve them out, and Luxembourg thought he was preventing the Allies from messing about in Flanders, and that he would soon starve them out.

On June 25, 4-500 Swiss deserters from a Protestant regiment showed up at Maastricht. Their commander, Stuppa, had died of wounds received and been replaced by a Catholic, who did away with the regimental minister and appointed a priest. The Allies had similar troubles. They were plagued by friars and priests who spied and tried to talk the Catholics, particularly the Irish, into deserting. Surprisingly, the Catholic Duke Max was keen to impose the death penalty, whereas the Protestant William pardoned some of the agitators.

Official reinforcements also arrived, in dribs and drabs, from the Rhineland, or Holland, or Flanders. Duke Max had sent to Bavaria for extra men; these duly appeared and for a few days he commanded a small corps of 8 squadrons and 5 battalions at Louvain. He joined William on July 4.

On June 26, Boufflers crossed the Jecker and approached the Allied camp, as did some 40 Swiss deserters. Boufflers withdrew but the latter kept on walking. It became a daily occurrence for William's army to take in deserters or large numbers of prisoners – the highest at one time appears to be 250, and d'Auvergne pins the regional total at 5,000 men – because of the food shortages on the French side and a lack of pay. Many men were taken as they wandered the countryside looking for food, or something to steal, or even working at odd jobs. The prisoners were usually redeemed quickly, because they were a drain on the captor's commissariat. 1694 was a peak year for French desertions, in every theatre.

The next day (June 27), the Allies formally dug in. Their cavalry was still in cantonments, and Boufflers' proximity made them realise they were vulnerable to attack. Not until June 29 did their first foraging take place. It only brought in enough to feed the horses for a single day, so back they went 'to grass'. Unable to concentrate his cavalry, William was unable to make any offensive moves.

Prisoners continued to be taken. A small body of Danish horse captured 56 of them, including officers. On July 1 another party brought in 80 prisoners, including members of the *Gend'armes*. Since the captors were from the infantry detachment on William's left flank, perhaps the aristos were having a joy ride around the neighbourhood.

'The 27th [July 7] the Enemy made a great Forage hard by Leauwe [Zoutleeuw, about 5 Km east of the Allied position, on their left front]; and because they were to come very near our Camp, and to forage just under the Garrison of Leauwe, they had a strong detachment of Twelve hundred Horse, and Six Pieces of Cannon, which the Dauphin Commanded himself in Person, to take this Opportunity of viewing the Posts between the two Armies and the Field of Battle where we fought last Year at Landen [Neerwinden]. The Enemy foraged so near the Garrison of Leauwe, this Day, that they fired Cannon upon them, to oblige them to retire; but Seventy of their Maroders[sic] were made Prisoners by a Detachment of ours upon the Left.'

D'Auvergne, Vol. 1694, p. 28

The French also rode as far as Maastricht and foraged there. The day after this incident the French fired another *feu de joie,* for the capture of the Catalan town of Girona.

On July 11 Luxembourg advanced a short day's march northeast, putting his Right on Tongres and his Left on a village called Fies (Fize-le-Marsal), behind the Jaar River. The main reason was forage, but it also permitted him to threaten Liège while covering Huy. Intelligence suggested the Allies were planning to retake that place. The Jaar runs northeast here, bending east at Tongres to join the Meuse at Maastricht. If the *Maréchal* had really been in a position to lay siege, he had the Jaar at his back and both

Maastricht and Liège open before him, only a day's march away, with a line of communication back to Huy that could be traversed in 2 days by a train or in 1 day of hard marching by troops.

William had decided to break camp the day before. Prince Vaudémont, his trusted right hand, arrived that day after convalescing in Italy. He had missed last year's campaign. Orders were issued, but it took a few days to disentangle the army from its entrenchments. On July 22 the detachments were recalled and a strong body of cavalry was sent to observe the French. The bulk of the army decamped, in 8 columns (later 6), at 1am on July 23.

They marched, arrayed for battle, 20 Km south to Mont-Saint-André, using the Great and Little Geet rivers to cover the flanks. The Méhaigne was reached about evening. This put William equidistant to Huy and Namur. Luxembourg was forced in response to cross the Jaar and march a similar distance to Vinalmont, 5 Km north of Huy.

The two armies dug in, about 25-30 Km apart. William, now accompanied by his cavalry, extended his camp southeast toward Ramillies – the value of that location, by the by, is that there are heights which command the road to Huy – anchoring his Right on the Méhaigne at Taviers and Harlue (only a couple of Km upstream from Boneffe), and his Left in front of Marilles and Molembais. This gave the army a frontage of perhaps 11 Km, facing southeast along the Méhaigne. Mont-Saint-André is some distance in the rear, but the camp is called by this name because King William had his HQ there. 5 cannon were allotted to each brigade, but the bulk of the artillery was concentrated about Ramillies. After a few days in this position, detachments of foot were pushed out to cover the flanks, as had been done at Tirlemont.

[D'Auvergne computes the army's strength at 176 squadrons of horse, 54 of dragoons, and 95 battalions, or a total of 31,800 cavalry and 51,000 infantry. This was the army's peak strength this year, but of course they still had 7,000 or more in Flanders and another 50 battalions or so along the Meuse. The estimate for the French was 91,320 men.]

Charles Henri, Prince de Commercy, Prince de Vaudémont (1649-1723)

Vaudémont, born at Brussels, was one of the innumerable brood of the House of Lorraine. Students of this war have to be careful to distinguish him from his son, Charles Thomas, who was an Imperial field marshal on the Italian front during the War of the Spanish Succession, but whose name also appears in accounts of the Nine Years War in Italy. Both are styled princes of Vaudémont and both are alternatively styled princes of Commercy; the Imperial regiment of that name fought in Italy as well.

Charles Henri was the step-son of Charles IV, Duke of Lorraine, by the latter's second wife. He was also the duke's only surviving son. There were inheritance issues because the Church did not recognise the second marriage as canonical. So the dukedom went to an uncle. Charles Henri's wife was the daughter of the Duke de Elbeuf. The Elbeuf family had been intertwined with that of the Lorraine-Vaudémonts since Medieval times. The duke was a fellow officer in King William's army.

The marriage alliance highlights why they were on the 'wrong' side. Elbeuf was a member of the Guise branch of the Lorraine family, which had made a play to rule France – the House of Guise claimed the throne as heirs of Charlemagne – and Vaudémont's father had backed the *duc* d'Orléans during the Fronde. Moreover, d'Orléans secretly married Vaudémont's aunt. Thus, they were undesirables in France, despite the fact that Charles Henri was attached to the household of the Grand Dauphin!

During the Nine Years War, Vaudémont was what might be styled the 'chief executive officer' of the Spanish Army in the Netherlands, and a trusted subordinate of King William. After the war he became Governor of Milán (1698), remaining in his post under the Bourbons, and then under the Austrian Habsburgs.

Luxembourg's camp faced northwest, with Waleffe on his Right and a village on the Méhaigne called Fenmale (probably Fumal). There are several Waleffe hamlets in the vicinity; the one closest to the Jaar is meant, so the frontage was about 6-7 Km. It may be that Boufflers' flying camp was still operating farther north. The French also fortified their position, and switched their supply lines from the Meuse to the roads on the right bank. D'Harcourt was recalled from the far side of Liège to protect the convoys, stationing himself just east of Huy on the right bank.

(Interestingly, d'Auvergne says the number of French deserters dwindled as the season progressed because the French camp was so protected by rivers that it was hard to get away without being spotted.)

The intervening terrain was perfect for cavalry duels, so both sides remained on their toes. But, nothing happened. William was unsure of the French intentions and Luxembourg thought at any moment he would be required to send troops to fend off a naval descent (as already recounted there had been one at Brest) or to reinforce Lorge's Rhine offensive.

A portion of the garrison of Liège established a camp on the left bank of the Meuse, to hinder French foraging – not that there was much left to glean. It was opposed by a flying camp of cavalry. The French garrison of Namur did the same on the Plain of Fleurus.

The hot summer days dragged on. On July 27, King William led a day-long reconnaissance of 4,000 cavalry down the Méhaigne toward the French. On July 28 both sides foraged in front of their camps and the respective mounted escorts came quite close to each other, but without bringing on a battle, though there was some skirmishing. Mostly, however, the Allies foraged west, toward the Sambre.

Both sides conducted formal raids. From the French camp, the *comte* de Bonneval obtained permission to keep his men busy by ambushing enemy convoys. Two such raids stand out. In July, Bonneval heard rumours of a gold convoy coming from Brussels. He and 200 men hid in the standing corn only 2,000 metres from the Allied camp. Most of the convoy arrived safely, under heavy escort, but a straggling pair of wagons were snapped up. One contained 95,000 livres and the other liquor (which Bonneval, knowing his men, promptly smashed).

The other raid was on a small town near Louvain, garrisoned by 500 men. Bonneval and 400 men, with a small corps of drummers, surrounded the town in the nighttime, then had the drummers, stationed on each road leading into the town, beat their regimental marches. The garrison surrendered and the French extorted 40,000 livres from the inhabitants, plus a large quantity of hams.

On the other side, a party of French marauders lying in ambush were sold out by a local peasant and either killed or captured, while down in Flanders, the Spanish general, Thian, engaged in horse stealing. On July 31 one of his raids, with 3,000 horse and 1,000 foot, marched south from Ath, broke through the Lines near Saint-Ghislain, 9.5 Km west of Mons, pillaged the town, whose garrison ran away, and returned safely.

Around mid August, both William and Luxembourg were becoming seriously concerned about their supplies. Already, the *Maréchal* had sent most of his cavalry south of the Sambre to forage. William's army had eaten up the country from Brussels all the way to Liège. Obviously, they were going to shift the venue to Flanders, but there were strategic concerns for both. Luxembourg needed to make sure Huy was not attacked, and William wanted Liège to be safe.

Gambling that the 'deserts' around the town would prevent a siege, he decided to move first, rather than trying to wait out the French in front of Huy. Luxembourg would have to follow him. This would allow the garrison of Liège to rejoin the main army as soon as Luxembourg moved away. The French had long since sent their heavy baggage into Huy, to avoid it being picked off by a column from Liège. This meant Luxembourg's line of march west was expected to be along the right bank of the Meuse; he would have to make two crossings of the Meuse and one of the Sambre if he planned to chase the Allies, giving William a one- or two-day lead on the French.

The latter predicted William's departure and sent their heavy baggage to Namur on August 15, when the Allies sent theirs to Louvain. At the sound of the starter's gun, both armies began marching; on August 17 the artillery trains were sent ahead; on August 18 the troops began to move. William began with a forced march 26 Km southwest to Sombreffe. But, he had to spend a day there recovering.

Luxembourg did not cross the Meuse to follow his baggage. Instead, he followed in William's wake, his train setting up bridges in advance. About 4pm on August 18 he crossed the Méhaigne at Fallais, immediately in front of his camp. The French bumped into the Allies just west of Namur but did not seek a fight. Instead, on August 20/21 Luxembourg crossed the Sambre and divided his army up into 10 separate corps, each following a different road. 3,000 dragoons under Villeroi were dispatched directly to the Lines by way of Charleroi.

The Allies, still in the lead, marched steadily west, to Nivelles (August 20), Soignies (August 21) and Cambron-Saint-Vincent (August 22). Here, they were a day's march east of Ath, which they passed the next day. *Generaal-majoor* Fagel led a separate column by Lessines to Oudenaarde, while the train was sent by a third road north of the main line of march.

On the march to Nivelles, a French incendiary was discovered among the ammunition wagons; he was later executed, being burnt alive after having his hand cut off. French raiders also damaged the pontoon train.

Against all predictions, the leading French cavalry reached Tournai on August 23, while William was crossing the Dender. Luxembourg had to traverse four-third's the same distance as the enemy, cross four major rivers (Méhaigne, Sambre twice, and Scarpe), and march through the western hills of the Ardennes, but his men managed to keep up, dumping their baggage and even their knapsacks. As many as 3,000 men and horses may have been lost along the way. Luxembourg arranged for brandy to be dispensed at regular intervals along the route and for wagons to follow along, picking up those who fell out. This was accounted a great feat of manoeuvre which foiled William's schemes. (Now, it is merely a feature of Basic Training, except for the brandy, unfortunately.)

[D'Auvergne downplays the march, saying it ruined the French cavalry, which had to be permanently reformed from 40 men per troop to 25, but that is more likely to have been due to the general attrition of war. He also avoids talking about the shock the Allied High Command experienced when they realised they had just been out-marched.]

At the Dender, William, probably still unaware of the proximity of the French, sent 20,000 men under Duke Max to launch a surprise attack on de la Valette in the Lines. This was a hasty operation, concocted only a day or two before.

Duke Max's vanguard, 5,000 men under Tettau, and composed of 60 men from each battalion, was tasked with bridging the Scheldt at Outrijve, 16 Km upstream from Oudenaarde and about 7 Km from the Lines. Tettau was upset to find the French waiting for him in great strength. The cannon announcing Villeroi's arrival had been heard but de la Valette had not only been reinforced by Villeroi's 3,000 dragoons but by the battalions of the Guard, who had force-marched to Condé and ridden barges down the Scheldt, and by a train of artillery based at Tournai. This gave de la Valette 15 battalions, 9 regiments of horse, 2 regiments of dragoons, and 2 batteries-worth of cannon.

Tettau deployed 15 guns of his own in 3 batteries, which he arranged to fire across the Scheldt, inflicting some damage on the French, who were still digging in.

Meanwhile, the remaining forces, 7 brigades of horse under Württemberg, 2 brigades of foot under Fagel, and some of the Ghent garrison under Thian, crossed the Scheldt at Oudenaarde and marched upstream to take Villeroi in flank.

[Out of Thian's command, 1 Brunswick battalion was also sent to Deynze and 3 Spanish tercios to Bruges.]

Luxembourg, hearing (falsely) that Duke Max had already crossed the river, drove his men even harder and got to Tournai by August 24, the day that William reached the Scheldt crossing. The two armies were not far apart. D'Auvergne says William's Left was only 6.4 Km from Tournai. They heard the triple-salute at that town as the Dauphin passed through.

William's army arrived at the Scheldt about noon, but it was decided circumstances were too risky to cross that day. The weather by now had turned to rain. He was most displeased to find the bridges not yet up and even more displeased when Tettau pointed out Villeroi's encampments on the far side and the massing columns of Luxembourg's main body coming down the left bank. By evening the entire French army was poised to oppose William's crossing.

(Childs notes the Allies' failure was entirely their fault. The French Army has always been famous for its rapidity. They merely ass-U-me'd Luxembourg could not possibly pass them on a longer route.)

The *Maréchal* made no attempt to flank William on the right bank. It was more important to unify his own command, and, of course, his men were exhausted. They needed the cover of the river.

Of course, William was alway glad of the chance of a battle, but now was not the time. He pulled back to Cordes, 10 Km southeast, intending to cross the Scheldt below Oudenaarde. However, the following morning he advanced again, to Berchem, 6.5 Km downstream from Outrijve and cannonaded Luxembourg's Left in an act of bravado. The French were unimpressed.

Only then did William move north to Oudenaarde. For two days the only action was the firing of the French guns against the Allied Left, particularly against Tettau. It pinned Tettau all through August 25, but few casualties were suffered. The French daily extended their lines downstream, emplacing new batteries. For this they did not require their whole army, some of which was sent to Courtrai and the rest employed in observing Württemberg.

He, meanwhile, had prudently not advanced against Villeroi, but occupied the hamlets of Moregem and Petergem aan de Schelde in the vicinity of Oudenaarde. The place was deemed 'good ground' and covered the Allied Right, but a French detachment of their Left arrived at the same time and both sides withdrew rather than bring on a general engagement.

On August 27, William crossed the river in force, camping at Kruishoutem, 8 Km to the northwest of Oudenaarde. 4 brigades of foot and the Scots Guards were ordered to reinforce Württemberg and occupy the Petergem high ground.

This envelopment caused Luxembourg to retire to Courtrai. He crossed the Lys, camping between the town and Moorsele, on a front of 6-7 Km. On the Scheldt end of the Lines were 5,000 men under de la Valette; on his Left, 12,000 more under Villeroi occupying the Lines between the Lys and Ypres. Beyond them were 15,000 men in Furnes.

(The Scheldt terrain was a tactical challenge. Above Oudenaarde it formed a lake, and was funnelled by a narrow channel through the town. This made the place unusually difficult to besiege. Farther upstream, as far as Tournai, the banks were swampy and crossing points were minimal. William had just tried them all.)

William remained camped in front of Oudenaarde, between the Scheldt and Lys, expecting the arrival of 8,000 men (12 battalions and some dragoons) under Coehoorn from Liège. These were at Vilvorde on August 25, reaching Ghent on August 31.

With Luxembourg in an unassailable position, William gave up on the idea of seeking battle. He wondered, however, whether Luxembourg would be willing to make another race to the other end of the front. On September 1, both the Lys and Scheldt were bridged, as an aid to foraging, but also to confuse the French. On September 4, the Allied Right moved to the Lys. The next day the entire army crossed the river at Machelen and Deynze (4 Km upstream from Deynze), except for the Brandenburg cavalry, which was ordered to march to the Meuse. This might signify William's true intentions, but the Brandenburgers always had to break off operations early, so they could return to the Rhineland before winter.

On September 8 William marched 30 Km west to Roeslare. The place is worth describing as it was used as a camp in 1695. D'Auvergne says it was idyllic (at least for a military camp), situated at the springs of the Mandel River, which flows into the Lys near Deynze. The countryside was flat and well-wooded, except on the Allied Right, where there was high ground called the Hill of Hooghleede. The fields were bounded by high hedges and rows of trees. Apparently Roeslare lay on the ultimate frontier of French influence, and was a customs post. It was also owned by the Elector Palatine of the Rhine, as a tenant of the French king. Because of the woods and bocage, the Allies only needed to entrench the heights.

The Allied Foot occupied the Roeslare position, while the Horse occupied Wouterghem (Wontergem), 22 Km to the east, just outside Deynze. William gave orders for the troops to erect huts, signifying his intention to stick around. Some of the Artillery was sent away to Malines. The rest would be stored at Ghent over the winter.

On September 19 the Allies occupied Dixmyude. This place, 20 Km northwest of Roeslare, and about the same distance from Nieupoort, could be used to hinder French raids towards the Bruges-Ghent Canal. For some reason, the French chose to abandon it after the Allied raid in April, and indeed had been demolishing the fortifications when the raid took place. The Allies garrisoned it with 2,000 men under Brigadier O'Farrell.

September 25: a Royal Navy squadron under Vice Admiral Sir Cloudsly Shovell bombarded Dunkirk, but could not come close enough inshore to inflict any hits.

Barring some minor adjustments to his position to deny forage to the enemy, and a detachment sent to reinforce Brussels, The army under William's personal command was done with campaigning, but across the front as a whole, the Allies had more men than the French. With the excess, with Luxembourg pinned, they now laid siege to Huy.

Huy, the Sequel - September 18-27 1694

Huy's value should be clear to the read by now. It facilitated a siege of Liège, or conversely prevented one. And, it was a key crossing point on the Meuse. But, there were political reasons, too, which developed over the course of the year.

Huy belonged to the Prince-Bishopric of Liège. If the reader remembers, at the start of the war it had taken a certain amount of intimidation to persuade the Prince-Bishop to join the Coalition rather than the French. That man was now dead, and elections were in the offing.

As an ecclesiastical state, Liège had a Chapter who decided such matters, subject to approval by the Pope (and at least nominally by the Emperor), and the contest between potential successors was fierce. The French were sponsoring the Cardinal of Bouillon, an out-and-out puppet of King Louis. He was not the popular choice (naturally) but if the French captured Liège he was a shoe in.

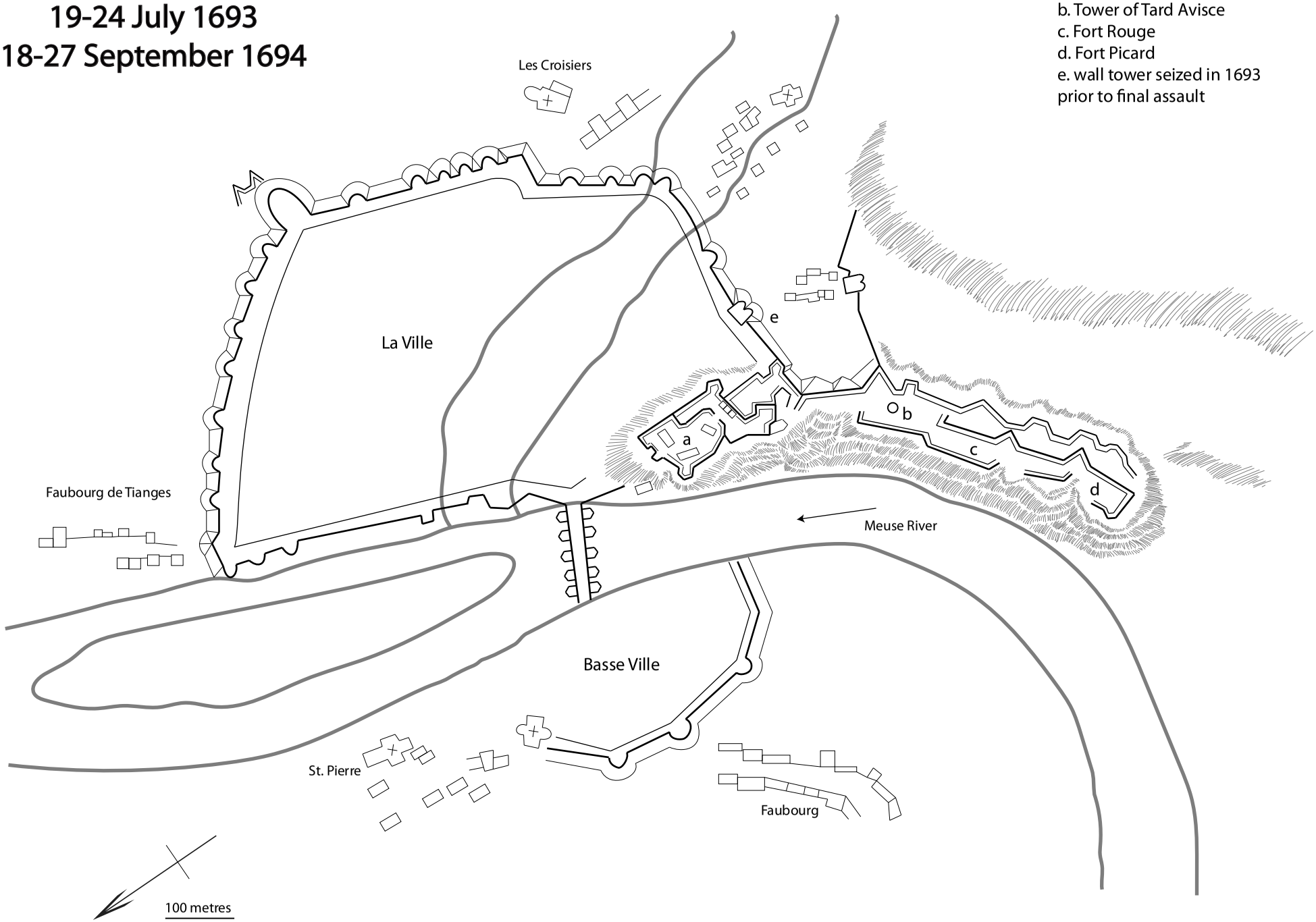
The alternative candidate was Joseph Clement of Bavaria. This man was the brother of William's key ally, Duke Max. He was also the Pope's favourite, and the current Pope was anti-French. Nevertheless, the man was dangerous.

What was the problem? Well, remember Duke Max was Governor General of the Spanish Netherlands. So? Duke Max and his brother together would create a Wittelsbach bloc between Holland and France – and the same family already ran Cologne. So what? Well, King Louis, who always had a second string about him, wile backing Bouillon was also offering to recognise Duke Max as legitimate ruler of an independent Spanish Netherlands after the ailing Carlos II of Spain died. Oh. Traditionally, the Wittelsbachs were pro-French. Their lands in Bavaria were also vulnerable to French attack, and a Wittelsbach 'greater Belgium' would be even more so. Oh dear. The phrase the reader is looking for is 'separate peace'.

Taking Huy would make it harder for the French to take Liège and install Bouillon by force, but taking Huy would also steal one of the Sun King's bargaining chips in his negotiations with Joseph Clement and put it in William's pocket.

The Allies' investment of Huy began on September 17. William had dispatched the Duke of Holstein-Plön, *sans* troops, to rendezvous with Tilly, who left Liège with his native troops, augmented by part of the Maastricht garrison. Preparations were well in hand, with a large

Sieges of Huy
19-24 July 1693
18-27 September 1694



siege train assembled at Maastricht. The rendezvous took place on September 16, near Huy. The Brandenburg Horse, under *generalleutnant* de Witz, also joined, as did Coehoorn's detachment. In all, Holstein-Plön commanded 18 battalions of Dutch, 18 battalions of Brandenburgers, 4 battalions of Liègeois, and 38 squadrons (all Brandenburgers).

Trenches were opened on the night of September 18/19. Coehoorn masterminded the siege, with the Brandenburg major general, Schwerin, to assist him while Tilly maintained the investment. The siege lines were established on the right bank, east of the Citadel.

Huy's situation has already been described (p.88). Since the first siege the French had completed Fort Picard and added a second redoubt, Fort Rouge, midway along the ridge west of the Citadel. Rouge was better sited and completely dominated the Citadel and was on higher ground than Picard.

The artillery arrived on September 19. It consisted of 55 heavy cannon and 28 mortars, plus field guns. On the morning of September 22, 5 batteries were unmasked. They quickly suppressed the enemy cannon, which were few in number and relatively light.

Fort Picard and Fort Rouge were both breached on September 23 and carried by the Brandenburgers, who began their assault about 4pm. It took three tries to break into Fort Rouge.

70 of the 300-man garrison escaped to the Citadel. The rest were killed. Their commander sprung a mine but it did no damage. In the pursuit, a pair of towers, St. Leonard (which featured in the previous siege) and another, which covered the approach to the Citadel along the ridge, were seized. Only 9 or 10 of the attacking troops were killed and a few more wounded.

By September 25 Allied guns had been emplaced at Fort Rouge, the last ditch filled with fascines, and the Citadel breached. Coehoorn was an aggressive engineer. Holstein-Plön summoned the Commandant to surrender about 11pm. The latter refused, though he had not constructed the usual retrenchment behind the breach. The next day the breach was widened, but not sufficiently for an assault. However, at 1pm on September 27, the Commandant had the chamade beaten. This took the besiegers by surprise because in spite of their summons, the breach was proving difficult to make practicable (the ascent was very steep) and the French could have held out for several days more.

The *comte* de Guiscard had been the Governor. He decided to abandon the town immediately, and after signing a capitulation for it on the day the investment began, paid his men and departed, leaving the defence of the Citadel to a man named de Regnac. Having only 1,400 men (regiments *Ponthieu* and *Angoumois*, each of 1 battalion, plus a free company of dragoons) and no reinforcements, and facing 23,800 Allied troops, there was not much he could do.

Regnac was accorded honours of war, though denied the right to take away a pair of brass cannon. The garrison marched out at 9am on the morning of September 28.

Boufflers' forces in the Ardennes, which might have supported Regnac, had left some time ago on a mini-offensive through the Eiffel in aid of Lorge. Versailles had hoped this might also weaken William's army, but although the local German commanders were in difficulties and called for help, none came to them. In an uncanny repeat of the French siege, Regnac gave up the town on the left bank immediately and capitulated after holding the citadel for five days, on September 27. His command had been reduced to 350 men. 7-800 bombs and 25,000 cannonballs were expended by the Allies.

In reprisal, a French raiding party of 500 men from the Mons garrison captured Tilly (September 29) as he was on his way west, taking him in his bed. He was ransomed, but embarrassed.

On September 30 King William received the glad tidings (of the capture of Huy, that is) and made his departure for Holland and England. His army remained at Roeslare until October 18, then began to break up for winter quarters. The camp at Roeslare proved ideal, with lots of construction material to hand and many vegetable farms in the surrounding country, although the men probably got tired of turnip soup. Unfortunately, the wooded surroundings allowed the French to harass their convoys. Apparently the sutlers had the bad habit of traveling with the foraging parties so that the trains were too long to protect adequately; wagon losses were heavy.

Luxembourg remained immobile throughout the Huy operation, and after. Mostly, as Childs points out, this was because he had no choice. The French did not have enough men to cover French Flanders and save Huy. However, the presence of the Dauphin may have limited his options. The Dauphin left the army on September 18 (the salutes were heard by the Allies as he passed through Courtrai and were even heard when he passed through Lille) and gave his officers leave to do the same.

However, the French remained in the field until after the Allies went in to quarters. Luxembourg made a reconnaissance in force against Roeslare on October 19, but no attack was forthcoming. His army broke up around October 24/25.

Death of a Titan

This was the *duc* de Luxembourg's last campaign. On January 14, 1695, he died suddenly, after a short illness, at the age of 67. In the language of the day, he died of 'a pleurisy', a lung infection. Accounted an immoral man in an age when immorality was *de rigour*, he seems to have made a good end. The priest who attended him said, "I have not lived his life, but I would wish to die his death".

Born at Paris in 1628, François Henri de Montmorency-Bouteville, *duc* de Piney-Luxembourg, was raised by his aunt, the Princess de Condé. His father had been executed for duelling before he was born. Montmorency-Bouteville was thus raised and educated alongside the princess' son, the *duc* d'Engien, known to history as the Great Condé. They fought together in the wars of the Fronde, even going into exile together.

After being pardoned by the Crown in 1659 (for being on the wrong side in the wars) Montmorency-Bouteville was married, with Condé's help, to the richest heiress in France, Madeleine-Charlotte de Luxembourg. From this point forward he was a peer of France and styled himself Luxembourg.

(It should be noted that the title belonged to his family by ancient right. It had originally belonged to Luxembourg's uncle, then passed to a daughter of that man, and then to her son. But the latter had given up the title, and when he did so, his mother transferred it to a daughter by a second marriage. This was Madeleine. The significance of the inclusion of 'Piney' in the title was that it had precedence over most of the French peerage. But, that claim was disputed.)

Of his military service, which lasted for 51 years, it is worth quoting Childs at length:

'This great solider, trained under Turenne and Condé, was a master of positional warfare. With uncanny precision he was able to put himself in the shoes of the opposition and work out the likely counters to his own manoeuvres… Luxembourg was a wily opponent and William failed to get the better of him in four campaigns. Perhaps his most important attribute was his ability to dig himself out of a hole. No other French marshal during the Nine Years War came within shooting distance of Luxembourg's skill, with the possible exception of Nicholas Catinat.' (Childs, p. 262.)

Saint-Simon wrote of him:

'…in his final calculations no one was ever more conscientious than M. de Luxembourg; no one more brilliant, prudent and far-sighted in the face of the enemy or in battle. He had daring and confidence, and at the same time a cool-headedness that allowed him to observe and foresee in the midst of the fiercest cannonade, in dangerously critical moments. That was when he was truly great. At all other times he was idleness itself; no exercise, except where absolutely necessary; gambling; conversing with intimates; every night a small supper party; nearly always with the same company, and, if they happened to be near a town, an agreeable mingling of the sexes.'

William of Orange: "I can never beat that cursed humpback."

Luxembourg: "How does he know I have a hump? He has never seen my back."

[François Henri de Montmorency-Bouteville, duc de Piney-Luxembourg]

1695 The Great Siege

The issue of the last Year's Campagne left the Scale of War beginning to incline favourably on our side; for though the Enemies at first seem'd to command the Field, and that their Army domineer'd to the very Gates of Maesticht, yet at last they had much ado to cover the Conquer'd Flanders from an Invasion, and were forced to leave Huy open to a Siege, and suffer it quietly to fall in our hands…

The History of the Campaign in Flanders: for the Year, 1695.

Luxembourg's replacement was *maréchal* François de Neufville, *duc* de Villeroi. He was brave, and worked well under supervision, but he was not the *duc* de Luxembourg. Most of the heavy lifting on the French side would be done by *maréchal* Boufflers, who was also not a Luxembourg, but infinitely better than Villeroi. Faced by

these lesser lights, King William would at last enjoy a real victory, but it would still be hard work.

(Acknowledging the great role played by French espionage and information gathering, it would be interesting to learn how much of this was based on personal relationships and how much on interpretation. That is, did Villeroi have access to the same resources as Luxembourg but fail to use them correctly, or did some of the networks vanish with Luxembourg's life?)

The Wider War

Success in 1695 went to the Coalition. What success there was, that is. This was a year of general stalemate as all the Powers struggled to maintain their armies in the field.

In Catalonia, endemic partisan warfare flared up and seriously eroded the French position. The Spanish military made a supreme effort, hiring regiments from Germany and Italy and appointing Gastañaga, who was not really a bad general, to command. Noaïlles fell ill and had to be replaced by the *duc* de Vendôme, who was actually a better general than him in some respects. The Spanish found it impossible to make good their losses, despite naval aid from England, but the general pressure of their efforts caused the French to retrench.

On the Rhine, nothing of consequence occurred. The Allied war effort was concentrated in the Northeast, and the French fielded a relatively small army here. *Maréchal* Lorge crossed the Rhine and squared off against German forces around Heilbronn. Here, too, the original French commander fell ill and had to be replaced, temporarily in this case, by *maréchal* Joyeuse. By the middle of the summer, having sent reinforcements to Villeroi, Joyeuse had been pressured by the Germans into retiring over the Rhine and calling out the militia to defend Alsace. But the Germans did not invade.

Italy was similarly quiet. Negotiations with Duke Victor were gradually reaching a tipping point. When the French agreed to hand over their outpost of Casale after a mock siege, Savoy's allegiance was gained and it would only be a matter of time before the Duke signed a separate peace, ruining the Coalition.

