

WHY DID THE DUTCH REVOLT LAST EIGHTY YEARS?

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READ 20 JUNE 1975

THE Dutch Revolt lasted longer than any other uprising in modern European history—from the iconoclastic fury in August 1566 to the Peace of Munster in January 1648; and it involved more continuous fighting than any other war of modern times—from April 1572 to April 1607 (with only six months' cease-fire in 1577) and from April 1621 to June 1647. Its economic, social, and political costs were enormous.¹ The longevity of the revolt becomes even more remarkable when one remembers that the two combatants were far from equal. The areas in revolt against Spain were small in size, in natural resources, and in population—especially in the first few years. In 1574 only about twenty towns, with a combined population of 75,000, remained faithful to William of Orange; Amsterdam, the largest town in Holland, stayed loyal to the king until 1578.² Against the 'rebels' Philip II could draw on the resources of Spain, Spanish America, Spanish Italy and, of course, the Spanish Netherlands. Although by the seventeenth century the odds had narrowed somewhat—by then there were seven 'rebel' provinces with a combined population of over one million—Spain could still call on vastly superior resources of men and money. There were a number of occasions in the course of the war when Spain seemed to stand on the threshold of success. In 1575, for example, the conquest of the islands of Duiveland and Schouwen in South Holland divided the rebel heartland in two and appeared to presage the collapse of the revolt. A decade later, in 1585, Antwerp was recaptured against all predictions, leaving Holland and Zealand dispirited and prepared to discuss surrender. As late as 1625, with the

¹ An effort has been made to quantify these costs at least for the major belligerents: G. Parker, 'War and economic change: the economic costs of the Dutch Revolt', in *War and economic development*, ed. J. M. Winter (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 49-71.

² For assessments of the population of Holland (and indeed of the Netherlands as a whole) cf. *The Sources of European economic history, 1500-1800*, ed. G. Parker and C. H. Wilson (to be published London, 1976), chap. 1, and J. de Vries, *The Dutch rural economy in the Golden Age, 1500-1700* (New Haven and London, 1974), pp. 74-101.

reconquest of Breda in Brabant and Bahía in Brazil, Spain's final victory seemed near. But total success never came. Spain never regained the seven northern provinces of the Netherlands and by 1648 Philip IV counted himself lucky to have retained the ten southern ones.

It is not difficult to explain Spain's initial failure to suppress the Dutch Revolt. Rapid victory was ruled out, in effect, by a combination of logistical factors. In the first place the Dutch population may have been small, but it included some who were determined to resist the Spaniards by all means and at all costs. For the Sea Beggars, the Calvinists and the other exiles who returned to Holland and Zeeland in 1572 there could be no surrender: they, like the Prince of Orange, had decided to make Holland and Zeeland their tomb, either in victory or defeat.³ The Anabaptists too, who had a powerful following in most of the northern provinces, had everything to gain by renouncing their obedience to Philip II: they had been the victims of ruthless persecution in the Habsburg Netherlands.⁴ More surprisingly, perhaps, and more important, Orange had the support of the Catholic majority of Holland and Zeeland. Although their first reaction was, understandably, to avoid a commitment to either side for as long as possible, the Catholics were soon forced into Orange's camp by the brutal behaviour of the government forces. In a conscious attempt to expedite the end of the Revolt, the duke of Alva pursued a policy of 'beastliness' towards certain rebellious towns. In October 1572 he allowed his troops to sack the city of Mechelen, which surrendered unconditionally, in the expectation that such an example would encourage the other Orangist towns in the south to make their peace with him. It did.

³ G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Archives ou correspondance inédite de la maison d'Orange-Nassau*, 1st series, iv (Leiden, 1837), pp. 2–6: a despairing letter from William of Orange to his brother, Count John of Nassau, written at Zwolle on 18 October 1572, announced that the prince was sailing forthwith to the only province remaining loyal to his cause, Holland, 'pour maintenir les affaires par delà tant que possible sera, ayant délibéré de faire illecq ma sépulture.'

⁴ Of the 880 Netherlands Protestants recorded in the various 'Books of Martyrs' as having perished in the course of the sixteenth century, 617 (or 70 per cent) were Anabaptists; their total losses through Habsburg persecution must have numbered many thousands. Not surprisingly, as early as July 1572, the Anabaptists declared their support for Orange and provided money for his army. (G. Brandt, *The History of the Reformation and other ecclesiastical transactions in and about the Low Countries from the beginning of the 8th century down to the famous Synod of Dort, inclusive*, i (London, 1720), p. 295.) This was, of course, a bribe. In the 1560s Orange, like most other princes, had persecuted and even executed Anabaptists. For some of the reasons which underlay this intolerance, cf. W. Kirchner, 'State and Anabaptists in the sixteenth century: an economic approach', *Journal of Modern History*, xlvii (1974), pp. 1–25.

In November the duke inflicted the same fate on Zutphen, which brought about the capitulation of all strongholds in the north-east. In December, the Spanish army proceeded to massacre the entire population of Naarden, a small Orangist town in Holland: 'Not a mother's son escaped' Alva reported smugly to the king, and he passed on to Amsterdam to await the surrender of the rest of the province.⁵ But the massacre of Naarden did not have the desired effect. Catholics and Calvinists alike became terrified of admitting the brutal Spanish troops, and their fear was reinforced in July 1573 when the citizens of Haarlem surrendered on condition their lives would be spared. Alva nevertheless ordered the execution of a score or so of them, together with most of the garrison. Haarlem was the last town in Holland to negotiate a settlement. Leiden in 1574 preferred starvation to surrender; the burghers of Oudewater in 1575 set their town on fire rather than see it fall intact to the Spaniards.

There was, of course, more to the resistance of Holland and Zeeland than desperate courage. The physical and military geography of the north-west Netherlands was also of crucial importance. The area was, in the words of an English traveller writing in 1652, 'The great Bog of *Europe*. There is not such another Marsh in the World, that's flat. They are an universall Quag-mire. . . . Indeed, it is the buttock of the World, full of veines and bloud, but no bones in't.'⁶

It was certainly hard for the Spaniards to regain Zeeland and South Holland, since the islands captured by the Sea Beggars in 1572 were separated from the mainland by deep channels (although with courage and resolution all things were possible, as the relief of Ter Goes in 1572 and the invasion of Schouwen in 1575–6 demonstrated). It was almost as hard for the Spanish army to operate in North Holland because of the great lakes, rivers and dikes which covered the country, much of which was below sea-level. In 1573 at the siege of Alkmaar and in 1574 at the siege of Leiden, dikes were

⁵ *Epistolario del III duque de Alba*, ed. the duke of Alba, (Madrid, 1952), vol. iii, p. 261, Alva to the king, 19 December 1572: 'Degollaron burgueses y soldados sin escaparse hombre nacido'. The policy of 'beastliness' almost worked in Holland too: news of the massacre of Naarden spread fast and three magistrates from Haarlem came to offer the surrender of their town on 3 December, the day after the massacre; the Spanish commander, however, unwisely insisted on unconditional capitulation and this the town refused to do. Other towns also showed a willingness to negotiate but would not throw themselves on the Spaniards' mercy. Cf. the eye-witness account of a Catholic living in Amsterdam, the Spanish headquarters at this time: *Dagboek van Broeder Wouter Jacobszoon, prior van Stein*, ed. I. H. van Eeghen, i (Groningen, 1959), p. 90.

