

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA**
MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 7
2026

Fascicolo 27. Luglio 2026
Storia Militare Moderna

a cura di
GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI



Società Italiana di Storia Militare

General Editors: Virgilio Ilari, Jeremy Black, Giovanni Brizzi.

Legal Editor (dir. responsabile Gregory Alegi **Ed. executive (comitato di redazione):** Viviana Castelli, Alessandro Carli, Emiliano Bultrini, Francesco Biasi, Francesco Pellegrini.

Special appointee for Intl cooperation: Dr Luca Domizio.

Scientific Editorial Board : Foreign members: Prof. Jeremy Armstrong, Christopher Bassford, Floribert Baudet, Stathis Birtachas, Lee L. Brice, Loretana de Libero, Fernando Echeverria Rey, John France, Francisco García Fitz, Tadeusz Grabarczyk, Gregory Hanlon, Rotem Kowner, Armando Marques Guedes, Harold E. Raugh Jr, Yannis Stouraitis: **Italian members:** Giampiero Brunelli, Aldino Bondesan, Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi, Alessandra Dattero, Immacolata Eramo, Carlo Galli, Maria Intrieri, Roberta Ivaldi, Nicola Labanca, Luigi Loreto, Luca Loschiavo, Serena Morelli, Francesco Somaini, Gioacchino Strano, Giusto Traina, Federico Valacchi.

Senior Academic Advisory Board. Prof. Massimo de Leonardis, Magdalena de Pazzis Pi Corrales, John Hattendorf, Yann Le Bohec, (†) Dennis Showalter, Livio Antonielli, Marco Bettalli, Antonello Folco Biagini, Franco Cardini, Piero del Negro, Giuseppe De Vergottini, Gian Enrico Rusconi, Carla Sodini, Donato Tamblé,

Special Consultants: Lucio Caracciolo, Flavio Carbone, Basilio Di Martino, Antulio Joseph Echevarria II, Carlo Jean, Gianfranco Linzi, Edward N. Luttwak, Matteo Paesano, Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforte, Simonetta Conti, Elina Gugliuzzo, Vincenzo, Angela Teja, Stefano Pisu, Giuseppe Della Torre

Nuova Antologia Militare

Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare

Periodico telematico open-access annuale (www.nam-sism.org)

Registrazione del Tribunale Ordinario di Roma n. 06 del 30 Gennaio 2020

Scopus List of Accepted Titles October 2022 (No. 597)

Rivista scientifica ANVUR (5/9/2023) Area 11, Area 10 (21/12/2024)



Direzione, Via Bosco degli Arvali 24, 00148 Roma

Contatti: direzione@nam-sigm.org ; virgilio.ilari@gmail.com

©Authors hold the copyright of their own articles.

For the Journal: © Società Italiana di Storia Militare

(www.societaitalianastoriamilitare@org)

Grafica: Nadir Media Srl - Via Giuseppe Veronese, 22 - 00146 Roma
info@nadirmedia.it

Gruppo Editoriale Tab Srl -Viale Manzoni 24/c - 00185 Roma

www.tabedizioni.it

ISSN: 2704-9795

ISBN Fascicolo 979-12-5669-424-2

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA**
MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 7
2026

Fascicolo 27. Luglio 2026
Storia Militare Moderna

a cura di
GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI



Società Italiana di Storia Militare



Vienna, Monumento equestre al Principe Eugenio di Savoia, particolare.
Foto Haeferl, CC SA 3.0 Austria Wikimedia Commons

A Knight of the “Imagined Kingdom”: *fra’* Don Alfonso d’Avalos

Between Spanish Italy and Habsburg Netherlands.

by MAURIZIO ARFAIOLI

ABSTRACT: In an existence defined by the awkward combination of opportunities and constraints that characterised the lives of the bastards of the Italo-Spanish high aristocracy, *fra’* Don Alfonso d’Avalos (c. 1570-1620) spent most of his life in the Habsburg Netherlands, navigating the social and political interstices between Spain and its European satellites, Italian and Spanish identity, royal service and family duty, court and army, merit and privilege, nation and faction, lay and religious status. Because his figure defied most of the social and cultural categories established after the rise of European nation-states and national armies in the nineteenth century, he was long stranded in a historiographical no-man’s-land between Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain. In addition to recovering the legacy of one of the major military and political players of the period, this article will shed light on the dynamics of some of the cosmopolitan interest groups that underpinned Imperial Spain’s European strategy.

KEYWORDS: ARMY OF FLANDERS; D’AVALOS FAMILY; EIGHTY YEARS’ WAR; HABSBURG NETHERLANDS; IMPERIAL SPAIN; ORDER OF MALTA; SPANISH ITALY

Introduction

One of the main challenges facing studies of the period during which the Habsburg Netherlands were ruled by Albert of Habsburg and Isabel of Austria is the very nature of the archducal couple’s power, which defies modern parameters of nationhood, statehood, and sovereignty (not to mention gender), as it was largely based on networks of personal rather than institutional loyalties. Biographical and prosopographical tools and methods have often



Fig. 1 – Francesco de Grado, *Fra' Alfonso d'Avalos*, in: Raffaele Maria Filamondo, *Il genio bellicoso di Napoli I*, Naples 1694, opposite to p. IX (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale). Unlike most of the portraits in Filamondo's oeuvre, that of Don Alfonso does not seem to belong to any known iconographic tradition and is generic enough to be a work of the imagination, like most of the biography to which it is attached.

proved useful in addressing these issues.¹ Indeed, the rediscovery of even relatively obscure figures has the potential not only to reveal previously unknown networks of connections, bringing together seemingly unrelated information stored in separate national and thematic silos, but also to help transcend some of the outdated conceptual frameworks that in many ways still shape current debates about the formation and development of the archducal state.

Unfortunately, the very characteristics that made many individuals fit into the cosmopolitan crowd that sustained the life of the archducal court and state have long made them characters of little (if any) interest in the various historiographical traditions that today speak for the “nations” of which they were once members – sometimes even prominent members. And in few cases is this truer than in that of *fra'* (short for *frate cavaliere*, “brother

knight” of the Order of St John) Don Alfonso d'Avalos d'Aquino e Aragona, who tied his fortunes to those of the archdukes, and whose memory and identity have consequently almost disappeared in a perfect storm of homonymies, misspellings, and national biases.

1 Luc DUERLOO, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012; Dries RAEYMAEKERS, *One Foot in the Palace: The Habsburg Court of Brussels and the Politics of Access in the Reign of Albert and Isabella, 1598–1621*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2013.

The Road to Flanders: A Tale of Two Brothers (and One Name).

In terms of narrative visibility, things did not start well for Don Alfonso, who, as one of the illegitimate sons of the ninth Marquis of Pescara and third Marquis of Vasto Francesco Ferdinando d'Avalos, was literally born a supporting character. The fact that his father had named his legitimate first-born son and heir Alfonso Felice, and that in the same years his uncle Carlo d'Avalos had christened his son Alfonso Francesco, laid the foundations for much future confusion.² The waters were further muddied by the fact that Don Alfonso would serve in the Army of Flanders at the same time as Alonso de Avalos y Guzmán, a Spanish cavalry officer, and that he was the near contemporary of a quarrelsome Spanish knight of Malta named Alonso de Avalos.³ And, as we will see later in this article, the misunderstandings would not end there.

As with many illustrious *bastardi*, some of Don Alfonso's key biographical details, such as his exact date of birth and his maternal lineage, remain obscure. It is highly likely that Don Alfonso's mother was at least of gentle (if not noble) blood, while the Genoese polymath Pietro Andrea Canonieri, who knew him, stated that he was fifteen in 1585 – a fact that would place his birth around 1570. Don Alfonso was therefore barely a child when the Order of Malta not only agreed to admit him to its ranks (3 April 1571), waiving most of the requirements of lineage, age and service, but also agreed to fulfil the marquis's dying wish (31 July 1571) that his son should be given the means to live honourably, which meant granting him the tenure of one of the Religion's commanderies (a landed estate) as soon as expedient.⁴

2 Nicoletta BAZZANO, «Dávalos de Aquino y de Aragona, Francisco Fernando de», in *Diccionario Biográfico Español de la Real Academia de la Historia*, Vol. 45, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 2010, pp. 605-609; Roberto ZAPPERI, «Avalos, Francesco Ferdinando, marchese di Pescara», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 4, Rome, anno 1962, pp. 627-635. Hereafter the half-brothers will be referred to as Don Alfonso and Alfonso Felice to avoid confusion.

3 Alonso VÁSQUEZ, «Los sucesos de Flandes y Francia del tiempo de Alejandro Farnese», in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, vol. 74, Madrid, año 1880, pp. 402-403; Fernando GONZÁLEZ DE LEÓN, *The Road to Rocroi: Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567-1659*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 65; Giovanni BONELLO, «Music for the Knights of Malta», in *Histories of Malta*, vol. I, Malta, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2000, pp. 109-110.

4 Giacomo BOSIO, *Gli statuti della sacra Religione di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, Rome, appresso Giacomo Tornieri, 1589, pp. 11-12; Bartolomeo DAL POZZO, *Ruolo generale de'*

The Order's willingness to comply with the marquis's requests is easy to explain, as the d'Avalos were one of the leading families of Spanish Italy's high aristocracy, and in 1571 Francesco Ferdinando occupied the crucial post of Viceroy of Sicily. The Order also owed the marquis, who had led a large contingent of troops to Malta in 1566 to counter any Ottoman landings on the island after the previous year's siege. That year, however, the Sultan's fleet had ventured into the Adriatic, laying waste to the d'Avalos' ancestral fiefs of Vasto and Pescara.⁵

Very little is known about Don Alfonso's early years, except that the d'Avalos raised him to be an asset in the service of his family, not the Order. Though he would take his role and duties as *frate cavaliere* seriously throughout his life, he would never fulfil his basic obligations as a knight – that is, he would not go to Malta for the required period of residence in the Order's convent, nor would he ever serve on the Religion's galleys. However, having been assigned the role of his brother's shadow and counterpart at a young age, Don Alfonso probably benefited from the first-class education given to Alfonso Felice, the academic side of which was taught by renowned scholars hand-picked by their uncle, Cardinal Iñigo d'Avalos, and under the supervision of his *ayo* (tutor), the Burgundian Louis de Morisot, a former teacher of the late Prince Don Carlos.⁶

Alfonso Felice's education bore fruit: the young marquis passed with flying colours the final, decisive stage of his education, that at the Spanish court (June 1578 – March 1582), catching the eye and favour of Philip II.⁷ Among the favours he granted to the young marquis, the king approved his marriage to Lavinia, the daughter of the Duke of Urbino Guidobaldo II della Rovere, which was celebrated on 5 June 1583. Meanwhile, his half-brother's status was also settled by that

cavalieri gerosolimitani della veneranda lingua d'Italia, Messina, Nella stamparia camerale di Vincenzo d'Amico, 1689, p. 37; Rita BERNINI, «La collezione d'Avalos in un documento inedito del 1571», in *Storia dell'Arte*, 88 (1996), p. 418; Pietro Andrea CANONIERI, *Delle cause dell'infelicità e disgrazie degli huomini letterati e guerrieri*, Antwerp, appresso Gioachino Trognese, 1612, p. 329.

5 ZAPPERI, «Avalos», cit., p. 630; Luigi MARCHESANI, *Storia di Vasto*, Naples, da' torchi dell'Osservatore Medico, 1838, p. 13.

6 Bonifazio VANNOZZI *Delle lettere miscellanee*, vol. III, Bologna, presso Bartolomeo Cochi, 1617, p. 927; Louis Prosper GACHARD, *Don Carlos et Philippe II*, vol. I, Brussels, Emmanuel Devroye, 1863, p. 269; BERNINI, «La collezione», cit., p. 419.

7 VANNOZZI, *Lettere*, cit., 926; Tommaso COSTO, *Lettere di Tomaso Costo*, Naples, appresso Costantino Vitale, 1604, pp. 19-21.