[Casale lay far down the Po River, on the other side of Duke Victor's domains. The fortress was designed to threaten the Spanish in the Milánese. Savoy, a satellite of France, was supposed to give the French 'right of transit' from their other fortress, Pinerolo (Pignerol), to Casale. Pinerolo itself lay at the tip of a corridor of French territory running through the Maritime Alps, Once at Casale, the French could launch a short-range strike on Milán. The whole transit rights issue was one of the main causes of Duke Victor joining the Coalition.]

At sea, the English repeated their tactic of sending naval forces to the Mediterranean. It was a relatively cheap way to boost Spanish morale, although it was also intended to gain recognition from the Italian States for the Prince of Orange's claims to the English throne. They also continued to attack French ports along The Channel coast, including Gravelines, Dunkirk, and Calais. The French, no longer able to maintain a battle fleet, came to the conclusion they did not really need one. They had enough land forces to repel any coastal descent, their colonies were not vital to the general Economy, and commerce raiding earned income for the Exchequer.

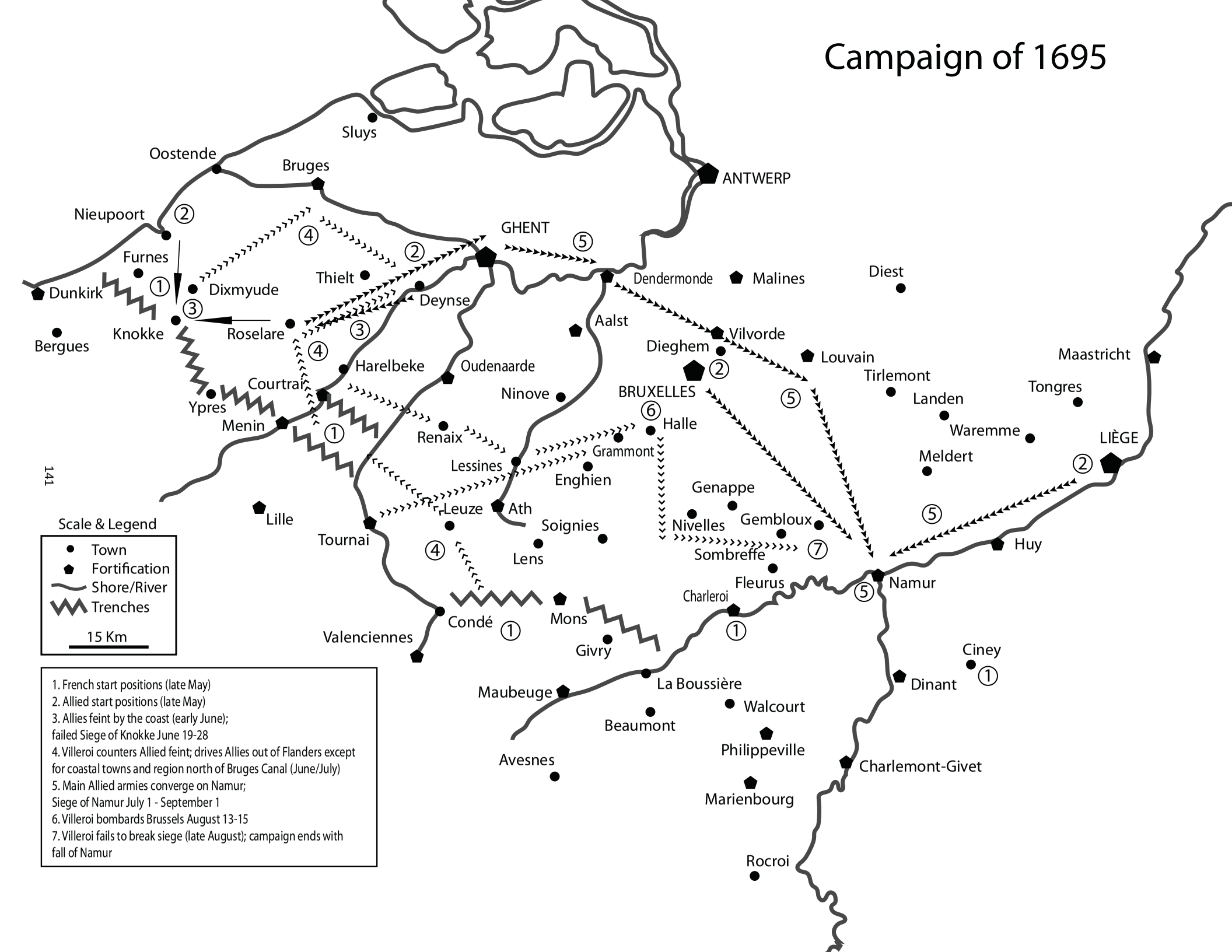
Diplomacy

The war had dragged on long enough, but both sides still hoped the other would concede first. All reports out of France spoke of abject misery among the common people, and a tottering economy. It was clear there would be no offensives this year. But the Allies were only lagging in misery; King Louis believed if he could just hold on, the Coalition would come apart at the seams. England was on the brink of her own financial crisis, as was Holland. Most especially, Duke Victor of Savoy, and even the Emperor, were leaning his way.

Tellingly, when official negotiations between France and Holland resumed in June of this year, Dijveldt, a hardliner, was given a 'moderate' assistant, Jacob Boreel, Burgomaster of Amsterdam. Callières remained the envoy for the French. The latter were at last talking William's language; they agreed to recognise him as King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, just as soon as peace was concluded (but not before). They were also prepared to make a separate peace with Holland and England – the Maritime Powers – on the understanding that William and his henchmen would attempt to persuade the other members of the Coalition to come in on a general peace treaty. This meant William need not break faith with the alliance he had created, since if he failed to persuade his partners he would be at liberty to resume the war.

Callières, however, was undercut, deliberately, by his own boss. While he was making all these wonderful offers, a pair of bishops made speeches in praise of James II and his queen, for which they were not punished. Part of a dispatch in which Louis revealed he was still abetting James II was leaked to the enemy. Also, when on September 5 *maréchal* Boufflers surrendered Namur to the besieging army, he did so to the Elector of Bavaria, as Governor General of the Spanish Netherlands and a potential future French ally, rather than to William. Admittedly, William was not actually at the siege, being with the covering army, but… Either William was a King in French eyes or he was not. A military solution was still an option, for both sides. And so, the war would drag on.

King Louis' sabotaging of Callières' negotiations was not as stupid as it might appear. That leak was deliberate. Other information was also leaked, specifically the bilateral negotiations with the Dutch, to Duke Victor down in Piedmont. Duke Victor, already wavering, became convinced William was arranging a separate peace without him. Very soon, he would give 'king' William cause to regret such an action.


Campaign of 1695
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Furnes
Thielt
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Dunkirk
Dixmyude
Deynse
Aalst
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Vilvorde
Dieghem
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
Tirlemont
Courtrai
Ninove
BRUXELLES
Tongres
Landen
Ypres
Halle
Waremme
Menin
Renaix
Grammont
LIÈGE
Meldert
Lessines
Enghien
Genappe
Lille
Leuze
Ath
Nivelles
Gembloux
Soignies
Tournai
Sombreffe
Huy
Lens
Fleurus
Namur
Charleroi
Condé
Mons
Valenciennes
Givry
Ciney
Dinant
La Boussière
Maubeuge
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Avesnes
Charlemont-Givet
Marienbourg
Rocroi
141
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French start positions (late May)
2. Allied start positions (late May)
3. Allies feint by the coast (early June);
failed Siege of Knokke June 19-28
4. Villeroi counters Allied feint; drives Allies out of Flanders except
for coastal towns and region north of Bruges Canal (June/July)
5. Main Allied armies converge on Namur;
Siege of Namur July 1 - September 1
6. Villeroi bombards Brussels August 13-15
7. Villeroi fails to break siege (late August); campaign ends with
fall of Namur

(The French could be too clever for their own good, but sometimes the implacable logic in their diplomatic dances is frightening.)

Flanders

France opened the campaign earlier than usual, but not with manoeuvre or raids, but the reverse. In accordance with King Louis' current defensive mindset, *maréchal* Boufflers, whose off-season job was Governor of Lille, was told off to improve the Lines of the Scheldt. The existing Lines, augmented by the Sambre, and the Meuse above Namur, now protected France's northeastern frontier almost completely.

From Namur, the French controlled the Meuse and Sambre all the way to their sources. All the places suitable for an army to cross were covered by fortifications. At Thuin on the Sambre, 14 Km southeast of Charleroi, the earthworks began, running 27 Km northwest to Mons. Here, the lines followed the Haine River to Condé (26 Km west in a straight line), then down the Scheldt to Pont d'Espierres and across to the Lys 18 Km northwest at Menin. From there the lines went back up the Lys to a spot opposite Ypres. Here there was a gap. From Ypres, the lines continued to Dunkirk following the canal network, by way of Fort Knokke, and Furnes.

Behind the Lines, the French had built Royal Ways, identical in function to Roman roads, running straight as a die from point to point, regardless of property rights. They were wide enough for a squadron to ride abreast. This allowed the French to cut the number of troops actually in the Lines, since they could shift their forces to meet a threat faster than it would develop.

However, there were vulnerabilities. Specifically, the original section between the Lys and Scheldt, which the Allies had damaged in the previous year, needed to be shortened, and the gap between Ypres and the Lys filled. These were not to be hastily scratched out slit trenches, but fieldworks worthy of a major fortress.

The new trenches were to be 8 feet deep and 8 feet wide backed by earthen parapets 9 feet high and 6 feet wide, with a firing step. The style of the slopes and zig-zags was that of regular fortress bastions. King Louis' thinking was simple: "If in holding the lines, one loses a great many troops, one can hope the enemy will lose considerably more… One must defend my country foot by foot." (Quoted in Lynn, p.248.)

The section from Ypres to the Lys was some 13 Km long, running southeast from that town to Comines, about 9 Km upstream from Menin. The section between the Lys and Scheldt was 14 Km long, running ESE from Courtrai to a spot just downstream from Bossuit, roughly where the Allies had tried to cross the river at the end of the last campaign.

François de Neufville, 2nd Duke of Villeroi (1644-1730)

Born in Lyon, Villeroi grew up at the Court of Louis XIV. His father was King Louis' childhood Governor. This meant François was a regular playfellow of Louis. It is surmised Louis enjoyed acting the part of older brother to Villeroi. François, gallant, and accomplished in all the courtier's arts, was fixated on becoming a soldier, so Louis made him one, to general dismay among the professionals. Villeroi's elevation to marshal in 1693 was not due to his generalship, though his courage under fire did play a part.

After the Nine Years War, he fought against Marlborough and managed to hold onto the shreds of his reputation until he was trounced at Ramillies in 1706. Louis decided not to continue employing him in the field, but he retained the King's favour; during the coming Regency he would be made Governor of the young Louis XV, be exiled to Lyon for the obligatory court scandal, then be recalled to favour by Louis XV before his death.

Despite the hyperbole of history, Villeroi appears, from his conduct in this war at least, to have been an adequate general. If nothing else, he must have been willing to take

advice. A Luxembourg, he was not, but neither was he a Soubise. Rather, it seems that he was unwilling to take calculated risks and preferred to adhere to the letter of Louis instructions. Possibly, this was because he was too close to the King, or possibly because his courtier's instinct for self-preservation was too finely attuned; the two reasons are not mutually exclusive, either.

In March Boufflers rounded up 20,000 peasants. Covered by an equal number of soldiers camped between Courtrai and Wevelgem (5 Km upstream from the town), the work commenced at the beginning of April. Boufflers completed the job in a week. Command was given to *maréchal de camp* de la Motte, de la Valette having died during the winter.

The Allies thought about interrupting the work, but were ultimately unwilling to risk a battle that might hand the summer over to the French; Boufflers ignored them. A large army of Coalition troops was assembled, in two halves, at Ninove and Brussels, then marched to a common camp nearly 12 Km long, between Deynze and Drongen. The force consisted of 500 men drawn from every garrison battalion in Flanders (i.e., virtually all the able bodied), plus Brussels, Malines, and Louvain, and 100 men from each squadron (assuming 50 men per troop, and 3 troops per squadron). Put another way, there were detachments from 70 battalions and 50 cavalry regiments or 82 squadrons (35,000 foot and 15,000 horse). Additionally, Dixmyude's 2,000 men were reinforced by some artillery and dragoons. Overall command was given to Duke Max. The army did not disperse after the work on the Lines was completed, but waited for King William.

The French, on the other hand, did sent their cavalry back into quarters, at Menin, Courtrai, and Tournai – so, not very far away. The infantry went into the Lines, to try them out. Immediately, a strategic problem arose. To fully man the Lines, de la Motte needed 30,000 foot and 84 cannon. In other words, the French could not conduct a static *and* mobile defense simultaneously.

Well, if the French did not intend to raid, someone ought to. Childs describes one notable incident where 160 men from the Ath garrison attacked Saint-Ghislain, 20 Km to the South. Saint-Ghislain was on the far side of the Haine, but the river was frozen, so three men 'slithered' across. They got in to the town by climbing the palisade and torched a magazine with 1,000 rations of forage. There was also a fire at Ypres which did some damage, but that may have been accidental.

The campaign proper began in early June. Villeroi's instructions were to keep the enemy distracted, nothing more. The war was going to be won through Diplomacy, not violence.

He proceeded to establish a camp for 73 battalions and 153 squadrons (62,640 men) between Blaton and Quiévrain, villages about 5 Km east of Condé on the Scheldt. This was over 50 Km from Courtrai, but not so far when one considers the Scheldt would be used to transport the heavy equipment. The Lines were supposed to maintain themselves for as long as possible, and Villeroi also needed to be in a position to support Boufflers.

[D'Auvergne says Villeroi had 147 squadrons and 75 battalions also totalling 62,640 men.]

That marshal was in the process of moving his HQ back to the Meuse front. His role would be to threaten action in Brabant, so his army was forming at Charleroi. The foot went into the fortress, while he kept 9,000 cavalry at Gosselies, 6 Km north of it.

Between Dunkirk and Furnes *lieutenant général* Montal commanded a flying camp of 10,800 men (18 battalions). Montal was to maintain French dominance on the coastal strip. A second flying camp, under *lieutenant général* von Rosen stood ready to assist the Lines between Ypres and the Lys. Finally, at Chiny, d'Harcourt again commanded a detached corps of observation between the Meuse and Moselle. But this year, he only had 1,800 horse.

Facing Villeroi in Flanders was King William's army camped between Deynze and Aarsele. This army was Vaudémont's, until William appeared in the field. Montal's flying camp on the coast was matched by an Allied one of 20 battalions and 10 squadrons (12,500 men) under the Danish Major General Ellenburg, posted at Dixmyude.

Vaudémont was also supported by an additional corps under Duke Max, seconded by the Dutch First Field Marshal, Holstein-Plön, of 32 battalions and 91 squadrons (35,650 men) camping at Asse, 12 Km northwest of Brussels, on the Dendermonde Road. On May 28 Duke Max moved west to Ninove.

[Lynn gives slightly different numbers: 80 instead of 82 squadrons for Vaudémont, and 36 instead of 32 battalions, 150 instead of 91 squadrons, for Duke Max. D'Auvergne says William had 70 battalions and 85 squadrons, Duke Max 33 battalions and 113 squadrons. Adding to his numbers the Brandenburgers (18 battalions and 38 squadrons), and the Liègeois (10 squadrons and 4 battalions of mobile troops), d'Auvergne computes a total of 150 battalions and 262 squadrons for the theatre, or 124,700 men.]

Deynze is 26 Km northeast of Courtrai, down the Lys, while Aarsele is 7 Km west of Deynze. William's focus was thus definitely on the coastal plain, possibly aiming for Furnes, possibly for Dunkirk, and at the very least, defending against further French encroachment in Flanders. Duke Max was in a position to aid him, or strike independently against Mons, or to counter Boufflers. Farther east, Boufflers would also have to contend against the Brandenburgers (15,800 men) and Liègeois (3,600 men) under *generalleutnant* Heiden and Count Tilly, who might try for Namur while he was occupied with Duke Max.

About the end of May, Villeroi marched 18 Km north to Leuze-en-Hainault, where he rendezvoused with a corps under the Duke of Berwick. The French marshal interpreted the Allied dispositions as a portending an attack against the Lines around Furnes. On May 29 he was at Cordes, halfway between Leuze and the Scheldt. He crossed that river at Escanaffles, a village on the right bank of the Scheldt just downstream from where the Lines touched the river. Leaving his army in this section of the Lines he went on a tour of inspection as far as Ypres.

Boufflers, meanwhile, became concerned at the concentration of forces in Flanders, especially when Duke Max shifted west to Ninove, apparently following Villeroi's motions, so he left Gosselies and camped at Saint-Ghislain, 44 Km west of Charleroi, but only with his cavalry. Heiden he deemed a lesser threat at this stage. The Germans were notoriously slow.

William already knew what he wanted to do. He was going to retake Namur. Heiden was to invest the fortress and hold on until William could bring up the rest of the forces. With 125,000 men, the Allies outnumbered the French (115,000) and should be able to pin Villeroi in Flanders, at least for a time. (The increase in mobile forces was not due to recruitment but because the recapture of Huy freed up the garrison of Liège.)

While waiting for Heiden to get into position, William, arriving at Deynze on June 1, noised it abroad that he planned to react to French moves; he put his army through its paces at the same time. The pre-siege portion of the campaign was indeed somewhat dependent on the French. During the winter planning, the Allies thought that by maintaining camps at Dixmyude, Ninvove, Huy, and Grammont (Geraadsbergen, a day's march southwest of Ninove), they would be able to keep the French guessing and press forward wherever they might display weakness.

Now, with the French beginning to concentrate at the western end of their Lines, it seemed as if the situation was developing the way William wanted. But Villeroi still had to be persuaded to strip his garrisons along the Sambre. Only then could Duke Max break east, link up with Heiden and successfully lay siege to Namur.

On June 6, King William took command of Vaudémont's army. On June 10 he held a review and was satisfied with the result. Two days later his army, less 40 squadrons of cavalry given to Duke Max (the countryside not being suitable for large cavalry actions), and 400 dragoons sent to screen the movement in the direction in Menin, marched in 4 columns to the old camp at Roeslare. It took them 5 hours. As usual with large armies, the whole took many more hours to assemble, the train not arriving until midnight. The dragoons meanwhile went up to the palisades of Menin and brought back 23 prisoners.

On June 13 they marched 3 hours SSW to Beselare (a distance of 13 Km), directly in front of the new section of the Lines between Ypres and the Lys, perhaps 6-7 Km southwest. William's position, well east of Fort Knokke, threatened all the French forts between the Lys and the sea.

The actual target was Fort Knokke, though Villeroi could not be sure of this. The burghers of Ypres were busy tearing up paving stones to prevent shell splinters. It was widely believed on both sides that the town would be bombarded.

Apparently William, after reconnoitring the Lines during his advance from Roselare, originally intended break through them 'on the fly', but his train and a portion of the infantry was slow in coming up. Making a second reconnaissance the next morning he saw Villeroi's army arriving and abandoned the idea. However, Knokke would make a suitable diversion. The place did not have to be taken, although that would be nice, but the fight must be intense enough for Villeroi to lose his nerve and call on Boufflers to bring infantry from the Sambre.

In concert with this move, Duke Max came from Ninove to Oudenaarde (June 14), crossing the Scheldt on June 15. This forced Villeroi to respond, which he did by shifting his army, behind the Lines, to a camp between Menin and Houthem. This position, with its back to the Lys, was only 9 Km from William's army. Believing an attack was immanent, Villeroi camped in 'line of battle'.

In those days the terrain was so thickly vegetated, not so much with crops as with trees, that visibility was down to only 40 metres; it would have been easy for the Allies to surprise the French, who for that reason stayed close to their camp. Fortunately, they were also close to the Lines, so that resupply was simple enough. The Allied convoys, coming from Bruges or Ghent, were subject to constant ambush. William was forced to order the locals to supply him or face being plundered by his army.

This helped a little, but the French had ordered the locals not to sow crops and forage was limited; the Allied horse scoured the land as far as Ypres, where the garrison, seeing enemy horsemen on the escarpment, began lifting paving stones in fear of a bombardment.

On June 16, Boufflers, dutifully shadowing Duke Max, arrived at Pont d'Espierres. Villeroi released 10,000 men from the Lines to join him. Duke Max had brought his own army down opposite Outrijve, only 7 Km away down the Scheldt, intending to cross the Scheldt at Outrijve and try to break through the Lines there.

On June 17 the storm (if one can call a massive deception operation a 'storm') broke. The Duke of Württemberg went to Dixmyude and took over Ellenburg's flying camp. He was joined the next evening by Major General Charles Churchill (Marlborough's brother) with 8 English battalions and a tiny siege train of gunners and engineers.

Württemberg arrived at Dixmyude at 9am on June 17, reviewed the troops, and dispatched them. They arrived in front of Knokke that evening. Counting Churchill's men he had 27 battalions and 10 squadrons. The troops were given leave on the march to roust the locals and plunder them, in reprisal for the murder of some soldiers.

[Childs says 19 battalions at Dixmyude, plus the English, while Lynn says 20 battalions in the garrison; it is assumed here that 1 battalion was left to guard the place.]

Württemberg's camp was on the left bank of the Ijzer (or Knokke-Dixmyude Canal) between that body of water and the Dunkirk-Furnes Canal, with HQ at Nieuwkapelle, behind the center-left. Frontage was about 5,000 metres. Though this was only a camp and not a battle line, it was nearly within musket shot of the fort. The English arrived at 11am on June 19. In the interim, Württemberg made reconnaissance but did not like what he saw.

As described much earlier in this commentary, the fort was divided into three sections, one facing Württemberg on the left bank of the Knokke-Dixmyude Canal), one on the right bank of the Knokke-Ypres Canal, and one protecting the southern triangle of land between them. This last was a hornwork covered by a morass across its whole length. The two northern halves consisted of counter-guards and a deep wet-ditch. The main bastion was on the right bank of the Knokke-Ypres Canal, nearly at the confluence. That side also was inundated, leaving only the section in front of Württemberg that could be attacked easily. Here, however, there were extra trenches and the canal had a drawbridge. On the plus side, the garrison was very small. Württemberg had also obtained a detailed plan of the fortifications.

The attack was worth making. If they succeeded it would be much easier to take back Furnes. Also, there were no other fortifications between Knokke and Saint-Omer, more than 50 Km away. Of course, this meant the French would concentrate here, which is what William wanted.

As in so many military operations, the line between diversion and primary goal was becoming blurred. Certainly contemporaries, not privy to William's councils, saw the attacks on the Lines as the main focus of the campaign. Some believed the attack on Knokke was intended to lure the French away from Duke Max's attack by the Scheldt. Others thought William was attempting a double envelopment.

William had to be personally careful in his thinking. He was prone to 'target fixation' and these attacks, which were ultimately intended to empty the Sambre garrisons and pin Villeroi in Flanders, could all too easily push the siege of Namur into the background. And what if he could accomplish both in one campaign?! Already he had sent a request to the Admiralty for a naval attack on Dunkirk intended to weaken the forces massing against Württemberg.

At this end of history it is difficult to know what level of importance William accorded these attacks on the Lines. During winter planning they had been conceived as a diversion. After they failed to bring spectacular results, they were again called a diversion. But at the exact moment of execution, did he not hope the French position could be overturned, Dunkirk captured, and his cavalry be sent raiding deep into Picardy?

The Siege of Knokke June 19-28

The attack on Knokke commenced at 2pm on June 19. Württemberg's men advanced and demolished some houses and minor redoubts that occupied the ground he wanted to use for his batteries. The Scots Guards and *Tiffin's* Foot led the assault, suffering 500 casualties but pushing the French back. The engineers began erecting the batteries. Desultory musketry continued all night.

Also on June 19, Duke Max, now on the left bank of the Scheldt, moved his camp back slightly, between Kerkove on his Left and Kaster on his Right, a frontage of 1,600 metres. Kerkove is opposite the crossing point at Berchem, 9 Km upstream from Oudenaarde and 6-7 Km downstream from Outrijve.

While Montal moved his flying camp into the wedge of land south of Fort Knokke and while Villeroi detached extra men to serve in the fort, Boufflers moved to challenge Duke Max. Opposite the latter's Right there was high ground at the village of Tiegemberg, about 2,300 metres west. Boufflers advanced his own Left to take the high ground with 2 battalions but a brigade under Fagel cleared them out and occupied the place.

[Unusually for Flanders, the 'high ground' is noticeably higher, suitable for artillery observation.]

At Fort Knokke, June 20 was spent on constructing the batteries. Soggy ground would have made the job a long one, but in fact Württemberg was only making a pretence of a siege. He only mounted 3 small cannon, just to cover the work parties. Montal tried a surprise attack, crossing the canal to attack the Allied outposts, but retreated when discovered, fearing he might be cut off.

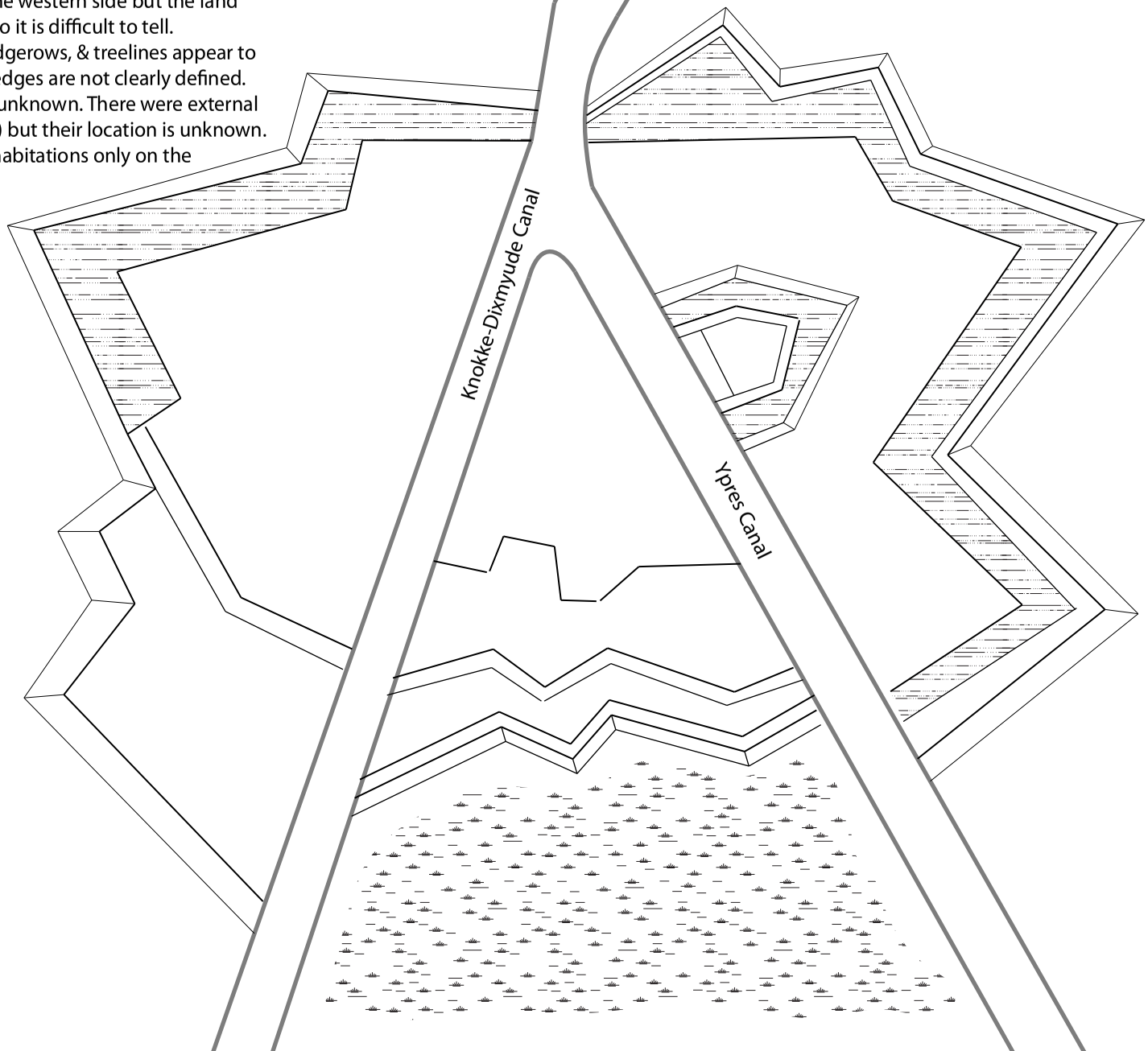
The next day a French sally was made in two or three waves, inflicting 400 casualties. A sally of a different kind was also made on June 21, when 200 French horse and 400 foot were reported passing through Menin to attack an Allied bread convoy coming from Ghent. The convoy's escort was beefed up and a group of 600 dragoons and 500 horse set out to find the French. The encounter took place at Moorsele, 10 Km east of the Beselare camp. The Allied dragoons, under Portland, dismounted and attacked the enemy foot in the village while both sides' horse remained poised to counter their opposite number. The French were routed with the loss of 80 killed to 17 Allied casualties.

[The dragoons may have been the Dutch Garde Dragonders, a.k.a. Portland's Horse, since Portland commanded the attack.]

Siege of Fort Knokke
17-28 June 1695

100 metres

Notes: this trace was derived from present day satellite imagery and written descriptions. The most clearly defined segment is the eastern side where the wet ditch still exists. The wet ditch may have continued on the western side but the land has been reclaimed so it is difficult to tell.
Field boundaries, hedgerows, & treelines appear to follow the trace but edges are not clearly defined.
Internal facilities are unknown. There were external buildings (farms, etc.) but their location is unknown.
Current maps show habitations only on the western side.



The French made another raid in reprisal, this time to gain prisoners, attacking a post at Sonnebeck (Zonnebeke), 12.5 Km northwest of Menin (and about 5 Km west of Moorsele).

On June 22 a brace of spies was arrested who gave evidence of a plot to blow up the besiegers' ammunition barges which lay moored nearby in the Ijzer; that night they were moved away to Dixmyude and 2 battalions were sent to guard them.

(This plot was supposedly the work of one Monsieur La Tour, a notorious partisan. The use of the word 'partizan' at this date probably means he was a pro-French Belgian rather than a proper guerrilla fighter.)

On June 23 the French cannon fire suddenly got suspiciously accurate, landing in the Allied camp. A local miller was spotted sending signals to the French. He was removed from this world.

Something odd occurred on June 24. The Allied guns were hauled away, but then brought back and repositioned. On June 25 they were permanently removed. The best guess is that Württemberg was toying with the French, though perhaps he was operating on a timetable that William decided to alter. A siege was no longer really practical, although he could have bombarded the place all summer. There were three reasons for abandoning the siege. First, Duke Max's inability to get any farther with Boufflers – either to attack him or break through the Lines, or persuade him to run away and help Villeroi. Second, the French had flooded the surrounding countryside, making trench work virtually impossible. Third, Montal had already constructed new lines behind Knokke.

As a bluff, however, the siege had worked. Villeroi was concentrated far away from Namur and was beginning to believe he had thwarted William's designs. Since King Louis had ordered him to remain strictly on the defensive, there was nothing to do but relax and accept the accolades.

On June 27, Württemberg, with definite orders to lift the siege, sent his pontoon train away and returned to Beselare on June 28. The French followed but were unable to master the rearguard and made no attack. The Allies lost 600 men in the siege of Knokke and the French perhaps 1,200.

The Namur Campaign Begins

On June 30, King William took his army out of Flanders, headed for Namur. This was to be the critical operation of the campaign, and a great victory for the Allies. Except that, as Lynn (pp.248-249) points out, 'Boufflers demonstrated that one could essentially win a campaign by losing a fortress, provided that you pinned down and exhausted the attackers in the process.' His defense of Namur was a credit to Coehoorn, whose tactics he employed.

Planning for the siege had not been completed ahead of time – it might have fallen out that a siege could not take place due to the activities of the French. Instead, William and his staff finalized the details while the attack on Knokke was taking place. They had not even decided on the quantity of transport, or how big the siege army and covering army needed to be, let alone who was to command what line of communication garrison and what posts needed to be held to decoy the French for as long as possible.

Childs references the siege 'memoire' compiled in the camp at Beselare. Among other things, Heiden was to initiate the investment, assisted by the Duke of Athlone (Ginkel), currently at Louvain. Each was to have 8 days rations. William would bring up the main armament later. The siege train would assemble as late as possible, to cut down on the expense. The Sambre was to be bridged above Namur, and two bridges were to be thrown over the Meuse. Ginkel would handle the pontoon train and Heiden the actual bridge assembly. The prince-bishop of Liège was made responsible for fabricating fascines in their thousands. Hospitals had to be established at Huy, Liège, Visé and Maastricht. And so on.

By June 27 all had been arranged, and William decided his army could no longer live at Beselare. On June 28 he moved north to Roselare. The same day, Heiden, Tilly, and Ginkel set out for Namur. Unfortunately for them, Boufflers got wind of the movements and left the Lines, heading for Dinant by way of Condé (June 29) and Philippeville. There were 20 battalions in Namur, and perhaps 6,000 men at Charleroi, but otherwise the Sambre line was unmanned.

Heiden and Tilly had been for some time at Fallais on the Méhaigne (a crossing point about a day's march NNW of Huy), with Ginkel at Tirlemont and a brigade of horse at Bilsen, on the near side of the Meuse not far from Maastricht. They were waiting for the last of the Brandenburg command (most of whom were not Prussian regiments but mercenaries) to come from the crossing at Visé. These arrived at Fallais on June 28.

On June 29 Ginkel, now in overall command, moved toward Charleroi, leaving a detachment of horse in his old camp. Soon after, he crossed the Sambre at Châtelet, just east of Charleroi, came down the right bank, collecting boats to make bridges, and camped on the Southwest side of the fortress. However, he could not (or chose not to) cross the Meuse, so by hard marching, Boufflers, after meeting with d'Harcourt at Dinant (July 1), was able to rush with 7 veteran regiments of the latter's dragoons to Namur and assume command of the garrison on July 2.