⁶ Owen Feltham, *A brief character of the Low-Countries under the States. Being three weeks observation of the Vices and Vertues of the Inhabitants* (London, 1652), pp. 1 and 5.

broken in order to flood the fields around the town and thus prevent the formidable Spanish infantry from launching an attack on the walls. But Holland was not only a 'great Bog'; it was also almost an island and the Dutch took care never to lose control of the sea which surrounded them. Between 1572 and 1574, the war fleet of the Brussels government was destroyed in a series of violent engagements. Some of the actions were Spanish successes (like the battles on the Haarlemmermeer during the siege of the city); others were Spanish defeats (like the battle off Enkhuizen in October 1573 and the battle off Bergen-op-Zoom in February 1574). But whatever the result, the Spaniards lost ships which they were incapable of replacing since the principal shipyards (and the naval arsenal at Veere) were in rebel hands and it proved impossible to send new ships from Spain. The Dutch were thus able to keep their own ports open to receive reinforcements and supplies from abroad (especially from the exiled Netherlandish communities in England),⁷ and to continue their vital trade with the Baltic (in 1574, almost 1,000 Dutch ships passed through the Danish Sound).⁸ Surely, the royalist Owen Feltham speculated in 1652, the Dutch Revolt had succeeded because of:

their strength in shipping, the open Sea, their many fortified Towns, and the Country by reason of its lowness and plentiful Irrigation becoming unpassable for an army when the winter but approaches. Otherwise it is hardly possible that so small a parcell of Mankind, should brave the most potent Monarch of Christendome who . . . hath now got a command so wide, that out of his Dominions the *Sunne* can neither rise nor set.⁹

Philip II's empire was indeed one on which the sun never set, and to most contemporaries the advantage in the Low Countries' Wars, at least during the reign of the Prudent King, seemed to lie with Spain. After all, only a few Dutch towns, such as Alkmaar or Rammekens, were entirely protected by an effective system of defence, with bastions, in the 1570s, and even they might have been

⁷ Queen Elizabeth sent perhaps 1,200 men unofficially in the months of April and May 1572, but then withdrew them. The support of the Flemish and Walloon churches in England was smaller but steadier: the correspondence of the churches pullulates with details on the aid in men and money sent over to the Low Countries. Cf. *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae Archivum*, ed. J. H. Hessels, ii (Cambridge, 1889), e.g. nos 112, 115, 123, 129; iii part i (Cambridge, 1897), e.g. nos 195, 197, 257, 367, 380. The Scottish government also sent substantial aid.

⁸ F. Snapper, *Oorlogsinvloeden op de overzeese handel van Holland, 1551-1719* (Amsterdam, 1959): 989 Dutch ships passed out of the Sound in 1574, but only 840 in 1575 and 763 in 1576—clear evidence of the growing impact of the war.

⁹ Feltham, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-85.

starved out in time.¹⁰ Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels, three of the best-fortified towns in Europe, capitulated after a year's siege in 1584–85 and Antwerp (at least) possessed all the natural advantages of the Holland towns. It was near the sea, it was surrounded by low-lying land which could be (and was) flooded, and its population was predominantly Protestant.¹¹ Yet in spite of stout hearts, naval superiority and superb defences, Antwerp fell; and there is every reason to suppose that, given time, the towns of Holland and Zeeland would have succumbed too. Time, however, was what the Spanish government lacked; time and money. The total cost of the Spanish army in the Netherlands between 1572 and 1576, a force of over 80,000 men at times (at least on paper), was estimated at 1.2 million florins every month. Spain simply could not provide such a sum. 'There would not be time or money enough in the world to reduce by force the 24 towns which have rebelled in Holland, if we are to spend as long in reducing each one of them as we have taken over similar ones so far', wrote the Spanish commander-in-chief, Don Luis de Requesens, in October 1574. 'No treasury in the world would be equal to the cost of this war', he echoed in November.¹² The siege of Mons in 1572 took six months; the siege of Haarlem in 1572–73 took eight months; the siege of Zierikzee in 1575–76 took nine months. Admittedly all three blockades were eventually successful, but while the Spanish field army was occupied in the sieges, the 'rebels' were free to attack and capture other strongholds in other areas. Moreover this siege warfare, with the winter months spent in frozen trenches three years running, was unpleasant for the troops; and the unpleasantness was exacerbated by the inability of the government to pay its soldiers for their heroic service. Inevitably it produced discontent in the Spanish army and both desertion and disobedience grew to alarming proportions. Whole companies broke away from the army and fled to France; whole regiments defied their officers and mutinied, and it might take

¹⁰ The new bastions of Alkmaar appear clearly in the drawing of the siege of 1573 by Thomas Morgan, an eye-witness: All Souls College, Oxford, MS. 129, published by D. N. Caldecott Baird, 'Een engelse visie op het beleg van Alkmaar', *Alkmaars Jaarboekje*, 1970, pp. 101–07.

¹¹ A partial census of Antwerp in 1584 revealed 3,248 Protestant and 3,011 Catholic households, out of a total of 10,176 households covered by the census (perhaps 60 per cent of the city's population). Cf. the interesting and important article of A. van Roey, 'De correlatie tussen het sociale-beroepsmilieu en de godsdienstkeuze te Antwerpen op het einde der XVIe eeuw', in *Sources de l'Histoire religieuse de la Belgique* (Louvaine, 1968), pp. 239–58.

¹² *Nueva Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la historia de España*, v (Madrid, 1894), p. 368, Requesens to the king, 6 October 1574; Archivo General de Simancas, *Estado* 560 fo 33, Requesens to the king, 7 November 1574.

weeks, even months, and millions of florins, before they could be brought back into service. The deliverance of Alkmaar (1573), Leiden (1574) and Zierikzee (1576) from the grip of the king's forces can be confidently ascribed to the Spanish mutinies.¹³

