Maréchal Catinat at the Battle of Orbassano

Army of Italy

The War of the Grand Alliance in Piedmont 1690-1696

Commentary

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Amongst the rude nations which lay beyond the Alps, valor was absolutely indispensable. Without it none could be eminent, few could be secure. Cowardice was, therefore, naturally considered as the foulest reproach. Among the polished Italians, enriched by commerce, governed by law, and passionately attached to literature, everything was done by superiority of intelligence. Their very wars, more pacific than the peace of their neighbors, required rather civil than military qualifications. Hence, while courage was the point of honor in other countries, ingenuity became the point of honor in Italy.

From these principles were deduced, by processes strictly analogous, two opposite systems of fashionable morality. Through the greater part of Europe, the vices which peculiarly belong to timid dispositions, and which are the natural defence of weakness, fraud, and hypocrisy, have always been most disreputable. On the other hand, the excesses of haughty and daring spirits have been treated with indulgence, and even with respect. The Italians regarded with corresponding lenity those crimes which require self-command, address, quick observation, fertile invention, and profound knowledge of human nature.

Such a prince as our Henry V would have been the idol of the North. The follies of his youth, the selfish ambition of his manhood, the Lollards roasted at slow fires, the prisoners massacred on the field of battle, the expiring lease of priestcraft renewed for another century, the dreadful legacy of a causeless and hopeless war bequeathed to a people who had no interest in its event – everything is forgotten but the victory of Agincourt. Francis Sforza, on the other hand, was the model of Italian heroes. He made his employers and his rivals alike his tools. He first overpowered his open enemies by the help of faithless allies: he then armed himself against his allies with the spoils taken from his enemies. By his incomparable dexterity, he raised himself from the precarious and dependent situation of a military adventurer to the first throne of Italy. To such a man much was forgiven – hollow friendship, ungenerous enmity, violated faith. Such are the opposite errors which men commit, when their morality is not a science, but a taste, when they abandon eternal principles for accidental associations.

Lord Macaulay, Essay on Machiavelli

In his essay, Macaulay defends Machiavelli's statecraft by pointing out that one must not judge people by one's own standards, but by theirs. Instead of using Francis Sforza as an example of 'Italian virtue', he might equally have picked Victor II Amadeus, Duke of Savoy – except that British historians of Macaulay's generation abominated Victor Amadeus as a black traitor, essentially for betraying England's King William before William could betray him. Which is ironic, given what Macaulay was trying to achieve in his essay…

In a study of the Italian theatre of war, at least since the beginning of the 17th Century, the House of Savoy is always at the crux of the matter. Certainly this was so in the Nine Years War. This was not a war of clashing socio-economic forces or ideologies, it was a war of personalities. In Italy, there were two antagonists, Louis XIV of France and Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor. Duke Victor was caught between them.

Italy was regarded as a sideshow by both the behemoths, but it would prove the most decisive theatre, even though in a number of years little happened and the campaigns produced minimal visible results.

War came to Italy primarily because Spain, a *de facto* member of the anti-Bourbon League of Augsburg, declared war on France in 1689, thereby bringing Spanish Lombardy into the picture, which gave the Habsburg Emperor a route to strike at France's 'soft underbelly' whilst – and at the same time – offering a juicy target for the French.

However, a successful French offensive in northern Italy (or a proper defensive campaign, for that matter) was predicated on the House of Savoy doing its duty as a loyal vassal, providing a base of operations for the French Army. Otherwise, campaigning on the far side of the Alps would be very difficult.

Problem No. 1. Although a French client, Duke Victor was also a vassal of the Holy Roman Emperor. This was because the duke's lands on the Italian side of the Alps – called 'Piedmont' for short – fell within the not-quite-defunct *Reichsitalien*, the Italian portion of the Holy Roman Empire. The Emperor would take dim view of his vassal making war against him, and could hurt the House of Savoy in a number of significant ways.

Problem No 2. Louis XIV tended to take people for granted. He made two assumptions, one correct, and one not, and nearly lost the war as a result.

He assumed the House of Savoy was too weak to defend itself militarily. This was certainly true if it was a question of facing the combined armies of Milán and the Empire. It followed naturally that the French Army would have to intervene decisively, whatever longterm strategy developed, and occupy Piedmont to protect its 'ally'.

The incorrect assumption was that the Duke of Savoy would not mind at all if his lands were occupied by a foreign army, would not mind if that army requisitioned the natural and human resources of his lands for its own ends without compensation either material or honorific, and that he himself would not mind becoming a puppet ruler once the war was over. Making Piedmont 'similar to Lorraine', or words to that effect, was the phrase used by the *duc* d'Orléans.

When Victor Amadeus quite naturally refused to allow his House to sink into oblivion, the Sun King lost his temper.

Sources

Of the four European theatres of war (Flanders, Spain, the Rhineland, and Italy), Italy has probably received the most attention on political matters and the least on military ones. Political interest stems from the nature of the Savoy-Piedmont state, which serves as a sandbox model of the emerging 'absolutist' regimes common to the 18th Century. Blow-by-blow accounts of the various campaigns are scarce probably because they were so inconclusive.

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.

Most of the works covering the campaigns in Italy date from the 19th Century or earlier. They tend to be partisan and the ones by Italian authors are heavily concerned to portray the House of Savoy as Italy's natural rulers.

Works studied for this Commentary include *Catinat, l'homme et la vie, 1637-1712* by Emmanuel Broglie (Paris, 1902), which is a defence of *Maréchal* Catinat written to counterbalance negative views expressed by earlier historians influenced by the writings of Catinat's rivals. It is a biography, not a campaign history, but it includes details from the campaigns as well as correspondence which helps fix dates and also contemporary thoughts.

There is also the *Journal de la campagne de Piémont pendant l'année 1691, et du siège de Montmélian, sous le commandement de M. de Catinat, Général des armées de sa Majesté en Italie*. by M. Moreau de Brasey (Paris 1692). This is more like! De Brasey was a captain in the *régiment* de Sarre and participated in the campaign; he was in the breach at the siege of Montmélian. De Brasey wrote journals for 1690 and 1692 as well, but unfortunately these proved unobtainable (probably buried in some Euro-trash baron's private library).

Another eyewitness account is the *Memoires Historiques et Politiques de François Eugene Prince de Savoye*, vol 1, by La Haye Etienne Foulque, published in 1712. The biographer was a French exile in the suite of Prince Eugene. Apart from limited descriptions of the campaigns and politics, he provides 'period flavour' with descriptions of the lands he visited.

The Waldenses: Sketches of the Evangelical Christians of the Valleys of Piedmont, Philadelphia Presbyterian Board Publication and Sabbath-School Work (1853), is a detailed account of the Vaudois or Waldensian sect. It is biased, but goes into great detail about Vaudois affairs.

The *Histoire Militaire du Piémont. Suite de la Seconde Partie. Guerres du Piémont Depuis le XVII Siècle* by Andre Saluces (2nd edition, Turin 1859), is similarly biased, this time in favour of Victor Amadeus. Saluces' dating is sometimes 'off'. Nevertheless he gives details of the campaigns from the Allied perspective.

Der Anteil de bayerischen Armee den Feldzügen in Piemont 1691 bis 1696 by Leonard Winkler (Münden 1886), is a precise accounting of the Bavarian regiments that served in Italy, with dates, OOB, TO&E, etc. Fortunately the Bavarians, though few in number, were involved in all the major events except the Battle of Staffarda, so the book is very useful for campaign, siege, and battle details.

Finally, there is *La guerre d'Italie ou Mémoires du Comte D–* (Cologne, 1707). This one falls into the category of 'amusing tales' which may or may not be true. *Le Comte D–* is purported to have been the *comte* de Langallerie, a Frenchman who fled to Turin after fighting a duel (over a woman, naturally). During the war he describes his position as that of high level aide and agent for Victor Amadeus, though his first job seems to have been pimping for visiting French officers before the war started. The book lacks details about the campaigns, but is very entertaining and provides views of off-duty life and backstairs dealings, which even if exaggerated, are accurate in flavour. For example, the great battle of Marsaglia (Orbassano) is dealt with in a single column of text. Most of that chapter is taken up with Langallerie's and his friends' affairs with a number of married women. The book is in French, of course.

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. Fortunately, no period English sources were referenced for this commentary, so date discrepancies can be put down either to mistakes made in translation by this author, or mistakes made by the original authors. OS dates were 10 days behind NS dates during the 1690s.

Background

French Ambitions

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. 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, that '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!)

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 put together 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, because their fate also illumines King Louis' thinking. Internally, Louis attempted to continue the process of unification by imposing religious conformity. 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 Dutch War.

King Louis feared that William of Orange, commander-in-chief of the Dutch Army, coveted the bishopric 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. In the event however, it was discovered that William coveted England more. Rather than foil the prince, the French attack into the Palatinate, conducted with what was essentially a peacetime army, instead gave him enough time to conquer the island before turning to meet the threat of an invasion of Holland.

French acts of 'frightfulness' in the Palatinate united Germany against them and the war became general. 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. Only Italy remained neutral, but not for long. The Duke of Savoy hoped to remain uncommitted. Unfortunately, the Spanish would not leave him the option.

Spain had tried to remain neutral herself, but It was inevitable that she would become involved. 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.

In 1689, therefore, Spain and France went to war. And, because his lands lay between southern France and the plains of Spanish Lombardy, the Duke of Savoy was forced to choose sides.

[Louis XIV in 1690]

The French in Italy

As the reader is probably aware, French involvement in Italy dates from the Dark Ages, when the Franks made war on the Lombards as champions of the Pope. Then there was the rivalry between Papacy and Empire in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, with the Popes sometimes being supported by the French and sometimes attacked by them. Immediately after that period, the French and Spanish were vying for control, and that struggle blossomed into the Bourbon-Habsburg feud, which was in full flower during the Nine Years War.

In the years immediately before the war efforts were made to strengthen France's diplomatic position. This was a modified form of Vauban's border-rationalisation policy. Rather than annex land and build fortresses, the French tried creating buffer zones.

[In 1692 the French military would wind up regretting the lack of decent fortifications on the southern border.]

Some possessions were essential, however. In 1681 the French bought the fortress of Casale from their client, Charles Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, for 1,200,000 *livres*. At the time the Gonzaga family built it, Casale was the most significant fortress in the Po Valley. It gave the French a base of operations right on the border of the Spanish-Habsburg Milanese and enabled them to keep a protective eye on their clients: Mantua, Modena, Parma, and Piazenza. Along with the acquisition of the fortress came a separate guarantee from the House of Savoy that the French would have transit rights across Piedmont.

[This was little different from the transit rights provided to the Spanish from their port at Finale, west of Genoa, into the Milanese.]

There was also Pinerolo, or Pignerol, as it used to be called. Pinerolo will be a key feature of the narrative of the Italian war. Situated southwest of Turin, on the banks of the Chisone where that river issued from the Alps, it guarded one of the main passes through the mountains. In 1536 the French captured it from the Dukes of Savoy, holding it until 1574. Captured again in the War of the Mantuan Succession, the subsequent Treaty of Cherasco in 1631 handed it legally over to France. In the parlance of the time, France now held the Key to Italy.

[The War of the Mantuan Succession was a side conflict of the Thirty Years War, waged between rival claimants to the dukedom of Mantua, each backed either by Bourbon or Habsburg interests. The French won this argument, and the current dukes of Mantua were pro-French. The Duke of Savoy in that day, a Habsburg-sponsored claimant, was fobbed off with part of Montferrat in exchange for the French retaining Pinerolo.]

Casa Savoia

Historians typically label the possessions of the House of Savoy as 'Savoy', 'Savoy-Piedmont', or when it became kingdom, either 'Sardinia' (from whence the royal title was derived) or 'Sardinia-Piedmont'. At the time of the Nine Years War they were dukes, not kings, so 'Savoy' should serve. Technically, the land west of the Alps and within the Alps was Sabaudia (Savoy), and the land to the east was Piedmont.

The dynasty was founded in 1003, making it one of the oldest royal families in Europe. Count Umberto I was the first ruler. His family is reputed to have come from near Magdeburg, and was installed by the King of Burgundy (or King of Arles), Rudolf III.

As an aside, these kings of Burgundy, of whom Rudolf was the last, ruled lands stretching from Provence to Franche-Comté; after Rudolf, the region became a part of the Holy Roman Empire, *not* part of France. Now forgotten, Arles was a very important kingdom during the

Middle Ages. Savoy was an integral part of the kingdom until 1361, when the Habsburg Emperor Charles IV made it a separate county. Charles himself was the last emperor of Arles. The French kings had nibbled away at the kingdom for several centuries, Provence being taken by the Anjou dynasty and the Dauphiné by the Valois, who also became hereditary vicars (supervisors) of what was left of Imperial Arles. The Bourbon-Valois would grab Franche-Comté. The Holy Roman Emperors retained the title of King of Arles until 1806, when Napoleon dissolved the Empire.

Savoy would remain a possession of the dukes of that ilk until 1860 (ignoring the French annexation of 1792-1815), but the reader can understand why the Bourbons felt they had a claim on the duke's loyalty – as vicars of the old Burgundian lands if nothing else – and why the Sabaudians themselves tended to be pro-French in outlook.

Once established in Savoy the family of Umberto soon developed lasting ties with their neighbours, particularly Geneva and the canton of Vaud in modern Switzerland, and also Turin, capital of Piedmont; the second count married the marchioness of Turin who also brought with her dowry the marquisate of Susa and the town of Pinerolo. Over the centuries Casa Savoia would continue its expansion on this model – that is, by nonviolent means.

The House became ducal by grant from the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund in 1416, and the first duke was Amadeus VII.

Continuous involvement with French foreign policy can be dated to the Italian Wars of the late 15th Century, when Charles VIII of France invaded Savoy and Piedmont. At that time the ducal capital was at Chambéry, in Savoy, and thus easily held hostage by the French kings. Meanwhile, the Emperor Charles V began stationing troops in Piedmont, and the dukes of Savoy became pawns in the ongoing Bourbon-Habsburg rivalry.

Emmanuel Philibert 'Ironhead' was a key figure in his House's fortunes. When he became duke in 1553, the French controlled most of his lands and his family was living in exile. To recoup the family fortunes, Ironhead put himself solidly in the service of the Habsburgs, serving as Governor of the Netherlands under Philip II, famously defeating a French army at St. Quentin in 1557.

Though he got the name Ironhead through military service, Emmanuel was a skilful politician who took advantage of every opening, however slight, to recover his family's lands from foreign domination, one piece at a time. It was he who moved their capital to Turin and began a fortification project there that lasted for generations.

Under Charles Emmanuel II in the early and mid 17th Century, Savoy prospered economically, with the development of the port town of Nice and the construction of a road linking Savoy and Piedmont. Charles died when his son, Victor Amadeus II (born 1666), was only nine (1675), a fact that left the House in a critically weak position. The dowager duchess, *Madame Reale* as she was known, ruled the country as regent until 1684 (and would have preferred to go on ruling it).

At the time of his accession, Victor was Duke of Savoy, Marquis of Saluzzo, Duke of Montferrat, Prince of Piedmont, and Count of Aosta, Moriana, and Nice. A string of titles that demonstrates the fractured nature of his 'absolutist' state – the 'state' *was* Victor Amadeus. Fortunately, he would prove a reasonably popular ruler.

[Victor II Amadeus, c1690]

Victor was a sickly child who spent his youth building his physique with fanatical devotion. His mother was Duchess Joan Baptiste of Savoy-Nemours, whose marriage to his father had returned the provinces of Genevois and Faucigny – the territories immediately south of Lake Geneva – to his House. Madame Reale was apparently a devoted mother but also domineering – well, her child *had* been sickly, after all. The pair had a love-hate relationship.

Her regency was peaceful, except for the odd riot over salt taxes, but in 1680 Duke Victor was 14 and thus 'of age'. For four years more he put up with having his

mother at the helm of state, then at the end of 1684 he deposed her because, as he said, “it was his pleasure to take the reins of government into his own hands”. Madame Reale cannot have been happy about it, but the transfer of power was a peaceful one.

One of the main reasons Duke Victor is said to have bestirred himself was an arranged marriage that was attempted in 1682. It was proposed that he be married off to Madame Reale’s niece, who was the heiress presumptive of Portugal. This would have given their House a stronger claim to the Spanish throne – they already had a weak claim – but the Duke did not want to live in Lisbon. More to the point, the French became involved, leading to riots and the opposition of the pro-French elements at Court.

These elements predominated in the aristocracy. Turin was often said to be more French than Paris. Madame Reale was part French, as her family name suggests. During the Nine Years War, Duke Victor’s skills at dissembling were honed not only by the need to fool the numerous minions of the French faction in Turin, but the entire world in which he moved.

France continued her involvement with the regime after Duke Victor took power. Louis XIV saw him not only as a vassal, but also a weak person who needed direction in life. As is often the case, this came across as naked bullying.

The strategic position of Savoy and Piedmont meant that in the case of a war, Duke Victor was going to have to make a choice between his overlord the Emperor or his overlord the Sun King. King Louis’ bullying attitude and interference in Sabaudian politics meant that Duke Victor was more likely to side with the Emperor, provided the League of Augsburg could protect him.

The most significant interference with the conduct of Duke Victor’s own rule began in 1685. In France, the Edict of Nantes, which promised religious toleration to French Protestants, also known as the Huguenots, was revoked.

King Louis then required Duke Victor to institute the same policy in his own country the following year, because he was harbouring large numbers of Huguenot refugees. The policy also affected the sect known as the Waldensians, or Vaudois, who inhabited a number of Alpine valleys on the eastern side of the Maritime Alps, most critically the valleys around Pinerolo.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was a direct cause of the formation of the League of Augsburg, signed initially by the Dutch, Swedish, Saxon, Bavarian, and Spanish states, plus the Holy Roman Emperor, on June 9 of 1686. In practical terms it was intended to defend the treaties of Westphalia and Nijmegen, both of which guaranteed the current European system and both of which were threatened by France’s naked aggression toward the Low Countries and along the Rhine. A righteous association of states opposed to tyranny, the League was also a useful anti-Bourbon propaganda tool for the Holy Roman Emperor.

The Emperor Leopold I

Leopold Ignaz Joseph Balthasar Felician of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine, otherwise known as Leopold I, by the grace of God elected Holy Roman Emperor, forever August, King of Germany, King of Hungary, King of Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Rama, Serbia, Galicia, Lodomeria, Cumania, Bulgaria, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Brabant, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Margrave of Moravia, Duke of Luxembourg, of the Higher and Lower Silesia, of Württemberg and Teck, Prince of Swabia, Count of Habsburg, Tyrol, Kyburg and Goritia, Landgrave of Alsace, Marquess of the Holy Roman Empire, Burgovia, the Enns, the Higher and Lower Lusace, Lord of the Marquisate of Slavonia, of Port Naon and Salines, etc. etc. reigned for nearly 50 years. He was born during the Thirty Years War and died during the War of the Spanish Succession. It is an understatement to say he was one of the primary shapers of Europe in his day.

[Leopold I]

Physically, he was short and thin. In childhood he was sickly, but he became athletic as he grew up, and enjoyed hunting and riding. Highly educated, fluent in several languages and a talented musician and composer, he was originally trained for the Church, but his brother Ferdinand died of smallpox, making him heir apparent. He would reign as Emperor from 1658 until his death.

Leopold remained deeply religious all his life, was heavily influenced by the Jesuits – with whom he was fully capable of holding erudite discussions – and has been described as the embodiment of the *pietas Austriaca.* In other words, he was a Catholic hardliner and a staunch supporter of the Counter-Reformation. Curiously, he was also deeply interested in astrology, sometimes wish detrimental results to his House's fortunes.

The historian and traveller William Coxe described him thus: "His gait was stately, slow and deliberate; his air pensive, his address awkward, his manner uncouth, his disposition cold and phlegmatic." He was stubborn as a mule where religion or his House was concerned, but perhaps due to the fact that as a child he had been cast as a bit player, he was remarkably gentle in person. Despite being a monarch who took on the Turks, the Hungarians, and the French simultaneously, he had no military bent.

He was married three times, first to his niece and first cousin, Margarita Teresa of Austria, who, despite her name, was the daughter of the Spanish King, Philip IV. It was a love match but she died young. He then married an Austrian archduchess, but she also died young. Number three was a Palatinate princess, Eleonor Magdalene of Neuburg, who outlived him. She was his wife during the Nine Years War.

Only a few of his children survived him, but two became Emperors: Joseph I immediately after his death, followed by Charles VI, whose daughter was Frederick the Great's incessant foe, Maria Theresa.

A workaholic, Leopold tried to run his own government. Partly, he aimed at creating an Absolutist State on the model of France, and partly, he simply distrusted over-mighty ministers, especially after he caught a couple of them making deals with France behind his back. Some of his policies were good, such as a partial reform of the mechanisms of the Empire, and others not, such as the expulsion of the Jews. Some of his measures strengthened Imperial control of debatable provinces and kingdoms, such as Bohemia and Serbia. His success was extremely limited, however, because like all Emperors, he was forced to grant concessions to obtain military and political support. In 1692, for example, the dukes of Hanover were granted electoral status.

Leopold's whole reign was marked by his House's rivalry with the Bourbons. Even before his accession, Cardinal Mazarin had tried to create a German anti-Habsburg faction that would elect someone else. Still, in his early years his personal relationship with Louis XIV was good. Only in 1672 was he forced to back France's opponents, at that time the Dutch and the mainly Protestant North German princes. (Such an unholy alliance illustrates the seriousness of the situation.)

In 1686 Leopold signed on to the League of Augsburg. In 1689, he formally joined the Grand Alliance against France.

[One secret article of the treaty was that the Anglo-Dutch would support Imperial claims to the throne of Spain. The Spanish were NOT told of this.]

At the beginning of the War of the Grand Alliance, Leopold's main focus was directed against the Turks, with whom he had been at war for some years, and who were always being stirred up by the French. He had also to contribute to the defense of the Low Countries and the Rhineland, before considering what to do about Italy.

When the Italian front opened, he was able to spare a few generals and a few regiments to back Duke Victor, and later arranged for troops of the *Reichsarmee* to help, but Italy was always regarded as a backwater, despite his House's interest in reviving the *Reichsitalien*. Actually, the maintenance of an Imperial corps in Italy had a lot to do with the efforts of Prince Eugene of Savoy, a rising star in the Emperor's army, who kept the fighting in Piedmont firmly before Leopold's face.

The Spanish Milanese

The Duchy, or States of Milán, sometimes known as Lombardy, was a collection of small states under the suzerainty of the Spanish royal house, administered by a Governor General at Milán.

The duchy was created in 1395, from lands stretching from the Alps in the North to the Apennines in the South. It thus straddled the Po. Both banks of the river were valuable property, but the lands on the left (north) bank were more significant. To the West lay Montferrat and Piedmont and to the East, Venice.

The older city state ofMilán was ruled by the Visconti family, and in 1395 Gian Galeazzo Visconti bought the duchy from Wenceslaus II, King of Bohemia. The Bohemian king could dispose of the duchy because at the time he was also King of the Romans – that is, he was Emperor-elect. By this point Milán was one of the five principal states in Italy.

In 1450 the Sforza family took over the city after a short-lived republic arose (and fell). During the early part of the 16th Century, Sforza fortunes also rose and fell. On occasion, the French, who had their own claim on the

duchy, ruled. At other times, the forces of the Emperor drove the French out, along with the Sforzas. In 1535 the last of the Sforza rulers died without an heir and the duchy became purely a bone of contention between Bourbon and Habsburg.

In 1545 the Duchy of Parma, consisting of the city of that name and neighbouring lands on the right bank of the Po, was split off from the Milanese. It was given to an illegitimate son of Pope Paul III, Pier Luigi Farnese.

Ultimately, the Emperor Charles V gained and retained control of the Milanese, handing it on to his son, Phillip II of Spain. The French recognized Phillip's rights in 1559 as part of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis. From that point on, until 1714, the States of Milán belonged to Spain.

The main value of the duchy to Spain was its role as a supply and recruitment node on the famous Spanish Road leading all the way north to the Netherlands. By the Nine Years War, this was less important and with the Anglo-Dutch on Spain's side the sea route to the Netherlands was both safer and faster. However, the duchy was rich, populous, and had been in Habsburg hands for a very long time.

Spain's Governor General was both the civil and military ruler of the duchy. Why a Governor General and not a Viceroy? Probably because although the duchy was a possession of the King of Spain, it was also a vassal state of the Holy Roman Empire. Technically, King Carlos II, lord of the Americas, was only a duke in Milán.

There were two Governors General during the Nine Years War (some sources list three): Antonio López de Ayala Velasco y Cardeñas, *conde* de Fuensalida (1686-1691), and Diego Dávila Mesía y Guzmán, 3rd *marqués* de Leganés (1691-1698).

[The third name is that of Prince Charles Henry de Lorraine-Vaudemont, a Huguenot general in Allied service whom some sources claim assumed power as Governor General of Milán in 1696, while others say 1698.]

The administration of the Milanese 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, so details are lacking. However, the Governor General probably functioned much like the viceroys, enjoying a great deal of autonomy most of the time, but being subject to a performance review when his term ended. Terms usually lasted a few years and were part of a series of such viceregal 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 Lombardy and frequently led the army on campaign.

Militarily speaking, Italy was divorced from Spain except at the highest levels of grand strategy. Only in an emergency would troops be sent from Spain to Italy, or vice versa. The latter happened during the war because the low troop levels in Catalonia constituted an emergency. As a rule, recruiting was done locally, and in Italy there were plenty of volunteers. Mercenary Swiss and German regiments were also commissioned for the duration of a given conflict.

Besides Lombardy, or the Milanese, Spanish possessions in Italy included the Kingdoms of Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia, the Stato di Presidi, which were five port-fortresses on the Tuscany coast, and the port of Finale, nestled in the heart of the Republic of Genoa.

In the Nine Years War, only the Milanese troops fought. The three kingdoms provided supplies and recruits. Finale was critical, however, and was strongly garrisoned. It was another of the nodes on the Spanish Road. The aforementioned supplies and recruits were sent by sea to Finale, then marched overland to the Milanese.

Milán was of course landlocked, but each of the three kingdoms had its own naval forces, mostly galleys. Unlike the Army, the Navy always operated together, combining with the squadrons from Spain, and this force was usually augmented by a private squadron from Genoa. Despite this concentration actual ship numbers were small, but the combined 'fleet' sufficed to keep the Army of Lombardy fuelled up, and was considered a major irritant by the French. Just keeping it in being restricted French options.

The Other Italian States

The other Italian states played no direct military role in the war, though it was feared they might. Some provided financial or political support, and the attitudes of the states was an important factor in the decision making of the major players. Especially, both Bourbon and Habsburg were concerned a) to prevent the various minor states from pitching in, and b) to justify themselves before the forum of those states.

All these states were in the pocket of either the Spanish, French, or Imperial Habsburgs. At this time, Imperial influence was far weaker than Spanish influence, and both the French and Spanish, though enemies, were agreed that it should remain so.

The Republic of Genoa was torn between fear of the French, whose client she nominally was, and the Allies, who had the bigger navy. Genoa, a long coastal strip backed by the rugged Ligurian Alps, was ruled by a tiny number of patrician families who governed in rotation. The economy, based mainly on silk and general shipping, was in terminal decline by the end of the 17th Century. Genoa remained an important banking center, but since Spain absorbed much of the business and the Spanish were broke, this hastened the city's decline. Still, Genoa was a useful source of funds for both sides during the war.

In 1672 France brokered a peace between Piedmont and Genoa, who had been fighting a small war over disputed territory. This led to additional meddling in both states' internal politics and the development of strong pro-French parties there. Some specific points that are germane to the War of the Grand Alliance are the imposition of French religious policies toward the Vaudois Protestants, and in the case of Genoa, the reversal of a legal sentence against a pro-French family; Genoa was also forced to decommission four new galleys. In 1684 *lieutenant-général* [*vice admiral*] Duquesne bombarded Genoa with 13,000 shells to force compliance with the latest sheaf of French wishes. The Genoese remained very nervous.

A brief mention should be made of the Republic of Lucca, which was essentially a mini-Genoa. Located on the coast just north of Tuscany and east of Genoa, it survived thanks to Spanish patronage.

Parma, southeast of the Duchy of Milán, was famous for its cheese and ham, as well as grain production and wine growing. It was run by the Farnese. Two dukes were in power during the war, Ranuccio II to 1694 and Francesco thereafter. As previously mentioned, the duchy originated as a creation of Pope Paul III, who gave it to his bastard son Pier Luigi. As a neighbour of the Milanese, Parma was under Spanish sway, but pretended French leanings as a means of gaining elbow room.

The Duchy of Mantua, east of the Milanese and straddling the Po, was ruled at this time by Carlos III. Historically, Mantua belonged to the Gonzaga family, but their line died out in 1627, so the current duke was actually the cadet Duke of Gonzaga-Nevers, a French protégé. From 1630 the duchy was also an Imperial vassal state – the price of the Habsburgs blocking the succession claims of the House of Savoy to the duchy. The economy was based on agriculture and wool production, but was now in a slump. During the war, Spanish and Imperial troops routinely established winter quarters in the duchy to prevent the duke from openly supporting the French, though his threats to mobilise were (he said) only for defensive purposes.

The Duchy of Modena, south of Mantua and stretching southwest to the Tyrrhenian coast, was run by the d'Este family. Its importance was cultural rather than political or economic. The economy was based on weaving and wine. There were two dukes during the war, Francis II until 1694 and Rinaldo thereafter. Politically, ties with France were stronger than those with Spain.

The Grand Duchy of Tuscany was the preserve of the Medici and thus had strong French ties. On the other hand, the Emperors had been the restorers of the Medici on more than one occasion. During the war, Tuscany, or Florence as it is sometimes known, leaned toward the Allied side without becoming involved. Its current Grand Duke was Cosimo III, who has been described as a religious bigot who sponsored excessive piety at the expense of the economy (i.e., the Jews were expelled). He was also generally incompetent.

The Republic of Venice was still quite powerful. She had money, and was actually fighting the Turks independently of Imperial direction during the Nine Years War. Western European dominance of the spice and silk trade, however, was slowing choking the economy. Ruled, like Genoa, by a small patriciate, Venice was more concerned with maintaining and regaining her possessions in the eastern Mediterranean than in Italian affairs, where she tried to preserve a strict neutrality, despite owning extensive territory on the lower and middle plains of the Po and northward toward Austria.

Two Popes ruled the Papal States during the war, Alexander VIII from 1689 from 1691, and Innocent XII thereafter. Naturally, ecclesiastical matters were the states' main export, but Rome was also valuable as a diplomatic hub, acting as a southern and Catholic counterweight to The Hague.

Papal influence was not insignificant, though Rome was usually under the Spanish thumb. In 1688, Avignon was finally repossessed from the Papacy. This ticked off the Popes, and Alexander's influence probably helped nudge Duke Victor into the Allied camp. Innocent, on the other hand, pursued a pro-French line, being instrumental in engineering the final peace in Italy.

The War Machines

Four national armies clashed in Italy, those of France, Savoy-Piedmont, Spain, and the Habsburg Empire (not exactly a 'nation' but close enough). In addition there were auxiliary forces from Switzerland, a number of German states, and even an 'English' corps, actually composed of French Huguenots. The French, Sabaudians, and Spanish also fielded militia, and the Allied side was aided by Vaudois irregulars.

In broad terms, the various armies were much the same. The French were a single national force and the most advanced in tactics, 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. 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.

On the plains of Piedmont, cavalry was the premier arm both in battle and in raiding or 'coursing'. In the mountains, and during sieges, infantry was more important. Thus, for example, in the years when the French had few cavalrymen, they clung to the mountains, since it would be risky to venture onto the plains. Conversely, the Allies could not use their superiority in mounted units to force their way through the passes.

Warfare on the plains 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.

In the mountains, war was a matter of frequent skirmishes, securing lines of communication, and of small detachments denying passes to much larger enemy columns. Set piece battles were simply not possible. In an alpine offensive, the object was to get through the passes into the rich plains or champagne country beyond; the trick was to use different routes yet be able to concentrate on the other side before being defeated in detail.

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.

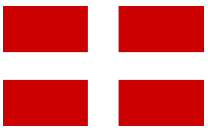
All regular infantry units fought their battles in linear formation, usually in six ranks. A number of pike/musket combinations were possible. Traditionally, the pikes were clustered in the center and the musketeers stood on the either side. The unit would advance rank by rank, the musketeers firing 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. The Sabaudians followed suit. 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 Savoy-Piedmont



Savoy-Piedmont is often considered the Italian equivalent to Brandenburg-Prussia. Victor Amadeus' struggle to maintain a standing army larger than the general population could support continues to be a focus of study. In raw numbers, the army grew from 7,948 infantry and 1,534 cavalry in 1690, to a peak of 23,626 infantry and 2,720 cavalry in 1696. The cavalry actually peaked at 2,990 in 1691, but infantry strengths climbed steadily year by year.

French trends were followed in dress and in the proportion of pikes to muskets – 20% pike and 80% musket as an average. This appears to have been true for the 'English' (i.e., Huguenot) subsidy regiments as well, which were equipped locally. The German subsidy troops under Duke Victor's command would have followed German fashions and drills, which were also modelled on the French in many cases.

The Sabaudians were fortunate in being allied to the Vaudois Montagnards, who excelled in mountain warfare. These men knew all the secret ways and could range freely on the slopes above the valley floor. They were also unusual in that they were essentially civilians fighting against a conventional army. This was a rarity by the end of the 17th Century.

Like all the armies, Duke Victor's fluctuated in the number of regiments available at any given time, and the regiments varied a great deal in strength. On paper, a 'national' line battalion's strength was 16 companies of 40 men, including 1 grenadier company. Upon the outbreak of war, after having had to dispatch 3 regiments to Flanders to serve under the French, the Army was so weak that the Duke felt he could not take the field until his Spanish allies arrived.

The Royal Militia was quite effective and numerous, those of the southern region of Mondoví being especially good, though politically suspect. To these could be added the general levy of the populace, which was called up from time to time and proved quite motivated. However, it was extremely difficult to keep such forces in the field, so it became policy to only call them up in threatened districts and at times of great danger.

By the end of 1690, the Duke was also receiving subsidies from Anglo-Dutch which allowed him to raise and maintain several foreign regiments. These fluctuated in number, not only because contracts would run out, but

because sometimes a regiment was transferred to Spanish or Imperial control. On average, mid-war, there were about 15 battalions of troops being paid for by England, or Spain, or one of the German powers.

Nearly all the subsidy troops were infantry. There was one weak Huguenot dragoon regiment. A number of German dragoon and horse regiments existed but these were assigned to either the Spanish or Imperial corps.

The core of the Sabaudian cavalry consisted of a pair of 'squadrons' of *gendarmes*, one for Savoy and one for Piedmont. Each had 8 companies of 100 men each. These were actually a militia (feudal host). Very soon augmented to 12 companies each, they were originally grouped as 8 brigades of 3 companies each. In 1692 both were disbanded to form two line cavalry regiments of similar composition.

At war start there was also one regiment of dragoons, which was quickly increased to three. The dragoons had 6 (later 8 and finally 9) companies of 50 men each.

There was also the *Guardie del Corpo*, a small ceremonial unit that regularly took the field as the Duke's bodyguard, as well as, for the first year of the war, a ceremonial *Gendarmi* unit that, unusually, accompanied the Duke into battle.

In 1690 four companies of Vaudois and Huguenot origin were added to the mounted arm. These were eventually split between the ducal cavalry and the Huguenot dragoon regiment.

The Artillery corps was small. Duke Victor relied heavily on the Spanish and Imperial artillery trains, especially after losing 11 of his 12 field pieces at Staffarda in 1690. Interestingly, the Artillery had no uniform until 1696, since they were regarded as civilian specialists.

The Army of Lombardy

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*.

Milán had a permanent force of 5 *tercios*, known as the 'Spanish *tercios*', though their men were mostly Italians. Territorial line regiments, the 'Milanese *tercios*', fluctuated in number. Only 1 was in service pre-war, and only 3 served throughout the war. They were of mixed quality. 2 Neapolitan *tercios* appeared in 1691; usually, Naples just sent fresh drafts of men.

In addition, Milán contracted for 2 German, 1 Grisons, and 2 Swiss regiments, plus a regiment of Württemburgers. The last was loaned by the Empire. These regiments had 12 companies, with 100-150 men each, so they were slightly stronger than the *tercios* and would have had 2 battalions per regiment. Some sources give the Württemburgers three battalions, though in such cases one usually assumes the third battalion remained at the depôt.

[The Grisons is the easternmost Swiss Canton. Its population was more diverse than the other cantons, and it had a unique history, which is probably why its regiments receive a separate listing in the sources.]

The Milanese cavalry consisted of 5 guard companies and 30 companies of Cavalry of the State. Unlike the cavalry of the other Spanish domains, they were not organised into permanent *trozos* (squadrons) and regiments, but served as free companies under their own general and lieutenant generals, who organised them into squadrons only when on campaign. Some of the Cavalry of the State were *gendarmes* (heavy horse), and others light horse.

As a rule of thumb, a typical *trozo* elsewhere would have 5-7 companies, so the Milanese regiment was equivalent to 5-6 'normal' *trozos*.

*[*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.

The Spanish also had a single dragoon regiment. Dragoons were organised into *tercios* like the infantry. They 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.

For the duration of the war, additional German cavalry regiments were hired: 1 Bavarian, 1 Württemberg, and 1 Imperial cuirassier regiment, and 1 Bavarian dragoon regiment.

The performance of the Spanish units was generally perceived to be poor – the cavalry ran away at both Staffarda and Orbassano, but those retreats probably have a political basis. First, the Army of Lombardy was unwilling to fight at all unless the Milanese was directly threatened. Second, the cavalry was the preserve of the nobility, which was riven by faction; there was a very strong pro-French element. Pre-war, the Spanish military reputation was quite high, and their infantry, though occasionally mutinous, seems to have fought well. 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. Siegecraft was not their strong suit, though at the siege of Pinerolo, their gunners performed better than the Germans.

Every fortification had a small (sometimes very small) garrison. The key port of Finale was an exception, with 4-6 Grison companies, 4-6 Swiss companies, and 6-12 companies detached from the line *tercios*.

Milán had its own state militia, very numerous and almost completely undocumented. Probably, it worked on the model used in Piedmont, where it could be summoned district by district for local defence. It did not leave the duchy, but was reportedly effective in dealing with French raiders.

The Empire

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 saw fit to visit Italy.
- 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 was governed by two main departments, the *Hofkammer* or Court Chamber, and the *Hofkriegsrat* or Aulic War Council. The former was actually in charge of legal and economic matters, such as the excise and the mint. Apparently, the Army's chronic money troubles had a lot to do with the disdain of the aristocratic members of the *Hofkammer* for the science of economics.

The *Hofkriegsrat* ran the High Command, the fortress system, chancery matters, and administration of the Army (e.g., senior appointments). Since it was responsible for the Border, it even had an important diplomatic function – that is, diplomacy with the Turks was conducted by the Army, not the civilian bureaucracy. The most famous president of the *Hofkriegsrat* would be Prince Eugene of Savoy, but during the war he was only a corps commander. Two presidents served during the war: Hermann von Baden (1681-91) and Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg (1692-1701).

Under the *Hofkriegsrat* and the *Hofkammer* were several departments. The most important of these were the *Generalkriegskommissariat* or General War Commissariat, and the *Obristproviantamt*. The first dealt with quartering, recruitment, supply, and the annual military budget (a major bone of contention among all parties) and the second dealt with fortress provisioning and magazines. The *Generalkriegskommissariat* was responsible to the *Hofkammer* for financial matters and the *Hofkriegsrat* for military matters, but the *Obristproviantamt* was only responsible to the *Hofkammer*. The reader can no doubt sense many levers for political games. Because of the limitations of the *Obristproviantamt,* army supply was often contracted out to civilians.

The administrative end of the Imperial Army was thus a curious blend of modernism and anachronism. One modern feature was the existence of a General Staff, or *Generalstab*. The *Generalstab* was divided into higher and lower elements. The higher included the generals and the lower included supporting services. Though a 'modern' concept, the *Generalstab* also suffered from anachronisms. With the exception of the general commanding a theatre's army, men of general rank were normally appointed roles (e.g., wing commander, or general of the cavalry) on a case by case basis, and had authority within that role only so long as they held the position. A general would be responsible for service conditions, equipment, discipline, and, of course, command, of his assignment.

Many generals were also colonels of their own regiments, though they did not usually command them in the field. The German armies employed the colonel-proprietor system, where regiments were raised as investments and run for profit. There was no standardization of drills or equipment (beyond the basic fact that everyone used muskets and pikes and wore the style of dress common in that period). A rich colonel's regiment would be a thing of beauty, but a poor one would be ill equipped and subject to frequent desertion.

The official peacetime strength of the Army was only about 20,000 men: 9 cuirassier regiments, 1 dragoon regiment, 9 infantry regiments, and a small artillery train. During the war with the Ottomans, which overlapped the Nine Years War, this expanded to 19 cuirassier, 10 dragoon, 4 hussar regiments, and 33 infantry regiments (in 1697). The artillery was also expanded by pulling numerous cannon out of the fortresses where they were stored. On paper, Army strength was around 80,000 men during the war. Effective strength in 1697 was 77,736.

Not only were the numbers of men usually lower than planned for, there was always a critical shortage of horses. Cavalry regiments had 1,000 men, but even officially were only expected to have 850 horses. A listing from 1703 records that the cavalry in Italy were short 9,000 mounts that year.

Tactics and drills varied depending on whether the army was fighting in the West or East. War on the Border was brutal, and regiments were often censured when they imported those practices to the western front. In the West, the universally practiced deployment of infantry in the center, cavalry on the wings, all in two lines with a small reserve, was employed. 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 style.

In the East, the army moved in square formation, the infantry carrying portable obstacles called chevaux-de-frise, and the cavalry advancing at a walk in tightly packed formation, all to combat the lethal horsemanship of the Turks. Prince Eugene would later introduce the charge at the gallop in two ranks after observing French developments, but this tactic does not seem to have taken root in the eastern theatre.

Imperial cuirassier regiments still wore jackets of buff leather, breast and back plates, and in the East also wore lobster-pot helmets. The sword was the *palasch*, or long straight sword, augmented by a carbine and two pistols. Because Imperial cuirassier regiments were so large, they were often split into two 'battalions', either posted on each wing or arranged one behind the other. Those men who had no mounts would form a reserve squadron, allowing the regiment to replace losses during the battle.

The dragoon regiments, organised into 10 companies of 100 men, just like the cuirassiers, were unarmoured and mounted on cheaper horses, but wore brightly coloured uniforms in compensation. The dragoon sword was worn like that of the infantry, and their firearms were fusils, not carbines. They could and did fight dismounted, but more and more began to fight like other cavalry, reserving their dismounted role for sieges. They wore boots, but these were lighter than those of the cuirassiers.

[The cuirassiers and dragoons did not receive carabinier/ grenadier companies until 1715.]

The hussar regiments had a long history of service in the Imperial Army, but not until the Nine Years War were they a permanent fixture. Two regiments were raised in 1688. Post war, five more were raised. Each regiment had a nominal strength of about 1,200 men in 12 companies, paired to form 6 squadrons. Uniforms were not standard, but were of Hungarian national 'civilian' dress. The men were equipped with sabres, a carbine, and two pistols, with the odd battle-axe.

Generally speaking, the Emperor's Hungarian subjects provided the manpower for the hussars, which did not fight in the line, but skirmished on the flanks of a battle or pursued a beaten enemy. They were also useful as scouts and raiders, and in 'special' duties. Indiscipline was their weakness, and if left unsupervised too long they might turn bandit.

The organisation of the infantry was still similar to that developed during the Thirty Years War. Curiously, it was in the East that the pike was first abandoned. Apparently the Turks were unimpressed by pike forests but feared regularly delivered volley fire. Pointed sticks were still used, but they were short spears, lashed together to make chevaux-de-frise. In the West, the pike lingered until the War of the Spanish Succession, when Prince Eugene got rid of them. In the 1690s the company ratio was 48 pikes to 88 muskets.

The musket most commonly employed was the 'matchlock musket'. In Imperial service, this was a specific piece of ironmongery, a hybrid matchlock and flintlock, introduced in the 1670s. It had a range of 300 paces. It stuck around so long solely for reasons of economy; by 1699 the flintlock had become the primary firearm. Plug bayonets were common issue, though socket bayonets were in use from 1689. The use of the matchlock musket inhibited their introduction because the sockets did not fit over the barrel, which was of wider diameter than either a matchlock or a flintlock. Paper cartridges entered service in 1699.

Deployment on the battlefield was, as usual in most armies, by seniority from the right, but it was the colonel's social status, not the regiment's age, that determined seniority. And, Austro-Bohemian colonels had precedence over 'foreigners' of like aristocratic rank. Battalions were composed of five ranks throughout the war. They were capable of forming square.

Against the Turks, a 'running' fire was maintained, like platoon fire although not as well orchestrated – the point was to keep bullets flying out all along the line, since the Janissaries learned to time their assaults with the intervals between pure volley fire. Volley fire or fire by ranks was used in the West, followed by close assault if desired.

At the star of the war each infantry regiment consisted of ten companies of 200 men, grouped into two battalions of 1,000 men each. In 1695 this organisation was reformed, creating regiments of three battalions of four companies each, each company having 175 men. This gave a regiment a full strength of 2,100 men instead of 2,000, but added flexibility. Each company had eight grenadiers, who would be grouped into special assault teams.

The Imperial Artillery was not considered a part of the Army, but rather its own professional corps, open to commoners with a good education who had a grasp of mathematics and other sciences. It was supervised by the *Hofkriegsrat* and commanded by a general. The corps was divided into ordnance, transport, and engineering.

Up until the end of the 17th Century the corps enjoyed a great deal of independence. Things changed in 1695, when the Ordnance branch was reorganised into four companies of 150 men. Transport was usually disbanded in peacetime, and the members of the engineering branch would busy themselves with scientific studies or civil projects.

The Ordnance was divided between the *Hausartillerie* or siege guns, stored in the arsenals, and the field artillery. The latter were provided on an ad hoc basis, campaign by campaign, whereas the *Hausartillerie* was reckoned a permanent element. The practice arose primarily due to a

lack of suitable draught animals, which had to be hired for each campaign from civilian contractors. Even the light regimental guns required a team of six horses each, and the siege guns required many, many oxen.

There was no artillery 'system'. The Imperials employed a mix of light and heavy cannon, mortars, and howitzers. The number of field pieces employed on campaign reached 90 in 1690. Most of these would be 3-pounder regimental guns. True field guns, 6- or 12-pounders, might number 12 or 16 per army. In contrast, 300 siege pieces were used at Vienna (1683) and 246 at the siege of Ofen in 1686. These numbers included mortars, which might number around 40 at any given siege.

Militia forces were not employed in Italy. There were two kinds, the Border or *Grenz* troops, often known as Haiduks in this period, and *Landregimenter*, employed to defend the Hereditary Lands. The *Grenz* were excellent, for what they were, but the *Landregimenter* were pitiful. Other German states also employed versions of the *Landregimenter* as part of their commitment to the defense of the Empire.

Regarding the *Reichsarmee* and ducal forces of the Empire, 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* forces 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.

Bavaria, Württemburg, and Brandenburg contributed significant forces to Italy. Some of the regiments were loaned to the Duke of Savoy, or to Spain – i.e., subsidy troops. The Brandenburg regiments were one example. Others served as part of the Imperial corps, part of the *Reichsarmee's* commitment to the war. So many Austrian regiments were committed to Hungary that there was no choice but to use the *Reichsarmee* outside of Germany. Technically, northern Italy was part of the Reich, which gave some justification, but other German regiments were forced to serve in Hungary.

In Italy, the Württemburgers served under the Spanish. The Bavarians served under the Sabaudian, Spanish, and Imperial commands. There was also a Westphalian battalion in Sabaudian service. All these regiments were of good quality, but subject to recall. Bavaria recalled all but one infantry regiment when the French threatened the Upper Rhineland.

France

In contrast to the forces of the League, 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 générals* 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 générals*. 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, as in Catalonia, the overall commander was initially a senior general, Nicholas Catinat. No new marshals had been created since the death of Turenne, but in 1694 several were appointed, including Catinat. He was assisted by various *lieutenant générals* in command of the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. They in turn were assisted by major generals known as *méstres 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 méstres de camp *had a role similar to the Spanish* sargento general de batallas*, and were responsible to a* méstre 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. 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, particularly in Catalonia and Italy, where the numbers of regulars were low. Catinat was forced to employ 7 battalions in the line at Staffarda. Their performance was usually quite good, for what they were. Typically, an understrength brigade would be given a militia battalion to round it off.

There was, in addition, a massive and entirely separate militia organisation in Dauphiné and Provence, but these were paramilitaries engaged in counterinsurgency warfare and repression against the Huguenots, under the command of local governors.

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.

Two cavalry units require special mention. These are the Carabiniers and *Petite Gendarmerie*. 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* made an appearance in Italy in 1693, and reappeared for the final offensive in 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. They were the critical element at the Battle of Orbassano.

Dragoons were a relatively new development. The French, convinced of their utility, already had 15 or so regiments. 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.

In 1692, the Allied invasion of the Dauphiné devastated the lands the army passed through. Although this was policy, the Allies had no alternative anyway, since their depôts remained on the other side of the Alps and the required mule trains were too few in number. Of course, the destruction meant they could not sustain themselves in France over the winter by forming depôts there, but such depôts would only have contained food, not equipment or replacements.

Something similar happened in Piedmont, where by late war no army could maintain itself over the winter. But at least the French were not prohibited from fielding large armies close to their own frontier.

Mention should also be made of *La Marine*, the French Navy. On the Italian front the Navy's main roles were to interfere with the operation of the small Spanish fleet and to intimidate Genoa whenever she began to lean toward the Allied cause.

The Diplomats

Diplomacy was an integral part of the war in Italy. It was so on all fronts, of course, but especially in Italy, where there were so many players, and where politics drove military strategy, rather than the other way round. It cannot be emphasised enough just how much diplomatic effort went into what today may seem petty issues, most especially the right of Victor Amadeus' ambassadors to the '*traitement royale*' (royal treatment) when visiting France. There was the rather more existential matter of the Prince of Orange's recognition as the true king of England, not just by France but by everyone in Europe.

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 states 'of interest'. As the French negotiator at Ryswick 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 regarded as 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.

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. The *comte* de D– and other first hand accounts of the diplomatic angle 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

Most of the campaigning in the Italian theatre took place within a reasonably small area: the environs of Turin and the southern plateau of Piedmont between the Alps and the Po, and south of there as far as the town of Cuneo. However, in 1690, 1691, and 1692, fighting also took place in and west of the Alps, and in 1695 and 1696 the campaigns were fought well to the East, on the borders of the Milanese. The Val d'Aosta, north of Turin, also saw some raiding.

French pre-war strategy revolved around securing safe transit from the Rhône Valley across the Alps, across Piedmont, and into the Milanese. The key issues for the French were the lack of friendly infrastructure in the Po Valley, and the fact that there were only a handful of routes through the mountains. The same problems were faced by the Allies when they attempted to invade France. To address these issues the French had obtained the fortresses of Pignerol (Pinerolo) and Casale (Casale Montferrato).

The acquisition of these places has already been explained. To secure Pinerolo, the French province of Dauphiné had been extended across the watershed of the Alps and down onto the plains of Piedmont, via the Val Perosa.

Casale was on the right bank of the Po, above the confluence (on the other bank) with the Sesia River, which formed the border of the Milanese. It was about 90 Km in a direct line from Pinerolo, 56 Km from Pavia, and 68 Km from Milán. It was situated in the territory of Montferrato, a state divided between the dukes of Savoy and Mantua, in the portion owned by the latter.

[Casale's claim to fame nowadays is as the epicentre of a badly managed fibre cement works – the process uses asbestos and thousands of inhabitants have died of mesothelioma.]

To get from Pinerolo on the French border to Casale, before jumping off on an invasion of the Milanese, the French needed transit rights through the lands of the dukes of Mantua and Savoy. Both were supposed to be pro-French, but…

The true 'cockpit' of the Italian campaigns will be described later. To begin, consider the lands west of the alpine divide. This region, between the peaks and the Rhône River, was divided between France and Savoy. Two French provinces faced and penetrated into the mountains, Provence and Dauphiné.

The border of Provence ran from the Mediterranean up the Var River, then headed northwest to the Durance River, which formed the boundary with Dauphiné. The towns of Gap and Grenoble were in Dauphiné, the town of Sisteron in Provence. Nice was the capital of a county of the same name, belonging to the dukes of Savoy (it was not transferred to French ownership until the *Risorgimento*).

Just east of Nice was Monaco, garrisoned by the French. It was owned by the Grimadli family (who still own it), first under Genoese, then under Spanish, and finally under French protection. Though the Grimaldi were recognised as sovereigns by the Treaty of Péronne in 1641, the tiny state was too valuable for Louis XIV to leave unguarded. This little fact added both to Duke Victor's nervousness and his greed.

North of Nice was the bishopric of Barcelonnette, also owned by Savoy. Barcelonnette is situated amongst the Maritime Alps. Nice, and most of Provence, are not truly alpine, but are certainly rugged country. The lands between the coast and the mountains are buckled, forming long east-west ridges that hinder movement north and south, and were heavily wooded. The terrain and climate are 'Mediterranean' in nature, somewhat dry, with scrubby vegetation, and subject to fluctuations in temperature between 'too hot' and 'miserably cold'. The Atlantic weather systems are channelled between the Pyrenees and the Alps, out over the Mediterranean. The climate in northern Italy is more in line with that of central France than the Mediterranean.

North of Provence, the Dauphiné extended eastward into the Alps above Barcelonnette, so that the French controlled the valleys of the Durance, which flows into the Rhône, but also the upper Dora Ripara, which eventually flows into the Po. As mentioned above, the province extended down the Val Perosa all the way to Pinerolo.

Dauphiné was thus mountainous, with isolated valleys and a number of significant rivers fed by rains coming out of the West. Between the Alps and the Rhône were isolated massifs, usually heavily wooded. Most roads ran roughly east-west. Between the Rhône and the Alps there was one primary north-south route, running from Geneva to the coast through Grenoble, Gap, and Sisteron to Toulon and Marseilles.

The terrain of Savoy was similar. It lay north of the Dauphiné as far as Lake Geneva and Switzerland, and reached west as far as the Rhône. Savoy can be divided into the regions of the high Alps and the less mountainous Auvergne near the Rhône. Administratively it is still divided into six districts: Savoie Propre, with the capital of Chambéry, Chablais south of Lake Geneva, Faucigny south of Chablais, Tarentaise and Maurienne in the central Alpine section of the country, and Genevois to the west.

Despite its name, Gevevois did not include Geneva, which held a curious status. It was a personal possession of the queen mother, Madame Reale, while simultaneously being closely associated with the Swiss cantons. Tarentaise and Maurienne lay to the north of the Dauphiné's eastern extension, and were bounded on the east by Piedmont.

The region as a whole was sparsely populated due its marginal agricultural value, which was perhaps fortunate

from the ducal point of view, since it was indefensible from attack by the French.

Piedmont was similarly divided into a number of territories. Beginning in the North were the mountainous Val Sesia and the Duchy of Aosta – a region that still enjoyed a great deal of autonomy – then the Val Susa, which lay to the southeast of Savoy, and formed the northern boundary of the eastern extension of the Dauphiné.

The Val d'Aosta was a critical route for reinforcements coming from and through Switzerland. The French raided it a number of times but only once made a major expedition down it, with the object of destroying the local infrastructure. Most of the Allied troops entering the theatre by this route were Swiss or Protestant. Imperial forces, whether Habsburg or *Reichsarmee*, used routes farther east and passed westward through Milán.

The so-called Vaudois Quarter lay on the southern side of this same enclave, so that the defenders at Pinerolo were under constant threat of having their lines of communication cut either by the Piedmontese Army or the Waldensian Montagnards.

Piedmont proper lay on the plains of the upper Po. On its eastern side were the territories of Verceil (south of Val Sesia), Asti, and Montferrato. The first of these was on the left bank of the Po, the second on the right bank; Montferrato was segmented into three parts, lay on both banks, and as mentioned before its control was divided between the dukes of Savoy and the dukes of Mantua – hence their great rivalry. In the southwest corner of Piedmont were the mountainous territories of Saluzzo and Tende, beyond which lay Barcelonnette and Nice, respectively.

To the north of Piedmont was the Swiss canton of Valais, with which the dukes of Savoy enjoyed good relations. This region served as a safe haven for Protestant insurgents and a support base for Swiss troops marching to join the Allied armies.

East of the agglomeration of territories called Piedmont were the States of Milán, or the Milanese. North of the Po these shared a common border with Piedmont along the Sesia River. South of the Po, they extended to the border with Genoa – meaning that the Duke of Mantua's possessions in Montferrato were isolated by his enemies. This isolated enclave, lying against the right bank of the Po, was critical, as it included the French fortress of Casale. The French thus guaranteed the safety of the duke's possessions while the duke allowed the French a secure base hard by the Milanese border.

On the north, the States of Milán were bounded by the Swiss canton of the Grisons, on the east by Imperial fiefs and the Duchy of Mantua, and to the southeast by other pro-French states, to wit, Modena and Parma, which were themselves sandwiched between the Po and the northern end of the Apennines.

Between Piedmont and the States of Milán were a number of tiny debatable parcels of land, jumbled up Mantuan and Imperial fiefs. The key word is 'fiefs'. Northern Italy was technically part of the Holy Roman Empire – the *Reichsitalien* – and was subject to many of the same political problems. Unlike the German zone, there was no system of common defence, perhaps because so much of it was controlled by the Kingdom of Spain, even though the Spanish kings were only Dukes of Milán.

To speak of the terrain, the Po Valley has two different characters. On the left (north) bank, the land is extremely rich, studded with towns and fortifications, patches of woodland, and good farmland. However, it is also a flood plain, split by numerous rivers and manmade canals, some of which were used for barge traffic.

Around Turin the land north of the Po is higher, but still flat and fertile, and cut by a number of rivers, prone to seasonal flooding and alternate dry spells. The lower slopes of the bordering mountains were heavily wooded and sparsely populated.

The land on the right bank of the Po is quite a bit higher than the left bank, being an extension of the Ligurian Alps. It features rolling, wooded hills, and some areas of flat land. The Ligurian Alps are not so high as the true Alps, but are very rugged and were cut by few (and very poor) roads.

Turin is actually located in a gap between the Alps and the hill country on the right bank of the Po. The hills come right up to the river bank. A little to the south the land opens up both east and west, creating a 'private preserve' for the dukes of Savoy that featured good farmland and a number of wealthy towns.

This flat land extends as far as Cuneo (or Coni), which was a key fortress guarding a couple of passes through the Maritime Alps, one leading by Tende to the coast, and the other to Barcelonnette and the County of Nice.

Genoa deserves a brief mention. The Republic's glory days were long gone and in fact it was under the thumb of France, though the city prudently kept out of the war. At the western end of the state were two enclaves, one owned by the dukes of Savoy, and the other by Spain. In both cases these were intended to provide access to the Mediterranean for those powers.

The Spanish possession was Finale, which had been a staging post on the Spanish Road to the Netherlands since the days of Charles V and was still the primary base for funnelling reinforcements, supplies, and dispatches to and from the Milanese and the wider Spanish Empire. At the time of the Nine Years War the enclave of Finale split the Genoese Republic, whose border was then closer to the coast, so that the Spanish could reach the Milanese

by marching through a part of Montferrato owned by Piedmont. The dukes of Savoy were not always happy with this arrangement, but since they were on the Spanish side (mostly) this time around, it was not a problem.