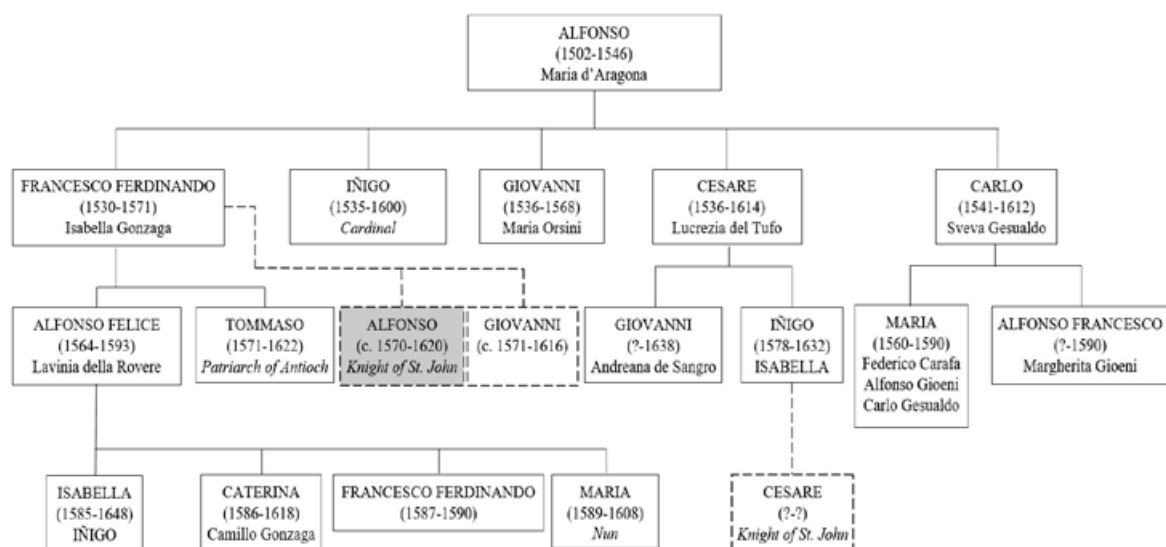


Fig. 2 – The d'Avalos Family Tree. The dotted lines indicate an illegitimate birth.

date, as in April 1583 the titular of the Commandery of Inverno, near Pavia, died, and Don Alfonso was designated as his successor.⁸ Inverno was a magisterial commandery, which meant that its allocation was at the discretion of Grand Master Hugues de Verdalle, whose reservations about Don Alfonso's appointment were finally overcome by an ad hoc *breve* issued by Pope Gregory XIII.⁹ Inverno was estimated to yield four thousand *scudi* of annual revenues. Though it didn't translate directly into as much income, as much of any commandery's income was tied up in investments, expenses, contributions to the Order and annuities for other knights, the titularity of a commandery was as close as someone like Don Alfonso could get to the status of a landed noble, adding much-needed prestige to his status and solvency to his finances.

8 Avviso from Rome (16 April 1583), Archivio di Stato, Florence (hereafter ASFi), Mediceo del Principato (hereafter MdP), 3083, c. 445r; on Inverno: Salvatore ARENA, *Il castello di Inverno. Le commende magistrali di Inverno e di S. Maria del Borghetto*, Milan, Gijes, 1982.

9 Loubenx de Verdalle to Gregorio Caetani (20 December 1584), Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Rome, Fondo Segreteria di Stato, Malta, 1, c. 167r; Iñigo d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (27 October 1619), ASFi, Ducato di Urbino prima serie (hereafter DU-I), 204, c. 958v.

Another favour granted by Philip II to the eighteen-year-old Alfonso Felice in 1582 was permission to serve in the Netherlands, which had already become the focus of the young marquis's interests and ambitions. This is hardly surprising, since by then the Netherlands had become the centre of gravity of Spain's European strategy, and the Army of Flanders, led since 1578 by his future cousin-in-law Alessandro Farnese, its fulcrum. Moreover, in 1582 Italian troops were granted tactical and administrative parity with the Spanish in the Army of Flanders and began to pour into the Netherlands in large numbers, opening new career opportunities for Italian military entrepreneurship as a whole – let alone for the young head of one of Italy's leading military dynasties.¹⁰

Provided by the king with a generous *entretenimiento* (monthly salary) and seats on the local Councils of State and War, Alfonso Felice arrived in the Netherlands in late November 1584 with his half-brother and a large entourage of veteran soldiers and servants. However, he would have no military command until chance intervened on 4 April 1585 in the form of the massive explosion of a fireship launched by Antwerp's defenders against the pontoon bridge over the Scheldt built by their besiegers. The explosion killed hundreds of soldiers, including the general of the light cavalry of the Army of Flanders, Robert de Melun, Marquis of Roubaix, whom Farnese immediately decided to replace with Alfonso Felice.¹¹ Farnese's move was largely dictated by political considerations. Until Roubaix's appointment in 1580, the position of general of the light cavalry of the Army of Flanders had been the contested province of its Italian and Spanish officer corps. The choice of Alfonso Felice, with his strong Italo-Spanish background and his family's military reputation, allowed Farnese to satisfy both factions, while the young general's inexperience ensured that, unlike many of his

10 *Avviso* from Milan (20 December 1582), ASFi, MdP, 3255, c. 129r; Alicia ESTEBAN ESTRÍNGANA, «Cabos de guerra: satisfacción de la oficialidad y eficacia bélica en el ejército de Flandes entre los siglos XVI y XVII», in J. F. P. Molero and M. L. Cortés (cur.), *Los oficiales reales: los servidores del rey en la Monarquía Hispánica (siglos XVI-XVII)*, Valencia, Universitat de Valencia, 2012, pp. 270-271; Maurizio ARFAIOLI, «Bastion of Empire: The Italian *terzo vecchio* of the Army of Flanders (1597-1682)», *The Journal of Military History*, 85 (2021), pp. 29-30. Alessandro Farnese and Lavinia della Rovere were first cousins.

11 Famiano STRADA, *Della guerra di Fiandra deca seconda*, Rome, per gli Eredi del Corbelletti, 1648, pp. 372-376; register entry (4 April 1585), Archives générales du Royaume, Brussels (hereafter AGRB), Secrétairerie d'État et de Guerre (hereafter SÉG), 9, cc. 229v-230r.



Fig. 3 – Anonymous, *Frontispiece*, in: Ludovico Melzi, *Regole militari*, Antwerp 1611 (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale). The frontispiece of Melzi’s treatise effectively visualizes the three types of light cavalymen of the Army of Flanders and their tactical and hierarchical relationship, with the lancer placed in the centre and on a pedestal.

predecessors, he could be kept on a short leash.¹²

Like his half-brother, Don Alfonso would start his career in the Army of Flanders from the top, albeit on a smaller scale, for a few weeks later he was appointed captain of a veteran company of Spanish lancers (lighter versions of the heavy men-at-arms).¹³ The lancers were the apex of the tactical triad of the Army's light cavalry, completed by the dragoons (mounted arquebusiers) and the cuirassiers (heavily armoured pistoleers), and the Spanish jealously guarded their long-established primacy and privileges within the Army of Flanders. The fact that someone so young and identified as Italian could be given command of a company of *caballos lanças* speaks volumes about the strength of the military and social Spanish credentials of the d'Avalos family.¹⁴

Although their illustrious names protected all concerned from open criticism, the appointment of the young and inexperienced d'Avalos brothers raised more than a few influential eyebrows, even at the time. Indeed, the new general was so frequently referred to in contemporary sources as «giovane» (young) or even «giovinetto» (boy) that the historian Leon van der Essen can almost be forgiven for thinking that «Giovinetto di Pescara» was an actual person. And decades later, even Canonieri would feel the need to explain why Farnese had done the right thing in putting fifteen-year-old Don Alfonso at the head of an elite company of lancers.¹⁵ Yet the recruitment, equipment and command of light cavalry forces was by this time very much a d'Avalos family business. Their father Francesco Ferrante had been general of the cavalry of the Duchy of Milan, while their uncle Cesare had commanded one of the companies of light cavalry that had accompanied the four *tercios viejos de Italia* along the Spanish Road in 1567, and was captain of one of the standing companies of men-at-arms of the Kingdom of Na-

12 GONZÁLEZ DE LEÓN, *The Road*, cit., pp. 23-26, 38-39; Giuseppe BERTINI, «Carriere di militari italiani nell'esercito di Alessandro Farnese nei Paesi Bassi: merito o privilegio?», in G. Bertini (cur.), *Militari italiani dell'esercito di Alessandro Farnese nelle Fiandre*, Fidenza, Mattioli 1885, 2013, p. 190.

13 Register entry (1 May 1585), AGRB, SÉG, 9, c. 253r.

14 Ludovico MELZI, *Regole militari sopra il governo e servizio particolare della cavalleria*, Antwerp, appresso Gioachino Trognesio, 1611, pp. 35-50.

15 Léon VAN DER ESSEN, *Alexandre Farnèse, prince de Parme, gouverneur général des Pays-Bas (1545-1592)*, vol. IV, Brussels, Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1935, p. 69; CANONIERI, *Delle cause*, cit., p. 330.

ples.¹⁶ Their uncle Carlo had also served in the Netherlands and had founded the light cavalry corps of the Kingdom of Sicily.¹⁷ Neither brother therefore lacked the training, resources, connections, and advisors needed to carry out their duties while facing dangerously steep learning curves.

Alfonso Felice served as general of the cavalry of the Army of Flanders until early 1590,¹⁸ and felt aggravated by the king's decision to replace him with the Duke of Pastrana Rodrigo da Silva. Alfonso Felice initially refused to serve in any capacity that would prevent him from returning to the Netherlands, and only accepted the rank of general of the cavalry of the Duchy of Milan when Philip II in person ordered him to do so.¹⁹ However, Da Silva turned out to be an absentee general (he did not come to Brussels until 1595), so the marquis took long absences from his duties and spent much of his time in the Netherlands, until a personal dispute with Alessandro Farnese's son Ranuccio in March 1592 forced him to return to Italy for good.²⁰

Meanwhile, Don Alfonso continued to serve at the head of his company even after his half-brother had resigned his generalship, and his unit was part of the large cavalry force of the Army of Flanders that was ambushed by the enemy near

16 *Avviso of Flanders* (June 1567), ASFi, MdP, 4254, c. 277r; Bernardino de MENDOZA, *Comentarios de don Bernardino de Mendoza de lo sucedido en las guerras de los Payeses Baxos: desde el año de 1567 hasta el de 1577*, Madrid, Por Pedro Madrigal, 1592, pp. 45, 66; Famiano STRADA, *Della guerra di Fiandra deca prima*, Venice, per Francesco Baba, 1640, pp. 326, 341, 349.

17 STRADA, *deca prima*, cit., p. 289; Carlos BELLOSO MARTÍN «Conflictos de poder entre el centro y la periferia de la monarquía: el establecimiento de la caballería ligera en Sicilia en el siglo XVI», in R. Cancila (cur.), *Mediterraneo in armi (secc. XV-XVIII)*, vol. I, Palermo, Associazione no profit Mediterranea, 2007, pp. 315-371.

18 Raffaele Maria FILAMONDO, *Il genio bellicoso di Napoli: memorie istoriche d'alcuni capitani celebri napolitani, c'han militato per la fede, per lo Re, per la patria nel secolo corrente*, vol. I, Naples, per Domenico Antonio Parrino, 1697, p. IX; STRADA, *deca seconda*, cit., pp. 410, 424, 473, 497, 498, 563, 564; Hugo O'DONNELL, «La caballería en la Empresa de Inglaterra de 1588», in *Revista de Historia Naval*, 21 (1988), pp. 48-49.

19 Alfonso Felice d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (17 May 1590), ASFi, DU-I, 202, c. 200r; Alfonso Felice d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (14 January 1591), *ivi*, c. 207r/v.

20 Guido BENTIVOGLIO *Historia della guerra di Fiandra*, vol. II, Venice, Appresso Pietr'Antonio Milochio, 1668, p. 135; Romano CANOSA, *I segreti dei Farnese*, Rome, Sapere 2000, 2001, pp. 70-82; Sebastiaan DERKS, «Le ricompense della guerra: giustificazione e rappresentazione di Alessandro Farnese nel Liber relationum di Paolo Rinaldi», in G. Bertini (cur.), *Militari italiani*, cit., pp. 218-219.

Nijmegen on 14 July 1591. With most of his soldiers either killed or captured, Don Alfonso ended the day as a prisoner of the Dutch captain Burchard van Kinsky. The cost of his imprisonment and the ransom (around thirty thousand ducats) would strain his finances for years to come. However, thanks to the relatively friendly relations that already existed between Alfonso Felice and Maurice of Orange, Don Alfonso was a free man by the end of December 1591.²¹ Thereafter, he served mainly in the Frisian branch of the Army of Flanders, acting as de facto leader of the eight light cavalry companies present in that theatre until the failed relief of Coevorden in August 1592.²² In November of that year, as the dispute in Italy between Alfonso Felice and Ranuccio escalated into a conflict between the Farnese on the one side and the d'Avalos, supported by the Gonzagas, on the other, Alessandro relieved Don Alfonso of his command – with the result that the latter left the Netherlands and went to Milan to serve as a lieutenant in his brother's company of men-at-arms.

After the death of Alessandro Farnese (3 December 1592), and after Alfonso Felice and Ranuccio had been forced to make peace by Philip II (April 1593), Don Alfonso decided to leave his brother's side and return to the Netherlands. At the time, Italy offered him little in the way of career prospects, while at the same time the merits he had acquired during his years of service in the Army of Flanders were rapidly devaluing. He was determined either to resume service in the Netherlands or to travel to Spain and present his *servicios* to the King in the hope of being granted an adequate reward, thus leaving the Netherlands behind.²³ And indeed, after spending several months in Brussels at his own expense without making any progress, Don Alfonso was preparing to leave for Spain when he received the news of his brother's sudden death in Rome (2 December 1593).²⁴

21 Vv. Aa., *List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series*, vol. III (June 1591–April 1592), London, Public Record Office, 1980, entries 20, 181, 191. On Van Kinsky: Anthonie DUYCK, *Journal Van Anthonis Duyck, Advokaat-Fiskaal Van Den Raad Van State: 1591-1602*, vol. I, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1862, p. 8n.3.

22 CANONIERI, *Delle cause*, cit., p. 330; Jacques-Auguste DE THOU, *Histoire universelle depuis 1543 jusqu'en 1607*, vol. XI, London, 1734, pp. 567–568; Francisco VERDUGO, *Comentario del coronel Francisco Verdugo de la guerra de Frisia*, Madrid, Imprenta de Rivadeneyra, 1872, pp. 182–183.