[D'Auvergne says the French sent 8 regiments.]

(The sources often assume this means the garrison was augmented to 20 battalions and 7-8 regiments of dragoons, but Boufflers actually only needed them as an escort, in case the Allies had encircled the place before he arrived. He retained only the regiments of *Du Roi* and *Asfeld-Étranger* and sent the rest back.)

Boufflers' arrival disheartened the Allied troops, because it was an accepted principle of the day that the Sun King would not commit a marshal of France to a place he did not expect to hold to the last man. King Louis held the same opinion.

Once Ginkel was in place, Duke Max broke camp (June 28), marching by way of Halle (June 30), and moving at a rapid pace. The Senne was crossed on July 1, and the upper waters of the Dyle by Genappe on July 2.

Then, at 4am on June 29, King William set out ahead of his army with an escort of 2,000 men, taking the road through Ghent, Brussels, and Louvain and rendezvousing with the army of investment on June 30. (D'Auvergne says on July 2.) Vaudémont was left behind to contend with Villeroi.

The next day, Duke Max crossed the Sambre with part of his army, putting his HQ on that bank, while the rest of his forces formed an arc around Namur on the left bank. Heiden's Brandenburg Corps completed the circle by camping on the right bank of the Meuse.

(The bulk of Boufflers' army pulled back into the Lines a couple of days prior to the abandonment of the attack on Knokke, taking them off the radar. Duke Max seems to have made no attempt to delay the disengagement.)

William's army, now once again under Vaudémont, made a slow, piecemeal disengagement from the Flanders front, to preserve as long as possible the illusion that the Allies were still trying to find a way through the Lines. On June 30 the whole force pulled back to the Aarsele camp, beside Deynze. Then, brigade by brigade, it marched east and either reassembled north of Namur as part of the covering army, or appeared at the fortress itself to aid in the siege. The last of the troops arrived in Brabant by July 8, when Namur was formally declared invested. The Dane, Ellenburg, remained at Dixmyude with a corps composed mostly of infantry.

[General histories peg the garrison of Namur at 16,000 men. D'Auvergne calculates the garrison at 9,600 men, plus 6 permanent companies and various bodies of specialists, making a grand total of 12,000. Normally, historians (as does d'Auvergne for the Allied forces) compute totals by assuming

600 men per battalion and 150 men per squadron. This is how the number 16,000 was obtained. But he argues that French units are typically understrength, even at the outset of a campaign, numbering 450 men per battalion and 100 per squadron. One is tempted to follow d'Auvergne, but in this case the casualty figures for the siege indicate the higher total is more accurate.]

Villeroi may have been deceived for a time, but his men had noted the Allied departure from Flanders, and had taken prisoners from among the marauders who always straggled in its tail. Namur, however, was believed to be impregnable. Its defences had been upgraded since 1692, by none other than Vauban. The Heights of Bouge, which overlooked the town on the northern side, had been heavily fortified, and Boufflers had the troops to man them. Why should Villeroi waste time reducing a place that did not need rescuing? Instead, he should attack the towns of Flanders, conduct *chevausées*, and generally make life miserable for the people who paid King William's army. Versailles sent him orders to that effect. He was to seek battle.

Ellenburg and Vaudémont, despite having only a moderate force at their disposal, were well sited to cause mischief if the Lines became depopulated. At the time Villeroi began contemplating offensive action, Vaudémont still had over 30,000 men encamped between Dentergem and Grammene (a line of 3,500 metres), about 7 Km west of Deynze. Ellenburg had only 6,500 foot and dragoons at Dixmyude. Brussels had a small garrison of 15 squadrons.

Now, if things had gone according to plan, Vaudémont's defeat would have ensured the raising of the siege of Namur, and allowed Flanders to be overrun before William returned there. So, his orders were strategically sound. But, battles are risky things, and Villeroi could have improved his odds by *first* laying siege to a town and forcing Vaudémont to meet him on ground of his own choosing. But, as d'Auvergne wrote (Vol. 1695, p. 49), 'Tis a very easy thing to find Miscarriages and Faults in ill Success; and when an Enemy has come to the worse by taking wrong measures, tis no hard matter to tell how he might have done better.'

D'Auvergne has a better suggestion: a battle was doubtful but the 'advance to contact' could have been used to mask a siege elsewhere. He suggests Oudenaarde or Ath, the two towns of significance to the French – Bruges, Ghent, etc., it should be noted, were either too tough or beyond King Louis' desired zone of influence. Oudenaarde was valuable for the contributions it could supply, but rather hard to take. Ath was an isolated post but of so little value to the French that it sat out the war until the last year, when it and Oudenaarde were again put on the target list; Oudenaarde would again be deemed too strong, so Ath would be taken. Also, the French felt (correctly) that Ath in Allied hands was a drain on the Allied war effort. Oudenaarde or Ath in their hands would be a drain on their war effort.

Soon enough, the French would attack the lesser post of Dixmyude, whose capture was nearly as effective at opening up Flanders as defeating Vaudémont in battle would have been. However, for the moment, Villeroi had his orders to seek battle. Dixmyude would await the failure of that action.

Nothing much happened in Flanders until July 5, when three Capuchin friars who also happened to be Allied spies, reported to Vaudémont that Villeroi was about to move.

The (Non)-Battle of Aarsele July 13-14

[The Allied camp was in the same place as last year, but if a battle had been fought, it would have been called Aarsele because that was the hamlet where King William had his HQ this year. In the previous year the HQ had been at Wontergem, on the eastern side of the same complex.]

Surprisingly, Villeroi exited the Lines eastward, advancing to the village of Popuelles, 11 Km northeast of Tournai. From here he might attack Ath, still in Allied hands after all these years, or head for Oudenaarde, or even attack Brussels. The Allies were afraid he might do all three, in that order. In reality, he was collecting *lieutenant général* Ximenes and a body of horse from Mons. It is also possible he *expected* to receive orders to move northeast but instead received a demand he attack Vaudémont directly.

Arguing against the idea of a last minute change in plans is the fact that Villeroi had already ordered the construction of bridges on the route he would take. French outriders clashed with Vaudémont's foragers on July 11. Villeroi had marched over 30 Km and crossed 4 rivers all in the space of one night, to arrive on the near bank of the Lys during the morning of July 12. He was then only 10 Km away from the Allied army, camping at Oostrozebeke, between the Mandel River and the Lys.

[Childs says he camped at Rozebeke. But the only Rozebeke is located about the same march distance to the northeast *of Popuelles. That location is on the lines of communication between Flanders and Brussels, so it can certainly be mistaken for Villeroi's destination. But Childs is describing how Villeroi approached Vaudémont's camp on the Lys west of Deynze, following d'Auvergne's first-person description. Given that the French crossed the Lys about 10 Km away from Vaudémont, the village of Oostrozebeke (East Rozebeke) on the Mandel River is clearly intended. Why it is called 'east' when it lies far to the west of the Rozebeke is a fact known only to the Belgians. The Mandel is a tributary of the Lys that joins it just above Deynze.]*

Meanwhile, Montal advanced from the direction of Knokke to form the left wing of Villeroi's army. From the descriptions in the sources it appears Montal commanded a detached corps, marching slightly behind the main body. Once Montal approached, Villeroi broke camp, on the morning of July 13.

Hearing of this, the same evening Vaudémont made a significant adjustment to his line, pulling back his right wing onto higher ground about Aarsele. It is a little hard to determine just where Vauedmont's original line was located. D'Auvergne mentions Aarsele and Wontergem, but he is simply making a point about a permanent camp having different names depending on where the HQ was located. Childs says between Dentergem and Grammene. The latter two villages lie on the Mandel River, 4,200 metres and 5,700 metres southwest of Deynze, respectively. This means Vaudémont was facing southeast, with the Mandel in front of him and the Lys immediately beyond – the confluence of the two rivers is at Deynze. If he was facing this way it would have been because he thought Villeroi was over on the Scheldt. When the French suddenly appeared upstream on the Lys, Vaudémont had to pivot. The only argument against this its that Vaudémont ordered his Right to dig in but not his Left. Did he bend his line? If his Right pulled back from Dentergem it must have pivoted through a 45° arc, without changing the length of the line.

This day, a strong brigade arrived from the camp at Namur (it had left on July 4). Vuademont also made calls on the garrisons in his rear. All together, he could dispose of 50 battalions and 51 squadrons (36,000 men). Villeroi was estimated to have 90,000 men.

[According to Childs, Vaudémont had 50 battalions and 57 squadrons, or 37,000 men.]

The French advanced on a 8-10 Km front, between Tielt and Wakken, halting with their Left on Kanegem and their Right on Dentergem, facing northeast. This means that to deploy for the advance the columns on their Left had to march about 9 Km north while those on the Right had to march only half that distance. The Tielt-Wakken start line (Wakken is 2,300 metres from the Lys) was about 5 Km away from the Allied camp. It would have been visible, though there was more woodland in those days.

When the advance halted, the French were only about 1,000 metres in front of the Allied Right and assuming the Allied Left had pulled back to a spot in front of Wontergem, perhaps 2,000-2,500 metres away on that side of the field. This pinned the Allied army. The other important fact is that Villeroi overlapped the Allied Right by about 2,000 metres.

By prearrangement, on the sighting of the French two signal cannon were fired and the Allies formed for battle. Vaudémont gave orders for his Right to dig in, which was completed about 1pm.

According to d'Auvergne, Villeroi had plenty of time to launch an attack on July 13. This probably means the French were close enough to do so by mid morning. There was a trouble at the Mandel, where one of their columns, crossing at a ford dominated by a fortified manor house called 'Inghelmonster', was held up by a garrison of 200 Dutchmen. The house had a palisade and moat, and the major in command refused to surrender until the French brought up some guns. Some of the officers wanted to 'make an example of him' but Villeroi commended his valour. This incident does not seem to be the cause for the delay, though. More likely, Villeroi was waiting for Montal to complete an envelopment of the enemy position.

Montal's detachment, trailing Villeroi on the latter's left, marched through Tielt later in the day. His task was to pass Villeroi and then wheel east, scraping past Aarsele and seizing the village of Vinkt, 4,200 metres behind the Allied lines, on the road to Deynze.

[Confusingly, d'Auvergne says the Allied Left was to be enveloped, and even Childs repeats this, but, clearly, he is thinking of the Allied Right.]

But, by the time Montal had come up, putting his own Right against Villeroi's Left at Kanegem, it was too late in the day. At 8pm Vaudémont stood down, leaving only a skeleton force manning the trenches. At 10pm, though he ordered 200 men from each battalion to improve the works on the Dentergem end of the line. Apparently there were spies in the French camp who reported Villeroi's intention to attack here. At 4am the Allied Center and Right were told to further improve their positions. This work was not finished until 11am on July 14.

The French were advancing by the time dawn broke. Always innovative, their cavalry was equipped with light artillery, which began a bombardment of the Allied Right. The spies must have been correct. The responding counter fire was a little too heavy for comfort, though, so they withdrew out of range.

The French heavily outnumbered the Allies, and Montal was poised to swing behind the Allies and cut off their retreat. So… why did they stay their hand? The stock historian's answer is that Villeroi was a second-rate general who was too timid. On that last charge, it was his courage in the trenches at Namur which earned him a marshal's baton. True, he was no tactical genius, but this was a set piece battle in which his army outflanked the enemy. Even if he deemed the entrenchments too strong to attack, he had only to pin the enemy while his extra men enveloped them.

Villeroi had a problem, and his name was the *duc* du Maine. Saint-Simon says Villeroi ordered this excuse for a leader to advance no less than five times. Du Maine first said he had not done sufficient reconnaissance. Then he had to have his Confessor (just in case). Then he simply funked it and refused to move.

The 25-year-old du Maine was the favourite, though illegitimate, son of the King, by Madame de Montespan, of whom Louis had fond memories despite having dumped her when she was accused of trying to regain his love through poison and witchcraft. Villeroi, a newly created marshal, was not about to *order* a son of the King to do anything, even if he and Louis *had* been tennis

partners. If du Maine did not feel like attacking today, well, that was that. Saint-Simon had a very low opinion of du Maine as a man, and history has marked him as a very mediocre general.

Villeroi's own critical error was unfortunately not one of judgement, but of habit. He preferred to command from the rear, which frequently happens when a leader is promoted to a job which requires a new perspective. He was responsible for an entire sector of the frontier, not just a corps. How was he supposed to lead a sector from the front? There is an answer, but Villeroi had not worked it out yet. By waiting until his sub-commanders reported back he wasted hours.

Ultimately, Villeroi must bear the blame for not pushing his subordinates. It seems quite clear that he was out of his depth commanding an entire army, but he was possibly out of his depth when it came to enforcing his will on men who had until recently been his peers. Luxembourg would have destroyed Vaudémont. But then, Luxembourg had a much lower chance of falling from the King's grace. It must also be noted that the Duke of Berwick and the *prince* de Conti, both abler men than du Maine, also failed to respond aggressively when they saw the Allied withdrawal beginning.

Vaudémont had already decided to retreat the night before, but the proximity of the French meant he had to be very, very quiet. On his own initiative, the Dutch artillery commander, a Colonel van Goor, ordered the construction of roadblocks on every possible approach, except for those leading to Deynze and Nevele. (Nevele lies 5-6 Km north of Deynze and was an alternative escape route.) Once the roadblocks were in place the Allies pulled up stakes and prepared to decamp, in a hurry.

The baggage was sent to Deynze and Ghent before dawn on July 14. In the afternoon, the guns were gradually pulled out. The teams had been moved from position to position all day, bombarding the French, and it seemed to the latter that they were just doing more of the same. By 3pm the batteries were off the field.

At some point during the day, Berwick was told to probe against the Allied Left. He failed to notice the departure of the guns, nor did he notice the Allied Foot defiling along the line of entrenchments from right to left. They marched with pikes and colours trailing (that is, dragging on the ground). The cavalry of the Right dismounted and occupied the whole of the Heights of Aarsele, and the same was done on the Left as the last of the infantry left the trenches. By 7pm they had vanished like smoke.

This left only the two cavalry wings and some supporting infantry on either side. By now the French were advancing in earnest, as they suddenly noticed the Allied lines thinning. *Général* Montal finally hacked his way through the obstacles in his path but was held at bay by General Colyear's cavalry of the Right and the grenadiers from two brigades of foot who fought from hedgerow to hedgerow. Colyear's orders were to feign solid resistance while shuffling sideways and off the field toward Deynze and Nevele.

On the Allied Left, the cavalry and a couple of battalions formed the rearguard. It took a long time for the French to catch up. The darkness and broken terrain made them cautious. Only a band of dragoons and hussars wearing the Allied recognition badge of a green bough managed to close. They rode with the rearguard, 4 battalions under Holstein-Plön, for a while, speaking in a mix of French and English to pretend they were some unit of Walloons. At an appropriate moment, they attacked, inflicting 200 casualties on a Lüneburg regiment, and taking a few prisoners and some ammunition wagons before riding off.

[The hussars may have been a free corps but are likely to have been the Régiment de Hussards Kroneberg*, France's only formal hussar regiment at this time.]*

That was about it for the pursuit. At one point the Allied train lost its protection when the infantry outstripped it on the road, but the French were unaware of this and Vaudémont hastily appointed some dragoons to escort it.

As early as 8pm on July 14 the head of the Allied columns were crossing the Lys at Deynze, the guns emplaced in front of the own to cover them. By 11pm Vaudémont had cleared the town and by 6am he was on the far side of Ghent and camped on the road to Antwerp. The guns pulled out of Deynze at 2am, covered by 6 English battalions under Bellasise, on the Bruges Canal.

Some of Vaudémont's Right, under General Overkirk, took the road to Nevele. Though the French were already north of Deynze and threatened this line of retreat, they again did not press. In fact, Charles Churchill and a small party billeted themselves in Nevele overnight and woke to find the town deserted, yet no French army in sight!

Unfortunately, there were marauders, whom the English unwisely fired at. Churchill's party was chased down and he was captured (while trying a lone breakout using the rest of his party to distract the enemy). The marauders robbed him, but forgot him temporarily while hunting the rest of the group. He walked away. The loss of his coat and his polished French enabled him to pass the sentries and walk back to the army.

Interestingly, the other men of his party, tricked into surrendering and then plundered, were taken before Villeroi, who was so embarrassed by their treatment that he let them go without a ransom.

Villeroi's army had in fact reached the Ghent-Bruges Canal, which ran all the way to the Scheldt, but the canal was well fortified with a continuous line of blockhouses manned by Bellasise's 6 battalions. This allowed Allied communications to be maintained with the western towns.

The next day, July 16, Vaudémont sent his train to Antwerp and moved slightly west, to camp at Oostakker.

This was about 5.5 Km NNE of Ghent, on the right bank of the Scheldt. Interestingly, the roads west were still clear of the enemy, though not of Allied stragglers. On July 17 and 18 reinforcements (10 battalion guns, then 12 battalions and two regiments of dragoons) were sent to Nieupoort and Bruges. They had to fight their way through, but only against the traffic. Ellenburg was not recalled but left isolated at Dixmyude. Deynze was given a brigade of infantry to defend it. Soon after, another 12 battalions and the rest of the dragoons under Württemberg were sent to the coast. This left Vaudémont with no more than 26 battalions and 30 squadrons.

Dixmyude July 18-28

There, Villeroi, camped at Oostrozebeke, decided the best way to bring Vaudémont across the Scheldt was still to reduce the remaining Allied posts in Flanders. Vaudémont might attack him at a disadvantage, disband his army into garrison, or plead for reinforcements. William might ignore such pleas, but if the Allied army in Flanders vaporised, he would have to put the siege on hold.

First on Villeroi's list was Dixmyude, which Montal was ordered to invest on July 18. For this operation the French had 13,000 men, Ellenburg had 8 battalions (4 English, 2 Danish, 2 Dutch) and 1 regiment of English dragoons (the Queen's). Besides Vaudémont's distant army, he could rely on 14,600 foot and 2,000 dragoons stationed at Nieupoort under Württemberg and Bellasise. Bruges also had a decent garrison that might supply some men.

Villeroi had originally been ordered to occupy an undefended Nieupoort, which Württemberg apparently abandoned to join Vaudémont, but the general arrived back in the nick of time. Once again, the French marshal was too slow. After securing the town, Württemberg then pulled back the greater part of his corps to Oostende (July 21) and opened the sluices to flood the country between there and Nieupoort.

(At Oostende, the canal runs through the middle of town. Württemberg withdrew through the town to the northern side by a bridge of boats across the harbour, leaving a brace of battalions to guard the canal. In this camp he could observe Villeroi or quickly rejoin Vaudémont. He was not well situated to assist Ellenburg, however.)

In theory, Ellenburg should have been able to hold without Vaudémont's aid, at least long enough for Namur to fall. The first thing he did was open the sluices and flood the land south of the town. Württemberg similarly broke the dikes, inundating the land northwest of Dixmyude. Only on the eastern side, in front of the Roselare Gate, was the ground firm enough to attack from. On the other hand, the eastern terrain dominated the defences, which were weakest on that side. The French also managed to approach the town from the direction of Knokke, where there was an isolated ravelin which guarded a bridge into the town.

It took a week for the French to erect two batteries – 8 cannon in one and 3 mortars in the other – but on July 26 they were unmasked against the ravelin. The guns did not do much damage, probably due to the soft ground. What was most strange is that Ellenburg gave no orders to return fire. He also decided not to try a sally.

On the following night the saps were advanced within musket shot of the palisade, both at the ravelin and by the Roselare Gate, where a new outwork, hastily erected to strengthen that side of the fortifications, was threatened.

The French were erecting a third battery. Now Ellenburg wanted to sally but could not, because the ground was too flooded. He called a council of war. Citing the immanence of a general French assault he strongly suggested throwing in the towel. Ironically, he said the waters were not deep enough to prevent an attack – though they were deep enough to prevent a sally. The council of war seems to have been made for form's sake. Some of his officers agreed and some opposed, but he sent out an officer under a flag of truce anyway. Incidentally, Montal continued digging during the truce, which was not supposed to happen.

There were sixteen articles in the capitulation. Boiled down, Montal was demanding 'surrender at discretion', meaning the garrison would become prisoners of war rather than march off to rejoin their army. This was in fact the primary object of the siege. It also meant they could be robbed they their captors. Even the officers were to be imprisoned, rather than given parole, though 'imprisoned' in this case meant they and their men would be 'locked up' in a town, not a jail cell.

The garrison asked for time to consider, but by the morning of July 28 Montal really was in a position to launch a general assault, with a battery erected at pointblank range against the Roselare Gate. Rather than delay any longer by getting Württemberg's opinion, Ellenburg decided to surrender on the French terms.

'As soon as the Capitulation was sign'd, the French took possession of the Rousselar Port, and were really Masters of the place, before a great part of the Garrison knew any thing of the signing a Capitulation; and the French Soldiers crowded in the place before it had been evacuated by our Garrison.'

D'Auvergne, Vol 1695 p. 80.

So much is known about this minor siege because of Ellenburg's court martial. King William was enraged at the loss of 9 regiments and the general lack of spunk among the men he was relying on to keep the French busy. Once he had returned from captivity, Ellenburg was tried and beheaded. Those of Ellenburg's colonels who had signed the surrender were either suspended or dismissed. One or two men had refused to sign, and the

colonel of dragoons asked for permission to escape, but was denied. In the build up to the trial, many thought he had been bought by the French, but the evidences against this.

Ellenburg had served with distinction in Ireland and was a career officer, and a commoner, rather than aristocrat: someone who could only advance to the rank of major general by his own ability. Presumably he had risen to his level of incompetence. He was supposedly on bad terms with Württemberg, who had been his superior in the Danish brigade (though Württemberg did not oppose his promotion), and with the English. However, these 'facts' appear to be apocryphal.

Further Adventures of Villeroi

The commandant of Deynze was another career soldier, Brigadier O'Farrell, described at his trial (spoiler alert) as 'an old fool'. He had greater excuse than Ellenburg for making a poor showing. Deynze had a palisaded earthen retrenchment, doubled up on the western side where the ground was dry. On the other sides it was covered by bogs. At about a musket shot beyond the works, on the western road, was a small star fort. O'Farrell had 8 cannon and 2 battalions, his own and one Dutch.

When *lieutenant général* Feuquières appeared in front of the town on July 29 and demanded surrender at discretion, O'Farrell immediately capitulated (signed on July 30). This may have had something to do with the fact that Villeroi had sent cavalry across the Lys higher up, which now appeared in O'Farrell's rear, at Petegem-aan-de-Leie, on the only exit road.

The loss of two battalions was not as bad as the loss of stored fodder and a key bridge. Most importantly, the loss of Deynze put Bruges, Nieupoort, Oostende, and even Ghent, at risk. Interestingly, it was also agreed that the French would raze the fortifications and that both sides would leave the town unoccupied for the duration of the war, an agreement which was adhered to.

Tried at the same time as Ellenburg, O'Farrell was charged with a) not even making a token defense, and b) not retreating over the bridge to rejoin the army. No one expected him to defend a 'speed bump' like Deynze to the last man. He was cashiered with infamy.

[After King William had time to cool off, O'Farrell was reinstated in 1696 and went on to serve in the War of the Spanish Succession. On wonders if Ellenburg would have been reemployed if his head was still attached to his body.]

When Villeroi moved on Deynze, Württemberg shifted his camp to Bruges, and spread his men out to defend the canals leading to Oostende and Ghent, which were well fortified by a string of detached redoubts. Bellasise lay at Placendal (Plassendalebrug, on the canal 5 Km east of Oostende). Colyear had been detached from Vaudémont's army to guard the approaches to Ghent. This left Vaudémont with only 18 battalions and 29 squadrons.

Villeroi sealed off the approaches from Ghent, occupying a camp with his Right on Nevele and his Left on Gottem, a 10 Km line along the Lys with Deynze in the center. He made a feint with his horse toward Oudenaarde, 17 Km southeast, but Vaudémont did not bite. He was more concerned about Ghent. There were rumours that the French had stockpiled mortar bombs at Courtrai to be used in another terror bombardment. Ghent entrenched itself and flooded the countryside between the Lys and Scheldt.

For the next few days the French ravaged the countryside behind them, up to the Bruges-Ghent Canal. But they did not make any preparations to reduce the remaining towns, such as Bruges and Nieupoort. Historians again blame Villeroi for this. He was informed of the surrender of the Town of Namur (August 4-5) almost immediately. What he should have done, say the historians, especially since the Citadel was supposed to be impregnable, was remain in Flanders, defeat Vaudémont's scattered army in detail and conquer the region. That would bring King William running.

Villeroi may not have been imaginative, but he was operating on a tight budget. Those mortar bombs at Courtrai were reserved, by the Sun King's orders, for Brussels. Also, Versailles was not particularly interested in conquering Flanders. Nieupoort, Oostende, Bruges, Ghent, Oudenaarde, all would require garrisons, reducing the size of the field force, while releasing Allied troops for service – and the Allies already matched the French in numbers. Why else was the garrison of Dixmyude interned? Why else was Deynze left without a garrison? The French could milk the region without occupying the towns.

Defeating Vaudémont's command in detail *was* a missed opportunity, though. But consider the circumstances. Each detachment was heavily entrenched on lands surrounded by floodwaters. This would not be a series of battles but a series of sieges, and to reiterate, the French preferred to see those men squatting in unhealthy swamps where they could do no harm. In any case, Villeroi was not given the option. He was ordered to go attack Brussels.

On August 5 the French withdrew from their position on the Lys, heading south and crossing that river at Wakken. Montal was given 6,000 men to hold the Lines. De la Motte, his superior, was allowed a strong detachment to protect Dunkirk. The rest of the French army followed Villeroi to Brabant.

Ultimately, the Allies would have only a matching force, of 10 battalions and 2 regiments of dragoons under the command of Bellasise, at Bruges.

Well informed of French intentions, Vaudémont recalled Colyear's 8 battalions form the Canal, and all his dragoons from Oostende, on August 4. With 26 battalions and 48 squadrons he marched 25 Km and crossed the Scheldt on August 5, the Foot using a bridge of boats at Appels, about 3-4 Km upstream from Dendermonde (west of the town) and the cavalry passing through the town. Württemberg marched his remaining 12 battalions from Oostende to Ghent on the same day.

The next day, Vaudémont had a scare when he was told Villeroi had recrossed the Lys. Thinking he was headed for the Ghent-Bruges Canal, Vaudémont recrossed the Scheldt. But he soon learned that Villeroi had actually crossed the Scheldt himself, and was indeed bound for Brabant. Back over the Scheldt went Vaudémont and his grumbling troops.

Racing to get ahead of the French, Vaudémont continued the march into the night, with only a 2-3 hour rest. Late on August 6 he passed through Willebrœk. By August 7 he was crossing the Canal of Brussels, the infantry at Vilvorde and the cavalry at Verbrande-Brug, 2,000 metres downstream. The army halted at Diegem. The next day (August 8) it passed through Brussels to the Anderlecht camp. Württemberg joined him there on August 10.

(With the death of Luxembourg, a great deal of the motions of the protagonists seem to have been reversed. Now it was Vaudémont who had the magic spy network and who – usually – read the French intentions so nicely.)

Villeroi took the road by Avelgem (4 August), crossing the Scheldt on August 5, Renaix (Ronse), Lessines (August 7), and Enghien (August 8). He waited at Enghien until his tail had caught up, then on August 11 his cavalry appeared at Halle (14 Km northeast of Enghien) and began to probe the defences of Brussels on the other side of the Senne. Villeroi had hoped to surprise the city and was disappointed to find Vaudémont already in position. His main body camped in the usual place, between Steinkerque and Enghien, where on August 12 it rendezvoused with the siege train under d'Harcourt, come from Mons. The French took delivery of 400 wagon loads of mortar bombs.

Vaudémont was faced with a dilemma. If he concentrated his and Ginkel's corps (covering the western approaches to Namur) he could not protect both Brussels and Namur. Villeroi was estimated to have 100 battalions and 220 squadrons – d'Harcourt had also brought with him elements from all the frontier garrisons. It was also rumoured – accurately – that the French were expecting troops from Normandy and Brittany, a contingent from the Rhine, and those regiments of the Foot Guards who had been serving in the King's presence (3 battalions).

So, Vaudémont was forced to spread out. If Villeroi had crossed the Senne he would have split their forces. Apparently they had no cannon, so Ginkel would have been forced to fall back on Mazy, a strong camp only a day's march northwest of the siege lines. The French could have blocked Vaudémont by guarding the defiles of the Bois de Soignies. William would have to lift the siege to give Ginkel enough men to face the French. But, of course, Villeroi was compelled to bombard Brussels.

Most of Vaudémont's infantry (a mere 38 battalions after reinforcement) was placed in the camp at Anderlecht, on the southern side, between the Halleport and Namur Gate. A brigade was sent (August 11) under General Rantsau to cover the ground between the Anderlecht and Flanders Gates, facing west. His cavalry, augmented by 22 of Nassau's squadrons, lay at Schaerbeek, 6 Km northeast, on the far side of the city. The rather odd deployment of the cavalry was due to the fact that some of the population had begun to flee. Vaudémont did not want French marauders winkling their way into the city through the crowds.

The magistrates of the city, meanwhile, closed the sluices on the Senne, flooding the meadows along the riverbanks above Anderlecht. To the North, below the camp, the ground was higher.

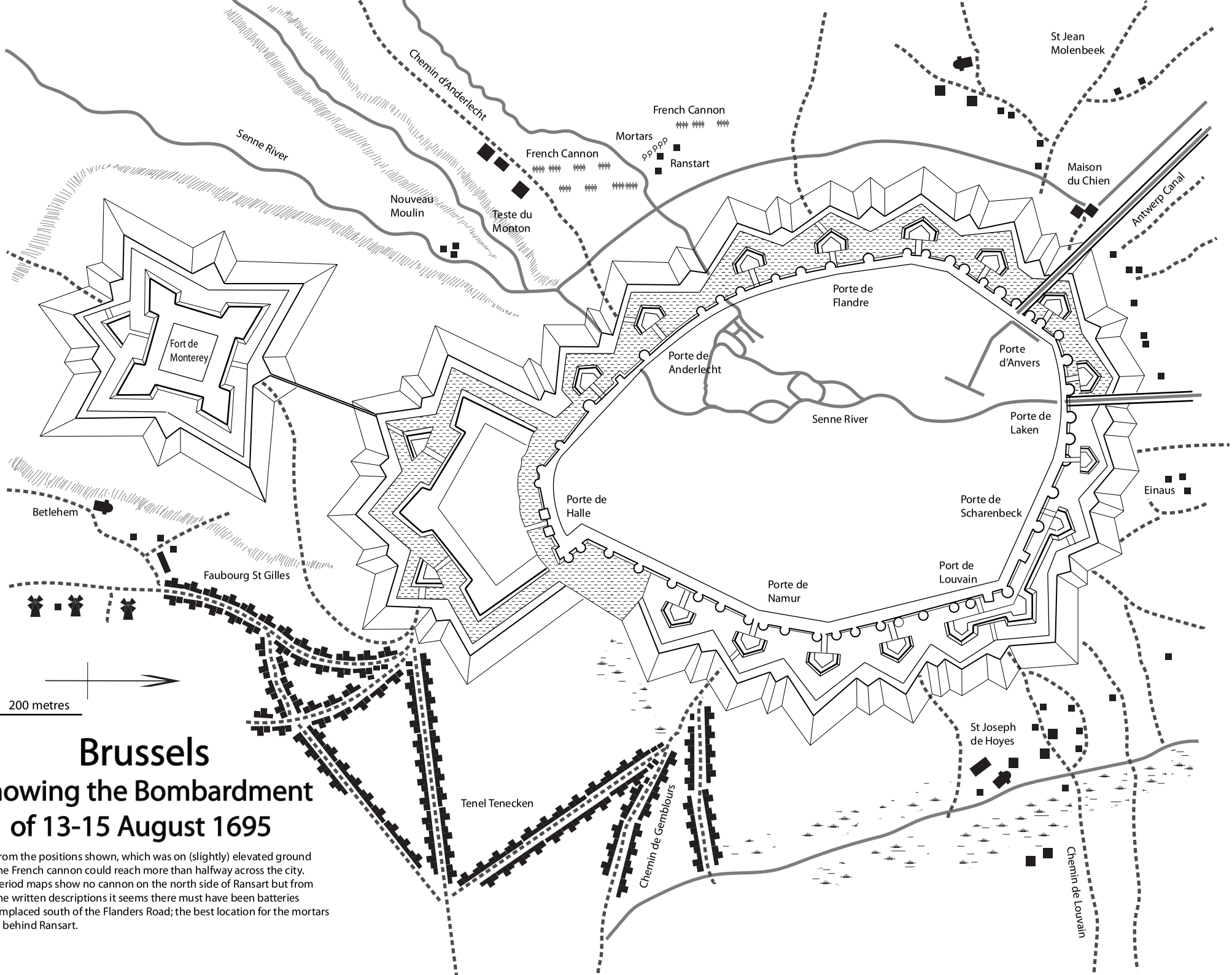
At Namur, the besiegers reacted to Villeroi's approach. On August 11, Ginkel's corps (30 battalions and 80 squadrons) was sent to Waterloo, 15 Km south of the city and 12 Km east of Halle. His HQ was in the house where Prince Vaudémont had been born.

King William came the same day and assessed the situation. He ordered Ginkel to send Vaudémont 10 battalions. The latter met with William on August 12. Presumably he was able to assuage any fears because the King returned to the siege. Duke Max, who had accompanied him, went on to Brussels, where his wife was expecting. Ginkel was left to cover the western approaches, moving back and forth between Genappe and Pont-à-Celles.

The Bombardment of Brussels, August 13-15

By the end of August 11, Villeroi had occupied the high ground along the Senne, about 2 Km from the Allied camp. A portion of his force was still at his old camp. His Right overlapped the Anderlecht camp and his Left stretched toward the Brussels Canal. D'Harcourt commanded a detachment at Halle to prevent Ginkel (currently doing the same thing on the other side of the river) from crossing and cutting the French off from Mons.