The Piedmontese port was Oneille (Oneglia, now Imperia). Access to the coast for the Sabaudians did involve crossing Genoese territory, but it was only a short hop. Troops could be moved either by the Tende Pass to Nice or Cuneo, or straight north to Mondoví or Ceva. The latter route skirted the 'true' mountains, which extended in a long tongue eastward from the Maritime Alps, but was still very rough.

To return to the 'cockpit' of the theatre, there were relatively few passes through the Alps suitable for an army. In the extreme south there were two possibilities, both of which terminated in front of the fortress of Cuneo, in the plains of southern Piedmont.

These have already been mentioned. South was the Tende Pass, which crossed the Colle di Tende at 1,870 meters and led to the Mediterranean coast, more specifically Oneille, Nice, and the communities between them. This pass was reputedly opened by the Phoenicians.

West was the Val Stura, leading from Cuneo by Demonte and Argentera over the Col de la Maddalena (1,996 meters) to the Vallé de Barcelonnette. Once over the pass there were three possible routes. These were to or from Barcelonnette and thence into Nice or Provence; to or from the Durance River by way of the Col de Vars (2,108 meters), taking one to or from Guillestre on the Durance; or northeast up the Vallee d"Ubaye and over the Col de Longet (2,647 meters – not for the faint of heart) into the Vallee de Varaita. This valley descends onto the plains of Piedmont by way of Casteldelfino and Sampeyre, exiting south of Saluzzo. Needless to say, an army could also ascend the Varaita and cross the watershed to descend on Guillestre.

Guillestre was the gateway for two more passes, one that ran northeast up the Durance to Briançon and over the Col de Montgenèvre (1,854 meters) to Oulx, Exilles, and Susa. The Val Susa exits the Alps in front of Turin. A side valley, the Val Perosa, lies to the south. This was French territory, guarded by the fortress of Pinerolo. At Fenestrelle, farther up the valley, it was possible to cross the Colle delle Finestre (2,463 meters) to and from Susa, but one could also follow the valley still farther up and go over the Colle Sestriere (2,035 meters), then cross the next valley and go over the Col de Montgenèvre to Briançon.

The other route from Guillestre led east through the Gorges du Guil to Queyras and Aiguilles, then by Mont Viso to the Val Luserna. This route was not only very rough, but passed through the heart of the Waldensians' country.

North of the Val Susa, the next practical route was roughly 60 Km away as the buzzard flies – essentially another world. This was the Val d'Aosta. Coming from Savoy, an army would follow the Isère River by Albertville and Moûtiers to Bourg-Saint-Maurice. Crossing the Col du Petit Saint-Bernard (2,188 meters) took one into the Val d'Aosta, which exited into Piedmont at the important town of Ivrea. The valley features a significant river, the Dora Baltea.

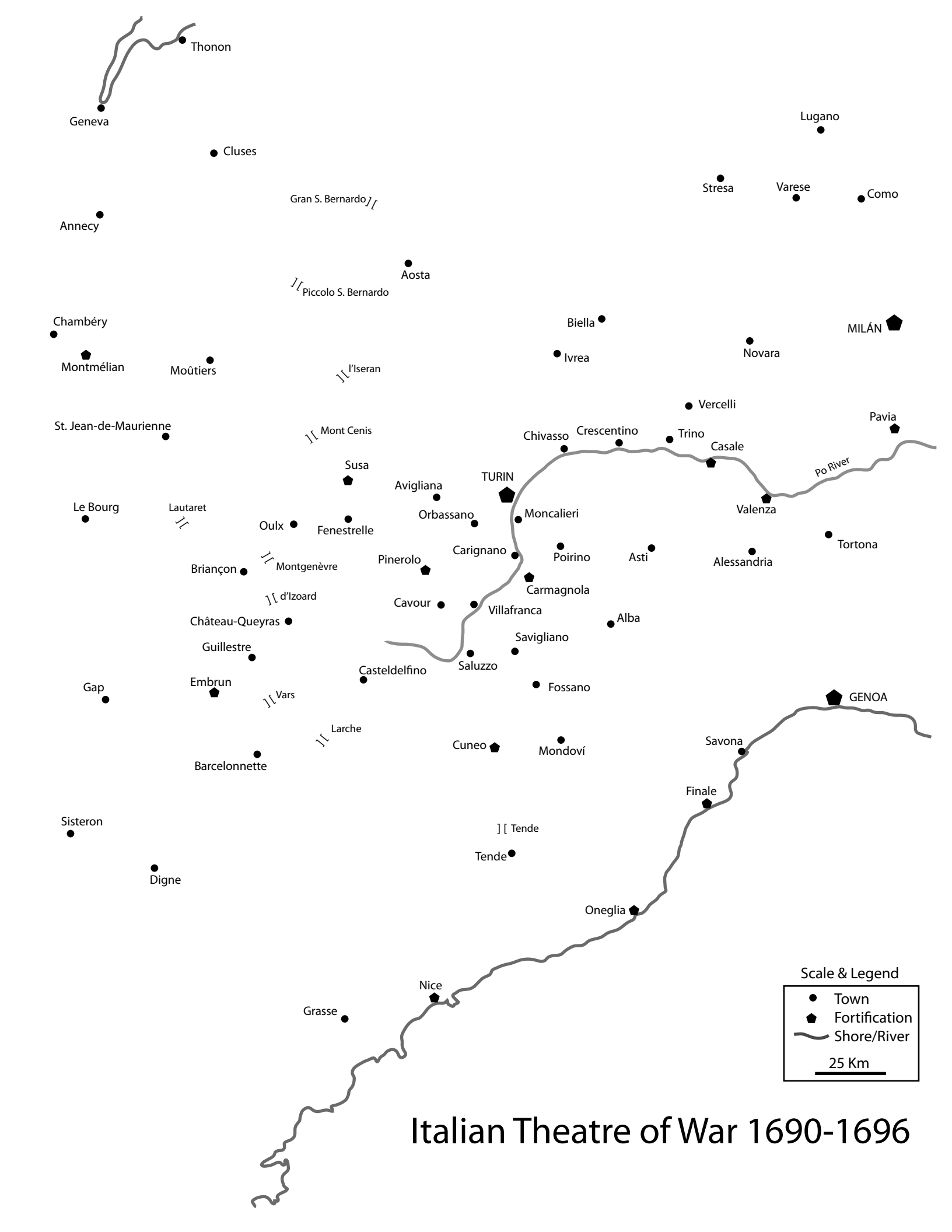
This route was not hard, comparatively speaking, but it was long. Again, the Val d'Aosta's main importance was as a route for Swiss and Protestant reinforcements coming from the eastern end of Lake Geneva; they traversed the Col Ferret (2,490 meters) below Mont Blanc and descended into the Val d'Aosta opposite the Little St. Bernard.

None of these passes was suitable for a force larger than a small corps. Even then, without a decent mule train, such a force could not penetrate far. What the armies did, of course, was divide up into columns and use the passes that converged upon one another. The columns operated in complete isolation but would eventually be able to concentrate.

Thus the Val d'Aosta, though quite wide and fertile, saw only raiding columns, and bands of reinforcements, because it was isolated from the main action. Similarly, the French were able to guard the southern passes with only light forces and militia because the valleys did not converge. Only in 1692 did the Allies penetrate into the Valle de Barcelonnette, but then they had to make a choice of diverging to take both Nice and Guillestre, or to converge on the latter and ignore the former.

As mentioned at the start, most of the manoeuvring took place to the south and west of Turin, between that city and Cuneo. This region was flat, a mix of farmland, vineyards, and woodland, cut by many alpine rivers and streams, as well as drainage canals. In stark contrast, the mountains erupt straight out of the plain. As a general rule, the mountains were 'owned' by the French, except where they were 'owned' by the Waldensians. The Allies typically encamped on the plain, in front of Turin when that city was threatened, or on the opposite side of the Po at Moncalieri when they had taken a beating.

The choice of Moncalieri for the Allies' primary camp throughout the war may initially be puzzling. It is near Turin but on the opposite bank of the Po and thus defensible but not, apparently, a good post from which to aid the city. In actuality, Moncalieri was the site of one of the Duke's oldest and most solidly constructed 'pleasure palaces' – more like a fortress, though in Baroque style – which sat on a hill commanding the approaches to Turin from the southeast. It was thus a perfect mustering point for the Allies, who could reach it without being intercepted, and easily defensible. A concentration at Turin itself would be in the face of the French Army, with


Thonon
Geneva
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Gran S. Bernardo
Annecy
Aosta
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Chambéry
Biella
MILÁN
Montmélian
Moûtiers
l'Iseran
Ivrea
Novara
Vercelli
Pavia
St. Jean-de-Maurienne
Mont Cenis
Chivasso
Crescentino
Trino
Casale
Susa
Po River
Avigliana
TURIN
Le Bourg
Lautaret
Orbassano
Moncalieri
Valenza
Oulx
Fenestrelle
Tortona
Carignano
Poirino
Asti
Alessandria
Briançon
Montgenèvre
Pinerolo
Carmagnola
d'Izoard
Cavour
Villafranca
Alba
Château-Queyras
Savigliano
Guillestre
Saluzzo
Casteldelfino
Gap
Embrun
Fossano
GENOA
Vars
Larche
Savona
Cuneo
Mondoví
Barcelonnette
Finale
Sisteron
Tende
Tende
Digne
Oneglia
Nice
Grasse
Scale & Legend
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
25 Km
Italian Theatre of War 1690-1696

no interposing river. Alternatively, if the Allies concentrated behind the Stura River, which runs into the Po northeast of Turin, they might have difficulty crossing that river to succour the capital. At Moncalieri a similar move would place them on the French flank.

It is roughly 60 Km from Pinerolo to Cuneo, 80 Km from Turin to Cuneo, and 35 Km from Pinerolo to Turin. The other French bases in this region were at Susa (after they captured it) and Fenestrelle. The latter is about 28 Km northwest of Pinerolo, and the former is about 52 Km west of Turin. The distance from Susa to the mouth of its valley, at Avigliana, is about 30 Km. 9 Km closer to Turin is Rivoli; this district was covered in parkland and featured a number of ducal pleasure palaces. Until they were sacked.

Forward to War

The countdown in Italy began in 1689, with the declaration of war between Spain and France. Duke Victor knew that he would soon be asked to support a French offensive against the Milanese. But by now, the Piedmontese were tired of watching French garrison columns wandering about their land, being insulted by arrogant French officers, and bullied by their men. Restrained by his mother's pro-French faction, the Duke was pulled in the other direction by his ministers, his people, and his own inclination.

He approached Vienna. This is portrayed by historians as the Duke hedging his bets, which was true. There is still debate as to whether he was operating on a master plan, or reacting moment by moment. The latter seems more likely. What he really wanted was to be left alone.

However, the Emperor reacted gleefully and speedily, dispatching Duke Victor's cousin, Prince Eugene of Savoy, to Turin. Duke Victor was an Imperial vassal, and Vienna had long been anxious about the fact that Turin seemed so firmly in the French orbit. Prince Eugene was a sworn enemy of France – he had in fact sworn never to return there except behind a naked sword. Something to do with his childhood experiences at the French Court.

Meanwhile, both the Duke and King Louis were operating with restraint. For the Duke's part, he was required to take into consideration his mother's pro-French faction and the fact that there were many French troops in his country. He had to be considerate of their wishes and also considerate of his need to dissemble his plans should he come to a firm decision to join the Allies.

For Louis' part, his restraint consisted of not immediately declaring war on Duke Victor. Instead, he issued demands that the Piedmontese stock magazines for his army and allow it free passage to the borders of the Milanese. After all, that is what Pinerolo and Casale were there for. In addition the Duke was to provide six regiments for service in Flanders, later scaled back to two foot and two dragoon regiments and eventually just three foot battalions. These were reasonable requests for a vassal to fulfil. The Duke sent the regiments to his liege lord but balked at the rest. Prince Eugene steadied him, aided by the Imperial envoy, the Abbé Gimani, arguing that the Emperor was stronger than France. But, how to buy time?

Short of manpower, Leopold I was only willing to commit 5,000 men to assist Duke Victor, but the Spanish also agreed to provide 10-12,000 men on an annual basis. The Spanish forces have been discussed above; the Imperial contingent would initially amount to 2 cuirassier regiments, 1 dragoon regiment (Prince Eugene's own), equivalent to 6 French cavalry regiments due to their larger size, and 2 infantry regiments, or 4 battalions. Prince Eugene held temporary command of these until a full general, General Carafa, could be sent out; as a matter of fact the troops were late and the only command Eugene exercised at the start of the war was over his own suite.

Once Prince Eugene had satisfied himself that Duke Victor was prepared to join the League of Augsburg, the Emperor expedited the signing of a treaty of alliance at Venice. This event was concealed by having Duke Victor attend the annual winter Carnival. Once the deal was done, the Duke sent orders to his fortresses and army encampments to make ready. The Spanish, also signatories, did the same.

The deception was good enough, even after the military began stirring, to allow the French to pretend they had been completely fooled – however, they were *not* fooled, only unsure as to the extent of the disaster. Much is made in contemporary accounts of *général* Catinat's futile attempts to spy on the Venice conference – he supposedly visited the Carnival himself disguised as a Capuchin – but northern Italy was carpeted in French spies so it is highly unlikely that anything beyond the details of the treaty escaped their net.

King Louis perhaps hoped to intimidate Duke Victor into withdrawing from his commitments before they were made public. Versailles now sent instructions that a number of locations in Piedmont, such as Ivrea, Saluces, Fossan, and Savillan, be occupied by French garrisons. This might have ensured Sabaudian neutrality, but the list did not stop there. Also demanded were the key fortresses of Verrue, Vercelli, and the citadel of Turin!

Even now, backed into a corner, Victor Amadeus waffled. Langallerie, in his *Mémoires de Comte D–,* says, from his vantage point as a member of his suite, that the Duke was partly annoyed and partly dismayed, and wished he had either been open with King Louis about the deal he had made with the Emperor, or demanded higher subsidies from the Allies. The Duke wrote a weak letter of protest to Versailles, as much as admitting he had signed a deal with the other side, so Louis had better not push him. The Sun King was obsessive-compulsive about lines

in the sand and stepped over this one. Piedmont followed the dance manual and declared for the Allied cause, although not technically for war.

That technicality allowed Duke Victor to order all French troops to leave his country, except for the garrisons of Pinerolo and Casale, which were on French land, and it allowed the French to comply without loss of face. This was in January of 1690. Both the Duke and the King now issued manifestos stating the rightness of their own position.

Offers of support poured in for the Duke: money from Venice, more money from Spain, 4,000 men from Florence (never sent), 2,000 men from the Duke of Rome (never sent), and unspecified aid from Genoa (after the Imperial envoy forcibly made them shake hands with the Duke). England promised 20,000 crowns per month, matched by Holland. Brandenburg offered the Prince Margrave, brother of the Elector, along with some regiments.

A camp was set up at Moncalieri to which 2,000 Sabaudian infantry and 600 dragoons were sent. These would be augmented in late spring by 1,000 Spanish cavalry and 8,000 infantry. (The numbers were less than promised because the Spanish also had to conduct an invasion of Mantua, which showed signs of joining the fight on France's side.) Duke Victor was made generalissimo of the combined army to bind him in his 'crime' of joining the Emperor.

Still King Louis showed restraint. If he could not attack the Milanese from a friendly base, perhaps he could persuade Duke Victor to remain neutral and thus prevent the Allies from crossing the Alps themselves. Unavailing efforts were made to demonstrate the weakness of the coalition by pointing to examples from the course of the war in Flanders. Allied weakness on the battlefield was a fact, but the Duke had pledged his word. For a man whom history portrays as the epitome of deviousness, Duke Victor's word was surprisingly important to him.

Les Barbets

At this point a digression is needed. The Waldensians or Vaudois were a religious sect living among the Maritime Alps, in the neighbourhood of Pinerolo. Their situation illumines some of the complications the French and Sabaudians faced in their relationship.

Only about 15,000 in number, the sect was founded by one Peter Waldo about 1173AD. They are thus not Reformation-Protestants, though they quickly joined the Reformation when it broke out, because they discovered that many of the tenets of the Swiss school were similar to their own. ('*We were Protestants before Protestantism was cool.*') Their descendants consider themselves akin to Calvinists and follow a strict adherence to the Bible and keeping the Sabbath on Saturday. The French called them *les Religionnaires* or *les Barbets*, from their patriarchal beards.

The troubles they went endured beginning with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes are known among them as the Fourth Persecution. It began before 1685 with low level persecutions and the 'selling of conversions' to Catholicism by the French Crown, but in 1685 the *dragonades* began – the rousting of villages and quartering of dragoons upon them.

[The revocation of Protestant privileges meant that Protestants of any stripe were denied Christian burial, had their marriages and baptisms nullified, their property confiscated, and once forcibly converted to Catholicism could be branded as lapsed Catholics if they went back to their old habits. They were also subject to the Inquisition. King Louis also declared that anyone who chose exile rather than conversion should be subject to death and confiscation of property.]

In October of 1685 the French governor of their valleys (remember, the French owned a strip of territory connecting the Dauphiné with Pinerolo), a man named d'Harleville, was ordered to forcibly convert the inhabitants. The effect of this was to convert 8,000 French Vaudois to Catholicism and send another 3,000 into exile. Around 2,500 Vaudois remained on the Italian side of the Alps.

The French ambassador at Turin, M. d'Arcy, then pressed Duke Victor to assist the French, as a loyal vassal, by conducting a similar operation among the Italian Vaudois. The Duke had had his differences with the Vaudois, but this stuck in his craw. Nevertheless, he complied halfheartedly, after a two-month delay and the formal threat of the King of France Withdrawing his Friendship.

That was in December of 1685. On January 31, 1686, the Vaudois were officially given 15 days to convert enmasse, or else. They sent representatives to Turin and Geneva but got little or no help. They found more support in Holland and among the Protestant German princes.

At the end of the fifteen days, 9,000 French and Piedmontese troops invaded the Vaudois valleys around Pinerolo. They faced stiff resistance, finding every village fortified against them.

In March, the Vaudois considered and rejected an invitation from the Swiss to make an exodus north. On April 9, Duke Victor took advantage of the uncertainty among the Vaudois to renew the offer of exile on his own behalf, giving them eight days to decide. They were permitted to sell their lands, instead of simply having them confiscated.

But, stirred up by a pastor named Henri Arnaud who had just returned from exile, the Vaudois chose to fight. The war lasted six weeks, and might have gone on indefinitely, but their plans were betrayed by a double agent called Desmoulin, The Vaudois were crushed in a

two-pronged drive by the French on one side and Duke Victor's forces on the other.

In all, about 2,000 Vaudois had been killed, another 2,000 continued in their conversion (this may include children forcibly taken from their families to be raised in Catholic homes), and 8,000 had been imprisoned. Of the latter about half would die of malnutrition or disease within six months. In a number of instances the Vaudois were bluffed or cajoled into surrendering and then massacred.

Only 80 men remained under arms (possibly 2-300 people, counting families). After having cut their way out, they ambushed an enemy convoy and made off with masses of stores and weaponry. Known as the Invincibles, they repeatedly attacked Catholics who were sent into their valleys to settle, until no one was willing to emigrate there. This forced Duke Victor to negotiate, and on January 3, 1687, he allowed the remaining Vaudois safe passage to Switzerland, releasing the prisoners. Actually, only 2,800 Vaudois left, and only 2,490 survived the trek. Many of the others converted or laid low.

From Geneva a diaspora took place to Germany and other places. Some even travelled to the American colonies. However, they found it difficult to fit into their new communities, so that by 1689 many of the Vaudois were willing to attempt a return.

Circumstances had altered. France was at war, and some of her enemies were Protestant nations only too happy to send the Vaudois and the Huguenots to places where they could make trouble for King Louis. William of Orange promised his support as part of a wider plan to swamp France with Huguenot irregulars, and in August, 1689, Arnaud led 800-1,000 men back to the valleys.

The army of the '*Retour Glorieux*' crossed Lake Geneva and landed in the province of Faucigny, racing through Savoy by way of Cluses (about 35 Km south of the lake), continuing in a generally southeasterly direction to Mont Cenis, northwest of Susa. Much of the way was along the easily traversed Vallée d'Isère, but some stretches took them over some very high cols.

Attempts to stop the band were foiled by the rapidity of their march and the judicious use of hostages. Turin was aware of their presence but Duke Victor was no longer keen to erase their memory and did not lift a finger to stop them. It would be up to the French.

After a march of only eight days they were at Salbertrand, in the Val San Martin, 15.5 Km southwest of Susa. That is a march of over 150 Km in a straight line, and their path was not straight. The Vaudois, heading southwest up the Dora Ripara, had bypassed Susa, where the river bends to the east, and marched without hindrance through Exilles (the place where the famous Man in the Iron Mask was supposed to have been imprisoned).

Their object was to get to the Val Luserna, a valley south of the Chisone that emerged on to the plains about 10 Km southwest of Pinerolo. This could be done by continuing up the Dora Ripara to Oulx, then hooking round south and east all the way to the springs of the Dora near the Col de Montgenèvre. On the other side of the mountain was the Val Luserna.

However, at Salbertrand they encountered *maréchal de camp* Larré with a body of 2,500 French, who were entrenched at the bridge. Ordered to surrender, the Vaudois attempted to bypass the post but were pinned down for a quarter of an hour by a fusillade that someone estimated at 2,000 bullets. One man was wounded.

What happened next is a bit garbled in the sources. The most likely sequence of events is that the Piedmontese sent out two companies from Susa, which encountered the Vaudois rearguard at Giaglione, a village about 3 Km west of Susa. Duke Victor's men did not press the point and this gave the Vaudois time to rally. Someone called out "Courage, the bridge is gained!" and the band stormed across it, fought their way through the entrenchments, and routed the French after a two hour battle.

Larré is said to have cried "*sauve quie peut*" and fled to his command post at Embrun. Since Embrun is a good 70 Km to the southeast, in the valley of the Durance, it seems highly unlikely that he ran the whole way. If Vaudois propaganda is to be believed, some of the French companies were down to 7-8 men, and the Vaudois captured their regimental guns and baggage. The Piedmontese seem to have pushed forward and recovered some of the booty, but the Vaudois escaped to Oulx.

By following the route already described, the Vaudois made it back home, to the Val Luserna, the heart of their lands west of Pinerolo. They were pursued for some distance, but finally broke contact. Their final stop is reported at Bobbio Pellice. Here they began cleaning house by forcibly removing 'papists'. While operating in the next valley to the north, the Val San Martin (west of Perosa Argentina, about 14 Km northwest of Pinerolo), they were attacked in force by the garrison of Pinerolo and Piedmontese troops under the *marchese* di Parella. They spent he next several weeks playing hide and seek with the enemy.

Meanwhile a second body of Vaudois attempting to follow the same roads were met by the Sabaudians under *conti* di Bernezzo at Thonon-les-Bains, on the south shore of Lake Geneva, and were deported to Switzerland, apparently without a fight.

Eventually the Vaudois, now down to only 300 men, were cornered at their stronghold of Balsiglia, far up the Val San Martin, with towering peaks all around, the solid wall of Albergian to the north and the sharp ridges of Ghinivert embracing it from the south and west. Balsiglia was virtually impregnable, with a cave barracks and observation tower, and cliffs behind. The siege, by 4,000

French equipped with artillery, under *maréchal de camp* de Feuquiéres, lasted all winter.

Feuquiéres will be a familiar name later in the narrative. He was a key subordinate of *général* Catinat, the man actually in charge of this anti-Vaudois campaign. Feuquiéres was a decent general himself, but inclined to be temperamental and hasty. By May 13, 1690, he was finally ready to assault Balsiglia and was so confident of success that he sent word to Versailles that the heretics had been wiped out. But the assault was delayed by fog and low cloud, and that night the Montagnards slipped out by a back way, crawling along narrow ledges on their hands and knees. One of them later said he was glad of the fog so that he could not see the drop beside him.

The Vaudois escaped to the Val Angrogna, 10 Km southwest of Pinerolo. That must have been an epic march. It was only about 15 Km, but meant going straight over the 2,867 meter high Punta Cornour. The Val Angrogna was curiously empty. The French had passed through, but not left a garrison. Here the Vaudois learned that Duke Victor was about to go to war with King Louis. This completely changed the situation.

The French abandoned their pursuit of the heretics; instead offers were made of good treatment and freedom of religion if the Vaudois would serve on the French side. Duke Victor countered by promising them protection, and issued a general invitation for other exiles to return. One of the Huguenot regiments sent by William of Orange to aid Duke Victor was composed of Vaudois.

For the Vaudois the choice was not hard to make. Despite their differences, Victor Amadeus was their natural overlord and Louis XIV their natural enemy. The *marchese* di Parella, their late enemy, was made their liaison with Turin and overall commander. Soon, they had driven the French out of the Val Luserna.

The Vaudois would wage an intense guerrilla war against the French for the next seven years. In the first few months alone they inflicted 1,000 casualties. Though their numbers were too small to have a decisive impact, they helped distract the French by cutting their lines of communication and inflicting general destruction. They even joined with the Allied army on occasion and fought well at Orbassano in 1693.

In 1692, for their sterling service, Duke Victor gave the Vaudois complete amnesty and in 1694 renewed this edict of toleration. Ironically, when the Duke switched sides in 1696, one of the secret articles of the treaty was for him to repress the Vaudois, which he did through taxation and exacting war reparations. However, the edict of toleration remained in force.

Général Catinat

Hey Frankie, get in here!"

"Yeah, Boss?"

"Look at this… Little Vicky thinks he can disrespect me… Me!… Big Louis. Nobody disrespects Big Louis. No Body."

"Guy don't know who his friends are. Guy's a ingerate."

"Frankie, we're gonna send this bozo a message. Who've we got that's clean?

There's Nicky, Boss. No flies on him.

Nicky's a good boy… Yeah. Have Nicky take care of it."

"OK, Boss."

[Frankie = François-Michel le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois.]

Nicolas de Catinat de la Fauconnerie was born on September 1, 1637, in Paris, to one of the King's councillors in the *Parlement* of Paris. Of bourgeois stock, the family were originally from Perche. Though as king's councillors they were high up the social ladder, their attitude to life was certainly bourgeois rather than aristocratic. The children – Catinat was 11th out of 16 – were taught in the 'old school' of Christian virtues: piety, hard work, and self discipline.

The family was very tight. Every winter, before he visited Versailles to discuss the next year's campaign, Catinat would spend as much time as he could with his children and his wider family.

There was a 'taint' of Jansenism about them, but that movement was not seen as subversive while Catinat was growing up, and after, his reputation was too high to be much affected.

Three of his sisters became nuns, while two brothers joined the Army. Catinat was destined to follow his old man into the legal profession and ultimately to a role as councillor. He was sent to study under an uncle at Tours, but showed little interest, preferring to study the arts of war. The legend is that he went to his uncle's library to find a copy of Justinian's Law Code, accidentally pulled down a copy of Caesar's Commentaries instead, and never looked back.

In 1660, age 23, Catinat returned home and announced his intention of joining the Army. He obtained a position as cornet in Bignon's Dragoons. There is a story that he was stripped of his rank at a review by *maréchal* de la Ferte, supposedly because the marshal thought he was too low born, then hastily reinstated when la Ferte was reminded that Catinat's father was participating in a trial in which la Ferte's father stood to gain or lose a great deal.

Actually, the position of cornet was abolished in 1664. Catinat was given a nebulous royal brevet (i.e., warrant) rank until made lieutenant in 1665. He served in a

regiment of light horse in Flanders in 1667 under Turenne and Vauban, and was Noticed By The King at the siege of Lille. For the daring act of charging the ramparts he was made a lieutenant of Guards. This was more than just a reward for heroism; his brother, a *capitaine* of Guards, had just been killed and the position was hereditary, in an informal sense. There is another story that the two surviving brothers each wished the other would obtain their dead brother's position, which pleased the King. Catinat's elder brother got the position, but Nicholas was promoted to ordinary captain in 1670.

The next major affair was the Dutch War. In 1672 Catinat was the first man across the Rhine. In 1674 he was wounded at Maastricht when assaulting a hornwork – he never did shake the habit of leading from the front. And at Seneffe, also in 1674, his name on the list of honours was written just under the Great Condé. In Franche-Comte he took Fort St. Elionne and the Citadel of Besaçon against superior numbers, inspiring his men by his 'valour and sangfroid'.

At 33, after only ten years of service Catinat was made Captain of the Guards and a Major General of Infantry. This was a remarkable achievement for a man of his class, and there was opposition. The Colonel of the Guards, La Feuillade, objected that, 'We can make this man a general, a minister, an ambassador, or a chancellor, but not a Major General of the Guards'.

Feuillade was not being hyperbolic. It was universally said that if Catinat had not been a general he would have been either the head of the diplomatic service or the King's 'eminence gris'. But, he had the bad habit, for a courtier, of always speaking his mind. He was too prudish, stiff, and reserved to fit in at Court. Tellingly, he was always addressed as 'M. Catinat' and not by his first name, even by those close to him.

Feuillade's objection also provides insight into the way the Court worked. Rather than upset Feuillade, King Louis did not promote Catinat, but instead began giving him key fighting commands. He also corresponded with him using a private cypher.

By 1677 Catinat was a brigadier. This was a new rank, created for men like him who needed to take a different career path to get to the top. He fought under the *duc* de Luxembourg in Flanders. At the siege of Valenciennes he repulsed a sally and seized the sally port. Later in the campaign he was made Governor of Ghislain, and in 1678 he was given command of the key town of Dunkirk.

The taking of Valenciennes illuminates another aspect of his character. He attempted to limit the excesses of the soldiers, but did not exceed the bounds imposed on him by his orders. The War Minister, Louvois, with whom Catinat was to work closely, stated that Catinat was the most focused officer he knew, but that this could make him too punctilious and precise. Counteracting Catinat's reputation for coldness, however, Louvois discovered a man with a strong sense of humour, saying also that he was a humane man and a faithful friend. The two would develop an excellent working relationship.

Catinat's relationship with Italy began in 1679, when he was sent on a secret 'rendition' mission. This had to do with the French plans to obtain the fortress of Casale. One of the Duke of Mantua's ministers, the *conti* de Mattioli, had been a naughty boy. In 1768, said minister had approached the French, offering the fortress for sale, but this had turned out to be a private venture of the minister. Moreover, the French Chevalier d'Asfeld who had been sent to negotiate the deal, was placed in danger of capture by Spanish and Imperial agents.

In revenge, Louvois decided to capture Mattioli. The *abbé* de l'Estrades, French ambassador at Turin, lured the minister onto French territory to 'hear his excuses'. Catinat was present. At a signal from him, the dragoons hiding in the next room burst in and arrested Mattioli. Some older sources postulated this affair as the origin of the story of the Man in the Iron Mask.

Catinat went back to the northeastern frontier, serving as governor of Lonwy in 1679, Condé in 1680, and Tournai in 1681. On July 22 of that year he was summoned to a secret conclave at Fontainbleu. After direct negotiations between the Duke of Mantua, the envoy to Mantua *abbé* Morel, *abbé* l'Estrades, and the dowager duchess of Savoy (Madame Reale), France was truly going to buy Casale.

Only the citadel was actually ceded to France, but that was assumed to be a formality. The French would obtain all by obtaining the citadel. Madame Reale was involved because Catinat would have to led the new garrison across Piedmont. 10,000 men were provided by the *marquis* de Boufflers, Lieutenant General of the Dauphiné.

On September 3, 1681, Catinat arrived at Pinerolo after travelling incognito, sometimes sleeping in haystacks and empty bread ovens. At Pinerolo he assumed the character of one Guibert, supposedly a traitor who had been arrested for trying to steal the plans to Pinerolo. He was 'detained' for twenty-four days while Boufflers brought the troops. Boufflers and Catinat then left Pinerolo on September 27 at the head of 6 regiments of horse, 6 of dragoons, and 16 battalions of foot.

These were far more men that were required, but the plan was to pretend an invasion of Mantua. Boufflers arrived at Casale on September 30. As the French entered by the back gate the Mantuan garrison marched out through the front. Catinat was installed as governor on October 1, receiving promotion to *maréchal de camp*. He was 44. About the same time, France obtained Strasbourg, and the chancelleries of Europe became suddenly quiet.

Catinat remained governor of Casale for some years. Initially he had trouble gaining control of the rest of the

fortress and the town, being unwilling to use force, but by a combination of his own mild disposition and Louvois' brutal threats, the Duke of Mantua was persuaded to yield. Catinat gained a high reputation among the Italians for his fairness in dealing with the local authorities and the discipline of his men. He also became familiar with the region, and helped to reconcile Madame Reale with her son at the time when she was trying to force him to marry into the Portuguese royal family. Catinat made the mistake, however, of judging the future Duke Victor as weak. Perhaps he was. Vacillation was part of his character, but vacillating minds are often capable of dissimulation and Duke Victor was already a master deceiver, something that Catinat seems not to have grasped, his own character being so forthright.

In 1686 Catinat began fighting the Barbets. His official orders were to assist Duke Victor, who seemed to be flailing around and making the situation worse. To do so he turned out the entire garrison of Casale. Though he has been blamed for the atrocities committed under his command, his own view was that, 'we can destroy the habitations of the Barbets, but cannot destroy the Barbets'. As ever, he preferred the soft approach, but this was a religious war, and besides, he was not about to disobey his orders, particularly since this was the first field command he had held in some years. Duke Victor expressed himself so pleased by his help that he gave Catinat his portrait in diamonds.

With the subsidence of the emergency, in December of 1687 Catinat was sent to serve as governor of the province of Luxembourg. He arrived unannounced to avoid having to go through the various ceremonies. As at Casale, he became very popular. In 1688 he was promoted to *lieutenant général* and assigned two regiments, one of foot and one of dragoons, both of which would serve under him in Italy.

Later that year he participated in the siege of Philipsburg under Vauban and the Dauphin himself, earning the soubriquet 'Père La Penseé' – Father Thought – for his clear orders and coolness under fire. He was twice wounded, once when leading a storming party, where he was struck by a spent musket ball and knocked out, and once when he was on night watch and repulsed a sally. Again a ball struck him in the head, but his thick wig absorbed the impact. His men wanted to preserve the wig as a trophy, but Catinat quickly threw it away.

The success of the siege led to the next phase, taking 'contributions' – i.e., extorting money and supplies – from Maastricht and Limburg. The locals pronounced themselves pleased that Catinat had been assigned the duty rather than the usual rapacious officer who would have torched the whole country before he even started.

Catinat had a reputation for never taking more than was due, never taking bribes, even socially acceptable ones, from either petitioners or government departments. He was known for protecting civilians, sometimes by personal intervention, and for preserving religious houses. If he had to, he would pay reparations for his soldiers' acts out of his own pocket. On the other hand his punishment of deserters and looters was inexorable.

Now age 50, Catinat's association with all the great lights, Luxembourg, Vauban, the Dauphin, and even the King himself, brought him that most coveted prize, not normally available to men of his class, a theatre command. With his previous experience, Italy was the obvious choice.

Catinat was undoubtably one of the best French generals of the period, perhaps second only to his mirror opposite, the *duc* de Luxembourg. Without regard to period he is entitled to be placed alongside the best, but not among the first rank. He became too cautious after Louvois died.

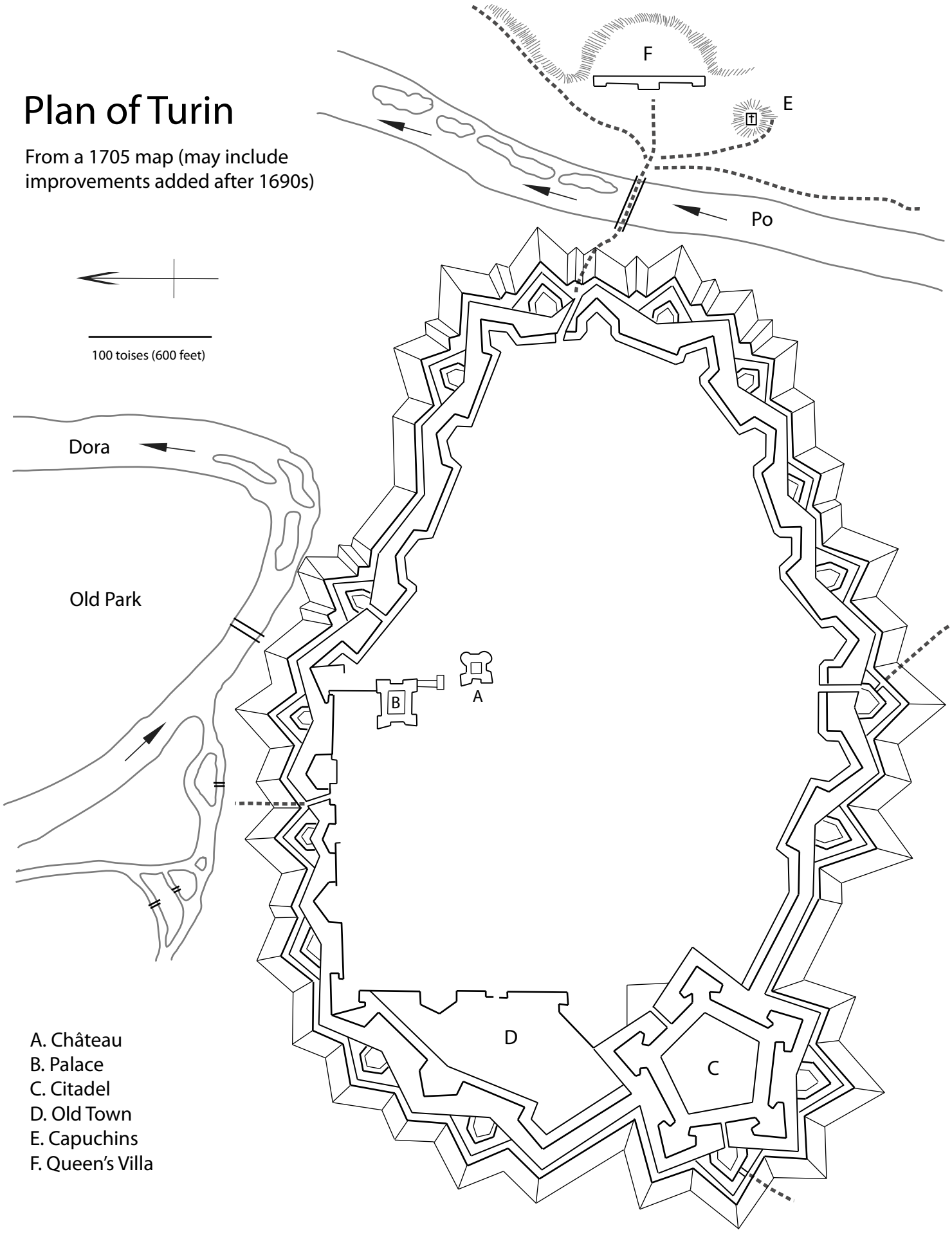
Why? In this author's opinion, it was because he was a Bourgeoise trying to stay afloat in an Aristocratic environment. He had to maintain a 100% success rate, even if that meant never taking a chance, because battlefield success was the only lever he could pull. Louvois and he had been opposites in both personality and morals, but at least they knew where they stood and shared a mutual respect. Louvois would fire off clear orders, Catinat would measure them against his own judgement, and then act decisively. When Louvois died, Catinat found himself dealing with a court and bureaucracy that communicated orders in vague, deniable murmurs. Catinat never learned to mumble.

"No man is a hero to his valet."

Nicholas Catinat

Plan of Turin

From a 1705 map (may include improvements added after 1690s)



A. Château
B. Palace
C. Citadel
D. Old Town
E. Capuchins
F. Queen's Villa

1690 Opening Moves

Had the Furies issued from Tartarus with their lighted torches, they could not have done worse than the soldiers, I will not say of Catinat, but of Louvois, did in Piedmont.

Botta

French preparations for war began as early as March, when Catinat arrived in the theatre. He travelled to Casale, to make pretence of reassuming the governorship, and opened negotiations with Turin from there. Typically for the French, there were at least three channels of communication available. First, the official one employing ambassadors and envoys, then, family relationships, in this case the *duc* d'Orleans who was King Louis' brother and the Duke of Savoy's father-in-law. Finally, there was the military. This one was optional, but Catinat was accounted a friend of Duke Victor. He was the stick to Versailles' carrot, but ironically, given the fact that Louvois was a bully and Catinat mild-mannered, mostly Versailles came off as the stick and Catinat the carrot.

The *Général* let Duke Victor know that he would be leading an army into Piedmont. The Duke could join forces with France, or stay neutral and let them pass. The alternative was destruction. The Duke temporized. At this point his deal with the Allies had been struck, but he was willing to hear what Versailles had to say. Langallerie, who was in personal attendance at this time, says he had the impression Duke Victor would have preferred to remain neutral, but that Leopold was twisting his arm.

One of the questions for historians is why Versailles kept forcing the issue. The solution goes something like this. First, the French were not all on the same page. King Louis waffled between counsels and after first deciding that Spain had to be attacked in the Milanese, had started taking advice from his Foreign Minister, Charles Colbert, the *marquis* de Croissy (brother of the more famous Grand Colbert), who counselled a soft approach toward Savoy.

[When Croissy died, in 1696, his son, Jean-Baptiste succeeded him in his post, and also received his uncle's title of marquis *de Torcy.]*

Louvois, Croissy's old boss, and now his rival, would have preferred a violent surprise attack, possibly to score off Croissy. Then, despite all those diplomatic channels, Catinat's own source of information was limited to direct communications with Louvois, and the impression *he* got was that the war was definitely on, and the sooner he attacked the better. But, Catinat's personal relationship with Duke Victor acted as a brake on his own actions, as did the fact that he had few troops available. This did not concern Louvois, who became abusive at the delay.

It was Louvois who instructed Catinat to make increasingly harsh demands. He intended to get, and did get, approval from King Louis *after the fact*, when he could justify himself by pointing to Duke Victor's 'insubordination', which of course had been brought about by his own baiting. Louvois 'worked' the King. Of course, the War Minister was sure in his own mind that this was just speeding up the inevitable. Recalling his days at Turin, Langallerie believes King Louis was given a further push toward war through the reports about a stream of Imperial and Dutch couriers passing through Turin at this time. Duke Victor was not going to be allowed to play the game Italian-style.

Victor Amadeus added to the confusion as his own attitude changed from a desire not to become involved to a desire to keep the French talking long enough for his allies to show up. And then Louvois was told by King Louis to slow down and give Duke Victor time to think. Meanwhile, M. de Rébenac, ambassador to Turin, was left scratching his head, since nothing in his instructions said anything about crushing the Piedmontese.

It was not until May that the ball got rolling, with the invasion timed for early June. Even then, the campaign remained political. On June 2, Victor Amadeus ordered the arrest of all French residents in his capital and the release of all remaining Vaudois prisoners. For King Louis, the signal could not have been clearer. He gave orders for *lieutenant général* St. Ruth (or Ruhe) to occupy Savoy and ordered *général* Catinat to invade Piedmont. On June 4 Victor Amadeus formally joined the Alliance. The news was not made public for another two weeks.

Though both sides had been cooperating in the war against the Barbets, both armies were still on a peacetime footing. Since the object on this front was always to force Victor Amadeus to 'see reason', *général* Catinat had strictly limited objectives, namely to continue the war against the Waldensians and to lay waste to as much of Piedmont as he could reach. This was not to Catinat's liking, but his only other option would have been to resign, which was unthinkable.

(During this campaign Catinat wrote to Louvois, "we ought to have mercy on the unfortunate inhabitants. What is to be done!", to which Louvois replied, "burn, devastate, and burn".)

These policies led to a significant battle, Staffarda, and to the storming of the town of Susa by the French, in order to secure a second base of operations opposite Turin. The final objective for this year was the occupation of Savoy, which was conducted without too much fuss by St. Ruth.

Facing Savoy, the *marquis* de Larré, standing in for St. Ruth, had only 10,000 militia and 4 mounted companies. Most of the militia were only anti-Huguenot paramilitaries; there was a single formal *milice* regiment. The first set of missives from Versailles were all concerned about the state of the fortresses and roads – this despite the fact that Catinat had been working in the region for many years. (The reason for this was that in previous wars

agains the Habsburgs, Savoy had been on the French side and had been left to manage such things herself.)

Fortunately, the duchy of Savoy had no units under arms at all. Larré's real stumbling block was an order from Louvois, of all people, not to engage in hostile acts while there was still hope of a negotiated settlement.

The French left off their anti-Vaudois campaign on June 10 and concentrated at Pinerolo. Catinat was somewhat surprised that Victor Amadeus wanted war. He was also concerned at reports of a Spanish corps on the march from the Milanese. His orders were to bring Duke Victor to battle, and to cause general devastation. The latter order should assist in achieving the former. However, the *Général* decided to wait for reinforcements before acting.

These amounted to 5,000 men, giving Catinat a total of 15,000, not counting the garrison of Casale (4 battalions and 1 regiment of dragoons). The garrison of Pinerolo absorbed 3,000 men, leaving the *Général* with 12,000 mobile troops. These marched north to Avigliana, at the mouth of the Val Susa, 22 Km west of Turin. Here Catinat asked for a liaison officer from Duke Victor. He still assumed the Duke would eventually cave in to King Louis' demands and told the officer, the *marchese* di Ferrero, that France wanted the Duke's best regiments to serve in Flanders. This would both weaken the Sabaudian army and give France hostages. He also handed over a list of French grievances.

Meanwhile, the Duke had to play for time until his allies could arrive. He agreed to Catinat's 'requests' in principle but countered with conditions he knew King Louis would not accept. Catinat, sensing this was just a ploy, marched out into the plain toward Turin, threatening a siege.

Duke Victor tried to delay the French advance by sending out the *abbé* Scaglia to negotiate, followed by his principal advisor, M. Saint-Thomas, who was empowered to offer the Po River fortress of Verrue. Catinat told the envoys King Louis wanted the citadel of Turin as well. Back the envoys went to Turin, and back again with an agreement, provided the citadel could be garrisoned by neutral troops, such as the Swiss or those of the Papal States.

[Verrue (Verrua Savoia) held a commanding position on the right bank of the Po about 30 Km downstream from Turin. The conti *di Verrue apparently went over to France so as to have an opportunity of fighting against his wife's lover, but the town he took his title from remained in Allied hands.]*

Annoyed at these delays, Catinat published a Declaration of War – he was empowered to do so – but did not continue his advance. Clearly, this was a political bid. Duke Victor did not reply, but wrote to his father-in-law, the *duc* d'Orléans, with 'reproaches' against King Louis.

Catinat, expecting the Duke to be properly chastened by now, reopened negotiations, but this time the reply was unequivocal:

"j'ai autant de témoins que vous avez de soldats, du désir où j'étais de conserver la paix: je vous offris les plus grands sacrifices : vos réponses m'ont prouvé quel est le seul parti qui me reste à prendre: je l'ai décidément embrassé."

"I have as many witnesses as you have soldiers of my desire to preserve peace: I have offered you the greatest sacrifices: your answers have shown to me the only course left me to take: I have decidedly embraced it."

[Andres Saluces, Histoire Militaire du Piémont. Vol. II. p.8]

The motivation of Victor Amadeus has been a matter of endless historical debate for every action, or even inaction, that he took, throughout the war. It seems pretty clear that in this case he truly was just playing for time. The treaty of alliance had already been signed, and was published on June 4. It was now June 16. This is not to say that he would not have given in if circumstances were just right, but when one considers he had pledged his word, AND he was seriously annoyed with France, AND the ball was already in motion, that chance was minimal.

Catinat made one more offer, publishing a new manifesto that stated France had no desire to make war on Piedmont and dropping the demand for the citadel in exchange for Verrue, Carmagnola, Susa, and Montmélian, to be left in French control for the duration of the war. The Duke of Savoy must allow free passage of French troops and supplies to the Milanese. Duke Victor must also persuade the Emperor to respect the neutrality of Italy while the French attacked Milán. (Yes, the reader has read it correctly – the Imperials must treat Italy as a neutral zone while the French beat up Spain.)

Duke Victor's response was to formally declare war. He resolved to attack as soon as the reinforcements promised by the Governor of the Milanese, Antonio López de Ayala y Velasco y Cardeñas, *conde* de Fuensalida, arrived. These consisted of about 8,000 Spanish troops under the *marqués* de Louvigny, who held the rank of *maestre de campo general* (i.e., general in command of the army). Thus it was that the Allies broke camp first, leaving Moncalieri (8 Km south of Turin) on the right bank of the Po, and marching toward Pinerolo.

[The Spanish are sometimes mistaken for the Imperials, who arrived later. The were committed to providing a corps of 9,000 foot and 3,000 horse yearly.]

Catinat now stepped off quickly, hoping to seize Carignano, 18 Km south of Turin. Taking this place would give him control of a crossing point on the Po River, which flows from south to north at that spot, right opposite the important town of Carmagnola. Control of the latter would give the French a base on the right bank of the Po, from which a hand could be extended to support Casale.

[Carmagnola also belonged to the province of Saluces, to which the French had an extremely vague claim. The bulk of the province lay west of Piedmont.]

However, this move halted the Allies' own march, at La Loggia, 4.5 Km south of Moncalieri on the left bank of the Po. Three of their battalions under the *marchese* di Parella were detached to augment the garrison of Carignano.

About July 8, the French overran a bridge guard that was covering the western road to Carignano, but Duke Victor sent up 2 battalions and followed with his whole army. The French retreated, ensconcing themselves in a camp at Lombriasco, 8 Km to the southwest.

The Duke of Savoy yearned for a battle, but the French would not oblige him this time. The Allies came up close, planning to initiate battle the next day. However, Louvigny, vastly more experienced than Duke Victor, dissuaded him from attacking. The French had all the advantages.

The failure at Carignano was a blow to Catinat's plans, but he did not feel strong enough to fight both the Sabaudians and the Spanish. Shortly, he moved to Orbassano (Orbassano), a march of 20 km to the northwest. Orbassano was only a day's slow march from Turin.

Also on July 8, a pro-French conspiracy was unmasked at the capital. The city only had 2 battalions of Guards to protect it. A man named Silvestre had begun a series of arsons to distract the troops so the gate of the citadel could be seized, but he and his conspirators were quickly arrested. Catinat's movements were probably timed to take advantage of this affair. Along their line of march the French laid the countryside to waste as part of Louvois' scorched earth policy.

Turin remained in a state of unease. M. de Rebenac was arrested for fomenting a new conspiracy and was sent to prison at Ivrea, north of Turin. All remaining French immigrants were rounded up and imprisoned or expelled. In reprisal, Versailles arrested the *marchese* di Dogliani and the *conti* di Provana, the Sabaudian representatives in Paris. At least that act got Rebenac released.

With the opposing forces in balance, the campaign devolved into a series of coursings by the French and guerrilla warfare by the Vaudois, who were now under the Duke of Savoy's orders, more or less. Catinat tried to contain the guerrillas, and continued exacting *contributions* and he meandered across the plains. *Contributions* had already been demanded from Carmagnola, 25 Km south of Turin, and even from the capital itself (1,200,000 livres).

From Orbassano. Catinat advanced to Beinasco, a short march of about 4 Km closer to Turin. The Allies marched to nearby Mirafiori, just to the east.

The French retreated to None, and then to Bibiana, a cautious march 10 Km south to break contact, then 24 Km more in a southwesterly direction to the foot of the mountains. Bibiana is at the mouth of the Val Luserna, and Catinat had planned a full scale assault against the Vaudois, who were threatening his lines of communication.

Catinat sent 400 men to occupy Fort St. Michel, outside the Vaudois 'capital' of Luserna, 11 Km south of Pinerolo and 20 km west of Villafranca. Holding this position would act as a check on Vaudois movements. Duke Victor, wanting to catch up with the French and also make a demonstration showing support for his former enemies, followed Catinat at a distance but sent Colonel Loche's battalion, a newly arrived Huguenot unit, to aid the Vaudois by storming the fort.

They were preempted by *maréchal de camp* Feuquières, who attacked Luserna with 1,200 men. Loche and the Vaudois under their leader Arnaud in turn attacked the French on front and flank, routing them. Feuquières suffered 50% casualties and was chased all the way to Bricherasio, 5 Km to the northeast.

[In some accounts, Loche's battalion was encountered separately and defeated, but this does not seem to have been the case.]

Meanwhile, the Duke's cousin, Prince Eugene of Savoy, was on his way back from Vienna with 4,000 Imperial soldiers, veterans of the Turkish war, led by General Carafa. From his camp at a place called Carpento, Victor Amadeus concentrated his standing army, called out the royal militia, and even summoned his vassals.

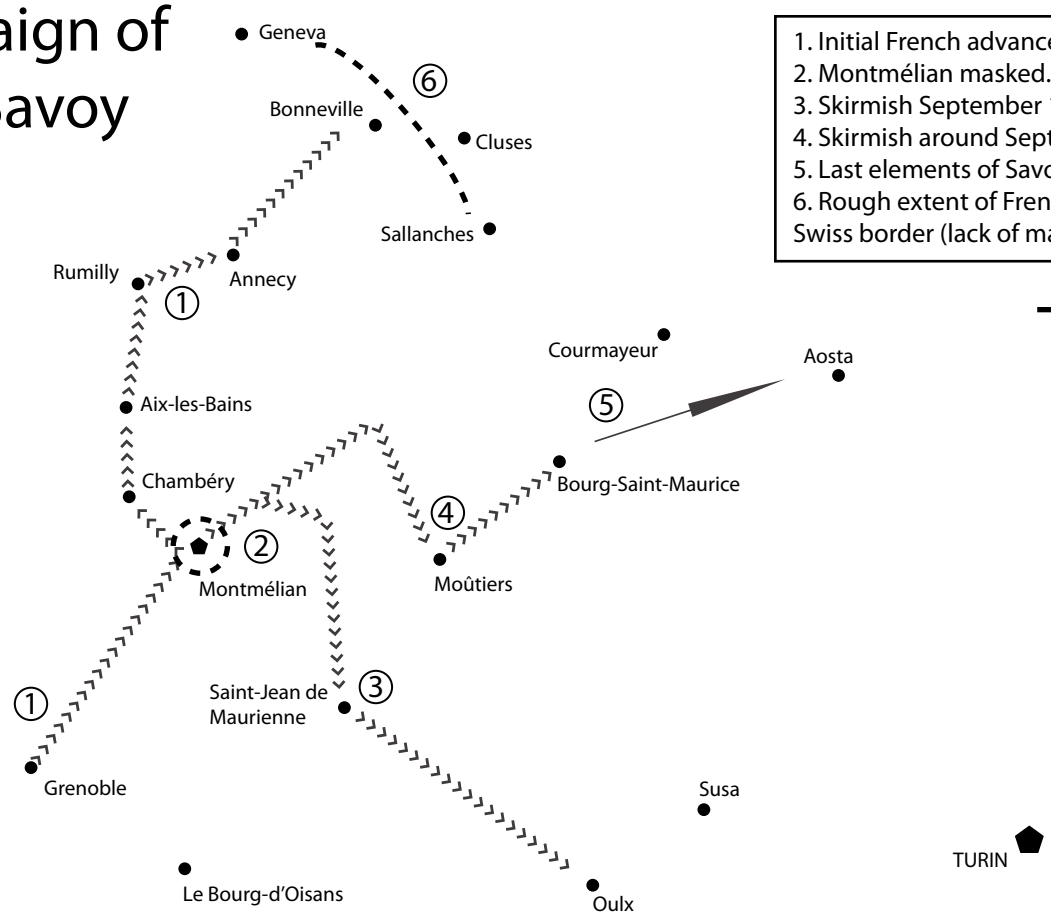
Arming the peasantry, no matter how enthusiastic, was not practical, but the Duke managed to form two new regiments of horse. The common people were told to keep themselves in a state of readiness but otherwise to go about their business. This allowed the authorities to raise considerable numbers of local talent throughout the war, as circumstances dictated.

News of the French defeat at Luserna encouraged Duke Victor, who was following Catinat at a distance. 600 casualties was a significant number. News of the enemy's next move hastened his march.

The French army was reinforced to 15,000 men. This allowed Catinat to march out onto the plain again and attack the town of Cavour, 11 Km south of Pinerolo. On the way he ran into bands of militia which he pushed aside. The town was invested on August 2. The mix of Vaudois and Mondoví militia that garrisoned the town refused to surrender. After a few hours of bombardment a breach was created and the French stormed in, sacking the place. They took the citadel only moments before Parella, once the Vaudois' hated foe and now their official commander and liaison, arrived with reinforcements.

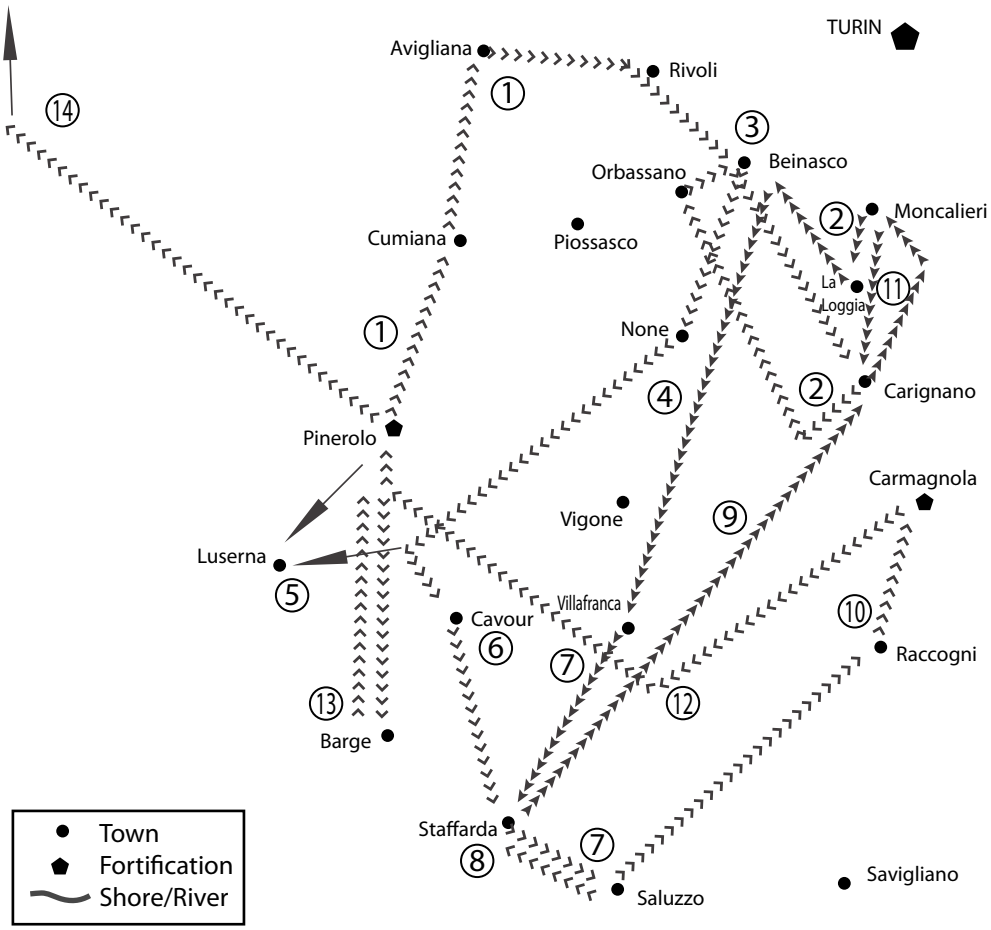
Duke Victor marched to the relief of Cavour, but halted at Villafranca, 35 Km south of Turin, upon news of its fall.

Campaign of 1690 Savoy



1. Initial French advance.
2. Montmélian masked.
3. Skirmish September 12; road to Oulx cleared.
4. Skirmish around September 18.
5. Last elements of Savoyards flee to Aosta.
6. Rough extent of French control toward Swiss border (lack of manpower).