23 Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (24 March 1593), ASFi, DU-I, 241, c. 422r; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (1 December 1593), ASFi, DU-I, 198, c. 614r.

24 Maurizio ARFAIOLI, «Giovanni Battista Marino e gli 'Alfonsi' d'Avalos», in *Studi Secente-*

Upon his return to Italy, Don Alfonso was entrusted by his brother's widow with the task of bringing Alfonso Felice's collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece back to Spain and representing her and her daughters' interests in the face of crushing debts and overbearing d'Avalos relatives.²⁵ By all accounts, Don Alfonso performed both duties well, meeting with the king and the *Consejo de Italia* on several occasions, and at one point it was even rumoured that Philip II would grant him a substantial *entretenimiento* in the Netherlands, which would have allowed him to resume his career in the Army of Flanders. In the end, however, the only reward Don Alfonso was granted was the temporary captaincy of his late brother's company of men-at-arms – a post that was to be filled by whoever married his niece.²⁶

While in Madrid, however, Don Alfonso had become involved in the negotiations for the recruitment of an infantry *tercio* from the Duchy of Urbino. By the time the French declared war on Spain in January 1595, Don Alfonso had established himself as the obvious candidate for the post of *maestre de campo* of the new unit, which he proceeded to raise, organize and equip in Lombardy, and then lead across the Alps in early September to join the Spanish army campaigning in Burgundy.²⁷ Don Alfonso's *tercio* had barely arrived there, however, than he received instructions (8 October) to ready his unit for passage to the Netherlands.²⁸

schì, Vol. 52 (2011), p. 406.

25 Marina FRETTONI, «Della Rovere, Lavinia Feltria», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 37, Rome, anno 1989, pp. 358-360; Consigliere Palma to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (25 December 1593), ASFi, DU-I, 204, cc. 694v-696v.

26 Bernardo Maschi to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (28 July 1594), ASFi, DU-I, 186, c. 419r; Bernardo Maschi to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (6 September 1594), *ivi*, c. 424r.

27 «Carteggio di Don Alfonso d'Avalos etc.», ASFi, DU-I, 198, cc. 612r-829v; Cesare FONTANA, *Delle Historie del Mondo*, vol. II, Venice, appresso Francesco de' Franceschi, 1609, p. 688.

28 Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (8 October 1595), ASFi, DU-I, 198, c. 690r/v.

«As could be expected of the son, grandson, and great-grandson of who he is»: *Albert's Soldier*.²⁹

It is likely that Don Alfonso was as little surprised by his new orders as he was unhappy with them. After all, the duke of Urbino had already approved the transfer, and a high-ranking and well-connected officer like him was probably aware that the Cardinal-Archduke Albert was on his way from Spain to replace his late brother Ernest as Governor-General of the Netherlands, and he would need to be accompanied by a sizeable force to reach his destination and reinforce the Army of Flanders. However, Don Alfonso's disposition was not shared by most of his *tercio*'s soldiers (who had been promised that they would not be sent to Flanders), and even by many of its officers. By the time Albert mustered his troops in Nozeroy (30 December), desertions had reduced the unit's strength to nine hundred men from the twenty-five hundred who had crossed the Alps. By the time Albert's force reached Namur, the *tercio* of Urbino was reduced to about four hundred men and was therefore disbanded on 14 February 1596.³⁰

Although massive desertions had also affected all the other Italian and Spanish units from Burgundy (none of whom had signed up to serve in the Netherlands), the duke of Urbino blamed Don Alfonso for his troops' disgraceful performance. Albert, on the other hand, liked what he saw and offered him a seat in his War Council and a post as one of his *entrettenidos* (personal retainers) an annual salary of two thousand *escudos*.³¹ Don Alfonso also liked what he saw, and as someone who had spent his entire life at the crossroads of the military and ecclesiastical worlds, he observed with interest as Albert moved from the status of cardinal-archduke to that of captain-general of the Army of Flanders. Albert, he noted,

has begun to show signs of wanting to be a soldier, since he has holstered a pistol to his saddle and has put on a short vest, although still that of a cardi-

29 «Don Alonso de Avalos ha servido mucho y muy bien, como se podía esperar de cuyo hijo, nieto y bisnieto es.» The Council of State to Philip III of Spain (10 October 1600), Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Estado, 2763, cc. nn.

30 Gregorio CRUZADA VILLAAMIL «Guerras de Flandes. Asedio de Calais, Ardres y Hulst en 1596 por el cardenal arzobispo de Toledo archiduque Alberto», in *Revista Hispano Americana*, Vol. 8 (1882), pp. 62-82, 78-79; ASFi, DU-I, 198, cc. 786r-787v, Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere, 1 March 1596.

31 Cesare d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (30 April 1596), ASFi, DU-I, 198, c. 805r; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (10 March 1596), Archivio di Stato, Mantua (hereafter ASMn), Archivio Gonzaga (hereafter AG), 574, cc. nn.

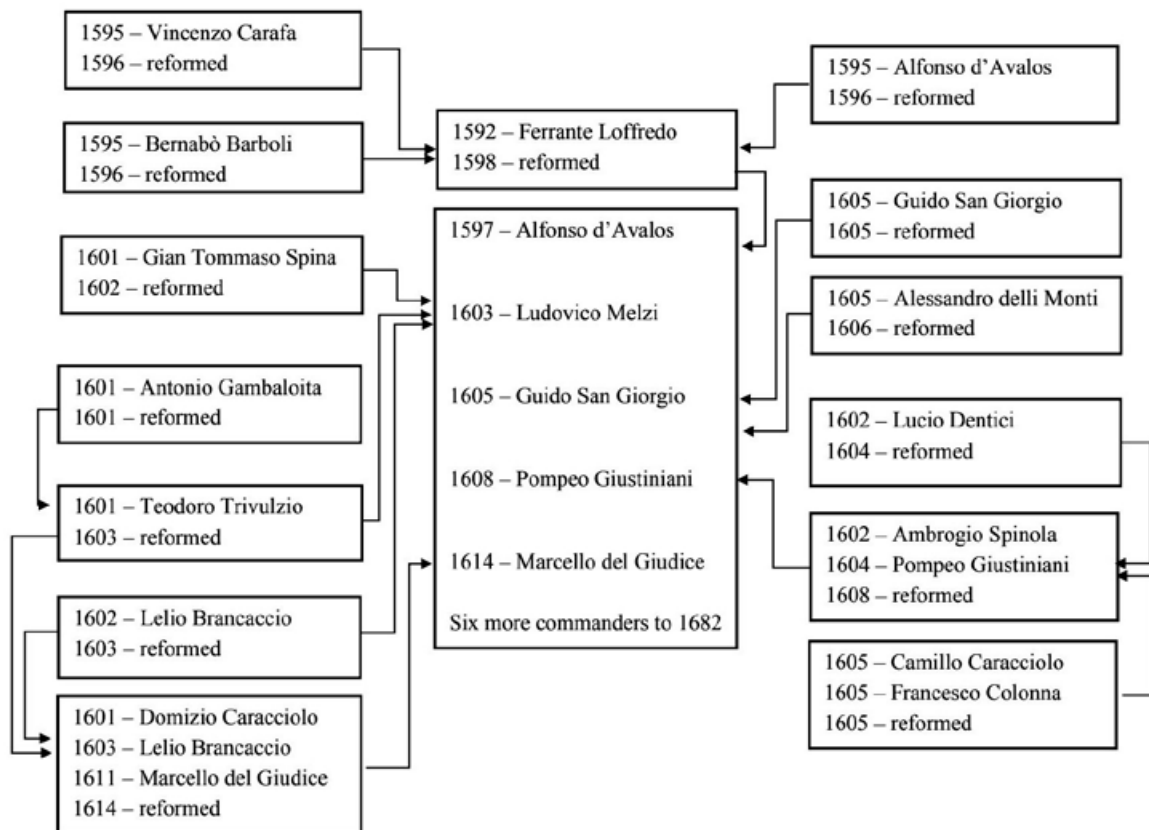


Fig. 4 – The genealogy of the *tercio* established by Don Alfonso (until 1614). This diagram follows the sequence of the “reformations” of the Italian *tercios* of the Army of Flanders during the years of Don Alfonso’s service in the Netherlands. It is worth noting that Marcello del Giudice, who became *maestro di campo* shortly after Don Alfonso’s departure, had served under him first as a captain and then as a sergeant major, and would in turn become one of the main advocates of the Italian *natione* in the Army of Flanders until his retirement in 1631

nal, which was *morello* lined with velvet of the same colour [...] It is said that he will soon buckle up his sword, and he certainly shows a bellicose and saintly disposition.³²

32 «quest'altezza del cardinale arciduca uscì in campagna assai alegramente, et ha cominciato a dar segno di voler esser soldato poi che si è posto l'archebugio all'arcione, et ha vestito l'habito curto, se bene da cardinale, che è stato *morello* fodrato di felba dell'istesso colore [...] Si dice che presto cingerà la spada, et si mostra certo belicoso, e d'una santa mente», Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (31 March 1596), ASFi, DU-I,

Don Alfonso accepted the seat in the Council but refused the *entretenimiento*, as he was confident that he could oblige Albert to a greater degree on the field and continued to serve at his own expense and on the first lines at the sieges of Calais (where he came so close to death that he later made a pilgrimage to Loreto to thank the Virgin), Ardres and finally Hulst, which fell on 18 August 1596. Don Alfonso's gamble paid off, as a month later Albert first granted him an *ayuda de costa* (one-off subsidy) of eight thousand *escudos* to restore his finances, and then, on 10 October, appointed him *maestre de campo* of a new *tercio* to be raised in the Duchy of Milan. Albert also confirmed the *entretenimiento*, and authorized Don Alfonso to receive it in addition to his monthly pay as *maestre de campo* and captain of one of the companies of his own *tercio*.³³

Albert and Don Alfonso had known each other before their paths crossed in Burgundy, as the former had helped negotiate the settlement that had addressed the marquis of Vasto's financial and patrimonial woes the previous year. The degree of favour shown by the (still) cardinal-archduke to Don Alfonso, however, was mainly because both men, in different ways and at different levels, wanted "in" the Army of Flanders. After all, the Army of Flanders was the real foundation of his power in the Netherlands, and Albert needed to be in control of it and not just in command of it by royal decree. He needed people who were not only experienced military commanders, but who also had direct experience of the Army's inner workings.

By the time Albert became its commander-in-chief, the Army of Flanders had been in existence for almost thirty years, evolving from the *ad hoc* (and mostly Spanish) expeditionary force assembled by the duke of Alba into the articulated, multinational "imperial" military joint venture established by Alessandro Farnese, creating a complex and powerful tangle of competing interests and ambitions, as well as a robust organizational culture in the process. His being, in effect, a child of the Army of Flanders, combined with his constant struggle to resume service in the Netherlands, made of Don Alfonso an effective means to the cardinal-archduke's end. On the other hand, for Don Alfonso, who had spent

198, c. 861r/v.

33 DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., pp. 44-45; register entry (18 September 1596), AGRB, SÉG, 17, c. 12v; register entry (25 October 1596), ivi, cc. 58r-59v; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (10 October 1596), ASFi, DU-I, 198, c. 829r.



Fig. 5 – Anonymous, *Relief of Amiens* (detail), c. 1610 (Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial). Albert («son altesse») is portrayed here still in his red cardinal's robes, next to the second of the three squadrons of infantry that led the effort to relieve Amiens, and which included the soldiers of Don Alfonso's *tercio*.

his life as his brother's shadow, becoming one of Albert's many shadows was an acceptable arrangement.³⁴

By early January 1597, Don Alfonso was already in Milan, making use of his family's extensive network of military patronage to recruit a *tercio* up to the cardinal-archduke's expectations. By early July, Don Alfonso's unit – more than four thousand strong thanks to a successful recruitment campaign – had crossed the Alps into Savoy and reached the Netherlands in early August, in time to participate in Albert's failed attempt to relieve Amiens (15-16 September).³⁵ The car-

34 GONZÁLEZ DE LEÓN, *The Road*, cit., pp. 1-47, 89-105; DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., pp. 84-90; ARFAIOLI, «Bastion», cit., pp. 29-31.