The two armies were separated by inundated ground, so a battle was unlikely. It was also impossible to conduct a siege of the city. However, Villeroi's orders were not to lay siege, but to conduct a terror bombardment, ostensibly in reprisal for the naval shelling of Dunkirk which occurred on August 1. Villeroi wrote to the Governor (August 13) with the offer to spare the city if William would agree to suspend his naval bombardment program, but he did not expect a reply, and did not get one.



Brussels
showing the Bombardment of 13-15 August 1695

From the positions shown, which was on (slightly) elevated ground the French cannon could reach more than halfway across the city. Period maps show no cannon on the north side of Ransart but from the written descriptions it seems there must have been batteries emplaced south of the Flanders Road; the best location for the mortars is behind Ransart.

During the night of August 12 the French erected between 10-18 cannon in a trench dug between the faubourg of Koekelberg and the Anderlecht Gate. This spot was ideal. It overlooked the city, but not from a great height. An Allied post on the causeway connecting Brussels and Anderlecht was cleaned out after an hour's resistance. The French then garrisoned all the houses along the causeway to screen their batteries. By morning their trenches paralleled the city walls almost to the Flanders Gate.

By the morning of August 13 the French had emplaced 22 (or 25) mortars in two batteries behind a pair of barns just on the edge of the inundation (one of the barns had a thatched roof, so they filled it with earth). Receiving no definite reply to Villeroi's letter, at 6pm they began a continuous 42-hour (or 36-hour) bombardment of Brussels, firing 3,000 bombs and between 1,200 and 2,268 hot-shot. (The Governor of the city, the Prince de Bergues, did reply, but only to say he had forwarded the letter to William and wanted a 24-hour delay; Villeroi had given him only 5 hours.)

[D'Auvergne computes a higher ammunition expenditure by multiplying 42 hours by 3 salvoes per hour, times the number of guns. Working backwards, that gives a total of 18 cannon. The figure of 1,200 is derived by starting with 10 cannon. His figure of 2,925 bombs is not disputed.]

The bombardment was horrific by the standards of the day, creating a firestorm in the city which destroyed 2,000 houses, 17 churches, several palaces, a pair of townhouses, a monastery, and the town hall. Casualties were minimal since most of the population had left, but a notable one was the Electress of Bavaria, who suffered a miscarriage. D'Auvergne witnessed the bombardment and estimated the French were launching at least three salvoes an hour; each time, he counted 25 bombs in the air.

[Apart from the human aspects of the Electress' tragedy (she and Duke Max had been married less than a year), the miscarriage had repercussions in Poland, because her maiden name was Sobieska. The French ambassador to Poland had to do some crawling.]

The only troops capable of engaging the batteries were Rantsau's brigade, which still held the section facing the French, but although it had been reinforced to 4-5,000 men, this was insufficient for an attack. The city returned fire all day, and the next, but lacked ammunition for its 24-pounders and had few men able to work the cannon; the Army sent them a detachment. This counter-battery fire inflicted some casualties on the French.

The French mortars ceased fire at 9am on August 15, and their cannon at noon. Only now did the Allied guns finally knock down the barns masking the mortar batteries.

On August 17 the French retired to their camp between Enghien and Halle, but did not stay there. New orders from Versailles arrived to attempt a relief of Namur. Ginkel reorientated his corps to face the French, and Vaudémont also broke camp, sending his train marching through the night to join Ginkel, then following with the main body on August 18.

The Great Siege of Namur, July 1 – September 1.

At this point the reader should refer to the diagram labelled 'Siege of Namur 1695'. The reader will notice a number of significant improvements. As with the 1692 diagram, the besiegers' trench systems have been left out for reasons of space.

Namur had been regarded as a tough nut before Vauban got hold of it. In the three years since then it had received the best care and attention money could buy. Namur was the Sun King's 'darling', the greatest siege victory of his reign, at which he had been present. It could not be allowed to fall. And yet, Villeroi was not prodded into relieving it. The French believed it could hold on its own.

There are discrepancies regarding some of the details of Vauban's improvements. The trace used for the 1695 diagram was by the same artist (N. Fer) as that of 1692 but may include projects that were not implemented. Some of the improvements named in the sources appear to be present already in 1692.

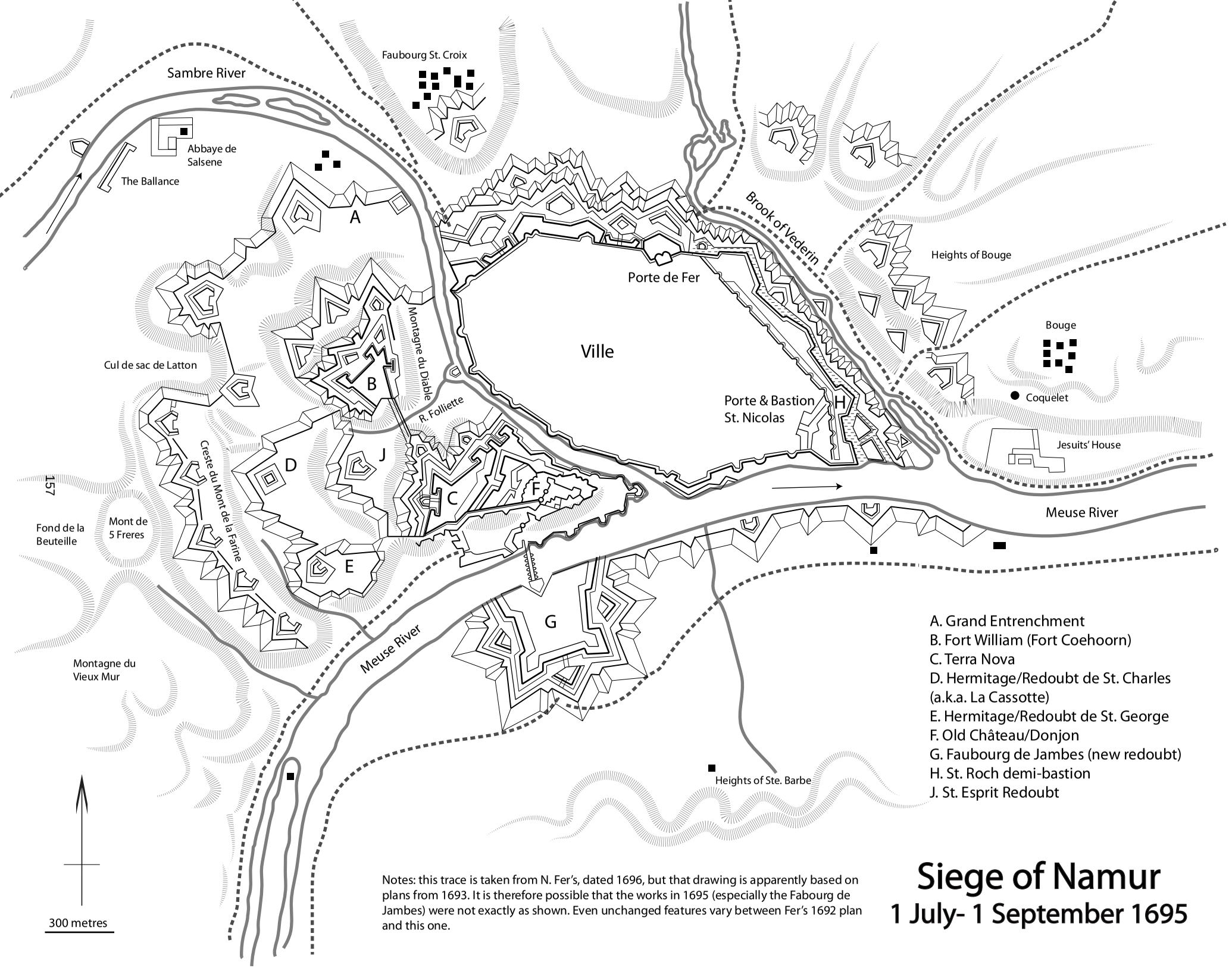
The Heights of Bouge were now heavily fortified. Coehoorn has apparently begun to work on them, but lacked enough manpower. According to the sources, the redoubts and demi-lunes shown on the diagram were connected, at least in part, by a palisaded covered way. A detached bastion with bomb-proof casement was added in front of the St. Nicholas Gate. Two bastions were added to the Porte de Fer.

For the Citadel, a new stone redoubt with another bomb-proof casement, called the Saint Esprit or Grand Redoubt, was added to the saddle between the two main forts. Although the plans show it facing outward, toward the southwest, its primary purpose was to lock up the ravine of the Folliette, which the French had successfully used in 1692 to isolate the Coehoorn Fort. Attackers using the ravine were now subject to enfilade fire. This new redoubt was protected by its own a covered way running from the Coehoorn Bastion to the cliff face overlooking the Meuse.

The Coehoorn itself was given a pair of new redoubts and a covered way farther down Mont Diable; this covered way ran down to the Sambre. Also, the hermitage of Saint George, on the same ridge as La Cassotte, was turned into a redoubt.

The Faubourg de Jambes also appears (from the diagram) to have been extensively redesigned. But it was abandoned relatively quickly, so perhaps the work was not completed.

On top of all this, 9 redoubts, linked by entrenchments, ran across the whole front of the Citadel between the two



Notes: this trace is taken from N. Fer's, dated 1696, but that drawing is apparently based on plans from 1693. It is therefore possible that the works in 1695 (especially the Fabourg de Jambes) were not exactly as shown. Even unchanged features vary between Fer's 1692 plan and this one.

Siege of Namur
1 July- 1 September 1695

rivers. This was the Grand Entrenchment, sometimes called the Vieux Murs, after the hill which faced it on the southwestern end. Only the ceremonial gate in the center of this line was unfinished. It was 1,500 paces (1,200 metres) long and its ditch was 5 metres wide and 3 metres deep.

The view of the Citadel from the Allied perspective was of tier upon tier of trenches, ravelins, redoubts, bastions, and horn-works, every post covered by fire from multiple directions.

Maréchal Boufflers was Governor; Guiscard remained as his lieutenant. They disposed of 12,000 foot (20 battalions), 4,000 dragoons (24 squadrons), and 120 cannon, plus miners and engineers. In store were 500,000 pounds of powder, 80,000 grenades, 10,000 spare arms, and provisions for 6 months.

[Lynn says 13,000 men were added to the permanent garrison. This includes the dragoons, so in 1694 there would have been 3,000 men in the garrison.]

Three Allied corps completed the initial investment, as has been described. Once they were all in place, some adjustments were made. Ginkel isolated the town in a semicircle from the Sambre to the Meuse. Duke Max occupied the southwestern ground between Sambre and Meuse, in front of the citadel. Heiden masked the Faubourg de Jambes on the right bank of the Meuse. Each segment was linked to each of its neighbours by a bridge. William's HQ was at Flawinne, 3-4 Km west of the citadel on the right bank of the Sambre. That of Duke Max was about 2,300 metres south, at Malonne, an abbey on the left bank, beyond a wooded ridge running east-west from the citadel.

The investment technically began on July 1. On July 6 the heavy baggage arrived, without which no 'party atmosphere' could be created. By July 7 the lines of contravallation were well underway and the rivers bridged, but King William's full strength was not yet deployed. The Allies made use of the old French entrenchments, which had not been properly filled in, except, d'Auvergne says, at a spot called Maulx, where they dug at a greater distance from the fortress.

There was also a delay bringing up the siege train. It took so long to arrive that the people of the town began to believe the Allies were really intending to take Charleroi instead. The guns were nearly always stored at Maastricht. Earlier in the campaign they had been brought by water up to Liège. Called forth during high summer they found the river above Huy too shallow for the barges and the guns had to be transhipped in smaller boats. The pieces, 120 cannon and 80 mortars, hove into view on July 11.

Meanwhile, the cavalry was sent to Mazy, just east of Ligny and a day's march WNW of Namur. They were to cover the most likely approaches north of the Sambre. This also meant the infantry did not have to waste time collecting food for the horses.

While his soldiers delved, William span. Or rather, planned. The first goal was the reduction of the Heights of Bouge. This would allow artillery to be brought to bear on the town. Heiden was to simultaneously reduce the Faubourg de Jambes. Mont Saint-Barbe was the key here; it allowed batteries to be erected in a dominating position with range not only of the faubourg, but of the town and Citadel.

In any siege of consequence there was a rotation of officers of the day, usually a major general or lieutenant general, and his subordinate, usually a brigadier or major general. Overall (permanent) command of the siege of the Town was given to the artillery commander, the Bavarian, von Tettau, and Major General du Puy. Coehoorn did not concern himself with trifles, he was to command the siege of the Citadel. But the honour of opening the trenches against the Heights of Bouge was given to *generaal-majoor* Fagel, on July 12. The honour was nearly his last duty. His position was immediately attacked by a French sortie of 1,200 men, repulsed by his own 6 battalions of Dutch. A day or so later he was shot in the neck by a spent ball, but soon returned to duty. Other major generals and brigadiers succeeded each other as the days passed.

Progress was slow. The engineer officers were described as 'lethargic'. The real problem was that William and his staff were in too much of a hurry. They were beginning to realize the siege had left them unable to counter French operations elsewhere. Yet it was a point of pride that they not abandon it. King William also desired that the town be spared as much damage as possible.

William had a point. Von Tettau, his General of Artillery, initially sited his batteries too far away to do any damage, while the first trench line opened against the Heights of Bouge was subjected to enfilade fire from the town (they must therefore have been facing west).

The besiegers concentrated along the line of lunettes opposite the Saint Nicolas Gate, which ran the length of the Heights of Bouge, from an old tower called the Tour de Cocklé (or Coquelet) on the Allies' Left, to the Balart on their Right. The Tour de Cocklé, sited in advance of the covered way, enfiladed the attackers and caused some misery. On July 13 the Allies set up three cannon to reduce it. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Meuse, Heiden unmasked a 6-7 gun battery to strike the reverse of the Citadel.

On July 14 the cavalry corps, under Ginkel, moved west to Piéton. Vaudémont had just reestablished himself north of Ghent and it was possible Villeroi might hold him there and advance to the rescue with a portion of his army. A few days later, having eaten the country bare, Ginkel camped at Pont-à-Celles. His intent was still to strip the country, this time on the French side. So, after a few days

he moved to Binche, 18 Km southwest, then backtracked 6-8 Km northwest to Mariemont and Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont. From here he sent 16 squadrons of horse under Brigadier Count Lippe toward Givry, some 18 Km southwest, taking contributions along the way.

On his return, Lippe captured Binche almost by mistake; he abandoned it as indefensible. The town had a small French garrison, as it was used for winter billeting, but its defences were extremely weak – 'decayed' is the word d'Auvergne uses. Some of Lippe's men went marauding and got into a skirmish. The French pursued, were pursued in turn by Lippe's column, and the town was taken.

Also on July 14, a French raiding party from Charleroi intercepted the English pay convoy. Most of the convoy got through, but the French stole some of the money, and some was scattered about when a wagon overturned, to the probable enrichment of the escort.

The same day, Duke Max unmasked a battery of mortars against the Citadel and began trenches of his own. The work proceeded at a leisurely pace, since no attack on the Citadel was contemplated until the town fell. Fire was also directed against a French post guarding one of the crossings of the Sambre, and a watch was kept on it for some days, in case the enemy tried an amphibious sally.

The first general assault on the Heights was scheduled for 6pm on July 18, the trenches now being within pistol shot of the works. There had been some delays. On July 15 the engineers, scouting in the middle of the night, could not find the spot where the trenches were to begin (it was in a hollow). This meant the English troops were a day behind the Dutch. However, starting from 'dead ground', they were closer to the covered way.

22 battalions took part in the assault: 3 English Guards (1 from each of the First, Coldstream, and Scots) and 2 Dutch on the Right, 9 English and Dutch in the Center (including a battalion of the Scots Guards and the Dutch Blue Guards), and 8 Dutch on the Left. The assault on the right and center was commanded by Major General George Ramsey, on the left by *general-majoor* Salust. The Guards battalions led with the line battalions in reserve. The first men out of the trenches in each sector were 120 fusiliers carrying fascines, followed by 120 grenadiers and then 100 pioneers.

The attack went like clockwork. Supporting fire was given by the battery targeting the Cockle, by some guns belonging to Duke Max which fired across the Sambre at the trenches linking the Heights with the town, and by the Brandenburg guns targeting the rear of the Heights, though they were out of range of the Heights. The greatest success was had on the English end. After occupying a fortified farmhouse in front of the French lines, the fascine-men filled the ditch and crossed them, followed by the grenadiers blithely tossing bombs into the redoubts on either side. The French fell back into a *place d'armes* on their side of the counterscarp. Though they returned fire for a while, Ramsey's reserves forced them back and they retreated off the Heights down to the Brook of Verderin.

Many of the defenders tried to hide among a number of quarries on the hillside, and most of those who did so died there. Boufflers has been blamed for not providing a suitable line of retreat. It is assumed he lacked enough men to provide covering fire. However, the Dutch had a harder time, losing many men to the cannons in the redoubts. With support from their second line they broke through, mixed clumps of English and Dutch fighting under whichever officer was within earshot.

The Allies did not pursue but consolidated their gains, throwing up a retrenchment on the enemy side of the works against a possible counterattack. Most of the battalions were then pulled back for a rest. Losses on both sides were heavy, with estimates rising as high as 2,000 apiece, though 1,200 for the Allies and something higher than that for the French, seems more likely. D'Auvergne says prior to the assault the French reinforced their lines, meaning the Allies faced perhaps 8-9 regiments of foot and at least one of dragoons.

On the evening of July 20, the French razed and abandoned the Faubourg de Jambes, despite a local success against the Brandenburgers achieved by a sally in that quarter on July 17. 100 Allied soldiers were killed and the French filled in about 150 paces-worth (100 metres) of approach trench, but that would not halt the Germans for long. Indeed, by July 20 they had nearly completed their parallels in the bend of the Meuse.

Holding the Heights, the Allies next had to reduce the town. In 1692 they had voluntarily abandoned it, but Boufflers had enough men to make a fight. The English approach trenches were dug down the Heights toward the Saint Nicolas Gate. The Dutch headed for the Meuse, toward the feature called the Jesuits' House – a monastery complex. From here they could erect a battery to fire at the Meuse Bastion (or demi-bastion), defending the gate on the river side. The Jesuit's House was dominated by the cliffs of the Citadel's hill on the far bank of the Sambre, but was safer from fire just because those cliffs prevented cannon from shooting down at them.

(King William spent all his days in the trenches, narrowly missing death several times. The fact that his staff tended to huddle around him made him more of a target, but they also served as human shields. Apparently he had no faith in his engineers and insisted on supervising everything personally.)

As the trenches advanced, the Allied guns were warmed up, bombarding the town and plinking at the Citadel. Every day a new battery, or perhaps two, was unmasked. Fire was concentrated on the Saint Nicolas Gate, but also on the Bruxelles Gate, which faced north, not far from the Sambre; this was a diversion. William had 11 batteries,

including heavy guns sent from Bruges and Ghent, firing on either side of Saint Nicolas. (D'Auvergne says about dedicated 30 pieces, plus a mortar battery and a long range battery on the Heights.)

On July 24 it began to rain, heavily enough to fill the trenches, dampen the gunpowder, and generally make life miserable. It let up for an afternoon, then began again. According to d'Auvergne (Vol. 1695, p. 70) 'more rain has fallen this Season than has been known for many years before.'

By the next morning the English had isolated the detached bastion (some sources call it a demi-lune) directly in front of the Saint Nicolas Gate (the one south of the Saint Roch Demi-Bastion). Its commander refused to surrender his men, but asked permission to retire into the town. This was refused in turn. That afternoon, mortar bombs set fire to the church adjoining the gate. It was being used as a magazine, and blew up.

Mining of the detached bastion began on the night of July 25. What with the mining and the bombardment, on July 26 the commander of the bastion agreed, after some back and forth, to surrender at discretion, before his command was blown up. D'Auvergne says, 'the Miner was applied', which suggests they were using an engine of some kind. This gave the Allies access to the Gate, though its flanking bastions and Saint Roch threatened enfilade fire. The latter was chosen as the next target and during that same day a battery was erected which could fire at it.

The first assault on the town took place on July 27. Whether it succeeded or failed depends on the source. If, as it appears, the aim was to seize the gate, it failed. However, at a cost of some 7-800 men the Allies did obtain a lodgement on the covered way south of Saint Roch. The ground here was a labyrinth of ditches and sluices and dikes and the French pinned down and slaughtered the attackers. But, they could not dislodge them.

Ramsey again led the assault, with Lord George Hamilton as his brigadier. Childs says 8 English battalions took part, but d'Auvergne mentions 5 English battalions, a possible Dutch battalion (Nassau), Dutch grenadiers supported by their battalions, and even a Swedish officer who was killed, so the honours should be shared.

'*Notwithstanding the Grenadiers gained the Glacis, but the Enemies, under the cover of their Traverses, very much annoyed our Men, and disputed the Lodgments upon the Glacis very hard; for which reason the Regements of Ingoldsby and Sunderson marched out of their Trenches to the Assistance; but when they came to lodge the Wool-sacks and gabons upon the Palissades of the Glacis, the Enemies, who still defended themselves by the favour of their Traveses [traverses], set them on fire, and sprang two or three Fougaces or little Mines which did some damage. Several Grenadiers leap'd over the palissades in the cover'd way, where they fought with a great deal of Bravery and Courage in the thick of the Enemies. The Lodgement was made at last, and the Enemies were forced to abandon the Counterscarp.'*

D'Auvergne, Vol 1695, p. 87.

[A Fougasse was a pit filled with explosives topped with stones and scrap metal – a 'land mine' in the modern sense.]

The extent of the lodgement was from the face of Saint Roch to the detached bastion, to the point of the Meuse Bastion. The casualties were heavy not only because the French resisted bitterly but because the French still held two or three redoubts on the Heights of Bouge (named Saint Fiacre, Piednoir, and Saint Anthony), from which they fired light artillery against the rear of the assault.

[D'Auvergne calls the Allied casualties 'not very great', which may serve to suggest the expected casualty rates for such an assault. On the other hand, he was trying to portray a badly handled siege as a great victory for his King. As usual, the officers and engineers formed a disproportionately high ratio of the losses. From the rearward bombardment an unusual civilian casualty was sustained: the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, who was talking to the King about the Army's pay. William was observing the assault at close range.]

While this assault was taking place, Duke Max launched a subsidiary operation in the bend of the Sambre north of the Citadel. Due north of the Grand Entrenchment's northwestern redoubt lay a fortified house and redoubt called the Ballance. The Balance proper sat on the right bank of the Sambre and the redoubt on the left bank. Behind the Ballance was another strongpoint, the Abbaye de Salsene. Both posts were held by the French, but not strongly. D'Auvergne faults Vauban for not cutting off the river bend completely by running the Grand Entrenchment straight north. It is not clear why the line was bent; perhaps that would not have made best use of the ground, and besides, for the Allies to mass between the Sambre and the works would have been suicidal – provided the French had sufficient men and artillery.

Some of Duke Max's men, 100 Bavarian grenadiers and 500 musketeers, with an equal number of Dutch, supported by 150 fusiliers, crossed to the Sambre's left bank by the existing communication bridge (which was above Flavennes), then came downstream and assaulted the isolated posts under the covering fire of 4 batteries.

While this was taking place, another 50 grenadiers and 300 musketeers, with 600 men in support, came down the right bank. These forces were followed by 6 squadrons of horse and dragoons, ready to counterattack any enemy sallies. Immediately following all, 6 bilanders (large barges with sails) were floated down. These were equipped with breastworks to shield against musket fire and carried 200 Bavarian infantry.

The attack went well. The Allied batteries wrecked the Ballance and its associated retrenchments. There was an artillery duel between French and Bavarian light pieces at

the Sambre end of the Grand Entrenchment; a pair of French guns about halfway up the slope of the hill overlooking the approach route fired on the troops advancing along the riverbank, while the Bavarians tried to suppress them. Fairly quickly, the Allied batteries dislodged the French pieces; the defenders then set up another battery between the Ballance and the Coehoorn.

Once they reached the bottom of Mont Diable (on their right flank), the assaulting parties were in dead ground. The larger party assaulted the Ballance and the smaller its associated redoubt. The detachment on the far bank also helped the engineers erect a bridge, then crossed it to reinforce the attack against the Ballance.

3 battalions and 4 squadrons of dragoons of French (that would be just about all the cavalry and 15% of the infantry), who were camped at the top of Mont Diable, launched a counterattack, coming from between the Coehoorn Fort and La Cassotte Redoubt, but their response was sluggish. The Ballance was taken and the crossing point secured before they could reach the Allies. The counterattack was called off.

100 Allied soldiers were then sent to take position of the Abbey Salsene, which the French immediately abandoned. In the whole operation the Allies lost perhaps 40 men. They fortified the end of the bridge, which was safe from enemy artillery fire due to the steep slope of the hill.

Work continued against the town. On July 28, the Allies began erecting a battery at the foot of the Heights of Bouge to fire upon the final demi-lune covering the Saint Nicolas Gate and the Saint Roch Bastion. To counter the Allied lodgement, the French dug a retrenchment from the Meuse to the western end of the Saint Nicolas Church. D'Auvergne says it was 'in the figure of a hornwork', so quite elaborate.

On the other side of the Meuse, the Brandenburgers finished their parallels, which ran along the bank of the Meuse above and below the bend, linking them with a communication trench. With the faubourg and connecting bridge isolated, Boufflers burned all the boats moored under the town wall – the batteries across the Meuse were already creating breaches on that side and he did not want some night amphibious assault surprising the garrison.

[The Brandenburg Corps had no cannon; these were Dutch batteries under its command.]

The Allies intensified their bombardment. The batteries on the right bank of the Meuse were directed to fire against the stone dike that held back the water in the wet ditch, but they barely dented it.

That night (July 28) a *feu de joie* was fired three times by all the Allied cannon, mortars, and muskets in the trenches. News had come of the fall of Casale, in Italy. As mentioned elsewhere, Casale was a strong French fortress located deep within enemy territory, and a bone of contention between the Duke of Savoy and the French. It had held for 6 years. The Allies did not know its fall had been prearranged as the price of Duke Victor changing sides.

The securing of the river crossing at the Ballance would ultimately make the Grand Entrenchment untenable, but the French retained it for a few days. On the morning of July 29, Duke Max concentrated his forces at the Ballance for an assault, but the preparations took too long. King William, expecting fierce resistance, postponed the attack until the next day. During the night, the French withdrew their artillery from the trench. This was a grave mistake, but Boufflers felt he lacked enough men to hold the line and decided he needed to save his guns.

During the same night the Dutch pushed the their trenches to the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse, under the Meuse Bastion. Some additional traversing work and they were in a position to mine the retaining dike.

On the morning of July 30, Duke Max's men made their assault, against light opposition. From the Ballance, 4,000 men headed up the hill toward La Cassotte. They came on in several lines. At the same time, 4,000 more made a frontal attack against the Trench itself, centered on the Grand Gate. The Dutch and Bavarians were on the Gate's left, and some Brandenburg battalions on the right. To prevent a sally against the flanks, 1,000 cavalry were posted between the Ballance and the Abbey of Salsene. Duke Max participated personally in the attack.

The Grand Entrenchment was not a furrow scratched in the earth. It had two traverses, blasted and hewn out of the solid rock of the hill. And yet, the Dutch soon broke in. A battery of 7 guns worked to crumble the parapet. The defenders fell back into the line of communication trench which ran up to La Cassotte, and the Dutch, under Schwerin, followed, pressing hard. On the right, the Brandenburg battalions pushed more slowly, but steadily, preventing the French from shifting forces to the communication trench; eventually, they also penetrated the Grand Entrenchment.

On the Sambre side, 300 Bavarians were sent to take out a battery of 2 guns firing down the slope toward the Abbey. They took the position but found the guns removed. The attackers pressed on, supported by 300 Dutch and some Bavarian dragoons, chasing the French right up to the Coehoorn Fort, where many of the pursuers were mown down in a crossfire.

Once taken, the Grand Entrenchment was to be converted into the start line for the next phase, the assault on the Coehoorn, which would be postponed until the town fell. In the meantime, a lodgement was developed facing the covered way in front of La Cassotte, This covered way ran across the whole of the hill above them. After it was taken, La Cassotte would have to be

taken, and only then could Coehoorn be considered. The French challenged the attackers furiously, but mainly with artillery. In the assault, the Allies lost a mere 20 men or so, but in developing and holding the lodgement, they lost about 300.

July 30 was a busy day. The Dutch blew a mine in the dike. It was not a spectacular success. Apparently the thing just sort of subsided. However, the water level in the Ditch began to drop. This was also the day that the news of Dixmyude came, which depressed everyone.

July 31: English siege guns arrived from Ghent, shipped by water to Malines, then up the Dyle as far as possible, then carted over land. They were emplaced the next day, so that on August 2, 18 English cannon began to pound the face of Saint Roch. The stonework soon slid down.

At this point, Saint Roch was still in French hands. The Allies had only a tenuous lodgement on the covered way to its left (as the Allies looked at it – that is, toward the Meuse). The French held the covered way on the other side, and their fire was galling. It was decided to expand the lodgement by an assault against Saint Roch on the evening of August 2.

The attack began when the reliefs were scheduled to take place. In a siege of this size, especially when there were so many spare troops, the battalions would rotate through the trenches on a daily basis. The handover, which also included a change of duty officers, normally took place at dusk. Assaults were often arranged for this time of day, not only because of the low light, but because in a pinch the outgoing units could be held on the line to give additional support.

Once again, Ramsay commanded. His brigadier was a man named Fitz-Patrick. The forlorn hopes consisted of 200 English grenadiers attacking the covered way directly, and 200 Dutch attacking the breach at Saint Roch. Each of these assault teams was supported by about 4 battalions. These typically remained in the saps and approaches, and would feed men forward as needed.

'The attack began but little before sunset, and the Dispute lasted very late in the Night. Our Cannon and Mortars made a terrible noise, and the small-shot went on very briskly for a great while. The Enemies disputed their Lodgment very long and very well, where some of their Officers signalized themselves very much, particularly one, who stood a great while upon the very pallisades, expos'd to all the Fire of our Cannon, encouraging his Men and waving his Hat over his Head: The Earth torn up by the grazing of our Cannon-balls covered him twice or thrice, and when our Officers, who admired his Bravery, expected him to be knock'd on the head, he still got up again: However, in spite of the Enemies resistance we extended our Lodgment considerably upon the Right… The Dutch Grenadiers marched on very bravely over the Digue [dike], though it was but narrow, and consequently a very disadvantageous Defile to attack a Breach; nevertheless they carried it, and lodged themselves upon the Demi-Bastion, of which they continued Matters for above an hour; but the Demi-Bastion being narrow, and the Grenadiers crowded upon it, the Enemy so pelted them with Granado's from the old Wall within, that they were forced to abandon it, and to lodge themselves without, at the foot of the Bastion…'

D'Auvergne, Vol 1695, pp. 96-97

Some casualties were sustained by friendly fire, as the cannon never ceased, but d'Auvergne says the Guards only suffered 22 casualties, and assumes the other units had similar losses. Other sources say 200-300 casualties. King William himself was somewhere down in the trenches, and remained there until after midnight. Contrary to d'Auvergne's account, however, the Allies were forced to retreat.

Throughout the next day, the Allied batteries pounded Saint Roch and the demi-lune that formed part of Saint Nicolas' immediate works, breaking down the bridge that connected the latter to the curtain wall. Both sides expected the assault would be renewed on August 4, but before it commenced, the *comte* de Guiscard, the lieutenant of the fortress himself, appeared on the breach and had a white flag put up. At this the Allies ceased fire.

The parley was held at the breach. Guiscard said the French were still able to hold, but they wanted to spare the town, so were willing to give it up. In reality, Boufflers believed the Allies would carry the breach on the next assault. His position was fatally compromised because the works along the Meuse facing the Brandenburgers were insufficient to prevent them enfilading the town wall from Mont Sainte Barbe. He was effectively down to 50% of his original garrison.

Ramsay had to consult his superiors, Holstein-Plön and the King. Also, Duke Max had to be informed. It was his staff that would draft the surrender terms. Hostages were soon exchanged, but the capitulation was not signed until the following day, at 10am. There were 17 articles, ranging from a guarantee that the Catholic religion was to be preserved in the town, but that there would be a 'free exercise' of all faiths; that the inhabitants would be free to leave within three months; that the minefields would be identified.

The garrison was allowed 6 days to withdraw into the Citadel. Two days were allowed to deliver up a gate – the Porte de Fer – to the Allies, signifying the change of ownership. This included the surrender of the towers on the Meuse Bridge which were part of the Porte de Fer complex; the French retained the drawbridge. Critically, the Allies did *not* agree to refrain from erecting batteries in the town as the French had done. So, the French destroyed the bridge leading to the Citadel and tore down all the houses along the riverbank.

[D'Auvergne says the Allies did not refuse to demilitarize the town, but that the French forgot to include it in the capitulation. Certainly it is not written there, but that does not mean they forgot to include it; Duke Max was the one who had the document drawn up, not the French.]

[The capitulation is usually dated to August 4, but d'Auvergne says the parley only took place that day. Since the capitulation was signed the following day, that makes it August 5. But, the Allies occupied the gate on August 6. Perhaps they did not bother to wait the stipulated time.]

D'Auvergne noted that the town was only slightly damaged and thought that the French could have held off at least one more assault. He guessed that they had lost a lot of men, though, and that Boufflers wanted to conserve his strength. He estimated 7,000 men were transferred to the citadel, and that about 5,000 were either killed, too wounded to move, or had deserted; the Allies found 500 deserters skulking in the town cellars.

Villeroi to the Rescue

Villeroi arrived too late to interfere with the siege in any meaningful way. Ginkel had already been reinforced (August 6) out of the excess men at the siege, to the tune of 30 battalions (13 English, 17 Dutch) under Count Nassau, marching by Temploux, Mazy (August 7), Sombreffe (where they joined 32 (or 40) squadrons of cavalry, including some Spanish), Genappe (August 8), to a place d'Auvergne calls Libercey (probably Lillois-Witterzée, a spot within 2 Km of Hougmont, of Waterloo fame) where they linked up with Ginkel, who had just recrossed the Piéton.