Campaign of 1690 Piedmont



1. French approach Turin; march on Carmagnola.
2. Allied march to Pinerolo is halted at La Loggia but French are deterred.
3. French threaten Turin; Allies counter.
4. French march south; Allies follow.
5. Various anti-partisan operations in Val Luserna. (3 major operations over course of campaigning season).
6. French take Cavour; march on Saluzzo.
7. Allies march to relieve Saluzzo & cut French LoC.
8. Battle of Staffarda August 18.
9. Allied army retreats to Moncalieri.
10. French take Saluzzo; march on Carmagnola.
11. Allied counter march; French desist after 40 day standoff..
12. French march for Pinerolo late in the season.
13. March & counter march to Barge, plus 3rd anti-P operation.
14. French head for winter quarters but break off to take Susa.

Town
Fortification
Shore/River

The armies were only 10 Km apart and watched each other warily.

Young and impetuous, the Duke wanted to take on Catinat and throw the French completely out of Piedmont. The fight at Luserna led him to believe the French were poorly motivated and badly led. His cousin Eugene tried to dissuade him in vain. All the latter could do was send courier after courier to the Imperial contingent, beseeching it to hurry.

The situation was made worse because the Spanish had orders not to start a general engagement against the French unless the Milanese was directly threatened. They were only prepared to fight on the defensive. Eugene grasped this fact, and wrote to Vienna,

"Without our troops, little can be accomplished. The Spaniards will not fight with any heart unless the army corps of the Emperor is on the spot to give them the impetus they require."

[Quoted in Malleson, p. 30. This opinion was universally held by the German generals and their men. Others had more faith.]

Catinat, now holding direct orders from his king to seek an engagement, was happy to oblige the enemy. Good news came from Flanders in early August. The French had won two great battles, one at Fleurus in Belgium and the other in the Channel. Duke Victor would be receiving no further reinforcements this year. However, the Allied camp at Villafranca was just too strong to be attacked. Duke Victor must be lured out.

So, the *Général* broke camp and headed for Saluzzo, 18 Km to the southwest of Cavour. If he had to make a diversion it might as well have some practical benefit, and Saluzzo was a) a major Allied supply dump, and b) well situated to become a French supply dump. His subordinates, particularly *maréchal de camp* Feuquières, did not appreciate the subtleties of Catinat's moves and demanded immediate battle. Not for the last time.

Saluzzo was guarded by 3-5,000 men, mostly Vaudois and militia, but including 2 regular battalions of Piedmontese, under the *marchese* di Marignano. Feuquières was given command of the operation and decided to use one of the 2 infantry brigades available, that of the *marquis* de Grancé's. The army was camped on the left bank of the Po, with the town a little distance away on the right bank. Leaving the heavy guns and baggage behind, Feuquières crossed the river with only Grancé's men.

The key to the town was a ridge that descends from the mountains southwest of the town. It was heavily defended, and to make matters worse, liberally sown with vineyards. Nevertheless the French stormed it with 3 battalions. The fight lasted 2 hours and casualties were heavy. Meanwhile, 3 more French battalions occupied the faubourg – that is, the trade and manufacturing suburb outside of the town proper. The enemy had not demolished any of the buildings and the French were able to obtain cover within 30 meters of the walls. Catinat and Feuquières began examining their gains for the best place to begin mining.

[Usually, French infantry brigades had 4-5 battalions each, but Grancé's had 9 battalions. In some OOBs it is listed as 2 brigades.]

At this point, a French cavalry screen that Catinat had deployed to the north – 400 men under brigadier M. de Montgommery – reported the approach of Duke Victor. The latter, stung to action, had broken camp and come south, reaching a place called Staffarda, 9 Km from Saluzzo, on August 17.

When their presence was reported, the Allies were crossing a left-bank tributary of the Po called the Torrente Giandone, which joins with the river about 2 Km north of Staffarda; the ford they were using was 800 meters northwest of Staffarda.

Catinat rode over to watch them, but he could not be sure whether this was their whole army since the sector was a narrow one, with limited visibility. He played safe, however, and after recalling his besieging troops and securing his baggage, deployed in the traditional two lines, plus a reserve, facing the enemy. These evolutions took until midnight to complete. Meanwhile, the Allies completed their crossing and made their own dispositions.

Staffarda, 18 August 1690

"Je ne vous demande pas combien ils sont, mais où ils sont."

[I did not ask how many they are, but where they are.]

Catinat's words on being told the enemy outnumbered him.

For some reason, possibly related to the non-presence of King Louis, the Italian campaigns have never received attention similar to that of the Flanders campaigns, and both of the major battles that took place during the war in Italy have been narrated in various, often contradictory ways; neither are there any suitable maps to work with.

With some trepidation, therefore, the reader is referred to the attached map. Much of the terrain and army dispositions on this map are a matter of interpretation and guesswork by this author. However, the map is to scale, based on US Army survey maps from WWII (the earliest accurate maps that could be found). Fortunately, the area has not been developed much since then, so it can be assumed that apart from the draining of swamps and the removal of trees, not much has changed since the 1690s.

Staffarda is just a large Cistercian monastery, without any associated town or village. On the night of August 17 it was Duke Victor's HQ. The Duke's army faced roughly south, the French north. The Allies' position was bounded on the north and northwest by the Giandone and on the east by the Po, which is occasionally described as 'an old branch', presumably implying a lesser, sluggish stream.

There may have been more trees than shown, because some accounts speak of Catinat not being able to observe properly, but those comments may refer only to his initial observation the evening before the battle. There may have been less marsh than shown; the extent of the marshes has been estimated by looking at the location of drainage ditches, the paths of rivulets, and their springs. The rivers were high, and the ground was flooded – the marshes were one of the key terrain features in the battle, initially deemed impenetrable. In some accounts, even the woods are described as boggy. In one source, marsh covers the center of the battlefield as well.

Naturally the Po and the Giandone were key features, but there were three more. First, a set of 3 (or more in some accounts) *cassines*. A *cassine* is a detached house. The buildings that fall into that category on this map are mostly farm compounds. On modern maps they are walled, but in the 1690s they were surrounded by quickset hedges (formed by the intertwining of plants and wooden supports). If the reader examines the map he will see far more than three buildings. It cannot be determined if all were present at the time; none appear to be 'recent' in origin. The location of the key *cassines* is given in various accounts by four statements which do not precisely match: 1) they were on the Allied Right, 2) they lined the bank of the Torrente Giandone, 3) they were on the fringe of the Giandone morass, 4) one of them was a 'grand *cassine*'. From these statements, the Allied Right has been shown defending the big *cassine* in the center-right, plus 2 more along the Giandone which are of substantial size. The rearmost is actually called the Cassinetta di Staffarda.

The second feature was a pair of disused dykes. In some accounts this is a single dyke. The survey map shows numerous drainage ditches and sunken rivulets – the rivulets shown on the attached map all have banks, making them 'official' obstacles. However, there are four statements given in the sources regarding the dykes: 1) they were on the Allied Right, 2) one was in front of the other, 3) they were (or it was) between the main body of the Allied army and the *cassines*, but also protected the *cassines*, 4) one of them could have been used to provide a position from which to direct flanking fire onto the French advance. Taking all these points into consideration, the most likely pair of ditches are the ones shown (marked #16 on the map).

The last feature to be described was man-made. In the Center of the Allied line, where the ground was firm, they constructed *chevaux-de-frise* to inhibit a cavalry charge. In some accounts, these obstacles are associated with the (singular) dyke just described – that is, instead of it being just on the right it is supposed to run across the center as well. From the WWII survey map, no such ditch exists. Perhaps the Allies dug one. Or, perhaps the *chevaux-de-frise* were extended to the right. Or, perhaps the source is wrong.

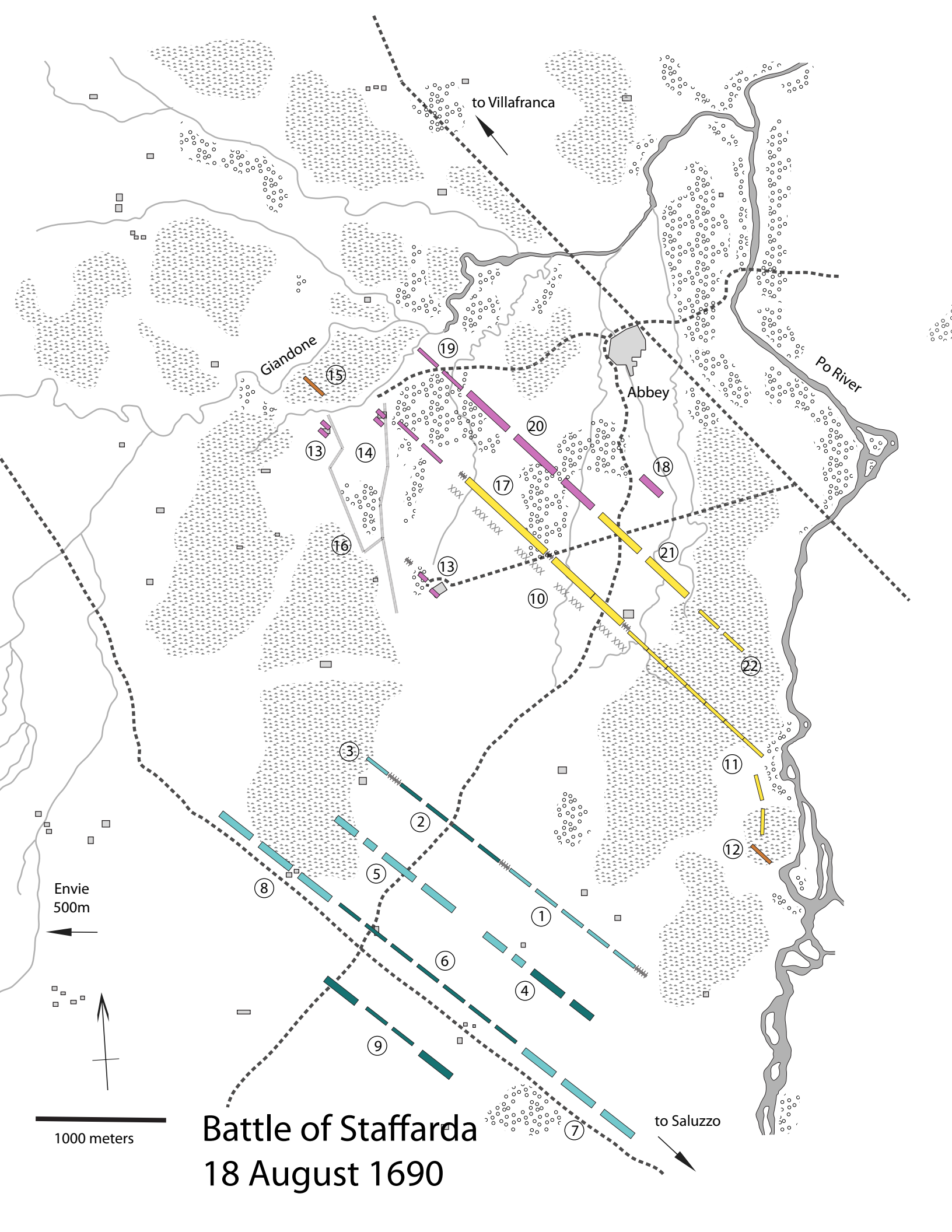
The Abbey, incidentally, was NOT a key feature in the battle. Many battle maps erroneously show the Allies drawn up beside it. Apart from the fact that the army's frontage will not permit such a deployment, the sources clearly state it was behind the Allied army. After the battle, the Abbey was sacked. Most sources skip over this event, but the Abbey's own records do not. Some of the men on the Allied side sought sanctuary there.

With regard to the depiction of the armies on the attached map, the thin blocks are infantry battalions and the thicker blocks are cavalry formations. Artillery symbols are individual field guns; regimental pieces are not marked. The French had advanced to the stage of being able to manoeuvre their cannon during a battle, so their starting positions are only roughly known. Grand batteries were not a feature of this period. Using field guns as mobile fire support was considered a major innovation that contributed to French victory in both the battles they fought in Italy.

The units depicted on the map are to scale, using standard frontages for battalions and squadrons. A textbook battalion had a frontage of 200 meters, and a squadron double that. Intervals for battalions were 50 meters and for squadrons 80 meters. This assumes regulations depths of 5 ranks for the Foot and 3 ranks for the Horse. In the absence of concrete information it is assumed that gaps between brigades are the same. Artillery batteries was spread more widely in this period and the standard seems to be about 2 meters for the gun with an interval of 20 meters between pieces, though apparently this could be as close as 12 meters. Depth (for limbers and caissons, if the guns had them) might be 50 meters.

There is controversy over whether a checkerboard formation was used – that is, making the battalion intervals wide enough for the second line units to pass through, as in Roman times. For this period it seems the trend was to cut the gaps down, though the first and second lines were still arranged in checkerboard fashion. Some commanders advocated no gaps at all. The Allied Left has been drawn in this manner, because the Spanish were described as being deployed '*en haye*'. This term usually applies to cavalry drawn up in a very thin line of 1-2 ranks. Given the cramped nature of the ground, there was little need to spread out – unless the units were much weakened, which is entirely possible – while squeezing together may have been a necessity. Perhaps the French just received an '*en haye*' impression because the gaps between the units were removed. Obviously, units that were severely understrength would have shorter frontages, but units that were only moderately understrength would typically hold the same frontage but have fewer ranks.

The length of each cavalry block indicates the number of squadrons involved. As an example, the shortest blocks, on the French side, are one squadron in size. None of the


to Villafranca
Giandone
Abbey
Po River
Envie
500m
1000 meters
to Saluzzo
Battle of Staffarda
18 August 1690

sources tell whether the cavalry regiments were drawn up with their squadrons in line or in echelon. Once source does describe 'multiple' Allied lines (i.e., more than two), and deploying in echelon takes up less frontage. Tactically, the emphasis was on the squadron rather than the regiment; a squadron was the mounted equivalent of a battalion. So, although battle diagrams often show formations arranged by regiment, it would be entirely possible to create a cavalry brigade a uniform number of squadrons wide-by-squadrons deep by mixing large and small regiments.

The colours used on the battle maps in this commentary represent the Allied contingent: yellow is Spanish, purple is Sabaudian, grey is Imperial, orange is Huguenot and Vaudois (in this case, unspecified militia), dark blue is Bavarian, and light blue is Württemburg (Württemburg regiments in Austrian service are grey). Imperial and German forces were not present in this battle. The Bavarian *Arco Cuirassiers* are sometimes shown on maps, but no contract was signed with Bavaria for troops until June of 1691.

The French are organised into brigades. The Allies were also, but all the emphasis in the sources is on nationality, not brigade. On the maps, French brigades are distinguished by alternating light and dark blue. Technically, the first line of French Foot on the Staffarda map are all Grancé's brigade, but in the battle, it was split up as shown.

The Allied order of battle is difficult to determine, as the page in the best source, de Quincy, has been obliterated (at least in the online versions). The actual units are known from several sources, but their arrangement is debatable. There are three choices: 1) their mounted troops were in the center and their Foot on the wings (because of the nature of the ground), 2) a standard cavalry-infantry-cavalry arrangement with the addition of infantry on the extremities, 3) the infantry extended across the front and the cavalry was deployed behind. The weight of evidence is on the first choice, with the possibility that the cramped ground forced the Allies to deploy in more than 2 lines. (as the attached map shows, however, that is really not a necessity).

Below are listed the forces at Duke Victor's disposal. The **bold** numerals correspond to the numerals on the map. It must be stated again that the positions of the armies are only estimates, based on the terrain (which is also estimated) and text-book unit frontages. No accurate representations from the period could be found.

CO: Victor II Amadeus of Savoy
Prince Eugene of Savoy

1st Line

Sabaudian: *marchese* di Parella

Foot (1 bn each) (**13** & **14**):

Guardie
Croce Bianca
Piemonte
Savoia
Saluzzo

Plus an unspecified number of Vaudois (**12** & **15**)

Spanish: General Louvigny

Cavalry **(17)**

Cavalleria dello Stato di Miláno (c20 cys heavy cavalry)
Cavalleria straniera dello Stato di Miláno (8-9 cys)
Cavalleria napoletana (6-8 cys)

Spanish tercios (1 bn each) **(11)**:

Lombardia
Savoya
Mar de Napoles
Duque de San Pedro (Spinola's).

Italian tercios(1 bn each) **(11)**:

Benedetto Alì
Bonesana
Porlezza
Dentici
Marco Antonio Colonna

2nd Line

Sabaudian:

Foot (1 bn each) (**19**)

Mondovì
Fucilieri

Cavalry **(20)**:

Genti d'armi (10 cys)
Dragoni di Sua Altezza Reale (Dragoni rossi) (3 sqns)
Dragoni del Genevois (Dragoni verdi) (3 sqns)

Spanish:

Cavalry **(21)**:

Dragoni dello Stato di Miláno (8-12 cys)
Cavalleria dello Stato di Miláno (c10 cys)

German regiments (1 bn each) **(22)**:

Michele Ulbin
Simon Enriquez de Cabrera

[As a rule of thumb, assume 2 companies per squadron.]

Reserve

Guardie del Corpo (4 cys) **(18)**

Artillery

12 pieces. 3 guns on the Left between the Foot and Horse. 3 guns defending the *cassines*. 6 guns in the Center.

Most sources agree the Sabaudians had the Right flank and the Spanish the Left. (Which did not please the proud Spaniards, but they were regarded as Auxiliaries.) Sometimes, the two nations are described in mixed formation. The *cassines* were occupied by 2 regular battalions, with 3 more, plus some irregulars, in support – essentially the whole Sabaudian first line Foot, with regiments *Guardie* and *Croce Bianca* in front. On the map these positions are labelled #13 and #14. Because of the position of the *cassines*, the rearmost building has been depicted as occupied by one of the support battalions, which seems reasonable.

On the map, the very large *cassine* has been occupied. It has not been proven that the place actually existed in 1690, but there does not seem to be another choice, unless one of the tiny buildings farther up the Giandone was the third location. The auxiliary (orange) troops at #15 were most likely in the marsh covering the extreme right. There is no information about these troops, except that they were present.

It should be noted that a common tactic with musket and pike regiments was to detach the musketeers from the pikes and send them forward, especially on battlefields where there was plenty of cover. If this was done, then the Right of the Allied Foot could be depicted in line with the main body, with only the musketeers among the *cassines*. Palisades were erected to protect the advanced troops, which further suggests that the pikemen were absent (unless 'palisades' is a reference to the quickset hedges).

Behind the two ditches on the Right (#16 on the map), which were significant obstacles, were three cannon. Again, there is no indication of the exact position, but given that the French were not expected to advance through the marshes, and given the Allies were faulted for not enfilading the French, they were probably near to the large, or 'grand' *cassine*, more or less protected by the ditch. What the Allies did NOT do, was line the ditches with musketeers to take the French in enfilade. it is assumed that, at the time, the Allied commanders were unaware of the ditches' value.

The Spanish Foot (#11) are anchored on the Po. In some accounts 2 battalions were in an advanced position near the riverbank, the common tactic of a 'forlorn hope'. Such a position was often taken up by dragoons, but the Spanish dragoons appear to have been part of the main line, guarding the three cannon shown on that flank. The forlorn hope, if there was one, may have been all or partly militia, and a unit of Vaudois has been placed in this spot on the map (#12).

The main line, however it was arranged, was covered by a line of *chevaux-de-frise* (#10).

The remaining 6 pieces of artillery were probably concentrated in the Center, but may have been distributed in pairs or triples across the front.

By the book, the Allied second line would have been about 300 paces (or 200 meters) behind the first line. The Allies are not supposed to have had a Reserve, but the Duke's mounted Guards are shown in such a position (#18) for two reasons: 1) the Duke's HQ was at the Abbey, and in this battle he is not described in the thick of the action, as would be the case at Orbassano; 2) the Guard served as the Rearguard during the retreat, so it was likely fresh. The alternative position assigned to it is in the first line, on the right of the cavalry, at a spot where it has little manoeuvre room.

The French order of battle, which is much better documented, was as follows. Again, the **bold** numerals correspond to the numerals on the map. The overall location of the French is based upon a) the fact that for the siege of Saluzzo their army was employing the Saluzzo Road; in fact, their camp was probably pretty close to the crossroads shown on the map, and they have been orientated to line up with the Allied army, a position which seems to correspond to the terrain as well.

CO: *Général* Catinat
Général d'Artillerie M. Dandigne (alternatively, de Cray)

1st Line

Right Wing: *márechal de camp* Quinçon **(4)**

Pelleport's (Belport's) Brigade
Cavalerie Régiment Pelleport (2 sqns)
Dragon Régiment Grammont (3 sqns)

Fimarcon's Brigade
Cavalerie Régiment Léry-Girardin (1 sqn)
Dragon Régiment Fimarcon (2 sqns)

According to more than one account the cavalry wings were folded behind the infantry because of the lack of firm ground to ride on. In fact, most of the cavalry did nothing during the battle.

Center: *márechal de camp* Feuquières

Grancé's Brigade (**1** & **2**)
Régiment Grancé (1 bn) (1R)
Régiment Bourbon (1 bn) (2R)
Régiment Perigord (1 bn) (3R)
Milice Régiment La Garde (1 bn) (4R)
Régiment Hainault (1 bn) (5R)
Régiment Cambresis (1 bn) (1L)
Régiment Robecq (1 bn) (2L)
Régiment Flandre (1 bn) (3L)
Régiment Artois (1 bn) (4L)

In some of the written OOBs this brigade is split in half, and this was indeed the case on the day of battle, with Brigadier Grancé taking the Right and the Prince de Robecq the Left. The regiments have been marked '#R' 'or #L' to indicate their position, from right to left. The battalions on the Right are in exact sequence; those on the Left are estimated.

Left Wing: *márechal de camp* Saint-Silvestre

Montgommery's Brigade **(5)**
Dragon Régiment Mestre de Camp (3 sqns) ‡
Cavalerie Régiment Servon (3 sqns)
Dragon Régiment Fimarcon (1 sqn)
Cavalerie Régiment Montgommery (2 sqns)

‡ This regiment is reported fighting on the Right, and in fact was the only regiment initially able to support the Foot on that flank. Because Catinat split Grancé's Brigade to attack the enemy wings, a gap formed in the Center, so that *Mestre de Camp* would have had little difficulty moving forward on a diagonal line to support the French Right, and was the regiment best placed to do so.

2nd Line

Chastelet's Brigade **(7)**
Cavalerie Régiment Souvré (Soastre) (3 sqns)
Dragon Régiment Catinat (3 sqns)
Cavalerie Régiment du Chastelet (3 sqns)

Du Plessis-Belliere's Brigade **(6)**
Régiment La Sarre (1 bn)
Régiment Clerambault (1 bn)
Milice Régiment Coutenges (Conteage) (1 bn)
Milice Régiment Poudens (1 bn)
Milice Régiment Boissière-Dufort (Aligny) (1 bn) ‡
Régiment Vexin (1 bn)
Régiment Du Plessis (1 bn)

‡ Note that there is another *Aligny* regiment attached to the Artillery; this was the *comte* d'Aligny's unofficial '2nd battalion'. This officer took command of *Boissière-Dufort* due to its colonel being captured earlier in the campaign.

La Lande's Brigade **(8)**
Dragon Régiment La Lande (3 sqns)
Cavalerie Régiment Saint-Mauris (3 sqns)
Dragon Régiment Languedoc (3 sqns)

Reserve (Brigadier Auxillion or Doxillon) **(9)**
Dragon Régiment Auxillion (2e Languedoc) (3 sqns) ‡
Milice Régiment Dulac (1 bn)
Milice Régiment Quinson (Kuesson) (1 Bn)
Cavalerie Régiment Josfreville (3 sqns)

‡ In de Quincy's OOB this unit is listed as a Foot regiment of 3 battalions named Doxillon. No such unit existed. The Auxillion Dragoons are reported in other OOBs, with 3 squadrons.

On the map, the Second Line cavalry have been shown in their text-book positions on the flanks of the infantry. There was room to deploy in that manner, but they may have copied the First Line.

Artillery:

14 or 16 cannon
Milice Régiment Aligny (listed as 'Batigny') **(3)**
1 company of Fusiliers. **(3)**

The infantry component of the Artillery may have been deployed where shown, or been split up as labour among the batteries. Certainly they were available to move all the guns to a concentrated spot during the battle.

The Battle

Early on August 18 the French heard a great commotion in the Allied camp, including much firing, but it was impossible to determine what was going on. So, a reconnaissance party went forward, including Catinat and his senior commanders. After only 15 minutes, they located the enemy front line. However, a cavalry screen prevented closer examination (the Allied infantry were fortifying themselves and needed protection). The *Général* then ordered a reconnaissance in force, dispatching Brigadier Montgommery with 10 squadrons of the cavalry of his Right to chase away the screen and investigate. In this way, Catinat learned he was facing the entire Allied army. The assessment was confirmed by the capture of a prisoner. This was a stiffer prospect than trouncing a mere detachment. Nevertheless, he was still determined to attack.

At 11am, Catinat gave the signal for a general advance and his artillery opened up. With the Allies responding and the French closing to musket range, D'Aligny writes, 'never was such a great fire heard'. On the French Right, the Spanish battalions *en haye* among the marshes were revealed. D'Aligny says that, "When this first line came into the hands of the Spaniards, who were at the front of the enemy, and who were very favourably posted, it took all the vigour of our battalions to sustain so great a fire."

Catinat ordered two battalions (*Grancé & Bourbon*) to clear the marshes on his extreme right. Two other battalions (*Perigord* and *La Garde*) followed in support slightly to the left, leaving a single battalion (*Hainault*) covering in the Center. Most of the cavalry was withheld, but assistance was provided by the *Mestre de Camp* Dragoons.

The French Right succeeded in clearing the marsh after a long and very stiff fight, reaching the enemy gun line and the Spanish dragoons that were covering it, and even taking the guns when the dragoons ran away, but at that point the assault stalled due to the constricted nature of the ground and heavy Allied fire. Probably, some of the Spanish infantry on that side had refused their flank rather than have it turned.

[In some accounts the whole of the Spanish Horse flee enmasse, which if true would have opened up a tremendous hole in the line, which does not seem to have appeared at this

time. Likely, it was just the dragoons, amounting to perhaps 3 squadrons. The flight is said to have surprised contemporaries, who expected better from them, but the dragoons were a newish unit.]

Simultaneously, the French Left prepared to assault the *cassines*. The fight here was even fiercer. The French assaulted at three points simultaneously but took withering fire until Catinat ordered up all his artillery. He placed 6 guns in a clearing on the left of the *cassines* and 8 more on the right, creating a crossfire. After two and a half hours, the French had secured two of the houses but the remainder were still being covered by heavy fire from the Allied main line.

The Prince de Robecq is named as the leader of the fight here, under Saint-Silvestre, which suggests his 'demi-brigade' led the assault. However, in most accounts the dragoons of the Left made the first assault but were counterattacked and thrown out. Andre Saluces asserts Saint-Silvestre sent the dragoons in prior to the general advance; they were thrown back, and this attack by the Foot was thus the second attempt. If so, Robecq's brigade may have been in a more central position initially. There are reports of the French Center, small as it must have been, removing the *chevaux-de-frise* during the initial probes.

[Saint-Silvestre was reputedly 'a very brave and very intelligent man' who had served under Turenne.]

While Robecq made his assault, Saint-Silvestre, accompanied at this point by Catinat, noticed that the gap between the defenders among the *cassines* and the Allied main line was a wide one. As many as 10 squadrons of cavalry were inserted into this gap to isolate the defenders, at which point the latter fell back, yielding the two buildings, but only temporarily. A fresh counterattack using battalions from the Allied second line forced the French out once more. The Allied reinforcements returned to their original positions, but were exhausted and depleted.

From the look of the map, it would appear the first attacks were thus made on the 'grand *cassine*', after which the French passed either west or east of it along the line of the ditch to cut off the other buildings. If it is true that *all* the Spanish cavalry had fled around this time, this would both make the job of removing obstacles easier and open up a very large gap for the 10 squadrons to use.

By this point in the battle the French were visibly flagging. D'Aligny writes that without the aid of their second line, they would have been beaten. And so, Catinat called it up. There were some delays because of the need to pass through the remaining cavalry of the First Line, and to negotiate a series of hedges and ditches (not shown on the map). The *Général* sent an aide to Plessis-Belliere asking him to hurry. Plessis-Belliere replied to the effect that he had no intention of arriving in disorder, and if the men of the First Line could not stand a little drubbing, then why were they in front?

[D'Aligny states that Plessis-Belliere was an excellent officer, and his objection was sound, since at the moment he received the aide de camp the second line was trying to negotiate a thick hedge.]

With difficulty the French resisted until their second line could arrive. Catinat, moving to his hard pressed Right, placed himself in the forefront, within pistol shot of the enemy line. As he passed the Intendant of the army, who was having a picnic lunch, he called out, "Adieu, Monsieur Bochu, adieu, je m'en vais battre Son Altesse Royale" ("Farewell, Monsieur Bochu, farewell, I am going to beat his Royal Highness"). Apparently the Intendant was one of those men who require constant reassurance that all is well.

The *Général* had his horse shot from under him, was bruised in the arm by a spent musket ball, and later shook out two more from his clothes. At one point he dismounted to personally lead units that were faltering back to their positions. Fighting raged for another hour. The French infantry is reported to have charged repeatedly, battalions rallying quickly each time they were repulsed and coming on again, heedless of losses.

About this time the most famous incident of the battle took place (though not recorded in every account), in which a body of French dragoons made an encircling movement on the Allied Left, wading through the marshes, rapidly remounting, and charging the Allied flank between their first and second lines. The attack was led by the *marquis* de Grancé (which argues it had infantry support). As he rode off to lead this attack he jested, probably to Catinat, "Je vais bien voir si je suis aimé" (I'll see if i'm loved). Grancé's groom was killed as he handed his master the reins when they remounted

Catinat, having camped in the vicinity longer than Duke Victor, was not deceived into thinking the marshes were too deep to be crossed, and may have planned the manoeuvre in advance, though it seems to have been a *coup d'oeil*.

Some forces were available in the Allied Second Line to counterattack, but not enough, and the flank crumpled as one regiment after another was sent reeling into the next. Seeing this success, Catinat gave the signal for a final general assault.

[In some accounts it is not clear which flank this movement takes place on. Some hint it takes place on the French Left, along the Giandone. But the ground on the French Right is more in keeping with the narrative, since they waded through the marsh to clear ground; there are woods and buildings on the other flank. Furthermore, it was led by Grancé, who was on the Right. Finally, the Sabaudians were still in play at the end of the battle, while the Spanish were retreating.]

Anticipating the success of this envelopment Catinat split the forces of his Second Line to envelop the enemy. The

régiment La Sarre moved to support that of *Perigord* on the Right, *Clerambault* made another assault on the Great Cassine, and *Plessis* went to the support of Artois, also on the Left. Though not stated anywhere, the cavalry probably filled the center, which had been at least partially cleared of obstacles. If it could not charge it could at least hold the line.

Momentum built. The French Second Line surged forward onto the solid ground cleared by the dragoons' charge, *Hainault*, *Grancé*, and *Bourbon* assaulting the remaining Spanish infantry and cavalry with bayonet and sword. Then, on the Left all the *cassines* were secured – in some cases the defenders had to be burned out – and the Sabaudians holding the buildings retreated in confusion.

D'Aligny writes that once the Spanish were routed, Prince Eugene looked at the battalions of the French Second Line advancing in good order and told Duke Victor it was time to leave. "Withdraw, Monsieur." But, he then goes on to relate that the French Second Line did have to fight, his own regiment suffering 70 losses in the last charge.

The Spanish were leaving the field, but not altogether. Bands of them took cover in the woods and marshes on the flanks and behind the Abbey. The Sabaudians had managed to reform after being evicted from the *cassines*, and held on for a time because they had been reinforced by the remainder of their second line, but once the men became tired no relief was available. They cannot have delayed too long, because the French were quickly encircling them. The retreat was ordered about 3pm. The battle had lasted 4 gruelling hours, perhaps 6 hours if the French approach and the retreat are included.

Generally speaking, the retreat was conducted in good order. Prince Eugene used his own regiment of dragoons and the Piedmontese Horse Guards as a rearguard, aided by the detachments of infantry who had rallied in the woods along the bank of the Po. No effective pursuit was possible. D'Aligny mentions that Saint-Silvestre found ways for the French Cavalry, which according to him had done little so far – he does not mention the flank attack described below – to weave its way through the marshes and the French infantry to chase down stragglers. According to de Quincy, the Allies were able to take advantage of the woods and marshes to turn and conduct harassing fire, and the French infantry could not clear these obstacles, or indeed simply make enough room on the field, fast enough for the cavalry to be brought forward. The Allies were thus able to cross the Po and reach safety.

Some accounts state that much of the French cavalry was detached to make a long detour, arriving back on the battlefield only as the Allies began their retreat. If this is correct it is likely the cavalry on the Left that were forced to circle the marshes on that side and perhaps could not find a way through. De Quincy makes no mention of such a flank march. It is possible this is a confused account of the dragoons' attack through the marshes.

In many of the accounts, the Spanish are said to have run away entirely, leaving the Sabaudians in the lurch. But a closer reading suggests that while some of the Spanish cavalry fled, particularly the dragoons, who were a raw unit, their infantry fought hard until outflanked. The Sabaudians are variously described as either maintaining their order or collapsing in chaos. The truth is probably a similar story to the Spanish: some units collapsed and others maintained cohesion. The only thing that can be said for sure is that the Duke's army was badly pummelled.

The French had beaten an opponent who had the advantage of both ground and numbers, but it had been a hard fight. Duke Victor did not give up easily, and during the best part of the day it had seemed as if his men would wear the French down to the point where they could be counterattacked. Victory came down to the comparative experience of the soldiers in the opposing armies.

The French employed two notable tactics that would become a feature of their 'way of war'. First, they attacked with the bayonet without wasting time on musketry duels. Second, they were able to move their artillery rapidly and redeploy it where it was needed as the battle unfolded (Catinat left his heavy guns in camp). They had not quite reached the stage of grand batteries, but did deploy the pieces in such a manner that they achieved concentration of fire.

Losses are debatable. Figures cited include 1,500-2,000 French against 1,000 Allied casualties and 1,500 prisoners, or 4,000 Allied casualties and 1,200 prisoners against 1,000 French losses (300 killed and 7-800 wounded. Lynn gives 2,800 Allied casualties and also 1,200 prisoners, making 4,000 in all. Many soldiers are said to have drowned while trying to cross the Po.

On the Allied side, 12 colonels and lieutenant colonels, and 60 other Allied officers were taken. The Spanish commander, the *marqués* of Louvigny, was wounded (perhaps this had something to do with the collapse of Spanish morale) and the son of the Viceroy of Naples was killed. The most notable Sabaudian loss was the *marchese* di Beüil, colonel of the Guards. The French lost no senior officers but many were wounded. The French, from commanding officer on down, led from the front. Saint-Silvestre, like Catinat, had a horse shot from under him. Montgommery was wounded in the arm and Pelleport was hit in the groin, but kept fighting. Robecq took a sword cut on his heel and on his leg. Many of the colonels also received wounds.

The Allied wounded were abandoned, but this was often done between the 'civilised' nations because they would still receive treatment and be returned (or join the new outfit), and the added bodies would put a strain on the victor's resources.

The French captured 11 out of the 12 Allied cannon (d'Aligny says 3 other pieces, probably regimental guns, were discovered hidden in a wood), 14 flags, and the Allied baggage train. Duke Victor's state and private papers were also lost.

According to d'Aligny:

"The infantry having won the battle had nothing left to do but to rest on the field of battle; I joined M. de Saint-Sylvestre, who did me the honor of [embracing] me; as he had room with M. de St Maurice, having no hangers-on to feed, they invited me to take My meals with them… As [the troops] had been in action from daybreak to night without eating, there was need of repose… We found M. de Catinat lying on sand with M. de Quinson, M. de Feuquieres, and some other officers; we also rested.

The next day they found the *marchese* di Monasterol hiding in the Abbey, dressed as a monk – but he had forgotten to remove his wig. Catinat knew him well and said to him, "Monsieur, comme vous voilà équipé", at which Monasterol had to laugh.

King Louis wrote to his *Général*:

"Versailles, this 22 August 1690.

The action which you have just made gives me so much joy, that I am glad to tell you the truth, and to assure you that I know what it deserves. It does not increase my esteem for you, but tells me that I was not deceived when I gave you the command of my army. I wish you to continue as you started and find opportunities to mark the feelings I have for you.

Louis. "

Catinat's official report was so modest that when it was read out at Court some wit asked if he had been at the battle. There were calls for him to be made a marshal of France.

Staffarda was the first instance of the French *milices provincials* fighting with regular troops in the line of battle. 7 of Catinat's battalions were militia. Their conduct here led to their frequent use in such situations, though they were still regarded as poor quality troops by many commanders.

After Staffarda

Post-battle, Duke Victor retreated to Moretta, 9 Km to the northeast, then to Carignano, where he remained for some weeks, waiting for Carafa and the Imperial contingent. His army had been shattered. Prudently, he recrossed the Po and camped at Moncalieri, setting up a cordon along the right bank of the river to prevent raids.

Prince Eugene rode posthaste to Vienna to personally request more aid. The Spanish sent an additional 3,000 men and the Imperial contingent was increased to 7,000. On his own account Duke Victor called a general muster of the state, which did something to raise the flagging spirits of his people.

Shortly after, however, the militia was dismissed and the arrangement was made for them to be called up on a regional basis, as needed. In this way the lands on the right bank of the Po were later defended against French raids, particularly when the towns of Asti and Alba were threatened (45 and 50 Km southeast of Turin, respectively) in 1691. (On the other hand, Duke Victor was forced to call extraordinary taxes, which was not popular.)

Saluzzo surrendered to Feuquières on August 19 without effort or fanfare and the French took contributions from many towns on the plain. Those that refused to pay were burned. Those that sported any of Duke Victor's pleasure palaces were burned whether they paid or not. The towns of Savigliano, Villafranca, Sommerive, Fossano, and a

few others in southern Piedmont were occupied, but only for the season.

Curiously, Catinat for once became so enthusiastic that he imagined himself marching through the streets of Turin, and it was Louvois who had to bring him down to earth. The War Minister estimated it would take at least 20,000 men, 60-80 squadrons, and a large siege train, which would be prohibitively expensive. The *Général* had less than 10,000 men and his army was dwindling daily through disease, despite all precautions. Italy was not a healthy place to campaign.

After their bloodless southern conquests, the French army moved to Raccogni, 9 Km south of Carmagnola on the right bank of the Po. Catinat still had designs on the latter place, but on September 16 a refreshed Duke Victor marched against him with 20,000 men, from Moncalieri to Carignano, 10 Km to the south, threatening to interfere if the French started a siege. The two sides remained in close proximity for about 40 days, it is said, though this does not jibe with a statement that Catinat was ordered to take up winter quarters in September. Probably, the orders were drafted in early September and the *Général* acted on them as best he could.

It had been decided the French would not winter in Piedmont. For that they would need more fortresses than Pinerolo, which could only supply its own needs. The winter was going to be a cold one; already the passes were filling with snow. Catinat broke camp and marched southwest for about 20 Km, crossing the Po near Cardé, Only bands of peasants opposed him and these were easily brushed aside.

Keeping the Chisone River between himself and Duke Victor, he then marched for Pinerolo, 20 Km to the northwest, arriving at Garzigliana, 6.5 Km southeast of Pinerolo, on November 1. Garzigliana was a crossing point for the Pellice River, a tributary of the Chisone. The confluence was 4-5 Km to the east.

The next move described in the sources is rather odd. Apparently the French reversed course and marched about 12 Km south to Barge on the same day. The march is perfectly possible, but no reason is given. At Barge they fought a ‘murderous’ combat with a single Piedmontese regiment which retreated into the mountains – Barge is situated at the immediate foot of the Alps. The town was pillaged and the French turned around again and marched without incident toward Pinerolo.

On November 2 they sacked the towns of Luserna and Ponte di Bibiana, both centers for the Vaudois. Bibiana lies at the mouth of the Val Luserna on the left bank, 9 Km south of Pinerolo, and Luserna is on the right bank, 3.5 Km farther west. After this, camp was made at Miradolo, 2.5 Km southwest of Pinerolo on the right bank of the Chisone.

Catinat now pulled in all his detachments from the southern towns and pretended he was taking up winter quarters. In actuality he planned to attack the strategically important town of Susa, at the head of the valley of the same name.

Susa

To add verisimilitude to his make believe, Catinat took the road up the Val Perosa for Briançon with his mobile forces, but diverted their line of march over the Colle delle Finestre, about 30 Km northwest from Miradolo, on November 6. The pass was guarded by Piedmontese troops but the French had it cleared by November 9, arriving in front of Susa on the following morning. The distance over the col was short but the path was rough and already covered in snow. Susa lay about 12 Km away to the north.

Duke Victor was caught out. He tried to reassemble a large force for the relief of the town, and dispatched the Spanish general Louvigny to take command of Susa and repair its works. The general obeyed but his troops refused to march with the rest of the army, so they were left behind. It is not made clear whether this was a pay issue, or spleen over some slight, such as being relegated to the left flank at Staffarda.

The garrison of 400 men, under the command of the ‘inept’ *conti* di Loza, abandoned the town for the citadel. The French were able to dig to within ‘6 fathoms’ (36’ or about 11 meters) of the fortifications. The next day 10 guns were unmasked on a nearby height and began firing on the ravelin that covered the front gate. The garrison tried to dissuade the workers in the trenches by throwing showers of grenades, but with little effect. A hot fire was maintained by both sides until November 13. That evening the ‘chamade’ was beaten – the traditional parley drum accompanied by a white flag.

The garrison was given honours of war and marched off for Turin. Relief almost arrived in time, but in the end Duke Victor was forced to watch the French entering the town from only 6 Km away. Angry, he had Loza and his officers arrested as they passed his lines and then returned to the plains.

Simultaneously, an Allied column was sent against Casteldelfino, far to the south. This is sometimes portrayed as revenge for Susa, but the operation was already being executed when that siege began. Catinat was not the only one pretending to be taking up winter quarters.

Casteldelfino was a French-held fort 30-odd kilometres up the Val Varaita, where the valley splits. The Varaita was a back door to the southern plains, emerging just south of Saluzzo. In the other direction it connected with southeast Dauphiné and the County of Nice, but it was well off the French lines of operation. The road down from

Casteldelfino was easy, but the passes into the west were not.

The column reached Saluzzo on November 6, Paesana on November 7 (18 Km to the west, at the foot of Mont Viso), then headed south over the intervening ridge into the Val Varaita at Sampeyre (a march of about 14 Km). Casteldelfino was 9 Km farther up the valley. The French detachment stationed there surrendered on November 12. The fort was razed and the town burned. The column then returned to the plain.

Operations in Savoy

Meanwhile… There is not much to tell about the offensive in Savoy conducted by St. Ruth, who superseded Larré on July 18. His first objective was to open and keep clear the road to Pinerolo, and his second to ensure Duke Victor could not winter an army on the western side of the Alps.

St. Ruth was a good commander, but notoriously vain. He was a rabid anti-Huguenot; one of the main reasons he had been given the job was because he could be trusted to 'pacify' the Protestants who had taken refuge on the Duke of Savoy's lands.

St. Ruth jumped off from Grenoble. His first opponent was the *conti* di Bernezzo, who had only a handful of militia and retreated into the Alps. The various towns and communities swiftly surrendered to his inadequate forces, fearing savage reprisals if they did not. These included the capital of Chambéry (August 17), and the towns of Annancey and Rumilly. For reference, Chambéry is 44 Km north of Grenoble. Annancey and Rumilly are 40 Km and 33 Km north of Chambéry, respectively.

The lands on the south shore of Lake Geneva remained in Allied hands for some time, though no key strongpoints were held. This worried St. Ruth, who feared a Protestant descent out of Switzerland (rumours of which were already in the wind). He was frustrated because he lacked the manpower to both secure the Pinerolo road and send forces to intimidate Geneva and Bern. Watching regiment after regiment pass through Savoy to join Catinat's army ticked him off.

However, in September the provinces of Genevois and Tarantaise were overrun, as well as a portion of Faucigny. On September 12 the *marchese* di Sales had an encounter with the French at a spot near St Jean de Maurienne, in the valley of the Arc River, 46 Km southeast of Chambéry, in the Tarentaise. His 1,200 Mondovían militia were forced to retreat to Moûtiers on the Isère River, 50 Km ESE from Chambéry in a direct line and about 75 Km on foot, where they joined with Bernezzo. Sales was captured. (The shortest route to Moûtiers not blocked by the French would have been straight north, over the mountains.)

[The Mondoví Militia were second only to the Vaudois in fighting spirit, but since Modovi suffered from periodic bouts of republicanism, they usually served outside their own lands.]

St. Ruth sent a column up the left bank of the Isère to deal with them. The French and Sabaudians clashed again near Moûtiers and the latter were routed after a flank attack. They retreated over the Little Saint Bernard pass into the Val d'Aosta, a march of about 50 Km to the northeast.

By September 18 St. Ruth considered Savoy to be secure. The French occupied the rest of the Tarentaise – really, the two valleys of the Arc and Isère – as far as the key passes of Mont Cenis and Mont Genèvre.

Bernezzo travelled to Turin and reported the complete loss of the Duke's western duchy. However, it was soon learned that the fortress of Montmélian, 12 Km southeast of Chambéry, still held out. Montmélian was more of a prestige target, as the garrison was very small and could not interfere with the French supply lines. It was quickly masked, but St. Ruth lacked the resources to take it. The County of Nice also remained unconquered.

[The state prison at Castle Miolans, 13 Km northeast of Montmélian, also remained in Allied hands, until its governor was bribed to surrender in October.]

Wind Up

One of the last military acts of the year was a coursing into the Val Lanzo, north of the Val Susa. This operations was forced on Catinat because Louvois was displeased that the garrison of Susa had been granted honours of war. Clearly, the *Général* was not being harsh enough (this despite local sources that speak of 'utter devastation' in the wake of his army).

The Prince de Robecq, commanding a Walloon regiment of the same name, took 17 of Catinat's battalions into the district of Aosta. Although the raid itself was routine, the approach march was not. Robecq had to climb the Col de Coupe above the town of Beaussolins (Bussoleno), 8 Km to the east of Susa. To put it bluntly, this meant taking something like 8,000 men plus pack animals 2,000 meters straight up one side of a mountain and down into the valley on the other side, through deep snow. And, returning the same night. The troops took *contributions* and hostages, and came back laden with spoil.

[De Brasey's detailed account seems to suggest that the French marched into the Val d'Aosta proper, but since he explicitly states that the forces marched by way of Bussoleno, he cannot mean the corps looped around the mountains to enter the Val d'Aosta from the west, or that any of St. Ruth's forces working around Montmélian were used. By the route he describes, a march to the Val d'Aosta would involve crossing three ridge lines and travelling a distance of 30 Km one way, so it seems clear the French only entered the Val Lanzo, which was part of the Duchy *of Aosta. Possibly the confusion is in the mind of this author, who made the translation.]*

The Duke of Savoy, still operating in a desultory fashion near Rivoli, made no attempt either to counter this action or take revenge, instead retiring into winter quarters for good. This involved the Spanish returning to the Milanese, the Imperials heading off to Mantuan Montferrato to intimidate the pro-French Duke of Mantua, and the Sabaudians camping in front of Turin.

The French followed the Duke's lead, basing themselves mainly west of the Alps, with a detachment at Susa, though apparently a last raiding column from Pinerolo visited Rivoli, which had not paid its taxes to the French yet. The Allies caught this column as it was returning and relieved it of most of its spoils. They also burned the environs of Pinerolo.

De Brasey provides some order of battle information for the French at this time: regiments Grancé, Artois, Bourbon, Perigord, and Robecq were sent by Mont Cenis to Savoy; regiments Sarre, Clerambaut, Sorbecq (3 battalions), Vexin, and Cambresis went to Dauphiné by 'various roads'; regiments du Plessis, Flandres, and Hainault garrisoned Susa. These are all line units.

Catinat may have taken up winter quarters, but Feuquières did not. He was sent back to Pinerolo on November 20, having under his command *régiment* Vendôme, *régiment* Gerse (Quercy), the 3rd battalion of *régiment* de Sault, and 200 unspecified men, probably militia.

Feuquières' job was to root out the Barbets, who were interfering with traffic on the road between Pinerolo and Briançon. Fortunately, the Vaudois did not usually range far from home, so most of the work was done near the fortress.

The Vaudois were primarily based between the Val Luserna and the Val Perosa, with camps at Miradolo (2 Km SW of Pinerolo), San Martino (4 Km west of Pinerolo), and San Germano Chisone (3.5 Km farther up the Val Perosa from San Martino). Feuquières sallied on the night of December 16. He cut down the forests on the lower slopes within the area of operation and built a series of redoubts and stockades to seal off all the side valleys.

Luserna was also raided and its walls torn down. Loche's Huguenot regiment guarded the place, but was caught by surprise. No quarter was given in the raid.

Feuquières also tried a *coup de main* in the other direction. A Sabaudian company garrisoning the castle of Orbassano, just outside Turin, was taken and the French cavalry rode a course under the walls of Turin. He also made a spectacular capture, which fell out in the following way.

The army of the Duke of Savoy was arranged in a series of camps in front of Turin, from Rivoli to Moncalieri on the opposite bank of the Po. The post standing immediately between Turin and Pinerolo was at Beinasco (10 Km SW of Turin and 7.7 Km SE of Rivoli). It was hosting the *marchese* d'Angrogne and an escort of guards. Feuquières raided the HQ there, kidnapped the *marchese* di Savigliano plus 5 other senior officers and 4 attendants, and the c*onti* di Non, commandant of the garrison (in his dressing gown, no less), plus a handful of generic guardsmen, and 160 horses. The prisoners were chivvied back to Pinerolo at top speed.

On the opposing side, the *marchese* di Parella made a rather bland coursing into the Vallée Barcelonnette, on the borders of Provence. Probably, snow prevented any deep penetration.

Declarations were sent out by the French after a number of *franc tirelleur* incidents occurred. As the war passed over their lands, the peasants had begun sending their families into the towns and taking up arms. They now took advantage of the general French retreat into quarters to make some 'statements' by the roadside. These men were ordered to return home on pain of death and any community in which a French soldier was killed would pay a 10 *pistole* fine.

The year ended with an abortive diplomatic offensive. In November, Catinat and Duke Victor agreed on a prisoner exchange (to the disgust of Louvois). This was a peace feeler. A second feeler was put out in December, when the *abbé* de Cumiane, the Duke's chaplain, was sent to France with the offer of a three-months armistice. The Pope added his weight in favour of peace. Louvois would only agree to 15 days – anything longer would allow the enemy to send troops to Nice and Montmélian – and the deal collapsed.

It is generally assumed that Victor Amadeus was merely playing for time, but he had a habit of becoming serious after suffering any important reverse, such as Staffarda, so the truce might have worked out.

Mantua

The other Italian states were not major military players, but their alignment was of great interest to both sides. The Pope advocated peace. Florence was strongly pro-Allied. Similarly, Venice had hosted the Allied conference that brought Duke Victor into play. Her old rival, Genoa, was in mortal terror of both sides. Modena, Parma and Piacenza, and Mantua were all anti-Habsburg. Of these last, Mantua was the most important.

Like the Dukes of Savoy, the Dukes of Mantua had strong ties to the Court of Versailles and were also Imperial vassals. The current duke preferred to remain neutral, but had mustered 6,000 militia to enforce his neutrality.

Enter the Imperial troops, literally. As an Imperial vassal, the Duke of Mantua was expected to host Prince Eugene and his men over the winter. Eugene decided to forcibly occupy his lands, levying *contributions* and reputedly pillaging 300 villages that would not pay.

This was not done on a whim. To begin with, the population, particularly in the west, in Montferrato, was openly hostile. After a number of ambushes, Eugene made an example of the town of Vignale Montferrato. This place was only 15 Km SSE of Casale, and presumably a source of supply for the garrison of that place. The prince's agents also intercepted a letter from the Duke to the French Governor of Casale, M de Crenan, which included a statement of resistance to Imperial occupation.

The Duke's protests at this 'occupation' fell on deaf ears at Vienna. In reply, Prince Eugene, in the Emperor's name, officially demanded a) quarters, b) 30,000 ducats in feudal dues owed the Emperor, and c) a permanent Imperial garrison at the Duke's capital.

Next, the Duke sought a league of neutrality with Venice and Florence, without success. However, the attempt did plant a seed. It would not be the last time attempts were made to form such a league, and the Neutrality of Italy was made a plank of the eventual peace treaty in 1696.

The Lindau Project

Lindau is a resort town on Lake Constance, situated on an island. During the war it was a center for Protestant intrigue. Here the notorious diplomatic representative of William of Orange, one Thomas Coxe, negotiated deals with various German princes, monitored the pulse of Franco-Sabaudian relations, tried to persuade the Swiss Protestants to hire themselves out to England, and forlornly attempted to get recognition for his master as the new King of England.

Having failed to hire 4,000 Swiss in 1689, Coxe was instructed to canvass the expatriate Huguenot community. As recounted in the narrative above, Loche's regiment was already in the field, but things really began to gel in the fall of 1690, and as they did so, the English began to conceive of a plan to generate a Huguenot rising in France in the following year. This was the Lindau Project, which received official approval sometime in November. Charles Schomberg, 2nd Duke of Schomberg, was earmarked to lead the corps; Schomberg's father, Frederick, was killed at the Battle of the Boyne that summer. Despite the sound of the name, the Schombergs were French exiles.

The regiments would muster in the Canton of Bern, then cross into Savoy, making their way into the Dauphiné, gathering recruits as they went. At some point they would have the strength to call on the large numbers of Protestants still living in that region to rise up, seriously disrupting French operations. This was less about helping Duke Victor and more about taking the pressure off Flanders.

However, they never got the numbers required. There were also disputes among the officers, at least one of whom turned traitor. What with the low turnout and fears that the plan had been revealed, the regiments were eventually sent south (or in some cases the personnel made their way south and mustered in Italy) to serve the Duke of Savoy under the English flag.

In all, Coxe was able to acquire 2 horse, 1 dragoon, and 4 foot regiments for Savoy, as well as an additional regiment of horse and 3 regiments of foot to serve in Ireland. As is commonly the case, more regiments appear on the rolls that were in the field, but their prospective colonels either spent the money on more important things or could not find the recruits.

The Year in Review

From the Allied perspective, 1690 was something of a disaster. The French had ravaged Piedmont, overrun most of Savoy, and beaten the combined Allied army in battle. On the other hand, the French had left the plains Piedmont and Duke Victor was still in the game.

Operationally, the French campaign was quite successful, although there are hints that Catinat was flailing around a bit. His shift from Carignano to Luserna looks as if the guerrillas were making him dance to their tune. Still, the *Général* had plundered Piedmont and defeated the Allies in battle, both per his orders.

[Prince Eugene of Savoy as an older man.]

An attempt to take Turin had failed because Catinat had to rely on a conspiracy from within, but taking Turin was always a long shot. He did not manage to acquire a base on the plains, but he had been ordered to withdraw anyway; and, in withdrawing, he had managed to secure an important pass, the Val Susa. Nearly all of Savoy had been occupied. For these reasons, Versailles was very pleased with the course of the campaign.

On a day to day basis, the balance of success versus failure was more even, with the French being prevented from taking Carmagnola and being forced away from Turin, but with the Allies being otherwise unable to dictate Catinat's moves.

Strategically – that is, politically – the campaign was a failure for the French. The House of Savoy had been seated even more firmly in the Allied camp. True, new diplomatic channels had been opened, but at the moment they were more useful to the Duke as a means of slowing the tempo of French operations.

Contemporary sources point to the operational success of the French, but later analysts, even those writing immediately post-war, recognised that the campaign really accomplished very little and was a drain on the French war effort.

1691 A Year of Sieges

This section is much longer and contains more details than those of other years. Although some years saw little activity, the length of the text here is due mainly to the efforts of *capitaine* de Brasey. His eyewitness journal for 1691 is exhaustive. Unfortunately, similar accounts are not available for the other years of the war in Italy. Let the events recounted here give the reader a taste of what a 'typical' campaigning season was like.

Général Catinat opened the campaigning season extremely early – late January, in fact. The ultimate prize was supposed to be Duke Victor's capital, Turin. The *Général* already knew he had no chance of obtaining it. His army was too small and his siege train minimal, and Turin was the most heavily fortified city west of Milán. But, his King wished to have Turin.

Louvois, more practical, insisted Catinat continue the program of systematic devastation. This was intended to sway the Duke of Savoy's opinions on the war, but it is generally believed the War Minister liked destruction for its own sake. The *Général*, more practical still, scaled his orders down to a program of forced requisitioning, holding out devastation as a threat that could be averted by prompt payment. It was the only way his army could subsist away from the magazine network established on the friendly side of the mountains.

Preliminary Actions

The winter saw several 'coursings' based out of Susa, besides the ones mentioned for 1690. The most notable of these was an action at Avilgliana (Veillane in French accounts). It was notable only because it was a minor debacle that contributed to *maréchal de camp* Feuquières' growing dislike of his superior.

Avilgliana, at the mouth of the Val Susa, was an important staging point for any summer campaign. Once taken, Rivoli, 9 Km farther on, and the other towns of the plain west of Turin, were within striking distance. The French could strip that country bare to feed themselves and force Victor Amadeus to camp his army on the far side of the Po or risk a battle. It would be very helpful if the town belonged to France when the main campaigning season opened.

Because Catinat had only 3 battalions to work with at the time, the attack on Avilgliana included troops from Pinerolo. Both columns marched out on January 26, intending to rendezvous during the night and attack the town (which boasted a castle but no walls) the following morning. Catinat would approach from Sant'Ambroglio di Torino, about 3 Km to the northwest, while Feuquières would come from Rivoli, where he happened to be at that time. The town was garrisoned by a regiment of Piedmontese dragoons.

Both men left ahead of schedule, but Feuquières was too eager for glory. When the *Général* arrived at Avigliana he found Feuquières' column in full rout after an encounter with a strong body of Allied cavalry that had intercepted it. All Catinat could do was cover his subordinate's retreat up the valley to Susa, from whence Feuquières had to struggle over the Colle delle Finestre to the Val Perosa and back down to Pinerolo. In reprisal, the local Allied forces again ravaged the neighbourhood of Pinerolo.

Rumour says Catinat had enough grounds for a court martial, but he graciously put it all down to bad timing and the fortuitous presence of the Allied Horse. According to de Brasey, Feuquières was only an hour or two ahead of schedule, which need not have been a fatal mistake. Unfortunately, the Allied cavalry happened to be conducting a sweep at the same time.

Feuquières was one of those generals who like to bypass their superiors. In this instance he tried to shift the blame onto Catinat, without success. The next time he tried inspiring Versailles to give Catinat orders he would get his fingers burned.

The stain on Feuquières' conduct was very soon wiped out. Concurrently with the main operation, a column of 800 Horse and 500 Foot from his command had been sent east on two enterprises. One group travelled 32 Km to Savigliano, capturing 4 companies of 'gendarmes' in a night assault after crossing a frozen moat and laying

down portable bridges for the cavalry, all without being noticed. (The town was moated, but otherwise open.)

The other group travelled a similar distance to Carmagnola and back. That town was walled, but the garrison was asleep and the gate was opened by an individual who was well rewarded for his trouble. Some or all of garrison was captured. No attempt was made to hold the town. The prisoners and their escorts made it back to Pinerolo without pursuit (though they were shot at by peasants) even though Duke Victor had 2,000 cavalry on the plain.