35 Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (10 October 1596), ASFi, DU-I, 198, c. 829r; PARKER, Geoffrey, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road: The Logistics*

dinal-archduke was reportedly pleased with the quality (and quantity) of the new Milanese **tercio**, which constituted a much-needed addition to the Army's Italian infantry, by then reduced to the Neapolitan *tercio* of Ferrante Loffredo, Marquis of Trevico. Loffredo's *tercio* had effectively become the repository for all the remnants of all the Italian infantry units that had served in the Netherlands since 1582 – a role strengthened by the previous year's reformation of all the three **tercios** that had arrived with Albert in 1596. Trevico, however, had been Farnese's man, and by 1597 he had become an absentee commander. When the effectives of Trevico's *tercio* reached a critically low level after the battle of Turnhout (24 January 1597), contrary to established procedure – and much to the dismay of the Army's Neapolitan soldiery – the senior unit was incorporated into Don Alfonso's junior (and Milanese) one (1 July 1597).³⁶

Brute military force was not all that Don Alfonso offered Albert. At the siege of Rheinberg in 1598, he was able to speed up the surrender of the Dutch garrison thanks to the acquaintances he had made while a forced – but honoured – guest of Maurice of Orange in The Hague seven years earlier. The friendly relations with Maurice continued after Rheinberg, as Don Alfonso was able to open a channel of communication between the *stadtholder* and the Duke of Mantua, Vincenzo I Gonzaga, during the latter's visit to the Netherlands the following year.³⁷ However, Don Alfonso was less fortunate at the siege of Zaltbommel (15 May – 13 July 1599), where not only did the Army of Flanders fail to take the town, but he was seriously wounded by a musket shot.³⁸ Zaltbommel was the culmination of the progressive military and political paralysis to which both the Army and the fledgling archducal regime fell victim during the absence of Albert, who travelled

of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries Wars, 1567–1659, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004 (first edition: 1972), p. 238; Carlos COLOMA, *Las Guerras de los Estados Bajos*, Madrid, Ministerio de la Defensa, 2010, pp. 613–616.

36 Bernabò Barbo to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (22 October 1597), ASFi, DU-I, 195, c. 413r/v; register entry (28 June 1598), AGRB, SEG, 18, c. 123r/v; ARFAIOLI «Bastion», cit., pp. 30–32.

37 Ambrogio Landriani to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (17 October 1598), ASFi, DU-I, 198, cc. 383v–384v; Emanuel VAN METEREN, *Histoire des Pays-Bas*, The Hague, Chez Hillebrant Iacobz, 1618, cc. 437r/v, 455v; Jean-Chrysostôme BRUSLÉ DE MONTPLEINCHAMP, *L'histoire de l'archiduc Albert*, Brussels, Société de l'histoire de Belgique, 1870, p. 198; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (4 June 1599), ASMn, AG, 574, cc. nn.

38 Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (28 May 1599), ASMn, AG, 574, cc. nn.; Coloma, *Las guerras*, 675.

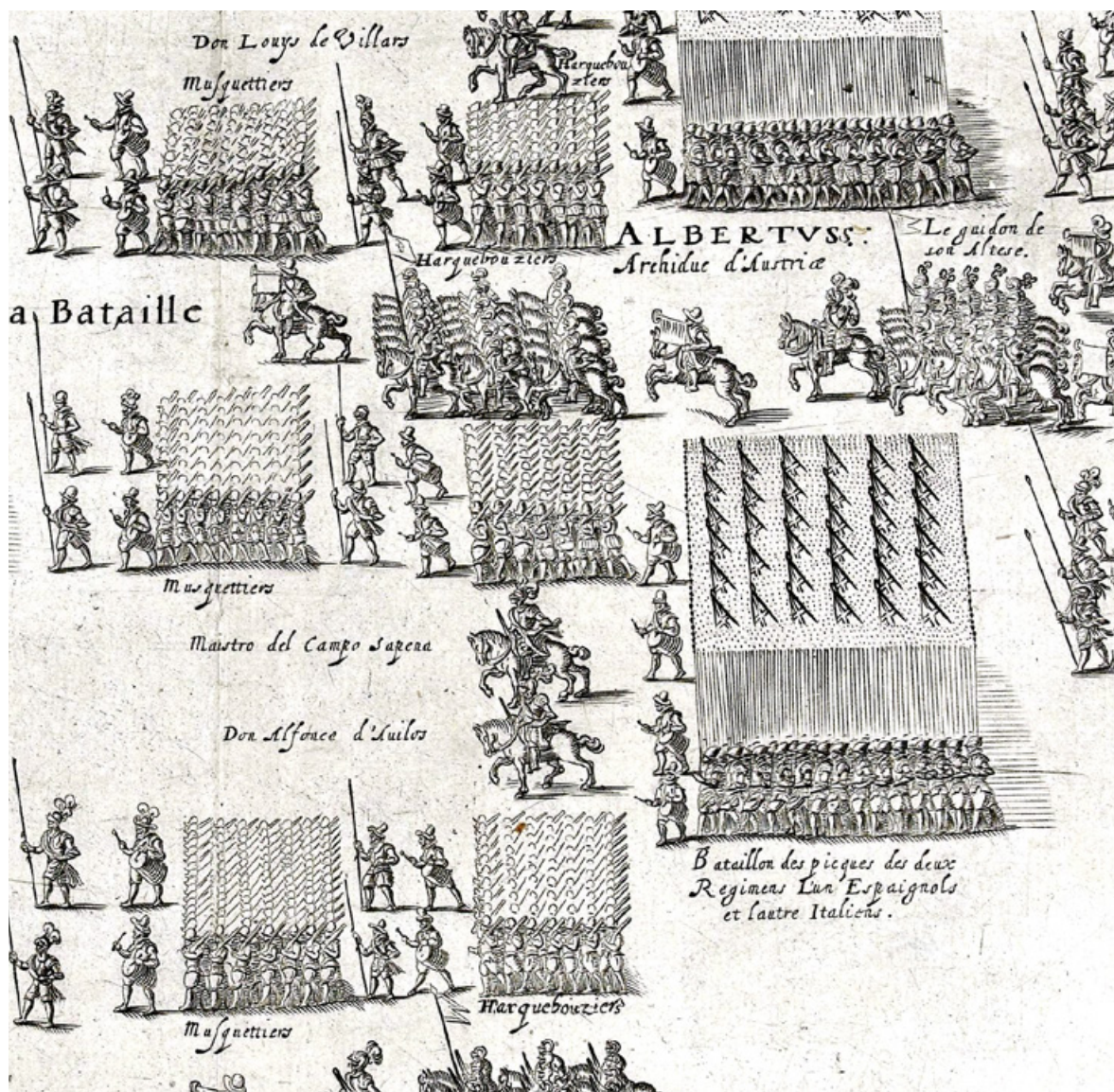


Fig. 6 – Balthasar Florisz van Berckenrode (attr.), *The Battle of Nieuwpoort* (detail), c. 1600 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). Albert («Albertus S[erenissimus] Archiduc d'Austriæ»), in full battle harness, is shown here leading the centre («la bataille») of his army, next to the squadron made up of the combined Italian and Spanish *tercios* of Don Alfonso d'Avalos and Gaspar Zapena.

to Spain from September 1598 to September 1599 to marry the *infanta* Isabel and bring her to the Netherlands. Even more dangerously, by the time the archdukes arrived in Brussels, the Army of Flanders had been severely weakened by a wave of mutinies. Yet, although only the intervention of the Italian light cavalry acting as a police force prevented detachments of his *tercio* from joining the mutineers, Don Alfonso's unit was among those on which Albert and Isabel could rely to counter the seaborne offensive of the United Provinces that led to the battle of Nieuwpoort (2 July 1600).³⁹

On that day, after nearly four hours of furious fighting, Don Alfonso's *tercio* was one of the last units of the archducal host to crumble under the pressure of the enemy's final push, suffering around two-thirds casualties, with less than five hundred soldiers escaping either death or capture. Thrice wounded while fighting at the head of his men, Don Alfonso himself was left for dead on the sandy ground of Nieuwpoort until a member of his household recognized his master and gave him his horse, allowing him to escape to safety.⁴⁰

By March 1601, as the archdukes were about to embark on what would become known as the Great Siege of Ostend (July 1601 – September 1604), Don Alfonso's *tercio* had been reduced to little more than a tenth of its original strength of 1597. Albert's favour, however, ensured that as new Italian *tercios* arrived in the Netherlands and siege operations quickly began to reduce their numbers, Don Alfonso's unit remained at the receiving end of the sequence of reformations, its ranks constantly replenished by new arrivals. Nevertheless, by February 1602 he had become pessimistic about the outcome of the siege, concluding that «we are now facing another Siege of Troy, but without Achilles or any of those famous

39 DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., pp. 108-112; Lisa KATTENBERG, «Military Rebellion and Reason of State. Pacification of Mutinies in the Habsburg Army of Flanders, 1599-1601», in *Low Countries Historical Review*, Vol. 131:2 (2016), pp. 3-21, 5-13; Ambrogio Landriani to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (23 February 1600), ASFi, DU-I, 198, c. 479r/v; Ambrogio Landriani to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (10 June 1600), ivi cc. 484v-485v.

40 Jan Piet PUYPE, «Victory at Nieuwpoort, 2 July 1600», in M. van der Hoven (cur.), *Exercise of Arms. Warfare in the Netherlands (1568-1648)*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, pp. 97-111; Geoffrey PARKER, «The Limits to Revolutions in Military Affairs: Maurice of Nassau, the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600), and the Legacy», in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71 (2007), pp. 351-354; Angelo GALLUCCI, *Historia della Guerra di Fiandra dall'anno MDXCIII sin alla Tregua di Anni XII conchiusa l'anno MDCIX*, vol. II, Rome, Ignatio de' Lazari, 1674, pp. 127-129; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (27 July 1600), ASMn, AG, 574, cc. nn.

Table 1– Don Alfonso’s *tercio* at Nieuwpoort. A *tercio*’s *maestre de campo* and sergeant-major were also captains of their own companies.

Companies	Rank	
Alfonso d’Avalos	<i>Maestre de campo</i>	
Giulio Cesare Caccia	Captain	
Alfonso Carafa	Captain	
Virgilio Gianitelli	Captain	
Fabio Regina	Captain	
Enrico Svigo	Captain	
Giulio Cesare Taliano	Captain	
Giovanbattista Gambaloita	Captain	prisoner
Decio Maggi	Captain	prisoner
Vespasiano Maggi	Captain	prisoner
Girolamo Rho	Captain	prisoner
Vespasiano Stanco	Captain	prisoner
Flaminio della Verde	Captain	prisoner
Giampaolo Gabbo	Sergeant Major	dead
Gabriele Battaglia	Captain	dead
Cesare Calco	Captain	dead
Giovanbattista Carisana	Captain	dead
Cornelio Mariano	Captain	dead
Baldassarre Svigo	Captain	dead

heroes». He was probably one of the first to make this comparison, but he would not be the last.⁴¹

However, not all of Don Alfonso’s worries were caused by the enemy. During

41 «di maniera che homai ci si presenta un altro assedio di Troia, ma senza gl’Achilli et quelli altri famosi», Don Alfonso d’Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (12 January 1602), AS-Mn, AG, 575, cc. nn. On Don Alfonso’s role in the siege of Ostend: Charles Alexandre de CROÿ, *Memoires guerriers de ce qu’y c’est passé aux Pays Bas depuis le commencement de l’an 1600 iusques à la fin de l’année 1606*, Antwerp, Hieronymus Verdussen, 1642, pp. 30, 36, 37; BRUSLÉ DE MONTPLEINCHAMP, *Histoire*, cit., pp. 267, 269, 270.

Table 2 – Don Alfonso's *tercio* at the musters of 9 October 1600 and of 24 March 1601 (AGS, Estado, 617/179; AGS, Estado, 618/110).

*: 'Corselets' (armoured pikemen).

Companies	Officers	<i>Entretenidos</i>	<i>Coseletes*</i>	Musketeers	Arquebusiers	Total
<i>Muster of 9 October 1600</i>						
Alfonso d'Avalos	3	0	27	7	18	55
Giulio Cesare Caccia	6	1	0	8	29	44
Alfonso Carafa	7	2	11	3	8	31
Flaminio della Verde	5	1	12	9	11	38
Giovanbattista Gambaloita	2	0	15	5	6	28
Virgilio Gianitelli	7	0	13	3	8	31
Decio Maggi	2	0	15	6	6	29
Vespasiano Maggi	4	1	16	3	8	32
Fabio Regina	4	0	19	7	11	41
Girolamo Rho	6	0	11	6	4	27
Vespasiano Stanco	3	0	16	8	3	31
Enrico Svigo	6	0	13	4	9	32
Giulio Cesare Taliano	2	0	0	7	25	34
Staff officers	10	0	0	0	0	10
Tot.	67	5	168	77	146	463
<i>Muster of 24 March 1601</i>						
Alfonso d'Avalos	5	1	38	19	37	100
Giulio Cesare Caccia	8	0	0	15	53	76
Alfonso Carafa	7	5	21	13	32	78
Giovanbattista Gambaloita	6	0	23	18	17	64
Vespasiano Maggi	6	0	44	6	19	75
Giulio Cesare Taliano	5	0	0	16	58	79
Staff officers	8	0	0	0	0	8
Released prisoners	0	0	0	0	0	61
Tot.	45	6	126	87	216	541

the previous year's campaign, policies had been promoted to end the equality between the Italian and Spanish nations in the Army of Flanders (established by Farnese in 1582) in favour of the latter. The decision to reaffirm the primacy of the *nación* within the Army of Flanders was part of a wider effort to promote Spanish service in the Netherlands, which after the Act of Cession (1598) had become an increasingly unattractive career option for Iberian officers and soldiers, placing them in the direct service of the archdukes and only indirectly of their king. For their Italian counterparts, a degree of national separation from their king was instead the norm, and indeed they saw the opportunities offered by the creation of a new political entity under the archdukes as an incentive to serve in the Netherlands.⁴² Since these policies had not been repudiated, and since the campaign season of 1602 was about to start, Don Alfonso expressed to the archduke his fear that, being an Italian, he would soon find himself in the position of having to do something that might tarnish his past services to the Crown. He, therefore, offered to resign his commission on the grounds of ill health, as the wounds he had suffered at Nieuwpoort had re-opened. Albert allayed Don Alfonso's fears, but the crisis had only been postponed.⁴³

Matters came to a head in August when a force under the command of Albert's right-hand man, the Admiral of Aragon Francisco de Mendoza, and which included Spanish and Italian *tercios*, left the camp around Ostend to relieve besieged Grave. The *maestres de campo* of two of the Italian units – Don Alfonso and Teodoro Trivulzio – publicly abandoned their posts in protest at Mendoza's decision to stop rotating the marching slots of the two nations' units, ensuring that in the event of battle, the Spanish would always occupy the squadrons' place of honour – the right flank. In response, Mendoza stripped them of their commissions and even had the Army's auditor-general open a case against them. In the end, Mendoza and the Spanish faction succeeded in establishing the primacy of the *nación* over the *natione* when it came to deployment on the battlefield. However, having proved once again that he lacked the military talent to make up for his lack of political finesse by botching the relief of Grave, Mendoza soon returned to Spain in disgrace, while Don Alfonso and Trivulzio, who had since been reinstated, received only mild reproof.⁴⁴

42 GONZÁLEZ DE LEÓN, *The Road*, cit., pp. 95-105; ESTEBAN ESTRÍNGANA, «Cabos», cit., pp. 265-272.

43 Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (26 July 1602), ASMn, AG, 575, cc. nn.