At that time, Villeroi was at Enghien enroute to Brussels. Ginkel's intentions were either to fall back on Mazy if Villeroi approached him or to march to join Vaudémont if the French headed for Brussels. 1,000 horse under the Spanish general, du Puy, were sent west to observe and secure the defile of Braine le Château, the route the corps would need to take if it marched to join Vaudémont.

But, as has been recounted, the French bombarded Brussels, Villeroi disengaged, and Vaudémont moved to join Ginkel. On August 18 the whole of the Allied covering army, 70 battalions and 182 squadrons, held a position parallel to the Namur-Brussels causeway, between Waterloo and Genappe.

Villeroi delayed his advance, waiting for reinforcements from the coast and from the Rhine. The latter, 12 battalions and 12 squadrons of dragoons, were at Rocroi on August 17. The Allies matched this force; 10 battalions and 22 squadrons of Lüneburg and Hessian troops under the Landgrave of Hesse. The man himself arrived at Namur on August 15, and his troops soon after.

On August 18 Vaudémont moved his camp to Saint Amand, on the Ligny battlefield. On August 20 he fell back to Mazy. King William assumed command here, leaving Duke Max, who had returned to Namur, to conduct the siege.

This camp was very strong. The French had used it in 1692. The Allies were in the usual two lines. The texts describe the camp as a convex curve, but it was almost a three-quarters circle. The lines ran from Temploux on the Right something like 6-7 Km northwest to Vaudémont's HQ at the castle of Golzinne, then followed the course of a small river called the Orne running down to the Sambre from Gembloux, by the hamlet of Bossiiere to Mazy. Now a village, in 1695 Mazy was nothing but a gentleman's house beside a stone bridge over the Orne.

Here, the lines bent south, heading toward the Sambre between Mielmont and Spy, following the Orne. They did not extend all the way to the Sambre, but they did not have to. At that end, the Orne forms a deep wooded valley (much of the woodland still exists) which was impractical to attack. Probably, the line stopped at a spot where a ravine runs west down to the Orne about halfway between Spy and Mielmont.

The whole length of the lines, taking into account the curves, may have been about 12 Km. The threat would come from Sombreffe. In that direction, about Mazy, the valley of the Orne flattens out; toward Bossiere it again forms a steep wooded slope above which ran the Allied lines. Before an enemy could get at the northern or eastern sides of the camp, they would have to pass the Orne Valley with its belt of woodland, which ran all the way to Gembloux. The only defile here was covered by a pair of English brigades posted in entrenchments between the Orne and Golzinne (presumably facing southwest, not northeast). The artillery were massed at Mazy, covering the open approaches.

Villeroi was approaching. The Allied heavy baggage was sent away, to the bridge over the Meuse, below Namur. This was partly in case of a battle, and partly because forage was running short. William had 70 battalions and 182 squadrons, but Villeroi was expected to have more than double the number of battalions and perhaps 40 more squadrons. (The estimate was quite close; the French would have 119 battalions and 235 squadrons.)

On August 22, two brigades of horse, including the Liègeois, were sent to Brussels by way of Louvain. These joined with some Spanish horse guarding the capital and with Bellasise's detachment of 10 battalions, come from Ghent. These were to protect the Capital. A few reinforcing battalions (d'Auvergne names two) arrived at Mazy from Namur.

Villeroi crossed the Senne three days later, by way of Nivelles. The French then advanced and encamped with their Right at Seneffe and their Left toward Feluy and Arquennes, facing the Plains of Fleurus. For such a large army, the frontage was quite short, only 3,500 metres. This is where they rendezvoused with their reinforcements, particularly the Rhine contingent under *maréchal de camp* Pracontal.

In response, the Allied cavalry of the right wing, supported by a brigade of English foot, was brought up from Temploux to patrol the Orne woods. Welcome reinforcements arrived in the Mazy camp: the corps of the Landgrave of Hesse, who made a fine show. These were immediately set to work building an entrenchment between a pair of woods named St. Denis and Meux. If these woods were associated with the hamlets of the same names, this means the Landgrave's forces were deployed to the right-rear of the Allied position, nearly 9 Km northeast from Mazy, about level with Gembloux.

On August 26, Villeroi advanced to within 9 Km of the enemy, camping between Fleurus and Marbaix (Marbais), a frontage of 7 Km facing northeast. Throughout the Northeast, and at Paris, it was common talk that Villeroi was about to defeat William in battle and raise the siege. Villeroi sent his heavy baggage away to Mons. The artillery, 50 pieces, was arrayed in front of the army, along the Namur causeway, and fired a salvo to alert Boufflers of his arrival. Ironically, the garrison never heard the guns, because the wind was blowing the wrong way. However, a system of fire signals had been prearranged and these were in use until the Citadel capitulated. The French rested here until August 28.

William, who was alternating between the siege and the camp, decided the Mazy position required his presence, particularly as Vaudémont was indisposed. He made some adjustments, strengthening his Right with additional cavalry from the Left and making a stronger link with the Hessians at Saint-Denis. Two battalions of Guards and 12 of the line, plus more cavalry, were called from the siege, giving William a total of 97 battalions and 237 squadrons. William even summoned all his artillery officers from Namur to man his guns. 30 battalions continued the siege and 6 more garrisoned the town of Namur. More entrenchments were cut. A detachment of 60 men was sent forward to a spot south of Gembloux, to give early warning and hold their post as long as possible. Trees were felled to create barricades on the roads in this vicinity. If Villeroi found the lines in front of Mazy too strong, this would be the first place he would try to outflank the Allies.

[D'Auvergne says the average numbers per unit were 500 men per battalion and 110 per squadron, or about 16% understrength. He appears to be trying to say the Allies were still outnumbered by the French in raw terms, but the French units would also have been reduced in strength. Nonetheless, Villeroi did outnumber them, 120,000 men to 90,000.]

The lines now ran from Mazy, to Bossière, to Golzinne, over to Saint-Denis and Meux. Beyond Meux were the headwaters of the Méhaigne. The whole of the position ran for 12-14 Km.

On August 28, Villeroi shifted to his left, putting his Right on Gembloux and his Left on Grand-Leez, northeast of Gembloux (a frontage of 6,300 metres). This put him about 5 Km from the Allied Right. William made arrangements to sent detachments of grenadiers to lead an assault at Namur, but changed his mind, instead ordering that no one leave the camp and everyone be ready to stand-to if they heard three signal cannon.

Villeroi's progress had been leisurely rather than 'deliberate'. Even now he did not really expect Namur to fall. Neither did any one else in France. There was an instilled belief that a Marshal of France would never surrender a fortress. It was almost as if Villeroi was loitering so that he could appear before the walls as a saviour at the last moment.

After some cavalry probes toward Saint-Denis, he decided to attack William on August 29. Since William was informed of this by his spies, everyone in both armies expected a bloodbath the next morning. The Allies had to lie in their clothes all night with their arms ready. Even the feverish Vaudémont appeared at 3am to take his post at the head of the Guards. An hour before dawn (about 5:15am), the whole army stood to. A thick fog lay on the ground; visibility was no more than 50 yards.

Villeroi did not take advantage of the fog. Instead, he waited until noon, when it was burning off, then advanced through the woods to Saint-Denis… At this point, the reader should be informed that this is not Villeroi-And-His-Army, it is just the *Maréchal* and some staff riders. He wanted a closer look. The woods allowed the party to approach quite close unobserved, but at last they were spotted and the Allies put on a grand display for him, expecting at any minute to see the French van emerge. Instead, Villeroi rode back to camp, convinced he could not attack at this spot. There were three defiles through the woods. Each was blocked and covered by enfilading fire.

Villeroi next determined to attack William's Right and to have a portion of his army cross the Méhaigne to outflank him. This took more planning and reconnaissance. On August 29 and on August 30 the Allies stood to for battle but nothing happened. Meanwhile, William decided he could not postpone the assault against Namur any longer, and fetched 36 grenadiers from each company that had not participated in the siege, plus those from the companies of 18 battalions that had, sending them to the siege on August 29.

Villeroi tried manoeuvre. On August 30 he pulled back, camping between Perwez and Grand-Rosières, a frontage of about 3,700 metres, facing south. This put the French 10 Km north and slightly east of William's camp. The significance of this place was that the Méhaigne had its springs here, so the French were rounding that river. Also, the land was more open. They would have to cross the Méhaigne if they wanted to flank William, but it was not a great obstacle here.

Unfortunately, William's spies were still functioning and Villeroi's motions were anticipated. They were obvious, anyway. The Cavalry of the Right, supported by a brigade

of Foot, and the Landgrave's forces, was sent down to the river, camping with the village of Dhuy (4 Km NNE of the official end of the Allied line, at Meux) on their left and a wood on their right. 20 squadrons more were sent to observe the French, posting themselves much farther to the northeast, at Taviers and Boneffe, crossing points on the river 7-8 Km away in case of a wide turning movement.

This is where Villeroi tried to cross. He advanced his Left first, against the posts at Taviers and Boneffe. 40 squadrons attacked the latter crossing point, at which the Allied Horse withdrew from there, in some disorder. Their rearguard, consisting of dismounted dragoons from two regiments, was forced out from behind some hedges. All 20 of the Allied squadrons on this sector then withdrew, in 2 columns, the French following but not pressing hard. As the French advanced, it was expected that a general battle was immanent. In fact, an express was sent off to Versailles boasting of how the Allied Right had just been turned.

But, William's army had not suffered much damage. He happened to be taking lunch not far from Dhuy, and immediately ordered his Left and Center to redeploy facing the French. 4 battalions and a regiment of dragoons were left to hold the position at Mazy. The Guards were posted as a reserve to the right and rear of the entrenchments at Dhuy, which were still held. In front of them were the Landgrave's forces. Forward and to the right the Cavalry of the Right reformed, after a retreat of 7-9 km, near Upigny. 8 battalions remained at Saint-Denis to anchor the Left. This was enough to halt the French, who made no attempt to assault. Instead, they camped on a line stretching east-west from Ramillies, to Perwez, to about level with Orbais, a front of about 11 Km and about 6 Km away from the Allied line.

All this took place during the General Assault against the Citadel of Namur.

[The picture below is Jan van Huchtenburg's painting of the siege in 1695, with William and Duke Max in the foreground. William is dressed in grey.]

The Citadel

Although the Allies refused to refrain from setting up cannon in the town, they were still forced, by the terrain, to attack from the Citadel's landward side. Most of the garrison's stores were tucked away in caves beneath the hill, invulnerable to fire, and the angle of fire from the riverbanks was so great that only mortars would be effective against the works.

One hope was that the cisterns or the springs which fed them might be damaged; it was rumoured that the French were installing plumbing to pipe water up from the river. According to French sources, their only reliable water supply came from the lower town, along the Sambre below the Donjon. This led Boufflers to permanently station 2,200 men, or perhaps a third of his strength, there.

The Allies had so many troops that they were able to dispense with many of them. As already described, 30 battalions were sent away on August 6. This left 42 battalions to prosecute the siege; Boufflers had perhaps 8- or 9-battalions-worth of men remaining. King William (this is before he went to command the covering army on August 10) took over Duke Max's HQ at Malonne, while the latter ensconced himself at the Carmelite Convent.

The trenches against the Citadel opened on the night of August 12 and the first batteries were unmasked as well. The Grand Entrenchment was turned against the French, serving as the attackers' base. One line of advance was against La Cassotte, which was still spitting fire, though not very effectively. The other was against the Coehoorn Fort's hornwork. Against La Cassotte there were two trenches, one headed directly for it, and the other heading down the slope toward the Sambre in hopes of cutting off the water supply.

Only a portion of the Allied troops served in the lines at any one time, the rest encamping at some distance and being rotated through on a daily basis. It was decided that 100 men from each regiment would serve at a time, making about 4,000 men, plus another 700 who would do the digging. The Guards were exempt from the work.

The batteries were arranged as follows: 3 at the Faubourg St. Croix on the Sambre just outside the Brussels Gate, firing at the Coehoorn Fort; 1, plus some mortars, on the far side of the Meuse firing at the Lower Town (below the citadel) to keep the French off the waterside; a mixed battery of 4 light and 4 heavy mortars on the right bank of the Sambre opposite La Cassotte.

On August 13/14 the English advanced their approaches by 250 paces, and that evening a new battery of 13 guns was unmasked on the far side of the Meuse, against the lowest tier of Terra Nova and the Bulé Hornwork behind it, which faced the river. The batteries on the Sambre were also strengthened. 3 guns sited at the right end of the Allied line were replaced with heavier pieces; these fired on the Lower Town.

What followed next was an aborted attempt to seize the lower town by wading the Sambre. It was high summer, and obviously the water level must have been quite low. The guns created a breach 110 metres wide by the end of August 14. Moreover, the connecting walkway which led to the Donjon was damaged. But on August 15 the heavens opened. As Childs says (p.293), 'Pouring rain added to everyone's enjoyment.' The river rose to a depth of more than a metre, and the attempt was abandoned.

Time for Plan B. This was to copy the French and try to surround the Coehoorn Fort before proceeding to Terra Nova. On August 15 Duke Max's trenches advanced another 200 paces, beginning to cut off the defenders of the Coehoorn from the Sambre. A small sally of 60 French dragoons interfered with the work but were driven back. The enemy also emplaced 3 guns on the Coehoorn's covered way to fire down on the trenches. The Allies scored a lucky hit on a cache of grenades, but in general their bombardment was doing little damage.

August 16: the left trench advanced 170 paces and the other a similar amount. The trenches were being dug along the slopes, so that the rainwater ran down and filled them. Another 3 guns were brought partway down the slope from the Coehoorn to fire on the Allied works; the cannon there could not depress to fire at the trenches. The French had to dig retrenchments in front of the covered way to house the guns and supporting infantry.

August 17: the two approach trenches were far enough advanced for a lateral trench to be started. More batteries were erected in the town or on its rampart. Boufflers threatened to burn the town, so the Allies reminded him they had 500 wounded hostages who could not be moved. The French did engage in counter-battery fire, but not indiscriminate bombardment.

By August 18 the trenches had reached the foot of the glacis and were within musket range of the defenders. Despite the rain the average rate of advance was 200 metres per night. The French sallied vigorously at every opportunity, but those opportunities grew less and less, and more and more pointless, given the sheer mass of men opposed to them. The last French sally took place this day at 11pm. 5-600 grenadiers and 200 dismounted dragoons attacked out of Terra Nova against overwhelming opposition and were chased back.

'The French Grenadiers came down with a mighty Fury, making a great Noise as soon as they came near our Works, to strike a Terror among our Men; but we were ready for them, which they found by the briskness of our fire: The Van of the Enemies would then have retreated the same way they came; but being hinder'd by those that sustain'd them, they were obliged to turn to the Right, where they fell into the fire of the Out-guards we had place'd to cover our Trenches'

D'Auvergne, Vol 1695, p. 131.

The grenadiers came from La Cassotte. The dragoons made a separate sally between the Coehoorn and the Sambre. These got among the out-guards on the riverside but were repulsed by a reserve of Spanish dragoons stationed between the Abbey Salsene and the Allied trenches.

Boufflers main reason for stopping the sallies, however, was to limit desertion. The Allies did not appear to be inflicting much damage, but French morale began to drop under the constant bombardment. 150 guns, including 32 twenty-four pounders brought in on August 18, and 62 of Heiden's pieces firing from the faubourg across the Meuse, pasted the Citadel, mostly La Cassotte and the rear of Terra Nova.

D'Auvergne records a curious incident. In the night of August 18 a French officer was fished out of the Meuse. The remarkable thing is that he was not bringing important dispatches or vital intelligence, but merely trying to report for duty after a leave of absence!

Also on August 18 the Allies came up with a revised plan. Progress was so slow that Coehoorn suggested a massed bombardment. This would hopefully wreak such damage and confusion that the Allies could assault from their current positions without suffering high casualties.

By August 19 the trenches were advanced far enough that communications could be established with the batteries across the Meuse, while any assault could now be made general, washing against La Cassotte and the Coehoorn Fort simultaneously. However, the most advanced saps were still between 450 and 800 metres from where they should have been. As should be clear from the other sieges described in this Commentary, cannon normally had to be repositioned several times and ultimately brought right up to the desired breaching point, because the outer defences masked the inner ones. This was the case with Terra Nova's western face, but not with Fort Coehoorn, or for batteries beyond the Meuse. This would save many days' work.

Also on August 19, 70 more artillery pieces began firing out of the town, bringing the total number of cannon to 136. The cannon were arranged on the ramparts or the riverbank and the mortars concealed in walled gardens or behind houses. Coehoorn's plan was beginning to reveal itself.

On August 20 there was a short truce for the French to try and locate some missing officers. Otherwise the bombardment continued, and in the night the communication trench was finished. The next morning there was a concentrated barrage by all the Allied batteries ringing the Citadel.

The defenders's meat store was destroyed under the hail of shot. To balance that, a hay magazine was destroyed, so the garrison felt justified in eating the horses. The response from the guns of the Citadel was weak. 200 French were killed this day, against 7 Allied soldiers. Bouffler's closest male relation was killed beside him. The *maréchal* had only 9 cannon and 3 mortars which could fire northward, and these did not survive for long.

[They did manage to kill the 82-year-old former Spanish governor of Namur who was in the town.]

On August 22 a potential breach was identified, where the masonry on the hornwork's counterscarp was beginning to crack, although as a testament to the fortress' strength, it was estimated that another week would be required to make the breach practicable. The bombardment continued. Allied casualties dropped by at least 25%, which was the reverse of normal expectations.

On August 25, the Redoubt de la Sambre (or the Redoubt de Bourgeois) was surrounded and surrendered. This post lay on the right bank of the Sambre, facing up the Folliette Ravine; it had originally been an outwork of the town. The place had a garrison of only 15 (or 17) men and 1 officer, who were completely pinned by the fire from the other side of the river, which killed half of them. The redoubt was taken by a party coming down the Sambre on a bilander. When the French spotted the vessel, they surrendered. On the other end of the Allied line, the Brandenburg troops west of the Meuse pushed forward and cleared some houses in the lower town along the riverbank. This was the day King William began cycling his troops between the siege and the covering army. There was little for them to do, until the final assault came, if it was ever necessary.

August 26: with the Redoubt de la Sambre occupied, a battery of 10 guns was erected between it and the leftmost approach trench. Its target was a small bastion at the bottom of the curtain wall that descended from Terra Nova, which could not be hit from the town. The battery also had a better effect against the face of Terra Nova itself. In the night, the trenches between the Coehoorn and the Sambre advanced. The French dropped an 'infernal machine' on the workers – a cask filled with grenades and bombs – but the load was uneven, so it bounced all over the place and 'made more noise than mischief' (d'Auvergne). The battery opened fire on the morning of August 27.

Most of the defender's heavy guns had by now been dismounted. There were a few at the top of the Citadel which could not see or be seen. The light cannon, which were mobile, still galled the besiegers, playing 'shoot and scoot'. The only unusual incident on August 27 was an ambush by a party of 20 dragoons from Dinant who tried to attack a post of Bavarians down by the Meuse. Most of the Frenchmen were killed or captured.

By the night of August 28, the Allied generals concurred that it was time to assault. As already recounted, King William had planned to send them a body of grenadiers, but changed his mind due to fear Villeroi was about to attack, so that they did not arrive until August 29. There

were now 6 identifiable breaches: at the Gronis Gate in Terra Nova (at its apex), in the demi-bastion on Terra Nova's right, 3 on the right side of Coehoorn, and 1 in La Cassotte. Meanwhile, the spade-work continued. The French tossed down no less than 6 explosive devices, but did no damage.

There was still some concern that Villeroi, who showed no signs of actually desiring battle, might try an end run against one of the Meuse fortresses, or even Louvain, none of which had any garrisons to speak of. Still on August 29 William sent the go-ahead for an assault. It was scheduled for the afternoon of the next day. (On August 30, remember, Villeroi was in the process of withdrawing north to Perwez. He had no orders to attack Louvain or the Meuse fortresses, and no desire to make his own decisions.)

Directed by Menno van Coehoorn, the general assault involved 20,000 men, in some places stacked more than a kilometre deep. Reputedly, Coehoorn wanted to punch right through and storm the Donjon, but cooler heads prevailed. Still, elements of this idea appear in the final plan of attack.

Sometime between noon and 1pm two powder barrels were ignited as a signal. 3,000 English, consisting of massed grenadiers (700 men) and 4 battalions (all that was still present at the siege), made a frontal assault between the bank of the Sambre and the Coehoorn Fort. They had the job of breaking through to Terra Nova, plus securing the line of communication trench between Terra Nova and Coehoorn. 2,000 Dutch attacked La Cassotte. 3,000 Bavarians assaulted the western side of Fort Coehoorn, and a mixed force of 2,000 Brandenburgers and Hessians attacked it frontally. Finally, 2,000 more German troops pushed forward along the bank of the Meuse.

The attack gave the French no surprises. They were deployed to meet it, with a body of troops at Saint Esprit, La Cassotte, and Coehoorn. only 500 men were retained to defend Terra Nova, which was about 600 metres from the nearest saps.

The English were green troops, but it was expected that the 'tougher' assaults elsewhere would draw attention away from them, and that fire from the town would pin down anyone looking their way. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned. They only had room in the trenches to deploy the 700 grenadiers of the storming party and another 300 men detailed to secure the communication trench between Coehoorn and Terra Nova. The remaining 3 battalions had o wait well in the rear.

Then, the signals were not properly received. The attacks against Coehoorn were delayed. Moreover, the Bavarians drifted toward the Brandenburger assault against the north face, which had an easier approach route, leaving the defenders of Saint Esprit free to shoot at the English as they climbed the Folliette Ravine. The men in Terra Nova were also concealed from fire form the town. Crossing 900 paces (685 metres) of open ground, the English, shot at from three sides, did not falter.

Until they bumped into a fresh obstacle, a newly erected retrenchment. The 3 supporting battalions, meanwhile, were not in support at all. Their commander and his second in command were both shot dead at the same time, the latter by an Allied cannonball, as well as another battalion commander, and the third in command was badly wounded.

By then, most of the forlorn hope's officers were also dead or dying. Lord 'Salamander' Cutts, leader of the party (he was called Salamander because he seemed to thrive in the midst of intense battle) was knocked out by a head wound and half of his grenadiers were dead. Suddenly, it was all too much. The survivors ran away. Some rallied, in particular the Royal Irish, but a second attack using them and the supporting battalions also stalled. In the interval between the two attacks the French reinforced the sector with 1,200 fresh infantry and 200 of the elite *Du Roi* dragoons, led by *maréchal* Boufflers himself, supported by the defenders of Saint Esprit. These countercharged the second attack, which was enduring fire from no less than six directions. Lord Cutts, arrived back on the battlefield, assessed the situation, and called off the attack.

[The Royal Irish earned their name in this assault, for planting their colours in the breach.]

The other three assaulting elements made good gains. The Bavarians got a lodgement in the retrenchment of the point of the Coehoorn Fort, but could not make headway. Cutts decided to lead as many English as would volunteer to lend a hand. This amounted to flanking attack on the covered way by the men of Mackay's regiment, which was taken at sword point. The English then captured a battery of light guns and turned it on the defenders. (The lieutenant leading this effort was duly rewarded after the action.) At this the Bavarians, accompanied by Duke Max in person, renewed their own attack and gained the post. The Elector wandered up and down, directing small parties against various objectives and tossing out handfuls of gold to encourage the men.

By 5pm the besiegers had a solid lodgement in the Citadel complex. Thanks to the French concentrating on the English and Bavarians, the Dutch penetrated deeply toward La Cassotte, gaining an intervening ravelin and the upper point of the Coehoorn Fort. La Cassotte itself remained in French hands.

The remaining attack, by the Brandenburgers beside the Meuse, is described differently in the various sources. In some, they cleared not only the covered way between La Cassotte and the river but the retrenchment (presumably the hermitage of Saint George) behind it, penetrating to a depth of 300 paces (230 metres). They were able to extend the line to link up with the Dutch in front of La

Cassotte. In other accounts, this attack was repulsed. In total the lodgement may have stretched for a kilometre and a half.

The assault was not a complete success. Terra Nova remained out of reach. The French still held an unbroken defensive line. And, the Allies had lost 3,000 men to 500 French. Duke Max, by now an experienced siege commander, described the assault as 'very rough'. However, the lodgement was deemed secure, and the Allies worked all night to strengthen it.

On August 31 the Allies brought up their 'Miner' to work on the breach in the Coehoorn Fort and maintained their bombardment, though unfortunately they could no longer fire on the Coehoorn without hitting their own men.

Boufflers signalled his situation to Villeroi. Villeroi was having troubles of his own. This day he crossed the Méhaigne in force and advanced his Left as far as Upigny, which lies on high ground. William did not hold here but withdrew his troops into the main camp. Villeroi then made a personal reconnaissance escorted by two squadrons of hussars. He could be seen riding to and fro, coming up close to the entrenchments under cover of a hedge. The Allies dragged over some cannon to fire at him, but he bolted in good time. A few squadrons chased him but he got away. The Allies, who had shifted some battalions to meet the expected attack, engaged in a little 'picketing' with the enemy, but no attack developed. (Picketing in this context means individual soldiers going forward at their own whim to pot at each other for fun.)

Villeroi was still searching for a way to relieve Namur. He rode all the way to Vedrin, only 3,500 metres north of Namur, where there was a potential flat spot running down to the Meuse. But even here William had posted a strong guard, including much of his Cavalry of the Right, which had engaged the French the day before, supported by a couple of infantry brigades. William had a solid defensive line over 19 Km long.

It must be remembered that the French cavalry did not remain concentrated on the field, but ranged far and wide. In fact, penned in as he was, William's lines of communication were cut, because their patrols reached the Meuse on the one side and the Sambre on the other, while the French infantry and guns sat on the main route back to Louvain (which had to be garrisoned out of the small force covering Brussels). The only place left to forage was on the French side of the Sambre, which was described by a participant as 'very difficult country'. Supplies could get through by barge, but it was risky. However, the end was nigh. Villeroi may have 'laid siege' to William, but he could not save Namur. He signalled back to Boufflers that he could do nothing and that the latter should surrender.

(It would be interesting to learn whether Boufflers was given the impression that Villeroi's suggestion was a Royal Order, or if it even *was* a Royal Order. Neither marshal suffered politically from Namur's surrender.)

A truce was arranged about noon on September 1. It began as a two-hour pause while the French collected their dead, but just before the time was up, Giscard appeared at the breach asking to speak with Duke Max. Guiscard offered to yield the Coehoorn – it was so large the opposing troops were still intermingled amongst the various facilities and rooms. There was to be a ten days' truce while Villeroi tried to effect a Relief. This was refused, so at 4pm Boufflers offered a full capitulation. The terms were finalised at 3am on September 2 (although the document is dated September 1, when it was drawn up by Duke Max's staff).

"…then all the besiegers in the trenches and the besieged in their works discoursed and became so familiar that several officers went in and out. This occasioned an apprehension in the Governor that too many of us should get into the works, which made him fire a cannon at our trenches, upon which everyone retired to his own post and as soon as that was done they received a salvo from all out batteries which did them no small damage. Then, immediately, the chamade was beaten again."

Quoted in Childs, pp. 295-296.

[For some reason Lynn (p.249) says Boufflers was given until September 5 to be relieved. It is true the garrison marched out on that date.]

As usual, the casualty lists vary. Childs says the French lost 11,000 men. Lynn says 8,000, but he is basing that number on an initial count of 13,000; the crucial point is that there were 5,000 survivors. D'Auvergne, who was present at the siege, says there were 5,442 survivors out of his estimate of 12,000, meaning 6,558 were lost. The Allies captured 104 cannon, mostly dismounted, and 10 mortars, besides a large amount of powder and ammunition still remaining. (Alternate figures are 281,000 pounds of powder and 40,000 grenades, plus 68 cannon and 8 mortars). In England there was a day of public thanksgiving.

As the garrison marched out, bound for Givet, *maréchal* Boufflers, riding at the head of the column, was drawn to one side and arrested. It was explained that he was being held hostage for the return of the garrisons of Dixmyude and Deynze. Boufflers was 'incensed' but soothed when it was explained King William considered him equivalent to 6,000 men. He was offered parole but since he could not guarantee either that King Louis would release the garrisons or allow him to return from parole, he gave up his sword. As a matter of fact, this incident was to prove of great value in ending the war. He was incarcerated at Maastricht, but not for long.

Lynn and Childs interpret the fall-out differently in a few respects, but they agree on the essential point. Strategically, even operationally, the siege gained the Allies nothing. Childs (who omits to mention Allied losses)

looks primarily at the diplomatic angle. What with capture of the Sun King's 'darling', the loss of Dixmyude and Deynze, and the suddenly harsh treatment of POWs, any thought of peace had been put on hold, at least for another year. Of course, the breakthrough would be achieved in Italy, and it appears that King Louis was already anticipating this.

Lynn notes that so many men and so much treasure had been expended by the Allies on the siege (and lost in the terror bombing of Brussels) that they had not the means to continue in the field that year, and would scarcely be able to continue the war in the next. From Versailles' perspective, *that* was the whole point of the 1695 campaign. One French chronicler wrote: 'Since the outbreak of the present war the Allies have unceasingly lost towns and battles & a success like that at Namur has been such a novelty for them that their rejoicing made them forget how dearly they paid for the advantage'.

A contemporary pointed out that financial losses meant little to the Dutch Estates since the Spanish Netherlands was footing the bill. But the Spanish were broke and had to borrow from the Dutch with no guarantee they could pay the money back.

King Louis' long term strategic goal of a 'natural frontier' in the Northeast had received a setback, but it is questionable whether Versailles really had such a farsighted view of things. That concept was Vauban's baby, and only his. But, the King had lost face, and Villeroi had failed to use his initiative and make gains that could have been set against this. As Childs points out, kings went to war for Prestige, that is for the perceived value of a thing rather than its true value. As d'Auvergne wrote (Book 1695, p.40), 'it has added extreamly (sic) to the Glory of the Siege, and has made it one of the boldest and finest Undertakings of this Age.' Nonetheless, Louis must have decided the price the Allies paid for their success was worth his personal loss. Boufflers was created a duke.

[Guiscard, also, was promised the first opening in the Order of the Holy Ghost.]

The armies went into winter quarters at the end of September, earlier than usual. Besides general exhaustion and the continuous heavy rains, there were political considerations on the Allied side. By quitting now, King William could make capital out of his victory, whereas, if he continued in the field the Great British Public would expect even greater victories and blame him when they did not take place.

Once Namur surrendered, Villeroi, not stopping to witness the scenes of Allied jubilation, retreated southwest to cover Charleroi and Mons. He decamped so rapidly that some of his foragers were left behind. Apparently he did not hear of the surrender immediately, but when it was reported to him he retired to his room for several hours.

On September 3 he was near Charleroi. A few days before, the *duc* de Tallard arrived from Germany with 15,000 welcome reinforcements. Dinant was reinforced by 2,000 men.

The French garrison left Namur on September 5. The Allies gave a polyglot garrison of 25 battalions who had the unenviable task of erasing the effects of the siege. William's army then split up into its various components. The Brandenburgers and other Germans headed east, crossing the Meuse at Visé. William marched west with the remainder. On September 8 he was at Sombreffe and on September 10 between Halle and Lembeek, where the King took his leave on September 12.

Villeroi remained active for a few more days. On September 7 he was at Binche, and d'Harcourt left him to shadow the Brandenburgers. 3,000 men were sent to Bastogne under *maréchal de camp* Précontal. Shortly after, Villeroi moved toward Ath.

On September 20 the garrison of Ath made a small raid.

September 21: *maréchal* Boufflers, after a short incarceration at Maastricht, set out under escort for the French frontier. At Dinant the Brevet sent from Versailles met him and handed him his ducal patent.

On September 22 Duke Max, now commanding the Allies at Lembeek, shifted his camp to Sint-Kwintens-Lennik, 10 Km northwest. He needed new forage. It was still possible to observe Villeroi. Here, the order was given 'to hut', which meant the soldiers would take up permanent quarters in the camp, rather than being billeted in various towns.

On September 25, Duke Max began disassembling his army. The field artillery was sent by road and canal to Ghent this time; there were facilities for artillery storage there as well as at Maastricht.

By September 28, Villeroi also needed fresh pastures and marched to Leuze. D'Harcourt was at Philippeville, Précontal at Bastogne with 9,000 men.

On September 29, the Allied heavy train was sent to Ghent, followed by the English units, who would quarter in Flanders as usual. The Dutch appear to have remained in the camp. Villeroi then sent his own army into quarters.

Between October 11 and October 28, a large portion of Villeroi's army, minus its commander, who had gone to Paris, drifted west into Flanders, settling about Furnes. The weather was unseasonably good. Württemberg had returned to Nieupoort some time before, with his mix of Danish, English, and Dutch regiments. He pulled about 10,000 men out of their quarters to resist an apparent enemy attack, but soon learned the French were merely back at work on their Lines. This was not the only sector that received improvement. With the loss of Namur, Villeroi ordered the construction of new entrenchments

between the Sambre and Meuse. There were also plans to improve Charleroi and connect it with Mons.

Louis François de Boufflers, *duc* de Boufflers (1644-1711)

Born at Crillon, in Oise, in northeastern France, Boufflers was a career soldier, a count from birth, generally known as the Chevalier de Boufflers, 'chevalier' usually signifying a younger son who has to make his way by the sword. He married the daughter of the *duc* de Grammont; the latter was the son of a niece of Richelieu's.