Apart from levying *contributions*, Catinat spent the winter refortifying Susa. Once the passes were safe enough to cross, he journeyed west to Montmélian, where St. Ruth was still engaged in the blockade. The French tried a short bombardment, but without a proper siege train accomplished nothing, so St. Ruth was ordered to maintain the blockade.

St. Ruth would shortly be transferred to command the Jacobite forces in Ireland, where he would be killed by a freak cannon shot at the battle of Aughrim. The Sieur de la Hoguette, a rising *maréchal de camp*, took over prosecution of the blockade and responsibility for that section of the theatre.

Catinat, meanwhile, paid a visit to his main depôt at Briançon before travelling to Versailles for the annual strategic conference. He was back in time to launch another mini-campaign, this time against the County of Nice.

The Taking of Nice

King Louis' eyes were fixed on Flanders, but he did allocate 20 additional battalions to the Italian front. These arrived in Dauphiné and Provence before the spring. The Toulon Squadron under *chef d'escadre* d'Estrées and the galley fleet of Marseilles under the Chevalier de Noaïlles were ordered to make ready for sea.

[This Noaïlles was général *Anne Jules Noaïlles' brother, who was his* bailli *in Provence.]*

The reinforcing troops, some of which had come all the way from the Irish campaign, were exhausted and would not take the field until May. This meant Catinat only had about 10,000 of his original force available for the invasion of Nice. They proved sufficient, but only thanks to a few lucky breaks.

The French approached Nice by the Col de Tende and down the valley of the Var River. This was perhaps because the northern passes were still closed to the passage of an army, or perhaps it was simply quicker.

Taking this route they had of course to enter the plain of Piedmont, and it appears the French covered their intentions by threatening a repeat of the previous campaign, before changing direction. The army, totalling 9-10,000 men, marched in 2 columns, arriving at Villefranche on the coast on March 15. Catinat's artillery, however, and probably the *Général* himself, came by way of northern Provence.

The port of Villefranche, which lies just around the next headland from Nice on that town's eastern side, was not defensible, and sent out a delegation with the keys of the town before the French began their siege. This seems to have been on March 21. The citadel defied the foe for 2 days before capitulating.

Additional surrenders took place on March 22 at the forts of Montalban, which is located on the ridge separating Villefranche and Nice, and Saint Hospice, on Cap Ferrat, which covered the maritime roads east of Villefranche. Montalban, a stout fort, is said to have been betrayed.

On March 24 Nice was invested. The siege of the town did not last long. Like Villefranche, Nice's defences were in bad repair and the threat of bombardment was sufficient to bring out the town commandant, M. de Grimaldi, and his second, to discuss terms by torchlight. Apparently they were pressed to do so by the inhabitants, who were incensed that the authorities had let the defences fall into such a ruinous state. It is even said they opened the gates for the French and then the commandant was forced to capitulate.

[Interestingly, both officers had served in the French Army.]

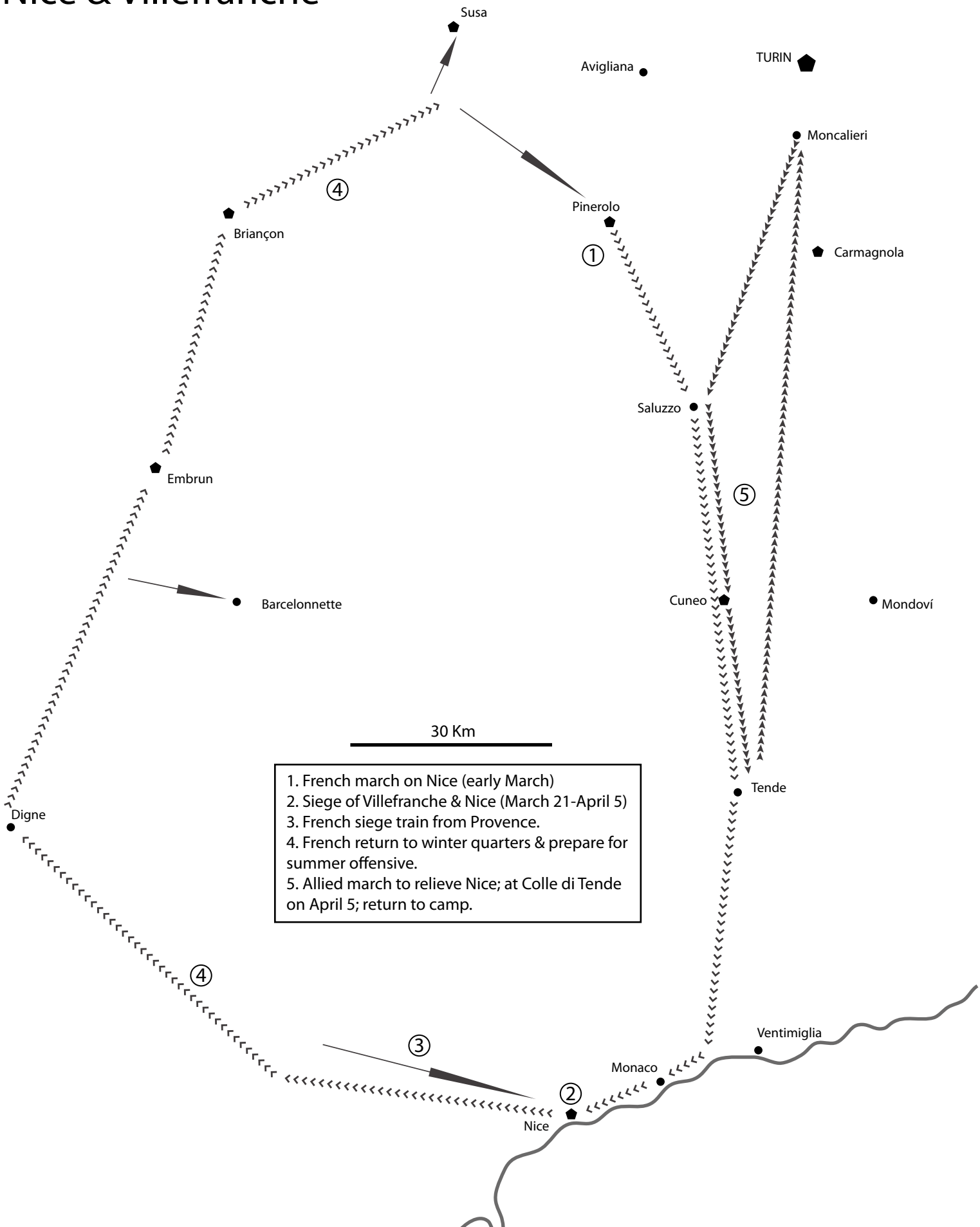
[Fort Montalban]

Nice obtained good terms: French occupation but no loss of privileges or franchises. Catinat entered the town on March 25.

The garrison, however, had been allowed to pull back into the citadel, which, as was the usual custom, defied the besiegers, under its Governor, *conti* di Frossasco. The citadel, holding 2,000 men, was located on a precipitous rock above the harbour, and would not be easy to take.

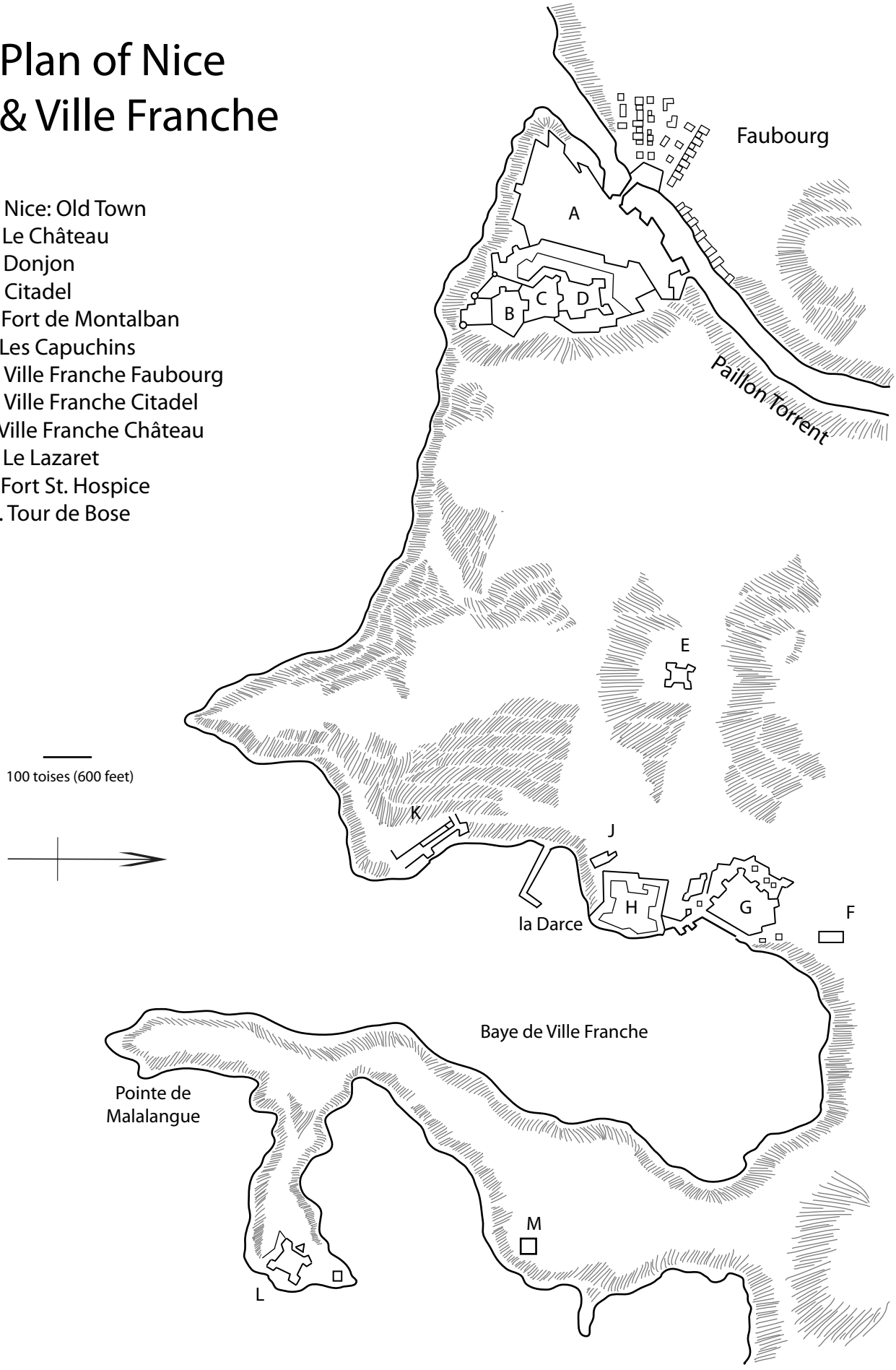
The citadel was located on the hill which is called Le Château on modern maps, overlooking the Old Town on the west and the harbour basin (which did not exist in

Campaign of 1691
Nice & Villefranche



Plan of Nice & Ville Franche

A. Nice: Old Town
B. Le Château
C. Donjon
D. Citadel
E. Fort de Montalban
F. Les Capuchins
G. Ville Franche Faubourg
H. Ville Franche Citadel
J. Ville Franche Château
K. Le Lazaret
L. Fort St. Hospice
M. Tour de Bose



1691) on the east. The section nearest the sea was called Le Château even then, and was that part of the citadel that overlooked the beach. Abutting it on the north was the Donjon, and just north of that the remainder of the citadel's works.

The east side of the rock, overlooking the modern harbour basin, is high and steep, as is the seaward end. On the west and north the hill has a gentler slope, running down to a small river called the Paillon Torrent, which is now covered over by a pleasant boulevard-park. The river (and modern park) passes the citadel on the west, angling southwest away from it as it approaches the sea. In those days the whole triangle between the coast, the rock, and the river was fortified, and contained the Old Town. Just across the river was the unfortified Faubourg, what might be termed the 'industrial zone', with mills and such like. Access between the two was by a bridge across the Paillon secured at both ends by fortifications.

There were four gates to the town: one at the bridge, one at the northern corner of the town wall, one south of the bridge, and one in the south wall west of the citadel, the sea gate. Of course, since the town had surrendered, only the rock itself had to be reduced.

The French fleet soon arrived, and on March 27 a man named Bethomas, who was both a *chef d'escadre* and *capitaine de galéres*, was ordered to erect a battery at Montalban, which was only 1,600 meters east of the citadel rock. His firepower was augmented by another 4-gun battery drawn from M. de Gabaret's ships anchored at Villefranche. Most of the besieging troops were positioned on the western side, within the Old Town, and on the north side of the citadel.

The batteries were unmasked on March 28, to great effect. The garrison's own counter-bombardment commenced on March 29 – the day the French opened their trenches – and did some damage, but the French guns gradually got the better of the duel, and the defender's fire slackened noticeably. Some of the garrison's mortar bombs fell on the civilian sections of the town.

4 more batteries were unmasked on March 30: one in the town fosse, one on the riverbank, one at the rear of the citadel 'on the mountainside' (probably on high ground beyond where the harbour basin now is), and one on the hills overlooking the town (probably on the high ground to the north, beyond the river. There were also mortars emplaced in the faubourg near 'a stone cross'. That was probably the market square, and if the modern street names are anything to go by, right in the middle of the Old Town.

Despite the heavy fire, the garrison might have outlasted Catinat's efforts, forcing a lengthy blockade like Montmélian's, but on the evening of March 30 a fortuitous shot from the battery on Montalban landed in a powder magazine near the Donjon, setting the place on fire. There were secondary explosions. In all, nearly half the garrison, some 7-800 men, were blown up. The blast even took out some of the French in their own trenches.

It is not clear exactly where those trenches were, but French seem to have been working their way up the slope and were probably at the northern end of the rock; the defenders dug trenches of their own and erected palisades to try and keep them at bay. By this point, the opposing troops were probably very close to each other.

Under cover of the confusion, the French advanced, reaching the glacis without difficulty. Most of the citadel's guns had been dismounted in the blast and they faced only desultory musket fire from the dazed defenders.

By dawn on March 31 the besiegers had taken the covered way, suffering few casualties. On April 1, four 24-pounders were emplaced on the glacis with three additional guns in the ditch on the left of this battery. Miners began digging into the counterscarp and ditch. A galley was erected to protect a mine destined for the ramparts.

Also on April 1 the guns of the fleet added their weight. Many in the garrison now wished to escape, but the officers were still able to maintain control, though the men were unable to do more than hunker down behind the thickest walls they could find. At some point during the day a shell landed on another powder mine, perhaps one the French were digging, blowing a hole in the defences.

At a council of war that night the Governor agreed to surrender. He had lost half his men and the garrison was low on both food and ammunition. Again the *chamade* was beaten and two officers went forth to discuss the articles. Frossasco agreed to surrender if no help came before April 4. Naturally, none did, though an Allied relief column under Duke Victor was on the Col de Tende by that date. It returned to Moncalieri upon news of the surrender.

Again, the garrison obtained good terms. The remaining 400 men (some accounts say 1,000) were to evacuate at 6am on April 5, with drums beating, matches lit, taking with them 4 guns and 2 mortars, plus 5 open 'chariots'. They were to be escorted to Oneille by the coast road.

[The chariots often referred to in accounts of the time were light, four-wheeled affairs. Some were for conveying persons of rank and substance, with an enclosed box for the passengers and an open driver's seat. The 'open' chariots mentioned here were more likely transport wagons capable of carrying stores or wounded men (think, 'jeep').]

On April 4 the *régiment* de Sault occupied the gates and the next day the garrison left. The *régiment* de Féré was ensconced as the new garrison under its lieutenant colonel. The Chevalier de la Fare was made governor of the whole county. According to de Brasey, the *duc* de la Ferté, a brigadier, who had greatly distinguished himself during the siege, was sent to the Royal Camp at Mons

with the news. (Mons was taken by King Louis' army on April 8.)

Catinat, who had been wounded twice during the siege, kept his troops on site for a few days, then sent them back into the interior. Three battalions of *régiment* d'Alsace having arrived from Catalonia, these were sent to Nice, and tasked with repairing the place and garrisoning Montalban, Saint Hospice, and Villefranche.

The comte d'Estrées took his fleet to bombard Oneille, which would have also surrendered, except that the paroled Nice garrison arrived in the nick of time. Frossasco left a detachment there and took the rest of his column to Turin.

Guerrilla War

Catinat, now at Briançon awaiting new orders, sent the regiments he had received as reinforcements to Susa. Two of his lieutenants, the *maréchals de camp* Larré and Vins, were sent to the Vallée de Barcelonnette to clear out a nest of Vaudois who had taken up residence for the winter.

Larré led detachments from the regiments of Clerambault, Sorbecq (a Swiss unit), La Marche, Vexin, and Cambresis, while Vins led a smaller body consisting of the regiments of (or detachments from) Sault, Bretagne, and Antin.

The whole column left Digne, about 90 Km NW of Nice, on April 17, commencing operations on April 19. De Brasey says that Larré entered the area of operations through the Vallée de Saint Paul and Vins by way of 'Keiras' (Queyras). This must mean that the column, after travelling about 40 Km north from Digne, divided at the confluence of the Ubaye and Durance rivers, about 30 Km west of the town of Barcelonnette.

Larré would have then proceeded east and northeast up the Ubaye into its upper valley, above Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye, Meanwhile, Vins would have marched up the Durance past Guillestre to Molines-en-Queyras, over a high pass, and down into the head of the same valley. The two columns would then have swept the valley from either end.

It is not clear if April 19 was the day the columns divided or not, but that seems most likely. It would only take 2-3 days for each column to get into position to begin their sweep, but there is still the 40 Km from Digne to account for, which would be a two day march in and of itself. From the accounts, it seems that the mountains were already clear of snow. The routes taken are not particularly difficult. For Vins it would have been an easy march of 35 Km northeast to Guillestre. Queyras is about 25 Km northeast of Guillestre, up a side valley from the Durance. The head of the Ubaye valley is only another 12 Km or so to the southeast.

Larré would cover 30 Km to Barcelonnette and another 20 Km or so to Saint Paul, or roughly the same distance. The section of valley the two columns had to sweep was about 20 Km long and very narrow.

The French met little opposition but discovered a number of entrenchments, which they destroyed, and burned all the hamlets they came across. *Maréchal de camp* Vins had a horse shot from under him, and the colonel of *régiment* de Bretagne was killed along with a few others. This was probably when the Barbets attempted to flee past his column and out of the valley.

After this, the recombined column marched to the summer concentration at Susa, where operations were to begin on May 26.

Similar operations took place in the Val Luserna, timed to coincide with Larré's sweep. On April 18 Feuquières led out 1,000 men from Pinerolo and ravaged that valley for the fifth time since the war began. The French drove the Vaudois out of the town of Luserna and burned it, but his men dallied too long over their plunder and the Barbets made a ferocious counterattack and routed them. The French lost 3 officers and 200 men. Reputedly though, the Barbets suffered more.

On May 5 Feuquières made yet another sortie, this time as far as Villar Pellice)and Bobbio Pellice, a good 10-12 Km up the valley. The *maréchal de camp* had a horse killed under him and lost 2 militia officers, 10-12 regular officers, and 50 men killed or wounded. The Vaudois body count was 4 officers and 100 men killed.

The Official Campaign

1691 saw the conduct of a number of operations on the plains of Piedmont. Some succeeded and some were abortive. Some were the results of instructions from the War Minister, Louvois, others were in accordance with King' Louis' wishes, and some were at Catinat's discretion. They tend to blend into one another, so that it is hard to determine when Catinat abandoned one idea and adopted another. The fact that the French failed strategically tends to be obscured by Catinat's operational skill, because in and of themselves most of the actions his army took were successful.

Ultimately, the campaign had four primary objects:

First, to relieve Casale. The fortress was not immediately threatened, and was able to supply itself, but the garrison needed replacing as half the men were Swiss troops who were refusing to fight the Spanish – 'not in our contract, *mein herr'.*

Second, to take Turin. This one was a real stretch of the imagination and seems to have been a mixture of wishful thinking by the King and a propaganda stunt. Taking the capital was impossible, given Catinat's resources and the lack of a fifth column, but it could be threatened.

Third, to establish a permanent presence on the plains of Piedmont. This could be accomplished by taking certain towns, namely Carmagnola, and more importantly Cuneo. This town secured the roads west into Provence and south to the coast. Lying in its own fertile zone, it would also allow supplies to be brought in from France throughout most months of the year. If the plains were occupied year-round, it would put real pressure on Duke Victor to bow out of the war, protect Casale and Pinerolo from any future sieges by the Allies, and threaten the Milanese.

[Curiously, Pinerolo and Casale lacked the facilities to serve as bases of operations for a large army. They had been conceived and constructed in an age when armies were much smaller.]

Fourth, to continue wasting the countryside, as an aid to accomplishing the other three objectives.

Louvois suggested crossing the Piccolo San Bernardo and invading Piedmont from the north. Actually, this was an Order, but Catinat, who usually did as he was told, fired back with a refusal, citing the poor state of his forces and the plan's lack of strategic direction. Louvois was a self-opinionated and arrogant bully, but he was not stupid, and saw the *Général's* point.

As will be seen, the first act then became an egress on to the plains through the Val Susa. The French began their wasting operations and made a demonstration agains the Capital. Moving on from there they took Carmagnola, tried and failed to take Cuneo, but did manage to relieve Casale. After that, operations became a grand scavenger hunt, stripping the country bare to stock up the magazines at Pinerolo and Susa, before the French had to recross the Alps for the winter.

A major battle this year was problematic, because the armies were fairly balanced, but one could be hazarded if necessary. Such a battle would be unlikely until after Duke Victor received reinforcements from the Empire. Catinat had no intention of wasting energy by attacking first.

The demonstration against Turin did not occupy much time, and the French quickly shifted gears. Catinat. arrived at Susa on May 16, his troops following from all points between that day and May 27. On the latter day the army left their camp and headed down the Val Susa to Bussoleno, a march of only 8 Km.

Catinat commanded 30,000 men in 35 battalions and 60 squadrons, not counting garrison troops. For artillery he had 2 companies of gunners and 1 of bombardiers, serving 20 field guns (including four 16-pounders). The regiments also had their battalion guns.

A march of 20 Km took them to Sant' Ambroglio di Torino, 3 Km northwest of Avigliana. Avigliana was small, but the reader will remember it had an old fort associated with it, the Castello di Avigliano. The town was screened on the west by a hill about 1.5 Km long. However, the hill had not been fortified or even occupied, apart from the old fort, which was on a knoll on the eastern side, overlooking the town, not the valley approaches. Despite the lack of fortifications, this position would have been a threat to any convoys moving through the valley.

The Duke of Savoy's men had improved the fort's defences over the winter. De Brasey describes it from the point of view of the French camp, located to the north. There was an old round tower on the right and a square tower on the left (containing the magazine) surrounded by a palisade and covered way, all supported by numerous outworks such as demi-lunes, redoubts, and *places d'armes*. The garrison, a mixed bag of 500 Germans, Spanish, and Piedmontese, abandoned the town. 200 and took up their abode in the fort and the rest occupied the entrenchments.

Catinat made his reconnaissance on the night of May 28/29. The next day saw an artillery duel between 4 cannon of the fort and a battery of French guns emplaced either to the west of the fort on the main portion of the hill, or on a smaller detached hill about 500 meters to the north. (These are the only two sites that make any sense.)

The Governor of the garrison, observing the French cavalry preparing fascines, imagined a day assault 'by the book', but Catinat surprised him with a night attack. 250 men from the regiments of De La Marine, Feuquières, Sault, Thiange, Vexin, and the Grenadiers de la Marine, plus 100 men from *régiment* Bretagne (which had been assigned garrison duties in the town) made a three-pronged attack. 5 guns were emplaced, probably on the hill 500 meters to the north, for direct support.

About 1 Km south of Avigliana are a pair of lakes, which block movement south of the main hill. The men of Bretagne made a diversion from the lakeshore, as if they planned to take the rear of the fort. Meanwhile, the three assault columns approached by way of the town, its old faubourg (north of the fort), and a Capuchin monastery located somewhere in between. The start lines for each of these attacks would have been no more than 200 meters from the fort, but the knoll is rather steep.

The French, led by the *maréchal de camp du jour*, the *comte* de Tessé, and his brigadier, de Grancé, carried the first line of defences in under 20 minutes, despite heavy musket and mortar fire. The garrison pulled back to the keep, where they kept up a continuous fire and tossed grenades out of the windows. The Governor soon capitulated, however, fearing the French were preparing a mine.

This time, the garrison did not receive good terms. The 200 remaining men were marched off to Briançon on May 30. The fort was systematically looted and demolished by fatigue details of 50 men taken from each regiment. The *régiment* De La Marine took up garrison duties. French casualties were 2 officers wounded (including de Tessé

who took shrapnel from a grenade), 20 men wounded, and 4-5 killed. The garrison lost over 30 killed and over 60 wounded.

That same day a column of 1,000 men under the *marquis* du Plessis-Belliere was despatched to levy *contributions*. When the locals refused their valley was 'reduced to ashes'.

May 31: the army had fun pillaging the Duke of Savoy's main pleasure palace at Rivoli, in full view of the enemy camp in front of Turin. This was really the focal point of the campaign of intimidation against the Capital. Catinat wrote to the Duke excusing the act on the grounds that the site had been used for winter quarters by the Allied army.

[Andre Saluces says this took place on June 3. He also says the Duke, on seeing the destruction, declaimed that he would rather have all his palaces destroyed than that his people should suffer. This supposedly bolstered the morale of the populace. Saluces was of the generation that saw the House of Savoy as the heroes of Italian unification.]

June 2: Avigliana was burned and *régiment* Bretagne rejoined the army.

June 3: the Castello di Avigliano was blown up. The place had so many provisions that much had to be abandoned and set on fire. De la Marine rejoined the army. The same day, Catinat marched his army in 3 columns to Candiolo (14 Km south of Rivoli). The cavalry formed the left column, screening against an attack from Turin, the infantry formed the right column, and the baggage marched in the center.

Apparently the French intention had been to camp at Beinasco, 7 km to the north of Candiolo, but the Allies diverted the flow of the Torrente Sangone – Beinasco is on its north bank – to block them. This could have easily have been accomplished; the river makes a sharp southward bend just before reaching the village. The French still had to cross the river to reach Candiolo, but going to Beinasco after the river was diverted would have meant a crossing in the middle of a march across the enemy's front.

June 4: the French rested at Candiolo while Catinat made a grand cavalry reconnaissance of the Po crossings south of Turin. Noting the ford at Carignano, 8.5 Km to the southeast of Candiolo, was accessible, the Arrois Brigade was sent under the *marquis* Plessis-Bellere to secure it. (Carignano is today a few hundred meters west of the river, so the brigade may have deployed in the gap, assuming the bed has not shifted much.)

On June 5 the whole Army moved, in 6 columns. The brigades of Sault, Grancé, and Sarre, augmented by the cavalry regiments of Châtillon and Jaufreville, and the dragoon regiments of La Land, Languedoc 'Ancien, and Auxillon, under *lieutenant général* Langalerie, formed the flank guard against any action by the Allied army at Turin, holding an entrenched line between Carignano and Candiolo. This served to protect the crossing and also any subsequent convoys sent from Pinerolo.

Meanwhile, Catinat and the rest of the army crossed the Po, whose waters were only waist deep, and marched on Carmagnola, a substantial town 7-8 Km southeast of Carignano, laying siege to it on June 6.

The Siege of Carmagnola

Again, taking Carmagnola, just across the Po, would enable the French to more easily hold a line across the plain, isolating southern Piedmont. It would also be a base for operations into southeastern Piedmont. The subsequent capture of Cuneo would open the lines of communication with Provence. The remaining urban centers in southern Piedmont, such as Saluzzo, Savigliano, and Fossano, were more or less undefended and could be occupied at will. Indeed, the French had not bothered to garrison them over the previous winter, knowing they could be easily reoccupied.

According to de Brasey, Carmagnola was well sited but not so well fortified. The surrounding land was quite flat. On the west, toward the Po, were extensive marshes. The town had 7 large bastions, but these were too widely spaced and only covered by earthworks and a decrepit covered way. The citadel was square, with 4 bastions and 4 angles, surrounded by a moat that was theoretically filled by the town's waterworks but in practice was no great obstacle. The garrison consisted of 2,000 men.

Upon their arrival the French skirmished with Allied posts covering the fords. June 7 was spent by the cavalry collecting fascines and the infantry making gabions. Picquets were thrown out in the direction of Raccogni to the south of the town. There would be delays because the guns were late, but meanwhile the trenches could be started.

At dusk, Feuquières arrived. Designated *maréchal de camp du jour*, he brought with him the 3rd battalion of *régiment* Sault, regiments Vendôme and Gersey, and the Mauroy Horse. As soon as they arrived, the 3rd battalion of Sault, in cooperation with the 1st battalion of De La Marine, opened trenches on the southern side of the town, only 100 meters or so from the counterscarp. *Régiment* Feuquières did the same on the northwest.

Feuquières drove his men hard and they quickly came within musket range of the garrison. A hot fire was kept up all night, both of cannon and musket. The grenadiers of the *régiment* Feuquières (commanded by the *maréchal de camp's* brother) were ordered to give covering fire from houses among the trench works. *Régiment* Feuquières suffered about 50 killed and wounded this night, including a senior officer, while De La Marine lost only 4-5 men. Local assaults were made against a Capuchin monastery and a number of mills, the

defenders employing cartridge (canister) fire, suggesting this was close range indeed.

On June 8 the workers were relieved by the regiments of Bretagne, Vendôme, and Artois, commanded by the *maréchal de camp du jour*, Saint-Silvestre, and his brigadier, M. de Famechon. After a hard day's work they reached the palisades by nightfall, despite two sallies by the garrison against the sap heads.

The cannon and mortars arrived at dawn on June 9 and were quickly in action. These included six 24-pounders. By now the besiegers were close to the covered way and it was intended to launch a general assault that night.

[Saluces notes that the Mondoví militia served on this sector and wished to fight to the last, but were overruled.]

There was no assault. The defence collapsed pretty quickly after 3 bombs were lobbed into the town. The *chamade* was beaten at 10am on the 9th. For their quick surrender the garrison was allowed to march out with lighted match and drums beating, but not with cannon or 'chariots', and the numerous peasants and Vaudois among them were required to disarm.

After the garrison left for Turin on June 10, De La Marine held the town; the *marquis* de Plessis-Belliere was made commandant and governor of the marquisate of Saluzzo.

[Remember, the province of Saluces or Saluzzo was primarily located along the edge of the Alps; Carmagnola was an isolated possession out on the plain.]

After a pause to send a dispatch to the King and the distribution of awards for valour, the army continued south. Catinat's next objective was the fortress of Cuneo. Savigliano and the town of Saluzzo were again occupied, and the *Général* made the latter his primary magazine.

All through the siege of Carmagnola the Allied army remained immobile. Duke Victor had moved out to defend his capital as Catinat marched across its front, and was at Mirafiori, just southeast of Turin, with 18-20,000 men. The Moncalieri camp was set aside for his allies, who were late, which is why he did not move.

Politics and Intrigue

Negotiations had never ceased, though they were now conducted secretly. Catinat was still primarily responsible for the dialogue, but diplomacy was not his forte, while Duke Victor was proving to be a child prodigy. The *Général* was also hampered by the extra layer of influence generated by Versailles. Later on, he would almost be cut out of the loop, but at this stage he was trying to carry out King Louis' will while other agents did the same independently of him. This must have given the Duke confidence, knowing he could play factions against each other.

To Catinat, the march of the French Army before Turin and its ability to levy contributions and sack pleasure palaces at will should surely give the Duke of Savoy pause for thought. Catinat had even 'sent a trumpet' to the capital announcing his immanent arrival. A stronger argument was the defeat of Allied forces at Mons after a short siege of 18 days.

Through a number of agents Duke Victor gave indication that he was open to discussing the situation, though in complete secrecy. The fact that his family was pro-French had as much to do with the need for secrecy as the presence of Allied representatives in the capital. Absolutely no hints could leak out.

There has been some suggestion that it was for this reason, at the height of the perceived danger to Turin, that the Duke sent his wife and children east to Vercelli for safety, because there was really no way the French could lay siege to the capital. Against that argument, the Duke's wife was pregnant; she had a miscarriage, too, which would spell trouble in the following year. The affair also led a number of the nobles to pack their bags, and in turn, this panicked the general populace for several days. Some who fled were robbed by the Allied troops. However, order was restored after a few days. The panic seems genuine enough.

Since he was expecting massive Imperial reinforcements this summer, both later commentators and contemporaries believed Duke Victor would have rejected any terms that King Louis would be willing to offer. The Allies earned a short reprieve, thanks to the Duke's prevarications. But, Catinat became convinced he was ripe for 'the close' and called in the manager, King Louis, to seal the deal.

The 'deal' was for Piedmont to become neutral ground. This would allow the French to settle the Vaudois question in peace and prepare for an invasion of the Milanese. Not exactly a new proposal, and the terms were pretty much the same; King Louis was still intransigent over his rights, as was Duke Victor over his perquisites.

Langallerie, the French captain acting as a volunteer in the suite of Duke Victor (and not the French *maréchal de camp* with the similar name), was one of the men used as an agent in these discussions. He knew Catinat quite well and was sent to his camp disguised as a Capuchin monk. He states that Victor Amadeus seemed pleased to be in correspondence with the French, but was otherwise noncommittal. (Catinat tried to persuade Langallerie to become a double agent, but the latter felt this was too risky, besides being dishonourable.) Other agents were sent to Pinerolo, where the *comte* de Tessé also acted as agent for King Louis, not necessarily with reference to Catinat.

Langallerie provides a humorous account of one of the talks, which also serves as a demonstration of just how quick witted Duke Victor was. King Louis attempted to give Duke Victor a push in the right direction by sending the *duc* d'Orléans to Turin. Duke Victor treated the visit

casually, holding their private discussion in one of the more public chambers available for such matters. While they were talking, Prince Eugene barged in, fresh from the Court of Vienna.

The Prince had no clue what was going on. He was of the House of Savoy in the chief palace of their House, and he was one of the Duke's chief advisors, and his friend, and saw no reason to knock first. He was rather shocked to find his cousin talking to a member of the French royal family without his Council present.

But, Duke Victor took Eugene aside and explained that, as the French were threatening the capital and pressuring him to surrender, he felt he had to stall for time by entertaining their envoys until the Imperial troops arrived. All this was true, but Eugene was left with a vague sense of uneasiness. Perhaps Duke Victor could have been persuaded to quit the war if he had not fortuitously walked in on the parley.

[Prince Eugene's suspicions of Duke Victor are played up or down depending on the sources. His panegyrical biographers portray him as the Only Man Who Knew Duke Victor's True Colours From The Start. Others believe he was taken in with everyone else, although they agree he was the first to twig to the truth, in a few years' time.]

After his stint as go-between, Langallerie was sent on another important mission, to Rome, where a new Pope was being elected. This election had repercussions for the war, especially in Italy. The old Pope had been Alexander VIII, who reigned from 6 October 1689 to 1 February 1691. Since Langallerie travelled to witness the conclave in the summer (which he describes in an entertaining if hardly edifying manner – the cardinals were allowed to have their mistresses 'wait on them' during a very sumptuous dinner), obviously there was a certain amount of contention over the new candidate. Langallerie had no power to influence matters, but he represented the Court of Turin, which clearly did all it could to procure the election of a friendly Pope.

Alexander VIII was from a Venetian family, but had been sponsored by Louis XIV and was pro-French. Though a skilled diplomat, his short reign was pacific and did not get involved in the war in any meaningful way.

His successor was Innocent XII, from a Neapolitan family. A compromise candidate between the French and Imperial factions, Innocent was rabidly anti-Spanish and leaned toward France rather than the Empire. He would play a significant role in the Peace of Italy in 1696, and in the negotiations leading up to it.

Through all these negotiations, Duke Victor set about repairing the works at Turin. The *marchese* di Parella, one of his favourite generals, was put in charge of the citadel and the Prince of Geneva commanded the town. Prince Eugene concerned himself with saving the next target of the French army, Cuneo.

[Much of Langallerie's book concerns itself with court gossip and experiences he had while travelling around Italy, rather than the campaigning, which after all, was only his career. He recounts how the peasantry universally feared strangers, even the Imperial troops who had 'come to save them', hiding all their worldly possessions, which is pretty typical of peasants, but also hiding their children because they believed foreigners ate them. The colonel of one of the Imperial regiments was named Corneau, which was coincidentally the name for a hunting dog. The peasants thought he commanded a unit of dog-men and tried to run him out of town – well, the Habsburgs did *live in the East, where all things bestial came from.]*

The Siege of Cuneo

"The fortifications were so degraded, that without the zeal of the inhabitants and the activity of Count Roero, the governor of the city, it would scarcely have been hoped to defend themselves with success"

Andre Saluces, p.34

According to some sources, the siege of Cuneo was actually instigated by Feuquières, who wrote to the King saying what a good idea it would be. Catinat is said to have had some qualms, only because his army was so small, but King Louis sent clear orders that it should be taken. Other sources suggest taking the town was a logical move, already anticipated by the *Général*.

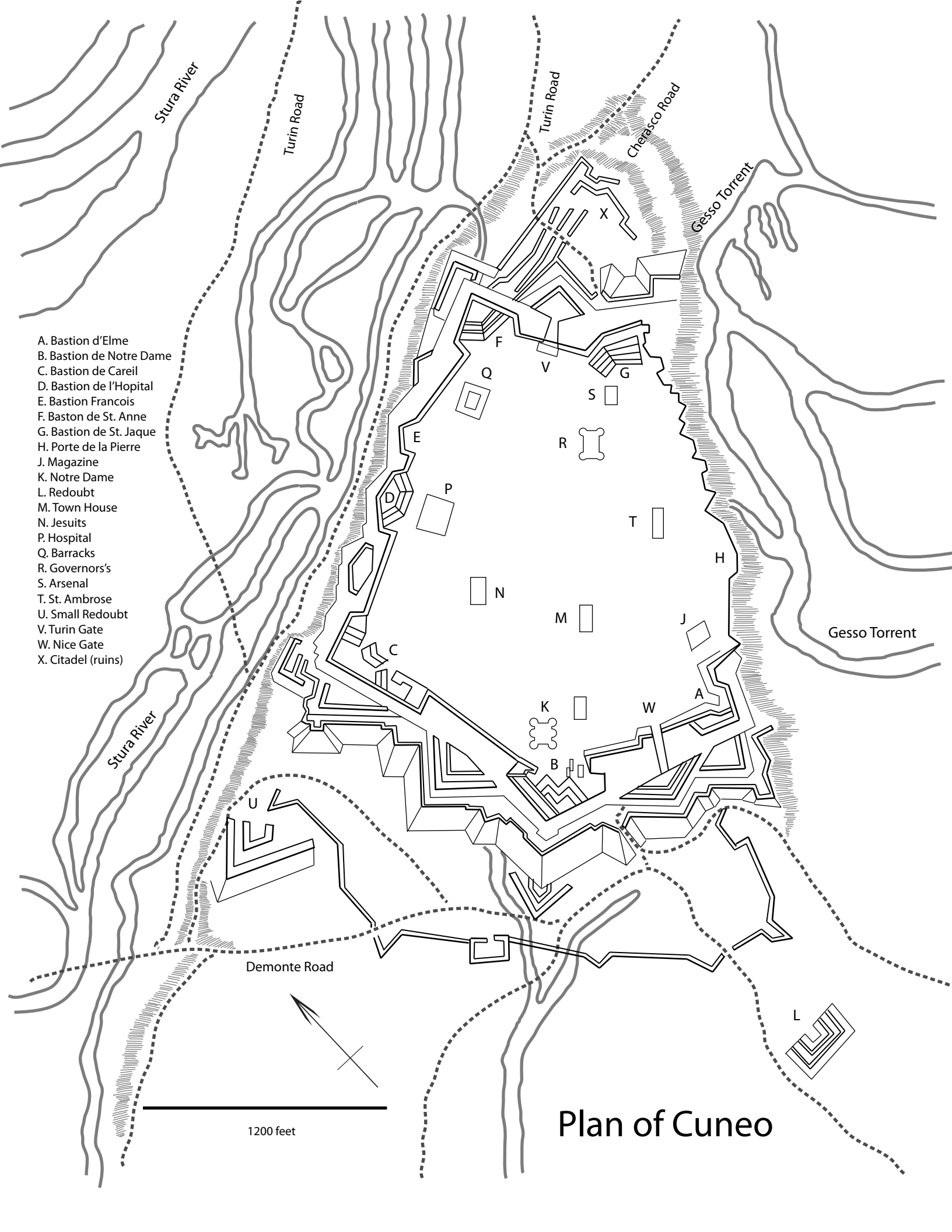
Ironically, Duke Victor thought Cuneo's garrison was too small. He had been forced to recall garrisons east of Turin, at Asti, Villanuova, Chivasso, and Cherasco, to rebuild his army, but debated how best to increase the number of Cuneo's defenders.

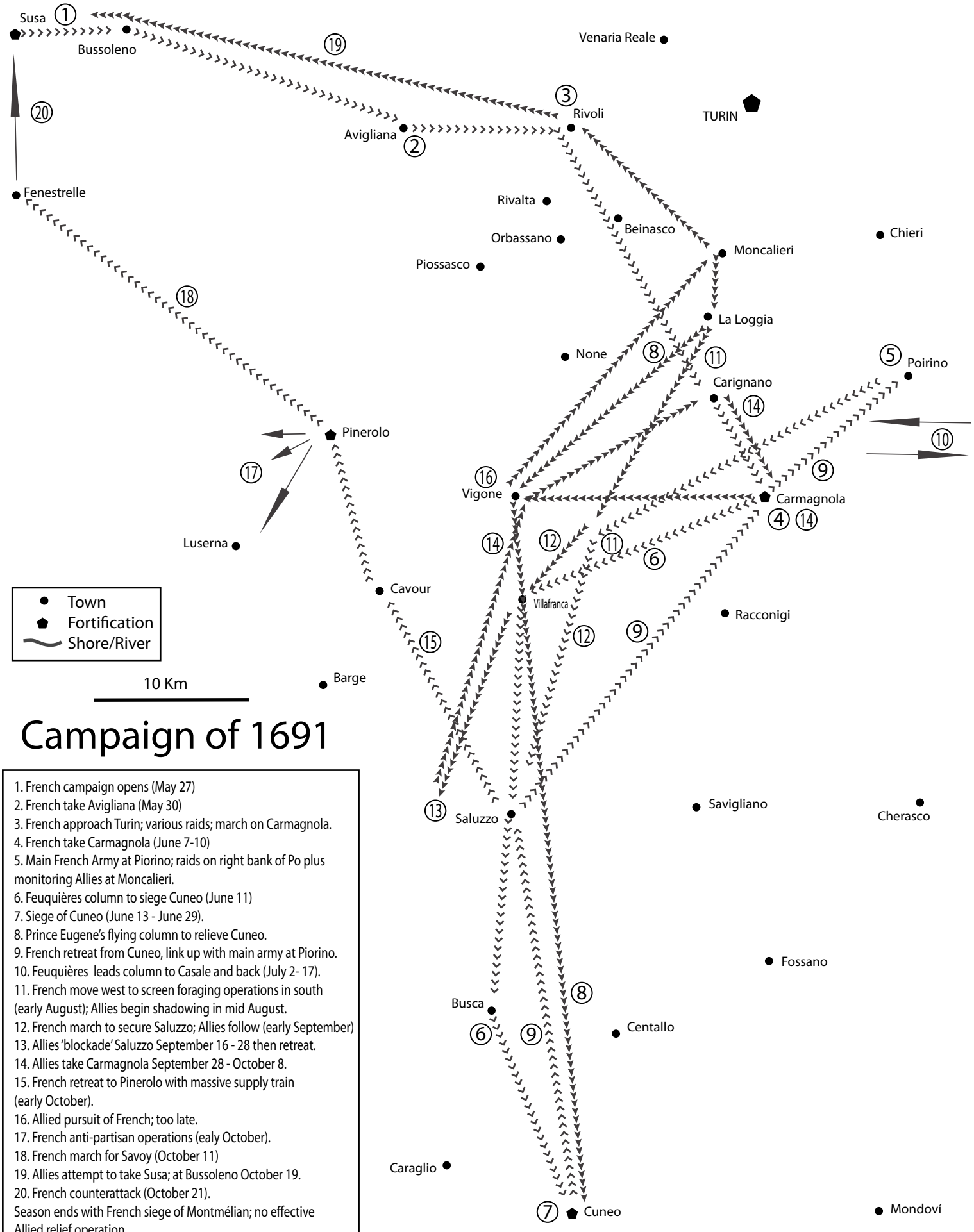
Cuneo (or Coni, as it was usually called) lay in the region of Mondoví. Mondoví had until a fairly recent war been under Genoese sway, had some of the trappings of a free republic, and was frequently at odds with the central government at Turin. Certain elements had called upon France to aid them and Catinat was assured that the gates would be opened upon the approach of a French column as the precursor to a general rising.

Unfortunately, the actual plot was a small one, the ringleaders were all arrested in a timely fashion, and the French found the fortress held firmly against them. *Conti* di Roero (Rovere) is suspected of having being in on the plot, but apparently a commissar was sent from Turin to stiffen his resolve.

Admittedly the loyal garrison was only a small contingent of 500 Mondoví militia augmented by 500 Vaudois, but Catinat had made no provision for a lengthy siege – he lacked the resources to even try – and his army was forced to withdraw, not without loss of honour, as will be recounted.

As can be seen in the accompanying diagram, Cuneo was a substantial town, sited in the wedge of land between the Stura and Gesso rivers, so that any assault would have to come from the south. It was also easy to reinforce, since a besieger would need to have three


A. Bastion d'Elme
B. Bastion de Notre Dame
C. Bastion de Careil
D. Bastion de l'Hopital
E. Bastion Francois
F. Baston de St. Anne
G. Bastion de St. Jaque
H. Porte de la Pierre
J. Magazine
K. Notre Dame
L. Redoubt
M. Town House
N. Jesuits
P. Hospital
Q. Barracks
R. Governors's
S. Arsenal
T. St. Ambrose
U. Small Redoubt
V. Turin Gate
W. Nice Gate
X. Citadel (ruins)
Stura River
Turin Road
Turin Road
Cherasco Road
Gesso Torrent
Gesso Torrent
Stura River
Demonte Road
1200 feet
Plan of Cuneo



Campaign of 1691

1. French campaign opens (May 27)
2. French take Avigliana (May 30)
3. French approach Turin; various raids; march on Carmagnola.
4. French take Carmagnola (June 7-10)
5. Main French Army at Piorino; raids on right bank of Po plus monitoring Allies at Moncalieri.
6. Feuquières column to siege Cuneo (June 11)
7. Siege of Cuneo (June 13 - June 29).
8. Prince Eugene's flying column to relieve Cuneo.
9. French retreat from Cuneo, link up with main army at Piorino.
10. Feuquières leads column to Casale and back (July 2- 17).
11. French move west to screen foraging operations in south (early August); Allies begin shadowing in mid August.
12. French march to secure Saluzzo; Allies follow (early September)
13. Allies 'blockade' Saluzzo September 16 - 28 then retreat.
14. Allies take Carmagnola September 28 - October 8.
15. French retreat to Pinerolo with massive supply train (early October).
16. Allied pursuit of French; too late.
17. French anti-partisan operations (ealy October).
18. French march for Savoy (October 11)
19. Allies attempt to take Susa; at Bussoleno October 19.
20. French counterattack (October 21).

Season ends with French siege of Montmélian; no effective Allied relief operation.

separate contingents, separated by the rivers, in order to completely cover the approaches. Furthermore, there were numerous ravines leading up into the hills of eastern Mondoví which could be used to smuggle supplies and reinforcements in. The French lacked the forces to form both a strong assault formation and a strong eastern guard.

[The diagram, based on a map of 1747, shows outer defenses on the southern side which do not appear on earlier maps, including one drawn in 1743. They would thus have been constructed in preparation for the more serious siege of 1744. The diagram also shows the Citadel in ruins. The Citadel was probably razed in 1641 when the French general Harcourt captured the city. Cuneo was ignored in the War of the Spanish Succession, the Citadel was already ruinous in 1743/44 when the Gallispan army laid siege to it, and it was not destroyed during the present war. Therefore, it was likely in ruins during the current siege. Napoleon later tore down all of Cuneo's walls, as he did to so many other sites.]

Feuquières led the forces initially allocated to the siege, consisting of the regiments Vendôme, Clerambault, Catinat, Tournon, and Molac, plus the cavalry regiment Mauroy and the Grammont Dragoons, along with a few cannon. He left Carmagnola on June 11 and arrived before Cuneo after a march of some 50 Km, on June 13.

[The régiment *Flandre was sent to the town of Saluzzo, and that of Beaujolais to Savigliano (which had been held by* régiment *Vendôme) and Fossano, the remaining principal towns of the region.]*

Upon their arrival the French forded the Stura River and occupied the Tower of Bonada, a detached fort within cannon range of the fortress. Expecting a delegation to come out and welcome him, Feuquières was surprised when he was greeted by a murderous fire. Suffering casualties, he pulled back out of range, camping at the sanctuary of Madonna-delgi-Angeli, 2,000 meters from the town center, on the left bank of the Gesso River.

[The tower is not shown on the diagram, nor on other maps of the period, and was probably just off the diagram's bottom edge.]

Later that day the garrison sortied. Being of a Gallic disposition, Feuquières responded, assaulting a demi-lune manned by 100 Vaudois with the grenadier companies of regiments Catinat and Clerambault. They were repulsed with the loss of about 50 men.

[Which of the demi-lunes attacked is not stated, but assuming the outer works were added later, that of Balbiano, the one covering the Nice Gate (site 'W') is the most likely. The French made this their main target during the siege.]

A report of the opposition the French were facing yielded reinforcements: the regiments of Bretagne, Famechon, Vexin, Tournaisis, Robecq, and a battalion of fusiliers (that is, of the Artillery), plus the Chastelet Horse and Auxillon Dragoons, six 24-pounder cannon and two small mortars with 500 bombs, supervised by officers of the Artillery, plus a supply train, *lieutenant général* Vivien de Bulonde commanding. In all, the French would employ 13,000 men in the siege.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Savoy, desperate for reinforcements, called out his royal militia and vassals, as he had done in 1690. The Governor of Mondoví was also ordered to send troops from his bailiwick, including the Saluzzo regiment, some Imperial companies, and 500 royal militia under the *marchese* di Voghera. About 3,000 men in all, plus a convoy of provender and munitions.

Sometime before June 18, Catinat, who had the Allied army under observation, sent a courier to Feuquières warning him of these measures. The Grammont Dragoons were detailed to intercept, but before they could cross the Gesso they took a prisoner who reported the presence of the convoy not more than 1,000 meters away on the other bank.

The colonel of Grammont's sent word he was about to attack the convoy and requested reinforcements, but before he could make his crossing the enemy, alerted, passed their supply train into the town behind a screen of troops. The Mondoví militia were partially dispersed in the French attack, but the regiment of Saluzzo and other regular forces, some 1,200 men at least, made it into the town, assisted by a sortie by the garrison. This was on June 14.

Feuquières reorganised his troops to prevent another such event. The assaulting force remained between the Stura and the Gesso, but an observation corps was created and camped on the right bank of the Gesso.

Bulonde arrived on June 17 or 18 and took command of the siege. There are insinuations, which may stem from the pen of Feuquières, that Bulonde's appointment was intended as a deliberate slight of Feuquières.

Bulonde pushed the siege energetically. By June 18 the saps had been pushed to within pistol shot of the walls for a loss of only 12 men. On June 19 a battery of cannon and a battery of mortars were unmasked, the cannon at dawn and the mortars toward nightfall. The cavalry collected fascines. The garrison continued a spirited resistance. Andre Saulces names two engineers, Garoe and Guibert, noted for their skill at foiling French engineering tricks. The besiegers began to suffer many casualties.

The cannonade and digging continued until June 23. On that day, Feuquières, who was still present, and presumably the *maréchal de camp du jour*, tried an assault. 300 grenadiers and 200 picked dragoons were to secure the covered way and attack the demi-lune of Balbiano, which protected the Nice Gate. The attack would be executed by 3 bodies of men, supported by additional troops.

The advance proved slow and costly, with the loss of the colonel of Tournaisis among lesser men, but the French at last reached the demi-lune, took it at sword-point, and

pressed the defenders to the postern gate. This was where the colonel was killed. Resistance was fierce. Roero brought up cannon to the flanking bastions and began firing at the demi-lune.

[The sources call these bastions Caraglio and Madonna del Bosco. On the diagram they are called d'Elme and Notre Dame. The latter is obviously the Madonna, but Caraglio could be either d'Elme or the demi-lune on the right of Balbiano.]

The *comte* de Vaudrey, commanding the grenadiers of Tournon, led 10 men across the bridge into the city before his band was overwhelmed, the count falling with 32 wounds on his body. Retreating to the demi-lune, the besiegers were attacked in flank and could not hold. Neither could they hold the covered way. The assault had to be abandoned. In this encounter the French lost either 1,000 or 1,600 men and the garrison 150.

[Fortunately for the comte *de Vaudrey, he was taken alive and brought to the colonel of the regiment of Saluzzo, who turned out to be a relative of his. He received good medical care and was only incapacitated for two weeks.]*

A truce was called to bury the dead. Immediately after, the French launched a surprise assault that was decimated by the defenders' cannon firing '*chargé à Cartouches*'.

The besiegers had by now lost every one of their engineers, meaning the work had to be directed by relatively unskilled infantry officers.

Now it was the turn of the garrison. On June 27 they made three sallies, the most dangerous being one made at 2am, which got into the French trench system. Fortunately, it was only a 50-man reconnaissance force and did little damage. The next day a forlorn hope of 30 Barbets supported by the fire of 400 others, tried to rush the French trenches and overwhelmed the grenadiers of Clerambault who faced them. Counterattacked by elements of Flandre, they were cut off and suffered severe losses, though the French suffered equally.

The denouement began later that day. Catinat learned that the Allies were dispatching their ace cavalry general, Prince Eugene, and the new Spanish Governor General, the *marques* de Leganéz, with 3-5,000 Imperial and Spanish Horse, to raise the siege and re-munition the fortress.

Montcalieri is 70 Km from Cuneo as the crow flies. The bulk of the French were at Piorino (often called the Camp of Gora in the sources), in the country on the right bank of the Po, 16 Km southeast of Moncalieri, where they had been since June 5 or June 6, taking *contributions* and causing mayhem. Catinat mustered as many regiments as he could here, including the brigades of Sault, Grancé, and Sarre, the cavalry regiment Châstillon, and the dragoon regiments Languedoc 'Ancien and Auxillon. Most of the rest of his army was with Bulonde.

Prince Eugene left Moncalieri two hours before dawn, giving him a head start on *maréchals de camp* Saint-Silvestre and Prince d'Elboeuf, who set out to intercept him with 2,500 horse and 300 grenadiers. In turn, Duke Victor sent off a follow-up column under Parella.

There are two possible start points for the French, and two possible routes for the prince's forces to have taken. Either the French cavalry was at Poiorini, or at Pinerolo. The sources do not make it absolutely clear where this column was based. The routes for the Allies were by way of Carmagnola across the front of the French camps at Piorino, or across the bridge to Turin, then south on the left bank of the Po.

The bridge over the Po in this direction had previously been blocked by the French Rearguard located at Carmagnola: Brigade Sarre, plus the Jaufreville Horse and La Lande Dragoons, under *maréchal de camp* Bourg. But the Rearguard had just been pulled in to Piorino, leaving the way unguarded. However, the second route was more likely. This is borne out by the fact the pursuing French cavalry are next reported at Villafalletto, some 20 Km north of Cuneo, on the road from Pinerolo. This report also makes it likely the French came from the latter place and did not pursue the Prince from the main French camp.

The chief fact that comes out of this examination is that both sides were running free across each others' lines of communication and had armies whose component parts were widely scattered.

The French reached Villafalletto at nightfall on June 29, where they learned from stragglers that Eugene had reached Cuneo the evening before. Even the couriers sent on ahead to warn Bulonde had not been in time.

Eugene, warned of the approach of the French, decided to dump his baggage train and the militia he had collected, and race to the fortress. This allowed the French to inflict a certain amount of damage on his column, but it was worth it.

Because, when Eugene showed up, *général* Bulonde lost his head. What actually happened depends on the sources. In some, he ordered a precipitate retreat which turned into a disorderly rout, abandoning his siege train, his transport, and his stores, as well as his wounded. On closer examination though, it would appear that the High Command overreacted. Here is the report from Catinat's HQ to Versailles in the immediate aftermath:

At the Camp of Gora [Piorino], July 1, 1691.

The siege of Coni is lifted; those who commanded [there] so badly executed orders, and so badly took their measures, that not only was the siege raised, but on a terror, for it can not be otherwise named, they left a piece of cannon in the trenches, and three hundred bags of flour, and sixty wounded in the Récolets, where they were, among whom were several officers, and all this in

precipitation, without even seeing the enemy. M. de Saint-Sylvestre [bringing the reinforcements] arrived there five hours before Prince Eugene came to the defender's [sic] aid; and found this fine work done. M. de Bullonde throws part of all this on M. de Feuquieres, and M. de Feuquieres on M. de Bullonde; the truth is that these gentlemen have very poorly executed a hasty assault; despite positive orders that they were to wait for M. de Saint-Sylvestre and support the trenches until he arrived. The latter was enroute with a large body [of troops] and marching there nonstop. These orders, received in time, have not prevented our fine design from going astray. M. de Feuquieres said that in the evening the council was held, and it was resolved to support the trenches; That he even offered to do so with four battalions, and that M. de Bullonde might post himself in such a manner as to support and prevent his being attacked by the enemy on account of the situation on the ground; and that, although this deliberation had been taken, M. de Bullonde, at ten o'clock in the evening, gave orders to retire, and to march forward. M. de Feuquieres is accused of being the cause of the attack in broad daylight of the counterscarp, which is the principle cause of all this disorder. Finally, from beginning to end, they are both wrong: one, not to have executed the orders given to him, and the other by mischievous advice or pretence to be such [having followed them too closely.] I [acquaint you with] all this according to the little time I have to send it to you. Monsieur [Catinat] is in good health, with grief at this affair.

Hebrail. [Catinat's secretary]

Catinat's apportionment of blame seems correct, given what he knew, but even by this report the 'rout' was not that significant.

Versailles ordered Bulonde to be placed under arrest for having disobeyed Catinat's orders to remain in his trenches, but an investigation of the facts, and friends at Court, ensured his quick release.

Bulonde was actually forewarned of Eugene's approach when a peasant was captured trying to smuggle a letter to the Governor of Cuneo. The latter also received the news from a different messenger, but that is not the point. What the letters stated was that a corps of 5,000 Horse and 6,000 Foot was on its way, and that Eugene was requesting a simultaneous sortie. The critical bit is the troop numbers. Bulonde had nowhere near that number of men, particularly after Feuquières' bloody and abortive last assault. So, he raised the siege voluntarily before he was forced to. It should also be pointed out that he called a council of war and they backed his intuition.

According to some sources, Feuquières was not even present when the retreat began, having been ordered to escort a convoy to Casale. This accords with the limited number of regiments named in the retreat, Bulonde's actual decision to retreat, and also with the fact that Feuquières was not arrested. He may have been targeted for blame because he had prompted King Louis to order the siege in the first place, over the head of Catinat.

The Vaudois made a local pursuit as the French crossed the Stura, but the garrison as a whole remained in place. The French marched first to Villafalletto, 17 Km to the north, then to Savigliano and Raccogni. Regiments Vendôme and Catinat remained at Savigliano, while regiments Clerambault and Robecq went to Carmagnola.