44 ARFAIOLI, «Bastion», cit., pp. 35-36; ESTEBAN ESTRÍNGANA, «Cabos», cit., pp. 275-282, 290-

Still, there was no real need for Albert to impose sanctions, since after this incident both men felt bound to tender their resignations. Trivulzio went first, on 11 January 1603, followed on 25 March by Don Alfonso, who, in a further show of archducal favour, was able to choose his successor at the head of his *tercio* in the person of *fra* ' Ludovico Melzi.⁴⁵

*«Most favoured by these highnesses»: Don Alfonso
Between Court and Army.*⁴⁶

Upon resigning the command of his *tercio*, Don Alfonso's military career in the Netherlands came to a virtual standstill and he entered a historiographical grey area between the Court of Brussels and the Army of Flanders. Don Alfonso's status as a d'Avalos and his previous services made it inappropriate for him to accept anything less than a full generalship as the next step in his career. At the same time, however, his illegitimate birth made it impossible for him to obtain a general's baton – at least in the Army of Flanders, which only accepted bastards of royal blood in its upper echelons. The same awkward combination of illustrious and illegitimate origins also closed other avenues of social advancement, preventing him from becoming a prominent member of the archducal court in Brussels. Moreover, as a knight of St John, he could not be invested with a title and a fief, and while, like many Hospitallers, he did not strictly observe his vow of chastity,⁴⁷ he could not follow the example of other Italian and Spanish officers of the Army of Flanders and marry into the Walloon-Flemish nobility. And yet, apart from a few months' absence in 1607, when he was urgently recalled to Italy because of the Venetian Interdict crisis, Don Alfonso was to spend the next ten years in the Netherlands.

It must be said that, at the age of about thirty-three, Don Alfonso had little to

292; DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., pp. 133-135, 148-149.

45 Register entry (11 January 1603), AGRB, SÉG, 21, cc. 101r-102v; register entry (25 March 1603), ivi cc. 161v-162r; Arfaïoli, «Bastion», cit., 35-36; Alessandro DATTERO, «Melzi, Ludovico», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 73, anno 2009, pp. 398-400.

46 «favoritissimo da queste altezze», ASFi, DU-I, 199, c. 657v.

47 In his history of the War of Montferrat, the pro-Savoy historian Antonio Possevino Jr. accused Don Alfonso of actually neglecting his duties due to an affair with a married woman: Antonio POSSEVINO, *Belli Monferratensis Historia, ab anno salutis MDCXII usque ad annum MDCXVIII*, Ex Typographia Petri Chouet, 1637, p. 571.

return to in Italy. There he was merely the Commander of Inverno for the Order of Malta and a *reformado* (inactive) captain of heavy cavalry in the Duchy of Milan, with no realistic chance of advancement in either institution. Moreover, his brother's death had triggered a dynastic and patrimonial crisis that led the d'Avalos to abandon the high-profile (and high-stakes) policy of active military service to the Spanish crown that they had pursued since the beginning of the Italian Wars (1494-1559), and to turn inwards, devoting themselves to the defence and consolidation of their possessions and privileges. As far as his family was concerned, he was on his own. Finally, by 1603 he was Albert's man through and through, and given the ongoing struggle between the courts of Madrid and Brussels for control of the Southern Netherlands and the Army of Flanders, caused by Philip III's attempts to reverse the Act of Cession, going to Spain to present his *servicios* to a king he had never met was not an option at that stage.⁴⁸

From 1603 to 1613 Don Alfonso continued to serve as an *entretenido* of Albert and as a member of his Council of War, drawing two hundred *escudos* a month from the treasury of the Army of Flanders. To a modern observer this may seem a significant step backwards, as it was the same position that Don Alfonso had been offered – and refused – in 1597. And yet Don Alfonso considered his status honourable (and advantageous) enough to refuse outright the rank of Lieutenant-General of the cavalry of the Army of Flanders offered to him by Albert after the death of Teodoro Trivulzio at Mülheim (9 October 1605).⁴⁹ Much of the explanation lies in the complex relationship between the court of Brussels and the Army of Flanders, and in the role played by the *maestre de campo* of a *tercio* beyond the strictly military. While that of the *entretenidos* was a well-established category that was present at all levels of the Spanish military hierarchy, the *capitanes entretenidos cerca la persona* of Albert constituted a unique feature of the archducal court – in that they had become one of the *estados* (branches) in which the court itself was structured. And in 1603, Don Alfonso was able to exploit the proximity (and access) to the archduke(s) that his position as *entretenido* afforded

48 Gennaro PASCARELLA, «I d'Avalos di Montesarchio: rifondazione ed ascesa di una dinastia (prima parte)», in *Rivista storica del Sannio*, Vol. 9 (2002), pp. 96-108; Angelantonio SPAGNOLETTI, «Gli Avalos nel sistema imperiale spagnolo», in M. MAFRICI and M. R. PELIZZARI (cur.), *Tra res e imago. In memoria di Augusto Placanica*, vol. II, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2007, pp. 931-942.

49 Register entry (23 May 1606), AGRB, SÉG, 23, c. 294r; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (26 November 1605), ASMn, AG, 575, cc. nn.; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (13 November 1605), *ivi*, cc. nn.

him to a much greater extent than six years earlier.⁵⁰

A *maestre de campo* was a royal commissioned officer at the head of a unit raised by the King of Spain himself. As such, he could not arbitrarily hire and fire officers in his unit, as was the case in privately-owned regiments, nor could he administer justice. Ultimately, this power rested in the hands of the king and his appointed representative – in the case of the Army of Flanders, Archduke Albert. A *maestre de campo*'s ability to obtain and retain his command, as well as negotiate and determine his unit's appointments – not to mention its continued existence – depended on the level of his military and political credentials and connections. But while royal control may have limited the authority of a *maestre de campo* in many respects, it also provided a stable administrative framework within which the careers and aspirations of the soldiery and officer corps could continue to play out, even as the *tercios* were reformed into each other in an increasingly complex game of Chinese boxes (Figure 4), with only those officers with the best military credentials and/or the strongest political connections retaining their commands. The units that emerged from this process of fierce political and military competition not only developed a strong esprit de corps but also acquired sufficient political and social weight to be considered in the negotiations between the courts of Madrid and Brussels regarding the Army of Flanders.⁵¹

As the *maestre de campo* of the senior (and, between 1598 and 1601, only) Italian *tercio* serving in the Netherlands, and thanks to Albert's favour, Don Alfonso came to enjoy considerable influence and authority within the Italian *natione* of the Army of Flanders. He established himself as the main guarantor of an already a complex and powerful social and military network of interests and patronage dating back to the arrival of the first Italian *tercios* in the Netherlands in 1582. A degree of control over the Italian *natione*, in turn, provided the archduke with valuable leverage in his dealings with the dominant (and domineering) Spanish *nación*. Moreover, although the title of reformed *maestre de campo* which Don Alfonso continued to use alongside his name long after he had resigned his rank was meant to be an honorific, in the context of the Army of Flanders it carried considerable practical weight.

50 Werner THOMAS, «The 'Spanish Faction' at the court of the archdukes Albert and Isabella», in R. Vermeir, D. Raeymaekers and J. E. Hortal Muñoz (cur.), *A Constellation of Courts: The Courts and Households of Habsburg Europe, 1555-1665*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2014, pp. 202, 208-209.

51 ARFAIOLI, «Bastion», cit., pp. 40-41.

By 1603 Don Alfonso had fought alongside, led, or trained most of the Italian infantry and cavalry officers of the Army of Flanders, and the *tercio* he had founded still stood. Although he formally ceased to hold an active command after this date, his prestige and effective authority over his old unit, and within the Italian military *natione* at large, would remain considerable for years to come. Given its informal nature, this authority would manifest itself in indirect actions at an unofficial level, which makes it difficult to track and to assess. Still, prominent members of the Italian officer corps, such as the future Imperial Field Marshal Vincenzo Carafa (1572-1631) who in 1606 asked Don Alfonso to attest his participation in the disastrous attack on Ostend on 7 January 1602, petitioned him to certify in writing the services they had rendered in the Army of Flanders. And again in 1606, when Count Francesco Bevilacqua disfigured Count Azzone Ubertini during a fight in Brussels, the Army's Auditor General deferred to Don Alfonso's judgement on the most appropriate course of action in such a high-profile case. At the other end of the spectrum, in May 1604, the mutineers of Roermond, who included a contingent of Italian soldiers, asked for him both as a hostage and as an intermediary in their negotiations with Albert. Don Alfonso was instrumental in persuading the mutineers to leave Roermond for Diest, and it was he who handed over the keys of the city on behalf of the archduke (May 1605).⁵²

In addition to his considerable military expertise, reputation, and access to a vast network of military patronage, Don Alfonso offered Albert and Isabel access to a wide range of international contacts. He enjoyed excellent relations with his late brother's cousin, the Duke of Mantua Vincenzo I Gonzaga, who would be the only Italian sovereign prince ever to visit the archducal court, attending the archdukes' triumphal entry into Brussels (5 September 1599). On 19 September 1599, in honour of Vincenzo I, a tournament was even held in the Great Hall of the Palace of Coudenberg, during which Albert fought against the duke, while Don Alfonso, who was diplomatically "playing" for the visiting Mantuan team for the occasion, faced off against the Spanish castellan of Ghent, Don Augustín de Herrera. Although Vincenzo I's hopes of replacing Alessandro Farnese as the new captain-general of the Army of Flanders (the main reason behind his presence) were soon dashed, the duke's visit was a particularly welcome one, coming

52 FILAMONDO, *Il genio*, cit., p. XIII; Geminiano Ronchi to Cesare d'Este (20 and 26 May 1606), Archivio di Stato, Modena, Cancelleria Ducale, Ambasciatori Germania, 72, cc. nn.; CROÏ, *Memoires*, cit., pp. 139, 147, 151, 163-1644, 167, 170, 175-176.

as it did at a time when any kind of international recognition of the archducal couple's sovereignty over the Netherlands was especially valuable. Over the years Don Alfonso kept Vincenzo I abreast on the events in the Netherlands, while promoting the careers of the Mantuan soldiers who came to serve the archdukes.⁵³

Of particular interest to Albert, who, as Cardinal-Archduke, had also been administrator of the Priory of Portugal, was Don Alfonso's connection with the Order of Malta. Although he had hardly followed the proper curriculum for a knight of St John, Don Alfonso was the highest ranking 'resident' Italian member of the Religion in the Army of Flanders, which over the decades had become a popular destination for ambitious knights who, having served in the Order's galleys, were looking for a way to further their careers outside the traditional Mediterranean military arena. Many officers, *aventajados* and *entretenidos* of Don Alfonso's *tercio* were knights of Malta, and he ensured that his successor as *maestre de campo* was *fra'* Ludovico Melzi. Off the battlefield, Don Alfonso kept an eye on the interests and privileges of the Religion in the Netherlands, ensuring a steady flow of *avvisi* (news) to the Grand Master and sometimes acting as his intermediary with the archdukes. More often, however, he dealt with the exequies of Italian knights who had died in Netherlands, ensuring that their possessions were sold, and the proceeds remitted to the Order, as required by its Statutes.⁵⁴

Ironically, Don Alfonso left even less evidence of the role he played in the history of the Netherlands in his official capacity as a member of the archducal Council of War because, unlike the Council of State, the former did not keep minutes of its meetings and therefore its impact on the decision-making process in Brussels cannot be effectively measured. However, the state ruled by the archdukes existed and would continue to exist in a semi-permanent state of war, and its development was fundamentally shaped by the presence of the Army of Flanders. The distinction between the duties and spheres of influence of the two advisory bodies was therefore blurred, and the matters dealt with by soldiers of

53 DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., 109, 112; «Relacion de la llegada del archiduque Alberto y su esposa á los Estados de Flandes, y torneo con que se les obsequió el duque de Mantua, en el mes de setiembre de 1599», in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, vol. 42, Madrid, año 1863, pp. 234-242.