Bouffler's combat experience began in 1663 at the Siege of Marsal. In 1669 he was made Colonel of Dragoons. In 1670 he participated in the conquest of Lorraine. He then fought under Turenne in the Dutch War as a brigadier, commanding the French rearguard during the retreat after Turenne was killed (1675). In 1677 he was made *maréchal de camp* (major general), and in 1681 *lieutenant général*. He was regarded as both skilled in the arts of war, and brave. During the Nine Years War he participated in all the campaigns in Flanders, notably acting as the King's Lieutenant at Mons and as Governor of Namur during the 1695 siege. He played a principal part in starting the final negotiations which ended the war.

During the War of the Spanish Succession, he held Lille for three months against the Duke of Marlborough, and was allowed to dictate the terms of his own capitulation. A

maréchal de France since 1693 and a Duke since 1695, he was created a Peer in 1708.

His final campaign was that of Malplaquet, in 1709. In that battle he offered to serve under Villars, who was his junior, and, after the latter was wounded, brought the army off without losing any prisoners or the artillery train.

1696 A Peaceable Campaign

"I am very apprehensive this campaign will pass vey peaceably, which to me will be no small mortification."

King William III, quoted in Childs, p. 315

In 1696 there were only two fronts where significant acts took place: on the sea, where an invasion of England by the French fizzled so spectacularly that it has largely been forgotten by history, and in Italy, where the war ended. Both those items had a strategic impact on the situation in the Low Countries, but operationally it was a pretty quiet year in Belgium.

The Wider War

In Catalonia, *maréchal* Vendôme would command against Gastañaga. Both sides were evenly matched. The French aim was to lay siege to Barcelona, but it would have to wait until next year, when more troops were available.

These would come from Italy. Duke Victor would not only sign a peace deal with the French, he would switch sides and became titular commander of the French Army of Italy! Military action would be carried on against the Spanish administration in Milán, bringing about the demilitarization of the war zone. This would release an army apiece for the protagonists, but the Allies would not have the chance to use theirs in 1697. The French would.

No acton of any significance would take place along the Rhine, although there was a lot of 'busy work'. The French would remain strictly on the defensive, but so would the Germans. *Maréchal* Lorge was ill; Choiseul would command. 36,000 French would face 70,000 Allies, but the Germans would send 22,000 of theirs to Flanders. Upon the return of those troops, late in the season, the two sides would square off near Neustadt, but not risk a battle. Choiseul would call on the Alsatian natives to defend their country against potential raids, limiting such actions.

Militarily, the most significant impact on the campaign in Flanders would be the war at sea. The defence of the French coasts had devolved on the Army. Naval commanders such as d'Estrées and Tourville commanded land forces around their naval facilities, but other sections of coastline were under the care of senior army personnel, such as *maréchal* Joyeuse (in Normandy). Even the King's brother, the *duc* d'Orléans, had been given such a role, though not this year, apparently.

The threat was real. In May, an Allied fleet would bombard Calais with 350 shells. To counter the presence

of the entire French Navy at Brest (see below), the Allies would assemble 90 sail, which could easily have been used to assist a second amphibious landing at Brest. None took place, but one was threatened, in August. Rather than take on the thousands of French troops entrenched there, the Allies would sail south and bombard the islands off La Rochelle and Rochefort, the coastal town of Les Sables-d'Olonne, and attempt to take Belle Île, off Quiberon Bay. All these places were either French naval anchorages or affiliated with her merchant traffic.

France was now committed to a strategy of commerce raiding. By the start – not the end – of 1696 the Allies had lost more than 4,000 merchant ships to a combination of individual privateers and French naval sorties. The famous commander, Jean Bart, would even raid into the North Sea with 7 ships. France was committed to a strategy of commerce raiding, but she only half-realised the fact. Relying on real war-weariness in Engand and supposed support for ex-king James II, King Louis was determined to reinstall his brother monarch by force. This would require a fleet action.

The Jacobite Campaign

Planning for the invasion of England began in 1695. Unfortunately the French had to rely on James II's interpretation of public opinion in England, and he had to rely on a variety of malcontents and down-and-out nobles living with him in exile, who told him what he wanted to hear in hopes of receiving a handout.

For the invasion, 50 ships of the Toulon Squadron (47 of the line) would come north to support the Brest Squadron. 12,000 French troops were assembled under the Duke of Berwick, and James received a starting bonus of 100,000 *louis*. The soldiers were veterans, not raw or battered formations, which shows that Louis was in earnest and not merely using James to divert King William – although that *was* one element of the operation, naturally.

Opposition was expected to be light. The Royal Navy was maintaining a permanent squadron at Cadiz, which was expensive and should mean fewer ships of the 'Home Fleet' could be fitted out; some of those already in service were busy chasing privateers. Most of the Anglo-Dutch regiments were now on the Continent and those that had been left as a garrison were inexperienced; some regiments might also be disaffected. The pro-James, or Jacobite, faction of the aristocracy was expected to arm their clients.

It was also possible some of the English in Flanders might mutiny if James recovered his throne. To make this more certain, in February of 1696 an attempt was to be made to assassinate William while he was wintering in England. This appears to have been a real plot, and not a fabrication of the Government, but like so many of the Jacobites' schemes, it was betrayed. Many of James' supporters were arrested; Catholics over the age of 16 were required to leave London. Unsettlingly, Parliament demonstrated strongly in favour of William.

The revelation of the plot, and other intelligence gleaned, most likely from Jacobite sources, indicated the French were planning an invasion. There was a scare. 20 battalions were sent to England. Admiral Russell sailed from Spithead with 48 ships to cruise the Channel. This ruined the chances of a coup d'etat.

An invasion of England was always a tricky prospect. William had succeeded because he was willing to gamble everything on one toss of the dice and got lucky, but it was quite a bit easier to coordinate the movement of troops from Holland to England, because of the prevailing winds and tides, and where the various harbours were located. The French, in contrast, had to cross from Calais, but had to base their fleet at Brest because of the lack of suitable harbours between those two stations. It then had to 'swim upstream' to reach the invasion flotilla.

If they wanted to use the Toulon Squadron, the French had to wait until at least April and possibly May, and by then the Channel weather would become unsuitable. In this instance, the Toulon Squadron did not sail until the end of March, thanks to delays in procuring stores. In the end, Château-Renault's sailors were brought ashore and used to make 11 scratch regiments to defend the port of Brest.

Only *Maréchal* Vendôme, in Catalonia, and perhaps *maréchal* Catinat, in Italy, really benefitted from the operation, because the French fleet, concentrated at Brest for the whole fo 1696, forced the Royal Navy to leave the Mediterranean. The moral presence of the Royal Navy might have retarded Duke Victor's *volte face*, while in Catalonia, its permanent recall allowed Vendôme to besiege and take Barcelona in 1697.

Allied Plans

Whatever diplomatic talks might be underway, in the Low Countries, as elsewhere, both sides remained committed to the military option. Villeroi disposed of 84 battalions and 104 squadrons, while Boufflers was given his own Army of the Meuse, of 85 battalions and 96 squadrons. On either army's flanks were flying camps: de la Motte and Montal by Dunkirk, d'Harcourt at Chiny, Guiscard (the former lieutenant governor of Namur) between the Sambre and Meuse.

The Allies were similarly arranged. William mustered 80 battalions and 100 squadrons (60,000 men) at Ghent. Duke Max mustered 39,360 men near Tirlemont.

Childs devotes several pages (pp.303-305) to summarising an Allied *memoire* that King William commissioned in September of 1695, before he left for England. It was an after-action report combined with a planning document for the 1696 campaign. As Childs points out, its main purpose was to get make sure all the Allies generals were reading the same script, and as an

aid to the accumulating and allocation of resources. As an AAR it devoted too much text to self-congratulation, failing to recognise the extent to which Villeroi had contributed to Allied success by his uninspired generalship. This meant the goals set out for 1696 would prove unrealistic.

Interestingly, it assumed Villeroi's dilatoriness was connected to the arrival – in the event, the too-late arrival – of troops from Germany, and his bombardment of Brussels was seen an attempt to draw off William from the siege. In the first case, they may have had something. Villeroi did probably feel he required more men before attacking William's concentrated force at Namur. As mentioned previously, however, it was really a case of his assuming Namur could not fall before the season ended. The bombardment was ordered by King Louis as a terror attack and nothing more, though if William had been lured away that would have been all to the good.

Based on this mix of true and false assumptions, and on the strategic situation in September of 1695, the *memoire* directed that the Allies create 4 armies. Most importantly, the Rhine armies were intended to function in tandem with the armies in the Low Countries, rather than playing their own game. To match what the French were expected to do there would be an Army of Flanders (Ghent), and Army of the Meuse and Sambre (Namur), an Army of the Moselle (Coblenz), and an Army of the Upper Rhine. The Allies would take the field first, forcing the French onto the defensive from the start.

The armies of the Moselle and Upper Rhine would be used offensively. The Army of Flanders would act defensively, pinning the French troops Flanders, and the Army of the Meuse and Sambre would act as a hinge. Later in the season, the Army of the Upper Rhine would stand on the defensive, and any offensive thrusts would be undertaken by the two middle armies, each of which would support the other should the opportunity for a siege arrive. Since William was going to be leading the Army of Flanders, he too might want to start a siege, in which case his neighbouring army would act as the covering force.

Other contingencies were addressed, vaguely, in the *memoire*. If the French were weak, or if the overall odds were even, then the Allies would attack on at least one front, possibly more. If the French outnumbered them, the Allies would try to open a new front (William was perhaps thinking of attacking Dunkirk by sea).

There were a couple of 'issues' with the plan. First, because it lacked a base of operations, the Army of the Upper Rhine needed to capture a major fortification. The first name that comes to mind is Philippsburg, not exactly a pushover. Also, in the event that they needed to form a fifth army, someone was going to have to give up 20 battalions and 30 squadrons, because there were no more reserves. Oh, Germany had plenty of manpower, but the Emperor was hogging it all for his never-ending Hungarian offensive.

So much for strategic directives. By the spring of 1696 there had been developments. The French economy was rallying a little but the English economy tanked. The pound slid against the Dutch currencies, was further devalued by systemic 'clipping' of the coinage, and was finally destroyed when it was shown that the outstanding government loans of £5,000,000 were set against an unrealistic estimate of the annual revenue. England was broke, and William, who had used the Pound to finance two-thirds of the Allies war effort in the Low Countries, could not buy supplies or pay his troops.

[In his history of the 1695 campaign, d'Auvergne surmised that so long as the money held out, the Coalition would beat the French.]

This had a knock-on effect in Germany. It was extremely unlikely the defensive-minded Germans would bother to even plan an offensive if William could not guarantee the French would be too busy in Flanders to respond. The Emperor was uninterested in funding such an offensive, and only wanted the Imperial Circles to hold the French at bay.

French Plans

From Versailles' perspective, military strategy was being dictated by diplomacy, *viz*, the attempt to restore James II and the Italian situation. The Northeast Frontier remained on a defensive footing, though in accordance with their usual practice the French would sustain themselves on enemy territory for as long as possible. Given William's troubles, this was likely to be easy, and to pay dividends later. There was an additional wrinkle, which the Allies learned of from their agents, in this case a Frenchman named de Chenailles who lived at The Hague. How he came by the information is not told, but it was accurate.

The grand scheme, as described earlier, was to combine the French fleet early in the spring, and while King William was distracted with naval matters, to take the offensive in the Northeast with three corps, that of the *prince* de Conti, Villeroi, and Boufflers. This was to be a surprise attack, which suggests little in the way of preparation, and yet they were to ordered capture a valuable location of some kind, after which they would revert to the defensive while Lorge's Army of the Rhine launched the major offensive of the summer.

The same source provided an update in February. The naval news was more dire. It was at this time that plans for an actual invasion of England were confirmed, a serious operation involving 40,000 men. This was never a secret – by the end of February it was openly discussed on the streets of Paris – but the spy confirmed what had only been hearsay. On March 2, the English Northern Secretary of State, Sir William Trumbull, received a list of all the French general officers assigned to the invasion, Even then, Trumbull thought the ships assembling at

Calais (19 men-of-war, 1 bomb vessel, and 80 transports) might be used to bombard and possibly assault Dutch coastal towns instead. But on March 4 it was confirmed that the squadron was indeed to be used to escort an invasion flotilla. Naval reconnaissance counted about 300 small craft. James II was seen at Calais, as well as Boufflers, who was apparently replacing d'Harcourt as the commander, and it was estimated that between 12-30,000 soldiers were camped nearby.

Adjustments to French plans for the Continent were also revealed: the main offensive was to take place in Flanders; the Rhine would be a defensive theatre. It would seem that the variation in the plan between January and February was not due to disinformation, but to real discussion at Versailles which was influenced by changing opinion and changing events.

Possibly to make up for the (temporary) withdrawal of so many veteran troops, the French raised a fair number of new regiments from their occupied territories. The number 30 was the target, though a quick check of the orders of battle suggest no more than 16 were actually raised. The rest may have been 'created' by the amalgamation and conversion of militia units. (Such formations were always disbanded after a war and at this distance in time their existence has an ephemeral quality.) It was at least more battalions than the Allies could create.

[Why would the population of an occupied territory join the occupier? Number one, they were starving and the Army had all the food. Number two, most of the people in that zone were Catholic, and many were ethnically French.]

Their plans also called for moving many of the regiments previously assigned to coastal defence into Flanders. This was presumably on the assumption that the invasion of England would succeed. When that did not happen, the troops did not move.

It goes without saying that the French were concerned at the loss of Namur. They could not afford to retake it – France had not recovered to *that* extent – but they were fed up with Allied raids between the Sambre and Meuse, which was a very fertile little zone, known as the Marlagne. Therefore, funds were spent on garrisoning all the forts and castles in that region, and in improving the major fortresses of Dinant, Charlemont (16 Km upstream from Dinant, opposite Givet), and Philippeville. Also, the Lines were to be extended across the gap. In January and February they were dug between Charleroi and Walcourt.

Diplomacy

Progress on the diplomatic front was slow. The Dutch put up a good bluff, saying William did not need the Sun King's blessing for his title and that the Coalition would stand or fall as one man. Recognizing the Coalition was in difficulties both diplomatically (with the pending defection of Duke Victor) and economically, the French merely kept the channels open. Only in December would they agree to accord William royal recognition (when it was clear to everyone that James II had no hope left) and agree to Swedish-mediated general peace talks at Rijswick. By that time, Savoy had switched sides and Italy had been demilitarized (for the duration of the war, that is).

The most valuable information that the Allied agent, de Chenailles, was able to provide – and its nature shows he was not likely to have been a double agent – was that 1696 was to be France's last attempt to win the war. If they failed to make significant gains, then in 1697 they would make peace, regardless of the consequences.

Winter Warfare

Raiding took place over the winter, in a random pattern dictated by the weather. In general, the winter was once again severe (the Thames froze solid) but there were sudden thaws which might trap a raiding party.

In January the French probed the lands around Ath and skirmished with its garrison. Other French raiders ambushed a boat carrying baggage on the Niuepoort-Bruges Canal.

In February, after the French invasion plans were leaked, the Dutch commander Fagel, now a *luitenant-generaal*, was ordered to capture the French outpost of Oost-Duinkerke (4 Km southwest of Nieupoort). This was done without fanfare. Oost-Duinkerke was a valuable port that the English administration needed for the shipment of troops to defend against invasion. Apparently, in those days Nieupoort's facilities were insufficient without the addition of Oost-Duinkerke.

Just as the French worked on their Lines, the Allies set about improving Brussel's defenses, particularly at the Anderlecht Gate on the western side. On February 20, the Governor of Ath was ordered to begin turning his town into a forward base, presumably to facilitate an Allied siege of Mons; there were to be enough stores to feed 40,000 men for three weeks.

William and Vaudémont also began building a corps of 40,000 men at Namur. This was the physical manifestation of a vaguely-planned offensive up the Meuse in combination with a push up the Moselle. Conditions were so bad, however, that troops and supplies were not yet assembled when the campaign opened. There were sufficient resources, however, to conduct a daring raid in mid March.

Based on the intelligence received of the French concentration at Calais, at the beginning of March Vaudémont set up a coastal relay system and warned the primarily English garrisons of Bruges and Ghent to be ready to march to Oostende and Nieupoort, and take ship for England. This amounted to 20 battalions, under the command of the Duke of Württemberg. Allied transports were sent to anchor off the ports in readiness. (8 of the

battalions, stationed at Ghent, were actually earmarked for Zeeland.)

Immediately after came news of the foiled assassination attempt against William. The English Privy Council was informed on March 3. The French learned of the plot's failure within a day or two, and gave up on the idea of an invasion. In any case they and the Jacobites were at an impasse, because the latter would not rise unless the French put in an appearance, and the French would not do so unless the Jacobites took up arms.The assassination would have galvanized both parties.

The Allies remained in fear for some time longer. The French squadrons were still fitting out, and it took time for the expeditionary corps to break up and return to the front, so there was still an impression of activity. Württemberg's men did embark, but they did not disembark, merely spending a few days being sick off The Downs before returning to Flanders.

The next significant act was completed unrelated. This was the raid out of Namur. A corps of 30 battalions (18,000 men), some few cavalry, 18 cannon and 6 mortars, under Ginkel and Coehoorn, marched up the right bank of the Meuse. Ginkel first made a feint toward Charleroi and Nivelles, before marching to Dinant, which was masked by 14,000 men under Ginkel himself, while the rest, under Coehoorn, proceeded to Givet (Les Givets), 15 Km farther on. The actual distance marched through enemy territory was closer to 45 Km.

Givet was bombarded on March 16. The attack commenced at 7am and lasted until at least 4pm. Hot shot was used. The magazines, containing 3-4 million rations, were burned to the ground, except for one on the left bank of the river. The Allies would have had to cross over to bring it within range. The Governor of Givet, Guiscard, tried counter-battery fire but lacked the men to sally. The French garrison at Dinant did sally when the columns passed by on their way back north, but it inflicted no damage and the corps escaped to Namur.

The purpose of the raid was to scotch any attempt to besiege Namur; this is what the Allies imagined those stores were for. However, they may have been intended to supply the new Lines in the Marlagne. A tale is recounted of how the people of Dinant, learning of the Allies advance, feared they would be bombarded and sent their belongings to Givet…

Of this raid Childs says (p. 311), 'As a military achievement, Givet ranked second only to Namur; in its contribution to the coming of peace, Givet was the greatest strategic blow delivered by the Allies.' There was no way the French could launch a major offensive now, though it would periodically appear they were about to over the course of the summer. Childs also notes that the financial loss incurred was a key factor prodding King Louis to consider the economic penetration of the Spanish Americas as a permanent solution to his money problems; there would be an expedition to that end in 1697.

Coincidentally, an accidental fire broke out at Charleroi in early April, which did much damage but missed the magazines.

Namur featured in the news again at the end of March. On March 30, Guiscard came down from Dinant on a reconnaissance with 1,000 horse. Coehoorn was busy improving the works with a team of 6,000 men. As soon as Guiscard left, he had a new fort built on the site of the Frenchman's observation post (Saint Barbes Hill), just in case the latter had spotted some weakness that Coehoorn had not! In addition he requested and got 16,000 more men for the garrison. Another 16,000 were camped between Namur and Dinant, Ironically this cut into the Allies' offensive plans, because those 32,000 men had originally been intended to form the Army of the Meuse. Technically, one supposes they could still do that, but it would be an immobile army.

The Summer Campaign

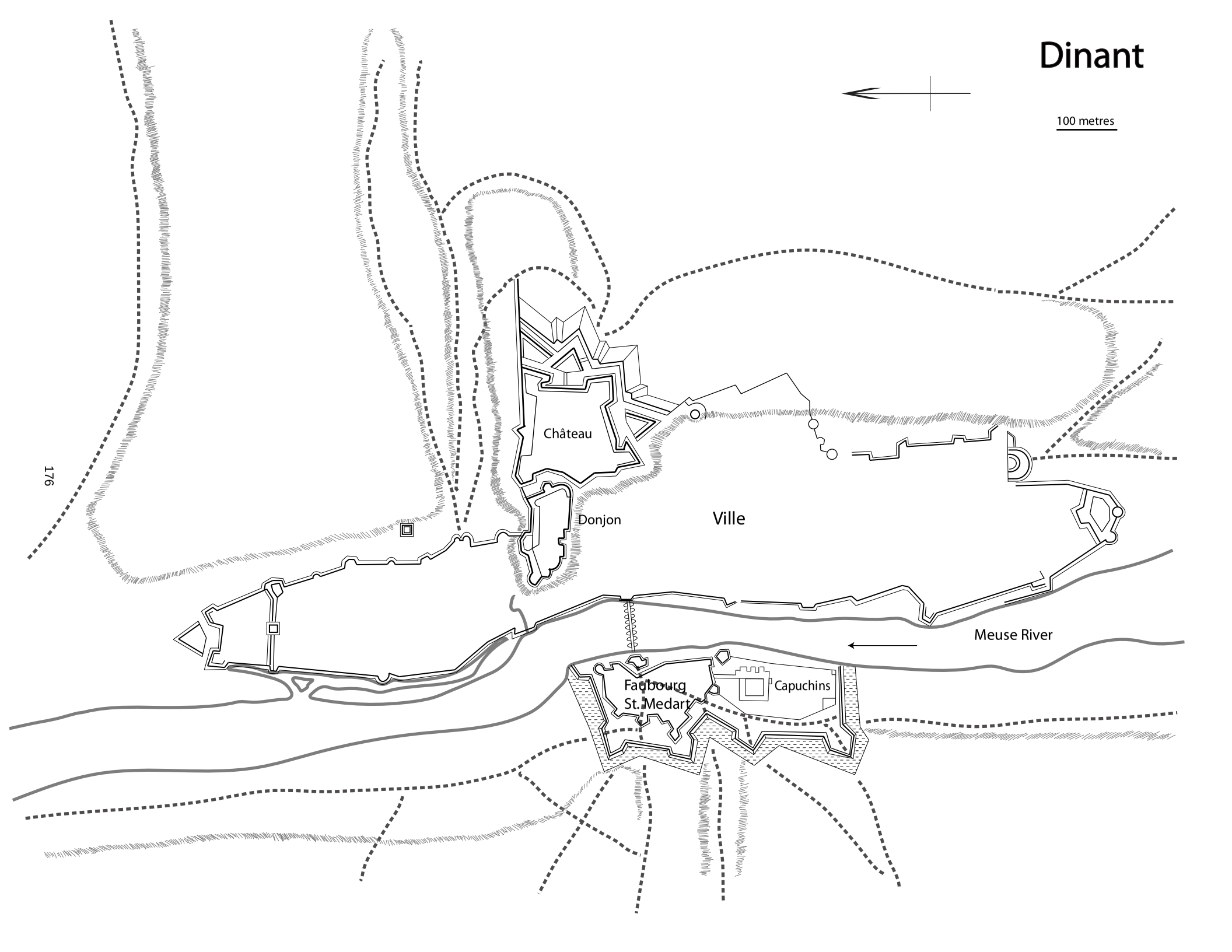
With both sides fighting with one hand tied behind their back, most of the campaign featured the armies meandering over the landscape like nomads pasturing their flocks. A ripple disturbed this pastoral setting in late June, when the Landgrave of Hesse arrived with 22,000 men. But the French merely adopted an even more defensive posture (if that were possible). Boufflers screened Mons and the Sambre line and Villeroi succeed in pinning the enemy at Ghent. No battles were offered, and in October both sides went into winter quarters.

The French were in the field by May 10. William had wanted to beat them, setting the date of April 28 as the start of the season, but though tents were issued on April 8 his troops were in no condition to take the field that soon. Nevertheless, Vaudémont's Army of Flanders mustered at Mariakerke, 3 Km northwest of Ghent, and Duke Max's Army of the Meuse (what was left of it) at Namur.

Until May 17 (Childs says May 19) Villeroi remained in the Lines between the Lys and the Scheldt. On that day, he marched north to feast upon Allied forage around Deynze. Boufflers formed up near Mons, on the Oreneau River, and took his army northeast into Brabant (May 19) for the same purpose, camping first at Fleurus.

Meanwhile, William, who, arriving at The Hague on May 17, had decided to command the Army of the Meuse rather than that of Flanders, and ordered it to camp at Wavre, 20 Km south of Louvain and about 22 Km southeast of Brussels. The peasantry were conscripted to construct a road between there and Namur in case he needed to march to the fortress' relief and the French chose to block the existing road from Brussels.

Vaudémont's Army of Flanders was weak. The Spanish regiments were so ineffectual now that they could only be


Dinant
100 metres
Château
Donjon
Ville
Meuse River
Faubourg
St. Medard
Capuchins

relied upon to function as garrisons, but the English were little better. They had not been paid in 3 months. So, Vaudémont distributed them along the Bruges-Ghent and Bruges-Nieupoort canals. 17 battalions under Major General Ramsey guarded the Ford of Bellem, on the former canal about 16 Km northwest of Ghent. In support were 25 battalions under General Noyelles. (Noyelles was a Walloon in Dutch service.) Nieupoort was held by Fagel and 10 battalions. The remaining troops were thinly spread along the canals, which had fortified posts along their lengths, built before the war. Some of these posts were strengthened with light cannon, breastworks, and abatis. The dragoons remained in billets, to spare their mounts. The horse, of 8 regiments, plus 18 battalions, were requisitioned by William.

King William was depressed, as was his staff. The Brandenburgers, who had also not been paid, had refused to make any long marches. The French were systematically chewing up the forage in front of his armies. On paper the Allies might have more men, but the French could actually employ a greater number. Disgruntled murmurings emanated from Ghent, HQ of the Army of Flanders. William had passed over a number of officers while favouring others with appointments and promotions to general rank, and it was considered that his stealing of part of their strength for his own use was pointless, as the Army of the Meuse not likely to accomplish much, either.

Villeroi's intentions were unclear. He had bridges over the Lys, threatening Roselare, which might mean he intended to attack the coastal towns. Or, he could try for Bruges or Ghent. Or, since the French were laying out a camp at Blaton, he might attack Ath. Blaton is 17 Km SSW of Ath, and was just in front of the Lines on that sector. Alternatively he could just strip Flanders bare in every direction, which is what he appeared to be doing. Vaudémont felt comfortable holding his line, but if he concentrated to drive the French off, he would expose several war-weary towns to siege. Fagel at Nieupoort was similarly pinned by Montal at Dunkirk.

When Villeroi sent 3,000 men to Boufflers, there was no attempt at interception, and in fact a small party of them torched a hay magazine at Oudenaarde on their way (although the Governor was warned in time and put the fire out).

Opposite the Allied Army of the Meuse, the French Army of the Meuse had been strengthened to 25,000 men and 55 guns. The Lines between the Sambre and Meuse were denuded to obtain these numbers. Boufflers was camping between Gosselies and Fleurus, and copying Villeroi's tactics. To wipe out any thought of an Allied siege of Charleroi, his men once again blew up the Grigon Mill sluice which controlled the water level on the Sambre. The camp at Gosselies was fortified and the cannon sited to cover every possible approach.

On June 14 William was reinforced by 14 battalions from Namur. On June 19 the Army of the Meuse, commanded by himself and Duke Max, marched to Orbais, a day's march southeast of Wavre. 60,000 men were pitted against Boufflers' 40,000. William probably sought battle, after which Charleroi might be attempted. But, it was a slim hope. If Boufflers avoided battle, he could still cover that town, and the alternative target of Dinant, from south of the Sambre. If he was reinforced, a battle would be foolhardy.

Boufflers did escape the net, crossing the Sambre when he heard William was at Orbais, and camping between Saint Gérard and Gerpinnes. (The former village is 15 Km east of Gerpinnes and only 8 Km west of the Meuse below Dinant.) Shortly before, he dispatched 5 regiments of dragoons to Dinant, which he felt was too weakly defended.

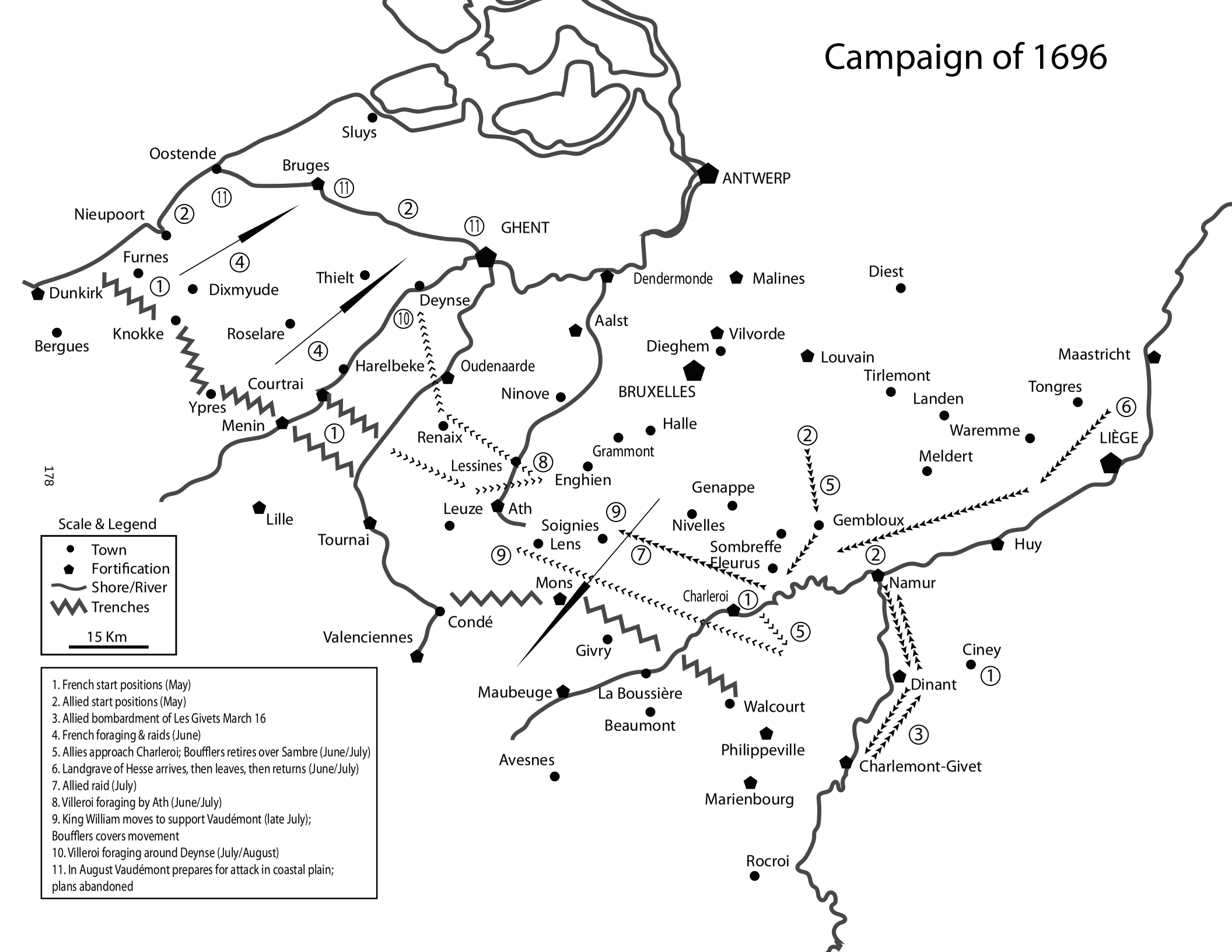
On June 21, Boufflers shifted the bulk of his forces to Saint-Gérard, leaving only observation posts along the Sambre and a quick-reaction force under *lieutenant général* Ximenes at Gerpinnes. 6,000 men garrisoned Charleroi. D'Harcourt joined him, bringing his army up to 50,000 men. They would shortly be facing 72,000.

Meanwhile, Villeroi's 25,000 were taunting Vaudémont's 42,000, foraging within 2,000 metres of the latter's camps. On June 16, elements of Villeroi's army surprised a number of English battalions guarding the Bruges-Ghent Canal and routed them. The response was swift and the French could not stay north of the canal. Vaudémont had the English officers responsible arrested.

On June 23, word was received that 4,000 of Villeroi's horse, led by *lieutenant général* d'Artagnan, had camped between Ath and Lessines (10 Km north of Ath), obviously with the goal of denuding the countryside of forage. Vaudémont sent General Overkirk and all his cavalry to deal with the problem, but the French camp was too strong; Overkirk returned to Ghent.

On the Sambre, the Allied van, 2,000 horse commanded by *luitenant generaal* Bentinck (the Earl of Portland) had begun skirmishing with Boufflers' screen. The main body, however, marching in 6 columns, did not arrive at Gembloux until July 4. For some reason, King William became incensed with the pesky French cavalry patrols along the Sambre. He claimed they were contravening the laws of war – exactly how is quite unclear – and ordered his own men to give no quarter.

Boufflers was worried that William might try another 'race to the sea'. This time, the composition of the French army would prevent it from extricating itself from the Ardennes fast enough to save Villeroi. The Allies might also try for Mons. Highlighting this fact, about June 19 an Allied raiding party of 200 horse drove south from Soignies as far as Bavay and Le Quesnoy, over 30 Km south of Mons.


Campaign of 1696
Sluys
Oostende
Bruges
ANTWERP
Nieupoort
GHENT
Furnes
Dunkirk
Dixmyude
Thielt
Deynse
Dendermonde
Malines
Diest
Aalst
Bergues
Knokke
Roselare
Dieghem
Vilvorde
Louvain
Maastricht
Harelbeke
Oudenaarde
Courtrai
BRUXELLES
Tirlemont
Tongres
Ninove
Landen
Ypres
Menin
Halle
Waremme
LIÈGE
Renaix
Grammont
Meldert
Lessines
Enghien
Genappe
Leuze
Ath
Soignies
Nivelles
Gembloux
Lille
Tournai
Lens
Sombreffe
Huy
Fleurus
Namur
Mons
Charleroi
Condé
Valenciennes
Givry
Ciney
Dinant
Maubeuge
La Boussière
Walcourt
Beaumont
Philippeville
Charlemont-Givet
Avesnes
Marienbourg
Rocroi
178
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
Trenches
15 Km
1. French start positions (May)
2. Allied start positions (May)
3. Allied bombardment of Les Givets March 16
4. French foraging & raids (June)
5. Allies approach Charleroi; Boufflers retires over Sambre (June/July)
6. Landgrave of Hesse arrives, then leaves, then returns (June/July)
7. Allied raid (July)
8. Villeroi foraging by Ath (June/July)
9. King William moves to support Vaudémont (late July); Boufflers covers movement
10. Villeroi foraging around Deynse (July/August)
11. In August Vaudémont prepares for attack in coastal plain; plans abandoned

Although William's force was far too large for rapid movement, as a precaution, Boufflers entrenched the Ford of Montignies, just east of Charleroi; if need be he would follow in William's wake as fast as he could. Somewhat later in the season, Boufflers sent 12,000 men under Ximenes to La Boussière to erect 4 pontoon bridges as part of the same contingency plan, which would see him move his army over to La Boussière and dispatch a 15,000-man advance guard to Mons. Boufflers was unaware the Allies could not pay for a siege, or he would not have lost so much sleep.