To some extent, however, the Spanish troops in the Low Countries were actors on a wider stage. The punctual payment of their wages lay at the mercy of political decisions taken elsewhere. Philip II had other problems to resolve besides the Netherlands. He had to maintain Spanish influence in the Caribbean in the face of English and French competition: the French Huguenots attempted to plant colonies in Florida in 1563, 1564–65, 1568 and 1577–80; the English tried their hands at colonization too after 1560, but then found piracy at Spain's expense more rewarding.¹⁴ Within Europe Philip II was concerned to keep both France and England as weak as possible, sending military aid to the French Catholics in 1563, 1567 and 1569, promising military aid to the English Catholics in 1570–71. It all cost money. Above all the King of Spain had to defend the Western Mediterranean against the Ottoman Sultan and for most of the 1570s this was a major concern which tied down men, money and material resources in large quantities. In order to defeat the Turkish fleet at Lepanto in 1571 and capture Tunis in 1573, and even more in order to defend Spain and Italy against the Sultan's counter-attacks, Philip II had to maintain and man a permanent fleet of 150 galleys in the Mediterranean. Several times between 1572 and 1576 the king's advisers had to decide whether to allocate resources to the Mediterranean or to the Netherlands; almost always they decided in favour of the former.¹⁵ Although it is possible that Philip II's revenues in the 1570s were not equal to the cost of the Army of Flanders in any case, Spain's commitment to the defence

¹³ On mutiny and desertion cf. G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road: the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries' Wars, 1567–1659* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1975), chaps. 8 and 9; and 'Mutiny and discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1572–1607', *Past and Present*, lviii (1973), pp. 38–52.

¹⁴ D. B. Quinn, 'Some Spanish reactions to Elizabethan colonial enterprises', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, i (1951), pp. 1–23. On the cost of all this to Spain—the defence of Florida against the French cost 180,000 ducats in 1565–66 alone—cf. P. E. Hoffman, 'A study of Florida defense costs, 1565–85: a quantification of Florida history', *Florida Historical Quarterly*, li (1973), pp. 401–22; and K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan privateering: English privateering during the Spanish war, 1585–1604* (Cambridge, 1964).

¹⁵ For a few examples among many: Archivo General de Simancas *Estado* 550 fos 115–16, 'Parescer' (opinion) of secretary of war Juan Delgado, 1574, 'Flanders' or the Mediterranean; *Estado* 554 fo 89, king to duke of Alva, 18 March 1573; Institute de Valencia de Don Juan (Madrid), *envio* 109 fo 59, secretary of state Gabriel de Zayas to Don Luis de Requesens, 8 May 1575 (a copy of the same letter is at *Estado* 565 fo 79).

of the Mediterranean certainly accelerated the State Bankruptcy of 1575 and the military collapse in the Netherlands which followed in 1576.

Taken together, these logistical factors—the determination of the defenders and their strength by sea; the defensibility of the north-western provinces; and the diversion of Spanish resources to other theatres—explain Spain's failure to win an early victory over the Dutch revolt. The collapse of Spanish power in the autumn of 1576 permitted the rebellion to spread to most of the other provinces of the Netherlands. In the south and east strong Calvinist cells were established and new fortifications were built, complicating Spain's subsequent attempts to regain the areas in revolt. Virtually no progress was made by force of arms between 1577 and 1582, while Philip II disengaged his forces from the Mediterranean and absorbed the Portuguese empire, but from 1583 until 1587 Spain's entire energies were channelled into the Netherlands offensive and superior resources soon began to tell. One town after another fell into Spanish hands; all the south and east was recaptured, leaving only Holland, Zealand and parts of Friesland, Utrecht and Gelderland to continue the struggle. Even William of Orange, a crucial figure in the Republic, was assassinated in 1584. The outlook for the 'rebels' seemed bleak indeed.

Orange, however, had always known that the Dutch alone could not hope to withstand the might of Spain for long. Ever since 1566 he had endeavoured to involve foreign powers in the struggle, either as mediators to deflect the wrath of Philip II, or as allies to divert his resources. In 1566–68 Orange and his associates had pinned their hopes on the Emperor and the German princes.¹⁶ In 1572, 'all our hopes lay with France'—only to be shattered by the Massacre of St Bartholomew.¹⁷ Thereafter England, France, the German princes and any other power not allied with Spain was importuned: in 1574 Orange even exchanged envoys with the Ottoman Sultan in

¹⁶ As early as January 1566 Orange made enquiries about raising troops in Germany (Groen van Prinsterer, *Archives*, ii, pp. 23–25; letter to Count Louis of Nassau, 25 January 1566); in August, Count Louis signed a contract with a German military enterpriser to raise 1,000 horse for service against the king in the Netherlands (*op. cit.*, pp. 257–58, 'Accord' of 30 August); and in February 1567 he actually came to the camp of the Imperial army at Gotha in Saxony and tried to recruit soldiers (M. Koch, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Maximilian II*, ii (Leipzig, 1861), pp. 36–37, letter to the Emperor dated 19 February 1567). On Orange's efforts to persuade the Emperor and princes to intervene in the Netherlands troubles in 1566–67, cf. Groen, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 27–30, 178–80 and 299–302, and iii, pp. 1–6, 9–10, 26–40 and so on.

¹⁷ Orange wrote to his brother John: 'il a ainsy pleu à Dieu pour nous oster toute espérance que pouvions avoir assise sur les hommes' (Groen van Prinsterer, *Archives*, iii, pp. 501–10 and iv, p. cii, letter of 21 September 1572).

order to co-ordinate his attacks on Spain.¹⁸ However, none of these overtures succeeded in creating an alliance which would permanently divert Spain's attentions from the Netherlands.

Only in 1585 did a sovereign prince enter into formal alliance with the Dutch and offer permanent and substantial military aid. The Treaty of Nonsuch, signed by Queen Elizabeth of England in August 1585, may not have prevented the Spanish army from recapturing Grave in 1586 and Sluis in 1587, but it did provoke Philip II to transfer his resources from the reconquest of the Netherlands to the invasion of England. The decision to send the 'Invincible Armada' against England in 1588, followed by the resolution to intervene on the Catholic side in the French Religious Wars after 1589, proved a godsend to the Dutch. The two unsuccessful enterprises siphoned off most of Philip II's resources, causing new mutinies and defeats for the 'Army of Flanders' and enabling the Dutch to regain the north-east provinces and establish their frontier along the Maas and Rhine in the 1590s. The principal towns were now fortified according to the latest designs with bastions, ramparts and ravelins, and a sort of 'Hadrian's Wall' of connected forts and blockhouses was built in 1605–06 along the River IJssel from the Zuider Zee to Nijmegen and from there westwards along the Maas to Tiel. These 'lines' of the Dutch Republic, although for the sake of economy built of earth and wood rather than of stone, effectively held back the powerful Spanish offensives of 1605 and 1606.¹⁹

It had clearly become impossible for Spain to achieve the sort of victory in the Netherlands that would force the Dutch to submit, and many members of the Spanish government came to the conclusion that failure was more or less a foregone conclusion. The pessimism of Don Luis de Requesens, Philip II's commander-in-chief in 1574, has already been noted. It was entirely shared by the king himself and by his principal advisers. On 31 May 1574 (after only two years of war) Philip II wrote to his secretary that he believed 'the loss of the Netherlands and the rest [of his Monarchy],

¹⁸ G. Parker, 'Spain, her enemies and the revolt of the Netherlands 1559–1648', *Past and Present*, xlix (1970), pp. 72–95, at p. 83; A. C. Hess, 'The Moriscos: an Ottoman Fifth Column in sixteenth-century Spain', *American Historical Review*, lxxiv (1968), pp. 1–25, at pp. 19–21; G. Parker, 'The Dutch Revolt and the polarization of international politics', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, lxxxviii (1976), no. 4.