54 Alof de Wignacourt to Alfonso d'Avalos (30 December 1605), Archives of the Order of Malta (hereafter AOM), 384, c. 416r; Alof de Wignacourt to Alfonso d'Avalos (14 February 1609), AOM, 1388, c. 70r; Alof de Wignacourt to Alfonso d'Avalos (12 September 1610), AOM, 1389, c. 294r.

the calibre of Don Alfonso d’Avalos during the meetings of the Council of War likely were not limited to the military sphere.⁵⁵

As late as May 1613, on the eve of Don Alfonso’s final departure from the Netherlands, Gianguualberto Paoli, the agent of the Prince of Palestrina Francesco Colonna at the archducal court, pointed out that he was «most favoured by these Highnesses». Over the years, Albert and Isabel’s favour had taken the form of salary increases, protection for himself and his unit from the recurring *reformas* of the Army of Flanders and help in collecting the pension that Don Alfonso had been granted in the Kingdom of Naples as compensation for losing the command of his brother’s company of men-at-arms to his cousin Iñigo. At one point Albert even asked Philip III to grant Don Alfonso a title (though, importantly, not a fief) of prince in the Kingdom of Naples, not so that he could bear it himself (as a knight of Malta he was forbidden to do so), but so that he could sell it and thus restore his shaky finances.⁵⁶

Paoli noted that Don Alfonso was also «most favoured» by Ambrogio Spinola and that between the two there existed «an excellent friendship and a very great love».⁵⁷ Don Alfonso had retired from active service after Spinola’s arrival in the Netherlands, but before the latter began his takeover of the Army of Flanders. Unlike most of the members of the Army’s Italian old guard, Don Alfonso had therefore avoided direct conflict with him. By 1612, Don Alfonso had long been integrated into what is now commonly referred to as the “peace” faction of the archdukes’ court, supported by Albert and championed by Spinola. In addition to their shared personal bond with the archdukes, Don Alfonso’s rapprochement with Spinola was probably facilitated by the fact that both men had a deep per-

55 DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., p. 147. A partial list of the members of the Council of War has only recently been reconstructed: Harald DECEULAER, *Archiefsporen van een vergeten instelling: de Raad van Oorlog en zijn leden ca. 1567-1718. Een institutionele en prosopografische studie*, Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2024.

56 Gianguualberto Paoli to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (20 April 1613), ASFi, DU-I, 199, c. 657v; Albert of Austria to Juan Alonso Pimentel (20 July 1610), AGRB, SÉG, 466, cc. nn.; report of the Council of State (18 May 1600), AGS, Estado, 2763, cc. nn.; Albert of Austria to Philip III (30 September 1613), AGRB, SÉG, 177, c. 149rv. On the purchase and sale of titles in the Kingdom of Naples: Angelantonio SPAGNOLETTI, *Principi italiani e Spagna nell’età barocca*, Milan, Mondadori, 1996, pp. 154-178.

57 «per essere favoritissimo da queste altezze e dallo Spinola in particolare, passando fra essi ottima amicitia, et amor grandissimo», Gianguualberto Paoli to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (20 April 1613), ASFi, DU-I, 199, c. 657r.

sonal and professional rivalry with Don Luis de Velasco, one of the leaders of the “pro-war” court faction. Velasco’s promotion to captain-general of the light cavalry in 1604 was, in fact, one of the reasons why Don Alfonso refused to accept the rank of lieutenant-general of the cavalry, refusing to serve directly under someone who was an «an impertinent man and no friend of Italians».⁵⁸

By 1612, however, despite the continued favour of Spinola and of the archdukes, the signing of the Twelve Years’ Truce (1609) had begun to affect Don Alfonso’s standing and fortunes. His interests may have long been aligned with those of the “peace party”, but he was a soldier, and one whose entire life and career had been inextricably linked with the Army – and the War – of Flanders. His old *tercio* still stood and would continue to stand, but the success of the Truce meant that the Council of War would no longer meet, and that the Army of Flanders would gradually be put on a peacetime footing to save money, radically reducing its numbers – along with Don Alfonso’s influence and opportunities. This was only partially compensated by his appointment to the ranks of Albert’s *gentilhombres de boca*, which finally made of him a full-fledged courtier.⁵⁹ Worse still (from his point of view), there were good reasons to believe that a more stable peace agreement could be reached between Southern and Northern Provinces.

By July 1612, having gathered all the financial and political capital at his disposal, Don Alfonso was ready to embark on a momentous (at least for his career) journey to Spain and the royal court, although on Albert’s advice he agreed to wait until September to travel with Rodrigo Calderón, the secretary to the king’s powerful *valido*, the Duke of Lerma, to curry his favour on the way to Madrid. As it happened, Don Alfonso was instead to travel to the Imperial Court as part of the delegation, led by Don Ambrogio, that the archduke sent to Vienna in August 1612 to congratulate the newly crowned emperor, his brother Matthias. But even then, Don Alfonso went to Vienna carrying letters of recommendation from the new Duke of Mantua, Francesco IV Gonzaga, to help him find employment in Germany or Hungary in the service of the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs.

58 «homo impertinente, et poco amico de italiani» Don Alfonso d’Avalos to Vincenzo I Gonzaga (26 November 1605), ASMn, AG, 575, cc. nn.; Dries RAEYMAEKERS «“The Great Alcandre”: Ambrogio Spinola at Court», in S. Mostaccio, B. J. García García, and L. Lo Basso (cur.), *Ambrogio Spinola between Genoa, Flanders, and Spain*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2022, pp. 131-156, 149-155; ARFAIOLI, «Bastion», cit., pp. 37-39; DUERLOO, *Dynasty*, cit., pp. 86-89; THOMAS, «The “Spanish Faction”», cit., pp. 212-221.

59 Ivi, p. 211n197.

However, Spinola and his retinue, including Don Alfonso, were soon back in Brussels, with the latter having made no progress in his search for employment.⁶⁰

As time went on, the process of downsizing the Army of Flanders reached new heights with the arrival, in 1613, of a series of royal orders designed to break the connection between the court of Brussels and the Army of Flanders – one of Albert's main political assets – by making it impossible for anyone to draw money from both the archduke and the king. Philip III made an explicit exception in the case of Don Alfonso, allowing him to continue to enjoy his *entretenimiento* while remaining Albert's *gentilhombre de boca*, as a reward for his long service. Furthermore, the king made him a member of the Privy Council of the Duchy of Milan – a title which, while prestigious, carried no stipend and which Don Alfonso described as «sizzle without steak» as he reluctantly accepted it.⁶¹

Lombardy beckoned, however, and at the end of November 1613 Don Alfonso left Brussels on the king's orders and travelled to Milan to be sworn in as a member of the Privy Council, while events were unfolding in Italy that would determine his next posting. The death of the Duke of Mantua, Francesco IV Gonzaga (22 December 1612), with only a female heir, Maria, had left the sovereignty of the Marquisate of Montferrat (which could be inherited through the female line) in a dangerously ambiguous situation, which the girl's uncle, Duke Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy, was determined to exploit by force of arms, although this placed him in a direct conflict with the Gonzagas' main ally, Spain. The situation called for the appointment of a governor general of the Montferrat with strong military credentials and the confidence of both the new Duke of Mantua, Ferdinando Gonzaga, and the king of Spain. Don Alfonso met all these requirements and was officially appointed on 14 February 1614.⁶²

60 «Lista de cavalieri che vanno in Alemagna» (18 August 1612), ASFi, DU-I, 199, c. 642r; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Giovanni Antonio Varese (2 July 1612), ASMn, AG, 1885, cc. nn.; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco IV Gonzaga (16 August 1612), ASMn, AG, 576, cc. nn.

61 Register entry (5 May 1612), AGRB, SÉG, 25, cc. 199v-200r; «fumo senza rosto», Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Francesco IV Gonzaga (9 February 1612), ASMn, AG, 576, cc. nn.

62 Ferdinando Gonzaga to Juan de Mendoza (25 December 1613), AGS, Estado, 1904/27; Pierpaolo MERLIN, «Il Monferrato. Un territorio strategico per gli equilibri europei del Seicento», in P. Merlin and F. Ieva (cur.), *Monferrato 1613. La vigilia di una crisi europea*, Rome, Viella, 2016, pp. 15-29.

«*Good fortune excepted*»: *Casale Monferrato, the End, and the Oblivion*.⁶³

Since they are beyond the scope of this article, Don Alfonso's three years as Governor General (February 1614-March 1617) and his active participation in the War of the Montferrat Succession (1613-1617) will be discussed here only insofar as they are relevant to his relationship with the history of the Netherlands. Suffice it to say that although his tenure was technically (i.e., militarily) successful, Don Alfonso found it impossible to perform the delicate balancing act between Mantua, Milan and Madrid that was expected of him. In the end, he would leave Casale in disgrace with Duke Ferdinando (whom he formally accused of plotting his murder) and after alienating the Governor of Milan, the Marquis of Hinojosa Juan de Mendoza (whom he recommended be replaced with Ambrogio Spinola), thus becoming a problem, rather than an asset, for Madrid.⁶⁴

In fact, although Don Alfonso was initially happy to accept a post that would allow him to hold the baton of general, his intention from the start had been to serve in the Montferrat for a short period before returning to the Netherlands. In September 1614, he was still spending considerable sums to keep his residence in Brussels open, and after spending six months in Casale he regularly petitioned the duke of Mantua, the governor of Milan and King Philip III himself for permission to leave Italy and resume his «old servitude of Flanders». His talents, Don Alfonso argued, would be better used in the Netherlands, especially after Albert's health had taken a turn for the worse. The archduke himself, he affirmed, requested his presence in Brussels.⁶⁵

After serving at the siege of Vercelli (24 May-26 July 1617), which ended the War of the Montferrat Succession, Don Alfonso began preparations for his long-delayed journey to Spain, leaving Italy in February 1618. He arrived in Madrid in March asking for «a salary commensurate with my services and my birth, so that I may return to Flanders to continue my old servitude». What he returned to Italy with, in October, was an *entretenimiento* of two hundred *escudos* in the

63 «dalla fortuna in fuori», CANONIERI, *Delle Cause*, «Introduction», cit., cc.nn.

64 Notarized depositions (23 November 1617), AGS, Estado, 1920/83; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Antonio de Ariostegui (4 December 1616), AGS, Estado, 1911/148.

65 Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Ferdinando Gonzaga (29 September 1614), ASMn, AG, 1885, cc. nn.; Don Alfonso d'Avalos to Antonio de Ariostegui (16 July 1616), AGS, Estado, 1911/146.

Duchy of Milan, an *ayuda da costa* of six thousand *escudos* and the customary promise that his arrears (which he estimated at nine thousand *escudos*) would eventually be paid in full – again in Milan. On these terms he could barely afford to fade into the background in Italy, let alone return to prominence to the Netherlands. With his career essentially over, Don Alfonso would never return to Brussels.⁶⁶

The fading part was not to last long, for Don Alfonso’s health had already begun to fail before he left for Spain. He had never fully recovered from the wounds he received at the battle of Nieuwpoort – particularly those to his legs – and by the time he returned to Italy in 1613, he could only travel long distances in a carriage. Politically marginalised and increasingly afflicted by what was probably an acute form of arthritis, Don Alfonso gradually retired to his Commandery at Inverno, where he died on 5 March 1620.⁶⁷

Don Alfonso never wrote memoirs describing his life and career in the Netherlands. However, we can get a glimpse of how he wished to be seen and remembered thanks to the pen of Pietro Andrea Canonieri, one of the small but dynamic colony of Italian scholars who had deliberately chosen the Southern Netherlands as their residence, and who in 1612 dedicated his *Delle cause dell’infelicità e disgrazie degli huomini letterati e guerrieri* to Don Alfonso. As was customary, Canonieri sang the praises of his dedicatee/patron in the introduction to the book, but he also presented Don Alfonso as the culmination of a list of Italian heroes of the Army of Flanders in the section devoted to the causes of the unhappiness and mishaps of the *guerrieri* – the warriors.⁶⁸

In arguing about the case of Don Alfonso, Canonieri argued that Don Alfon-

66 «un soldo conforme a’ miei servitii et nascimento, acciò me ne possa tornar in Fiandra a continuar la mia servitù vecchia», Don Alfonso d’Avalos to Antonio de Ariostegui (4 December 1616), AGS, Estado, 1911/148; Bernardo Maschi to Francesco Maria II della Rovere (16 September 1618), ASFi, DU-I, 188, c. 570v.

67 Don Alfonso d’Avalos to Giovanni Antonio Varese (23 January 1614), ASMn, AG, 1885, cc. nn.; Don Alfonso d’Avalos to Giovanni Antonio Varese (17 July 1619), *ivi*, cc. nn.; Clemente FIAMMENI, *Castelleonea*, Cremona, per Pierfrancesco Bortolotti, 1649, p. 173.