William had something different in mind than either of Boufflers' fears. He paused at Gembloux to collect more men. Vaudémont was required to send him the Duke of Württemberg and a strong detachment (possibly including the Danes, whom the duke commanded). William also expected the Landgrave of Hesse, who had been recruiting in northern Germany. The Landgrave crossed the Meuse at Visé on June 21. His corps consisted of 16 battalions and 43 squadrons, a grab-bag of troops from Hesse and the North German Plain – Hanover, Münster, and Holstein. They reached Huy on July 6, the same day that Württemberg arrived. In the interim, on June 26 the Elector of Cologne arrived with the Liègeois corps.

[The reader may remember Liège had recently gone to the Bavarian Wittelsbach crew, who controlled Cologne.]

Boufflers also received reinforcement from the Rhine front in the form of 2,000 veteran foot and 4 regiments of dragoons. When William learned of this he hoped the Margrave of Baden, opposing Choiseul near Metz, would start an offensive. Such an act was the only thing that could break the stalemate in Flanders and Brabant. The Allies had more men but lacked the supplies to do anything constructive. The growth of William's army actually contributed to its inactivity; it was becoming musclebound. There was debate over sending some of the troops back to the Rhine to aid Baden.

(In the opinion of one of Childs' low-level sources, and in contradiction to the *memoire* that he discusses but which the source was not privy to, William's every action so far had been designed to force the French to shift troops to the Northeast frontier, in the hopes that Louis of Baden would exercise his own initiative and attack on the Rhine, if not up the Moselle, then at Philippsburg. Members of William's staff had been prodding Baden since the spring. But William could only *request* an offensive, not order one. Baden was supposed to be a dynamic commander, but his reputation was based on past glories, not present conduct, which was lacklustre in the extreme.

The Landgrave of Hesse was sent away, almost as soon as he arrived, but to the Moselle, where he was to interfere with the river traffic on the river down around Mont Royal. Maybe a shortage of supplies would cause Choiseul to pull up stakes and give Baden a chance of attacking. No such luck.

Dunkirk, *Again*?

As Childs puts it (p. 317), 'William's mind was turning once more to his pet project, the one which he always favoured when he could think of nothing else to do – the bombardment of Dunkirk'. Circumstances could not have been more unfavourable. When his scouts reported that there was a) no wood for fascines, b) ground too soft for erecting batteries, c) redoubts so far in advance of the town that it could not be reached by cannon or mortar fire, d) no fresh water anywhere near it, and e) the presence of a fair number of armed ships that could come out and bombard the Allied army, William said 'Go'.

Vaudémont started preparations. After all, if Dunkirk was a fizzle, they could still acquire Furnes, and would have to do so if Dunkirk was to be taken. 14 battalions from Noyelles' reserve of 25 battalions moved to the Ford of Bellem, where 4 bridges were erected so the army could march on Roselare. A convoy of 52 barges, escorted by 10 battalions, was sent from Ghent to Bruges. Vast numbers of peasants were mustered at Passendale, halfway between Roselare and Ypres.

All that remained was for William to pick a target. The choice was made for him. He was told he had run out of money and would be lucky to have an army by the end of the season. While he havered, the French consolidated their position, blocking the approaches to Dunkirk and calling out the Maubeuge garrison. Villeroi sent 10 battalions to occupy Furnes and 16 more to Dunkirk, along with a company of bombardiers and another of miners (about 1/4 of the siege technicians available to the French Army). At his end of the front, Boufflers now had 70,000 paid men to match William's 70,000 unpaid men.

King William, still looking for an opening and not finding one, recalled the Landgrave of Hesse, who dutifully stopped in his tracks, turned around, and came back to Namur (July 25). This changed nothing. In fact, Louis of Baden used the corps' absence as his excuse for the failure of his attempt to take Philippsburg!

Childs notes that the stalemate was not simply that of a war that was winding down, but was inevitable merely from a military standpoint. Equilibrium had been achieved. Neither side could break through the others' defenses, and there was nothing worth taking out in no-mans-land. The odd place, like Ath, that might have some value, was not worth the cost in manpower to hold it.

Ath is mentioned by design. It was <sort of> worth taking, as was Brussels. The other fortresses, even ones that might improve one or the other side's defensive line, like Namur or Mons, were now too costly to acquire. Ath, however, lay in a salient, and Brussels was a capital city.

William recognised this fact. Abandoning his attempts to crack the Sambre, on July 25 he marched his army in 4 columns to Attre, 3 Km south of Soignies, reaching there on July 28. This was done to protect Ath, but William had

not quite given up on the Dunkirk operation, and Soignies was at least *closer* to Flanders. Vaudémont was complaining that he could not move while Villeroi was in his face. The forage north of the Sambre was exhausted, so it was unlikely Bouffler would try for Brussels in William's absence. Indeed, Boufflers followed William on parallel lines, coming to rest at Saint-Ghislain. He was still concerned for Mons.

Once again, the lack of finances put the brakes on. Actually, this time the engine quit and died. William had been running on fumes for some weeks. He managed to raise two loans on the Bank of England (whose credit was no longer accepted by the Dutch Estates) but the money would not arrive until October. By pawning his jewels he obtained enough funds to pay his men for another two weeks.

And, to crown it all, he was informed that Duke Victor of Savoy had not only come to a separate peace with France, but had changed sides. William became so depressed that he could not eat for two days.

In the middle of the campaigning season, therefore, William gave up on all his schemes, releasing the Landgrave of Hesse to carry out the Moselle operation – far too late now to help Louis of Baden – and ordered 12 battalions from the Army of Flanders, under *general majoor* Berensdorff, to re-staff the Namur garrison. D'Harcourt's flying column shadowed Hesse.

On August 20, Villeroi finally ran out of forage at Deynze and decided to move to Tielt, a day's march west. This was also a better blocking position against an Allied march to Dunkirk, not that that was going to happen. It also brought the French closer to Bruges, and to the two canals that formed their junction there.

Villeroi investigated the idea of bombarding Bruges. There was a hill at the Abbey of Sint-Andries, west of the town and within 3,000 metres of it, where he might set up a battery. However, his scouts found it occupied in strength by the enemy; Vaudémont still had spies in the French camp. This was on September 9. Two days later, after finding no weak spots in the canal defenses, Villeroi retired to Wynendale, 17 Km southwest of Bruges and about halfway to the Lines at Dixmyude.

By then, the Allied Army of the Meuse had been sent into quarters (August 24). William had already left for his hunting palace at Het Loo, leaving Duke Max in charge. The camp was laid out at Grimminge, 7 Km southwest of Ninove. There were indications that Ath might be targeted by the French. The Army of Flanders rested *in situ* and the French did likewise. On September 29 the Army of the Meuse broke camp and marched to Halle, then to Bois-Seigneur-Isaac on the right bank of the Senne, before breaking up for winter quarters (October 6-8). Vaudémont's own army likewise broke up, but his regiments did not have far to march; they stayed on site.

Few people expected the war to resume in the spring, but it did.

[Childs mentions that the Elector of Cologne, now in charge of Liège, had Huy returned to him. Apparently it had remained under military administration until now. Interestingly, William did not charge him a penny for the cost of the siege, despite his own financial difficulties.]

1697 Scramble for Peace

"The success of my arms upon which the benediction of God continues to rain, has not erased from my heart the desire that I have to make a good peace."

Louis XIV, quoted in Lynn, p.232

'The Experience the World has had of Louis XIV since the beginning of his Reign, is sufficient to convince all Mankind, that as long as his Power is so great, as his Encroachments upon his Neighbours have made it, 'tis in vain to expect a solid and durable Peace.'

D'Auvergne, Vol 1694, p. 102.

Strategy in the Low Countries, in this last year of the war, was driven by one glaring fact of life, the Treaty of Turin, and even more by Succession Politics. Succession politics in this case revolved around the immanent demise of Carlos II of Spain (who 'had a bad turn' the previous summer), and which non-Spanish royal was likely to replace him. This would, of course, be resolved in the next war, the War of the Spanish Succession. For the moment, though, it meant that most of the participants in the current war were interested in coming to terms.

On the purely military side, Italy had been demilitarised. This meant the French could deploy Catinat's army to another theatre. In fact, they distributed it among all three remaining theatres of operation, giving them numerical superiority everywhere. Catinat himself was brought to Flanders. The Allies gained no advantage. Duke Victor of Savoy was on the French side. The Spanish army of Milán was either demobilized or maintaining law and order, and in any case would never have been sent to Flanders. The only other troops in that theatre, 18 battalions in all, went to the Hungarian or Rhine fronts. This included 6 Huguenot battalions in English pay as well as 4 Brandenburg and 2 Bavarian battalions.

The Wider War

On the Rhine, the French pursued their habit of eating German forage while avoiding major engagements. There was a risk of Imperial forces making an appearance, but these arrived too late to make a difference. The Lines so prevalent in Flanders were also appearing on the Rhine front. Only once did the two sides come close enough for a battle, and both avoided it. The last act was the French siege of a small fortification called Ebernberg, which they took on September 27, after the peace treaty was signed.

The greatest French victory of the year occurred in Spain, when *maréchal* Vendôme captured Barcelona on August

10. In previous years the Royal Navy had made great efforts to support Spain, but William was too close to a settlement to want to prolong the war, and no sails appeared on the horizon.

At sea, the *guerre de course* continued. There were two significant operations, one practical and one a feat of arms. In the Med, d'Estrées supported the siege of Barcelona, greatly contributing to its fall. In the New World, the *baron* de Pontis, a privateer, obtained King Louis' permission to raid Cartagena de Indias. The raid involved 7 ships and 1,500 men (plus other troops collected in the West Indies), paid for out of Pontis' own pocket. His aim was to intercept the treasure fleet at its source. The *Flota*, as it was called, supposedly sailed every year, but because there were always problems of one kind or another, this was not actually true, and locating it while in transit was a gamble. Taking it in port was also a gamble, since Cartagena de Indias was well guarded. Nevertheless, Pontis besieged and took the town. His squadron left France on January 9, appeared off the town in April, and obtained Cartagena's surrender on May 14. On June 1 Pontis sailed for home, avoided an English squadron, and by August 29 was back at Brest. His booty amounted to 10,000,000 *livres*.

[This raid was the inspiration for Britain's own attempt to take Cartagena during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1741), which was a fiasco. Lynn says Cartagena was taken on May 2. This may be a mistake in OS/NS dates.]

While describing this raid, Lynn talks about the Nine Years War in other places of the globe, specifically Asia and North America. In North America it is called King William's War. Here, the English and French used militia and native war bands to make life unpleasant for one another; the war itself was just an excuse to settle local scores, though the French did employ a few line battalions. Port Royal in Nova Scotia was taken from the French in 1690, but handed back at the peace. In India, the French fought the Dutch, not the English; the Dutch captured Pondicherry in 1693, and likewise returned it at the peace. The English East India Company's armies, on the other hand, were twice defeated by the Mughals.

Politics

The winter of 1696/97 was relatively quiet. The weather for once was dry, but still colder than average. In Brussels, at the balls and soirees, those who believed the war was nearly over mocked the worriers who feared yet another French surprise attack.

The Coalition was falling apart. Savoy had gone, the German princes were only interested in defense; the Emperor was only interested in Hungary. The Nine Years War was on its deathbed and no-one wanted to pay it a visit. Even King William and the Dutch Estates wished they could avoid another campaign. Unfortunately, it was becoming clearer with every passing day that the French were not ready to settle just yet.

This explains why Spain, also eager for peace, was promised military aid to keep her in the war. Spain was the key. King Carlos II's lifespan was the key, driving the need to find a solution to the war even more than the empty treasuries of the Allies. But Spain was exhausted. It was highly likely she would agree to a settlement before the Maritime Powers, which would mean additional concessions on their part. William could not allow this, so he promised to send naval aid, as he had done in previous years. Only this time, the aid never arrived. By the summer, when Barcelona was invested, the Maritime Powers and the French had settled their differences and wanted Spain's ready agreement to what was likely to be peace on unfavourable terms to her. So, aid was withheld.

Interestingly, the French offered Neutrality to Spain, similar to the arrangement in Italy. But, both the Spanish Crown and the rest of the Allies felt this was merely a ploy to release troops for Flanders. The French could and would use Vendôme's army in Flanders if possible, while the Spanish could never have transferred forces there.

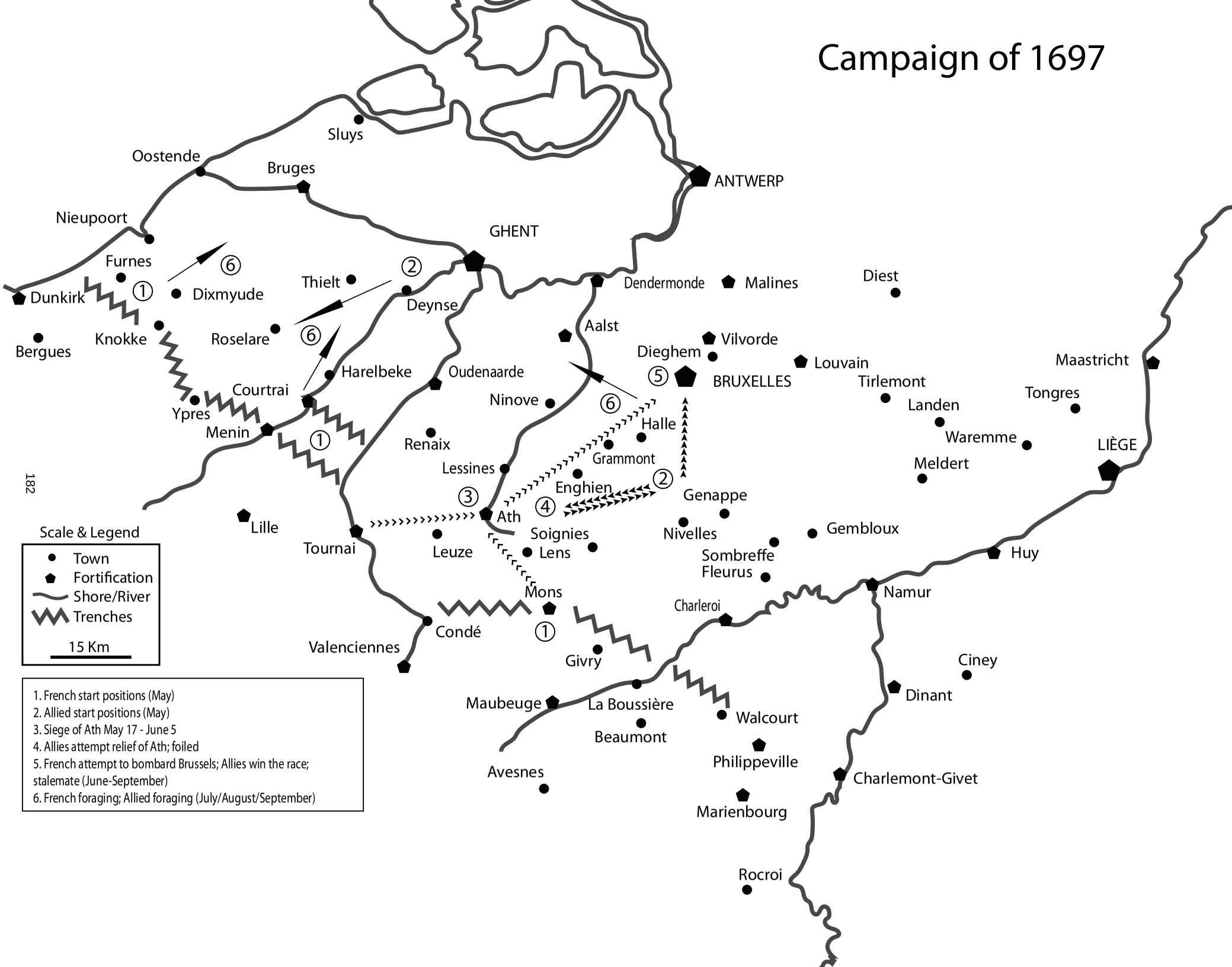
William was not alone in his desire to keep Spain in the war a little longer. While the Spanish wanted to opt out, the Emperor was still in the fight. He had no interest in France, *per se*, but if the war in the West ended, the Germans would demobilise. Then where would he get men to fight the Turk without having to make enormous concessions to the imperial princes?

(As an aside, the Swedish mediators were also not averse to prolonging the talks. It made them feel important. This is not a dig at Sweden, just a dig at diplomats in general. It is also true, according to the source material.)

As of February 10, 1697, when all the envoys and mediators were finally given accreditation by their respective monarchs, and recognised by the other monarchs as legitimate negotiators, an eight-point baseline was written up (repeated here to give some sense of what the parties were aiming at). The quote is from d'Auvergne, vol. 1697, p. 7:

'Monsieur *de Callieres,* having communicated his full power from the *French* King for this purpose to the Mediatour [*sic*], did declare in the *French* King his Masters Name, that in order to a General Treaty of Peace, his Most Christian Majesty Consented and Agreed,
1. That the Treaties of *Westphalia* and *Nimoguen* should be the Basis and Foundation of the Treaty to be made with the Allies.
2. To Restore to the Empire the Town of *Strasbourg* in the Condiıtion it was when taken by his Majesty.
3. To Restore to the King of *Spain* the Town of *Luxembourgh* in the state 'tis now in.
4. The Towns of *Mons* and *Charloroy* as they are at present.

Campaign of 1697



5. All places in *Catalonia* in the Kings possession which have been taken since the Treaty of *Nimeguen* in the state they were when taken.
6. To the Bishop of *Liege* the Town and Castle of *Dinant* in the state they were at the taking of them.
7. All the Reunions made since the Peace of *Nimeguen.*
8. *Lorrain* according to the Conditions of the said Treaty.'

[The Reunions were those bilateral 'thefts' of territory made by Louis XIV in an attempt to rationalize the French frontiers.]

Separately, Callieres told Dyckvelt that Louis XIV would recognise William as King of Great Britain, without making any waves. This was not made a ninth point, though, in case the talks were broken off; they kept this particular ball in the French *court* (pun intended).

Once all this had been agreed to, more time was spent deciding where to meet. Eventually, one of William's palaces, outside the village of Rijswick, was chosen. It had the necessary accommodations and amenities, with the added advantage that the French diplomats traveled to it from the West and the Coalition diplomats from the East, so that there was no risk of one party gaining precedence over the other in traffic (always a deal breaker). Another deal breaker was Official Recognition: to wit, the Brandenburg contingent complained because although their Elector had Personally Declared War on King Louis, they were being lumped in with the rest of the Holy Roman Emperor's flunkies.

D'Auvergne explains the arrangements in some detail. The opposing diplomats did not convene in the same room, nor did they officially meet one-on-one for bilateral talks (*as if that never happened*) but each party sat in a large antechamber, with the Mediator's room in the middle. This room had three entrances, the preexisting one used by the Mediator, one created on the West for the French, and another created on the East for the Coalition. The Mediator scuttled from antechamber to antechamber with proposals and counterproposals.

Obviously, the next French offensive would be geared to intimidating the peace brokers. If Savoy had not switched sides, the French would probably have come to terms over the winter. But, they did have the strength to fight one more round. It would be useful to have more bargaining chips, but Louis' main aim was propagandistic. On the other hand, he could not go too far. The Bourbons had a claim on the Spanish Crown. Spain must be intimidated, but not completely humbled. He had to be sure his armies' actions did not stall the peace offensive, since Carlos II might die at any time and Louis would need those armies to back his succession claims. More than in any other year, military action was to be yoked to diplomacy.

[French recognition of William's own dynastic claim may have been in part an attempt to buy his 'vote' on the Spanish succession.]

The Last Mile

For the final campaign in the Low Countries, 3 French armies would face 1 Allied Army. 144,700 men against 102,400. Spain's decision to fight on meant that the French could not use all of the troops released from the Italian front, so that their operations were not quite as bold as they might have been; however, as already mentioned, the extra forces sent to Catalonia ensured the fall of Barcelona.

Outnumbered, William and his advisors believed it was better to concentrate their troops. On the French side, Villeroi, in Flanders, commanded 78-80 battalions and 106-107 squadrons (55,620 men). Boufflers commanded 78-79 battalions and 107 squadrons on the Meuse (55,740 men). Catinat commanded a siege army of 50 battalions and 49-50 squadrons (33,340 men). His first target was Ath. The Allies had 96 battalions and 206 squadrons under William and Duke Max. Ath would fall and the French move on Brussels, but the city would be too well guarded. Although the peace was not signed until September 20, the opposing armies disengaged and made camp in late July.

Warlike activity began in January. When Pontis fitted out his squadron for the West Indies, William feared Catinat's troops from Italy were about to descend on England and order 15 battalions home, though it seems the threat subsided before any were sent. Otherwise, his army was on short notice to move throughout the winter. The French buildup and the consistently clear weather meant raids, and even major operation, could commence at any time.

Childs details the early warning system for Flanders, developed by the Dutch Quartermaster-General. The troops here were still stationed along the canal fortifications and the nodal towns. To raise the alarm, a threatened unit was to light a fire-pot on a high pole, and fire cannon or volleys of musketry. The posts on either side would do the same and pass the message down the line. At the towns, the beacons were set on church steeples or towers. In tests, it was demonstrated that a major garrison 60 Km away could be alerted within an hour. Ghent could alert Brussels in only two hours. The entire warning line, from Nieupoort to Brussels, was 160 Km long.

Most of the Allied defenses were by now as impervious as the French Lines. In Flanders, they were, like the Lines, continuous. Ghent was a weak point. Entrenchments had been dug on the western side, but the gap between the Lys and Scheldt was vulnerable, so the land was flooded by closing sluices on both rivers. A dry section in the center was fortified with trenches. In Brabant, there was no continuous line, but the wasting of the countryside meant neither army could advance far from its base. Especially, the French could do little damage until they retook Namur.

The Allies still feared for that place, despite Coehoorn's latest improvements. If the Meuse froze, as it did this winter, the town became an isolated post. To maintain it, vast convoys of wagons had to be arranged, with equally vast (and expensive) escorts. However, the French made no attempt on the town over the winter. With the thaw, in March, Guiscard, still in charge of this sector, tried a raid on the first barge convoy coming up the Meuse, but failed to locate it.

The thaw also brought about activity at the Allied HQ. Conferences on March 11 and March 12 activated the troops. William's army was to be based on Brussels and Louvain. Only 'sufficient' garrisons would be left to cover Flanders. This was done by detaching companies from each battalion, rather than employing whole battalions in one role or the other. More inundations were created to limit access to the fortified canal line between Nieupoort and Bruges.

The Allies began assembling about March 16, but in late March it was decided, after all, to create a separate corps in Flanders under Duke Max. This formed at Deynze, about April 17, and consisted of 40 battalions (Childs says 38; later there were 42), 18 squadrons of horse, and 33 of dragoons, a total of 31,600 men (Childs says 38,000). The cavalry was once again delayed by the usual supply issues, remaining in cantonments until called for. The core of Duke Max's corps were English and Danish, with some Dutch. The Huguenots appear to have remained with the main army in Brabant.

By the articles of its surrender (back in 1695), Deynze was not to be fortified with permanent works, so Duke Max had (April 25) temporary ones erected, hexagonal in shape. He also inundated the ground around his camp. Fagel was in distant support at Nieupoort, with 10 battalions-worth of troops taken from a variety of regiments (6,000 men). More companies were distributed along the canals, and set to work improving the fortifications. In Brabant, companies of Dutch troops were sent to the principal towns, and most of all, to Namur.

On May 6, after being delayed by contrary winds which also delayed money and supplies for the English troops, King William arrived at The Hague. The plenipotentiaries for peace proceeded with their preliminary probings. In London, tongues were wagging over William's plans to attack Ypres, or possibly Dunkirk. The French do not seem to have bought the lie.

By May 8, the main Allied army, composed of Dutch and German regiments, had concentrated at Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, 25 Km south of Brussels. Officially there were 64 battalions, 75 squadrons of horse, and 26 of dragoons (46,490 men). There was little forage for the cavalry, much which was still on the road from Holland.

[Higher figures are 70 battalions and 151 squadrons (58,400 men). These are certainly valid later in the campaign.]

Detachments were stationed at Waterloo and Ukkel (Uccle), on the army's right flank, closer to Brussels. The Brandenburgers, who had crossed the Meuse in mid April, went into new cantonments over 60 Km northeast, by Aarshot and Diest; they were to reinforce any garrison troops sent to assist Namur, which remained the army's chief forward depôt.

This was a change from the original plan, but so was the formation of Duke Max's corps. French preparations to besiege Ath may have been known to the Allies but fear for Namur was still strong. Brussels was also a potential target. This camp was closer to both Ath and Namur, and in front of the belt of woodland south of Brussels. The Allies were first in the field this year, so, ironically, it was hard to determine what the French were up to.

From William's perspective the greatest threat was to Namur. Obviously, Boufflers would conduct the siege and Catinat would cover him; hence the changes in the Allied deployment. The evidence suggests William was actually correct in his assessment, but because he got into the field first, the French were forced to pick an easier target – i.e., Ath.

Until now, the French had ignored Ath. Taking it would have shortened their line slightly, but it would have required an overly large garrison for its size. Oudenaarde was another potential target, so little thought of by the French that the histories never mention it being under threat. Again, holding it would gain the French nothing in territory, since it was hard against the Allied defensive line, but would consume more manpower. The only point of a siege against any target but Namur would be 'to make a noise' at the peace table (Childs, p. 330). Ath was an easier target than Oudenaarde, so Ath was picked.

The French plans had not reckoned on the enemy beating them into the field. Catinat had originally been sent to the Moselle, where an army was forming to operate in Luxembourg and the Eiffel, and toward the Lower Rhine. This is why the Germans latched on to the Huguenot battalions returning from Italy. At the terror of Catinat's name they began digging in at Cologne and Bonn. They also raised 60,000 men in Franconia and Swabia, which coincidentally ruined Choiseul's hopes on the Upper Rhine. The Germans' efforts scotched the idea of a Moselle offensive, so Catinat had been redirected to lay siege to Namur, briefly and only on paper. After the Allies deployed so many men near Namur, that name was scratched off the order and Ath substituted.

The Siege of Ath (May 17-June 5)

Ath was a small place, more fortress than town, sited at the confluence of the Dender and Irchonwelz, 28 Km east of Tournai and 47 Km southwest of Brussels. France acquired Ath by conquest in 1667 and obtained legal ownership in 1668, but in 1678 gave the place back to Spain at the Peace of Nijmegen.

10 years was enough time for Vauban to work his magic on the place. The fortifications were laid out as a regular heptagon, with 8 bastions. One length of the *enceinte*, between the Luxembourg and Flandres Bastions, was much longer than the others. Each section of *enceinte* was protected by a ravelin; each ravelin had *tenailles* in the ditch behind it. On the northwestern side, where the Dender exited the town, there was a hornwork. Elaborations included decorated sentry boxes (!) and four rows of elm and lime trees planted along the ramparts. These last were not merely decorative, they were intended to interrupt the flight of cannonballs. Finally, the Medieval castle on the western side of the town was turned into a citadel.

[Ravelins are detached outworks shaped like a shallow arrowhead. In a fortress such as Ath, these would be stone-faced, but simple ones were of rammed earth. A tenaille is a work shaped like a pair of pincers – effectively a ravelin in reverse. In this instance, the ravelin would channel attackers to either side of it, into the ditch, where they would be funnelled into the tenaille and slaughtered like sheep by enfilade fire. Tenailles could also be placed beyond a ravelin, with a different effect on the flow of attack. Hornworks were used to push the besiegers back from a critical sector, out of artillery range. Unlike ravelins and tenailles, they were connected to the main fortress by a pair of walls, the ailes *(wings) on which were mounted cannon which could fire perpendicular to the enceinte and glacis of the main fortress. The hornwork itself was a mini-fortress, created out of a pair of half-bastions with a connecting enceinte. Elaborate ones had their own set of outworks. A crown-work was a double hornwork, one in front of the other, but shaped like a crown when seen on the plan, with a full bastion between a pair of half-bastions, and perhaps a ravelin in-between the inner and outer hornworks.]*

Ath needed these improvements, because the town was not well sited for defence. It was overlooked on the East by Mont Férron, which commanded both the Mons and Brussels Gates and began its rise about 1,500 metres from the foot of the glacis. Vauban had used an army of conscripts to try and level it, but it was still there. His quick-fix was to erect *cavaliers* on all the bastions – raised observation or firing platforms conforming to the shape of the bastion.

Opposing Catinat's besieging army was the *conde* de Fariaux, with a garrison of 3,500: 3 Dutch battalions, 4 Spanish (3 of which were Milánese), 1 Spanish Horse regiment and 1 Spanish dragoon regiment.

William had already decided not to save Ath. Given its location there was always the possibility a relieving army might be cut off from its base by a thrust from either side, and by this stage of the proceedings a lost battle would be much worse than a lost fortress. Besides, Ath was not in the same league as Namur or Brussels.

The Allies had been in the field for three weeks when the French began to stir. The troops were in place, but the commanders were revising their plans. Boufflers held command of the frontier over the winter, so he was the man chiefly responsible for organizing things. And very competently he did so.

On May 10, Catinat arrived at his command (50 battalions and 49 squadrons; 33,430 men). He began his operations from Helkijn (Helchin), on the left bank of the Scheldt, just behind the new Lines extending from Courtrai on the Lys. His bridges were already laid, and he crossed on May 10. His march halted at Frasnes-lez-Buissenal, 12 Km WNW of Ath. Montrevel, who had been on the left bank of the Lys, threatening Deynze with 8,000 men, moved back into the Lines.

[Montrevel's flying camp is included in the tally for Catinat's command. It was primarily an infantry command.]

When Catinat's army reached Frasnes-lez-Buissenal another 8,000 men under Créqui were detached, making a flying camp at Celle, 12 Km WNW back toward the Scheldt. Créqui's first job was to screen Catinat's supply convoys coming from Tournai. His second job was to observe Oudenaarde. His third, should Duke Max stir, was to reinforce the Lines. For this reason his command consisted mainly of infantry.

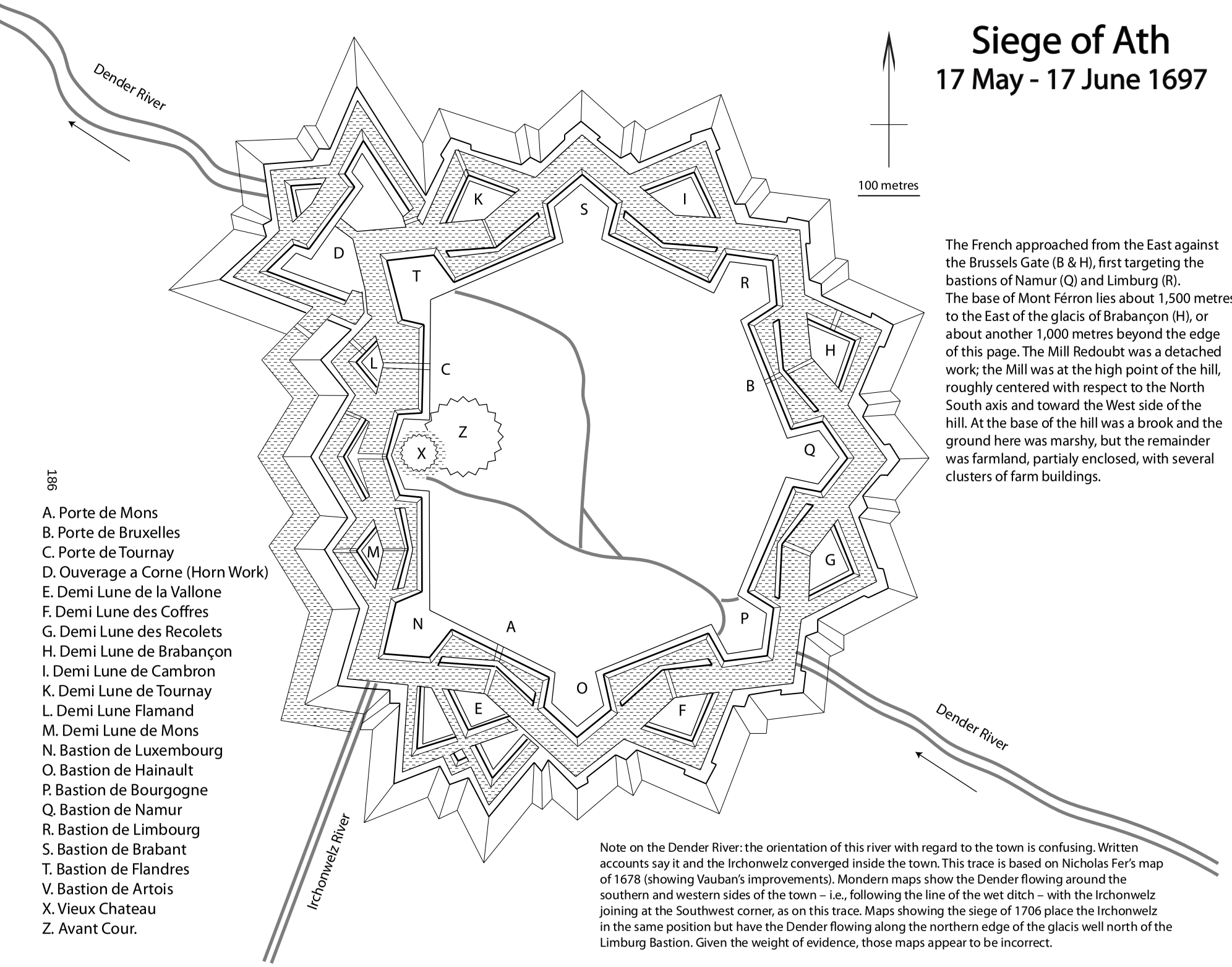
These movements caused William to cancel an order for Duke Max to send him the English cavalry. His Dutch horsemen were still in transit from points north, which left the King short. Fortunately, those troops arrived before it became an issue.