Sources differ on the number of French casualties suffered in the siege, from 7-800 men up to 4,000. The highest Allied losses are put at 1,000. Material losses were not as heavy as the loss of prestige. The loss of the siege train amounted to the loss of one heavy gun, either forgotten or perhaps stuck. It is true that stores, and also 60 wounded, were left behind because there was insufficient transport, but the corps as a whole escaped, and did not disintegrate during the retreat.

For the Allies, especially the Piedmontese, the failure of the siege was an excuse for rejoicing. Duke Victor had a special medal struck. Cuneo was awarded special privileges and its defenders were given bonuses. The failure at Cuneo is reputed to have hastened the death of Louvois.

Feuquières meanwhile escaped the physical aspects of calumny and about July 2 or July 3 successfully marched off to Casale and back, an exploit not repeated during the war which went a long way to clear him of any dishonour.

As an extremely important aside, the death of Louvois, on July 15, was a blow to Catinat. The War Minister had been his patron. Form now on, the *Général* would correspond directly with the King. This was a great honour admitted to only a few, but it was also dangerous for Catinat, not only on account of the jealousies raised, but through the risk of offending his monarch.

The *Général* began more and more to confine himself to purely military matters, and became hesitant to take chances even in that realm, which irritated subordinates like Feuquières and Tessé. Louvois' successors, his son Barbezieux and Michel Chamillart, lacked the authority to push Catinat and they, too, became subject to the Sun King's micromanagement. M. de Chamlay became the go-between for the *Général* and the King, and he was the merest extension of Louis' will.

[Chamillart was technically only Intendant of Finances during this war (from 1690), but of course that meant his opinion had to be consulted. Notice too, that instead of one man – Louvois – there were now two men and two separate departments to deal with.]

Standoff

On July 4 Catinat earmarked the regiments Tournaisis and Tournon to join regiments Foret and Cambresis, and the Auxillon Dragoons and 400 extra mounts at a place called 'Vilsterlon', probably Villastellone, about 8 Km west of Piorino and 10 Km south of Moncalieri. No attempt was made to intercept Feuquières as he led these men across to Casale, some 60 Km to the east. Actually, much of the march led through Mantuan Montferrato, which was friendly territory. From his base at Piorino Catinat was easily able to screen the initial stages of the march.

The regiments mentioned above remained as the new garrison, replacing the regiments Quercy, Bigorre, the three-battalion Aisiq Suisses, and the Gange Dragoons, all of whom were brought back to Pinerolo for refit. The Swiss regiment disappears from the record soon after, so presumably they were discharged. (As mentioned above, this particular Swiss regiment was not contracted to fight the Spanish and refused to waive that clause.) Resupply was less of an issue. Casale was well sited to feed itself under anything short of total blockade.

On his return, Feuquières collected large *contributions*, burning the towns of Riva and Chieri (7 and 10 Km north of Piorino, respectively). The latter place paid the ransom but was burned anyway.

While Feuquières was visiting Casale, Catinat kept the pot stirred. On July 7 the Prince d'Elboeuf was sent with a detachment to Montà, 14 Km southeast of Piorino. Montà was a sizeable town and it also sat on a pass that gave entrance to the rich plains southwest of Asti. The French stormed the town and battered their way into the castle. The defenders fled out a secret rear door. The town was burned.

[D'Elboeuf was of the House of Lorraine; some of his relatives were fighting on the Allied side.]

On July 10 there was a cavalry skirmish involving 40 French against a troop of Allied horse, in which the French came out best, taking 10 prisoners. This was part of a more general operation to levy *contributions* from the villages in southeastern Piedmont. Some locales paid up and were spared, others did not and were sacked.

On July 17, with Feuquières safely back, Catinat began his withdrawal. This was the only year he was able to forage on the right bank of the Po prior to the (spoiler alert) Duke of Savoy switching sides. In future years he was either too weak, or had a gentleman's agreement with the Duke not to leave the mountains.

Saint-Silvestre took the Brigade Sarre, the Aisiq Suiise, the Jauffreville Horse, and the La Lande Dragoons to secure Carignano. *Régiment* Anjou held the ford itself. The remainder of the army held posts from the ford to Villastellone. Demolitions were carried out on a castle at Villastellone and on the defenses of Carmagnola. This took until July 22 to complete. *Maréchals de camp* M. du Bourg and the *duc* de la Ferté were in charge.

On July 21 the train passed the Po, forming its park to the west of Carignano. On the evening of July 22 the Advance Guard of Brigade Sarre and the Swiss set out for Piobesi Torinese, 6 Km beyond Carignano; the Swiss carried on to Pinerolo.

The main body broke camp on July 23 and headed for the Po. Catinat marched with the Rearguard, composed of the Carabiniers, 300 grenadiers, and the dragoon regiment Comte du Grammont. He suspected an ambush, and was not disappointed.

[The Carabiniers regiment was created this year by concentrating all the carabinier companies in the French cavalry to form 5 oversized 'brigades' of 2 'companies' each. Since 19 companies are listed in the order of battle around this time, it seems clear these are the pre-regimental companies – that is, just the converged carabinier companies of all of Catinat's horse regiments.]

The ambush was located in a defile somewhere between the French camp and the Po, probably very close to the river since most of the land is as flat as a billiard table. Prince Eugene, returned from Cuneo, was given 1,200 picked men from the regiments of Montecuculi, Taafe, one only called 'Allemand' (German), and his own dragoon regiment. They allowed the French to begin crossing the river.

[With the exception of the Germans, these are all well known Imperial units. The Germans were probably one of the Imperial line regiments as well. Best guess is the Brandenburg-Bayreuth Dragoons, one of those permanent/semi-loaned units.]

These made the crossing in 2 columns. Because the water was so low the troops were apparently barely aware they had crossed a river and suffered no loss of cohesion. When it was the turn of the Rearguard, Prince Eugene struck. The Carabiniers were thrown into disorder until personally rallied by Catinat, sabre in hand. The Grammont Dragoons lined up along a foot bridge and began to give covering fire. The Allied Horse lost impetus. Catinat and the *maréchals de camp* Saint-Silvestre and the *marquis* de Crequy led a counter-charge that drove them into the Po, where (curiously, given the low water) many are supposed to have drowned. Probably a literary trope.

The Allies lost over 100 killed in this action and 'many more' wounded. The French lost 20-30 carabiniers and dragoons killed and about 40 wounded, including a lieutenant colonel. De Crequy had a horse killed under him. Prince Eugene was forced to hide with his servant in the scrub for some time until he could rejoin his detachment.

That is one version of the affair, recounted by de Brasey. Broglie, the biographer of Prince Eugene, claims that the Allies had the best of the encounter, made against 3 squadrons of French cavalry, and that the French were

the ones drowned in the river. He also says Eugene advanced too far and was nearly cut down by a volley of musketry, and that one of his men saved his life by killing a French soldier who was drawing a bead on him. This last is very likely, given the Prince's nature.

Catinat set the Carabiniers and Grammont Dragoons to shadow the enemy while the rest of his army camped between Piobesi and Vinovo (a distance of 2,300 meters). If formed for battle they would be facing either northwest or southeast, but probably they were just in line of march.

While here he was reinforced by the regiments Royal Comtois, Nassau, Philippeaux, 2 battalions of Bourgogne, the Boufflers Horse, and the Languedoc 'Ancien Dragoons. He also ordered raids against Volvera, None, Castagnole Piemonte, and Piossasco. All of these places, lying in an arc to the west of the camp, were within a day's return march by foot, except for Piossasco, which was about twice the distance.

The *Général's* next objective was to cover the assemblage of a vast magazine at Saluzzo, which town was being guarded by the regiments Famechon and Gange Dragoons.

On July 31 the French marched to a place rendered as 'Auzasc' in French, probably just a farm since there is no hamlet with a name anything like that. On August 1 they were at Pancalieri, 11 Km south of Piobesi, on the banks of the Pellice. The next day's march was delayed because the rains had made it too swollen to cross on foot – a bridge had to be built.

The bulky wagon train could ford, however, and did so, camping on the night of August 2 at Villafranca Piemonte, 8 Km to the southwest, along with the Reserve (La Lande and Bretagne Dragoons and the Chastelet Horse).

After crossing the Po on August 3 the army rejoined the baggage at Villafranca before moving about 5 Km southwest to Cardè, where another bridge was constructed on August 5. The river in question was the Po, which at this point is flowing down from Monte Viso in an easterly direction. Cardè is only 4 Km or so northeast of Staffarda.

While this bridge was being built, the *marquis* de Grancé took a detachment of 1,000 fusiliers, 200 dragoons, and 200 grenadiers to beat the woods of Scarnafigi, 10 Km to the southeast. There had been reports of large bands of peasants skulking there in entrenched positions. Just a rumour. The countess who owned the woods gave the men wine and grain to avoid having her village sacked. Arriving back at camp around 2-3am, the men were given a day's rest before setting out.

Having built the bridge, which was to facilitate the movement of supply convoys north from Saluzzo, the next stop for the Army was back toward the north. They marched 11 Km northeast to Faule, not far from Pancalieri and just east of the confluence of the Pellice and Po rivers, where the latter begins to bend to the north. Faule lies south of the latter, near the start of the bend. The Army remained camped here from August 7 to August 12. The regiments Clerambault and Robecq came from Carmagnola, and the St Valery and Narbonne Horse also arrived.

[De Brasey supplies an order of battle for this camp:

CinC général Catinat
MdC Saint Silvestre & LG Langalerie
MG d'Atiene
MdC & Commander of the Infantry Feuquières
M des Logis de Army Mauroy
Commander of Cavalry Servon

Numbers are squadrons for mounted troops and battalions for foot.

<u>1st line</u>
Brigade Grammont (dragoons):
Grammont 3, Catinat 3 (in 2nd line)
Brigade Saint Vallerie (horse):
Pelleport 2, Saint Valerey 2, Servon 2
Brigade Philippeaux (horse):
Philippeaux 3, Narbonne 3
Brigade Famechon (foot):
Famechon x1, Bourgogne x2, Feuquieres x1
Brigade Grancé (foot):
Flandres x1, Thianges x1, Ryl Comtois x1, Grancé x1
Brigade Renac or Sault (foot):
Sault x1, Alsace x2, Medoc x1
Brigade de la Ferté (foot):
La Marine x2, Conde x1, Languedoc x1
Brigade Chastillon (horse):
Grignan 2, Chastillon 3
Brigade Varenne (horse):
Anjou 2, Nassau-Saarbrücken 3, Varenne 2
Brigade Fimarcon (dragoons):
Mestre de Camp 3, Gange 3, Fimarcon 3 (in 2nd line)

<u>2nd line</u>
MdCs Comte de Bourg, Prince d'Elboeuf, Crequey

Brigade St Maurice (horse):
Manderscheidt 3, St Maurice 3
Brigade Molac (horse):
Molac, 3, Mauroy 3
Brigade Clerambault (foot):
Vexin x1, La Marche x1, Bigorre x1, Clerambault x1, Artois x1
Brigade Sorbecq (foot):
La Sarre x1, Sorbecq x3, Beaujolais x1
Brigade Prince de Robecq (foot):
Bretagne x1, Hainault x1, Perigord x1, Querci x1, Robecq x1
Brigade du Plessis (horse):
Josfreville 3, du Plessis 3
Brigade Montgommery (horse):
Montgommery 3, Boufflers 3

<u>Reserve</u>
Marquis du Camboult Commandant

19 companies of Carabiniers
La Lande Dragoons x3
Chastelet Horse x3
Bretagne Dragoons x3

Artillery
M de Cray Commandant
Le Sieur de Laparat Chef d'Ingenieurs (11 men?)
30 cannon, 1 battalion of fusiliers, 2 companies of canoniers.]

About this time, the French suffered two minor disasters. Huguenot forces in the Val d'Aosta, probably coming from Switzerland as reinforcements, defeated a large French supply column before it could evacuate the valley, and Larré was beaten while trying to take the Vaudois redoubt of Fort Mirabouc (located on the Col Giulian at the head of the Val Luserna).

Reinforcements

On August 12 Catinat crossed the Po, shifting forward about 3 Km to Pancalieri. The reason given for this is that he had heard the Allies were being reinforced by Bavarian troops and made a preemptive move to a better position in case they attacked. He remained here until September 3, awaiting the Allies' next move. Another reason for his move may have been to provide a better base for foraging parties operating north of the Po and Pellice rivers.

These 'Bavarians' were actually 13,000 German troops from the Holy Roman Empire, including a large contingent of Württemburgers. There were another 5-7,000 actual Bavarian troops. All were commanded by Duke Max Emmanuel, Elector of Bavaria. This gave the Allies a total of 40-45,000 men, organised in 3 corps: the Imperials under Eugene (Horse) and Carafa (Foot), the Spanish, under Louvigny and Leganéz, and the Piedmontese or Sabaudians under Duke Victor and Parella. The Huguenot Charles Schomberg commanded the Protestant troops, colloquially known as 'English', as auxiliaries of Duke Victor's corps.

[The Elector's staff consisted of the generals Carafa and Commerci, Prince Eugene, Counts Pálffy, Arco, Taafe, and Salabourg, and Baron Steinau, Arco and Steinau were Bavarians, the rest Imperials. Duke Victor was co-commander but deferred to the 'expert'.]

The actual Bavarian units – 2 horse, 1 dragoon, and 2 foot regiments – only left Bavaria at the end of June, arriving in Italy via Lake Como. The delay was partly due to the fact that Prince Eugene had to visit the Elector and offer him the job, and party due to the Elector being under the weather.

The troops arrived in stages at Turin around mid-August. There was also an artillery train that arrived at Milán on August 23 and at Turin at the start of September. The Elector arrived at Turin on August 19.

High hopes were entertained of Duke Max, taker of Belgrade, but his performance in Italy was less than stellar. Perhaps his illness lingered. He was a good general, something of a womanizer, but his appointment was made because the Imperial reinforcements were made up of regiments that would only fight under an electoral prince of the Empire. The various Imperial generals, and even Prince Eugene, did not qualify.

Unfortunately, the Elector's arrival created new problems. The Spanish had an irritating habit of always demanding precedence in every undertaking. Among other things, this meant nothing could be started until they showed up. Until now, this had been less of an issue because they, the Imperials, and the Sabaudians were technically three separate armies working together. Under the Elector, the Army was supposed to be a unified whole and questions of precedent became paramount. The Spanish branch of the house of Habsburg was the elder, ergo…

[As an aside, the source on the Bavarian regiments blames petty jealousies, divergent aims, and Spanish feebleness for the failure of the Allies various endeavours, along with the selfishness of Duke Victor.]

Fortunately, the Elector saved the situation by granting them separate camps and separate march routes, and, when the Army marched together, arranged that the Spanish Horse covered the Imperial Foot and the Imperial Horse the Spanish Foot.

[Langallerie recounts how he became lost one day and asked a Spanish soldier where the Allied camp was. The soldier took him to the Spanish camp, which was the ONLY camp as far as the Spanish soldier was concerned.]

Reinforced, the Allies left Moncalieri and took the field. Duke Victor wanted to screen Catinat while he sent a column up the Val d'Aosta to relieve Montmélian; he was already forming such a column near Ivrea. However, the Elector insisted the French had to be cleared from Piedmont before any other enterprises could be considered. The Allies therefore sought a way to bring on a general engagement.

Meanwhile, *Général* Catinat had not been inactive. On August 16 the regiments La Marche and Beaujolais were sent to Savigliano to guard a new supply dump being formed there. The Army scavenged the villages of Virle Piemonte, Vigone, and other places in the vicinity of Pancalieri. A camp of Barbets at 'Briueras' (Buriasco), 6.5 Km east of Pinerolo, was cleared by Feuquières leading a column of 1,000 fusiliers, 400 horse, and 600 grenadiers (it was a *large* encampment). The Vaudois had to be content with taking a few prisoners and horses in revenge.

On August 25 the French were ranging farther afield. Cumiana was pillaged, probably by Feuquières' column, which seems to have been conducting a coursing. Cumiana is 11.5 Km north of Pinerolo and 24 Km from Pancalieri, just south of the entrance to the Val Susa. 3 or 4 grenadiers of Royal Comtois were killed here by *franc tirailleurs*. On August 26 the *régiment* Quercy was, for some unspecified reason sent by itself to Pinerolo and then Susa, under the *marquis* de Larré (perhaps as his escort).

September 1: to protect grain shipments between Fossano and Savigliano, the *marquis* de Crequy established a flying camp on the route with the regiments of La Marche, Catinat, Chastelet Horse, and Bretagne dragoons.

September 2: the Allies captured some 60-80 horses at pasture.

September 3: Catinat fell back to the south, recrossing the Po and camping at Polonghera, 3.5 Km away. (Within spitting distance of Faule.) It is not clear if Feuquières had rejoined him or continued to Susa or Pinerolo. This shift was made because the Allied army was approaching from the north. Crossing the Pellice suggests Catinat was no longer expecting to support any flying columns north of the river.

September 6: the brigades of Varenne and Montgommery (cavalry), with artillery and a body of fusiliers, augmented by the regiments Famechon and Gange Dragoons, marched to Casalgrasso, less than 3 Km to the northeast of Polonghera and about the same distance from Pancalieri.

September 7: the French army camped about 1.6 Km from La Mothe de Carmagnola (Motta). This was another short march; Motta is about 3 Km northeast of Casalgrasso and about the same distance from Carmagnola.

Race to Saluzzo

The enemy was close, camped just across the Po between Brillante and Carignano. The armies were probably around 4,000 meters apart, with the river lying equidistant between them. Later that night the French heard three volleys fired in the enemy camp, and there was speculation as to who was visiting.

The Allies, roughly 40,000 men, were waiting for an opportunity. They faced 27-28,000 men, equipped with 40 field guns. Duke Victor hoped that by interposing his army between the French and Pinerolo and provoking them by his proximity, they would attack him in a favourable position. Both sides had the advantage of the ground if the other advanced, but if Catinat tried to move around the Allies they had the advantage of interior lines.

However, the *Général* refused to attack. The impetuous Duke Victor then wanted to attack himself, noting the Allies' superiority in cavalry, but his council overruled him. Their argument was strengthened by an event that took place while the Duke and the Elector were on reconnaissance.

Catinat, whose army was moving westward into its new camp, was watching it defile about 5-600 paces from the old camp when he spotted a body of enemy horse on the edge of a wood, on his side of the river. He quickly ordered the grenadiers of Sarre – who happened to be passing him – to the attack. A lieutenant and 8 grenadiers advanced, firing three or four volleys and killing at least one Allied officer of senior rank. Meanwhile, 12 volunteers from the Grammont Dragoons and 20 Carabiniers moved up to the bank of the Po to cut off the enemy, which they failed to do. Encountering enemy troops on the opposite bank there was an exchange of talk, rather than fire, but this allowed time for 3 guns to be brought up which felled many of the enemy in their first discharge. The rest scrambled out of range.

The following morning, Catinat informed his camp that the party they had engaged was that of Duke Victor himself, accompanied by the Elector of Bavaria. The officer killed was the *marqués* de Mortara, the chief General of Cavalry of Milán, and the son of a Spanish grandee.

The same day (8 September), the *comte* de Grammont employed 400 dragoons and 400 infantry to gather forage in a massive operation south of the French camp. This provender was quickly dispatched to Pinerolo.

September 13: Catinat ordered the *battre la generale* to be sounded. This was the signal to 'make ready'. The enemy was on the march. The Allies moved toward Pancalieri, occupying the old French camp.

Meanwhile, *major général* de Areine organised the train and sent it to Casalgrasso. *Maréchal de camp* Saint-Silvestre was sent to Polonghera with the Brigade Feuquières. At 2pm the army followed the train.

In the night, the Allies crossed the Pellice and marched to Villafranca after barely setting up camp at Pancalieri. This sounds very much like one of Prince Eugene's schemes to confuse an enemy, but appears to have been Duke Victor's idea. It had been agreed they would march to Staffarda, *provided* no battle was fought unless Catinat made a stupid mistake, which was virtually impossible. This move would threaten Catinat's supply dumps.

The Allied cavalry was deployed along the line of the Po as a screen. The same night, Saint-Silvestre was ordered to Cardè, blocking the Allied line of march – remember, Cardè lies on the south bank of the Po and features a bridge over the river. At dawn he moved out and took a position opposite this bridge.

Catinat's main concern at this point was to somehow get his mass of booty out of the local magazines and over to Pinerolo without it being intercepted. This was going to be difficult, given that Pinerolo was some distance behind the enemy army, and would probably require a battle.

On September 14 Crequy rejoined the army, now at Moretta (3 Km southeast of Villafranca and about 5 Km from Cardè) bringing the mounted regiments Chatelet Horse, La Lande Dragoons, and Bretagne Dragoons. The Foot (La Marche and Catinat) were left at Savigliano, where 400 men were busy burning the town. 100 grenadiers from this force were sent to garrison the château of Saluzzo, which was to host the French baggage train.

The same day, Saint-Silvestre was pulled back from Cardè to escort the train from Moretta to Saluzzo, 13 Km to the south. It appears Catinat believe the best spot to get his convoys from Saluzzo and points east across the Po would be at Saluzzo itself, but he had to secure the crossings before the Allies could.

And again, on September 14, the Allies made the decision not to send a relief force to Montmélian but to remain concentrated and attack Catinat, or at least force him to leave the plain. The French, whether by coincidence or good intelligence, decided to pull up stakes.

To cover the move of their baggage the French remained drawn up for battle from 5pm on September 14 to 5am on September 15. Catinat had advanced right up to the Po, so that the opposing front lines were able to skirmish with one another. The French tried some cannon salvoes and the Allies made a display by riding their cavalry up and down the river bank.

In the night the French night watch took three prisoners by a ruse. Their picquets had encountered the Allied soldiers in a wood. One of them had fired at the French, but rather than return fire, the leader of the picquet started berating the patrol for 'firing at a servant of Duke Victor!' He then insisted the patrol prove their identity by returning to camp with him. He did not specify *which* camp. It turned out the French had captured the *marchese* di Palavicin, Duke Victor's Captain of the Guards, and two volunteers, one of whom was the *marchese* di Ville. Of course these men were well treated and sent back under parole, but it was a point for the French.

On September 15 the French marched to Saluzzo, in 2 columns. The rearguard, consisting of the mounted regiments of Chastelet Horse, Gange and Bretagne Dragoons, possibly 2 squadrons of Carabiniers, and 6 companies of grenadiers, was tasked with pillaging Moretta. Due to lack of transport they were forced to burn over 2,000 sacks of flour.

September 16: the high born prisoners were released after this move to prevent them alerting the Allied army. Acting on reports of enemy activity nearby, Catinat and his staff, escorted by some carabiniers and dragoons, investigated and managed to capture two more prisoners who reported that the Allied army had followed the French from Villafranca and was now about 9 Km to the northwest of Saluzzo.

According to the prisoners, the Allied Right was anchored on the village of Envie, and their Left on Staffarda, a front of 7,000 meters. Envie is located against the mountains, 10 Km WNW and Staffarda 9 Km northwest of Saluzzo. In addition to the regular army, 10,000 peasants under Parella were forming up in the woods to the east, near Fossano, and 6,000 more were mustering near Villafranca, on the French side of the Po. It seemed the plan would be to have the peasants envelop the French to hinder their retreat.

At the Allied council of war, Eugene argued they should hug the French so closely that they would have no option but to attack at bad odds. The countryside should be cleared of provender and the peasants levied. If the generals did not like this plan, they should break camp and march off to relieve Montmélian; Catinat would be unable to catch up in time to save the fortress. As the dispositions just described suggest, the first option was agreed upon, but circumstances worked against them.

The French spent September 17 digging in. Catinat had to make sure the Po crossing was in his hands, and protect the lines of communication stretching out to the southeast, where the last of the forage was being brought up to his camp.

De Brasey, serving with the Brigade Sarre, tells how he was stationed on the left-front of the line, near the Po, with the Reserve to their rear, and how his regiment fortified two small houses and erected a battery of 6 guns in front of their position. Similar deployments were made in a ring around Saluzzo, along the line of the Po, and along the roads leading to the town. Most of these were small redoubts and posts manned by parties of grenadiers, which would have been succoured by cavalry in an emergency. Their main role was to prevent partisan and cavalry bands from interfering with the French convoys.

The main army, which would deploy for a battle facing the Allies, had its own entrenched camp, arranged in a croissant shape on the high ground to the left of the town A spur of the mountains, really no more than a low ridge, runs down to Saluzzo here. The reader may remember the French storming it the previous year. The second line and the officers tents were located beside the suburbs.

Things were in no way desperate for the French. They were in a strong position, and well supplied. Though augmented by 2,000 regular cavalry, the peasants at Fossano proved unable to interfere with Catinat's supply lines, despite some skirmishing.

In contrast, the Allied camp was soon out of food, due to Catinat stripping the countryside ahead of time. Moreover, there were reports that the Imperial cavalry regiments were bleeding men daily, because they had not been paid. On September 28, the Allies were forced to break camp and retreat north. Eugene had departed 2 days before, with 2,000 cavalry. It had been decided to retake Carmagnola and perhaps force the French to come to its assistance.

[Eugene blamed the Bavarian Elector for the faulty execution of the encounter at Saluzzo.]

Catinat did not break camp for a few days. Once the Allies marched away, the *Général* sent cavalry to shadow

them, but the rest of his force was employed in collecting stores.

The Allies marched first to Cardè (September 26), thence to Moretta, and finally to Carmagnola, which they besieged. Of course, they claimed that had been their intention all along. Actually, Duke Victor was looking for some way to redeem his prestige, and perhaps acquire enough booty to satisfy his men. From the Allied perspective, taking Carmagnola would deny Catinat his last fortified base on the plain.

[Andre Saluces reports that on the march, Victor Amadeus was beset by the peasantry crying out for relief; he and his suite sold their gold ornaments.]

The campaigning season was winding down. Unable to take Cuneo, it seems Catinat had decided to once again leave the plains for the winter, abandoning Carmagnola. He would have liked to retain it, but was not going to relieve it. Instead, he left the garrison, which was a small one, in place to occupy Duke Victor's attention while he shuttled his grain convoys to Pinerolo. Carmagnola had already shipped most of its stores via the Po to Saluzzo while the Allies were facing Catinat. De Brasey writes of wharves piled high with materiel from Carmagnola.

Maréchal de camp Crequy was ordered to abandon Savigliano and bring out all the ammunition and provender. For the job he was given 2,500 men from the regiments Vendôme, La Marche, Beujolais, and Catinat, 2 companies of régiment Sorbecq, and 1 squadron of the La Lande Dragoons.

[According to Andre Saluces, the Allies overran the dumps at Savigliano on their march north. It is possible they did so and that the French accumulated more supplies.]

While the primary campaign was being waged out on the plain, probably around this time the *marquis* de Larré was fighting his own little war from Susa, using the regiments of Limosin, La Coronne, Maulevrier, and Quercy, plus 2 battalions of *régiment* Royal. These had raided some of the villages close to Turin, such as Pianesi Marcelllo, Casaletto, and San Giorgio (the last two were north of the city).

Second Siege of Carmagnola

The Allies opened the siege against Carmagnola on September 28, their advance guard of 1,500 cavalry under Eugene arriving the day before. Catinat only learned of this on October 2. They were deployed in a semicircle on the west side of the town. As was typical for the Allied sieges, the Imperials were given the center, by the Capuchin monastery, the Piedmontese took the right, at a fort called 'Mongut' on the Racconigi road, and the Spanish took the left, at another fort called the Madonna. All these posts were roughly 1,000 meters from the town.

[Some sources switch the positions of the Spanish and Piedmontese, and certainly the Spanish would be likely to claim the right flank, but the plan of the siege shows the Capuchin monastery on the west side of the town, and since Racconigi is south of Carmagnola, this means the Sabaudians were on the right flank.]

The Allied siege train only left Turin on September 29, but the trenches were begun, employing 3,000 peasants. Men were employed wrecking the sluices that diverted water into the moat (which had been repaired by the French).

The digging continued for 7 days. At first, the besiegers could only use mortars to shell the town, rather ineffectively. But, by October 7, the Allies had deployed 16 large cannon, and on October 8 they had 36, plus 8 mortars. The Spanish captured a redoubt on the edge of the glacis, and Governor du Plessis decided to beat the chamade. So far, his casualties had been extremely light – 10 men against a loss of 800 Allied troops by one possibly exaggerated account – and he did not expect relief. Hopefully, Catinat had got his supplies away safely by now.

[Andre Saluces says the investment began on September 28 but that the trenches were only opened on October 31, supposedly because it took that long to wreck the sluices and drain the moat, and the city surrendered on November *8.]*

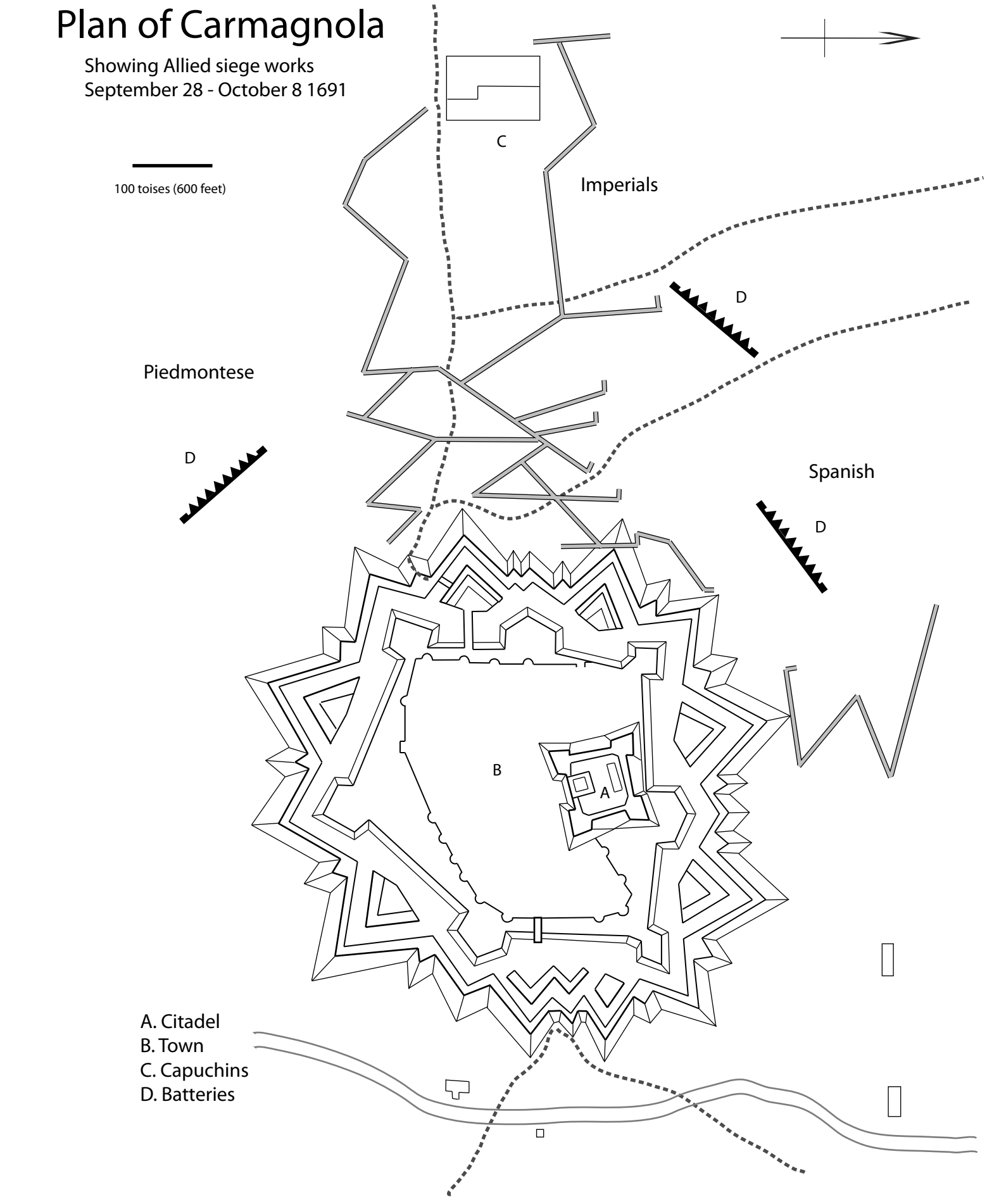
The capitulation required separate negotiations between each of the Allied parties. The terms were good. The 3,000 men of the garrison (less 10) could march out with drums beating, lighted matches, and 6 cannon. In addition it was agreed there would be no punishments for townsfolk or local peasantry who had worked for them, and that such persons could accompany the French if they desired (in this era, allowing a valuable resource like people to leave their lord's lands was still unusual enough to be noted). The wounded were to be sent to Pinerolo at the expense of the Duke of Savoy.

Such were the agreements. However, the besieging troops had other ideas, and the garrison was plundered of their weapons and mounts (including the Governor's own horse). Some of the garrison were roughed up. The blame is laid variously on the Imperial troops, carrying over habits learned in the Turkish wars, or on the Vaudois, who were uncultured heretics. Piecing together separate accounts, the Vaudois seem to have given most of the beatings and the Imperials done most of the stealing. Well, they were unpaid, and probably felt their commanders had cheated them of booty. This event was unusual for the time and place, and was much remarked upon. Catinat wrote to Duke Victor with dire warnings of revenge and the Prince Eugene wrote back that the French had started it by raping his country.

After the siege, Duke Victor marched to Vigone, 17 Km west of Carmagnola, on a report that Catinat, after wasting the district, was at Cavour, 11 Km to the southwest and the same distance from Pinerolo. But, the French had already passed beyond his reach.

Plan of Carmagnola

Showing Allied siege works
September 28 - October 8 1691



Withdrawal

During the siege, Catinat's army had begun its move. After pulling in his detachments and garrisons the *Général* had 30,000 men – he was now too strong to be attacked. On the night of October 5, supply convoys began leaving Saluzzo, escorted by the dragoon regiments La Lande and Bretagne, and the *régiments* Vendôme, La Marche, and Catinat.

On October 6 the Army followed, in 2 fighting columns with the baggage train in the middle, as usual. From Saluzzo to Pinerolo is about 30 Km. The army travelled northwest to Cavour (11 Km from Pinerolo), where it camped, facing east toward the enemy, with Cavour on the right and the Pellice River on the left.

On October 7, the French arrived at a place called 'Ausasque', probably Baudenasca, to the north of the Chisone River and only 5 Km southeast of Pinerolo. On both October 6 and 7 the troops heard single cannon shots from Pinerolo, and surmised it was a signal to the Governor of Carmagnola that the Army was safe. As recounted above, du Plessis surrendered on October 8.

The next couple of days were spent dealing with partisans. Posts were established at San Secondo di Pinerolo and Bricherasio to cordon off the Barbets operating on the slopes to the west. San Secondo is about 3.5 Km southwest of Pinerolo, on the other side of the Chisone, and Bricherasio about 4.5 Km south of there on the north bank of the Pellice. The mountainside between the Val Luserna and Val Perosa was heavily wooded and cut with ravines, with numerous hamlets. It was the primary base of the Vaudois, who could never be entirely removed from it, no matter how many sweeps were conducted.

The Barbets made an attack on Bricherasio but were driven off by a 1,000-man flying column under the *duc* de la Ferté. The second half of this operation took place the next night, probably October 8, when the Prince d'Elboeuf led 6 companies of <possibly> grenadiers, 1,500 picked fusiliers, and 500 dragoons into the valleys of Luserna and Angrogna. The column had orders to kill anything that moved and burn anything that did not.

The column's sweep lasted a total of 3 days, after which all the troops were recalled to Pinerolo. They must have missed someone, because they lost 60 men killed or wounded in the withdrawal, including a number of officers, and also had some prisoners taken. This was on October 9.

According to Andre Saluces, the French next camped at Avigliana, with their lines extended as far as Rivoli, supposedly blocking an Allied advance to Susa. Duke Victor advanced against them, merely to force them back off the plains, and Catinat marched back to Pinerolo. This seems highly unlikely, but it is possible that during the anti-partisan operations the French also patrolled in the opposite direction. There is also the fact that the Pope and Cardinal Forbin had been roped in by Louis XIV to discuss peace and there appear to have been some negotiations going on at this time. A move like this may have been to facilitate the exchange of agents.

On October 10, Catinat camped at the Abbey of Pinerolo, under the fortress' guns, as the saying went. That night (or early the next morning), the garrison of Carmagnola arrived, escorted by 800 Allied Horse.

On October 11 the French cavalry began defiling through the passes into Savoy and Dauphiné. The Foot either remained at Pinerolo or marched to Susa. Observing the Allies marching across the plain, Catinat paused to see what they would do; they appeared to be marching toward the Val Susa. At this, the *Général* decided to send extra troops to Susa over the Colle delle Finestre.

On October 15 the Bavarian cavalry (3 regiments) was ordered back to Bavaria, travelling by Lake Como over the Alps. The Foot would remain for a time.

The Allies Attempt to Take Susa

By dint of forced marching, the Allies were well up the Val Susa, at Bussoleno, by October 19. Their intent was to take Susa, and if at all possible, reach Montmélian in Savoy, which was still holding out. This last was highly unlikely, but unless relief came, the Governor would probably be forced to capitulate sometime during the winter.

On October 20, the Allies occupied the ground between Bussoleno and the Capuchin monastery at Susa, about 2 Km short of the town. They also probed the Colle delle Finestre and temporarily occupied the high ground above the town on the southeast side. However, learning that Catinat was approaching, and assuming he had most of his army with him, the Allied commanders ordered a withdrawal on the night of October 20-21.

At dawn of October 21, Catinat descended the pass at the head of 600 Horse. A number of infantry regiments followed some distance behind. Seeing the enemy was preparing to leave, he decided to pursue them. Detachments of grenadiers and fusiliers from the regiments of De La Marine, Royal, and Bigorre, took the left, harassing the Allied rearguard unmercifully and routing 3 battalions. On the right, similar detachments from regiments Folleville and Bourgogne chased 3 other battalions beyond the village of Meana, which was on the slopes to the southeast, about 2,400 meters from Susa town. The pursuit went all down the valley, only halting at Sant' Ambriglio di Torino because the Allied cavalry was out in force. Duke Victor established his camp here.

In the skirmishes the Allies lost some 300 men. The French lost 15 killed and 15 wounded. Duke Victor and the Elector of Bavaria were nearly taken while making observations from a church steeple, and were only saved by the actions of some Cadets of Brandenburg. The Allies

were too discouraged to make another attempt on Susa. The French grenadiers who led the attack were awarded 100 pistoles by King Louis' order.

[The Cadets of Brandenburg are not identified in the OOBs. They may have been a volunteer mounted unit or junior members of the Bayreuth Dragoons, possibly its dismounted component. Brandenburg-Prussia did not send any formal regiments until later in the war.]

Feeling secure, Catinat marched for Montmélian, leaving his opponents camped on the plain, arguing over what to do next. Ultimately, they broke up for winter quarters. A feeble attempt was made to relieve Montmélian through the Val d'Aosta, once it was realised the siege had not ended in a quick capitulation, but it was a *very* feeble attempt, hindered by the wrecking of the road by the French.

This had occurred in the summer. On June 18, *maréchal de camp* the Sieur de la Hoguette had taken a column of 5-6,000 men over the Piccolo San Bernardo and down the Val d'Aosta for about 45 Km to the fort of Bard, which sat at the last chokepoint before the road entered the plains of Piedmont.

A Sabaudian detachment just below the pass, at the hamlet of Pont Serrand (30 Km west of Aosta town) put up a good fight but was forced back. Another block at Ruitors near La Thuille, 1,500 meters away, was cleared on June 19, and another at Pierretaille (possibly Saint-pierre, 7 Km west of Aosta town) on June 20, and on June 22 Aosta town was pillaged. The French faced no further opposition.

At the time, it was feared that the French planned to take Ivrea at the mouth of the valley and strike at Turin from the north. This was one reason why they moved so hesitantly against Catinat. But de la Hoguette's main purpose was to destroy the bridges and roads so that any relief march to Montmélian would fail.

The Siege of Montmélian

King Louis' last order for Catinat this year was the capture of Montmélian. The fortress had been holding out since the initial invasion in the summer of 1690. This is often put down solely to a lack of French resources, but also had something to do with politics. Catinat could easily have besieged it by adopting a passive strategy in Piedmont, but his king could not make up his mind.

It all came back to the object of the campaigns, which were intended to force Duke Victor to the bargaining table. Taking Montmélian would provide additional security for the French in Savoy, but there would be sticky political questions about returning it to the Duke at the end of the war, as its location was a threat to the Dauphiné. So perhaps it should be razed? But what would be Duke Victor's response? The King dithered. He was more interested in Flanders, where he could exercise direct control and score big points.

A certain urgency developed toward the end of 1691, however, as a large number of Huguenots were reported to be massing in Bern with the object of entering the province of Chablais – as part of King William's Lindau Project, of course. Catinat finally received his orders and began his march on November 5, but fortunately, most of the preparatory work had been done much earlier in the season.

Montmélian is a goodly way from Susa, 90 Km as the crow flies, and perhaps 120 Km on foot. It sits on the northern side of a fairly wide plain, where the 'Chambéry gap' connects to the Isère valley. The massif of the Roche du Guet thrusts out of the plain at this spot, forming the north wall of both valleys.

The Isère flows southwest at this point, about 900 meters from the bottom of the massif. A steep knoll, the Rock de Montmélian, roughly tadpole-shaped, with the 'tail' pointing downstream – a glacier moraine, in fact – sticks out of the valley floor just north of the river, leaving a gap of about 300 meters between its foot and the foot of the massif.

The fortress sat on this knoll, and was elongated in form. As shown in the accompanying diagram, the fortress had three principal bastions, plus a donjon. The central one, Beauvoisin, faced northeast and overlooked the Old Town. The two other bastions were actually split into upper and lower sections, effectively giving the fortress five bastions. The names vary, apart from that of Beauvoisin, which was the primary target of the French. St. Maurice on the south is sometimes called Isère; its lower half was called Francin. The two halves of Ianonciade on the north are sometimes known as La Douca and Grenoilles. There were also two additional 'low forts', not shown in the diagram, which screened the outermost wing bastions; that on the north was called the Fort de la Tuille, after a village some distance away up on the massif. That on the south was Du Pont, because it overlooked the bridge over the river.

[The fortress was completely levelled in 1706 on Louis XIV's orders and few traces remain today.]

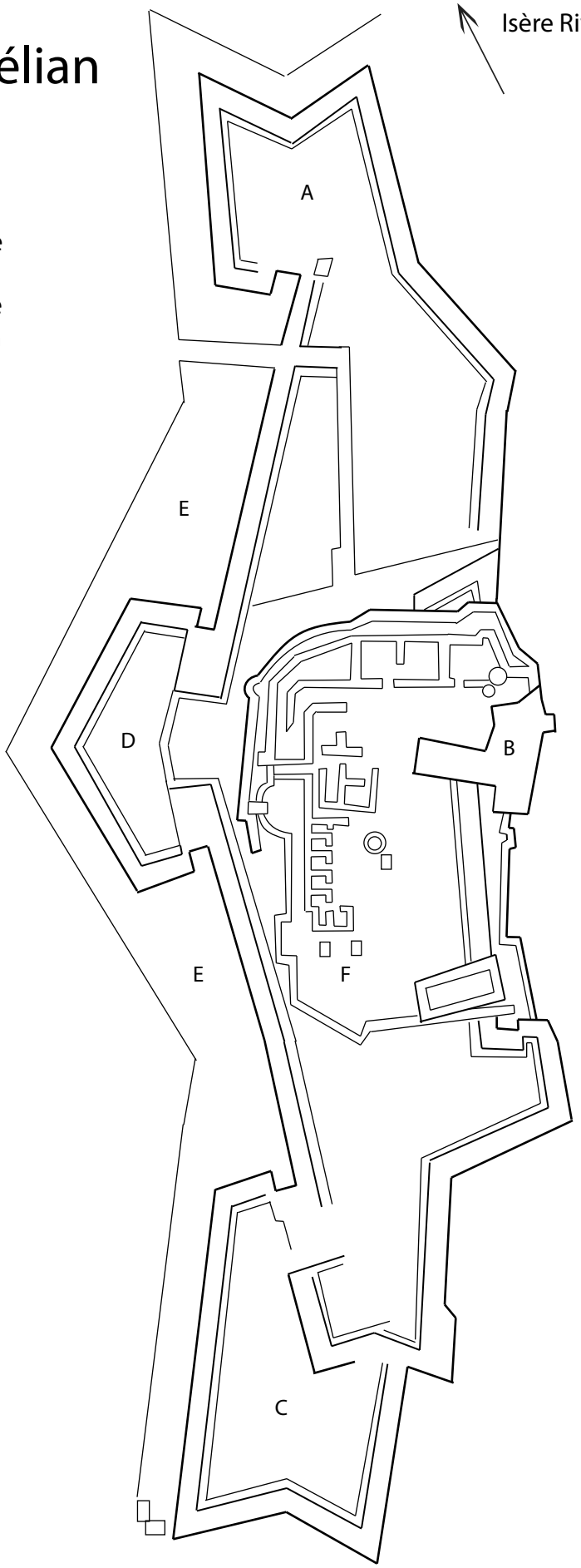
All the bastions were lower than the inner defensive works; the wing bastions considerably so, and the 'low forts' were lower still. Behind Beauvoisin, at the highest spot, sat the donjon, which was more than 9 meters high and overlooked a drop of over 50 meters to the valley floor; the western side of the fortress was pretty much impregnable. Fronting the town, the slope of the knoll was gentler, so here there was a fosse, in three sections, carved out just under the fortress' outer walls.

The Old Town, which was walled, lay on the northeastern side, but faubourgs, partially walled, stretched around the knoll to the north, and along the river bank to the west, with a bridge over the Isère just at the southern end of the old town. Some distance upriver, on the river bank, was

Plan of Montmélian

A. Bastion de St. Maurice
B. Donjon
C. Bastion de Ianonciade
D. Bastion de Beauvoisin
E. Fossé
F. Magazines

Old Town
on this side



Cliffs at back
of Fortress

the obligatory Capuchin monastery, and beyond it, a priory.

The principal road up from the town ran into the fortress between the bastions of St. Maurice and Beauvoisin. The spot was protected by a demi-lune called the Tete du Pont. Behind that, the road crossed a stone bridge over the fosse before entering the gatehouse.

The garrison was commanded by the *marchese* del Carretto de Bagniasco. Under him were about 600 men, a mix of Piedmontese (mainly from Mondoví) and local Sabaudians. The fortress was well stocked in general terms and had copious amounts of cannon.

The town had been taken by de la Hoguette during the summer. Trenches had been opened on the night of July 27/28 in front of the town, only 50 paces from the wall. On July 30 12 cannon attacked three of the wall's towers, the bombardment lasting until August 4.

On August 2 the *marquis* d'Hoquincourt, *maréchal de camp de jour*, led 200 men in an attempt to secure a church which formed part of the wall (or was built close against it) but enemy fire was too heavy. The next day 2 guns were brought up to play on the church. No assault took place, however, since the Governor permitted the syndics (town fathers) to surrender on August 4. The surrender took place at 4pm and the French took possession of the gates on August 5. There then followed a four-day truce to allow the inhabitants to freely depart. The French lost 60 men in the operation.

On the night of August 9 the French levelled the town and destroyed the wall. The garrison of the citadel was unable to prevent this by fire alone, so they made a truce with the French which held until the arrival of Catinat in November.

The final investment under Catinat began on November 14. Once the rest of Savoy had been overrun, the French, under *lieutenant général* St. Ruth, who was responsible for operations in the province until his departure for Ireland, had established magazines at Chambéry and Fort Barraux. These locations are equidistant from Montmélian (12 Km and 10 Km, respectively) to the northwest and the southwest. All that was required were sufficient troops. These arrived between November 14 and 15.

Catinat set up his HQ at a place called Tormery or Turmery, a hamlet about 400 meters west of the citadel, then made a reconnaissance with the Sieur Laparat, his *chef des ingenieurs*. They decided the approach would be easiest on the town side of the fortress.

The *Général* had 40 cannon, 25 mortars, and 18 battalions of foot: the brigades of Ferté, Famechon, Genlis, Renal, Clerambault, and Thoüy. In typical fashion, each brigade took a turn in the trenches on a regular system of rotation (by seniority), under command of a *maréchal de camp de jour* and his brigadier, with 6 engineers providing technical advice and 200 grenadiers drawn from the various regiments under an *estat major* providing covering fire.

Two saps were started, one against the Beauvoisin bastion and the other against Francin, with the honour of opening the first trench going 800 men headed by the *régiment* Navarre, under de la Hoguette and de la Ferté, at about 4pm on November 17. Fire from the garrison was heavy, but only 3 men were killed, and 12 wounded.

On the night of November 18/19 a communication trench was dug at the foot of the fortress. The low fort on this side was in a position to enfilade the work and casualties mounted to 100 killed and wounded. The new trench was intended to give cover to the workers moving back and forth.

From November 19 to November 25 batteries were constructed. There were difficulties bringing up the guns (which came from the western magazines, not Susa or Pinerolo) because it was most efficient to move them by water, but the flow of the Isère was an issue. However, they were placed into batteries as they arrived.

The grand unmasking took place on November 25. In all, there were 5 batteries of cannon and 2 of mortars. The first battery, of 6 guns, was called Henri IV because that monarch had once set up a battery on the same spot. It was at the foot of the Roche du Guet and overlooked part of the fortress. The second battery was called Louis XIII for a similar reason, but only comprised 2 guns. It was sited to fire at the rear of the citadel. The third battery was that of Royale, of 6 guns, placed at the entry to the communications trench where it could target the Chambéry gate. The fourth battery, of 3 guns, was called the Ville, and was located in the town. The last battery, of 4 guns, was called Francin, and targeted that bastion. One of the mortar batteries was located in the middle of the comms trench, and the other was at a '*place d'arme*s' in the middle of the zone selected for the assault.

The lower sections of the fortress were hit hard and soon began to crumble; cannon also began to be dismounted. However, the defenders kept their spirits up through incessant musketry.

On November 26, Saint-Silvestre and his sidekick, brigadier Genlis, took over the digging. (Brigade Famecon probably served in the interval before.) Saint-Silvestre was almost struck by a cannonball and the *marquis* d'Antin was hit in the head by a stone splinter. By now, the works were within '12 toises' (20 meters) from the primary fosse.

[A toise *in pre-Revolutionary France was exactly 6 feet, the same as an English fathom.]*

On the night of November 28/29 a new communication trench was dug on the town side and the first mortar battery began lobbing bombs.

On December 1 a new battery of 4 guns was unmasked to fire against Beauvoisin, which was deemed the weakest sector of the fortress. The next day, the last of the artillery was emplaced, a total of 38 cannon.

[De Brasey reports the presence of 2 perrieres *or antiquated stone-throwing cannon.]*

Normal siege bombardments were regulated to a certain amount of shots per day, but on December 4 Catinat authorised a dawn-to-dusk cannonade with unlimited expenditure of ammunition. It was the Feast of St. Barbe, patron saint of the Artillery. The same thing happened on December 4, which was the Feast of St. Nicholas, that being Catinat's Christian name. After these two poundings, Beauvoisin was shattered.

Now began the final approach to the breach. On December 7 the miners began to fill in the fosse, or rather, to create a ramp to facilitate movement. They also dug a mine against Beauvoisin. This went on until December 12, then they began to stock the mine with explosives and prepare the fuses. Side trenches were dug at the lip of the fosse for fusiliers who would cover the storming party.

Meanwhile, the infantry prepared for the assault. Saint-Silvestre and brigadier Thoüy were to lead it. Thoüy's brigade included the regiments Sarre, O'Brien (one of the new Jacobite units from Ireland), and Foix. The last named would make a diversionary attack against the adjacent bastion, Francin. The guns were ordered to fire 50 shots apiece from noon until nightfall.

On December 13 workmen carried up gabions and fascines to the jumping off points. They were kept on site to immediately begin work on the lodgement if the assault succeeded. The guns began firing slowly but soon picked up speed and began firing nonstop. At 3pm the mine was blown with good results. The assault began.

M. de Laparat, the chief engineer, led his work parties into the fosse to begin filling it in. They set the gabions up as a screen and a party of 15 grenadiers of *régiment* Sarre used these for cover as they supported the workers.

On the left, the attackers reached the fortress' springs – the water supply – and drove off 5-6 of the garrison, capturing 2 more. The blast from the mine had raised such a cloud of debris that the defenders could not see what was going on. It was a quarter of an hour before they could organise a firing line to try and pin down the attackers. When they did open up the fire was 'terrific'. Grenades were hurled down like hail.

Catinat, la Hoguette, Sanit-Silvestre, and Thoüy were all in the breach trying to bring order out of chaos. A number of officers were killed, mainly by grenades, but only 15 men were wounded. The garrison kept up the fire for 3 hours, only slackening when it became clear the French had secured the lodgement. Desultory shooting continued throughout the night.

This did not end the siege. The next step would be to fight into the core of the bastion, which might take several days more of mining and bringing up the batteries to fire pointblank, before the place was finally taken. Then, if the defenders did not surrender, the same process would follow against the donjon.

On December 14 preparations were made to occupy the bastion. An 'épaulement' was created to protect the workers from the fire of 2 cannon at the Fort de la Tuille. During the night, the miners moved up and began

tunnelling into the bastion's face. At 7am the next morning, Laparat supervised the setting of the mine, which was on the right side, 8 meters from the corner.

[An épaulement (shoulder) was a low berm of earth used to give cover from flanking fire.]

The garrison tried to cause a premature explosion by dropping powder barrels on the miners, as well as grenades and even stones. The company of grenadiers providing covering fire suffered some casualties. Saint-Silvestre was almost killed by a falling stone around 10am, while Catinat was nearly obliterated by a grenade that exploded in his face. Miraculously, it missed him completely.

On the night of December 15/16 the garrison redoubled their efforts to dislodge the attackers by fire. They did not attempt a sortie. 1 man was killed and 2 wounded.

By dawn on December 16 the mine and the *épaulement* were complete, the latter topped with wool bales and sandbags. This author may have mistranslated de Brasey, but it appears that the mine was some sort of prefabricated 'infernal engine' rather than a simple pile of powder barrels.

Despite the mine being ready, nothing of note happened until December 19. Obviously the assault trenches were not close enough. Work continued, but mainly at night, with the workers being withdrawn at dawn. The defenders seemed to have unlimited ammunition and the fire could not be borne for any length of time during the day. The mine, which was probably guarded, was not attacked by a sortie. The garrison did dig a countermine into the bastion, though.

It may have been that the defenders did not think the mine was ready. But, on the night of December 18/19 the garrison observed workers bringing up bags, which they assumed was gunpowder, but were actually sandbags. Alarmed, plans were made, but too late.

The mine was never deliberately fired, though. On the night of December 19/20, a French bomb landed on the garrison's countermine and set it off, probably detonating the French mine as well. There was a tremendous roar and concussion and the whole left face of the bastion cracked open and slid down. This was not realised immediately, but a party of French grenadiers was sent to investigate and reported the left side of the bastion had been split open, creating a sort of 'chimney' that looked climbable.

At first, neither the grenadiers nor an engineer and some other soldiers could get more than halfway up, but a way must have been found. Catinat ordered the regiments Limousin and La Couronne to occupy the sap head and prevent the defenders from securing the breach. Then, that night, the bastion was taken by 2 companies of grenadiers.

This disaster demoralised the defenders. On the morning of December 21, Laparat and Catinat came under fire while investigating the best place to mine the donjon – the engineer was wounded above the eye – but at 11am, the *chamade* was beaten and the *marchese* di Chamouset came out to parley.

According to the articles, the garrison marched for Turin with drums beating and flags flying, holding lighted matches and carrying bullets in their mouths. They were granted 3 cannon, but these were to be taken from the Duke of Savoy's palace at Rivoli, because it would not be possible to move guns from Montmélian over the Alps at this time of year. The French would pay their way to Avigliana. Catinat even loaned Bagniasco an escort. Those of the garrison who were locals were permitted to go home and to take any provisions they wanted from the stores, which were still extensive. Many of the officers had homes in Savoy and chose to remain in the province.

On December 21 the French occupied a gate, and the next day *régiment* Navarre garrisoned all the posts of the fortress. At 10am on December 23 the garrison, 200 men out of an original 600, marched for Aiguebelle, 20 Km to the east on the Arc River. King Louis was informed by courier on Christmas Day.

[Taking the valley of the Arc meant they were headed for Susa. It was the easiest route.]

Soon after, *régiment* Navarre was pulled out and 6 companies of the Royals and 3 companies of Bigorre became the garrison, with orders to begin repairs. The lieutenant colonel of *régiment* Foix became interim commandant.

The *marchese* di Bagniasco suffered some ill talk for his surrender, but no hiccup in his career. He was made a lieutenant general and created a Commander of the Order of the Annunciation, Savoy's highest military order. De Brasey commends him as a valiant officer who performed wonders with inferior material (his garrison was mostly militia).

This was the end of the campaign. The troops were dispersed into winter quarters. Many of the regiments were pulled off the Italian front entirely. Sarre, de Brasey's unit, went to Dole in Franche-Comté and later served on the Rhine. Catinat would have only a weak corps of observation in 1692.

The Allies had already dispersed, the Sabaudians among their fortresses, the Spanish to Milán, and the Imperials to Mantuan Monteferrato. The Duke of Bavaria left the scene to take up a new appointment as Governor of the Spanish Netherlands (though Langallerie notes he stayed in Turin as long as possible to enjoy the nightlife).

As a footnote, the fortress of Casale was nearly betrayed during this campaign by the *marchese* di Fassati, an agent of the Duke of Mantua. He plotted to introduce Imperial troops into the town but was discovered.

Ironically, such a move was against the wishes of the Duke, so Fassati lost his job, though his life was spared.

The Year in Review

1691 was a year of mixed results. Tellingly, both sides saw the year in Italy as a great success for France, mainly because of Catinat's talents as a general. But hindsight paints a different portrait.

As in 1690, all his efforts failed to move Duke Victor politically, so strategically the campaign can be seen as a failure. Operationally, also, the French failed to secure bases on the plain, and Cuneo was both a tactical and an operational disaster. Victor Amadeus was still unwilling to talk seriously of peace.

On the plus side, all of Duke Victor's possessions on the west side of the Alps had been occupied, giving the French a number of bargaining chips. The relieving of Casale would allow that fortress to hold out for another four years. But, the economic heartland of the Duke's realm was Piedmont, and as long as Allied subsidies continue to flow he would not run out of money or men. For his efforts, however, Catinat was made a Chevalier of the Order of St Louis.

From the Allied perspective, 1691 was a frustrating year. They had been unable to bring the French to battle, the enemy had again ravaged the plains, so that it was becoming harder to support a campaign there, and territory had been lost without any sort of matching gain for the Allies.

Prince Eugene complained that the Bavarian Elector's dilatoriness had permitted Catinat to do as he please all season. He also had nothing good to say about his immediate boss, General Carafa: "I know no one who is less of a soldier, and who understands so little, as Carafa" [*Malleson p. 38*.], stating he would prefer to resign than serve under him. The Elector would be 'kicked upstairs' to become Governor of the Spanish Netherlands and Carafa would be sent to Hungary at his own request. Eugene's influence was not yet great enough to have engineered these transfers, but the Emperor probably took his opinion into consideration.

[Duke Maximillian Emmanuel of Bavaria.]

1692 - Payback

"And the military operations, which seemed at the beginning of the campaign to announce great events, brought no change to the fate of the war, nor to the state of affairs in Piedmont."

[A. Saluces, p. 53.]

This year, King Louis' main strategic effort would take place in Flanders. French combat power in *les Payes-Bas* would be even greater than before – which of course meant Catinat would be shorthanded. Without the support of Louvois, it was proving difficult to keep the King's attention.