68 «To the most illustrious signor Don Alfonso d’Avalos, my most reverend master», CANONIERI, *Delle cause*, *cit.*, dedication (not numbered) and pp. 326-333. On Canonieri and the Netherlands: Silvana D’ALESSIO, *Per un principe “medico publico”. Il percorso di Pietro Andrea Canoniero*, Florence, Centro Editoriale Toscano, 2013, pp. 23-73, and Giovanni Carlo GAMBINO, «Pietro Andrea Canoniero: frammenti sulle Fiandre Spagnole», in *Bulletin de l’Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, Vol. 48-49 (1978-1979), pp. 261-272.

so had indeed inherited all the virtues of his illustrious ancestors «good fortune excepted». However, he had countered, nay, mortified *fortuna* «with an obstinate greatness of spirit»⁶⁹ and if, in the end, Don Alfonso had not received the promotions and rewards that his merits and exploits had earned him, that had happened only because

he put aside everything, however great and important it might have been, so as not to let the Italian nation be wronged, and it is perhaps for this reason that he has not attained the ranks of which, in all other respects, he is most deserving of [...] so that it may be said freely and truthfully, and to the shame of no matter who hears the name of Don Alfonso d'Avalos, that he was the only true defender of the Italian nation in the long and ferocious wars of Flanders. And all the soldiers confess that this was the most remarkable achievement of the war, and they regard it as the crown of all glories.⁷⁰

It was, however, a crown of rather ephemeral laurels. Some of what Canonieri wrote turned out to be true: Don Alfonso had overseen the establishment of the main line of Italian troops in the Netherlands – something that was indeed beyond the reach of the «unbridled will of mad, fickle fortune». From 1614 to 1620, the unit he had raised in Milan would again be the only Italian *tercio* of the Army of Flanders, and in time it would become the longest-lived Italian infantry unit serving in the Netherlands, being finally reformed only in 1682. On the other hand, establishing himself as the protector/champion of a group that though permanent, was characterized by a multi-faceted, changeable identity, would not be enough to ensure that his name remained, as expected by Canonieri, «glorious in all future centuries».⁷¹

Over the seventeenth century, Don Alfonso was regularly (albeit passingly) featured in many of the printed narratives of the conflict in the Netherlands and those the War of the Montferrat Succession. He would even get for once the exclusive (so to speak) of his name in Famiano Strada's *De bello Belgico*, as the

69 «con un'ostinata grandezza d'animo», CANONIERI, *Delle cause*, cit., «Dedication», pp. nn.

70 «ha posto in un cale ogni cosa per grande, et importante ch'ella si fusse, per non lasciar far torto alla nazione italiana, e quindi forse è proceduto che non ha conseguiti quei gradi, che per tutti gli altri rispetti n'è meritevolissimo [...] potendosi con libera verità dire, e con rossore di chi si sia, che senta il nome di Don Alfonso d'Avalos nomare, esser egli stato solo, e vero difensore della nazione italiana nelle lunghe et atroci guerre della Fiandra. E tutti i soldati confessano questa esser stata la più notabil azzione, che sia nella guerra successa, e la stimano la corona di tutte le glorie», Ivi, pp. 331-332.

71 «glorioso in tutti i secoli a venire», Ivi, 332; ARFAIOLI, «Bastion», cit., Figure 2, pp. 40-48.

Jesuit historian mistakenly referred to Alfonso Felice using the name of their father.⁷² By the end of the century, however, the memory of his life and deeds was so weak that his first (and only) biographer, Raffaele Filamondo, writing in 1697, accepted the date and circumstances of his death as established since 1662 by the Venetian historian Giovan Battista Nani, who, due to another case of partial homonymy (this time with Don Alfonso Pimentel de Herrera), had Don Alfonso die in 1617, three years before his time, struck down by a cannonball during the siege of Vercelli.⁷³

But then again, Filamondo included Don Alfonso's profile in *Il genio* because he had to find a way to honour one of his powerful dedicatees, the Marquis of Pescara Don Cesare Michelangelo d'Avalos (1667-1729), in a book that celebrated the memory of «some renowned Neapolitan captains who served God, King, and Country in the current century». And unfortunately, the only d'Avalos of the Vasto and Pescara line whose exploits deserved to be mentioned in the military annals of the «current century» (the seventeenth) was not only a nearly-forgotten *bastardo*, but one who had spent his life far from Naples.

By the time Don Alfonso was called back into service as a character in the Neapolitan military epic, however, there was very little of his memory left for Filamondo to work with beyond what had been published. The author of *Il genio* therefore combed through all the available printed sources and then proceeded to fill in the gaps via the massive use of inference (for example, it was assumed that Don Alfonso had served with distinction on the galleys of Malta), transcriptions from the odd archival source, bits of genuine Neapolitan military lore, and, finally, the use of entertaining and edifying narrative devices and *topoi*, such as the stirring speech that Don Alfonso is credited to have delivered to his soldiers at the critical moment of the battle of Nieuwpoort. At the same time, Filamondo still found it expedient to gloss over the issue of Don Alfonso's illegitimate birth, going so far as to omit any mention of his lineage, even on his father's side. Moreover, ironically unaware of Canonieri's work, Filamondo began Don Alfonso's biography by stating that he had been blessed by *Fortuna* (the one with a

72 STRADA, *deca seconda*, cit.: ad indicem as «Ferdinando d'Avalo». Since Strada based his influential work largely on pro-Farnese sources, it remains to be seen to what extent his was a mistake and not the final, posthumous parting shot in the bitter feud between Alfonso Felice d'Avalos and Ranuccio Farnese.

73 FILAMONDO, *Il genio*, cit., p. XVI; Giovan Battista NANI, *Historia della repubblica veneta*, Venice, per Combi e la Noù, 1662, p. 153.

capital F) at birth and then brutally torn from her embrace by a cruel fate. Adding insult to injury, Don Alfonso's profile was included in Filamondo's work so late that it had to be added on top of the already printed and paginated first volume in an extra folio numbered in Roman numerals.⁷⁴

Ironically, Don Alfonso has been better served by Dutch historiography, as he was involved in some of the first clear victories achieved by the forces of the United Provinces over the Army of Flanders. As a result, Dutch historians of the period did the most to preserve his memory for propaganda purposes, correctly identifying him and preserving details such as the fact that the standard he lost at Nijmegen in 1591 had, in typical Hospitaller fashion, St John the Baptist and the Lamb embroidered on it. The Dutch also took careful note of the identities, units, etc. of the prisoners taken at Nieuwpoort, including those from Don Alfonso's *tercio*, and the list was reprinted several times over the decades, while «Don Avalos» appeared as a character in a play performed in Amsterdam in 1634. In 1836, more than two centuries after they were marched into Ostend after the battle of Nieuwpoort, the captured officers of Don Alfonso's unit were paraded through the streets of Utrecht as part of a patriotic re-enactment during the celebrations for the two hundred years of the local university.⁷⁵

The rise of the European nation-states and nationalism in the nineteenth century gradually shattered the narrative unity of the world of which Don Alfonso was an expression, stranding the remnants of his memory in the historiographical no-man's-land between Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands. And once lost, the legacy of Don Alfonso – and that of many others like him – would then remain lost because of the long-term consequences of the virtual identification between the very memory of Italian involvement in the defence of the Spanish Netherlands and the figures of Alessandro Farnese and Ambrogio Spinola. Although for different (and sometimes opposite) reasons, Farnese and Spino-

74 FILAMONDO, *Il genio*, cit., pp. IX-XVI.

75 VAN METEREN, *Histoire*, cit., c. 334v; Henrik VAN HAESTENS, *La Nouvelle Troye, ou mémorable Histoire du Siège d'Ostende*, Leiden, Chez Loys Elzevier, 1615, pp. 23-53; Isaac COMMELIN, *Wilhelm En Maurits van Nassau, Princen van Orangien, Haer Leven en Bedrijf, Of 't Begin en Voortgang der Nederlandsche Oorlogen*, Amsterdam, 1651, 200-09; Hubertus MEEUS, *Repertorium van het ernstige drama in de Nederlanden 1600-1650*, Leuven, Acco, 1983, p. 86; Laurent Philippe Charles VAN DEN BERGH, *Gedenkboek Van Het Tweede Eeuwfeest Der Utrechtsche Hoogeschool*, Utrecht, J. Altheer, 1837, pp. 272-273; Isaäc DA COSTA, *Da Costa's komplette dichtwerken. Derde deel*, Haarlem, A. C. Kruseman, 1863, p. 421.



Fig. 7 – Victor Adam, *Historical Parade for the Second Centenary of the University of Utrecht in 1836* (plate 4) (detail), 1837 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). This group, quoted in the text as made up of «captured Spanish and Italian Officers», included officers from Don Alfonso’s *tercio*.

la remained an integral part of the new European national historiographies that emerged from the ideological crucible of the nineteenth century, which swept under the historiographical carpet most other narratives related to the massive military and political investments made by the pro-Spanish elites (and, to an extent, the general population) of the Italian peninsula in support of the military effort in the Low Countries. Indeed, until recently the combined and cumulative historiographical “pull” of the scholarship surrounding the figures of Farnese and Spinola has shaped perceptions of Italian involvement in the Eighty Years’ War, thus making both men appear as the cause rather than the effect of the whole phenomenon. This, in turn, perpetuated the impression that nothing of real agency had existed in the middle space between the two great generals and the tens of thousands of Italian soldiers who, as the saying went, «passed to Flanders» over the course of a century and a half. And Don Alfonso was not just in the middle: in many respects, he *was* the middle.

As a champion of Albert and Isabel’s “Imagined Kingdom”, which never came to be, and as a leading advocate of a military community whose epic simply failed to found a role in modern European historiography, Don Alfonso is an

extreme example of the type of the intermediate and intermediary figures who populated, navigated and exploited the interstitial power spaces that crossed the multinational and polycentric empire of the *Austrias*, and whose rediscovery is key to reassessing imperial Spain's European legacy as an organic whole rather than the sum of a series of distinct national historiographical viewpoints.⁷⁶

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Gastone Basile, Giuseppe Bertini, the late Luigi Borgia, Manuel Buttigieg, Matthias Ebejer, Fernando González de León, Daniel Gullo, Lisa Kaborycha, Wouter Kreuze, Flavia Luise, Luca Maggiore, Geoffrey Parker, Blythe Alice Raviola, André Rocco, Juan Luis Sánchez Martín and Lorenzo Vigotti for their valuable advice and support.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archives générales du Royaume, Brussels

- Secrétairerie d'État et de Guerre, 9, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25, 117, 466

Archives of the Order of Malta, 384, 1388, 1389

Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Rome

- Fondo Segreteria di Stato, Malta, 1

Archivio di Stato, Florence

- Ducato di Urbino, prima serie, 186, 188, 195, 198, 199, 202, 204, 241
- Mediceo del Principato, 3083, 3255, 4254

Archivio di Stato, Mantua

- Archivio Gonzaga, 574, 575, 576, 1885

Archivio di Stato, Modena

- Cancelleria Ducale, Ambasciatori Germania, 72

Archivo General de Simancas

- Estado, 1904/27, 1911/146, 1911/148, 1920/83, 2763

PRINTED SOURCES

76 AA.VV., *El Arte en la Corte de los Archiduques Alberto de Austria e Isabel Clara Eugenia (1598-1633): un Reino Imaginado*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1999; Piero DEL NEGRO, «La storia militare dell'Italia moderna nello specchio della storiografia del Novecento», in *Cheiron*, vol. 23 (1995), pp. 11-33.

- ANONYMOUS, «Relacion de la llegada del archiduque Alberto y su esposa á los Estados de Flandes, y torneo con que se les obsequió el duque de Mantua, en el mes de setiembre de 1599», in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, vol. 42, Madrid, año 1863, pp. 234-242.
- ARENA, Salvatore, *Il castello di Inverno. Le commende magistrali di Inverno e di S. Maria del Borghetto*, Milan, Gijes, 1982.
- ARFAIOLI, Maurizio, «Bastion of Empire: The Italian *terzo vecchio* of the Army of Flanders (1597-1682)», *The Journal of Military History*, 85 (2021), pp. 27-50.
- ARFAIOLI, Maurizio, «Giovann Battista Marino e gli 'Alfonsi' d'Avalos», *Studi Secenteschi*, Vol. 52 (2011), pp. 405-411.
- BAZZANO, Nicoletta, «Dávalos de Aquino y de Aragona, Francisco Fernando de», *Diccionario Biográfico Español de la Real Academia de la Historia*, Vol. 45, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 2010, pp. 605-609.
- BELLOSO MARTÍN, Carlos, «Conflictos de poder entre el centro y la periferia de la monarquía: el establecimiento de la caballería ligera en Sicilia en el siglo XVI», in R. Cancila (cur.), *Mediterraneo in armi (secc. XV-XVIII)*, vol. I, Palermo, Associazione no profit Mediterranea, 2007, pp. 315-371.
- BENTIVOGLIO, Guido, *Historia della guerra di Fiandra II*, Venice, Appresso Pietr' Antonio Milochio, 1668.
- BERNINI, Rita, «La collezione d'Avalos in un documento inedito del 1571», *Storia dell'Arte*, 88 (1996), pp. 384-445.
- BERTINI, Giuseppe, «Carriere di militari italiani nell'esercito di Alessandro Farnese nei Paesi Bassi: merito o privilegio?», in G. Bertini (cur.), *Militari italiani dell'esercito di Alessandro Farnese nelle Fiandre*, Fidenza, Mattioli 1885, 2013, pp. 171-203.
- BONELLO, Giovanni, «Music for the Knights of Malta», in *Histories of Malta*, vol. I, Malta, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2000, pp. 107-118.
- BOSIO, Giacomo, *Gli statuti della sacra Religione di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, Rome, appresso Giacomo Tornieri, 1589.
- BRUSLÉ DE MONTPLEINCHAMP, Jean-Chrysostôme, *L'histoire de l'archiduc Albert*, Brussels, Société de l'histoire de Belgique, 1870.
- CANONIERI, Pietro Andrea, *Delle cause dell'infelicità e disgrazie degli huomini letterati e guerrieri*, Antwerp, appresso Gioachino Trogniesio, 1612.
- CANOSA, Romano, *I segreti dei Farnese*, Rome, Sapere 2000, 2001.
- COLOMA, Carlos, *Las Guerras de los Estados Bajos*, Madrid, Ministerio de la Defensa, 2010.
- COMMELIN, Isaac, *Wilhelm En Maurits van Nassau, Princen van Orangien, Haer Leven en Bedrijf, Of 't Begin en Voortgang der Nederlandsche Oorlogen*, Amsterdam, 1651.
- COSTO, Tommaso, *Lettere di Tomaso Costo*, Naples, appresso Costantino Vitale, 1604.
- CROY, Charles Alexandre de, *Memoires guerriers de ce qu'y c'est passé aux Pays Bas depuis le commencement de l'an 1600 iusques à la fin de l'année 1606*, Antwerp,