Villeroi's army (78 battalions, 56 squadrons; 55,620 men) was at Tournai. He arrived at the beginning of May. On May 15 he brought in a huge number of wagons – d'Auvergne says 5,000 from Artois alone. Then, the gates of Tournai were shut on the eastern side, probably for security reasons. That night *prince* Camille de Lorraine was sent with 20 men from each troop of horse to secretly invest Ath on the side facing Tournai. Catinat led a similar detachment to invest the town's northern side, along an arc facing Oudenaarde and Lessines. The remaining section was invested by cavalry from Mons under *lieutenant général* Gassion. The garrison woke to find themselves surrounded. Catinat permitted the Governor's wife and other ladies to leave the town. This was typical of him.

[Not all of the House of Lorraine fought on the Imperial side in this war, or in any war, for that matter.]

Boufflers (77 battalions, 107 squadrons; 55,740 men) had been cantoned behind the Sambre. He moved west, crossing the Sambre at La Boussière on May 14,

Siege of Ath
17 May - 17 June 1697



The French approached from the East against the Brussels Gate (B & H), first targeting the bastions of Namur (Q) and Limburg (R).
The base of Mont Férron lies about 1,500 metres to the East of the glacis of Brabançon (H), or about another 1,000 metres beyond the edge of this page. The Mill Redoubt was a detached work; the Mill was at the high point of the hill, roughly centered with respect to the North South axis and toward the West side of the hill. At the base of the hill was a brook and the ground here was marshy, but the remainder was farmland, partialy enclosed, with several clusters of farm buildings.

A. Porte de Mons
B. Porte de Bruxelles
C. Porte de Tournay
D. Ouverage a Corne (Horn Work)
E. Demi Lune de la Vallone
F. Demi Lune des Coffres
G. Demi Lune des Recolets
H. Demi Lune de Brabançon
I. Demi Lune de Cambron
K. Demi Lune de Tournay
L. Demi Lune Flamand
M. Demi Lune de Mons
N. Bastion de Luxembourg
O. Bastion de Hainault
P. Bastion de Bourgogne
Q. Bastion de Namur
R. Bastion de Limbourg
S. Bastion de Brabant
T. Bastion de Flandres
V. Bastion de Artois
X. Vieux Chateau
Z. Avant Cour.

Note on the Dender River: the orientation of this river with regard to the town is confusing. Written accounts say it and the Irchonwelz converged inside the town. This trace is based on Nicholas Fer's map of 1678 (showing Vauban's improvements). Mondern maps show the Dender flowing around the southern and western sides of the town – i.e., following the line of the wet ditch – with the Irchonwelz joining at the Southwest corner, as on this trace. Maps showing the siege of 1706 place the Irchonwelz in the same position but have the Dender flowing along the northern edge of the glacis well north of the Limburg Bastion. Given the weight of evidence, those maps appear to be incorrect.

reaching Binche by way of Fontaine l'Évêque on May 16. This involved a march down the Sambre, toward Charleroi, before zigzagging west. Binche is 20 Km west of Charleroi. This placed him in a position to intercept William's army.

To cover Catinat, Villeroi marched out of Tournai on the night of May 15, the vanguard, and the train of about 60 cannon, at 10pm, and himself with the main body about 3am on May 16. He camped between Leuze and Ligne (the former place is 11 Km WSW from Ath and the latter on the same line, halfway from there to Ath). His main concern, Duke Max, was 50 Km north, at Nevele (about 6 Km north of Deynze). All the next night, until Catinat's siege army was in place, Villeroi's men remained at 'bywatch' ('boots and saddles' to American readers).

On May 17, Catinat began the siege, his army augmented by 24 battalions and 15 squadrons loaned by Villeroi, and by a corps of 16,000 pioneers and 1,800 wagons dedicated to siege work. Most of the siege paraphernalia came from Douai. Bridges of communication were erected on the Dender above and below the town, and on the Irchonwelz. Vauban directed the siege itself – after all, he built the place, he should be allowed to tear it down.

[D'Auvergne records that the French brought with them 400,000 bread rations. He also says there were 20,000 pioneers and 2,000 siege wagons.]

Villeroi and Boufflers each made short marches to improve their coverage of the siege. Villeroi, on May 18, placed his HQ at Ligne. On May 20, he moved to Ostiches, 5 Km north of Ath. His Right was at Papignies and his Left at Lahamaide, a front of 6.5 Km facing NNE. The advantages of this position were a stream running along the entire length of the camp into the Dender, and a ridge nearly the same length following the stream on its left bank, on which the army was no doubt encamped. In front of the army were a number of small streams, with ravines. On the right was the Dender, and on the left yet more streams and ravines and beyond that the very large Bois d'Hubermont. The position did not directly threaten anything; it was covering the siege army. However, with little effort, Villeroi could march to join Boufflers, or head for Oudenaarde.

The same day, Boufflers, roughly 30 Km east of Ath on the right bank of the Sambre, marched from his camp just north of Binche to a camp near Le Roeulx, his Right at Thieux and his Left at Thieusies. This 9 Km march involved crossing to the left bank of the Sambre and facing northeast, on a front of about 5.5 Km, with his Right anchored on the river. Three days later (May 21) he made a further short march of 7-8 Km north to Soignies. A detachment under the *comte* de Tallard, out of Mons, had been on watch here since the start of the siege. At this time, King William's army (still under Vaudémont) was at Bois-Seigneur-Isaac, just north of Nivelles, on the far side of the Senne River, so these moves were intended to a) block his advance on Ath, b) threaten to intercept any move by him or Duke Max should they attempt to combine, and c) threaten Brussels.

The French had interior lines, so Vaudémont made no move. Duke Max investigated the possibilities of making a diversion against the Lines but decided he was outmatched. His situation was a miniature of the overall problem. Courtrai was to be his target, but de la Mothe, Montrevel, and Créqui could all cooperate to bring a larger force to bear.

At Ath, the lines of circumvallation were completed in 6 days. Bridges were thrown over the two rivers to connect the trenches. Vauban decided to make his attack on the eastern side, against the Brussels Gate, taking advantage of Mont Férron. The hill had a brook at its foot and the nearby confluence with the Dender was marshy, but there were a couple of tracks leading down the hill to the town, and between was only scattered farmland. At the highest point, dead center on the hill's north-south axis but favouring the western slope, was a windmill. The two approaches would be against the Bastion de Namur and the Bastion de Limbourg, which flanked the Brussels Gate on right and left, respectively. This direction of attack took advantage of another weakness in the defences, a dam that controlled the flow of water into the ditch.

[Childs also cites sources who claim Vauban wanted to attack here because it was actually the strongest sector, thus prolonging the siege and enhancing his own glory by demonstrating just how phenomenal were the defences he had built. In 1706 the Allies would attack the fortress from the opposite side.]

The night the approach trenches were opened, May 22/23, the work progressed 1,000 metres against both bastions, and in the morning, a parallel was finished which connected them. By the end of the day, the trenches were within 400 metres of the glacis. On May 24 a second parallel was dug, and the next day, after some good work by Swiss battalions under *lieutenant général* Tessé's command, the approaches were each at the foot of the glacis and a third parallel connected them. Digging can be fun, if the ground is soft.

So far, the garrison had made no sortie and fired few shots, and those mainly in reply to an equally small number of shots by the besiegers. There had been a few French casualties. Allied raiders from Ghent struck at an ammunition convoy coming from Tournai on May 13, taking 30 prisoners and 62 horses, though it proved hard work to escape the escort's pursuit.

No batteries had yet been erected. High ground has its disadvantages, too. The French might observe the town, but they had no desire to conduct a terror bombardment that might ruin the peace talks. The walls were in 'dead ground'. But, Vauban came up with a solution.

Meanwhile, the Allies had been seeking some way of interrupting the siege, more for something to do than

anything else. When Boufflers fist moved to Soignies, a brigade under Fagel was sent by Vaudémont to Braine-le-Château, 7 Km SSE of Halle on the right bank of the Senne. This was to prevent Boufflers from intercepting Duke Max by way of Halle. About the same time, a conference was held between Vaudémont and Duke Max. At that time, William had not yet joined his army, but he later gave his blessing to the relief attempt they concocted.

Thus, on May 23, Duke Max, minus Fagel's men, marched east, camping between Merchtem and Asse, about a day's march northwest of Brussels, on May 24. Also on May 23 the Brandenburg general, Heiden, arrived at Brussels with 21 squadrons, while on May 24 Tilly arrived there with cavalry from Liège and Cologne. (The Foot of those contingents stayed in place, observing d'Harcourt's flying camp in the Ardennes.) Some battalions did arrive from Namur.

Vaudémont took William's army from Bois-Segnieur-Isaac on May 24, bound for Halle, was joined by the eastern contingents and King William in person, and combined with Duke Max on May 26 at Sint-Kwintens Lennik (there was a day's delay waiting for some of the Artillery). The Allied camp reached from Asse to Halle, nearly 20 Km in length. In all, the Allied army numbered 112 battalions, 165 squadrons of horse, and 78 squadrons of dragoons; a total of 104,756 men, according to d'Auvergne.

[D'Auvergne's order of battle shows Vaudémont and Duke Max holding separate commands though physically colocated. Vaudémont had 70 battalions, 102 squadrons of horse, and 51 squadrons of dragoons; Duke Max had 52 battalions, 63 squadrons of horse, and 27 squadrons of dragoons.]

The French responded to these moves as follows. Montreval moved out of the Lines to Celles. Créqui at Celles rejoined Villeroi. Boufflers closed up in a northwesterly direction, camping at Silly and Ghislenghien, 9 Km east of Ath. Villeroi still lay at Ostiches. This put the two marshals about 5 Km apart, on roughly the same line of front. The Dender lay between, but bridges were thrown across it.

Up until now, the siege, in d'Auvergne's words, 'was carried] on very quietly… I believe that Trenches were never carried on so quietly, with so little Loss, and without firing of Cannon to the very Glacis of such Fortifications as those of Ath before; and indeed the Besiegers make so little Noise that all the Discourse in our Camp [at St. Quentin] was of a general Cessation of Arms…' (vol. 1697, p. 60). Childs writes of 'an unnatural hush around Ath' (p. 333) as the work progressed.

(The French had actually proposed a truce, in which there would be a general cessation of arms, and seaports would be open to commerce. The Allies baulked at the second point. French overseas trade was minimal at the best of times, whereas the Allied merchants were very keen to start making money again by delivering to France, But, their ships would become hostages if the talks broke down.)

The quiet period was about to end. On the night of May 26/27 the Third Parallel was completed. On May 27, an ominous sound reached William's HQ: the thunder of 36 heavy siege guns arranged in 5 batteries. The sound began in the morning and rolled on and on and on, all day without ceasing. Vauban used reduced charges, so that the shot went high, came down within the defensive positions, and skipped all about. There was no cover.

Something might yet be attempted in the way of relief. A reconnaissance was made by the Quartermaster General of the States Army (named van Dopf), as far as Enghien, 20 Km northeast of Ath. He was escorted by 600 cavalry and 200 infantry, which fought a skirmish with the French (100 Carabiniers, 50 horse, and 50 dragoons) near Enghien early that morning. The French were worsted, losing 10-12 men killed, 40 prisoners taken, and many horses.

A second reconnaissance was made by the Prince of Nassau-Saarbrück's own QMG (named M. Ivoy) toward the Bois de Lessines (that is, against Villeroi), which was a large wood on the near side of the Dender. After this, William called a Great Council to determine the plan of attack.

The QMGs reported 'favourable omens'. Villeroi and Boufflers were barely joined at the Dender, a significant obstacle which they would have difficulty crossing in a hurry, bridges or no. The Allies would advance to a line facing southwest just about Enghien. Duke Max would cover from the village of Marcq on his Left to the Bois de Lessines, and Vaudémont from Marcq on his Right to a post behind Enghien. The details are not that important, because on the night before the march, May 27/28, a storm arose and the roads turned to mud. The work parties who had been sent out ahead of time to prepare the routes had a hard time making it back to camp, let alone doing their job.

On May 28 Vauban unmasked 3 mortar batteries: 2 of 12 tubes each, firing 150-pound shells; 1 of 3 tubes firing 500-pound shells. The heavy battery was dedicated to destroying the dam, so that the water would run out. (At this time the wet ditch had 3 metres of water, and the surrounding land was flooded.) By May 29, only 2 of the defenders cannon facing the trenches remained mounted, and the defenders abandoned the ramparts.

That evening, three lodgements were obtained on the counterscarps of the two bastions and the intervening Barbançon demi-lune covering the Brussels Gate. They were with '12 fathoms' (22 metres) of the points of the bastions' salient angles. Suffering only light casualties – not 'for public consumption light', but *extremely* light – the attackers penetrated the counterscarp and drove the defenders along the covered way in both directions. The French units participating were:

On the right, 1 battalion of Surbeck (Swiss) and 2 battalions of Jung-Salis (also Swiss), directed by *lieutenant général* Tessé.

On the left, 3 battalions of *régiment d'Irelandais* Lee, directed by *maréchal de camp* the *comté* de Marsin.

[The French lost 3 killed and 8 wounded, including an engineer who had his thumb shot off.]

On May 30, the artillery was moved forward to begin making breaches. For this, the cannon had to be brought down the hill and deployed on the glacis, since direct fire was not possible from the hill itself. Damage to the dam lowered the water in the ditch from 3 metres to 2, and on May 31, from 2 metres to 1. At the Barbançon Ravelin the saps worked down into the ditch, where a corduroy road of fascines was laid across the remaining water.

To the Relief Army the sudden cessation of noise, as the batteries were shifted, sounded like the end of the siege, but later on May 31 the thunder resumed. That day, the weather cleared. The Allied machine was still primed for advance, so the pioneers went forward to fix the roads, but William had mentally abandoned the operation. He could not afford to lose a battle, and he was running low on forage.

It was decided to split up. If the Allies waited until Ath capitulated, then Villeroi and Boufflers could each steal a march and strike at some other fortress, the one in Flanders, the other in Brabant. So, King William decided to rearrange *his* forces first. Duke Max went back to Nevele and William crossed the Senne, camping near Genappe (at Promelles, 2 Km away). This was on June 1.

The French covering armies did indeed split after this. Boufflers camped at Thieusies, 7 Km south of Soignies, where there was better forage. Villeroi shifted slightly but remained covering the siege.

The evening of June 1 also saw French grenadiers gain a lodgement at the tip of the demi-lune. The 60-man garrison was forced to retreat to the tenaille behind, which was still surrounded by water, at a cost of 2 French dead and 5 wounded. After about 2 hours an attempt was made to retake the demi-lune. Strangely, although it was night, the counterattack was 'by fire' only – musket salvos from the ramparts and neighbouring bastions. This lasted for about 90 minutes. A few salvoes from the siege batteries dispersed the threat.

June 2 saw a battery each of 20 guns emplaced on the covered way in front of the Namur and of the Limburg bastions, while the lodgement on the demi-lune was consolidated. The mortars, besides continuing to bombard the dam, targeted the bridge connecting the town with the enemy-held tenaille behind the demi-lune. Stacks of fascines were brought up in readiness for filling the final ditch.

All day on June 3 the batteries played on the two bastions, so that by nightfall each had had its face shattered. The left face of the Limburg Bastion collapsed along a width of '20 fathoms' – 36 metres. At the tenaille, the bridge collapsed and the garrison in the tenaille, 53 men and 1 officer, surrendered.

June 4: the left face of the Namur Bastion collapsed along a width of 36 metres. The right face of Limburg collapsed for a distance of 14-15 fathoms (25-27 metres). At both bastions, the French mortars kept up a rain of fire so the defenders could not dig retrenchments. That night, the saps were completed. Both breaches were deemed practicable the next morning: at Namur, the gap was the width of 30 men, and at Limburg, 25 men.

While files of French soldiers marched up to the fosse and threw in fascines, or scraped down bits of shattered bastion into the ditch, and while the cannon and mortars continued to roar and cough, the Governor and his staff discussed surrender. The French lined up 20 companies of grenadiers under the *comte* de Marsin to spearhead the final assault, which was expected to carry the town. At 2pm the chamade was beaten and the last siege of the war in the Low Countries was over. Terms were signed that evening, and the following day, June 6, the Feast of Corpus Christi, the French obtained possession of a gate. June 7, the garrison marched out with honours of war. Vauban missed his deadline by one day.

By the standards of the day, the siege, regarded as Vauban's finest, cost a ridiculously small number of lives. The French lost 53 dead and 106 wounded, and the garrison had 250 casualties. Total financial cost of the siege was 89,250 *livres*. The French paid more than that for a single assassination attempt. In contrast, the siege of Barcelona was going to last three times as long (67 days), and cost 9,000 French and 12,000 Spanish dead.

[D'Auvergne estimates 50 French dead, 150 wounded, and no more than 400 Allied casualties.]

The siege of Ath vindicated Vauban's methodology. Even his lime trees worked as he intended. French gunnery was as precise as could be expected for that age. Out of 15,000 cannonballs and 5,000 mortar shells stockpiled, they only needed to use 4,000 and 400, respectively. The town suffered minimal damage, since Catinat had issued express orders not fire on it. Childs describes the garrison's defense as 'uninspired', but who wanted to be the last Spaniard to die in King William's war? Most of their Italian soldiers deserted to France.

[Alternate figures for the materiel stockpiled are: 266,000 pounds of gunpowder, of which less than half was expended, 34,000 pounds of lead, 27,050 cannon balls, 3,400 bombs, 950 grenades, 12,000 sandbags.]

À Bruxelles!

King Billy learned of the fall of Ath on June 6. He had hoped the siege might last longer than this. The French had most of the season left to work their will, the peace talks were dragging, and the Allies remained outnumbered. And, the French were getting stronger. What did the enemy intend? They were not sure themselves. After Ath capitulated, the obvious move was to denude the lands around Aalst, which would hinder the Allies recombining. This, however, hardly sent a strong message to Rijswick. There was time for another siege, but the coastal towns of Flanders remained difficult to take, mainly because all the approaches were flooded. Oudenaarde had been the alternative to Ath, but it was too well garrisoned and the approaches were also under water. If Villeroi moved to Aalst, and Boufflers to Piéton, they would threaten both Brussels and Namur; Catinat, positioned behind them, could reinforce either army, or toy with Duke Max by threatening Flanders.

The course they finally chose was another terror raid on Brussels, probably on King Louis' orders. The Allies were off balance. William was trying to cover both Namur and Brussels, and was too far east to protect the latter effectively. Catinat would still pin Duke Max. Villeroi and Boufflers would combine, and using the open country west of the Senne, reach the Anderlecht Gate before William, at that time 30 Km away, could hack his way through the woods south of the city. No siege was contemplated, though if the city was weakly defended, of course they would take it. Boufflers would make a bombardment while Villeroi protected him. There would be consternation at Rijswick.

The day after the news of Ath's fall reached him (June 7), William ordered 7 squadrons under Major General de Bay to make a reconnaissance against Boufflers. These skirmished with a French patrol, gaining the advantage and some prisoners, who do not seem to have yielded any useful intelligence, since William remained where he was. However, on June 9, he did send 2 battalions to Brussels, where they joined another battalion in garrison, and took put a position between the city and Vilvorde, guarding the crossings over the Brussels Canal, and a fort called Des Trois Trous (probably Drie Fonteinen, 1,400 metres south of Vilvorde, on the canal).

Duke Max was so short of forage that he had to import it from Dutch Flanders and Holland. The French were absorbing the local sources around Aalst. On June 12, Tilly's Liègeois cavalry was ordered to Brussels, somewhat easing the shortages. During the first week of June the Elector also detached a few battalions to guard the Scheldt crossings and the Ghent-Bruges Canal.

Tilly's brigade was stationed in front of the Halle Gate, at Fort de Monterey, on the ground where the French made their last terror bombardment. The next day (June 13), Coehoorn went to Brussels to start laying out trenches. The men who had to dig them were still enroute. Due to lack of funds, 8 English and 17 Brunswick battalions had not yet reached the theatre. 5 of these English units landed on the Continent on June 15, while the next day 8 battalions and 12 squadrons from Lüneburg crossed the Meuse at Visé and marched to Tongres (June 18).

On June 17, Duke Max made a forage up the Lys River toward Wacken, scouring both banks of the Mandel. Montrevel, then at Courtrai, quickly dealt with the parties, routing them for some distance, before running into superior forces and returning to Courtrai with 40 prisoners and 30 horses. The Allies had, as was typical, laid out a string of detachments along the two rivers to cover the work parties, including 3 cannon at one place, but apparently a Spanish outpost broke and the panic spread, the French, about 400 in number, rolling up several outposts.

On June 22, after a council of war, it was decided that the Flanders Army would seek cover behind the canal line if attacked. 3 battalions from Nieupoort (some sources say all 6,000 of Fagel's men) were recalled to strengthen the main body, while further detachments were made, not only to cover the various crossings, but to guard forage convoys coming from Flanders. In short, Duke Max was not well positioned to aid King William before Brussels.

As for the French, while Catinat's army spent a few days effacing the traces of the siege (6,000 peasants were used), Villeroi crossed the Dender over his communication bridges and camped with his Right on the Bois de Lessines and his Left on the river. Here he recovered the men he had loaned to Catinat. Both armies received provisions; the convoy also removed the unused siege material and the pontoon bridges.

On June 11 D'Harcourt disbanded his flying camp, then at Mont Royal in the valley of the Moselle, sending 10 battalions and 9 squadrons to the Rhine and leading the rest (6 battalions and 8 squadrons) to the Marlagne (the country between the Sambre and Meuse). This gave Boufflers more operational flexibility.

On June 19, Catinat finished his labours at Ath and camped at Ligne, his Right by the Irchonwelz River and his Left toward Frasnes-lez-Anvaing (12 Km WNW from Ath), facing NNE.

[Some sources say that Catinat was at Grammont (Geraardsbergen) on June 19, breaking camp then for Ligne. This is probably a mistake.]

On June 25, in accordance with the need to pin Duke Max, he crossed the Scheldt to camp on the right bank of the Lys at Sint-Eloois-Vijve, halfway between Courtrai and Deynze. Duke Max responded by bridging the Lys north of Deynze. On June 27 Catinat inched forward 3,000 metres to the village of Zulte. All he was doing was hugging Duke Max closely enough that the latter could not make an attack along the coast or detach troops to

help William; Catinat would cut off and destroy the column. So much for Flanders.

In Brabant, the two French marshals moved up to their start lines on June 22. Boufflers had rations for 6 days, and presumably Villeroi had the same. The latter posted himself at Gammerages, 7 Km east of Grammont (Geraardsbergen), for Villeroi, and Enghien for Boufflers.

King William learned of this movement the same day and at a council of war resolved on a forced march to Brussels. It was raining, but, ironically, he was going to have a faster passage than the enemy, because they had to march along muddy tracks while he had the use of a stone causeway which bisected the Bois de Soignes. Odd that the French never took that into consideration.

The Allied column stretched for 20 Km. The train left first, about 5pm. The foot followed at 10pm. The staff carriages departed at midnight and the Brigade of Guards brought up the rear in the dawn of the next day. The foot reached Waterloo then, while the cavalry was just leaving the old camp. It had been a very dark night and William did not want his infantry accidentally run down by his horsemen.

Tilly, recalled from the Monterey Fort, was sent to cover the march column by occupying the Anderlecht Gate and sending scouts southwest to look for the French. By 10am on June 23 the infantry had reached the Namur Gate on the South side of the city. There was a pause while the camp was marked out. At 1pm the march resumed, through the gate, through the city streets, and out through the western Flanders Gate; the camp lay between it and the Anderlecht Gate, which faced southwest, and protected the entire western side of the city, running from Laeken, on the Willebrœk Canal, to the Senne Valley. HQ was at Kœkelberg.

As the van approached the camp, 4,000 French cavalry hove into view. The Allies' position was nearly lost because their van commander was good at laying out camps but not at fighting; he wanted to withdraw. At the last minute Vaudémont arrived and steadied everyone's nerves. The French withdrew instead.

Villeroi, camped 14 Km southwest, at Kestergat, had been forced to halt there for a whole day due to the weather. Boufflers was able to reach Halle on June 23 but was not sure if William had broken camp yet. The 4,000 French cavalry were one of his patrols. So much for surprise.

The French took up a position in front of the Allies, camping along a 15 Km line between the Senne and Dender, centered on Sint-Kwintens-Lennik, 10 Km from the Allied lines. Across the Allied Right ran the Brook of Zellik, a series of fish ponds that filled its small valley, and beyond that were wooded defiles. On the Left the line was anchored on the Senne and featured even more fish ponds. 6,000 men were transforming the 6 principal villages west of Brussels into strongpoints. By June 24 the Allied position was too strong to take, but not until June 29 was Coehoorn satisfied. He was not going to be the man that lost the last fight of the war.

The ensuing stalemate effectively ended the campaign. Both sides knew a settlement was very near. William was the one who might have risked a battle, because he was down on points, but his army was unreliable. The French did not have that problem, but why make waves? The rest of the season was spent in routine maintenance. Forage parties went out heavily guarded, to discourage foolish actions. On July 6, both armies tacitly agreed to forage on the opposite ends of their armies – west for the Fresh and east for the Allies.

Catinat, who had as much trouble foraging as Duke Max, had had to pull back. He stopped at Courtrai and distributed his men into the Lines on July 4. The same day, Tilly took 50 squadrons south to Mazy, to protect Namur and Huy, but also to get rid of a few bellies. On July 7, a party of French ignored the unspoken foraging agreement, sparking a stand-to in the Allied camp. The last recorded action was the capture of a band of 50 French trying to steal Allied mounts. On July 11, King William was informed of the election of the new Polish King (Augustus of Saxony) – sowing the seed of a future war.

Manoeuvres continued as long as the talks lasted. Duke Max advanced to Roselare, but not until August 14, and he was only looking to feed his horses. Villeroi and Boufflers recrossed the Dender, camping between Ninove and Alost. An Allied brigade, commanded by the Huguenot, Belcastel, covered the move by being repositioned at Verbrande Brug, just north of Vilvorde (in case the French tried to go around the Allied camp). 10 guns and some cavalry were given Belcastel from the reserves stationed at Diegem.

Everything came to a halt on September 20. Peace had broken out. On October 1 the armies in the Low Countries began to disperse for home (though some regiments were not demobilized until the next year).

The Peace

The talks at Rijswick were moving too slowly. Tensions were high. There were a number of real sticking points, such as the recognition of William as king, and the corresponding French desire for a general amnesty for the Jacobites in France, not to mention a pension for James II's wife, Mary of Modena. Imperial interests and Spanish succession questions lay heavy on everyone's mind. The election of Augustus the Strong as King of Poland had relevance, because it put paid to French ambitions in that quarter, at least for now. It meant the removal of one more barrier to peace.

Ath had a counterproductive effect because the French envoys became arrogant; it took the flop in front of Brussels to deflate them. Even so, they refused to talk

directly to the English, using the Dutch as intermediaries. The affair at Brussels also raised Spanish – and Dutch – opinions of William. They had been afraid he would sign a deal with France that excluded their interests, but by defending Brussels it seemed he would not make peace without them. The Swedish mediators were in no hurry, since they would go back in the drawer once the peace was signed. The Spanish envoy, named Don Bernardo de Quiros, was a real piece of work. He actually disobeyed Madrid, who told him to make 'peace at any price', because he, personally, thought the war ought to continue. Overriding all was the personal mistrust between William and Louis.

After the Mexican standoff at Brussels, William took the initiative and bypassed the diplomats. He sent one of his senior generals, and a close confidant, Willem Bentinck, to talk directly with *maréchal* Boufflers. The two men had first met when Boufflers was imprisoned at Maastricht after the fall of Namur.

The meeting took place between the lines, in a summer house, in an orchard, at a place called Brucom, not far from Halle, on July 8. Bentinck wanted to know whether Louis truly desired peace. If so, what would it take for him to acknowledge William as a king and to disown James II. Boufflers gave him an acceptable answer.

The Treaty of Rijswick was thus really a separate peace concluded between England, Holland, and France. It took 8 meetings and the French threatening to besiege Oudenaarde, but when Bentinck told the diplomats that William was prepared to break up the Coalition, they came face to face with reality.

Madrid stomped on Don Quiros. There was no way Spain could survive a war with France; she could barely hang on even with the help of the Maritime Powers. The taking of Barcelona, which might have been avoided if Don Quiros had done his duty, was the final nail in the coffin.

It took longer for the Emperor. To begin with, his envoys had no real power to make deals. They had to refer everything to Vienna. Leopold huffed and puffed, but he did so want to keep steamrollering the Turk. Oh, why could not Willie be a good little boy and keep playing war for another year. To be fair, the Emperor's main concern was that the Spanish Succession be addressed. The Imperial signature was appended to the document on October 30, without the Succession question really being settled; in consequence the peace was understood by all to be no more than an armistice.

[One of the envoys was heard to say it would be better to knock Charles II on the head than to keep everyone in suspense.]

In summary, the terms were as follows: France gave up Luxembourg and the territories extorted through the prewar Reunions, but retained Strasbourg, which was essential to protect Alsace. Lorraine was returned to the Empire, under its dukes, but France had right of transit for her armies so long as they paid for food and lodging. Breisach and the right bank of the Rhine were given up by France (thus satisfying the Emperor), but the retention of Strasbourg meant she could still interfere militarily in Germany. (The French quickly built a Neuf Brisach on the opposite bank.) King Louis recognized William as King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and agreed to stop his political support for James II, though the latter remained his pensioner. Overseas, all prizes were swapped, but the French obtained recognition of their half of Hispaniola, thus creating the country that would eventually become Haiti. Closer to home, the French reduced their tariffs on Dutch goods (pretty much the only reason the Dutch were fighting in the first place). This was also the treaty which officially sanctioned the system of Barrier Forts, locations within the Spanish Netherlands which could be garrisoned by Dutch troops.

The jury is still out on who won. Lynn argues that, although the French generals, such as Vauban, felt they had been cheated of a victory, King Louis did obtain a favourable peace, but that the balance of power coincidentally shifted against France at this time because of the Emperor's gains against the Turks. Louis' recognition of William as a king was a bitter pill, but on the matter of the Jacobites, nothing more was said, and though he had to promise not to recognise James II's *children* as legitimate heirs, he was not forced to renounce James himself. France did not get much from nine years of war, but she did not lose anything essential, either.

Childs says the Grand Alliance was a clear winner at the peace table, because it solidified William's hold on England. When one considers the course of the War of the Spanish Succession, not to mention future world history, that argument has validity, but in the short term the greatest shift in the balance of power was between Habsburg and Bourbon. Childs does agree with Lynn on this, but, as Lynn says, the event which brought it about was the Peace of Carlowitz, in 1699, not the Treaty of Rijswick.

'As for the Advantages of France in this Peace, notwithstanding that it has lost all Footing in Italy by the Separate Treaty with Savoy, by giving back Pignerol after a Possession of above Sixty Years, to obtain it; that Lorrain is restor'd upon much better Terms for that Duke and the Empire, than those agreed upon in the Treaty of Nimeguen; and notwithstanding the great and prodigious Expences to which the French King has been oblig'd, to carry on so long and tedious a War, which in truth he began himself, against so many Confederates, and yet that he is still reduc'd to the Bounds and Limits of the precedent Peace; which for this reason looks like so much Blood shed, and Treasure spent to no purpose; that Cazal has been taken by the Allies, Lorrain and Dinant restor'd, both which were in his Possession even at the Treaty of Nimeguen; and Luxembourg given back to the

Spaniards, all which Places were in the hands of the French before the beginning of the War; and that he has been oblig'd to evacuate all the Towns and Fortresses he has taken since, at the Expence of so much Blood and Money; and all the Country he was Master of beyond the Rhine, in Exchange for Strasbourg: Yet it must be own'd that the French King has manag'd the whole War with abundance of Art and Wisdom; that he has gain'd very great Advantages over the Allies; that he has brought them to make a Peace upon his own Terms, and extricated himself very gloriously thereby out of all the Difficulties which a Powerful Confederacy had brought his Kingdom to, not so much by the Vigour of their Efforts as by the Necessity of his own Affairs, the Consequence of a Burdensome and Expensive War carried on by himself against so many Potent Enemies, which had reduc'd most of the Provinces of France to an Universal Poverty and Misery; and at last he remains Master of Strasbourg in Alsatia, Longwy and Saar-Louis in Lorrain, much more to his Advantage than the Equivalents he gives, being thereby in a Condition to hinder Lorrain (though restor'd) from being troublesome to France, and still to keep the Rhine and the Empire in awe; and has Power enough left by it, to be still formidable to the rest of Europe, and to disturb the Peace and Quiet of Christendom as soon as his Coffers are replenish'd; unless his Adherence to the Publick Faith and Sacredness of Treaties, constrains him more than the Apprehension of the Power and Greatness of any of his Neighbours.

Yet notwithstanding these Advantages on both sides in the Treaty of Ryswick, it is certain that both France and the Allies are fallen very short of their Expectations in the last War…'

D'Auvergne, Vol, 1697, pp.157-158.

[The picture is of the palace of Huis ter Nieuwburg, setting for the peace conference.]

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