¹⁹ The new fortifications, the 'houten redoubten', and the campaign plans of 1605–06 are described and illustrated by the eye-witness P. Giustiniano, *Delle Guerre di Fiandra, libri VI* (Antwerp, 1609), pp. 228–29 and figs. 14 and 25. There is some correspondence about their construction in Algemeen Rijksarchief, the Hague, *Staten-Generaal* 4748. The classic account of how to construct fortifications in the cheapest way possible was by the mathematician Samuel Marolois, *Fortification ou Architecture militaire* (Amsterdam, 1615). Marolois was military adviser to the States 1612–19.

to be as certain as, in this situation, anything can be. . . . It is a terrible situation and it is getting worse every day'.²⁰ The same refrain was heard again several times in the course of that year and in the years to come. In 1589 the Council of State warned that to speak of 'conquering [the rebellious provinces] by force is to speak of a war without end', and in 1591 Philip's faithful secretary Mateo Vázquez pointed out that the king's expensive policies in France, the Netherlands and the Mediterranean had depopulated Castile so that 'We may fear that everything here will collapse at a stroke'. 'If God wished Your Majesty to attend to the remedy of all the troubles of the World,' he added, 'He would have given Your Majesty the money and the strength to do it'.²¹ Yet despite the widely-held and persistent belief at the Spanish Court that the war could not be won, Spain kept on fighting continuously from 1577 to 1607 and from 1621 to 1647.

There were several reasons for this curious reluctance to accept failure. Most important was an unwillingness to accept the conditions put forward by the Dutch for ending their rebellion. As early as February 1573 William of Orange enunciated two demands which he regarded as the indispensable preconditions to peace: 'I see nothing else to propose,' he informed his brothers, who were trying to negotiate a settlement, 'but that the practice of the reformed religion according to the Word of God be permitted, and that this whole country and state return to its ancient privileges and liberty'. These twin demands for religious toleration and 'constitutional guarantees' were fundamental to the Dutch cause and they were repeated at every round of negotiations between Spain and the Dutch.²² And every time they were rejected: these were precisely the points on which Philip II would admit of no compromise. In

²⁰ Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, *envío* 51 fo 31, Mateo Vázquez to the king with holograph royal reply, 31 May 1574 (this document is cited, with others, in an unacceptable translation by A. W. Lovett, 'Some Spanish attitudes to the revolt of the Netherlands', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, lxxxv (1973), pp. 17-30, at pp. 24-25.

²¹ Archivo General de Simancas, *Estado* 2855, unfol., 'Sumario de los 4 papeles principales que dio el presidente Richardot'; Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, *envío* 51 fo 1, Mateo Vázquez to the king with holograph royal reply, 8 February 1591.

²² Orange to Counts Louis and John, 5 February 1573 (Groen van Prinsterer, *Archives*, iv, pp. 49-51). Cf. also Orange to Marnix, 28 November 1573 (L. P. Gachard, *Correspondence de Guillaume le Taciturne*, iii (Brussels, 1851), pp. 88-93). Precisely the same two demands were made at the peace negotiations at Breda in 1575 (cf. E. H. Kossman and A. F. Mellink, *Texts concerning the revolt of the Netherlands* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 124-26); at St Geertruidenberg in 1577 (G. Griffiths, *Representative government in western Europe in the sixteenth century* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 454-62); and at Cologne in 1579 (Kossman and Mellink, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-87).

1574 an English agent in the Netherlands observed that: 'The pride of the Spanish government and the cause of religion' constituted 'the chief hindrance to a good accord'. It was perfectly true. In August 1574 Philip II gave his lieutenant in the Netherlands permission to open talks with the Dutch, but forbade him to make any concession which would affect the exclusive position of the Roman Catholic Church or prejudice his sovereign power: 'On these two points,' he ordered, 'on no account are you to give in or shift an inch.'²³ The same reluctance to concede toleration and constitutional guarantees sabotaged the peace arranged in 1577 (the Perpetual Edict) and prevented the conclusion of a settlement in 1594.²⁴ As late as 1628, the count-duke of Olivares was able to summarize Spain's reasons for fighting the Dutch in much the same way as Philip II: 'The matter may be reduced to two points', Olivares informed the king: 'religion and reputation'.²⁵ This remarkable consistency of outlook, which lasted from the 1570s until at least the 1630s, is explained by the prevailing concepts of statecraft at the Court of Spain. 'Reputation', or prestige, was recognized to have a tangible influence in politics and diplomacy, and Spain feared that acknowledgment of weakness in the Netherlands would decrease her stature (*'reputación'*) as a world power. The view was expressed that if the Dutch Revolt were allowed to succeed, heresy and rebellion would immediately follow in other parts of the Spanish Monarchy.²⁶ Even the need to preserve the Catholic religion in the Netherlands could be justified in terms of honour and reputation. It was, admittedly, a course of action by which 'Your Majesty will have done his duty to God', but the ability to protect Catholicism was also a touchstone of Spanish power. 'We should consider the issue of religion not only as a matter of piety and spiritual obligation, but also as a temporal one involving

²³ Kervijn de Lettenhove, *Relations politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre sous le règne de Philippe II*, vii (Brussels, 1889), p. 397, Dr Thomas Wilson to Walsingham, 27 December 1574; Archivo General de Simancas, *Estado* 561 fo 95, the king to Don Luis de Requesens, 9 August 1574.

²⁴ W. J. M. van Eysinga, *De wording van het Twaalfjarige Bestand van 9 april 1609* (Amsterdam, 1963), chap. 1; J. den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, i (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 199–201.

²⁵ Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid) *Estado* 3285, unfol., *voto* of the Count-Duke of Olivares, 1 September 1628.