But, Louis was not ignoring the Italian front. He continued in hopes of a reconciliation with Victor Amadeus, and with more justification this year. The winter had been very quiet along the Alps. Not only had the Duke of Savoy shown temperance toward the French, it was known he had sought to obtain better terms from his allies after the latest French offers, so he was clearly willing to bargain.

Talks

In 1691, King Louis' demands included the following: France must retain the County of Nice, several Piedmontese towns, and Montmélian (not yet taken at that point). France must receive the service of 2,400 Sabaudian troops, including all three dragoon regiments, for use in Flanders. Those demands were made when

Carmagnola had fallen and Cuneo was under siege, and most importantly, when Louvois was still alive. But the War Minister died in July.

The death of such a forceful character led to a shakeup in the Administration, which resolved itself into a division of responsibility between several lesser lights, such as his son Barbezieux, and Chamillart the Intendant of Finances, plus the more moderate, if somewhat ineffective, Simon Arnauld, *marquis* de Pomponne. Pomponne and Chamillart had a useful alliance in the form of a marriage between their houses, giving them leverage against the more warlike Barbezieux.

So, by December 1691 Versailles had changed its tone considerably. However, this did not mean that other diplomatic players were on the same page. Remember, the Military had authority to conduct local diplomacy of its own accord. They were supposed to follow the same policy as the central government, but…

While the siege of Montmélian was being wrapped up, the *comte* de Tessé, by now governor of Pinerolo, hatched two schemes, one to suborn the Vaudois and the other to foment a revolt in Mondoví that would lead to the massacre of the garrison of Cuneo. As a good bourgeoise and a professional soldier, Catinat was appalled and forbade the latter scheme. However, Tessé continued to plot. As will be described the actual revolt never came off, but he acquired some useful backstairs contacts as well as Catinat's authority to conduct local diplomacy; it was felt the good *Général* was too honest and open for this work.

Duke Victor's own Minister of Finance, Gropello, visited Pinerolo disguised as a peasant. He adopted this disguise so frequently he became known to the garrison as 'The Peasant'. He had been district intendant there before the war, representing the Italian population, and knew the routine of the garrison, as well as the various secret passages in and out. At the about the same time, King Louis sent his envoy, the *marquis* de Chamlay to Turin for talks with his counterpart, Saint Thomas.

[Jules Louis Bolé, marquis *de Chamlay, was by profession a soldier, holding the title of* maréchal général des logis aux camps et armées du Roi*, and serving as chief assistant to Louvois and his son. He could have had Barbezieux's place but refused, primarily because the various ministries were family affairs and he did not want to step on any toes. Instead, he was sent on various diplomatic and fact-finding missions.]*

There were thus three strands of negotiations: those started by Catinat on King Louis' orders before war broke out, the State channel represented by Chamlay, and those begun by Tessé on his own initiative. Catinat was allowed to think his line was still open, but in fact King Louis was now beginning to rely on Tessé instead. It took a long time for the *Général* to realise he had been sidelined, which played into Duke Victor's hands. The official channel needed to be open at all times so that any private deal could be immediately implemented as a bilateral treaty, or made the basis for serious multilateral talks.

Chamlay visited Turin in March of 1692, bringing an open offer. France would indemnify the Duke of Savoy for all war costs, hand back all conquests, raze the fortress of Casale, and assist the Duke, in the event that Carlos II of Spain died, in obtaining the States of Milán as part of his inheritance claims. In return, Duke Victor would have to supply troops for Flanders and allocate a hostage fortress, which would be occupied by a neutral but friendly power, such as the Pope or the Swiss.

Such a deal included serious concessions on the part of France. Nevertheless, Duke Victor rejected it, feeling that with an army of 45,000 men, many of them veterans, he was sure to be in a better position to bargain at the end of the year. There were certain items of more interest ti himself that were not on the list, such as he Royal Treatment for his diplomats. He did send details of the offer to Vienna and Madrid, protesting his loyalty but clearly hinting that they ought to increase his subsidies. Pinerolo was made the sticking point. Knowing King Louis was not ready to give up this fortress, he could say 'no' without permanently closing the door to future talks.

It should be pointed out that the Duke did feel it to be a point of honour not to break with his Allies. This is one of those human quirks that are hard to clarify. Despite his reputation for treachery, the Duke felt himself to be a typical honourable aristocrat. The French offer had been made openly, therefore his allies ought to be party to it, and, if they made an effort to keep him on their side, he could not in good conscience openly break with them. It would be dishonourable. If the offer had been made secretly, there would be less shame in cutting a deal, particularly if his allies were failing to follow through on their own commitments – which was admittedly not yet the case.

However, Langallerie is of the opinion that if Casale *and* Pinerolo had been thrown into the pot, even made part of the open offer, Duke Victor would have jumped at it, regardless of points of honour.

King Louis also sent his resident ambassador, M. de Rebenac, and other agents, on a tour of the Italian capitals, trying to form an anti-Imperial League. As a backup plan, Chamlay had been instructed to "make Victor Amadeus odious in the eyes of other Italians" by publishing a manifesto painting him as the author of the war, in that he had allowed foreign powers, some of them Protestant, to persuade him to fight on their side for material gain, that those same powers were sending Protestant dissidents to fight on Italian soil, and that King Louis only wanted to bring peace and order to the galaxy…er, Europe.

The trouble with this message was that it contrasted with Duke Victor's apparent honesty in dealing with his allies,

which compared favourably when set against the stereotypical Italian duplicity that the 'northerners' expected from him. In other words, the Allies became more willing to support the Duke, not less. He was their man, through and through. Besides, if the other Italians rejected him, who else could he turn to?

The new Pope was a useful tool in the formation of a pro-French league, but his influence was slow to be felt. He was afraid to commit after Venice and Tuscany took an openly pro-Imperial stance. Some states, such as Mantua and Modena, were interested, but being under the heel of the Emperor and the Spanish, could not see their way to join.

(In 1691, the *marqués* de Leganéz defused a potential revolt in Mantua, which was primarily concerned with the quartering of troops, by evacuating the hot spots until things cooled down, then reoccupying them in greater strength with the excuse that he needed to a) blockade Casale, and b) obtain supplies and quarters to support the blockade.)

Only Genoa signed onto the French project, raising a few men. In consequence, the Chevalier de Noaïlles was dispatched from Marseilles with 33 galleys, 2 ships of the line, and a few galliots and bomb vessels. These carried a handful of regiments to Genoa, but when they arrived, the Genoese changed their minds, mainly because the Anglo-Dutch fleet had just defeated the French in the Channel and they feared the fleet would come all the way to the Mediterranean just to bombard their city.

Noaïlles instead took his force to Oneille, which he bombarded. Seeing the inhabitants had already fled inland, he landed his troops and pillaged the town, before returning to Marseilles.

The attempt to form an anti-Imperial League had failed, but the negotiations were not entirely fruitless. It was the second attempt to achieve a neutralisation of Italy and some of the topics discussed were added to the mix.

Allied grand strategy for the coming campaign, as developed by a council of war held at Milán over the winter, was nothing if not ambitious. The Spanish were to land on the coast of Provence, linking up with a thrust from Cuneo, while other Allied columns penetrated into Dauphiné, disrupted the French supply network and took revenge for past slights like the raping of the Palatinate. Casale and Pinerolo would be masked.

Who came up with this plan depends on whose biography one reads. Some accounts have it that the Imperials and Anglo-Dutch forced the strategy on Duke Victor and the Spanish, while others say the Duke hoped to recover Savoy and manipulated his allies. Both statements can be true without being incompatible. It should also be noted that William of Orange (now William III of England) had hopes of a follow-on offensive into Provence to shut down the French naval base at Toulon.

The Allies were not happy with Duke Victor's field performance to date, but they did not suspect him of treachery, only of blundering incompetence – and a certain unwillingness to bootlick. This is why the invasion is sometimes also portrayed as a stunt to prove his loyalty to the Cause.

Only the Spanish were really reluctant to cross the Alps, for reasons that have not been fully explained. Most likely, the Governor General had a standing policy of using the Army of Lombardy in a purely defensive manner because there were insufficient resources available to replace it. It is also possible they were more concerned with potential unrest in Mantua and Modena. Or, they may have felt the Imperials were a greater threat than the French; if Duke Victor slipped permanently into Vienna's pocket thanks to some brilliant success in Provence that led to a favourable peace on Vienna's terms, the Milanese would be surrounded by potential foes guided by a single hand.

[Several commentators bemoan the fact that as far as the policies of the Milanese Administration are concerned very little has been researched, thanks to the erroneous assumption that the reign of Carlos II was one of unrelieved Spanish degeneration and thus not worth the effort of examination.]

Preparations

Serious campaigning began at the start of the month of May. By that time the Imperials had begun leaving their quarters in Montferrato. The Spanish had some business to take care of first and would be along later. Even without the troops from Lombardy the Allies had 45,000 men against 15-16,000 French (10 battalions and 40 squadrons in their mobile force).

Duke Victor received a patent from the Emperor appointing him Generalissimo of all the Allied forces in Italy. General Carafa was unhappy with the way the war was being conducted and had been sent to Hungary; his replacement, General Caprara, had been advisor to the Elector of Bavaria. He was another of the Emperor's cronies. According to Malleson, Caprara "was unenterprising, avaricious, envious and cruel, careless of the comforts of his soldiers, and never possessing their confidence." [*pp. 38-39.*]

The French were concentrating at Pinerolo. The Allies mustered at Moncalieri, as usual, then moved to Pancalieri, where a grand council of war was held to decide whether to attack Catinat directly or go around him. The latter course was picked as the least wasteful.

On May 28 the Allied cavalry appeared before Pinerolo, followed by the infantry, which camped at Buriasco. *Général* Catinat positioned himself at Fenestrelle, at a spot still called Catinat's Field, where he could move to aid either Pinerolo or Susa.

[Over the coming years the French usually camped at Fenestrelle unless they were conducting active operations, and Catinat began the works that later became the fortress of Fenestrelle. The Allies eventually made their own

entrenchments nearby to observe the French, but no battles took place here, since by that point Catinat had a gentleman's agreement with Duke Victor not to enter the plains.]

Far to the east, the Spanish tightened the blockade of Casale as an integral part of their low-key operations against the Duke of Mantua. The *marchese* di Pianezza had been given 6,000 men to mask the fortress.

In the mountains, the Vaudois launched a mini-offensive of their own, with 600 men crossing into the Vivarêts and wasting the countryside; they set up a base there, and did the same in the Vallée Queryas.

This situation now remained static for a whole month, while the new commander of the Imperial troops, General Caprara, slowly sauntered up to the front lines. He had some difficulty obtaining pay for his men, who refused to budge until they had a reason to. Campaigning resumed at the end of June.

The Invasion of Dauphiné

"There is nothing to prevent us reaching Grenoble"

Eugene of Savoy, from the town of Gap. Malleson, p.40.

15-16,000 men were left in front of Pinerolo under General Pálffy, who would occupy his time by raiding the Val Susa. No attempt had been made, nor would be made, to make formal siege of either Pinerolo or Casale this year, because the Allies lacked a suitable siege train.

The 'English' (i.e., Huguenot) commander, General Schomberg, took 4,000 men up the Val Luserna and the Col Lacroix to attack the fort of Château Queryas, about 15-16 Km northeast of Guillestre. The intention was to threaten the main French magazines at Briançon, 20 Km to the northwest. Queyras was also a collection point for supplies coming from the region.

General Commerci commanded the Duke's Advance Guard, which marched south, followed by the main body. The Duke and General Caprara commanded the main body. The order of march (which would be typical for all the columns) was as follows: Commerci leading 5 dragoon regiments, an unspecified number of Horse, then the main body of 9 Piedmontese and Imperial regiments, including the Bavarians.

Duke Victor and the main column left Moncalieri on the night of July 20/21. On July 24 he was at Demonte in the Val Stura, about 21 Km WSW from Cuneo. Demonte was made the primary magazine. It was discovered that the passes were too rugged for draft animals so the army would be travelling light. Mule trains were organised to ferry supplies behind the column, but there were too few of the animals. This would probably prevent an extended campaign.

Duke Victor's column crossed the Col de Larche and descended to the Vallée Barcelonette. Rather than march southwest to the town of Barcelonnette and into the County of Nice, Duke Victor's main column, now followed by a Spanish corps of 10,000 men, continued northwest over the rugged Col de Vars and down onto the town of Guillestre. The days of the march are as follows: Sambuco on July 27 (a march of 19 Km), Larche on July 28 (a march of 23 Km), Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye on July 29 (a march of 13-14 Km), Vars and Guillestre on July 30 (9 Km and 11 Km, respectively.

The *marchese* di Parella, now an Imperial general as well as a Sabaudian one, has been given two separate and incompatible jobs in the sources. In some, he leads a detached force of 2-3,000 men up the Val Varaita to Casteldelfino, 34 Km west of Saluzzo (though on foot the march from Saluzzo to Casteldelfino is more like 42 Km). The column then crosses the Col de Longet. Guillestre was to be his target, but that town was a long way off; taking the Col de Longet means that he actually marched southwest to rejoin Duke Victor's line of march at Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye, either meeting the main column there or being a little in advance or behind them.

Alternatively, Parella's force is given merely as the Foot component of Commerci's vanguard. The former version of events seems more likely, both from an operational standpoint, and because he fought an unsupported skirmish at Saint Paul.

[The Bavarian troops were with Parella.]

It seems that the Spanish, though allotted to the main column, marched separately, partly, as always, because they were late and partly, as always, to avoid questions of precedence. They became the *de facto* rearguard.

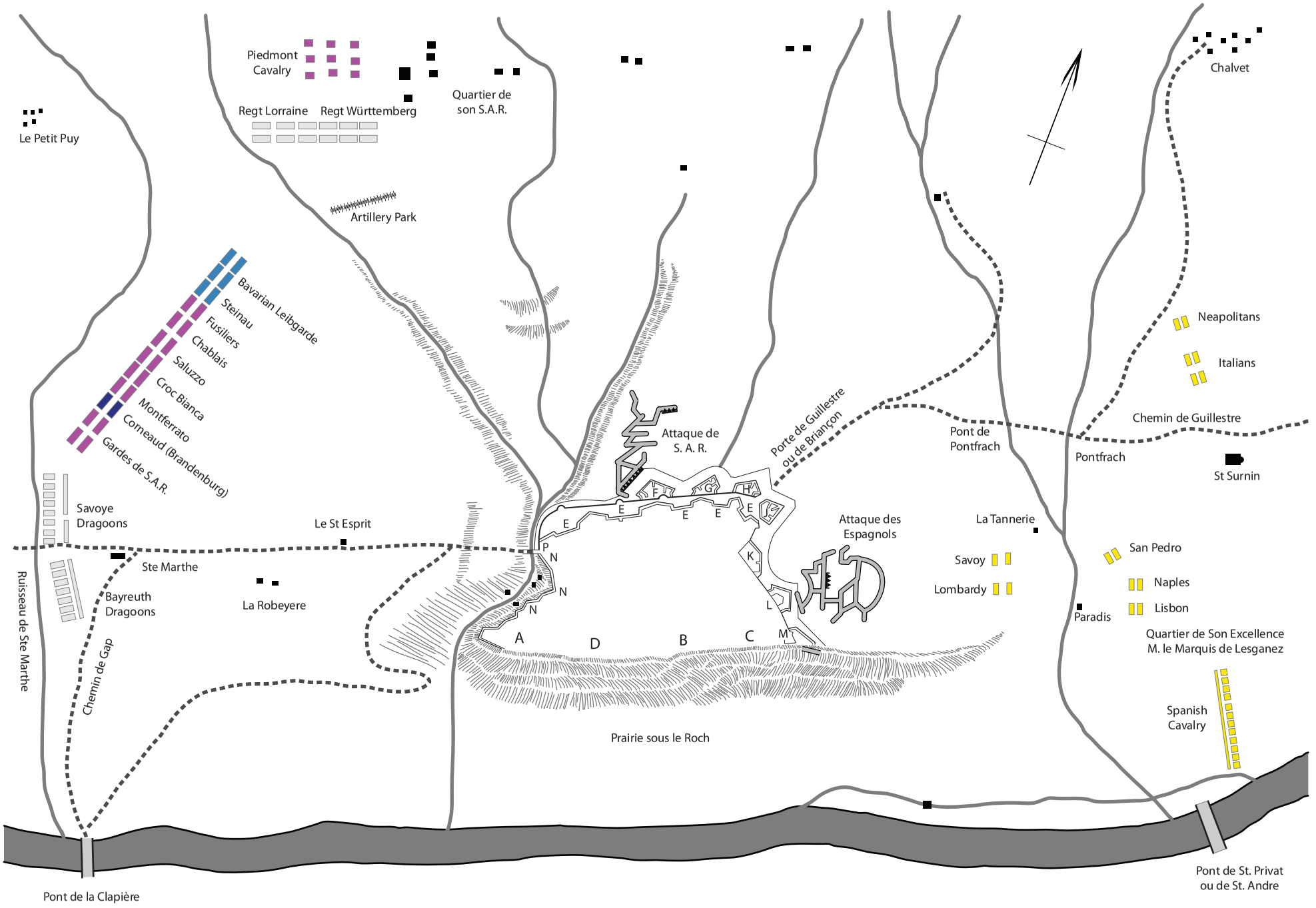
Guillestre is located the south bank of the Guil River, a tributary of the Durance. It was not much of an obstacle, guarded by 'a few Irishmen' (probably elements of O'Brien's regiment) and fell after a few days bombardment.

[The fate of Mont Dauphin, one of Vauban's creations located downstream from Guillestre on the opposite bank of the Guil, is not recorded. It may have been bypassed or the surrender of Guillestre may have encompassed it.]

General Pálffy, meanwhile, made an attempt on Susa, probably when he heard that Catinat had removed much of his force to Briançon (as noted below). However, the French were still strong enough to prevent an attack on the town. Or, perhaps, this was just a feint to recall Catinat.

Following the valley of the Durance, the Allies crossed that river at some point above Embrun, 16 Km southwest of Guillestre. Embrun was invested. The Advance Guard arrived on August 4. The investment was made on August 5. On August 6 the first trench was opened.

Embrun was a significant town that could not be bypassed. Though relatively small, it was the metropolitan see of the Maritime Alps. As can bee seen from the attached map, the fort at Embrun was sited on a long knoll, about 150 meters high, on the north bank of the



A. Le Roch des Religieuses
B. Archbishop's Palace
C. Capuchins
D. Governor's Residence
E. Interior Bastions

F. Bastion de Navarre
G. & M. Bastions de Irlandois
H. & J. Bastions du Regt. Quercy
K. & L. Bastions de la Marine

N. Regt. d'Ordonnance d'Argenson
P. Porte de Gap

100 toises (600 feet)

Plan of Embrun & Siege August 5-16 1692

Durance. The side facing the river featured low cliffs, and the end facing Guillestre was steep, so no fortifications were required here, but the other sides were easily accessible. Embrun had a ‘bastion-like’ wall enclosing a ‘simple wall with towers’, except on the river side where the cliffs served the same purpose. Larré had dug some hasty entrenchments on a number of low hills covering the enemy’s approach route. The fort was defended by 5 regular battalions: one of Navarre, one of Quercy, and 3 of O’Brien, plus 4,000 militia, all under *général* Larré.

[Some sources say 3,000 men. The sources say général *Larré, so he may have been promoted over the winter.]*

On August 7 Schomberg arrived from the direction of Château Queyras. He had tried to surprise that place but failed. Upon a report that Catinat had come east to Briançon, Duke Victor ordered Schomberg to bypass the château. His appearance at Embrun, and that of the 600 Vaudois who had been camping in the Vallé Queyras, allowed the works to be extended so that by August 9 the town was cut off. By now, the Spanish had also caught up. As can be seen on the map, the Sabaudian and Imperial troops attacked the northern face, and the Spanish the eastern.

A shortage of cannon hampered the besiegers, and the French delayed matters by making three sorties, in which they were able to wreck a portion of the most advanced works, but on August 15 the siege guns were unmasked. Enough damage was inflicted on the first day of bombardment for Larré to concede defeat on August 16. He and his remaining 2,800 men were given honours of war and permitted to travel to Pinerolo, on condition of refraining from campaigning for six weeks.

[Embrun, looking east.]

The loss of Embrun was quite a serious blow to the French. One of Catinat’s lines of communication ran through the valley of the Durance to Briançon, about 40 Km to the north. The town yielded 40 cannon, many provisions, and the provincial treasury. The besiegers suffered few losses, but among the wounded were Prince Eugene, General Commerci, and the Spanish general, de las Torres. Three officers of high social rank were killed and a nephew of Parella was badly wounded.

Leaving 4 regiments of Huguenots at Embrun under their brigadier, M. de Montbrun, the Allies marched on Gap, which lay on the border of Provence and Dauphiné. Once at Gap they could head south into Provence or northwest toward Grenoble. In fact, they wound up doing neither.

There are a variety of different accounts for the next few days. The most logical narrative seems to be that Prince Eugene led out the Advance Guard, consisting mostly of Imperial cavalry, including his regiment of dragoons, several days ahead of the main body.

The route the Prince followed would have been the same as that later used by the main body, from Embrun on the right bank of the Durance to Savines on the left bank, a distance of 8.5 Km. Then by Château Pontis (4 Km more) across the Durance again toward Chorges (another 8 Km). From Chorges to Gap, 15-16 Km. But, he may have spread his men out into several detachments.

At Gap he found that the garrison, if any, had fled. (The figure ’13,000’ is used in one source but this must refer to the populace as a whole.) The town was summoned and surrendered immediately, giving Eugene the keys. Heavy contributions were exacted on the town and the surrounding villages, which the locals did not want to pay, so they all fled to the mountains. These events took something like a week to resolve.

The date that Eugene arrived at Gap various with the source. He may have arrived as early as August 20. August 29 and August 31 are also put forward as dates.

Meanwhile, the Allied leaders called a council of war to try and settle a number of growing disagreements, of which the question of the French army at Briançon was the most immediate. From Briançon, the French, weak as they were, could potentially threaten the Allied supply lines. Should they be attacked, diverting the main aim of the invasion, or should they be masked? What of rumours that Catinat was already returning to the Dauphiné north of the intervening massif of the Oisans? It was decided the Spanish, already reluctant to penetrate any deeper into France, should observe Briançon, and their whole corps, under Lenganés and General Rabutin, was sent back to Guillestre on August 17.

On August 27 the Allied army was at Savines, probably having left Embrun on August 26. Parella, leading the vanguard, occupied Château Pontis either the same day or the next.

On August 29 the Allies marched on Chorges, breaking camp at 2am. At some point during the day, Duke Victor was struck down by a fever. For now, he ordered the advance to continue. Later that day, a body of French cavalry, possibly supported by militia, appeared from the direction of Chorges and attempted to block the crossing of the Durance. These troops had been based at Embrun but fell back when the Allies approached to lay siege to it.

The Allies met the challenge and the French withdrew precipitately, screened by a few squadrons. It is not clear if the main body chased them off, or if Eugene came back from Gap and did the job. Some accounts say this is so, other accounts are not specific, and some say Eugene himself did not reach Gap until August 31. Possibly, he turned around and attacked this body of French and returned to Gap on August 31. Allied dragoons pursued the French but were hampered by the terrain, which was marshy, and the enemy escaped. They were spotted retreating toward Grenoble on September 1.

The Allies camped at Chorges. The Duke's condition was worsening. He could not decide whether to press on or order a retreat. The decision passed out of his hands when the fever developed into smallpox. He was carried in a litter back to Savines, and then Embrun. He was still capable of rational speech and had to be persuaded to retreat. This adds weight to the idea that the invasion was something he wanted to participate in. On September 5 his mother and wife arrived to nurse him.

[Think about that statement for a minute. Say the disease was positively identified on August 30. A courier must have been dispatched immediately to Turin, a distance of over 100 Km. The courier would be mounted, so allow 2 days to travel the distance. Given the nature of the news, any French posts in his way may even have given him fresh mounts, rather than arresting him. Then, the royal family throws a few necessaries in a valise, along with the court physician and some 'Gravol', and covers the same distance in a carriage; 100 Km of bad roads in a glorified cart in 4-5 days, stopping at convents or bad inns for the night. (They Queen may have ridden a horse, but it is unlikely the Dowager did so.) Though they would have an escort against bandits, they could have been taken hostage or turned back by any significant body of French. Likely, the valleys were utterly empty, but just perhaps the horses were again refreshed by the enemy and the royals waved through.]

The main army meanwhile carried on toward Gap, arriving there either on August 29 or August 31. The latter date is most likely, given they were marching *to* Chorges on August 29. What happened at Gap is again debated. The town was burned, but some accounts blame the inhabitants, others the Imperials, and others the Huguenots or Vaudois. The best guess is that the inhabitants had fled, as described above, and that the Huguenots, some of whom apparently used to live at Gap, burned the town. It is said some of them targeted their own houses, now 'infested' by Catholics. General Caprara had taken charge of the campaign and ordered his Imperials to ravage the countryside, as payback for the damage to the Palatinate, and may have aided the Huguenots. The Vaudois aided the Imperials out in the country, which was scoured at least a day's march in all directions. Nearly 70 villages and other inhabited sites were torched, including churches and convents.

[One place that was sacked was the Château de Tallard, near Gap. It belonged to maréchal de camp *Tallard, who took revenge in 1693 by destroying Duke Victor's famous Vénerie palace after the Battle of Orbassano.]*

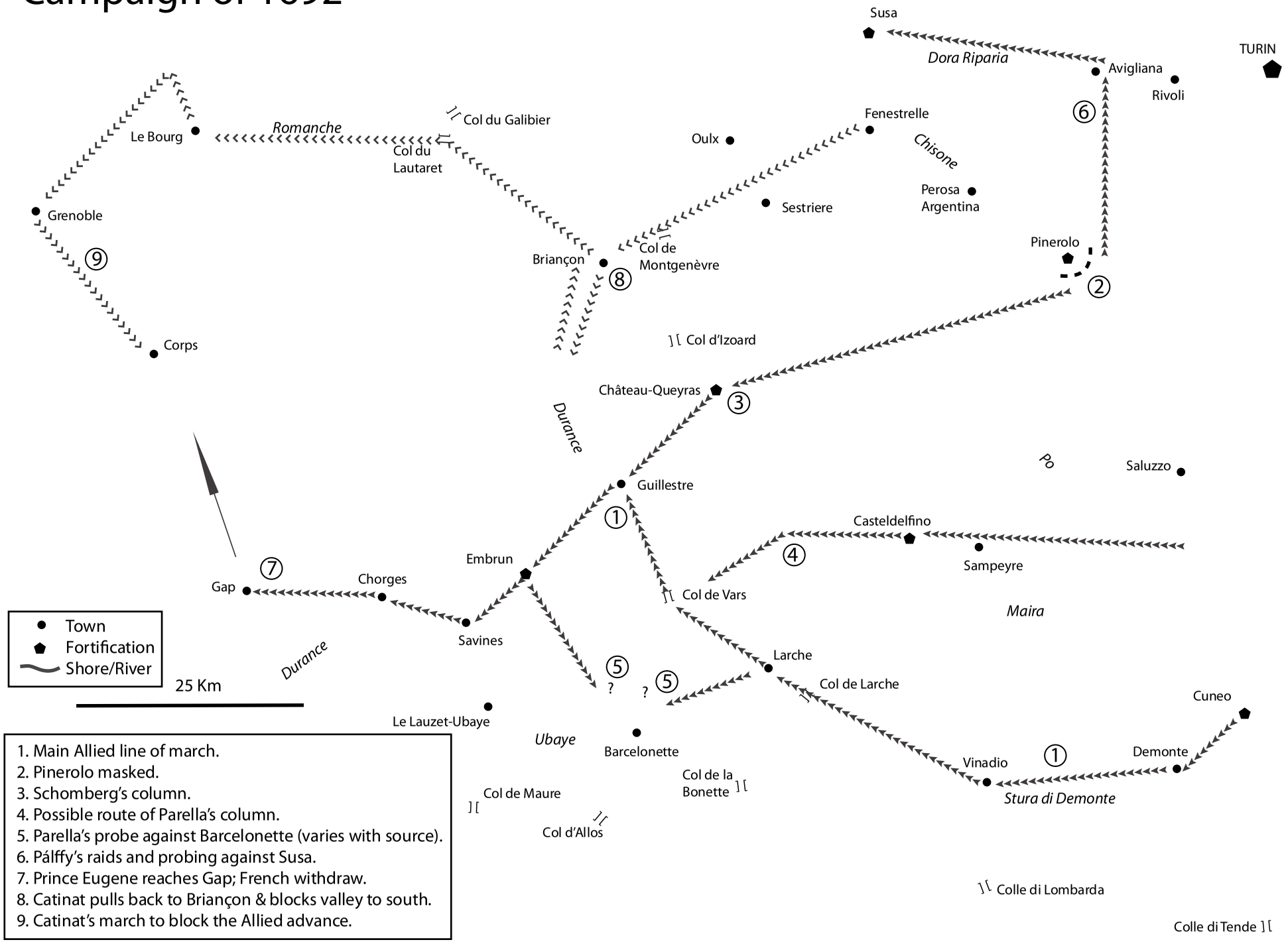
Meanwhile, Parella was sent to the Vallée Barcelonnette, possibly to protect the Allied lines of communication from a French probe out of Provence ordered by the *marquis* de Grignan, who commanded there. It is sometimes recorded that Parella was sent to patrol into Provence. Either way, at Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye he fought an engagement with either French militia, or elements of the regiment Catinat's Horse, or both, and his column was halted. In some accounts Parella was mortally wounded and taken to Saluzzo to die, and though the Parella name reappears later, this seems to be correct.

Throughout all these activities *Général* Catinat was not idle. There is a story that he believed Pinerolo was the main target of the campaign, and is also said to have sent a message to Commerci: "il leur saisoit ossrir ses services, & en même tems qu'il leur fouhaitoit un heureux voyage" – in other words, 'bon voyage' – as the Allied vanguard marched west past the fortress, not believing they could force their way through the passes. In fact, he had been made aware of Allied intentions through a spy working under the *conti* di Bins, Duke Victor's chief minister. The spy got cold feet (or felt he was under-appreciated) and confessed all to the Allies, but by then it was too late to change the plan.

Thus, Catinat fell back from Pinerolo by Fenestrelle over the Colle Sestriere and by Montgenèvre to Briançon, bringing with him either 4,000 or 14,000 men (depending on the source; the latter is the most common number). He arrived on July 19, actually before Duke Victor left his own camp at Moncallieri. On July 22 and 23 he recalled a number of cavalry regiments (Grigna, St. Liviere, Varennes, and the Grammont-Fallon Dragoons) from various patrolling duties and sent them to Embrun under command of M. de Bachivilliers. They did not take part in the siege, but monitored the situation, and as already mentioned, they later tried to interfere with the crossing of the Durance, but unsuccessfully. The *Général* remained in the environs of Briançon for some days. On August 5 he was at Montgenèvre with a small escort. This seems to have been a personal visit, something to do with a marriage proposal. He was 57 and his friends were nagging at him.

While the siege of Embrun took place, the *Général's* forces were stationed at Pallon, 19 Km south of Briançon. He did not feel strong enough to attempt a relief. Once Embrun fell, Catinat realised Grenoble was vulnerable and detached 10 battalions from his blocking force, leading them rapidly west by the valley of the Guisane northwest, crossed the Col de Lautaret, and descending to Le Bourg-d'Oisans and the valley of the Drac River, a march of about 50-60 Km. From here it was another 40 Km west to Grenoble. Having secured the town he headed south to Gap, linking up with Bachivilliers' cavalry in early September. His intention now was to block any

Campaign of 1692



1. Main Allied line of march.
2. Pinerolo masked.
3. Schomberg's column.
4. Possible route of Parella's column.
5. Parella's probe against Barcelonette (varies with source).
6. Pálffy's raids and probing against Susa.
7. Prince Eugene reaches Gap; French withdraw.
8. Catinat pulls back to Briançon & blocks valley to south.
9. Catinat's march to block the Allied advance.

move toward Grenoble, but he was not sure how he could accomplish this. He was dealing with a major outbreak of dysentery. Fortunately, he never had to find a solution.

While the Duke lay on his sick bed, his generals fell to arguing. Prince Eugene believed the way was open for a march into Provence. Others, both Imperial and Sabaudian, opted for retreat, noting that the Spanish had no intention of supporting such an advance with the naval landing that had been discussed back in Milán. In some accounts the blame is thrown entirely on the Spanish.

Their commander, Leganéz, claimed his men not only refused to advance any farther but were in a mutinous state and could walk off the job. This would leave Guillestre undefended and threaten the Allied supply lines – although they were gathering a rich haul, the region could not support a large army over the winter, so many supplies still had to come by infrequent mule train from Piedmont. Prince Eugene tried to persuade Leganéz to change his mind but the Spaniard said he could barely control his men.

[Broglie, the biographer of Eugene, who was a participant in the campaign, claims the Allies could indeed have camped on the Durance, or farther in-country, based on the amount of booty they were collecting, but the generals apparently did not ask his opinion.]

But the deciding factor was probably the mortal sickness of the Duke. If he died there would be a succession crisis which might pull his House back into the French orbit and in any case would seriously disrupt all sorts of matters for months to come.

Succession Crisis

The succession was in crisis for a couple of reasons. The Duke only had two daughters; his third child had miscarried at the time his wife was bundled out of the Capital when Catinat approached the city. Females were forbidden to inherit Imperial fiefs, which unfortunately composed a large percentage of the Duke's holdings.

The next two contenders were the senior Carignano branch, whose current representative was old, deaf, and dumb, but who had two sons, and the junior Soissons branch, whose representative had a number of sons, including Prince Eugene. Complicating the issue was the fact that the Carignano branch was pro-Spanish, and the Soissons branch, excepting Prince Eugene, was pro-French. The head of the Soissons branch was currently serving the French Army. The last time anything like this had occurred, there had been a civil war.

This was a prime reason why Prince Eugene, who was only General of Cavalry in the Imperial corps, was bumped to Imperial commander-in-chief in 1693; he was supposed to step in as co-regent to support Carignano. Ironically, King Louis intended to support the Carignano branch, not the Soissons, provided the new duke was willing to sue for peace, and sent a secret mission to talk with him (or shout at him). It was feared the Soissons branch would be too unpopular.

The Court of Versailles was so sure Victor Amadeus would die that King Louis issued regulations on who would wear mourning and for how long, and the Paris merchants began speculating in black cloth. Then, when the Duke recovered, rumours circulated that the his illness was purely political, an excuse to back out of a campaign he had opposed. After all, he had been cured in 'only 8 days'! This rumour is undoubtably false, but points to the French Court's undying hope that he would return to his 'true' allegiance.

On the other hand, the Court of Turin picked the Spanish as scapegoats for the failure of the offensive, clearly indicating that neither the Duke's sickness nor a secret desire to quit had anything to do with the retreat. There was some grounds for the blame. Not only had the troops been actually or 'politically' mutinous, but the Spanish Navy had had made no attempt to conduct landings in Provence, allowing the *marquis* de Grignan to march north to assist Catinat. And, the Spanish corps had arrived late. And, the Spanish subsidies were in arrears. And, they rarely plundered (so even their discipline and courtesy was turned against them). The short answer to most of these points is that the Spanish Crown was broke.

End of the Season

The Allies were thus forced to retreat without having accomplished much, though they acquired a great deal of booty. In actuality, it would have been impossible to support an army of 20,000+ men in Dauphiné over the winter. The booty was not *that* great. Langallerie recounts that most of the soldiers had gambled or spent their share within 15 days of returning to Piedmont. Only a few canny souls managed to quit the Army and retire on their winnings.

Duke Victor did not die, but he was ill for some time and had to be moved back to Turin. On September 12, his army left Gap and entrenched at Chorges, then pulled up stakes and marched back to Piedmont by the road it had come. Embrun and Guillestre were 'slighted'. They arrived at Demonte on September 25 and Borgo San Dalmazzo, at the mouth of the Val Stura, on September 26. The French shadowed them. The Allies arrived at Saluzzo on September 28.

A number of Sabaudian regiments occupied blocking positions farther west, particularly in Barcelonnette. The Spanish camped at Cuneo and the Sabaudians and Imperials (or at least the vanguard) at Saluzzo.

Catinat, after giving up on any attempt to harass the Allied rearguard because the roads were so churned up by their passage, and because there seemed to be no straggling, took his army to Pinerolo (September 25), suspecting a last minute attempt on the fortress – if the Allies had the

supplies. He found Pálffy's cavalry wasting the countryside around their base at Buriasco.

The Allies did augment the blockading corps, but had no siege equipment. The blockade lasted until October 21, at which point first the Allies and then the French went into winter quarters. The Spanish marched to Montferatto. They would quarter here so as to better maintain the blockade of Casale. Lombardy would be defended by the Imperials, who could thus more easily obtain reinforcements from Austria. The Sabaudians littered he plains of Piedmont and the French returned to Fenestrelle.

[As an aside, in October maréchal Vauban was dispatched by King Louis to begin work on the fortification of Mont-Dauphin, which would block the Col de Vars.]

'Revolt' in Mondoví

As mentioned previously, the *comte* de Tessé had plotted with certain elements in the southern district of Mondoví to start a revolt. Mondoví was a relatively recent acquisition of the House of Savoy. Once belonging to Genoa, it enjoyed a degree of autonomy under both states. The people were prone to riot over perceived violations of their rights, such as the imposition of the *gabelle*, or salt tax, and were notorious smugglers. One of Duke Victor's first acts on coming to power had been the suppression of a revolt in Mondoví.

Tessé's main aim was to acquire the fortress of Cuneo on the cheap. Once the revolt started, Catinat would only have to show up. With the countryside in an uproar, French soldiers disguised as peasants would enter the town the day before the French army arrived and secure a gate. Simultaneously, a column, probably under de la Hoguette, would advance down the Val d'Aosta and seize the town of Ivrea at the mouth of the valley, cutting off Duke Victor's lines to Switzerland and threatening the capital from the north.

This sounds very much like an elaboration of the attempt against Cuneo in 1691, but apparently it had a better chance of success. Unfortunately, the plot was once again betrayed. The ringleaders, the *marchese* di Montfort and the *marchese* di San Damiano, were arrested and taken to Turin. Montfort's motivation was strictly parochial: he was upset by the loss of some of his privileges, which many nobles were giving up as the war helped the State centralise. San Damiano, a troublemaker, had gone over to the French side, hoping to recover some of his lost lands.

The countryside around Cuneo was garrisoned by regular troops, including the Bavarian regiments, who had been formally placed under Piedmont's control on October 10.

[Their Elector, fearing a French invasion on the Rhine next year, requested their return but did not press the matter when Duke Victor decided to retain them.]

The Year in Review

Given the circumstances, 1692 was a good year for the French, though it may not have appeared so at the time. Catinat had only a skeleton army, yet the Allied performance did not come up to the standard he had set in previous years. True, this had little to do with the French and everything to do with circumstances, but as Napoleon said, the primary requirement for a good general is that he be lucky.

For King Louis, however, the 'ravaging of the Dauphiné' was a personal insult, a blow against his *gloiré*. Though he would continue to pursue a negotiated settlement wit Duke Victor, he would take a hard line for the next while, and seek revenge on the field of battle.

For the Allies, 1692 seemed a complete waste of time and effort. The Duke of Savoy was beginning to waver on the political front, ever so slightly. And so, 1692 could be chalked up as strategically positive for the French.

1693 Watershed

This year's campaign came in like a lamb and went out like a lion. In terms of grand strategy, the Allies were everywhere on the defensive except in Italy. In Italy, the French had to hold their ground until late in the season, at which point they took the initiative. Louis did not expect his wish for revenge to be gratified, but it would be, in spades.

At the start of the season, Catinat had no more than 16,000 mobile troops almost none of which were cavalry; most his veteran regiments had been taken from him. King Louis had ordered two offensives this year, one on the Rhine, where the Dauphin was given the limelight, and one in Catalonia.

Catinat's main force mustered at Catinat's Field, a.k.a. Fenestrelle. Small detachments of French, nearly all militia, covered the other passes. Most of the summer would be spent at Fenestrelle, or more properly, between Bussoleno in the Val Susa and Villaretto in the Val Perosa (5.5 Km down the valley from Fenestrelle).

On the other side of the hill, in Vienna, Prince Eugene advocated the siege of Pinerolo followed by a second invasion of France, but at first could not find anyone willing to listen to him. Money was tight and the defeats of earlier years – except in Hungary – bred caution. Duke Victor would be fully supported but another 'forward strategy', well, that was problematic.

The first action of the season was a series of patrols or raids by French forces in the Vallée Barcelonnette, led by Larré and *maréchal de camp* Vendôme. These were intended to remove an Allied presence left over from the previous campaign. Once they had succeeded, in late June, the French began raiding the Val Stura intermittently throughout the summer.

Meanwhile, to interfere with Spanish operations – primarily to prevent reinforcement of the Catalonian front – the Toulon Squadron, 20 sail under the *comte* d'Estrées, went to the Port of Baies, near Naples, looking for the Spanish galley fleet under *Amiral* Papachin. The Spanish fleet was small, but it was a Presence, and it was vital for Allied communications and the shipment of men and materiel around the Western Mediterranean. The Spanish were 'rescued' by the arrival of an Anglo-Dutch squadron – d'Estrées intentions were known ahead of time – and the French returned to Marseilles. A small number of Spanish *tercios* would be sent to Spain, but this meant fewer troops to aid Duke Victor.

In March of this year, seven French generals received the rank of *maréchal de france*, including that Man of the Bourgeoise, Nicholas Catinat. They were the first to receive the promotion since the days of Turenne.

Catinat was at Oulx, 20 Km southwest of Susa, when he received the news. Oulx was to be his main HQ for the next couple of years. The month of April was spent writing replies in longhand to all his well-wishers.

Talks

The latest round of diplomacy had begun as soon as the armies entered winter quarters. High level diplomacy was still somewhat open but beginning to be concealed from Duke Victor's allies. Secret diplomacy became, if possible, more secret. Actually, the former was currently in abeyance, pending results from the secret talks.

In the latter, de Tessé's role continued to expand. His counterparts were M. Perachino and Gropello 'the Peasant'. The Duke hoped for a better offer than last year, considering his mighty invasion of Dauphiné, but that campaign had only angered King Louis; Tessé appeared cold and reserved to the Sabaudian agents. His offer was as follows:

- Susa, Nice, and Villefranche were to be garrisoned by a neutral power, such as Switzerland or the Papacy, but France would return the rest of the Duke's possessions.
- Duke Victor's daughter and his immediate heir were to be hostages, with the former marrying the *duc* de Bourgogne (the son of the Dauphin).
- The King his master considered a Neutral Italy a good idea, Should the Emperor refuse to accept a Neutral Italy, however, then Duke Victor must declare war on him.
- Should the Emperor instead accept a Neutral Italy, then Duke Victor must send troops to help King Louis in Flanders, but at French expense (200,000 crowns for 4 years).

Tessé pointed out that it was the Emperor who kept insisting that Pinerolo be reduced, only so that France would be goaded into doing the same to Montmélian and Nice, so that there would be perpetual bad blood between two natural allies, Savoy and France. He omitted to mention that France now controlled all three places. No need to rub it in. He also argued that the Emperor planned to 'enslave' northern Italy by acquiring Casale and the Milanese upon the death of Carlos II of Spain.

[In the following decades, that is precisely what happened. Persuasion works best when you can present a truth in its most sinister form; lies cause more trouble than they are worth.]

To these arguments Duke Victor was not deaf, though he was unconvinced. Receiving Gropello's report on April 14, he countered by demanding the French completely evacuate his lands without reservation. If this were done, he would advocate the neutralisation of Italy and agree to the other demands made by the French.

Things went back and forth until mid-July, with no immediate result.

A Summer of Siege

The Sabaudians and their subsidy troops completed their muster at Carignano on May 20. Duke Victor was still very ill and in much pain, so the generals took charge of the campaign, though he continued to have input. Their first thought was to reenter France by way of Barcelonnette again – which is why they had left forces there. However, by the time the Allies got going, the French had already sealed off that valley. Susa was the next target taken under consideration, with an invasion of France as a possible follow-on. A reconnaissance in force of Fenestrelle showed that place to be impregnable. Catinat could not be assaulted directly. But this meant if Susa were taken and the French bypassed, the enemy would just cut the Allied lines of communication. The French had also augmented the garrisons of Briançon and Barcelonnette with militia.

And so, they returned to Prince Eugene's pet project, the formal siege of Pinerolo. Then, if there was time, they would invade the Dauphiné by the Val Perosa. By that time Catinat should be too weak to interfere.

Though their plans were only finalised in early July the Allies began concentrating much earlier. The Imperials marched west in mid-June and joined the Sabaudians at Vigone, 14 Km east of Pinerolo, on June 21. Even without the Spanish the army was 40,000 strong.

Meanwhile, those worthies, under Leganéz, secured the fort of San Giorgio Montferrato. This was a key post in the defensive perimeter of Casale, lying 4 Km to the southwest of that fortress. San Giorgio was invested on June 28 and capitulated after a bombardment and night assault on July 3/4. Leganéz then had 2 additional forts constructed, which took about 6 days to complete. This operation hemmed in the garrison and prevented it from raiding. It did not prevent them from obtaining supplies from the locals, who continued a brisk trade despite draconian punishments against smuggling.

Some of the Spanish (about 5,000 men) remained to watch Casale and the rest marched to join the Allied army, which was already on the march again. The Spanish only passed Turin on July 14.

The main army meanwhile moved to Buriasco, halfway between Pinerolo and Vigone. Here, Duke Victor, feeling better, held a review of the army. The Sabaudians were then sent out to San Secondo di Pinerolo (July 18), 3 Km southeast of Pinerolo on the other side of the Chisone.

On July 19 an Allied council of war confirmed their decision to besiege Pinerolo. The first task was to force Catinat's army away from the fortress and block its return. The *Général* had responded to the Allied advance by coming down from Fenestrelle with 18 battalions and the Senneterre Dragoons, and occupying Monte Rocciacotello, driving back the Vaudois and militia forces that had been monitoring him. This mountain, 1,035 meters high, is the last on the north bank of the Chisone, and overlooks the fortress; the distance to Pinerolo is about 5 Km.

To remove the French, the Allies moved up both banks of the Chisone, the Spanish on the left (north) bank, the Sabaudians on the right, to Villar Perosa, a march of about 10 Km. They occupied the Abbey of Rocciacotello.

At the same time, a column of Imperial troops hooked right to Rivoli and entered the Val Susa (July 21). This column's composition has been noted in detail: the regiments of Lotharingen, Stadel, Sachsen-Mersburg, Sachsen-Coburg & Corneau(d), plus 1,000 horse and some cannon, led by de las Torres and brigadier Thabernat. The remainder of the Allied army spread out to the north, facing the mountains. Their HQ remained at Buriasco.

On July 23 the news that the Spanish had taken Villar Perosa was reported to Duke Victor. At this, he led a column to Cumiana, 12 Km north of Pinerolo. With him were FML Gschwind and brigadier Despretz, the Württemburg and Bavarian regiments, and 800 horse. Forces under the Spanish general Rabutin occupied Frossasco, 6 Km north of Pinerolo. Both of these locations lay in their own shallow valleys, separated by ridge lines jutting from the end of the mountain chain between the Val Perosa and the Val Susa. They had been held by French outposts, which were driven off.

Simultaneously, a column of cavalry under generals Pálffy and Commerci approached Pinerolo, and Prince Eugene led the remainder of the army up onto Rocciacotello that night. It had been intended to bring the baggage along, but this was not feasible.

A sizeable force of Vaudois under Schomberg's direction climbed into the mountains to keep the various columns in communication with each other.

The operation was successful. By July 24 the Spanish occupied Rocciacotello, while Schomberg and Prince Eugene had joined up in the mountains north of Pinerolo. The French fell back without a fight. The threat of encirclement coupled with de las Torres' feint against Susa, meant Catinat had no choice. In fact, he reinforced Susa, thinking it the more likely target.

The investment was completed on July 26, and the various Allied columns drew back in, leaving outposts to watch for French movements. A large detachment of Vaudois and possibly some militia, under general St. Croix, observed Fenestrelle directly.

Pinerolo had a garrison of 12 battalions, commanded by the *comte* de Tessé (who remained in secret diplomatic contact with Duke Victor throughout the siege). This amounted to 8,000 men, plus 500 more assigned to the key outwork of Fort Santa Brigida, also known as St.Brette.

Santa Brigida, situated to the north of the fortress between it and the mountains, was the key to the place, providing a high firing platform for cannon to bombard the main fortress, should it fall into enemy hands. It had 4 bastions of its own, and was connected to the main works by a covered way. Tessé had also constructed redoubts in the intervening ground and manned them with 5 battalions.

The Allies were arranged as follows:

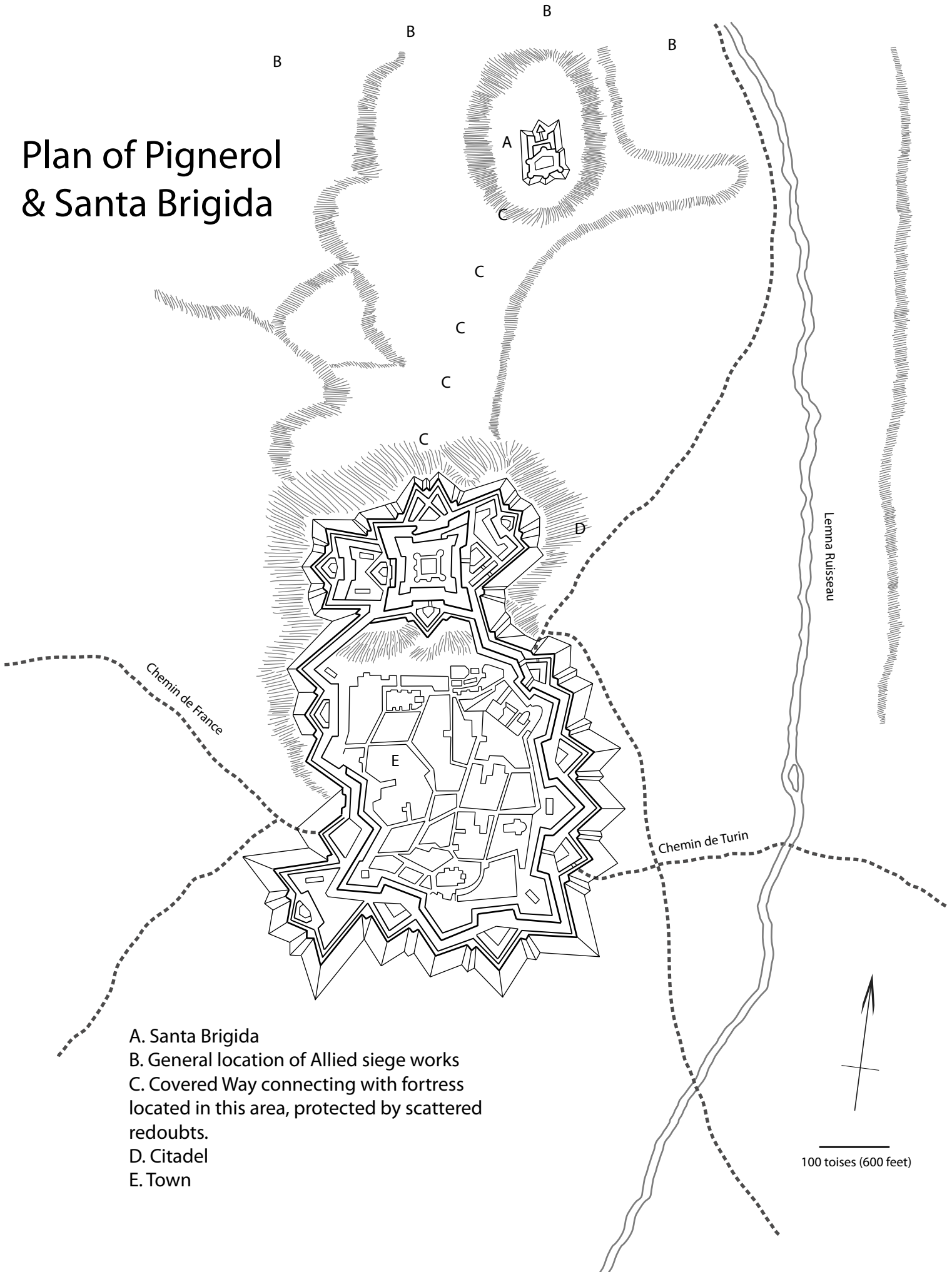
- The Imperial and Sabaudian cavalry at Frossasco.
- The Imperial, Sabaudian, and Bavarian Foot in the center, facing southeast – that is, the troops were arranged on the high ground, in a semicircle around the fortress, preventing any relief by Catinat.
- The Spanish and Huguenots on the Right – that is, if looking at the fortress from the northeast. The Spanish were still concentrated on Rocciacotello.
- The plains southeast of the fortress were covered by cavalry patrols.
- The baggage train would have been north of the fortress, moved there when Duke Victor marched on Cumiana.

The siege was prosecuted vigorously, with daily skirmishes, but the guns, supplied by Milán, did not arrive until the end of July. There is a report of them reaching Vigone on July 23.

On July 29 the Spanish general de las Torres succeeded in taking the key redoubt between the fort and the citadel. The covered way could now be taken under fire. However, this did not cut the fort off completely. This gain was countered by depressing news from Flanders: William of Orange had been defeated at Neerwinden.

On the night of July 30 the trenches against the fort were opened at a distance of 2,000 paces (1,000 meters). 800 workers were employed, with 2,000 troops to cover them. A 4-gun battery was erected. As in all large sieges, the

Plan of Pignerol & Santa Brigida



A. Santa Brigida
B. General location of Allied siege works
C. Covered Way connecting with fortress located in this area, protected by scattered redoubts.
D. Citadel
E. Town

troops worked in rotation; the Imperials and Bavarians had the honour of breaking the ground.

The French responded with heavy cannon and musket fire, using not only the formal defences for cover but also a number of houses in the vicinity; some of these were taken by the Allies at sword-point on August 1. The same day the Sabaudian troops received Absolution.

On August 2 the Spanish Foot advanced from the vicinity of Monte Malannagio, west of the fortress, tightening the noose. 5,000 men were left to garrison the mountain. Their cavalry was rebased at Frossasco.

That evening the Imperials and Bavarians reentered the trenches, erected a mortar battery, and added 4 more cannon to the existing battery. The mortars were in action the same night and the garrison responded ‘in lively fashion’.

On August 3 the latest battery of cannon was unmasked. The French attempted a counterattack around noon, hurling grenades in large quantities. They were seen off by some Bavarian grenadiers, who suffered only 5 casualties.

The same day the Spanish took over the construction work, using the same numbers of troops: 800 workers and 2,000 supports. 6 new mortars were emplaced on the right (southern) wing. The Sabaudians received a number of replacements.

On August 4, the French sortied, and their vigorous attack forced the Allies to abandon the works. But, they soon returned. The trenches received twice their usual complement of men and new batteries were erected. Meanwhile, the French engineers erected a 4-gun battery of their own on a small hill between the fort and citadel, firing 500 rounds into the Allied trenches during the course of the day.

Galled by this fire, the Allies assaulted the position at day’s end. The attackers reached the hill, capturing the detachment that was guarding the site, but the guns were shifted in the nick of time.

On August 5, Duke Victor visited the works, exposed himself to enemy fire while personally drawing up plans for the placement of third battery, and witnessed the storming of a redoubt. Splendid!

Allied progress continued slow but steady. Their fire was heavy enough for the defenders to dig a cut in one of the bastions for extra cover.

Through the nights of August 6 and August 7 the Allies dug a parallel to encompass the curtain wall and the target bastion, known as the Belvedere because it faced a col of the same name in the mountains above it.

On August 8 all the French wounded were evacuated to the citadel and that evening the Allies launched an assault on the Belvedere, signalled by 4 cannon shots. The assault was conducted by the Spanish contingent, assisted by the Imperials and Huguenots, and was led by massed grenadiers supported by dragoons. The attackers filled the ditch with wool sacks and erected scaling ladders while the French rolled grenades down on them. Simultaneously, Pálffy’s cavalry feinted against the main fortress and rode into the gap between fortress and fort to prevent the garrison from sending reinforcements.

The attack on the bastion was repulsed, though the grenadiers did attain its summit for a brief time, before the fire became too hot. However, another redoubt was taken, as well as a section of the fort’s glacis. Over the next few days the Allies brought up their guns and elaborated their trenches around the glacis.

On August 9 there was a ceasefire to recover the dead. The last assault had cost 3-400 Spanish casualties and about 200 Imperials and Huguenots. Later in the day the truce was suspended and fire resumed on both sides.

August 10: 7 new cannon were added to the glacis battery and Allied miners were at work in the ditch.

August 11: the Allied guns on the glacis commenced firing, quickly shattering the parapet of the Belvedere. Tessé sent 300 men as reinforcements, but would soon decide to withdraw the entire garrison.

Between August 12 and August 14 the Allies concentrated on creating a breach, while the French pounded them from the citadel. The Bavarians worked on the trenches on August 12 and the Sabaudians on August 14. Credit for the breach thus went to the latter.

On August 13 the breach was large enough for an assault, which was set for the following day, to ensure the mine was ready.

On August 14, before the Allies’ mine could be blown, the French evacuated Santa Brigida under cover of a sortie. They reached the citadel with most of their cannon and equipment, then set off a counter-mine that wrecked the fort.

The investment of the main fortress now began. The execution was going to be problematic. Duke Victor was running out of time. There was real concern at Versailles that Pinerolo would fall, and Catinat was heavily criticised for his inaction, though not by the King. News of Versailles’ attitude gave Duke Victor hope that the *Maréchal* would be forced to attack him at a great disadvantage. But, the *Maréchal’s* leash was held by King Louis himself.

[Catinat was irritated by the declamations of the pundits and even backhanded Vauban for having neglected the Italian front in his master scheme of fortifications. Rather unfairly, as the French had only just taken Savoy.]

It was reported that Catinat was receiving new regiments daily. In contrast, the Allies had already suffered between 14-15,000 casualties. By the end of September, the

French offensives in Spain and on the Rhine had come to a close. King Louis' loss of *gloiré* in 1692 still rankled and he had all along planned on revenge. He was waiting until it was ice cold before eating it.

The Allied army now divided into 4 columns. The first continued to blockade the fortress, made some repairs to Santa Brigida, and emplaced the remainder of the siege train. It was decided to gamble on a massive bombardment to force the garrison to capitulate before Catinat could bring his army into play.

The second column, under Duke Victor, marched against Catinat, just to test his strength. The two forces faced off on August 25 and August 26, then the Duke withdrew back to Pinerolo on September 14, much sobered. Expecting that when the French moved they would do so by the Val Susa, Duke Victor left detachments in the Val Perosa to hinder the movement of French raiders, and ravaged the valley.

This may have been done in coordination with the third column, which set off south with 10,000 men to deal with Larré and Vendôme around Barcelonnette and the Val Stura. Some skirmishes ensued, then both sides withdrew and marched north on their own lines.

The fourth column set out somewhat later, upon receiving word that the French were breaking camp. Composed of about 1,500 cavalry under Pálffy, it marched north to the mouth of the Val Susa to wait for the French.

On September 20 and September 21, Pinerolo's cannon pummelled the Allies. The latter's dispositions were now as follows: the Spanish at San Secondo, the Huguenots at San Pietro Val Lemina, 3.5 Km northwest of the fortress, and the Imperials and Sabaudians arranged to the northwest.

On September 22, the Allied camp learned Catinat was on the march. The *Maréchal*, with no material reason to delay any longer, had been concerned when he learned of the immanent arrival of some extra Imperial troops and decided to march before things got worse for Pinerolo.