²⁶ Cf. the opinions of various Spanish ministers printed by G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders* (2nd edition), p. xiv and pp. 127–34. There was also an 'ideological floodgates' theory, which argued that if heresy were allowed to prevail in northern Europe all heretics would attack the possessions of Philip II. 'Much . . . will be risked in allowing the heretics to prevail' the king wrote in 1562: 'For if they do, we may be certain that all their endeavours will be directed against me and my states'. (Quoted by H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The statecraft of Philip II', *European Studies Review*, i (1971), pp. 1–21, at p. 13.

reputation', Olivares told the king in 1628. He went on to say that 'He did not consider it possible to conclude a truce with honour, even if the Dutch expressly conceded us sovereign power, unless there is some improvement in the religious position.'²⁷

By 1628, however, another reason had emerged to strengthen Spain's determination to carry on the struggle: she was also fighting to preserve her overseas commerce. In the 1580s, Dutch ships began to trade directly with the Spanish and Portuguese empires in America and Africa, both now controlled by Philip II. At first this trade was intended to supplement the goods freely available in the Iberian peninsula (for with only a few interruptions—1585, 1596, 1599 and 1601–02—Dutch ships came and went to all Iberian ports relatively easily throughout the Eighty Years War).²⁸ In the 1590s, however, an element of economic warfare crept in: Dutch vessels, like the English, sought to injure Habsburg commercial interests as well as maximizing their own profits.²⁹ Between 1598 and 1605, on average 25 ships sailed to West Africa, 20 to Brazil, 10 to the Far East and 150 to the Caribbean every year. Sovereign colonies were founded at Amboina in 1605 and Ternate in 1607; factories and trading posts were established around the Indian Ocean, near the mouth of the Amazon and (in 1609) in Japan.³⁰ By the time of the truce talks in 1607–09 the Dutch investment in these overseas trades was already so great that they were not prepared to forgo them. Spain had encountered exactly the same problem in settling the peace with England in 1603–04. The talks almost broke down over the freedom of navigation to the East and West Indies, ('the point of most moment and difficulty' according to the chief Spanish negotiator), and the issue had to be resolved by an ambiguous silence—the final treaty made no specific mention of overseas trade. Oldenbarnevelt made full use of this precedent and, in the end, the same solution had to be adopted in the Netherlands.³¹ In February

²⁷ Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Estado* 3285, *ubi supra*.

²⁸ P. J. Blok, 'De handel op Spanje en het begin der groote vaart', *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde* 5th series i (1913), pp. 102–20; J. H. Kernkamp, *De handal op den Vijand 1572–1609*, 2 vols (Utrecht, 1931), gives the definitive account of Dutch trade with the Iberian peninsula during the war period.

²⁹ On English policy and profits, *cf.* K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan privateering: English privateering during the Spanish War 1585–1603* (Cambridge, 1964), *passim*.

³⁰ C. C. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580–1680* (Assen, 1971); E. Sluiter, 'Dutch maritime power and the colonial status quo, 1585–1641', *Pacific Historical Review*, xi (1942), pp. 29–41.

³¹ K. R. Andrews, 'Caribbean rivalry and the Anglo-Spanish peace of 1604', *History*, lix (1974), pp. 1–17; R. D. Hussey, 'America in European diplomacy, 1597–1604', *Revista de Historia de América*, xli (1956), pp. 1–30—*cf.* pp. 24 and 29–30 in particular; J. Den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt* (Cambridge, 1973), ii, p. 386.

1608 the States-General 'roundly' informed the Spanish delegation to the peace talks, 'that they intended to continue their trade with the East and the West Indies by means of a general peace, truce or war, each on its own merits.'³² It was this attitude which determined that there would be a truce and not a peace in the Low Countries' War in 1609: Spain was not prepared to abandon for ever her monopoly status in the New World, but neither was she prepared to continue fighting in the Netherlands for the sake of the Portuguese Indies (the Dutch had been chased out of the Caribbean—albeit temporarily—by a Spanish fleet in 1605). The Twelve Years Truce, therefore, made no mention of areas outside European waters, and warfare did indeed continue there intensively. In the Far East the Dutch conquered Jakarta (renamed Batavia) in 1619; in Guinea they established their first trading post (Fort Mouree) in 1612; in North America, they appeared to trade along the Hudson River in 1614 and founded 'Fort Orange' near the site of present day Albany (New York). The Dutch also planted more colonies on the 'Wild Coast' near the mouths of the Amazon, opened political and commercial contacts with the Indians of Chile, and began to make war on Spanish shipping and settlements on the Pacific coast.³³ Side by side with this geographical extension of Dutch trade, there was also a quantitative increase. The number of East Indiamen rose from an average of 10 in the 1600s to 17 in 1619 and 23 in 1620; the number of ships going to Guinea doubled (to 40); and the Dutch gained over half of the carrying trade between Brazil and Europe (there were 29 sugar refineries in the Northern Netherlands by 1622 as against 3 in 1595).³⁴ In the discussions at the Spanish Court in 1619–20 over the possibility of renewing the Truce (due to expire April 1621), the strongest and perhaps the decisive argument against prolonging the existing arrangement was the damage which the Dutch were doing to the Indies and American trade. In the end Philip III (at death's door but for once determined on a specific

³² *Resolutiën der Staten Generaal van 1576 tot 1609. xiv: 1607–1609*, ed. H. H. P. Rijperman (The Hague, 1970), pp. 377–79.

³³ P. Gerhard, *Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain, 1575–1742* (Glendale, 1960), pp. 101–34. The first Dutch attack on the Spanish Pacific was the 'trading mission' of Joris van Spilbergen, sent by the States-General in 1615. The journal of the expedition refers to the Spaniards throughout as 'the enemy'! (An English translation appeared as *The East and West Indian Mirror*, ed. J. A. J. Villiers (Hackluyt Society, London, 1906), pp. 11–160.)

³⁴ For a general survey of the expansion of Dutch trade, cf. C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire 1600–1800* (London, 1965). For the expansion of the East India trade, cf. Algemeen Rijksarchief (The Hague), *Kolonialische Archief* 4389 'Schepen voor de Generale Vereenigde Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie nae d'Oostindies uytgevoeren'.

policy) insisted on the reopening of the Scheldt and Dutch withdrawal from the Indies as the two inflexible conditions for the conclusion of any new truce; the questions of religion and royal authority were shelved.³⁵ The Dutch, however, were not prepared to give up either of these economic advantages and in June 1621, three months after the expiration of the truce, a Dutch West India Company was formed to promote trade and war in Latin America. In 1624–25 the Dutch occupied Bahia, the capital of Brazil; in 1628 they seized a Spanish treasure fleet worth 20 million florins, in Matanzas Bay, Cuba; and in 1630 the province of Pernambuco in northern Brazil, the centre of the colony's sugar production, was captured by a Dutch expeditionary force of 67 sail and 7000 men. Before long three hundred miles of the coast and hinterland of north-east Brazil was in Dutch hands and sugar production began to rise again—this time to the advantage of the United Netherlands.³⁶

The following years brought more Dutch victories abroad—the seizure of parts of Guinea and Ceylon in 1637–38; the defeat of one Spanish navy in the English Channel in 1639 and another off Brazil in 1640; the capture of Malacca in South-East Asia, the Maranhão in South America and Luanda in Southern Africa in 1641—but by far the most important success was the conquest of Brazil. It immediately transformed the issues at stake in the Low Countries Wars. Brazil and its sugar were the mainstay of the Portuguese economy and without them Portugal's union with Spain rapidly became less popular. There was discontent in Lisbon, there were riots in Evora; and the Spanish government became fearful of the consequences should they fail to drive out the invaders. A perceptive Venetian observer noted in October 1638 that Brazil in Dutch hands was 'more damaging than the continuance of the Low Countries wars.'³⁷

³⁵ Archives Générales du Royaume (Brussels), *Secrétairerie d'Etat et de Guerre* 185 fo 24, King Philip III to the Archduke Albert, 4 February 1621. Later on, the Count-Duke of Olivares was to claim that the Truce had not been renewed by Spain 'solely for the cause of religion': this appears to be false. (Cf. the *voto* of 1628 referred to in note 25 above.) On the expiry of the Truce cf. the admirable study of J. J. Poelhekke, 't *Uytgaen van den Treves. Spanje en de Nederlanden in 1621* (Groningen, 1960). It is interesting to note that at exactly the same time Spain's solicitude for the fate of the English Catholics diminished: A. J. Loomie, 'Olivares, the English Catholics, and the peace of 1630', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, xlvii (1969), pp. 1154–66.