This is when the 1,500 cavalry mentioned above were sent north. New Allied batteries were set up on the heights overlooking Villar Perosa, but, as expected, the French only sent a token diversionary force in this direction.

On September 26, the Allies received those extra Imperial troops, obtained by a special mission to Vienna undertaken by Prince Eugene in person. But, they would prove too few.

The grand bombardment began on September 25, and was intense and nasty. 4,000 bombs and 4,000 shot rained down on the fortress and the town, but the destruction was far less than anticipated. Langallerie says only the Spanish guns had any effect; the Imperial and Sabaudian mortars were sited out of range. (He also says there were rumours of treason but that really the gunners were just stupid or lazy.)

Nevertheless, Tessé tried to buy off the besiegers with the offer of 40,000 louis d'or, but all he could obtain was free passage for women and clergy. This at least gave him

and Duke Victor an opportunity to exchange agents. Curiously, they both thought that the loss of Pinerolo would persuade King Louis to drop his demand to retain that place, though of course Tessé had no intention of ruining his career by a capitulation.

Gropello and Tessé met twice during the siege. The French response to questions of higher diplomacy than the immediate needs of the garrison was cool, possibly because Tessé suspected Duke Victor was just spinning things out, as usual.

On September 29, the Allied cannon ran out of ammunition. The mortars continued firing through September 30. At the end of the day Pinerolo was overshadowed by a pall of dust and smoke, but its flag still flew. The Allies suffered a further 2,000 casualties in this operation.

Having exhausted all options, Duke Victor called a council of war and it was decided to slight Santa Brigida and raise the siege. Some sources believe this was an act of good faith toward King Louis, arranged with Tessé. Perhaps. Others believe Duke Victor would have preferred to seize the fortress and only gave up on the advice of Prince Eugene; the French were on the march.

The same day, Catinat's army, reported at this moment to be 77 battalions and 48 squadrons, with 18 cannon, arrived at Bussoleno. It is said that Catinat chose this route to spare his cavalry, though there was obviously less chance of opposition, too. Most sources state that he left Fenestrelle on September 27 or 28, so the forces that broke camp on September 22 were most likely the diversionary column sent down the Val Perosa. These did not remain for the purpose of observing the enemy, so would have marched back, hence the additional delay.

The next day (28th or 29th), the French cavalry was at Avigliana, with the main body at Sant'Ambroglio, clearing armed peasant bands from the nearby heights. Pálffy's men observed them, but fell back to join Duke Victor when the French advanced.

Duke Victor, having sent his siege train to Turin on October 1, broke camp on October 2 and followed it, his army in 3 columns. Some sources state he was unaware of the French movements, but this is incorrect. The observing cavalry corps under Pálffy gave him constant updates. Before breaking camp it had been decided in council to march at all speed to Orbassano 14 Km southwest of Turin, and hold the Torrente Sangone against the French, who were reported to be between Avigliana and Rivoli.

Once at Avigliana, the French had sent out a column of cavalry under M. de Bachevilliers to pillage the summer palaces at La Vénerie and Rivoli, along with the houses of some of Duke Victor's ministers. The column rode all the way to Turin and back, leaving a path of destruction in its wake. Catinat then swiftly moved to block the Allies' expected line of advance, camping between Rivalta di Torino and Beinasco – that is, on the north bank of the Sangone – on October 2.

The key question for the Allies was whether to fight or not. At the moment they believed, falsely, that they could beat the French to the Sangone. If they could do so, Catinat would be placed between the Allied army and Turin, and the Allies would be close enough to the Capital to be in communication with it, and points east. The Allies had fewer men than the French, but the balance of forces was not utterly against them, and they would have the river line to help.

Then, late on October 2, came word from Pálffy's screen that the French already held the river, as well as the news that they had been burning Duke Victor's pleasure palaces again. A new council of war was held. The Duke seems to have been waffling. On the one hand his men were willing to fight, and he himself was angered by the French raids, issuing an order that all French raiders (and in some sources, *all* French troops) were to be given no quarter. But, none of his generals wanted a battle. The Spanish, of course, were unwilling to do anything offensive unless it involved Milán, but even the Imperials, even Eugene, were reluctant. The Huguenot commander, General Schomberg, put his personal honour on the line by advising the Duke not to engage.

[The no-quarter order may have been French camp gossip, though some sources say it was contained in a communication Duke Victor made to Catinat when the latter wrote to explain his actions – very punctilious was Catinat – and the former sent his reproaches.]

It was decided they would sidle past the French, the Foot marching on Mirafiori while the Duke and General Rabutin took 2,000 cavalry to reconnoitre the French camp. They had only gone about 2,000 paces (3 Km, or about halfway), however, when their outriders reported the French approaching. The party returned to camp, where a new plan was quickly concocted. The Allies would now march swiftly for the Po. But, at the last minute, the Duke called a halt. It would have meant a highly risky march across the front of the French army. It seemed to him he was committed to a battle that was not on his own terms.

The Allies still hoped the expected battle might be no more than a brief encounter. It might be possible to face down the French. It was assumed Catinat wanted only to relieve Pinerolo. The opponents might be able to squeak by each other like passersby in an alley. Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent that Catinat was no courteous pedestrian, but a rather rough individual with a broken bottle in his hand. He was going to force a battle. Duke Victor is reported to have consoled himself with the thought that at least this way he had a chance of exacting revenge for the destruction of his palaces.

There is an interesting sequel to Schomberg's part in the council of war, which reveals some of the personal dynamics of the situation. As a mark of his disagreement with the Duke's initial decision to fight, Schomberg refused to take command of the Left of the Second Line, which was his post, insisting that Leganéz do so instead; he would serve under the Spaniard as colonel of his own regiment. Also, the Imperial generals demanded they be placed to the fore, to prove that they had not disagreed with the Duke out of cowardice.

Orbassano, 4 October 1693

"Préparez de l'oseille pour nous faire des soupes vertes."

[Prepare sorrel for us to make green soups.]

Catinat to Tessé, on October 2

Orbassano, or Marsaglia as it is also known, was the last and largest battle fought on the Italian front. The troops on both sides were motivated and the commanders were in a mood to gamble. The Allies were outnumbered but held on until the very last moment, and by the end both sides were exhausted. Militarily the battle had little strategic value, since it took place at the end of the campaigning season and could not be followed up. Politically, it was significant, though the extent of that significance can be debated.

Orbassano is a better name for the battle than the one the French chose, given the village of that name was actually a part of the battlefield, while Marsaglia was not. Contrary to what one often reads, Marsaglia was not even a village, only an abbey, which just happened to be where the Allies camped on the night of October 2. (The place still exists, though it looks a little the worse for wear.)

Interpretation

Like many battles of the period, the accounts are choppy and confused, and since it involved both Duke Victor and the great Prince Eugene, the historians are often mildly biased (actually, *extremely* partisan).

Taken together, the accounts present a fairly standard battle for the period, with some tactical innovations on the part of the French. In overview, each side had the most success against the opposite Left Wing, meaning the armies turned on their axises to some degree, though not significantly enough for it to be specifically pointed out. By the end, the fighting was very confused, with local commanders rallying what men they could and hurling them at the enemy as fast as assault groups could be made available. Ultimately, Catinat committed all his unengaged forces, some 10,000 men that the Allies could not match, and broke the enemy line. However, a strong rearguard and French exhaustion prevented pursuit.

This is all standard stuff, but there are three conundrums that this author needed to find a solution to. The first two are related: on what axis did the armies deploy, and where was the high ground? The period sketches show the armies lined up on a NE-SW axis. The problem with this is that the orientation does not fit every fact, and especially, it does not allow the French enough room to deploy properly. Now, the sources do say the French had trouble deploying, but not that they remained cramped by the terrain for the whole battle. Instead, it is said they overlapped the Allies on both flanks. This can only work if the orientation is along a ENE-WSW axis; this orientation also fits all the facts. By the *end* of the battle, the armies may indeed have been on a NE-SW axis, but not before.

One reason for the mistake in orientation – or perhaps the mistake led to the reason – is the inclusion of a high feature, the Heights of Piosassco, which in reality does not exist. The French held the only high ground on the battlefield, but if they did so where the old maps show they did, the armies would have to be orientated NE-SW. However, the *real* high ground is about 4 Km to the northwest of where the old maps show. This suites the ENE-WSW axis.

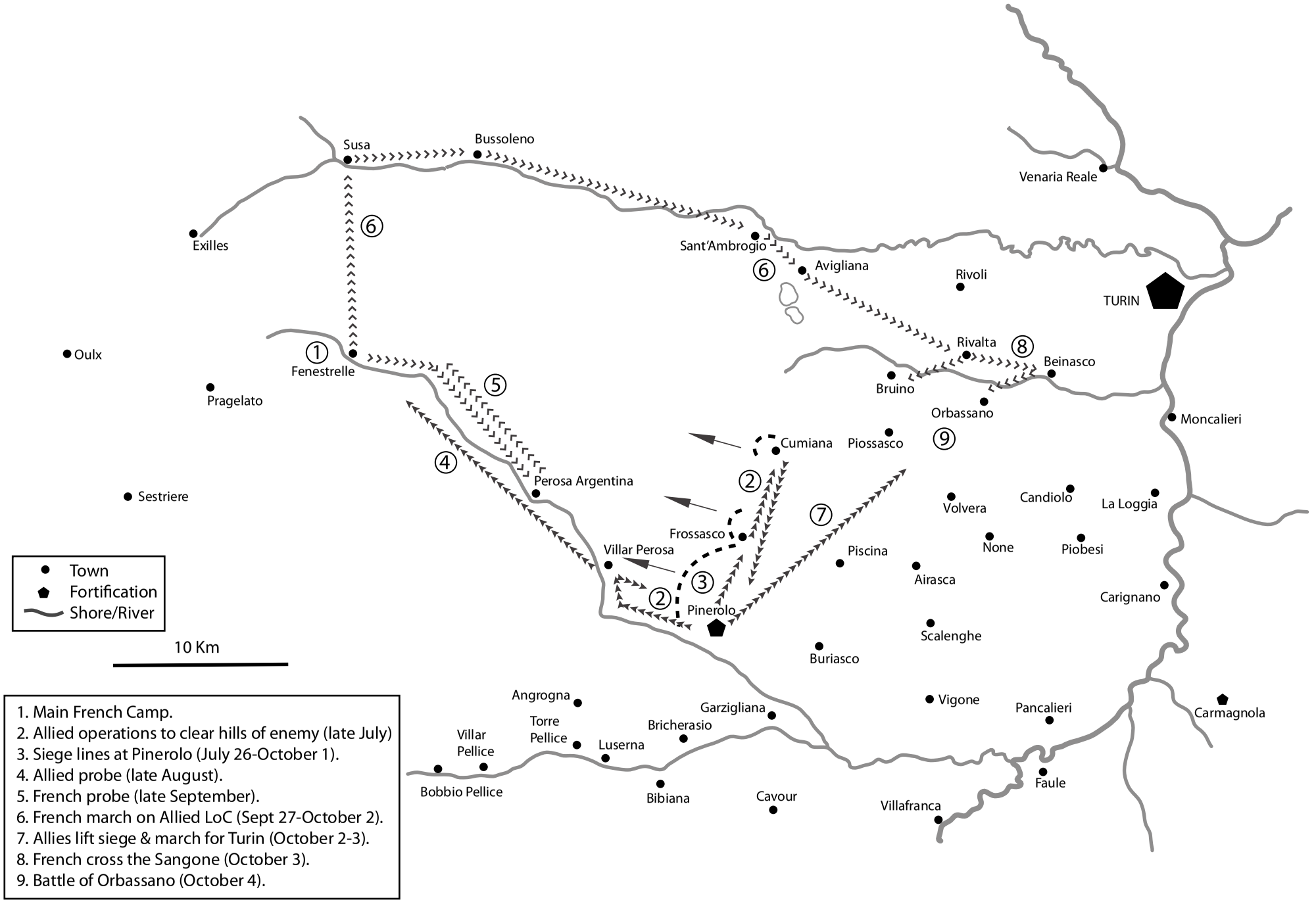
[For those who wish a fuller explanation, the old maps show a tongue of high ground extending along the north bank of the Torrente Chisola almost as far as the ford at Marsaglia, with the village of Piossasco to the northwest of it – that is, behind the high ground. In reality, Piossasco sits at the foot of the southeastern side of Monte San Giorgio, which is the true high feature held by the French. The old maps would have it that the French dominated the ford from about a kilometre away, whereas in reality they were about 4 Km away. Hence the rotation of the armies' axises. Interestingly, even the old texts do not describe events based on the maps they use – which also show the armies deployed in three lines when the texts say two lines!]

The other major conundrum (there are a few minor ones dealing with brigade organisation) is the use of the French *Petite Gendarmerie*. This regiment arrived fresh (actually, exhausted) from the Rhine campaign on September 30, and consisted of 8 squadrons. The sources sometimes say 16 companies, which is the same thing. As noted elsewhere these men were not officially part of the *Maison du Roi*, but they were elite troops, and receive mention on several occasions during the battle. The problem is, they are mentioned all over the field, sometimes in two places simultaneously, or at least without being allowed time to get to the other side of the field without a teleportation device.

Specifically, they start on the French Right (as senior regiment), transfer to the Left (either as part of a redeployment made before dawn on October 4 or as an emergency measure), reappear on the Right to make a breakthrough, then reappear on the Left. They were elite, but not supermen!

The simplest solution is that the unit was split up, as was habitually done with oversized regiments, both horse and foot. On the attached map, this author has chosen to show the regiment with 4 squadrons on either flank. The fact that one of the replacing cavalry regiments that

Campaign of 1693



1. Main French Camp.
2. Allied operations to clear hills of enemy (late July)
3. Siege lines at Pinerolo (July 26-October 1).
4. Allied probe (late August).
5. French probe (late September).
6. French march on Allied LoC (Sept 27-October 2).
7. Allies lift siege & march for Turin (October 2-3).
8. French cross the Sangone (October 3).
9. Battle of Orbassano (October 4).

supposedly filled its spot on the Right is nonexistent adds weight to the idea that 4 squadrons remained on the Right and that 1 line regiment swapped with the other 4 squadrons.

The reader should be aware that this arrangement is nowhere confirmed in the sources. However, there is a similar example from the Allied side that shows just how vague the accounts are. The Imperial general, Prince Commerci, commander of the Allied Left, is described taking up his post with his regiment. In reality, he was escorted by only 2 squadrons; the remaining 4 were on the Right under General Caprara.

The Battle Map

At this point the reader should refer to the accompanying map. Apologies for the tiny units; the reader should invest in a magnifying glass. However, everything is to scale. Like all such images the map attempts a static representation of a dynamic event and inevitably falls short of the truth. In this case the situation is made worse because, as already noted, some of the historical data is either vague, contradictory, or just plain wrong. None of the old maps have any details and only one or two even print the wing commanders' names, let alone the regiments. The present map is drawn to scale using a set of 1:50,000 survey maps dating from the Second World War. While movable features like woods can only be guessed at, the survey maps at least allow an accurate representation of elevations and slopes, and they were sufficiently old not to be crowded with the modern suburbia of Turin.

The reader will note the battlefield is bounded north and south by two streams, the Torrente Chisola and the Torrente Sangone, both of which join the Po about 12 Km beyond the east edge of the map. Both have steep banks, thick with underbrush, and their beds are wider than their actual streams thanks to seasonal flooding – hence the prefix '*torrente*'. The Sangone is wider, but at this time both streams were very low. However, their gullies remained significant obstacles. The west side of the battlefield is bounded by the outliers of the Alps, and the east side by a belt of woodland called the Woods of Volvera. The heart of the field, where much of the heaviest fighting took place, is today covered by a Fiat auto plant.

In earlier times the Grand Chemin from Pinerolo to Turin ran by the abbey of Marsaglia (300 meters off the bottom left of the map), then crossed the Chisola at a ford, before traversing the battlefield in a more or less direct line to Orbassano. From there, it crossed the Sangone by another ford – actually, there were a few choices – before passing the village of Beinasco and reaching the Capital. Not much remains of the *chemin* now. The section that leads from Marsaglia to the Chisola ford – and, it is still a ford – is just a farm track dividing two fields. Even in its heyday a 'Grand Chemin' was nothing more than a wide strip of cleared land. Heavy carts and artillery travelled in the centre, foot traffic, including troops, to either side, and riders on the fringes. A special zone was set aside for couriers and mail. But, there was none of the regulation of speed and direction the modern driver has to put up with.

None of the villages on the battlefield appear to have been significant enough to receive a mention in the fighting, except for Piossasco, which was the subject of a skirmish on October 3. All the other villages appear to have been behind the lines, anyway. This is even true of Orbassano, which might have been thought useful enough to anchor somebody's line.

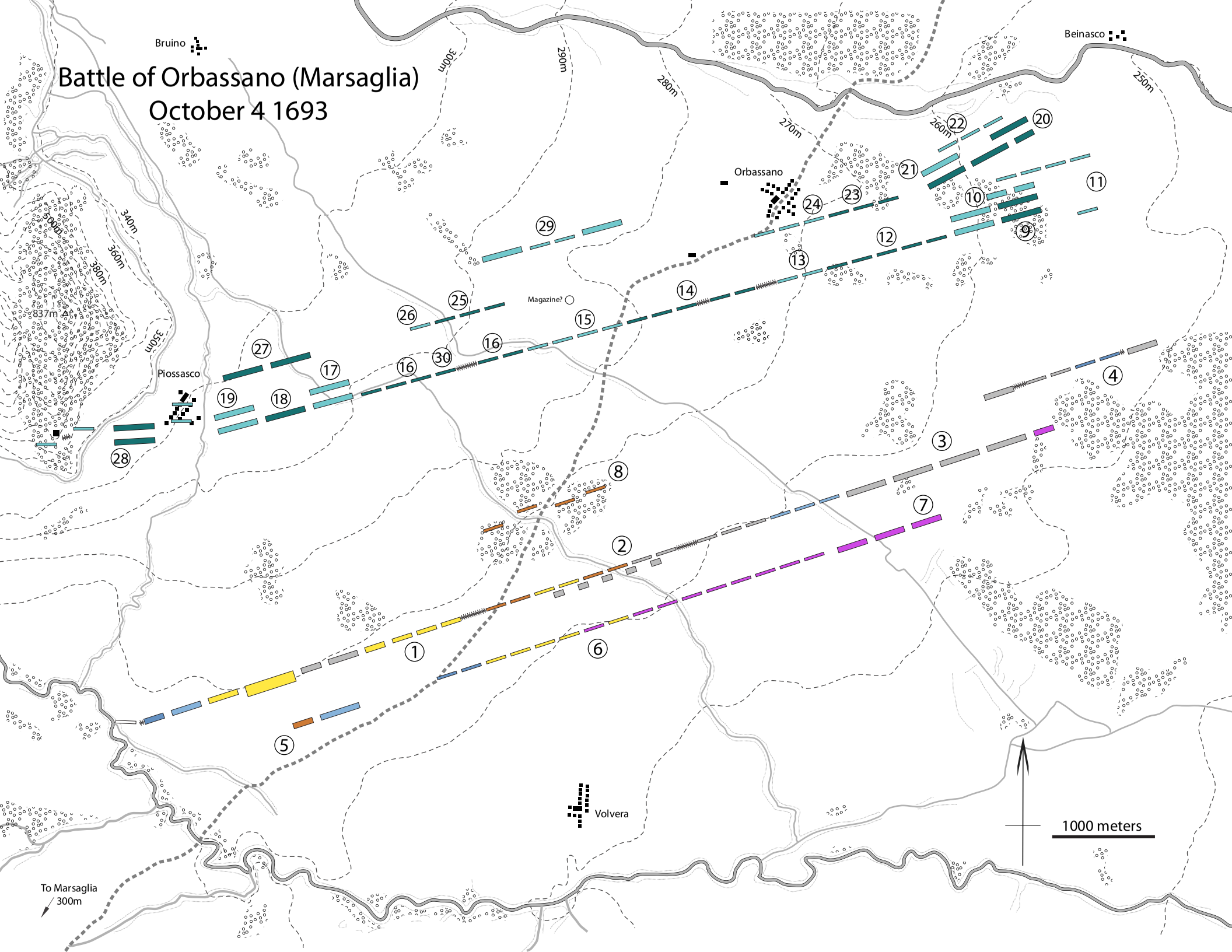
One special structure on the map is the one labelled 'Magazine?'. This location *may* have been where the French concentrated their caissons for quick resupply – some accounts mention, as a fact of no significance, that the French were able to resupply before their final assault. On the survey maps the spot is marked 'Magaz'i di Artiglia'; perhaps the name stuck. It is in about the right place.

The plains featured scattered farms and patches of woodland, but the main obstacles seem to have been extensive vineyards and a number of drainage ditches, and thick brush near the banks of the streams. These made deployment more difficult than the map implies, since in the interests of clarity the farms and vineyards have been omitted and only those ditches that seem to make significant cuts in the earth have been depicted.

The siting and size of the woods shown on the map involved a lot of guesswork, mainly comparing the few patches shown on period maps with the traces that still remained on the survey maps and in modern satellite views. The largish wood in the Allied Center was the most significant and best documented, since it obstructed vision along the Allied line once things got underway (it is now the site of the Fiat test track). The woodland on the right of the map may have extended south to the Chisola, and the clear space between its north and south strips may have been filled in as well. Unfortunately, there are no traces remaining to confirm this. The sources state these woods had an 'inner elbow' in which the Allied Right nested.

The high ground, Monte San Giorgio, is a detached spur of the ridges descending from the Alps, 837 meters high, steep and heavily wooded. In practical terms, the mount rises about 500 meters above the plain. As shown, the village of Piossasco sits at its foot, about 60 meters above the plain. There is also a ruined castle on a knoll (it was ruined even then) just to the southeast of the village.

As an aside, the reader should note that in general the ground slopes down from the French to the Allied lines, dropping about 10 meters for every kilometre. To anyone walking the battlefield the land appears flat, yet even a slight slope would have given the French a bit of an advantage in an assault.


Battle of Orbassano (Marsaglia)
October 4 1693
Bruino
Beinasco
Orbassano
Piossasco
Volvera
Magazine?
837m
300m
290m
280m
270m
260m
250m
340m
360m
380m
350m
1000 meters
To Marsaglia
300m

With regard to the depiction of the armies, the same icons, measurements, and scales are used as on the Staffarda map and everything said about the units on that map applies here as well. Again, the colours on the Allied side represent the contingent: yellow is Spanish, purple is Sabaudian, grey is Imperial, orange is Huguenot and Vaudois, dark blue is Bavarian, and light blue is Württemburg (Württemburg regiments in Austrian service are grey). The French are again organised into brigades, alternating light and dark blue for clarity.

For both armies, cavalry 'bricks' are assumed to be arranged with all their associated squadrons in line. The exception is the numerically strong Milanese State Cavalry, which is shown as a thicker 'brick'. The French cavalry brigades frequently have one brick behind another. This seemed the most sensible way to deal with the congestion of the battlefield. Alternatively, regiments could have been arranged with the squadrons in echelon. The method used here reduces the number of 'bricks' needed and occupies roughly the same amount of ground.

On the French Left, note the mixing of Foot and Horse. This was done because of the close nature of the terrain and the proximity of the Sangone. The Foot were required for security and to clear obstacles. At the point depicted on the map, the wing now has enough room to begin full expansion into line. On the French Right, a mixed detachment holds Piosassco and Monte San Giorgio; the official French Right begins with the cavalry 'bricks'.

The most forward line on the Allied Right also requires explanation. This was a special formation created by Duke Victor. In some sources he assembled it in the hours before dawn as a designated Vanguard. In others it was a last minute attempt to extend his line after he saw how badly outnumbered he was. Both versions state that one object was to extend the Allied Right because the French overlapped them, but the Vanguard accounts also say he was weighting his Right in hopes of turning the French with a counterattack.

Mention should also be made about the small bricks of cavalry arranged slightly behind the Allied Center. These are individual squadrons. On the OOB found in de Quincy they are listed as part of the First Line. However, since their purpose was to repel local breakthroughs, they were probably drawn up slightly to the rear of the Foot. Placing them in the intervals might interfere with the evolutions of the infantry formations. Apparently the tactic, advocated by Prince Eugene, was not of much use.

The Approach

To return to the narrative. As previously described, on the night of October 2 the Allied army had camped at the 'cassines of Marsaglia' – outlying buildings associated with the abbey. Orbassano is about 6 Km to the north, and Turin about 20 Km away to the northeast, one day's fast march or two days at normal rates. Here they were joined by Pálffy's cavalry corps, which had been observing the French. Most accounts have the Duke's forces deployed along the Chisola between the Abbey to a point opposite the village of Volvera. This accords with the failed attempt to pass to the right of the French, and it was also a good defensive position.

The French camped between Rivalta (just off the top left corner of the map) and Beinasco. Their march from Avigliana had been much hampered by vineyards and ravines. At this point, all they knew of the Allies was that Pálffy's cavalry had retired south toward Marsaglia; therefore, Duke Victor was probably on the Pinerolo-Turin Road.

At dawn on October 3, Catinat detached a M. de Béthomas with 500 cavalry to make a reconnaissance to the south. Meanwhile, his army defiled across the Sangone in 2 columns, the baggage on the right. Period sketches show them bunched up between Monte San Giorgio and the river, but there are several fords and it would have been much easier to simply march directly south, as indeed the sources state in contravention of their own maps.

[If sketched on the spot, these map inaccuracies may have been engendered by some perceptual illusion created by the bulk of Mont San Giorgio, which would have appeared to be on the French right from a number of angles.]

After 3-4 hours of marching, the Allied army was spotted by the Chisola and Catinat learned that it was the whole army, and not just a detachment. By the order in which the various contingents are described, it seems their order of march was the same as on the attached map, with the Spanish at the rear. By the time Catinat was alerted the Allies had crossed the Chisola.

The *Général* ordered the *duc* de Vendôme, commander of his Right Wing, up onto the high ground by Piossasco for a better view. Catinat, after picking out the spot where he wished to give battle, later joined him, and what they saw, coupled with reports from their scouts, determined the *Général* to attack that very day. Unfortunately, all that could be accomplished was a grand skirmish.

It began when the Grand Prior, this day commanding the French Left, with the *marquises* de Vins and de Varenne, led a body of horse, supported by two brigades of foot under d'Usson, toward a perceived gap in the enemy line, and forced the Allied troops back.

Meanwhile, Vendôme observed the Allies heavily fortifying their Left and feared they would also try to gain

control of Piosassco. He called for a brigade of two dragoon regiments and four battalions of Foot from different brigades to occupy the place.

The Allies only belatedly noticed this manoeuvre, and sent somewhere between 5-8 battalions, supported by 4 cannon, to evict the French, but though the attackers managed to hold onto a couple of outbuildings for a few hours they were eventually repulsed. The French established a battery of their own near the ruined castle on Monte San Giorgio. Duke Victor has been roundly criticised for not winning the fight for Piosassco. If the Allies had taken the hill the French would have been at a grave disadvantage.

This affair was supposed to be the preliminary to the general French attack, but they found it impossible to disentangle themselves from the close terrain. Catinat decided he had better call a halt and properly think things out after studying the ground. The armies remained close, but only sniped at one another, while the French generals rode about assessing the battlefield. The Allies spent their day digging in.

With nightfall, the armies pulled back, sleeping ‘under arms’. This does not seem to have changed their battle positions, which would have been held by picquets while the bulk of the men slept.

About midnight, the Allies took the opportunity to send away their baggage to Villafranca, and made certain modifications to their deployment. As already discussed, they weighted their Right (or extended that flank). It was decided to await a French attack, since the enemy was the stronger party. If the opportunity presented itself, however, a counterattack on the Right might force the French away from the Sangone and pin them against the mountains.

The commotion these manoeuvres made was noticed by the French vedettes. At first it was thought the enemy was running away, but Catinat grasped that the noise was just the baggage departing and suspected he would be facing a reinforced Allied Right, since he had noticed own Left did slightly overlap them. To prepare, he made some adjustments of his own, moving the *Petite Gendarmerie*. This unit has already been discussed. It will be assumed that 4 squadrons were swapped with a line regiment on the Left. In a grand tactical sense, Catinat was weakening his main point of attack to shield his other flank. The *Gendarmerie* were his best troops.

The Opponents

The Allies had about 44 battalions, 81 squadrons, and 31 guns, against a French force of about 50 battalions, 86 squadrons, and 30 guns. There are discrepancies between the two primary OOBs, that of Catinat (using his private papers) and of de Quincy (using war ministry documents), not to mention confusion over unit names, whether the converged French Carabiners should be included, and whether the Jacobite cavalry, which fought on foot, should count as cavalry or infantry. The Allies also had a body of Vaudois and may have had some other peasant bands. As always, the only OOBs available are drawn from parade states taken days or even weeks before, and do not always reflect the deployment on the day of battle. In raw numbers, however, the French had a clear advantage, of 38-40,000 against 20-25,000.

The Allies were disposed in 2 lines, as follows. The dispositions within each Wing are given from Left to Right. The numerals in **bold** type correspond with the numerals on the map.

1st Line

Left Wing **(1)**: Prince Commerci, a Huguenot general in Imperial service, related to the ducal family of Lorraine

Leibregiment zu Pferde (2 sqns)
KR Württemberg (3 sqns)
Caballería Extranjera (3 sqns)
Caballería del Estado (10 sqns)
KR Commerci (2 sqns)
KR Ludwig von Württemberg (2 sqns)
‘Spanish Horse’ (2 sqns)
Tercio de Lombardía (1 bn)
Tercio de Saboya (1 bn)
Tercio de Mar de Nápoles (1 bn)

Center **(2)**: Count Pálffy, an Imperial general, usually commanding the cavalry

Tercio Provincial de duque de San Pietro (1 bn)
Biscaye Infantry Regiment (1 bn)‡
Melli Infantry Regiment (1 bn)‡
Tercio de Cabrera (1 bn)
DR Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1 sqn)
Tercio de Lisboa (or Alemanno Corneaud) (1 bn)*
DR Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1 sqn)
Loche Huguenot Regiment (1 bn)
KR Carafa (1 sqn)
Schomberg Huguenot Regiment (1 bn)
KR Carafa (1 sqn)
IR Stadel (1 bn)
KR Montecuccoli (1 sqn)
IR Pfalz-Neuburg (or Sachsen-Mersburg) (2 bns)*
IR Herzog von Lothringen (2 bns)
IR Württemberg (3 bns)

‡ These are most probably Huguenot regiments, of which 3 possibles were in service at this time. They do not exist by the names given here, and the sources require 4 Huguenot battalions in all.

*The alternate (bracketed) names are completely different units cited in de Quincy’s OOB. And for the *Tercio de Lisboa*, Catinat’s own OOB records ‘Catuena’.

Right Wing **(3)**: Caprara, Pabelles & de la Pierre. Caprara was usually commander of the Imperial Foot. De la Pierre was a Spaniard.

KR Commerci (4 sqns)
KR Pálffy-Erdödy (4 sqns)
KR Montecuccoli (4 sqns)
KR Taafe (4 sqns)
Guardie del Corpo (2 sqns)

Advance Guard **(4)**: Victor II Amadeus of Savoy

Regiment zu Fuß Max Emanuel (Leibregiment) (2 bns) and 2 unspecified battalions of Imperial Foot (taken from the main line and thus among those listed below)
DR Savoy (6 sqns)

2nd Line:

Left Wing **(5)**: General Leganéz, commander of the Spanish Corps

Balthasar Cavalry Regiment (2 sqns)
DR Württemberg (4 sqns)
DR Savoy (6 sqns) (to Adv Gd)

[Louvigny is cited as the left wing commander in some modern OOBs but according to the sources this does not seem to be the case.]

Center **(6)**: General Rabutin, a Sabaudian general

Regiment zu Fuß Max Emanuel (Leibregiment) (2 bns)@
Regiment zu Fuß Steinau (2 bn)
Tercio Milanés de Benedette Ali (1 bn)
Tercio Milanés de Bonesana (1 bn)
Tercio de Mayer de Baldegg (1 bn)
Tercio de Besler de Wattinguen (1 bn)
Reggimento d'Aosta (1 bn)
Tercio Napolitano de Colonna (Francia) (1 bn)
Reggimento Mondoví (1 bn)
Reggimento Croce Bianca (1 bn)
Reggimento Chablais (1 bn)
Reggimento Monferrato (1 bn)
Reggimento Saluzzo (1 bn)
Reggimento Savoia (1 bn)
Reggimento Guardie (2 bns)

@ Transferred to the Vanguard

[As noted earlier, some accounts report the death of the marchese *di Parella in 1692. This Parella was probably the* cavaliere *di Parella, whose name begins to appear in the accounts.]*

Right Wing **(7)**: Prince Eugene of Savoy, no introduction necessary

Reggimento Dragoni di Genevois (3 sqns)
Reggimento Cavalleria di Savoia (3 sqns)
Reggimento Dragoni di Masselloti (3 sqns)
Reggimento Cavalleria di Reale Piemonte (3 sqns)

Guarding the Train
Reggimento Fucilieri Sua Altessa Reale (1 bn)

Other

4 battalions of Vaudois occupying the central blob of woodland. **(8)**

3 unspecified battalions with the baggage. Since they were actually some distance away on the road to Pinerolo, beyond the Chisola, they were effectively out of the fight. These may have been peasant bands, the 3rd battalions of Imperial regiments, or cadres from the Spanish *tercios*.

There was also an unnamed battalion posted as flank guard on the Allied Left. This might actually be the Fusiliers.

Artillery Pieces

- 8 with the Vanguard: 6 on the left and 2 on the right
- 9 entrenched in the center.
- 12 entrenched with the 3 Spanish tercios of the Left.
- 2 on the extreme left of the line.

31 cannon in all.

With respect to the entrenchments, they were significant enough to be noted, but not significant enough to stop the French. Apart from protecting the guns, they were probably used to house musketeers sent forward from their battalions. In the waning musket and pike days, this was often done. The pikes remained in reserve and the musketeers, or a portion of them, formed a firing line in front, protected by fieldworks or existing terrain features such as hedges and ditches, both of which were in plentiful supply.

The French were also deployed in 2 lines, but had a small reserve. The maps that show them in 3 lines probably do so because Catinat called upon 10,000 'fresh' troops for his final assault; in reality these were merely previously unengaged forces from the second line. No army in this period placed 30% of its strength in reserve. 2-3 battalions, and maybe a regiment of dragoons, was sufficient to tip a fight.

[The various French OOBs available are even more contradictory than the Allied OOB. The following is drawn from Catinat's own OOB, amended to account for the forces that occupied Piossasco.]

Commanding Officer: Maréchal de Catinat

1st Line

Left Wing: Lieutenant General de Vins
Maréchal de camp de Varennes

Brigade **(9)**: du Cambout
Bretagne Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)
Sennectère Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)

Brigade **(10)**: elements of de Saint-Maurice
Gendarmes (assuming 4 sqns)
Saint-Maurice Cavalry Regiment (4 sqns)
Carabiniers (2 sqns)
Robin Cavalry Regiment (2 sqns

[The Carabiniers and Robin were doubled up behind until there was room to expand.]

Brigade **(11)**: von Fürstemburg
Vaubecourt Infantry Regiment (2 bns)
Fürstemburg Infantry Regiment (3 bns)

[Originally deployed to the right of Famechon's brigade but now supporting the advance of the cavalry of the Left through close terrain. In some accounts, Famechon's brigade has this role, but the lead battalion (in front of the cavalry), was one of Fürstemburg's battalions. Only 4 battalions are noted as participating, but whichever brigade was involved, they both have 5 battalions. The missing battalion cannot be accounted for.]

Center: Lieutenant General de la Hoguette
Maréchal de camp de Grancé

Brigade **(12)**: de Famechon
Feuquières Infantry Regiment (2 bns)
Solre Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Famechon Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Nivernois Infantry Regiment (1 bn)

Brigade **(13)**: de Maxwil
Reine d'Angleterre Dragoon Regiment (1 bn)
Roi d'Angleterre Dragoon Regiment (1 bn)

[These 2 regiments are listed as 'infantry'. As they were always notoriously short of horses they will have fought dismounted.]

Brigade **(14)**: de Clerambault
Quercy Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Flanders Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Clerambault Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Touraine Infantry Regiment (2 bn)

Brigade **(15)**: de Baudemain
Bigorre Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Médoc Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Sault Infantry Regiment (2 bns)

Brigade **(16)**: de Bellane
Catinat Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Condé Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
La Marine Infantry Regiment (3 bns)

Right Wing: Lieutenant Général *duc* de Vendôme, grandson of Henri IV, and thus of the blood royal.
Maréchal de camp de Bachevilliers

Brigade **(17)**: de Grammont
Grammont Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)
Catinat Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)

Brigade **(18)**: de Josfreville
Josfreville Cavalry Regiment (4 sqns)

Brigade **(19)**: elements of de Saint-Maurice & Gendarmerie
Gendarmes (4 sqns)
La Reine Cavalry Regiment (4 sqns)

[La Reine was placed here to replace the Gendarmerie. In Quincy, a nonexistent 'Normandie Horse' was also used.]

2nd Line

Left Wing: Lieutenant General le Grand Prieur, brother of Vendôme.

Brigade **(20)**: de Saint-Livière
Sainte-Livière Cavalry Regiment (2 squadrons)
Esseville Cavalry Regiment (4 squadrons)
Courlandon Cavalry Regiment (4 squadrons)

Brigade **(21)**: de Valençay
Valençay Dragoon Regiment (4 squadrons)

Brigade **(22)**: de la Chassaigne
Bretagne Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Robecq Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Gatinois Infantry Regiment (1 bn)

[This brigade brought up the rear of the mixed Left Wing. A Poitiers regiment is also listed but no such unit existed. It may be a Milice *unit given an alternate name.]*

Center: Maréchal de camp d'Usson

Brigade **(23)**: de Chartoigne
Vendôme Infantry Regiment (2 bn) (on Piossasco) ‡
Ile de France Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Beauce Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Labor Infantry Regiment (1 bn)

‡ Catinat lists 1 battalion but there were a total of 4 battalions on the Heights (plus dragoons) & other sources list 2 battalions for this regiment.

Brigade **(24)**: Wacob
Reine d'Angleterre Foot Regiment (2 bns)
Clancarty Infantry Regiment (1 bn)

Brigade **(25)**: de Vallière
Barrois Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Tierache Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Dauphine Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Perche Infantry Regiment (1 bn) (on Piossasco)

Brigade **(26)**: de Novion
Clare Infantry Regiment (1 bn; alternate 3 bns)
Grancé Infantry Regiment (1 bn) (on Piossasco)

Right Wing: Lieutenant General de Larré

Brigade: de Fonboissard (on Piossasco)
Fonboissard Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)
Preissac Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)

Brigade **(27)**: de Catalan
Catalan Cavalry Regiment (4 sqns)
Villepoin Cavalry Regiment (4 sqns)

At Piossasco/Monte San Giorgio **(28)**
Fonboissard Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)
Preissac Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)
Perche Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Grancé Infantry Regiment (1 bn)
Vendôme Infantry Regiment (2 bns)

Reserve **(29)**:
Montbas Cavalry Regiment (4 sqns) ‡
Vaugrenau Infantry Regiment (2 bns)
Gévaudan Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)

‡Originally attached to Valençay's brigade but reassigned to the Reserve, possibly to due lack of manoeuvre room.

Artillery **(30)**: du Gast
1 bn of Fusiliers

30 guns arranged in 3 batteries: Left (10), Center (6), Right (10), plus 4 guns on Monte San Giorgio. The positions on the map are based on de Quincy's OOB. From the way his notes are written it almost appears the guns were incorporated into the line, instead of being advanced. It is not clear how the Fusiliers were deployed, but they were at the associated battery.

The Battle

The last battle of the war on the Italian front began around 8:30am (or 9am) on October 4. There was a thick fog on the ground as the French began their advance, which allowed them to approach quite near the Allied line without being seen, though no doubt they were heard. The fog lifted sometime between 9am and 10am, heralding a general cannonade by both sides.

How much damage the cannonades did depends on the source. It appears the French fire was very effective, particularly against the Allied Left, but that the Allies also did great execution among the French cavalry.

In some accounts, it is only at this point that Duke Victor, noticing that his Right is exposed, creates the Vanguard. In these accounts his decision to launch a counterattack is opportunistic rather than planned.

The first French assault was a general one, involving some 20,000 men, though the main impetus was on their flanks. They attacked with the bayonet, without stopping to fire, but after a furious hand-to-hand fight were repulsed. This statement gives the impression of a steadily advancing wall, but at least on the Allied Right the attack was made 'in Turkish fashion', that is, with the cavalry charging to clear away the enemy Horse and isolate the infantry battalions, which were then assaulted individually by the supporting French infantry. This seems to have been a fortuitous tactic deriving from the need to have infantry assisting the cavalry through the obstructing terrain, rather than a deliberate one.

At this point the French Left became disconnected from the main line, partly due to the ground and partly due to local counterattacks by Allied cavalry. The latter had quickly rallied under the Duke and Prince Eugene, while the Allied infantry battalions stood like pillars and poured fire into the French.

Duke Victor saw his opportunity and ordered a general counterattack, leading from his Right. Unfortunately, thanks to the patch of woods in the center of his line, it was a rather disjointed attempt and does not seem to have been obeyed by the units to the left of the wood (many of whom were too busy, anyway).

Still, he managed not only to drive the French back, but hold ground in advance of his lines for about an hour before sending his regiments back to their original positions. Probably this was done when it became obvious the rest of the army was not helping. In some accounts Duke Victor gave the signal for a general advance around 11am but was almost immediately informed his Left had been overthrown and that the French were behind his Center.

For his part, Catinat took personal command of the situation on his Left, rallying his flagging troops with the cry, *Ressouvenez-vous que vous êtes Français!* (remember that you are French!) The *Petite Gendarmerie* was brought up to plug the gap. Given the assumptions made in this commentary, this statement means the *Gendarmerie* led the initial assault but was forced to retire and reform; they are now attacking for the second time.

On the French Right, the Allied Horse had been shaken but not broken, before the crisis on the other flank intervened. Now began the second French assault. On their Right the French finally overpowered the Allied cavalry. The texts state that the Spanish regiments were driven upon the Imperials, disordering everyone, at which point the *Gendarmerie* came up and put them all to flight. The Bavarian text and de Quincy make special mention of the effectiveness of the French artillery in sowing chaos; the Bavarian text limits this to the regimental guns, but de Quincy seems to suggest the field guns were also involved.

If the Allies were arranged as shown on the map, this suggests their second line was also involved in the rout. No mention is made of it attempting to stabilise matters, though mention *is* made of Prince Commerci pulling one of Steinau's battalions and 3 Sabaudian battalions out of the second line, and in a couple of texts some cavalry was sent as well, probably the individual squadrons in the Center. Why battalions were taken from the right and not the left of the Foot is not explained, but most likely, they were already forming the core of a 'refused flank' defense.

It is also not clear if the Bavarian and Württemburg regiments are considered 'Imperial' or 'Spanish', though the latter were in Spanish pay. If 'Imperial', then the breakthrough could have occurred in the middle of the wing, thrusting the Spanish to either side. On the other hand, the sources make no attempt to be precise, so it

may be the whole line was simply bent in toward the Center. The net result was the same – the Allied Foot lost its flank protection. Prince Commerci was badly wounded and de las Torres, who had brought over the infantry reinforcements, took command after Schomberg refused to do so.

The French pursued the fleeing remnants of the cavalry for some distance and annihilated Steinau's battalion, before returning to attack the Allied Center in flank and rear. This led Prince Eugene to order the second line to face about, and in this super-square the infantry managed to stand without difficulty. Some of the battalions on the Allied Left had been caught up in the rout, meaning that the line ended roughly at the central wood. Here, the Huguenot battalions and the Vaudois found themselves under intense pressure from front and flank.

On other parts of the field the second assault did not go so well. The Allied Center continued to hold. On the French Left, the situation was confused. Two broad narratives are possible. In the first, the Second Assault was merely an extension of a successful charge by the *Gendarmerie* that stopped the Allied counterattack, after which the *Gendarmerie* were in turn charged by Montecuccoli's Cuirassiers and driven back. This led to the Allies actually turning the French flank and inflicting severe damaged on the left of the French Center, which contributed to the failure of the Second Assault on this flank and in the Center The Allied Right was then driven back in turn by a Third Assault, which may have been general, or specific to this flank.

Alternatively, it was the original Allied counterattack that turned the French flank, causing the First (not the Second) Assault to fail, and the Second Assault, which included the charge of the *Gendarmerie*, dealt with this crisis, after which the French Left was again sent packing by the Allied cavalry. If this was the sequence, the Third Assault may again have been general or specific to this flank, but would only have stabilised things.

In some cases numerous assaults are mentioned, but these will have been local attacks organised by commanders on the spot. Vendôme, for example, commanding on the French Left, led five charges with five different squadrons, each of which he had personally rallied in a remarkably short time. Both Catinat and the Grand Prior performed similar feats.

[One of the units mentioned as participating in the Allied turning manoeuvre is the two-battalion Bavarian Leibregiment. In de Quincy's OOB, it is marked on the left of the second line of the Center, but the accounts that have a Vanguard place it there on the day of battle. However, in at least one account it is described as only now being pulled from the second line. Did it return there at some point? Or was the source looking at the official OOB and, noting its original position, assume it came from there without considering that if it had done so, it would have had to have pulled out of combat with the French Right and marched all the way across the battlefield to outflank the French Left?]

The confusion disappears with the Fourth Assault, launched in the early afternoon. By now, both sides were exhausted, their lines ragged, their cavalry blown. The Allied Left had vanished. The remainder of the Center, in oblong all-round defense, was anchored on the central patch of woodland, where the Protestants continued to fight against determined attackers. Duke Victor had rallied his Right around him.

By early afternoon, however, the French had reformed most of their army. Badly mauled, they still had 10,000 fresh troops from their second line and, critically, had been able to resupply with ammunition, and probably remounts. The Allies had no chance to do so since their baggage was on its way to Turin.

The assault began around 2pm, led by the commander of the French Second Line, *lieutenant général* Larré. Spearheaded by the nucleus of what would become the Irish Brigade, it proved unstoppable, its wave overlapping the Allies on both flanks and washing them away.

In desperation, Duke Victor led the cavalry of his Right in a final charge that managed to take some prisoners and flags, but his attack was too localised. Everywhere else his men were either surrounded or falling back. At 3pm (4pm in some sources), he gave the order for a general retreat.

Duke Victor led the rearguard and was one of the last to leave the field. It is said that thanks to his personal example the army did not collapse, though partisan writers give the credit to Eugene. General Rabutin, commanding the remaining infantry, is also praised. The French were too exhausted to pursue.

At Orbassano the best modern estimate is that the Allies suffered 6,000 killed and 2,000 wounded, mainly among the Spanish, Huguenots, and Imperials, and had over 2,000 men taken prisoner. Other estimates are 5,500 casualties and 2,000 prisoners, which breaks down as 2,500 Spanish, 1,500 Imperials, and 1,500 Piedmontese and 'English' (i.e., Huguenot). Some French claims go over 10,000 casualties, probably by lumping the various losses together as 'losses', then adding the POWs a second time.

[The Bavarian chronicler tries to work out the percentage of overall losses by using his regiments as a baseline. Before the battle the 4 Bavarian battalions together had 1,500 men. After the battle they had 400. Of the losses, 900 were prisoners and 600 were killed. One battalion of Steinau's was wiped out. These numbers also suggest, as the Bavarian text is at pains to point out, that the Bavarians were regarded as elite troops and used as a 'fire brigade'.]

30 cannon were captured by the French (this may include regimental pieces; if not, the Allies lost their entire train, less one – but 5 guns are recorded as saved), as well as 99 flags and guidons, and 4 banners. The retreat was not

so disorderly that some cannon could not have been saved, but so many horses had been killed that there was no way to tow them off the field.

Of the Allied officers on the casualty list, 13 were of high rank. There were 180 others. The Duke of Schomberg was one. He had spent the day fighting with his regiment. As the French formed up for their final advance, he was asked to take command of the battle since Commerci was out of action, but refused, saying Duke Victor's approval would be needed, the Duke was at the other end of the battle line, and in any case, the battle was lost. He continued to fight, however, and was mortally wounded in hand-to-hand combat. He would have been left on the field but a servant found his body. In some accounts he was taken prisoner and immediately paroled by Catinat in hopes that they would be able to save his life at the hospital in Turin; in others his servant carried him to Turin directly. He died there.

The sources universally blame the Spanish for the lost of the battle, for running away. The Bavarian source reports that they threw themselves on their knees and pulled out rosaries to show the French they were fellow Catholics. They had some reason for doing so – Imperials and Huguenots were killed out of hand in reprisal for the Dauphiné campaign. But the fact remains that by nation, excepting the Huguenots, the Spanish suffered the highest losses. In earlier wars, most casualties were suffered in retreat, but in these campaigns a victor was rarely able to pursue effectively, so the Spanish losses were almost certainly that high because they resisted the full weight of two French assaults before breaking. The Huguenots were of course massacred as heretics.

French casualties were also high. The usual toll in French accounts ranges from 1,500 to 3,000, but the true total may have been over 4,000. They lost very few prisoners. The *Gendarmerie* alone had 8 officers killed and 18 more wounded. In all, the French had 45 officers killed, including 6 of general rank, and 43 other officers wounded. They also lost 30 flags or standards.

Vendôme was given great praise for leading in all four assaults, but he also was wounded, in the head. His brother the Grand Prior, also in the forefront, was severely wounded early on but remained in the fight. De la Hoguette was slain. Catinat took the latter's death very hard; he was a personal friend. The Irish troops received much praise for their efforts in the final assault under Larré.

Orbassano is also noted for the two French tactical innovations: using field artillery in the close support role, and attacking with the bayonet. Though this was not the first time these tactics had been used, they astonished the Allies. The artillery was especially praised in this battle. According to Catinat, "our cannon were served to perfection, M. de Cray making them follow our troops continually."

Despite this, and the edge the French had in numbers, the battle could have gone either way. Until about 3pm, no one was willing to bet on the outcome. In fact, so narrow was the margin of victory that Catinat had to quash rumours of the Allies returning to the fray.

At least one commentator feels the Duke was right to pick a fight, since if he had retreated, the French would have had free rein on the plains; the Duke's biggest error was in not occupying Piossasco. If he had won the battle, Duke Victor could have placed himself between his Capital and the French, forcing Catinat to retreat south past Pinerolo into Vaudois country, where his disorganised army would have been harried by partisans. Other commentators blame the Duke at the operational level for not blocking the passes ahead of the French descent from the mountains, but it is hard to see how this could have been accomplished given the manpower available.

The exhausted French camped on the battlefield. When Catinat came out of his tent the next morning, he saw his soldiers had surrounded it with the captured flags and cannon.

King Louis sent his personal congratulations:

"At Fontainebleau, the 10th October 1693.

I have received the letter from the Marquis Clérambault made from you to me, and heard what he told me with pleasure that I would have difficulty expressing. I was expecting some brilliant action in Piedmont, but the perfect victory that you won over my enemies surpassed my expectations, increased the esteem I had for you, and makes known how much you deserve my trust in serving the state as you do. So count on my perfect satisfaction and my friendship.

"Louis. "

[A joke began circulating at Turin that King Louis now had the advantage because he controlled both the Pope and the Twelve Apostles. The Twelve Apostles were guns lost by Francis I at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, which had just been recaptured at Orbassano.]

Aftermath

Orbassano solved nothing in the short term. His defeat depressed Duke Victor, but not to the point that he appeared willing to negotiate. Not yet. The French were still too weak to occupy Piedmont, or take Turin; Catinat's reinforcements would be withdrawn at the end of the season. King Louis, however, was hopeful of great things. He sent new proposals to Duke Victor through the *duc* d'Orléans. Despite the French victory they were more favourable to Turin, too.

On the military front, Catinat was instructed to curb his raiding, which had continued after the battle. He was to avoid burning any of the important towns, and to let Duke Victor know this was being done on Louis' express orders. This did not stop him foraging along the banks of the Po from Villafranca to La Loggia, or overrunning the Allied depôts established for the sieges of Pinerolo and Casale (provender from the latter was used to re-victual that fortress). The loss of these dumps was a major reason no such siege was carried out in 1694, though the fact is often overlooked in the histories which focus on Duke Victor's duplicitous dealings.

Putting a brake on French raiding was next to impossible. For one thing, the troops had grown used to that mode of subsistence. For another, the French commissary system was on the verge of collapse. 1693 was the year of the Great Famine, and here, as elsewhere, the troops were hungry and unpaid. Their officers frequently joined them in looting expeditions.

[The lack of money and supplies was put down to corruption; Catinat hanged several commissaries. Corruption was indeed endemic, but it had been exacerbated by the failed harvest and a severe financial crisis.]

Immediately after the battle, the Allies retreated unmolested to Turin, where the next few days were spent collecting stragglers. They eventually mustered 12,000 Foot and 7,000 Horse. For over two weeks they appeared paralyzed, then on October 22 they moved to Moncalieri. Both the baggage and siege train were also directed there.

In utter disarray, the Allies were forced to lift the blockade of Casale (October 6), though those troops only came as far west as Vercelli, giving them options. Both the royal militia and the general levy were called up, as had been done in 1690, causing some dislocation of the economy.

Stopping first at Pancalieri, the French moved to Polonghere (October 15), Moretta (November 1), and Manta, 25 Km north of Cuneo (November 5). Catinat's ultimate goal was Cuneo. At Busca, 15 Km northwest of that fortress, the French crushed a large detachment of militia under the *cavaliere* di Parella.

The French siege train was brought up and it looked as if Cuneo would undergo a new siege, but the French abruptly stopped and withdrew. In mid November they were at Saluzzo, and on November 25 at Savigliano. On December 15 they were at Pinerolo, marching there via Cavour. By December 19 they were among the high passes, enroute for Dauphiné.

This volte face has been put down to a number of causes, but there are two main versions.

In one, King Louis was most insistent that Cuneo be taken, and Catinat was forced to refuse, because he had no supplies, it was too late in the season, and the troops were unpaid – on the march home he had to allow them '*les excès du plus affreux libertinage*' to keep them happy. However, he had kept moving forward until the King's cancellation of the order was received.

Refusing the King's orders was a step which began to erode Catinat's political capital. Into the gap stepped the *comte* de Tessé, who took over the army-level negotiations with the Court of Turin, leaving Catinat to concentrate solely on military affairs. In a decade or so, Tessé would backstab his chief during the War of the Spanish Succession. As evidence for this version of events, there is the correspondence between Catinat to King Louis, and other writings that tell of Versailles' displeasure.

In the other version of events, Catinat is keen to attack Cuneo but reluctantly has to give up the idea, partly for the reasons outlined above, but mainly because King Louis orders him to winter in France for political reasons. Duke Victor is at last beginning to see reason and the taking of Cuneo will only change the equation. In fact, Catinat was required to let Duke Victor know he had been instructed to vacate Piedmont.

Most likely, the true situation was a blend of both. The King ordered the siege, Catinat refused through force of circumstance, the King could not refute his arguments, and reluctantly ordered the army to withdraw from Piedmont, but was cheered by news that Duke Victor appeared to be coming round. It should be noted that the instructions for Catinat to inform Duke Victor of his withdrawal were only dated November 25, *after* the *Maréchal* began his withdrawal.

Taking Catinat's army away from him – the *Maréchal* was to be left with only a skeleton force – may have been a way for King Louis to vent his spleen decorously. Possibly, if Catinat had agreed to and succeeded in taking Cuneo, he would have been given a blank cheque in 1694 and Versailles would have taken a harder line with Turin. Instead, the Italian front became a backwater.

Both sides entered winter quarters with nothing resolved either militarily or politically. The Allies broke camp first, and distributed themselves in their usual haunts. The French had delayed too long and suffered a brutal march over snow covered passes, harassed incessantly by partisans. The cavalry suffered the loss of many of its mounts.

[On November 29 the Bavarian Leibregiment returned home. The performance of these troops had been stellar, and there were requests for additional regiments, but to no avail. As a concession, the badly damaged Steinau Regiment was allowed to remain until September 1695.]

The Year in Review

1693 was Catinat's best year. He had outlasted the Allied siege of Pinerolo, prevented another invasion of France, and taken back the initiative by crushing the Allied army. On the other hand, the French still could not overwinter in Piedmont, and the Allied army would regain its strength.

Politically, things seemed to be at an impasse, but the balance had actually swung firmly in France's favour, at least as far as making a deal went. All it would take would be a few concessions by Louis XIV. But that, of course, was not guaranteed.

For the Allies, the year was an unmitigated disaster. The damage could be repaired, but most were of the opinion that come the spring, the whole Army of France would be flooding through the passes into Italy.

[Battle of Orbassano.]

1694 The Faithless Promise

"This Campaign was, properly speaking, merely a Campaign of Marches and Counter-Marches; and, with the exception of the Château St. George, before Cazal [Casale], which was [hemmed in], we lived with as much tranquility as if we had been in a deep peace. The Army being divided into several Corps, all that was done was to consume the forage, and spend a pleasant life."

[Broglie, p. 461]

In fact, there were not that many 'marches and counter-marches', either. The Italian campaign of 1694 is very easy to describe. There was no campaign. Strategically, both France and her enemies were exhausted, still suffering from the Great Famine of 1693. Operationally, the lands of Piedmont had been stripped bare so that neither side could support an army there, whether by taxation, requisition, or rapine.

King Louis' instincts were right. Orbassano made the Duke of Savoy more pliable, and Victor Amadeus was at last in serious discussions with Versailles. According to Langallerie, the general impression among the Allies was that Catinat would be given an even larger army this year, perhaps 60,000 men, and told to crush all before him. There were fears for the safety of the Milanese.

The siege of Pinerolo the previous year also played a part. As recounted earlier Duke's finance minister, Gropello, twice visited Tessé during the siege. Tessé took great care to point out just how strong the fortress was, with the result that Duke Victor lost his nerve and began to seriously think of coming to terms.

Before the French left Piedmont the previous winter, Tessé had even visited Saint Thomas (disguised as a postillion) and spent 6 days concealed in the palace at Turin, where he had more than one private audience with the Duke. In this Tessé was officially acting as Catinat's deputy, but was given full plenary authority – that is, he could close the sale without calling in the manager.

A deal was slowly being hammered out. So far, it was agreed that Italy should be made a neutral zone for the duration of the war, and that if the Emperor would not agree, Duke Victor would break with him. There were still some sticking points, however, notably Pinerolo itself, and Casale (King Louis kept waffling on this one), not to mention the Duke's desire to keep faith with his Allies, which was still strong. The *duc* d'Orléan's latest 'personal' visit would hopefully address these issues.

On the neutrality question, the Duke insisted on informing Vienna – the Emperor would have to know eventually, after all – but Leopold proved adamantly opposed and the Duke did not press matters, saying it was just an idea some of the Italians and the Pope were keen on. He did *not* reveal that the French had demanded he switch sides if the Emperor spurned the concept.

So, negotiations were going to take many months, and the Duke still had commitments to the League – if he wanted to retain his subsidies. How to placate his allies, without incommoding the French?

Toward his allies, the Duke's true intentions were still well hidden, despite his airing of the neutrality question, but the Powers were definitely dissatisfied with him, from at least as early as the aftermath of Orbassano. He was apparently either an idiot or a deep, dark schemer. A few argued he should be dropped from the rolls, but most were of the opinion that his kickbacks (pardon, *subsidies*) should be increased dramatically. The Spanish, well in arrears, suggested the Emperor take care of it. He suggested William of Orange should put more in the pot.