³⁶ The basic study on Dutch Brazil is by C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624–1654* (Oxford, 1957). Pernambuco contained about 50 per cent of the population of the entire colony and produced about 60 per cent of its sugar.

³⁷ Archivio di Stato, Venice, *Senato: dispacci Spagna* 74, unfol., T. Contarini to the Doge and Senate, 2 October 1638. On the gains and losses accruing to Portugal from the Union with Spain, cf. S. B. Schwarz, 'Luso-Spanish relations in Habsburg Brazil, 1580–1640', *The Americas*, xxv (1968), pp. 33–48. The English

Olivares offered 3, 4 even 5 million crowns to the Dutch if only they would restore Brazil.³⁸ By 1640, according to Olivares, 'The item which seems to be indispensable [in any settlement with the Dutch] is the restitution of Brazil'; 'The restoration of Brazil is inexcusable' Philip IV echoed in May and he declared his readiness to bargain away everything else in order to regain it.³⁹

And yet in the end Spain made peace without regaining Brazil, without retaining the monopoly of the East Indies Trade, without reopening the Scheldt, without securing any official toleration for the Dutch Catholics and without persuading the Republic to recognize Spanish suzerainty in any way. After struggling for so long, Spain eventually gave in on all points.

This collapse came about for a number of reasons. First there was the deteriorating condition of Spain. The run of poor harvests, the falling tax returns and the decline of the American trade with its silver remittances in the 1620s and 1630s were serious.⁴⁰ Far worse, however, was the spate of rebellions in the 1640s: the revolts of Catalonia and Portugal in 1640, the 'Huelga de los grandes' of Castile in 1642–43, the 'Green Banner' revolts in the main towns of Andalusia and the contemporaneous risings in Sicily and Naples in 1647–48.⁴¹ All these problems encouraged the Madrid government

discerned somewhat earlier, in the 1590s, that Brazil was a weak but lush part of the empire of the Spanish Habsburgs. Cf. K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan privateering*, pp. 133 and 201–13.

³⁸ In 1636 the Dutch wanted 5 million crowns but Spain would only offer 2 million; in 1638 Spain did offer 5 million but by then it was not enough. A. Waddington, *La République des Provinces-Unies, la France et les Pays-Bas espagnols de 1630 à 1650*, i (Paris, 1895), pp. 343–46; A. Leman, *Richelieu et Olivares: leur négociations secrètes de 1636 à 1642 pour le rétablissement de la paix* (Lille, 1938), p. 55.

³⁹ A. Leman, *op. cit.*, p. 126; J. J. Poelhekke, *De vrede van Munster* (The Hague, 1948), p. 65. As early as 1632–33 Brazil had been almost the only point at issue in the peace talks then underway: cf. L. P. Gachard, *Actes des États-Généraux de 1632*, i (Brussels, 1853), pp. 96, 108, 124, 159; ii (Brussels, 1866), pp. 665–68, 677–78, 680–81.

⁴⁰ On the falling Indies receipts cf. A. Domínguez Ortiz, 'Los caudales de Indias y la política exterior de Felipe IV', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, xiii (1956), pp. 311–89. There is a growing volume of evidence, as yet unsynthesized, that the critical period for the collapse of the Spanish economy was 1625–30. Cf. G. Anes Alvarez and J.-P. le Flem, 'Las crisis del siglo XVII: producción agrícola, precios e ingresos en tierras de Segovia', *Moneda y crédito*, xciii (1965), pp. 3–55; C. J. Jago, 'Aristocracy, war and finance in Castile, 1621–65: the titled nobility and the house of Béjar during the reign of Philip IV' (Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis, 1969), chaps. 4 and 7; M. Weisser, 'Les marchands de Tolède dans l'économie castillane, 1565–1635', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velásquez*, vii (1971), pp. 223–36; F. Ruiz Martín, 'Un testimonio literario sobre las manufacturas de paños en Segovia por 1625', in *Homenaje al profesor Alarcos*, ii (Valladolid, 1967), pp. 1–21.

⁴¹ On the main revolts there is a clear and concise exposition (with bibliography) by J. H. Elliott, 'Revolts in the Spanish Monarchy', in *Preconditions of revolution in*

to seek peace on all external fronts in order to concentrate its resources on quelling the unrest within the empire. Gradually the flow of Spanish treasure to the Netherlands dried up: the Army of Flanders received an average of almost 4 million crowns a year from 1635–41, 3.3 million in 1642, but only 1.5 million in 1643.⁴² On 19 May 1643 the Spanish army was decisively defeated by the French at Rocroi. It was, according to Philip IV's chief minister Don Luis de Haro, 'Something which can never be called to mind without great sorrow'. It was 'a defeat which is giving rise in all parts to the consequences which we always feared': the French took Thionville and Sierck in August and their navy defeated Spain's principal Mediterranean fleet off Cartagena in September.⁴³

It would not be true to say that serious negotiations for a settlement to the Low Countries wars only began after these disasters, for there had been so many other rounds of fruitless talks.⁴⁴ However after 1640 a new urgency and a new desperation entered Spain's overtures for peace. 'A truce or a peace is necessary and unavoidable whatever the cost and whatever the price,' wrote one minister in 1645. Spain's leaders were prepared to 'give in on every point which might lead to the conclusion of a settlement'. Philip IV, according to one (admittedly hostile) observer, was so desperate for peace that 'If necessary he would crucify Christ again in order to achieve it'.⁴⁵

early modern Europe, ed. R. Forster and J. P. Greene (Baltimore and London, 1970), pp. 109–30. The 'Green Banner' revolts, with which Professor Elliott does not deal, are covered by A. Domínguez Ortiz, *Alteraciones andaluzas* (Madrid, 1974).

⁴² Figures from G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 295, based on the audited accounts of the army paymaster. Slightly lower figures were put forward by the vanquished Spanish commander as an explanation for his defeat: Bibliothèque royale (Brussels), MS. 12428–29 fo 328, 'Memorial . . . sobre materia de hacienda' (30 September 1644) gives a receipt of 4.7 million crowns in 1640, 4.5 million in 1641, 3.4 million in 1642 and only 1.3 million in 1643.

⁴³ Bibliothèque publique et universitaire (Geneva), MS. Favre 39 fos 88–89, Don Luis de Haro to the Marques of Velada, 17 November 1643. So few of Haro's letters have survived that this one, giving vent to his personal views, is particularly important.

⁴⁴ Talks between Spain and the Dutch went on almost continuously at an informal level, but formal negotiations took place in 1621–22, 1627–29, 1632–33, 1635, 1638–39, 1640–41 and (of course) 1644–48. They are all mentioned in the first chapter of J. J. Poelhekke, *De vrede van Munster* (The Hague, 1948). There were also semi-continuous talks about peace between France and Spain from 1636 until 1659.

⁴⁵ *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España* lxxxii (Madrid, 1884), pp. 138–39, Count of Fuensaldaña to the king, 17 September 1645; Archivo General de Simancas, *Estado* 2065, unfol., apostil of Philip IV to a report by the 'junta de estado', 3 January 1646; *Correspondência diplomática de Francisco de Sousa Coutinho durante a sua embaixada em Holanda, 1643–1650*, ed. E. Prestage and P. de Azevedo, ii (Coimbra, 1926), p. 256.

The king's broken spirit sank even lower after the death of his son and heir, Don Balthasar Carlos, in October 1646. He lamented: I have lost my only son, whose presence alone comforted me in my sorrows. . . . It has broken my heart.⁴⁶

Fortunately for the depressed Philip IV, by 1646 the Dutch had also come to appreciate the advantages of a settlement even if they could not obtain everything they wanted. There were several reasons for this change of heart. First there was the unwillingness of the Holland oligarchs (who paid almost two-thirds of the Republic's budget) to finance the war indefinitely: they had long resented the heavy cost of the army (in 1628 and 1630, when the Spaniards did not campaign, Holland refused to pay for more than defensive operations) and in 1645 and 1646 the province reduced its military outlay to a bare minimum, directing its resources instead to intervene in the war between Sweden and Denmark which threatened its Baltic interests.⁴⁷

The prince of Orange also had his reasons for desiring an end to the war. In the first place, his son and heir was married to the daughter of Charles I of England and he earnestly desired a peace with Spain which would leave him free to help his Stuart relatives in the civil war. However at the battle of Sherborne in October 1645 the Parliamentary army captured a number of highly compromising letters concerning the aid offered to Charles by the prince of Orange behind the backs of the States-General. Early in 1646 these papers were printed in English and Dutch and they totally discredited the ageing prince. After Naseby, in any case, Frederick Henry realized that further attempts to save the Stuarts were futile.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the House of Orange continued to favour peace on other grounds, the chief of which was financial. A settlement with Spain would bring the restoration of the extensive Nassau lands in the South Netherlands (confiscated from Frederick Henry's father, William of Orange, in 1568) and it would bring immediate cash rewards from the king of Spain. The total gain was estimated at £350,000 per annum. Peace would be, in the phrase of Frederick Henry's wife, 'nostre avantasche'.⁴⁹

In the end, however, it was not the prince and princess of Orange,

⁴⁶ Quoted by M. A. S. Hume in *Cambridge Modern History*, iv (Cambridge, 1906), p. 659.

⁴⁷ On Holland's objections to the cost of the war in 1646–47, cf. the documents cited by Poelhekke, *Vrede van Munster*, pp. 307 ff.

⁴⁸ *The Lord George Digby's Cabinet* (London, 1648: 68 pages of documents and commentary) and *Eenighe extracten uyt verscheide missiven gevonden in de Lord Digby's Cabinet* (also London, 1646). These are discussed by P. Geyl, *The history of the Low Countries: Episodes and Problems* (London, 1965), pp. 75 and 246.

⁴⁹ The policy of the Prince of Orange and his family is discussed by P. Geyl,

but the delegates of the seven United Provinces, or rather of the 2,000 oligarchs who elected them, whose decision in favour of peace proved critical. Bribery played its part here too—Spanish gold undoubtedly eased a few consciences towards accepting the peace—but the States-General had two sound reasons of state for desiring a settlement with Spain. In the first place there was the growing power of France. Until 1640, France had seemed unable to get the upper hand in the war against the Habsburgs—peasant revolts, court intrigues and military defeats seemed to dog every French effort. Although Catalonia and Artois were overrun in 1640–41, a considerable Spanish victory at Honnecourt in May 1642 kept the French at bay, followed by the death of Richelieu (4 December 1642) and Louis XIII (14 May 1643). But five days after the king's death the French victory at Rocroi effaced the memory of all previous defeats and it became the springboard for further successes. In 1645 alone, 10 major towns in Spanish Flanders fell to the French.

The Dutch were not concerned by these encroachments on the southern border of the Spanish Netherlands; on the contrary they made use of the French presence to extend their own territory by capturing Sas van Gent in 1644 and Hulst in 1645, and they cheerfully renewed their 1635 treaty with France to partition the Habsburg Low Countries should they be entirely overrun (1 March 1644). Unknown to the Dutch, however, France and Spain were negotiating for a settlement. In the winter of 1645–46 Spain proposed a marriage between Louis XIV and Maria Theresa, Philip IV's eldest daughter, giving her part of the Spanish Netherlands as a dowry. News of this projected arrangement reached the United Provinces in February 1646. Immediately there was a major political storm: there were anti-French riots in the Hague; moves were made to expel all the French residents from the Republic; and consternation broke out in the States-General. The States of Holland passed a formal resolution declaring: 'That France, enlarged by possession of the Spanish Netherlands, will be a dangerous neighbour for our country.'⁵⁰ Fear of a separate Franco-Spanish deal provoked the first spurt of negotiations between Spain and the Dutch at Munster in March and April 1646. Undismayed by the mistrust of her allies, the French advance continued: Kortrijk fell in June 1646; Dunkirk, the only serviceable port of the Spanish Netherlands, in October. This increased the concern of the Republic's leaders that, unless Spain's forces on the Dutch frontier were

Orange and Stuart, 1641–1672 (London, 1969), chap. 1, and by J. J. Poelhekke, *De vrede van Munster*, chap. 5.

⁵⁰ Cf. Poelhekke, *op. cit.*, chap. 7 (quotation from p. 256).

released, the South Netherlands would be totally overrun, especially when the peace concluding the Thirty Years War in Germany was signed, releasing France's armies in Alsace for operations in the Netherlands. A cease-fire between Spain and the Dutch was therefore agreed at length in June 1647. There were further delays before this preliminary agreement could be made permanent. French entreaties and French gold, liberally applied, kept in being a small but devoted party dedicated to sabotaging the peace, while French diplomats created 'an artificial labyrinth, constructed in such a way that those who allow themselves to be led into it can never find the exit', in order to place further delays in the way of all decisions. The system of government in the United Provinces which required unanimity in all major policy resolutions, naturally favoured the *status quo* at all times: continuing war during wartime, avoiding war when at peace. However in the mid-1640s the province which had resolutely and consistently opposed a settlement with Spain—Zealand—was forced to change its mind by some unforeseen and unfavourable developments in the Iberian world.