The death of Schomberg led to the appointment of the Duke of Galway to command the 'English' troops. Galway's other name was Lord Ruvigny, yet another Huguenot in the service of William of Orange. Besides his military role, Galway received an enhanced political mandate spent most of his time acting as the Anglo-Dutch representative, thus introducing an extra factor into Duke Victor's calculations. Galway was described by Langallerie as a clever and energetic man, fervently religious, but also affable and approachable. Duke Victor often preferred his council, but it was a constant strain dissembling before such a man.

General Caprara had been so fed up with the conduct of the campaign of '93 that he requested a transfer before the new campaigning season even opened. Prince Eugene thus became the overall commander of Imperial forces. He returned to Turin from Vienna in the spring, to find a new atmosphere, one that he did not like at all.

Superficially, his relative's attitude seemed to be one of self-indulgent sacrifice: Piedmont would be crushed but the Duke would go down with the ship and be content with whatever bone – perhaps Lorraine? – that his liege lord the Emperor chose to toss him. Very noble and so very false.

Yet even Eugene could not penetrate far beneath the surface, which was also disturbing. According to Langallerie, he tasked his cousin on the matter and was told that yes, the Duke had been negotiating with the French in previous years, but only to buy time. There had been no new offers. Technically, this was true. The offers were not new, just improved.

Langallerie states that he personally was aware of the coming and going of French agents, but his own dealings with them on the Duke's behalf were about things like the purchase of remounts and transport mules. It was not unusual for antagonists to sell each other materiel during a war. Famously, the Austrians sold grain to the Prussian Army during the latter's Silesian campaigns. So, this would not have rung any alarm bells.

Summer Manoeuvres

"We certainly received, apparently by virtue of our understanding with the Duke or with one of his ministers, information, always accurate, regarding the contemplated movements of the enemy"

[Malleson, p. 43, quoting Catinat]

The Allies had 45,000 men to employ against only 18-20,000 French. According to Lynn, Catinat actually had 50 battalions, which is not insignificant, but many of these were militia, and he had very little cavalry (only 2 regiments of horse and 5 of dragoons, plus the dragoon regiment 'Languedoc 2e' at Casale). King Louis had decided to make Spain the primary – indeed only – theatre of offensive operations. This did mean that the Spanish would be sending troops out of Italy, but even so, there was no reason not to attack the French.

Duke Victor solved the problem of how to avoid defeating Catinat very elegantly. He was now Generalissimo of the Allied army in Italy. This meant that the Duke could either delay through inaction or by making proposals that created arguments.

Catinat, unable to do anything else anyway, was ordered by Versailles to stay up in the mountains. It was tacitly agreed that Duke Victor would stay on the plains. Since the Duke did not fully trust the French, in March he sent a force under Bagniasco to Cuneo. That place and Turin then underwent extensive repairs.

During March and April a number of councils of war were held which could not decide on a general plan of campaign. At the end of May, Prince Eugene sent Pálffy and the Imperial cavalry to Orbassano, followed by the rest of the army at the start of July. The Allies received reinforcements throughout this period. Starting on May 20 Brandenburgers began to arrive at Turin, 3,000 men under Prince Karl, brother of the Elector, and the Huguenot general, Varenne.

[Langallerie had been sent to Berlin in the previous winter to speed the delivery of these troops. He notes that unlike the Imperials, who waited until the weather was pleasant and then moseyed up whenever it suited them, the Brandenburgers made a rapid march over the high Alps in the dead of winter and arrived at Turin still fresh.]

By July 3 the army was camped at Mirafiori, except for detachments of Huguenots and Sabaudians under Lord Galway and Prince Carl. They were already at Candiolo, where a general review was held by Duke Victor on July 7. The Spanish camped at Beinasco by July 10.

Depôts were constructed at this place and at Scalenghe and Airasca on July 12. These are two villages 13 Km east of Pinerolo, only about 3 Km apart. This makes it look as if a new siege of Pinerolo was contemplated, but in fact the depôts were constructed to deal with a water shortage. It is true, however, that Eugene wanted to besiege Pinerolo.

To placate his cousin and divert his attention, Duke Victor suggested the Imperials invest Casale while he 'screened' the siege by 'observing' the French from his own lands. He was able to point out that the Emperor himself was most insistent that fortress be taken this year.

The Bavarian commander, Gschwind, was duly sent to Casale with his own regiments and some other troops, totalling 1,500 Foot and 1,200 Horse, as a token of the Duke's zeal.

But the latter then scotched the whole operation by making out that it was impossible to lay siege with such a small force and that he could not possibly spare more men. If more troops were sent to Casale, who would defend Piedmont against the French? And if Turin fell, Milán would be next…

If his cordon strategy was questioned, Duke Victor could honestly reply that a) it was impossible to support a concentrated army any more, and that b) the failure to block the passes last year had led to the debacle at Orbassano.

There was some *petite guerre*. Duke Victor issued an edict granting the Vaudois the status they had enjoyed in 1686 (i.e., before the crusade against them) and they responded by intensifying their raids against the French.

This edict put the Duke at odds with the Pope, which was ironic, given that the latter was already pencilled in as a guarantor of the Peace of Italy that the Duke and the French were secretly hammering out. But, the Duke had to live with the Barbets. It also helped to confuse the Allies, who knew the Pope would be a central figure in any peace treaty and assumed he would abandon support of the Duke in protest. Of course, the Pope was in the pocket of Versailles, not Turin.

[Duke Victor also expelled the Inquisition from his lands at this time. Not a popular move at Rome.]

Catinat's main army, to give it a grandiose name, occupied Fenestrelle as before. The remainder of the French forces in the theatre were concentrated in the County of Nice (a few battalions of militia) and on the coast, near Fréjus (some dragoon and horse regiments).

To counter the Barbets, the *Maréchal* sent 15 battalions down the Val Perosa, and some coursings for supplies spilled out onto the plains, where they were met by Piedmontese militia.

On July 31 the Allies marched to Buriasco, setting up their HQ at Macello, 2,700 meters to the south. The left wing of the army was extended south of the Chisone through Garzigliana (2.4 Km to the south) and Osasco (4 Km to the southwest) to San Secondo, where the Spanish camped. (Apparently the Spanish had been based at Villafranca prior to this.) This appears to be an operation directed against Pinerolo, but was actually an abortive probe of the Val Perosa. Or at least, that is what it turned into. Duke Victor thought better even of a mere probe, and took the army to Bibiana, Cavour, and Saluzzo. The Spanish appear to have remained at San Secondo.

On August 24, Fort San Giorgio, the outwork of Casale which had had to be abandoned by the Allies the year before, was laid under siege, capitulating on August 28, but no siege was initiated against Casale.

On August 25 the army, less the Spanish, returned to Orbassano, camping between there and Rivalta until just after September 4, when they moved their base to the mouth of the Val Susa, having devoured the countryside around their old camp.

On September 29 the army moved east, north of Turin, and from there broke up for winter quarters. The Spanish remained near Pinerolo for a few days more, then headed for the Milanese.

Apart from the above, there was also a raid into the Val Demonte, which accomplished nothing.

From Duke Victor's point of view all these movements had as their primary purpose the victualling of the Allied army, which he needed to keep in being in case the French actually did get any ideas. From the viewpoint of his Allies, it was supposed to appear as if he was being ceaselessly vigilant against a possible French probe. Prince Eugene was unconvinced, but other of the generals still wanted to believe in the Duke.

The French probe only came after the Allies had broken up for the winter. Toward the end of October the French launched a four-pronged attack against the Vaudois, who alone of the Allied forces had been waging their own form of intense warfare, raiding as far as the Dauphiné. The French were badly beaten in all quarters, being chased as far as Briançon and Embrun! The Barbets took the opportunity to burn a few French villages.

As a side note, the English Admiral Russell cruised off the coast of Provence this year; it had been arranged that the Allies, after taking Pinerolo, would invade Provence… maybe… but clearly his did not happen. His presence was of some assistance to the Spanish in Catalonia, and caused consternation among the Genoese. Having been blatantly pro-French to this point, they now declared themselves supporters of the Allies, at least until Russell went away.

The Year in Review

"In a few words… they entered [the campaign] late, and retired early, and each one thought only… of taking part in balls, comedies, operas, and other public spectacles, which are so numerous in Italy. Others, which were the greatest number among the Duke's troops, thought of passing their time pleasantly by gallantry, finding for themselves a Mistress, whom they passionately loved, or at least for whom they contended."

Memoirs of the Comte de D–, p.212

Nothing more need be said.

1695 Faux War

"All that I attack is surrendered, All yields to my supreme power."

A line from a popular opera of this year

The war had three more years to run, but only in Catalonia would there be real progress in a military sense, and only in the last year. In 1695 the endemic partisan warfare in that province flared up into a nasty guerrilla war that seriously eroded the French position. On the Rhine there was stalemate. In Flanders, France's best general, the *duc* de Luxembourg, died, to be replaced by the incompetent poseur, Villeroi. The loss of Namur to the Allies was the result. Nowhere were there enough resources to prosecute an offensive strategy. Fortunately, the same was true for the Allies.

Only one operation of note took place in Italy this year, the siege and final capitulation of Casale. If for the Imperials and Spanish it was a purely military affair, for the French and Sabaudians it was much more a political act.

As has already been explained, Casale was a sticking point between Victor Amadeus and Louis XIV. It might have continued as such but for the Emperor. Leopold was determined to have Casale for himself and had insisted that it be besieged in 1694. Duke Victor had prevented that operation but could no longer offer any excuses.

From the Allies' point of view, the siege was now to be a test of Duke Victor's loyalty. From his own point of view, a siege was needed to restore his prestige. For the French, this was also true. They could not simply hand it over. But the intention to do so was the reality behind the farce.

The Emperor's will forced both King Louis and Duke Victor to agree on a plan, essentially the one already proposed. That, as a first step in the eventual Neutralisation of Italy, Casale would be razed and handed

over to a neutral third party, in this case the pro-French but most assuredly neutral Duke of Mantua. The parties were all agreed that under no circumstances should the Habsburgs *ever* get hold of it.

The Duke of Savoy would thus have no French forces on his eastern border, the Spanish and other Italians would have no enemy in their midst, and the Duke of Mantua would get rid of an abscess in his state's body. Both the French and the Imperials would lose out, but the French would have the consolation of drawing Victor Amadeus back into the fold and shutting down an unwanted front. Still, it was a bitter pill for Louis XIV to swallow.

The Emperor would have no consolation whatsoever. To add insult to injury the French stipulated that after the siege was concluded Duke Victor must somehow keep the Imperial forces in Italy for the duration of the current campaigning season.

Gropello and Tessé met on March 15 and agreed on the demolition of Casale. Victor Amadeus was to insist on commanding the siege to demonstrate his zeal for the League, and perhaps also so that *should* the Allies have qualms, it would only be over the Duke's desire to acquire Casale for himself – something the Emperor would think he could deal with.

The Governor of Casale was to surrender as soon as the besiegers were lodged on the glacis, and Duke Victor would not reoccupy any of his lost possessions until November. He was to arrange *contributions* for the French, rather than have them conduct raids.

King Louis was consulted and agreed in general terms, provided the French garrison remained in possession until the place was actually razed, and that the handover would involve a general truce in Italy (tending toward the idea of complete neutralisation). He also stipulated that Duke Victor must declare against the Emperor should the latter refuse the truce or try to seize the fortress. These amendments were forwarded to Turin on April 6.

Victor Amadeus and the handful of his advisors in the know were not keen on that final clause, but eventually decided they had no choice, agreeing to the terms on April 29. The siege of Casale had already begun.

Casale, At Last

At the same time the Duke was talking with the French representatives, he was presiding over a council of war at Turin. On March 19, the army assembled at Frassinetto, a hill top village 40 Km north of Turin at the mouth of the Val d'Aosta. Eugene, Galway, the *conde* de Louvigny, and Leganéz all were there, and all agreed Casale should be invested as soon as possible. Duke Victor was vocal in his hatred of France, but Eugene's suspicions only grew. However, he was the only one to mistrust the Duke.

The campaign duly began, with a reconnaissance by Eugene against Casale that determined the fortress could indeed be taken. The first trenches opened on April 7. 18,000 men, from all three of the Allied corps, took part.

The French were then aided by a freak weather event. An unusually heavy snow fell the same day the trenches were opened. The cold was intense and the snow deep, and there was nothing to do but reenter winter quarters, though a blockade was maintained. While waiting, the blockading troops began the contravallation and the generals began bickering over who should control the fortress after it fell.

The besiegers reappeared in front of Casale on June 2 but the trenches were not reopened until the night of June 27. On July 6 the bombardment started. In the exchange, which lasted 2 days, Carl of Brandenburg was killed, along with more troops than had been bargained for.

In some sources, there is a slightly different narrative, which does not accord with the dates appended to the negotiations discussed above. Duke Victor is supposed to have truly wanted to capture Casale for himself, though he would have preferred a siege of Pinerolo, which was clearly within his sphere of influence. During the enforced rest period, he became seriously concerned at the various claims being put forward by his Allies. Catinat supposedly offered him money to raise the siege. The Duke refused, but it was agreed that the French would only go through the motions, with the fortress being taken over by the Duke of Mantua.

Essentially the same deal, but made between Catinat and the Duke during the campaign and not prearranged over the winter between King Louis and the Duke.

It is also said that Governor Crenan was not happy about the whole affair and cleared fields of fire around the fortress so he could inflict maximum casualties on the besiegers during his 'token' defence.

The details of the siege are as follows:

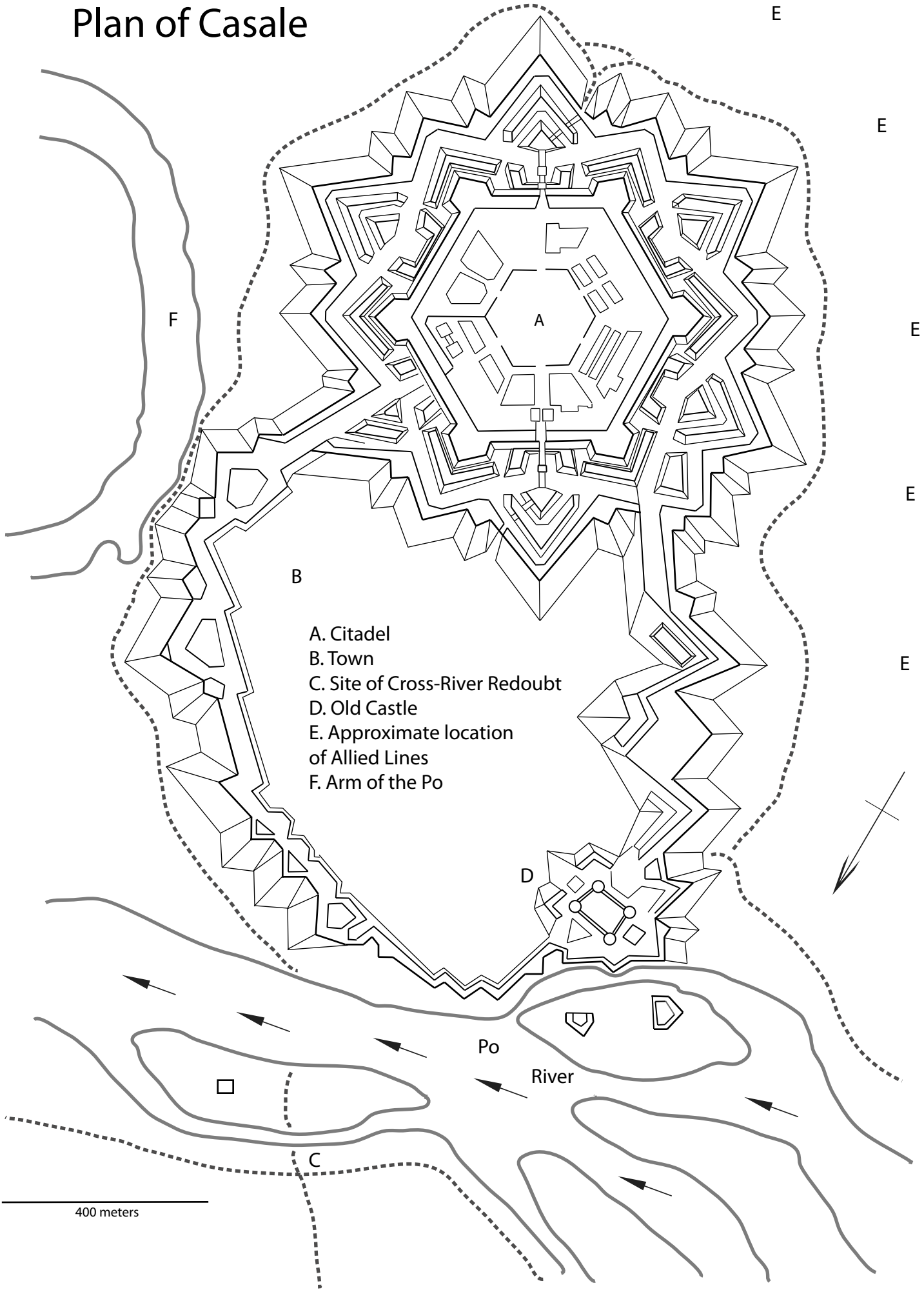
Two saps were started, one by the Sabaudians and Imperials against the outer bastion of the citadel and one by the Spanish against the curtain wall of the town, at a spot between the town and the citadel.

By the first night, the saps were only a few hundred paces from the Citadel, and a covering redoubt was stormed. The Imperials then dug parallels 200 paces to the right and 100 paces to the left of the redoubt.

The regiments of Savoy, Galway, Montferrato, and Sacconay – a mixed bag of Sabaudians and Huguenots – under Prince Eugene took over the work, extending the parallels to 400 and 200 paces respectively and helped erect a battery of 20 guns in the center of this position.

[The reader is referred to the attached map of Casale. Unfortunately, detailed plans of the trench works are lacking. Also, no date was appended to the original diagram, but it must be older than 1695 since the redoubt on the north bank (where Oltreponte Casale sits now) was not shown. This may mean that

Plan of Casale



the loop of the Po shown on the east was not present, in which case the siege lines may have been on that side instead. The depiction of them on the west is a 'best guess'.]

On June 28, Eugene was relieved by Prince Carl, who had the right hand parallel extended by 300 paces and completed the work. He was killed shortly after by cannon fire.

On June 30 the Chevalier Parella brought up the Savoy Guards and some other battalions and pushed the sap to within 50 paces of the palisade. The Spanish opened their own trenches this night.

Meanwhile, the garrison, which had throughout held a redoubt on the north bank of the Po (connected by a ferry to the town) had endure 2 assaults there. Crenan felt it was weak enough to be evacuated, which was done without incident.

By July 4 all the works were complete, with redoubts erected at the head of each sap and a parallel connecting them. That day, Duke Victor led an assault with his own troops agains the town, securing a second enemy redoubt and a demi-lune. The garrison abandoned both the counterscarp and covered way in this sector. Two mines were blown, inflicting heavy losses on the French.

On July 6 the trenches were within 30 paces of the glacis and the bombardment started. Most of the work was done by the Spanish artillery, which had 10 mortars and 35 cannon firing on the target bastion.

On July 8 the required Lodgement-On-The-Glacis was achieved. Batteries were erected there in preparation for making the breach, but Governor Crenan surrendered on cue, signing the capitulation on July 9. The Allies secured the obligatory gate the same day.

By the terms of the surrender the French would retain control of the main defenses and see to their demolition while the Allies occupied all the outer works and destroyed them. 200 cannon and a great quantities of stores were handed over.

Vienna was 'exceedingly pained' at the turn of events. Emperor Leopold was wroth, arguing that since Casale lay within the bounds of Monteferrato, and that Montferrato was an Imperial fief, the House of Austria should decree whether the fortress be torn down or not. Victor Amadeus was forced to play his trump card – the threat of breaking from the League and joining France.

Interestingly, Duke Victor was exculpated among the high and mighty at Vienna. Many hoops were jumped through to demonstrate that the way things had turned out had nothing to do with him. This may be where the alternative narrative about Catinat making a deal on the fly comes from. Vienna did not want to lose a key ally at a time when the Sultan was gaining the upper hand in Hungary.

It has to be said that the loss of Casale was also a great blow to the French, and in the eyes of modern historians marks a failure in King Louis' grand strategy. The fortress had cost an estimated 'three millions' in its repairs, upkeep, garrisoning, and in subsidies to the Duke of Mantua. Louis' propaganda machine played the loss as a boon to France, pointing out that the place no longer had any strategic value, but the argument was pretty lame.

Ironically, the destruction of those portions of the fortress in Allied hands went quickly and smoothly, while Governor Crenan seemed in no hurry. Eventually, he had to be evicted. This took place on September 18, when the Duke of Mantua's officers arrived. By then the Allied army had gone, save for 5,000 men under Lord Galway who remained to oversee the transfer. Crenan's prevarication has been put down both to his reluctance to give up his charge and to the strategy of preventing the Allies from starting a second campaign, either inside or outside of Italy.

[Casale.]

Pinerolo?

Thwarted in their acquisition of Casale, the Emperor's representatives, as well as Duke Victor's generals, insisted on an immediate siege of Pinerolo to cap off the season. An observation corps under Commerci, mainly composed of Imperial and Sabaudian cavalry, had been stationed at Buriasco since the beginning of July. Now the remainder of the army marched to join it.

But, Duke Victor nimbly forestalled the siege by urging *maréchal* Catinat to threaten Turin, allowing him to disperse his own army to watch the passes again and make pointless marches across the plains. He also passed details of the Allied plans to the French. The Duke played up the danger, pleading for Allied troops to help him defend his capital from the big bad Frenchman.

Lack of forage was also a real hinderance. On August 1, for example, the Allied cavalry are reported camped on the lands between Cavour and Villafranca, but other detachments are placed at camps some distance away, at Orbassano and Turin. The army could not remain concentrated.

Duke Victor stirred the pot by putting forward Susa as an alternative to Pinerolo. Several councils of war failed to reach a decision. He also said they should wait for a number of Empire troops being mustered at Frankfurt.

The French had done nothing all summer, excepting the usual unrecorded forays against the Vaudois, who did not care whose side Duke Victor was on. Catinat was at Oulx on April 15, joined his army at Pinerolo by May, and there he stayed.

1695 also saw some naval activities, with the Anglo-Dutch fleet under Admiral Russell making the rounds of the Riviera. In concrete terms they were able to assist the Spanish in Catalonia by escorting reinforcements and making an amphibious landing, but according to Langallerie, the main purpose of the cruise was to get the Italian states to recognise William of Orange as King of England, which they had not yet done. The visit also cowed waverers such as Genoa.

Russell extorted 4 ‘millions’ from the republic on the grounds that they had loaned that much, at interest, to Louis XIV and as a neutral power should do the same for King William. The money was used to pay Duke Victor’s English subsidy troops, and a lot of it may have stayed in his Administration’s hands.

[Russell also forced the Pope to entertain him and his officers and dish out valuable presents. Since they were heretics, tourist-grade holy relics would not do.]

In October, both sides entered winter quarters, except for some of the Imperials, who lingered at the front until November 13.

The most noteworthy incident this year other than the siege of Casale seems to have been a quarrel between the Huguenot colonel Montauban and General Bagniasco. The latter tried to arrest the former as a result of their quarrel, which had to do with a personal slight offered to Montauban, but Montauban refused to surrender, saying he was under English authority. His regiment took up arms in his defence. Montauban cooled off enough to give up his sword to prevent bloodshed but challenged Bagniasco to a duel when the campaign ended. Duke Victor forbade Bagniasco to participate. Montauban showed up anyway but there was no one to fight. A new duel was arranged, so the Duke intervened with Montauban as well, which required asking his regiment and the Court of England to intercede.

Langallerie tells an amusing story of an affair that took place at Vienna involving the arrival of Duke Victor’s envoy, who was sent to announce the fall of Casale and to ask for reinforcements. Apparently, some penurious Piedmontese count got wind of the matter and raced to Vienna ahead of the official embassy. He then bought clothes, a fine carriage, and splendid lodgings, all on credit as the Ambassador From Turin. Thus equipped, he paid a series of state visits, attended balls, met the princes, had an audience with the Emperor, and skipped town as soon as the real envoy showed up. They caught him at the frontier. He was still in prison when Langallerie last inquired.

The Year in Review

1695 saw the beginning of the end of the Italian war. Of all the protagonists, only Duke Victor can be granted a gold star for the year’s efforts. He succeeded in his political campaign, in his deceptions, and in at least one of his longterm objects – the removal of the thorn of Casale.

The Allies *seemed* to gain by the taking of Casale, but not really. Perhaps the Spanish benefited in the same manner as Duke Victor, but Piedmont had been made slightly stronger by the razing of Casale, while the Milanese had undergone no change.

Was it a successful year for the French? According to their propaganda, yes – the Allies had been stalled for an entire season through the sacrifice of a worthless piece of real estate that had been a drain on the Treasury. However,, while the Imperial corps in Italy had not been available for use elsewhere, the Emperor had had no intention of moving it anyway, and King Louis had been forced to make major concessions to a second-rate vassal power, because the war was going badly for France on every front.

The real boon for France was to be the splitting of the Allies and the rush to make peace that would occur over the following two years, which came about because of the sacrifice of Casale.

1696 Volte Face

As a military commander, Victor Amadeus was unique. Many men have switched sides during a war, but few if any have been Generalissimo of both sides.

The first thing to make clear is that although the Duke was leaning toward France, over the winter he had been required to renew his allegiance to the League of Augsburg. This had allayed the fears that Prince Eugene had been stoking about the level of his commitment to the Cause.

As the price of breaking faith with the League the Duke therefore demanded Pinerolo, and at last, after trying to give him any fortress but Pinerolo, King Louis agreed. After 8 years of war, France was in a stalemate and bleeding resources. Louis realised he had a chance to close down the Italian front, and drive a wedge into the enemy coalition that might lead to a series of separate peace agreements.

The Duke went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loretto. In between his devotions he met with the papal nuncio and the envoy of Venice. These two powers had spent several years now working toward the neutralisation of Italy, and they would stand as guarantors. So here, on March 5, 1696, Victor Amadeus signed the treaty along with the

comte de Tessé. Only Saint Thomas, of all his ministers and servants, knew what had occurred.

In detail, the terms of the treaty were as follows:

- Pinerolo was to be razed, though not handed over until the end of the war. Also, the Val Perosa which connected Pinerolo to the Dauphiné was to be given to Piedmont.
- 250,000 *livres* would be awarded Piedmont for damages
- Duke Victor would get a seat at the final peace negotiations.
- Princess Marie-Adélaïde would marry the *duc* de Bourgogne. When the Spanish king, Carlos II, died, France would back Duke Victor's claims to the Milanese portion of the inheritance. (He had a claim to the Spanish throne as well, but did not really want it.)
- And, Louis would provide 26,000 men as auxiliaries for any campaign in Italy, provided Duke Victor put up 10,000 of his own. France would annually pay 100,000 crowns for their upkeep, for 4 years. If anyone attacked Duke Victor, the French would loan him a corps of 8,000 Foot and 4,000 Horse.
- As a minor point, Duke Victor was not allowed to station more than 1,500 men west of the Alps.
- Perhaps most importantly of all, Sabaudian ambassadors would be accorded the 'traitement royale' when visiting Paris. This was a common desire of dukes with royal pretensions during this period and had real significance. Until now, King Louis had adamantly refused to consider it.
- For his part, the Duke would decommission his army down to peace-time levels as soon as the Imperials left Italy.
- Venice and the Pope were to act as guarantors.

Spain and the Emperor were to be informed of this treaty and given the month of August to decide. If the Imperials did not agree to evacuate Italy peacefully, Duke Victor would declare war on them. As a bonus, he would be created Generalissimo of the French army in Italy. Though he would only be a figurehead, this did mean that any conquests would belong to Piedmont.

Duke Victor's absence from Turin was not considered remarkable by the Allies. He had gone on a pilgrimage, that was all. If they had suspicions, it would be that he was going to let his allies do all the heavy lifting, not that he intended to change sides.

The difficulty for the Duke lay in doing exactly that, seamlessly. To address the problem, King Louis gave Catinat an army so powerful that the Duke's excuse that he had no choice but to surrender would be believed. In case he changed his mind, it would also be true. For the campaign of 1696, the *Maréchal* had under his command 88 battalions, 63 squadrons of horse, and 21 squadrons of dragoons, totalling 35-40,000 men, of which 10,000 would be used on line of communication duties.

[Alternate numbers are 90 battalions and 95 squadrons.}

The French marched out of Fenestrelle on May 19, arriving at Meana in the Val Susa the same day. A column of cavalry under Larré was also sent, with massed grenadiers and a number of fusilier companies, to secure the mouth of the valley. On May 20 the main body was at Bussoleno, where they were joined by part of the Pinerolo and former Casale garrisons, led by Tessé.

On May 23 the whole of the Catinat's army camped at Sant'Ambroglio. Here, Duke Victor and his advisors met with the French plenipotentiaries. The Duke returned to his allies, ostensibly both preparing to resist and utterly overawed by what he had seen. There was no need to fake it.

[Alternate dates foe this march are: leaving Susa on May 26, and arriving at Rivalta on May 28.]

Ignoring suggestions that the Allied army concentrate, which the Duke could argue would take took long, he distributed his Sabaudians and subsidy troops into various fortifications, particularly Turin, where new entrenchments were dug and all the artillery mounted on the walls. Politically suspect (i.e., loyal to the greater cause) regiments, like the Bavarians, were sent to places like Cuneo, far from the action. He sent his cavalry to Carignano.

At the same time, the Duke requested his allies to muster at Moncalieri – he did not trust the French, who were also very disorderly, so this call was not merely a ploy to fool his allies. In fact, he placed a bounty on French soldiers who misbehaved.

The Allied army matched the French in size, with a total of 40-45,000 men: 10,000 Imperials, 12,000 Spanish and Huguenots, and 18,000 Sabaudians. The cavalry numbered 10,000. However, this formidable force was rendered impotent by the changed political situation. Without Duke Victor, they would have only 22-27,000 men, while the French would have over 60,000.

[Alternative numbers for the Spanish/Huguenots are 11,000 Foot and 4,600 Horse.]

The Allies spent the period May through August camped between Moncalieri and Villastellone, 9 Km to the southeast. The Sabaudians and Bavarians camped at Volvera from July 12, except for their 2,500-strong cavalry which camped at Moncalieri as a mark of good faith. They left that camp when the Truce was declared.

[Interestingly, the Imperial contingent requested the Bavarian regiment (Steinau's) be transferred to their control. The Bavarians refused, saying they were under contract until September, and in fact they only detached themselves from the Duke's command at that time.]

The Duke also visited the camp at Moncalieri daily with the Spaniard Leganéz to confer with his generals. After all, he was still their Generalissimo. But this was pretty much an attempt to muddy the waters. At Turin, the princesses packed their bags, the archives were stowed away, and the citizens organised into work parties and fire brigades. Duke Victor still did not trust the French.

The Truce had in fact already been arranged, but it was so secret that the guerrilla war continued unabated, and patrols still skirmished with each other, which lent credence to Duke Victor's lies. The Duke even sent troops – Imperial troops – to harass the French, and Catinat's subordinates raged at him for not responding in kind. The Grand Prior even complained to the King, who merely laughed and told him to stop worrying.

Not until July 12 was the truce openly proclaimed at the head of both armies. The Allied generals had been called to Turin, informed, and told to report the existence of a treaty. The truce came into force while they were waiting for the couriers to return from Madrid and Vienna. It was set to last a month. The French had officially 'cowed' Duke Victor. Technically, the English, Imperials, and Spanish did not agree to the truce, but since they made no move, they gave a tacit acceptance.

The real point of the truce was to allow Duke Victor time to build a case for himself. He wrote or sent envoys to all the key players complaining of shabby treatment by the Emperor – who was trying everything he could to keep Duke Victor on-side, including a royal marriage with the King of the Romans for that eligible niece – and the Allies' failure to pay him subsidies on time (that was one in the eye for the Spanish) and that the French were just too strong.

For some, after weeks of unaccountable inactivity and building tension, the truce came as no surprise. Many of the generals and officials who had to work daily in the 'other party's camp' had become fearful of arrest before the treaty was announced. Prince Eugene, now that his fears were confirmed, accused his cousin of signing a treaty without the agreement of his allies, which the Duke confessed to, without revealing the secret articles. According to Langallerie, Eugene then actually challenged Victor to a duel, which challenge was accepted, but the Duke's ministers interfered.

The Treaty of Turin was ratified on August 29, but as yet the secret articles about Duke Victor switching sides were not published.

At this point Duke Victor was hoping to save some of his honour and asked for an extension of the truce until mid September, which might prevent the French from demanding he loan them his army. But, King Louis ruined this idea when he soon after published ALL the terms of the Peace which he said now existed between France and Piedmont. The truce held, but Duke Victor would be forcibly installed as commander of the French.

There are accounts that Duke Victor actually told Lord Galway about the secret articles before they were published; in this way London got to hear of them ahead of time. This seems to have been at an audience Galway requested to protest the Duke's actions. The latter noted that what the French were offering was too good to pass up (true) and that Imperial interests were not affected (well, that depends on one's point of view). In conclusion the Duke admitted he would openly league with France if backed into a corner.

This was perhaps an attempt to give the Emperor a way of backing down. He would not learn of the secret articles from Savoy, but by side channels, thus preserving the decencies, but would be made aware of just how serious matters were. The tactic may have been balm for the Duke's conscience, but the Emperor was nothing if not pigheaded.

In a letter to the Pope, the Duke tried to justify his actions by emphasizing the neutralisation clause. The Pope liked this part of the treaty and agreed to help, putting pressure on Bavaria and Spain. He could not pressure the Emperor, who disliked him. Duke Victor also wrote to the courts of Spain and Bavaria, and to Brandenburg (whom as a Protestant prince the Pope could not address).

On the day the treaty was made public, the French Command entered Turin with 'much pomp'. Delegations were sent to the French camp, and then to Pinerolo. Everyone was 'well received'. In Turin, the news was published by 'the Herald of Arms, to fanfares of Trumpets, Hautbois, tambours, at the Place de Tuilleries and Places des Victoires, and the Palace".

In Paris, in front of the Hôtel de Ville, there were fireworks and a cannonade, and a tableau representing Alexander the Great cutting the Gordian Knot. King Louis asked his archbishop for a Te Deum:

"My Cousin, in this war, that I have waging alone for nine [sic] years against conspiratorial Europe, I have only sought to defend Religion, and to avenge the King's Majesty; God has protected his cause; he has led my destinies, and seconded my enterprises. The happy successes which accompanied my arms have been all the more agreeable to me, inasmuch as I have always believed that they could contribute to peace, and I have profited from this prosperity only in order to furnish my enemies with conditions more advantageous than those which they could have wished, even when they had over me that superiority which I have preserved over them. I have no reason to omit anything that can advance the happiness of Europe, and I have made every effort to point out to my Brother the Duke of Savoy, with what ardor I wished to see an intelligence reborn between us, established for so many centuries, founded on the bonds of blood and friendship, and which had been interrupted only by the artifices of our Enemy. My wishes have been

fulfilled: This Prince has known his true interests, and my good intentions: And Peace is concluded.

It is to be hoped that the Confederate Powers, affected by these examples and the evils of their peoples, will imitate his conduct; or that, if they persist in the same sentiments, they will know that nothing is impossible for Troops accustomed to conquer, and led by the desire of Peace. It is thanks to the God of the Armies, who has been kind enough to show himself the God of Peace, and to entreat him to render to Europe a tranquility so necessary, which he alone can give; that I resolved to make the Te Deum in the Cathedral church of my good City of Paris, etc.

Reaction from the other Italian states was mixed. Genoa locked down her borders and raised the militia. Mantua, Parma, and Modena received French deputations. These clarified matters by explaining the War was still on, and that the French would only leave Italy when the Allies did so – therefore it was in the interest of those states to pressure the Emperor.

The role of chief negotiator fell on Prince Eugene, who, after being the most vocal against Piedmont's separate peace found himself having to enforce it.

Duke Victor was busy trying to persuade his Protestant troops to stick with him, but without success. The Huguenots marched off to join the other allies and the Vaudois returned to their valleys. They seem to have left off harassing the French, though.

Count Mansfeld came down from Vienna at this time on a last ditch mission seeking an extension of the truce, which would end the campaigning season and postpone an evacuation of Italy until next year. He reached Turin on August 13, but Duke Victor would not listen to him.

The Duke's excuse was classic. He had just been made Generalissimo of the French army in Italy. As his own man, he said he was sympathetic to the Allied cause but had been forced to surrender to France to save his lands, which the Allies were unable to protect. But, as a French general, he could not meet with Mansfeld unless Versailles permitted.

On August 14, the Duke left his capital for his army. The same day, the Allies left Turin, marching each by Settimo (11 Km north of Turin) to Chivasso (13 Km to the east of Settimo).

There were threats from the Allied side saying they had no intention of respecting the neutrality of Italy, but the French stated in that case they would quarter themselves in the Milanese. In fact, they would do that if the Allies failed to get out in time for the French to return over the mountains. Some of the commanders wanted to kidnap Duke Victor, or take Turin by a coup de main, but that would have turned Piedmont into hostile territory, and kidnapping princes set a bad precedent.

Unfortunately, the Allies at this time were not presenting a united front. The Spanish were on the verge of giving in and the English, represented by Lord Galway, were not sure what to do. The troops retired from Piedmont under their national commanders.

The Last Campaign

Speaking of war… the truce ran out, but no one took up the sword until September. It was nice to take a break.

Both sides did manoeuvre, however. The Franco-Sabaudians left Volvera for Vigone on August 6, then marched to Pancalieri and Macello. The Sabaudians returned to Turin under their Duke.

The Bavarians, now garrisoning Cuneo and numbering 1,300 men, came to the conclusion that they had better get out, leaving there on August 10. On August 13 they were at Turin, and on August 16 at Chivasso, 21 Km northeast of Turin at the confluence of the Orco River and the Po. From there they marched to the Milanese. No one molested them.

[At 1,300 men, Steinau's regiment was not an insignificant force. The regiment was always kept up to strength and had been in the thick of things since it arrived in Italy in 1691.]

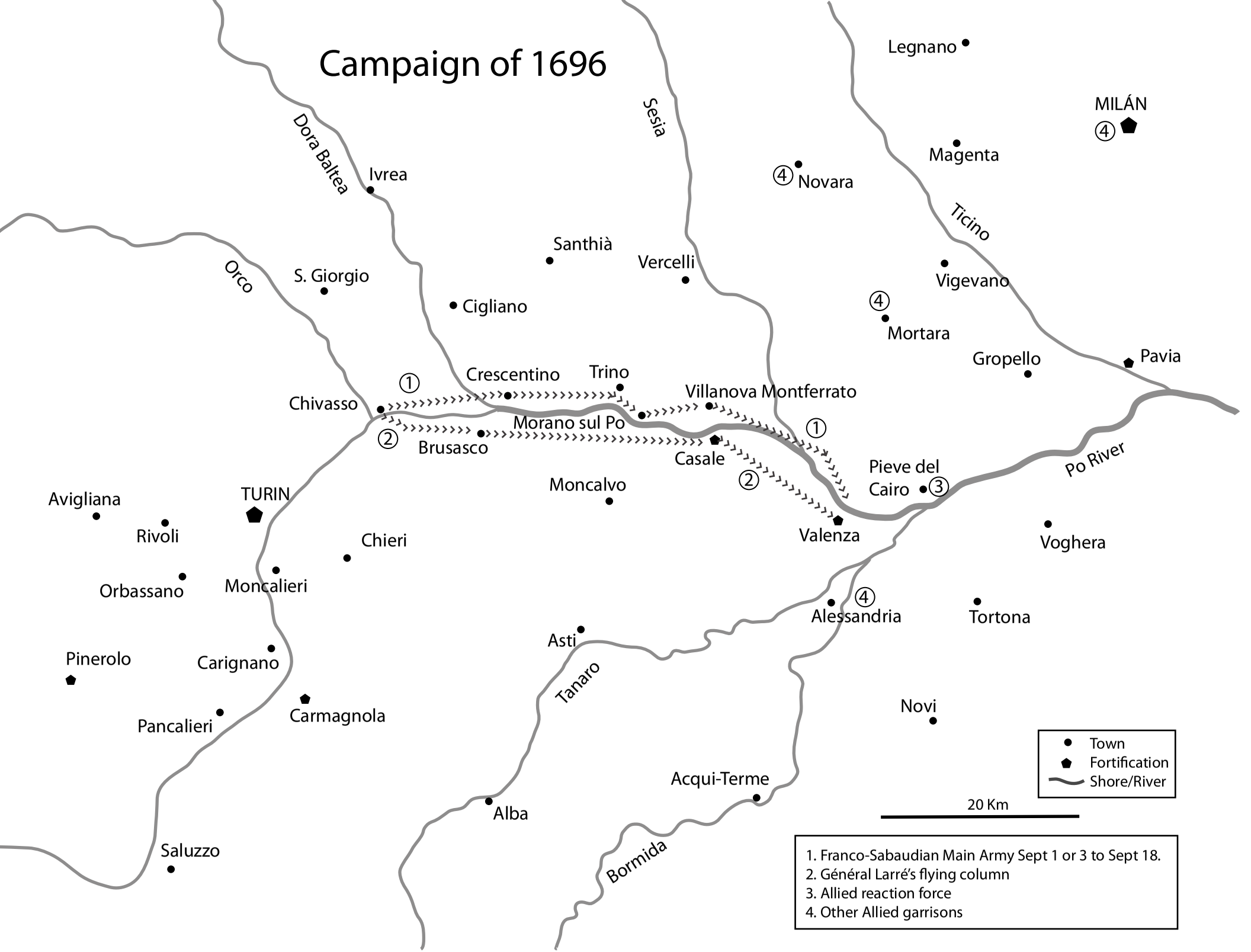
The bulk of the Allies left Chivasso for Saluggia, 11 Km to the northeast, at the end of August.

On September 3 (or September 1), Catinat struck camp, which was then at Chivasso. He marched down the Po and bridged the Dora Baltea the same day, the cavalry fording although the water was very high and the river swift. His army moved slowly because of the siege train, which was transferred to barges on the Po as soon as possible.

A screening force from the Allied army was at Crescentino. They did not challenge the French but fell back, breaking up into several columns and travelling to Casale, Mortara, Valenza, Allessandria, Valencia, and Novara. These locations formed a cordon covering the heart of the Milanese. Some work was done on the defences at Mortara.

From Chivasso to the Dora Baltea is 12 Km, and another 4.5 Km to Crescentino, where the French Advance Guard made camp. Led by the *comte* de Marsin, it was composed of the Gendarmerie, who had returned to the theatre, and dragoons. Meanwhile a flying column under Larré crossed the Po and marched down the right bank.

On September 6 the French were at Palazzo Vercellese, 10 Km east of Crescentino. On September 7 they were just short of Morano sul Po, another 10 Km on. There was a well known bridge over the Po here, the Ponte di Stura. The French remained here until September 9, possibly loading barges, then moved to Villanova Montferrato, another 10 Km to the east. Villanova lies along the same longitude as Casale, about 6 Km to the north of it. Larré was already camped in front of the fortress.


Campaign of 1696
Legnano
MILÁN
④
Magenta
Dora Baltea
Sesia
Ivrea
④ Novara
Ticino
Santhià
Vercelli
Vigevano
Orco
S. Giorgio
Cigliano
④
Mortara
Gropello
Pavia
Crescentino
Trino
①
Villanova Montferrato
Chivasso
Morano sul Po
①
②
Brusasco
Casale
Pieve del
Cairo
③
Po River
Moncalvo
②
Avigliana
TURIN
Rivoli
Chieri
Valenza
Voghera
Orbassano
Moncalieri
④
Alessandria
Tortona
Asti
Pinerolo
Carignano
Tanaro
Novi
Pancalieri
Carmagnola
Acqui-Terme
Alba
Saluzzo
Bormida
Town
Fortification
Shore/River
20 Km
1. Franco-Sabaudian Main Army Sept 1 or 3 to Sept 18.
2. Général Larré's flying column
3. Allied reaction force
4. Other Allied garrisons

[It is difficult to discover just where the navigable portion of the Po ended. The confluence with the Sesia is one location, but clearly in the 17th Century barges could be used much farther upstream, as this campaign proves.]

Catinat threw two bridges across the Po and repaired the old redoubt on the north bank of the river. He placed his magazines and hospitals at his back, and waited for the artillery. The water was low.

On September 10 the Allies called a council of war. It was decided to put the 12 best battalions in the army into Valenza, a riverside town 20 Km to the southeast of Casale, which was the most likely target since the French siege train was floating down the Po. The rest of the army would be distributed among the various sites mentioned above, except for a 'fire brigade' composed of the 4 Brandenburg battalions, the Lotharingen Regiment (2 battalions), and 6,000 cavalry. These would be stationed at Pieve del Cairo, 14 Km northeast of Valenza on the left bank of the Po. There was a bridge here. The Artillery was sent to Pavia (September 19).

The plan was to let the French pick a target, quickly reinforce it with the fire brigade, then concentrate the troops from the other fortifications into a relieving army.

The truce still held, so the French did not attack. Instead, on September 15 they marched to Candia Lomellina, 9 Km to the east, across the River Sesia. They were unopposed. This was the day the marriage contract between the *duc* d Bourgogne and Victor Amadeus' niece was signed. The Allied forces at Casale fell back to Valenza.

On September 16, the French deployed with their left at Sartirana Lomellina, 8-9 Km southeast of Candia, and their right on the Po, a frontage of over 5,000 meters. The camp was arranged in 2 lines, with the Gendarmerie and 500 of De La Marine as the Advance Guard.

On September 17 Catinat and his generals welcomed Duke Victor, travelling to meet him at Casale and escorting him to 'his' camp, where he held a review. The French army, now augmented with Sabaudian troops (15 battalions and 17 squadrons), came to 60,000 men. The Sabaudians were stationed at Vercelli, about 40 Km to the northeast, as a reserve in case the large numbers of Allied troops on the left bank of the Po advanced on Piedmont. It also kept them out of French hair.

The next day, Duke Victor's French army marched to Valenza, 8 Km downstream, and invested it. Valenza, located on the right bank of the Po, sits on a bluff overlooking the river. The fortifications were pentagonal in shape, and their outline can still be seen. Valenza was commanded by a Spaniard, Don Francisco Colmanero, and had 7,000 men in its garrison, including Spanish, Huguenots, Bavarians, and Varenne's Brandenburgers.

Why Valenza? Most importantly, this was a propaganda event. The Emperor was refusing to recognise the neutrality of Italy, so pressure was to be applied. Valenza was on the border of Monferrato, to which Duke Victor had a claim, but this part of Monferrato was part of the States of Milán, Spanish property. So, investing Valenza threatened the Milanese, but because it was well off the line of advance to Milán itself, the siege was not a dire threat to the Spanish. If Valenza fell, the French army could continue down the Po into the pro-French states such as Mantua, enlist their aid, begin to isolate the Milanese, and increase the number of Italian states in arms against the Emperor.

For his part, Duke Victor wanted control of the town to add weight to his claims over the whole of Monferrato, and once he got going, tried to push the siege hard. But, the French did not really want Valenza to fall. If it was actually taken, the Spanish would be forced to continue the war, both to secure a matching bargaining chip and to challenge Duke Victor's claims of ownership.

The bulk of the French army camped on the left bank of the Po. *Lieutenant général* the *marquis* de Vins crossed the river downstream with 20 battalions and 20 squadrons and 3 *maréchals de camp* to assist him. Upstream, a body of French under the *Sieur* de Hessi that had been camped at Casale approached and completed the encirclement.

[The troops at Casale must therefore have included the three battalions of Hessey's (Hessi) Swiss regiment.]

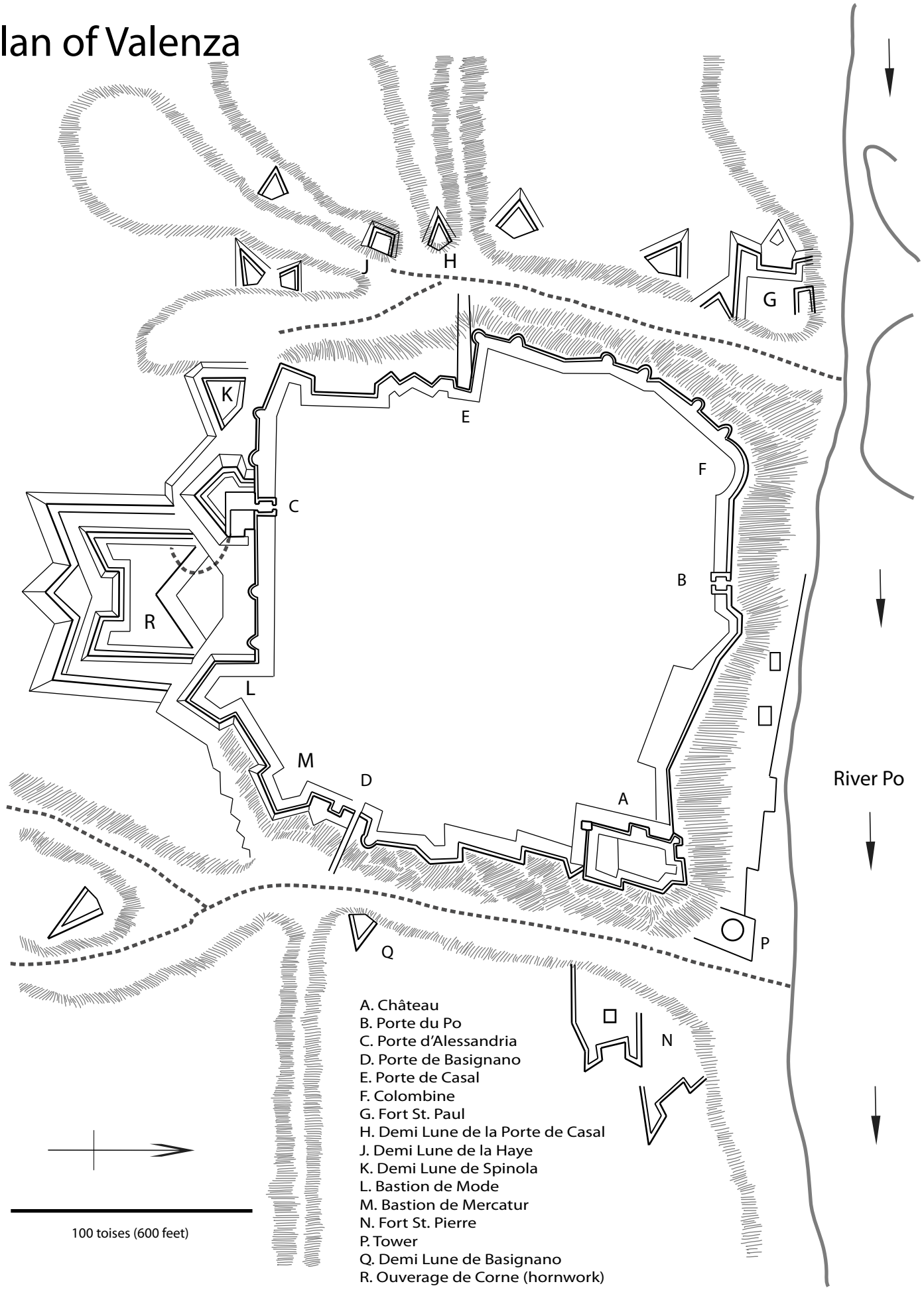
The truce officially ran out on September 19. This day there was a skirmish to remove Allied troops from a forward post. The next day the bulk of the French army crossed the river. Duke Victor and Catinat made their plans.

On September 21 there was a general reconnaissance and troops were assigned to various key posts around the town. The Allies began bombarding the besiegers and scored some near misses on Duke Victor, who retired out of range. Catinat remained, observing.

The same old routine was begun. While the mortars and heavy guns were brought down the river the French began making fascines and gabions. Count Mansfeld appeared at the camp but was refused an audience, though he was permitted to confer with Saint Thomas, who was currently at Pavia. These two would arrange the final peace, which was still several days in the future.

The guns arrived on September 23 and the trenches were opened on September 24, in two places, on the left and right of the fortress. Tessé and his brigadier the *marquis* de Bouligneux had first command on the right, with 3 battalions of De La Marine. *Maréchal de camp* the *comte* de Marsin and his brigadier the *marquis* de Novion had first crack on the left, with 2 battalions of Feuquières and the *régiment* Perigord. Each group was headed by 2 companies of grenadiers and 2 squadrons of dismounted Gendarmerie, plus additional cavalry for security.

Plan of Valenza



The chief French engineer was still M. de Lapara, assisted by 12 others. His opposite number in the garrison was named Goulon. The defenders laid down heavy fire from cannon, mortars, and musketry, inflicting many casualties. Catinat and Duke Victor visited the trenches every day and were surprised at just how determined the garrison seemed to be.

Their own guns were distributed in batteries on both sides of the Po and continued an effective bombardment until the night of September 29/30.

By September 28 the saps were no more than 100 *toises* from the glacis. The work slowed now, thanks to torrential rain, but the bombardment was increased, using 30 guns and 15 mortars. Catinat also had something to do with the slow progress. It was critical that the fortress hold until a peace deal was worked out with the Emperor.

The defenders did their part, digging backstop entrenchments and making cuts in the fortifications on either side of the French works to restrict any lateral movement once a breakthrough was achieved. This was a common siege tactic. On the night of September 29, they sortied with 200 grenadiers and 400 fusiliers, including the Bavarians, who lost 1 officer and 20 others killed, and 35 wounded.

In early October the French suffered losses attacking a demi-lune, from which they were repulsed. But, on October 8 they stormed the Bastion of the Annunciation after a six-battery (36 gun) cannonade on the night of October 7/8. A new assault was planned for the night of October 9, which would seize the pesky demi-lune and the covered way.

The attack never came. On October 7 the Conventions of Vigevano declared the Neutrality (or Peace) of Italy, the treaty being signed by the representatives of France, Spain, and the Emperor, and a messenger swiftly brought the news to the French camp on the evening of October 8.

At first, the Emperor had baulked, but he changed his mind when Saint Thomas walked away from the table. The Spanish backed the Piedmontese. They knew the autumnal rains would begin in a few days, which would mean the siege would be lifted. Now that peace was assured, this was categorically *not* what the Spanish wanted, because it would mean the French and the Imperials staying in Italy for another year.

Casualties in the siege were 137 killed and 250 wounded for the garrison, and a ludicrously high estimate of 10,000 for the besiegers (though that includes losses from partisan attacks). The fortress suffered 200 bomb hits.

The Peace

On October 9 the French lifted the siege and began to withdraw. By the next day their siege train was at Pinerolo, and on October 11 the Sabaudian corps was back at Turin. The French Foot and Horse took a little longer, the former marching west on October 13 through the Lomellina region north of Valenza and the latter marching to Vercelli and Novara to make sure the Allied troops were also pulling back.

The Spanish drew down some of their forces and sent others to Naples, where they could remain ‘in being’ without breaking the agreement. The Imperial troops were withdrawn to the Tyrol by November. Some regiments went to Hungary, and others were sent to the Rhine front.

[The Bavarians only left Italy in December, because of administrative issues, i.e., pay questions.]

The terms of the agreement were as follows: the Italian princes were to pay for the Imperial quarters this winter. Then, for every Imperial regiment that withdrew from Italy, the French would withdraw three.

The French evacuated their conquests, except for Susa, the County of Nice, and Montmélian, which would be held until the end of the war. Savoy was otherwise evacuated in September, except for Chambéry, which was evacuated once the peace was signed.

Everyone took credit for the treaty. The Pope was convinced (and was told by the French) that it was his work. To a great extent, it was, at least as far as the neutralisation of Italy was concerned. He had been one of the voices pressing Duke Victor to agree. The Italian princes thought they were the deciding factor. And, King Louis boasted of his ‘defeat’ of the Allies. Most modern assessments paint France as the loser. She had to give up both Casale and Pinerolo, and pay the war costs. It was not even clear that Piedmont would remain in her camp when the next war came along.

The Impact of the Italian Campaign

Most of the principal officers of the French Army were able to visit the city of Milán, and the other rarities of this duchy, and those of the allies came to see their armies, and were entertained there.

Lanagllerie, p. 314

Strategically, the Italian theatre was an unnecessary war front. Neither side could accomplish anything of military significance without a major outlay of resources badly needed elsewhere. Politically, however, it was *the* significant theatre.

To recapitulate, a general war began when Louis XIV miscalculated the German and Dutch reaction to his blitzkrieg in the Rhineland. It expanded when the Spanish, fearing for their possessions in the Low Countries, declared war. This led the French to consider eliminating the States of Milán – after all, that was why

they had purchased Casale. But King Louis again miscalculated. The highhanded arrogance of the French, from their king down to the lowliest sous lieutenant alienated the Piedmontese and forced Victor Amadeus into the opposing Coalition camp. The whole affair was badly managed and frankly, unnecessary.

However, after seven years of grinding attrition, it turned out that Duke Victor was the weak link in the chain, and his defection ultimately tore the Coalition apart. The Italian campaign of 1696 thus ended the war. Though it only aimed at levering the Imperials out of Italy, the shock of Duke Victor's 'betrayal' went so deep that a scramble for peace began, ending in the Treaty of Ryswick the following year. So… was it worth it for the French to open the Italian front after all?

Not really. The war would have ended anyway, and the way it historically ended did not prevent a continuation of the struggle after only a few years.

France lost a lot more than she gained. Apart from generalities such as the draining of additional state funds and additional population, she lost the keys to Italy, Pinerolo and Casale, and she lost the 'face' in the process. In this author's opinion, France beat the Coalition on points, and did so *because* of the Italian Campaign, but did not win *in* Italy.

Spain and the Empire more or less broke even. In a few years, King Carlos II would die and there would be another dust up, but for the moment, the Milanese remained secure. Their western rivals, the dukes of Savoy, were more powerful, thanks to the removal of Casale and Pinerolo, and the concessions granted to them as victors, but the Emperor's grip was somewhat weakened.

In terms of troops released, the closing of the Italian front benefitted the Emperor to a greater extent than the French. But, there was no dramatic geopolitical shift. Habsburg attempts to reincorporate the *Reichsitalien* back into the Empire were always fitful. They had suffered a set back, but later wars would see the Austrians achieve total dominance in northern Italy.

The House of Savoy was the true victor of the Italian campaign. Duke Victor scored major concessions from the French that strengthened his position versus the Spanish and Imperials. His 19th Century panegyrists would have it that all Italy saw him as their champion. That was certainly not the case, but the dukes of Savoy were now better placed to play a more important role in Italian affairs as time went on.

The dukes of Savoy had also achieved European importance, though not perhaps in the best possible way:

"Neither France nor her opponents ever forgave the duplicity by which the Savoyard contrived so to dupe them all as to render himself master of the situation; though the only aim and result of all his intrigues was, besides the recovery of what was indisputably his own, the liberation of his country and the pacification of Europe. They never forgave, never forgot it: never afterwards gave Victor Amadeus or his descendants credit for common honesty and plain dealing. In all difficult combinations, in all delicate transactions, Savoy was always treated with outrageous mistrust; and as her neighbours always looked for deceit on her part, so they never scrupled to deceive her in turn."

[Antonio Gallenga, History of Piedmont, p.109.]

The English at least had something to complain about. Duke Victor felt slightly guilty at abandoning such regular paymasters. His impression of the Imperials was that they had helped him just enough to keep the French tied down at his expense. They returned the charge, accusing him of being in collusion with the French from the start. As for the Spanish, they had been a liability on the battlefield and still owed him money. The ill will would carry over into the next war.

Postscript

Maréchal Catinat ended the war leading a corps in Flanders, where he took Ath after a 20-day siege. Vauban ran the siege itself, and Catinat the investment, with Boufflers and Villeroi under him. Prince Eugene, meanwhile, went on to win a famous victory against the Turks in 1697.

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Plan of Milán