As early as January 1634, just after the failure of another round of peace talks, the French agent at the Hague, Charnacé, noted that if Dutch Brazil were reconquered the States-General would be driven to negotiate an immediate settlement with Spain.⁵¹ A decade later, that is precisely what happened, even though on the eve of the disaster the Dutch position in South America appeared to be stronger than ever. In 1637 the Dutch West India Company sent out Count John Maurice of Nassau, great-nephew of William the Silent, to govern Brazil. Almost at once the new governor captured another province (Ceará) and sent an expedition to Africa which captured São Jorge da Minha in West Africa, gateway to the Ashanti gold-fields. In 1641 one more province was added in Brazil (Maranhão) extending Dutch control over 1,000 miles of the Brazilian coastal plain between the São Francisco and the Amazon rivers, and an expedition sent from Recife to West Africa captured Luanda in Angola, key to the supply of slave labour upon which Brazilian sugar production depended. In the midst of these successes, in December 1640, Portugal successfully threw off its allegiance to Spain and a local grandee, the Duke of Bragança, became King John IV. There was no longer any risk of Spanish forces being sent to win back Brazil and in 1641–42 a truce was concluded between

⁵¹ Charnacé to Richelieu, 2 January 1634, quoted Waddington, *La république des Province-Unies*, I, p. 221. The influence of Charnacé and the French was critical in aborting the peace-talks of 1632–33 between Spain and the Dutch: cf. M. G. de Boer, *Die Friedensunterhandlungen zwischen Spanien und den Niederlanden in der Jahren 1632 und 1633* (Groningen, 1898).

the new Portuguese régime and the Dutch. The States-General even sent an expeditionary force to Lisbon in August 1641 to bolster Portuguese resistance to Spain.⁵²

So healthy did the Dutch position appear in 1643–44 that the Directors of the West India Company decided to economize by reducing their military establishment (which cost some 1.4 million florins annually) and John Maurice, together with many of his soldiers, was recalled. It was a fatal mistake. The Portuguese planters of Pernambuco had never accepted their new Calvinist masters whole-heartedly and they resented the high interest charged by Dutch moneylenders on the loans provided to re-stock the sugar plantations after the fighting of the 1630s. In June 1645 there was a major uprising of the Portuguese settlers against the Dutch. In August a battle was fought at Tobocas, outside Recife, which the settlers won. This minor engagement, fought 6,000 miles from the Netherlands and involving under 1,000 men on each side, was one of the most important 'actions' of the Eighty Years' War. It destroyed Dutch power in Brazil (only four toeholds on the coast, Recife the chief among them, remained). The great profits from the sugar trade were gone. The West India Company based on Zeeland was therefore desperate to recover its lost empire and looked urgently at the means available. The short term remedy was to send immediate relief to the beleaguered defenders in Recife and other places, and this was done in Spring 1646: 20 ships with 2,000 men set sail. However the rebellious settlers were in receipt of aid both from Bahia, the capital of Portuguese Brazil, and from Portugal herself, and it was clear that a far larger expedition would be required to restore Dutch power fully.

There were thus two problems: the first was to mount a major expedition from the Netherlands to reconquer Brazil; the second was to end the assistance from Portugal. In former years, the West India Company had vehemently opposed any settlement with Philip IV on the grounds that it would free Spanish resources to defend the Portuguese Indies. After the rebellion of Portugal in 1640, however, this was no longer the case. On the contrary, a settlement with Spain might now be of benefit to the West India Company since Philip IV would be free to use some of his resources on the reconquest of Portugal, which would in turn prevent Portugal from sending reinforcements to Brazil. By itself, of course,

⁵² Cf. M. de Jong, 'Holland en de Portugese restauratie van 1640', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, lv (1940), pp. 225–53; C. van de Haar, *De diplomatieke betrekkingen tussen de Republiek en Portugal, 1640–1661* (Groningen, 1961); and J. Pérez de Tudela, *Sobre la defensa hispana de Brasil contra los Holandeses, 1624–1650* (Madrid, 1974).

peace with Spain would not be enough to regain Brazil: for that, the great fleet was still required. Throughout 1646–47, therefore, hard bargaining took place between the states of Holland and Zeeland, on these two connected problems. In the end, Holland offered to pay for a major expedition to save Brazil if Zeeland would sign the peace with Spain. In August 1647, despite the efforts of the Portuguese and the French to sabotage the settlement, Holland and Zeeland reached agreement on the terms for the reconquest of Brazil: a force of 41 ships and 6,000 men would be assembled ready to sail in October 1647; then the peace with Spain would be signed. Inevitably there were more delays, and the fleet did not sail for Brazil until 26 December 1647, but this did not affect the other half of the bargain: Zeeland instructed her representative at Munster to sign the peace with Spain in any case, which he did in a solemn ceremony on 30 January 1648, bringing the Eighty Years' War to its formal close.⁵³

For Owen Feltham, writing four years later, the Dutch were supermen. 'They are' he wrote, 'in some sorte Gods. . . . They are a *Gideons Army* upon the march again. They are the *Indian Rat*, knawing the Bowels of the *Spanish Crocodile*. . . . They are the little sword-fish pricking the bellies of the Whale. They are the wane of that Empire, which increas'd in [the time of] Isabella and in [the time of] Charles the 5th was at full'.⁵⁴ The Dutch Revolt, which began among a few thousand refugees in north-western Europe, had spread until it affected the lives of millions of people and brought about the collapse of the greatest world empire ever seen. In the 1640s there was fighting in Ceylon, Japan and Indonesia, in southern and western Africa, on the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and of course in Brazil and the Low Countries. It all stemmed from the revolt of the Netherlands. The struggle had become, so to say, the First World War, and it is only when one surveys the global scale of the conflict and the complexity of the alliances and coalitions of the participants that one can satisfactorily explain why the Dutch Revolt lasted eighty years.

⁵³ In fact Zeeland was cheated: the great fleet was badly delayed by storms and arrived late at Recife with many of its soldiers dead and the rest mutinous for lack of pay. On 19 April 1648 and again on 19 February 1649 the surviving Dutch troops were routed by the Portuguese on the heights of Guararapes outside Recife. These defeats sealed the fate of Dutch Brazil, and that in turn led to the loss of Dutch Angola. Cf. C. Moreira Bento, *As batalhas dos Guararapes* (Recife, 1971), text and maps; W. J. van Hoboken, 'De West-indische Compagnie en de Vrede van Munster', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, lxx (1957), pp. 359–68; W. J. van Hoboken, 'Een troepentransport naar Brazilië in 1647', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, lxii (1949), pp. 100–09.

⁵⁴ Feltham, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–92.

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