- Hieronymus Verdussen, 1642.
- CRUZADA VILLAAMIL, Gregorio, «Guerras de Flandes. Asedio de Calais, Ardres y Hulst en 1596 por el cardenal arzobispo de Toledo archiduque Alberto», *Revista Hispano Americana*, 8 (1882), pp. 62-82.
- D'ALESSIO, Silvana, *Per un principe "medico pubblico". Il percorso di Pietro Andrea Canoniero*, Florence, Centro Editoriale Toscano, 2013.
- DA COSTA, Isaïc, *Da Costa's komplette dichtwerken. Derde deel*, Haarlem, A. C. Kruseman, 1863.
- DAL POZZO, Bartolomeo, *Ruolo generale de' cavalieri gerosolimitani della veneranda lingua d'Italia*, Messina, Nella stamperia camerale di Vincenzo d'Amico, 1689.
- DATTERO, Alessandra, «Melzi, Ludovico», *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 73, anno 2009, pp. 398-400.
- DE THOU, Jacques-Auguste, *Histoire universelle depuis 1543 jusqu'en 1607*, vol. XI, London, 1734.
- DECEULAER, Harald, *Archiefsporen van een vergeten instelling: de Raad van Oorlog en zijn leden ca. 1567-1718. Een institutionele en prosopografische studie*, Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2024.
- DEL NEGRO, Piero, «La storia militare dell'Italia moderna nello specchio della storiografia del Novecento», *Cheiron*, 23 (1995), pp. 11-33.
- DERKS, Sebastiaan, «Le ricompense della guerra: giustificazione e rappresentazione di Alessandro Farnese nel Liber relationum di Paolo Rinaldi», in G. Bertini (cur.), *Militari italiani dell'esercito di Alessandro Farnese nelle Fiandre*, Fidenza, Mattioli 1885, 2013, pp. 205-230.
- DUERLOO, Luc, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598-1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012.
- DUYCK, Anthonie, *Journal Van Anthonis Duyck, Advokaat-Fiskaal Van Den Raad Van State: 1591-1602*, vol. I, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1862.
- ESTEBAN ESTRÍNGANA, Alicia, «Cabos de guerra: satisfacción de la oficialidad y eficacia bélica en el ejército de Flandes entre los siglos XVI y XVII», in J. F. P. Molero and M. L. Cortés (dir.), *Los oficiales reales: los servidores del rey en la Monarquía Hispánica (siglos XVI-XVII)*, Valencia, Universitat de Valencia, 2012, pp. 265-293.
- FIAMMENI, Clemente, *Castelleonea*, Cremona, per Pierfrancesco Bortolotti, 1649.
- FILAMONDO, Raffaele Maria, *Il genio bellicoso di Napoli: memorie istoriche d'alcuni capitani celebri napolitani, c'han militato per la fede, per lo Re, per la patria nel secolo corrente*, vol. I, Naples, per Domenico Antonio Parrino, 1697.
- FONTANA, Cesare, *Delle Historie del Mondo*, vol. II, Venice, appresso Francesco de' Franceschi, 1609.
- FRETTONI, Marina, «Della Rovere, Lavinia Feltria», *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 37, Rome, anno 1989, pp. 358-360.
- GACHARD, Louis Prosper, *Don Carlos et Philippe II*, vol. I, Brussels, Emmanuel Devroye,

1863.

GALLUCCI, Angelo, *Historia della Guerra di Fiandra dall'anno MDXCIII sin alla Tregua di Anni XII conchiusa l'anno MDCIX*, vol. II, Rome, Ignatio de' Lazari, 1674.

GAMBINO, Giovanni Carlo, «Pietro Andrea Canoniero: frammenti sulle Fiandre Spagnole», *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 48-49 (1978-1979), pp. 261-272.

GONZÁLEZ DE LEÓN, Fernando, *The Road to Rocroi: Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567–1659*, Leiden, Brill, 2009.

KATTENBERG, Lisa, «Military Rebellion and Reason of State. Pacification of Mutinies in the Habsburg Army of Flanders, 1599-1601», *Low Countries Historical Review*, 131:2 (2016), pp. 3-21.

MARCHESANI, Luigi, *Storia di Vasto*, Naples, da' torchi dell'Osservatore Medico, 1838.

MEEUS, Hubertus, *Repertorium van het ernstige drama in de Nederlanden 1600-1650*, Leuven, Acco, 1983.

MELZI, Ludovico, *Regole militari sopra il governo e servitio particolare della cavalleria*, Antwerp, appresso Gioachino Trognese, 1611.

MENDOZA, Bernardino de, *Comentarios de don Bernardino de Mendoça de lo sucedido en las guerras de los Payses Baxos: desde el año de 1567 hasta el de 1577*, Madrid, Por Pedro Madrigal, 1592.

MERLIN, Pierpaolo, «Il Monferrato. Un territorio strategico per gli equilibri europei del Seicento», in P. Merlin and F. Ieva (cur.), *Monferrato 1613. La vigilia di una crisi europea*, Rome, Viella, 2016, pp. 15-29.

NANI, Giovan Battista, *Historia della repubblica veneta*, Venice, per Combi e la Noù, 1662.

O'DONNELL, Hugo, «La caballería en la Empresa de Inglaterra de 1588», *Revista de Historia Naval*, 21 (1988), pp. 37-49.

PARKER, Geoffrey, «The Limits to Revolutions in Military Affairs: Maurice of Nassau, the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600), and the Legacy», *The Journal of Military History*, 71 (2007) pp. 331-372.

PARKER, Geoffrey, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries Wars, 1567–1659*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004 (first edition: 1972).

PASCARELLA, Gennaro, «I d'Avalos di Montesarchio: rifondazione ed ascesa di una dinastia (prima parte)», *Rivista storica del Sannio*, 9 (2002), pp. 85-142.

POSSEVINO, Antonio, *Belli Monferratensis Historia, ab anno salutis MDCXII usque ad annum MDCXVIII*, Ex Typographia Petri Chouet, 1637.

PUYPE, Jan Piet, «Victory at Nieuwpoort, 2 July 1600», in M. van der Hoven (ed.), *Exercise of Arms. Warfare in the Netherlands (1568-1648)*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, pp. 69–112.

RAEYMAEKERS, Dries, «“The Great Alcandre”: Ambrogio Spinola at Court», in S. Mostacchio, B. J. García García, and L. Lo Basso (cur.), *Ambrogio Spinola between Genoa, Flanders, and Spain*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2022, pp. 131-156.

- RAEYMAEKERS, Dries, *One Foot in the Palace: The Habsburg Court of Brussels and the Politics of Access in the Reign of Albert and Isabella, 1598–1621*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2013.
- SPAGNOLETTI, Angelantonio, «Gli Avalos nel sistema imperiale spagnolo», in M. Mafrić and M. R. Pelizzari (cur.), *Tra res e imago. In memoria di Augusto Placanica*, vol. II, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2007, pp. 931-942.
- SPAGNOLETTI, Angelantonio, *Principi italiani e Spagna nell'età barocca*, Milan, Mondadori, 1996.
- STRADA, Famiano, *Della guerra di Fiandra deca prima*, Venice, per Francesco Baba, 1640.
- STRADA, Famiano, *Della guerra di Fiandra deca seconda*, Rome, per gli Eredi del Corbelletti, 1648.
- THOMAS, Werner, «The 'Spanish Faction' at the court of the archdukes Albert and Isabella», in R. Vermeir, D. Raeymaekers and J. E. Hortal Muñoz (cur.), *A Constellation of Courts: The Courts and Households of Habsburg Europe, 1555-1665*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2014, pp. 167-221.
- VAN DEN BERGH, Laurent Philippe Charles, *Gedenkboek Van Het Tweede Eeuwfeest Der Utrechtsche Hoogeschool*, Utrecht, J. Altheer, 1837.
- VAN DER ESSEN, Léon, *Alexandre Farnèse, prince de Parme, gouverneur général des Pays-Bas (1545-1592)*, vol. IV, Brussels, Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1935.
- VAN HAESTENS, Hendrik, *La Nouvelle Troye, ou mémorable Histoire du Siège d'Ostende*, Leiden, Chez Loys Elzevier, 1615.
- VAN METEREN, Emanuel, *Histoire des Pays-Bas*, The Hague, Chez Hillebrant Iacobz, 1618.
- VANNOZZI, Bonifazio, *Delle lettere miscellanee*, vol. III, Bologna, presso Bartolomeo Cochi, 1617.
- VÁSQUEZ, Alonso, «Los sucesos de Flandes y Francia del tiempo de Alejandro Farnese», in *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, vol. 74, Madrid, año 1880.
- VERDUGO, Francisco, *Comentario del coronel Francisco Verdugo de la guerra de Frisia*, Madrid, Imprenta de Rivadeneyra, 1872.
- VV. AA., *El Arte en la Corte de los Archiduques Alberto de Austria e Isabel Clara Eugenia (1598-1633): un Reino Imaginado*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 1999.
- VV. AA., *List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series*, vol. III (June 1591-April 1592), London, Public Record Office, 1980.
- ZAPPERI, Roberto, «Avalos, Francesco Ferdinando, marchese di Pescara», *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 4, Rome, anno 1962, pp. 627-635.



Johann Georg Ziesenis (1716-1776). Portrait of Friedrich the Great (1763).
Sans-Souci Palace. Wikimedia Commons

Storia Militare Moderna

Articoli / Articles - Military History

- On the dating of the Trigonion Tower, Thessaloniki,
by DIONYSIOS HATZOPOULOS & STATHIS BIRTACHAS,
 - «Ut insigna nostra ad libitum tuum deferri facere possis». Ferrante Gonzaga e Giulio III,
di GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI,
 - Tra tecnica e retorica: come opporsi a un nemico più forte nei trattati di architettura militare del Cinquecento
di MICHEL PRETALLI,
 - Genova contro i Barbareschi: una piccola lunga guerra mediterranea (XVI-XVIII sec.),
di EMILIANO BERI,
 - A Knight of the “Imagined Kingdom”: *fra* ‘Don Alfonso d’Avalos Between Spanish Italy and Habsburg Netherlands,’
by MAURIZIO ARFAIOLI,
 - The first dragoon companies of the Habsburg Empire The organization, recruitment, arming and first muster of during the Long Turkish War (1591–1606),
by ZOLTÁN PÉTER BAGI,
 - Sir Robert Dudley in the Service of the Medici: Tuscany in the Theatre of Global Politics and Trade,
by MIRELA ALTIĆ,
 - The Evolution of Fighting Tactics in the Mediterranean: Ottoman-Venetian Naval Battles during the Cretan Campaigns (1649-1655),
by EMIRHAN ÖZÇELİK,
 - «Spettacolo di onore e di orror pienissimo». La guerra nei ‘Campeggiamenti’ di Emanuele Tesauro,
di DENISE ARICÒ,
 - Battle plans in the 17th century on the example of the ‘Ordres de bataille’ from Riksarkivet – Focusing on the Armies of Western Europe,
by MARIUSZ BALCEREK,
 - Le più antiche armi da fuoco portatili a ripetizione,
di MARCO MERLO,
 - A defeat that came from the sea: the Venetian loss of the Morea, 1715,
by GUIDO CANDIANI,
 - Storia, fonti e strategia delle fortificazioni campali sabaude in valle Stura di Demonte nel XVIII secolo,
di ROBERTO SCONFENZA,
 - La dissolution des Cent-Suisses de la Garde du Roi de Sardaigne, le 20 juin 1802,
par BRUNO PAUVERT,
 - Il 13° Reggimento Ussari napoleonico reclutato nelle Divisioni di Toscana e di Roma (1813-1814),
di PIERO CROCIANI,
-

Recensioni

- CHRISTOPHER LYNCH, *Machiavelli on War*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- OLIVIER ARANDA, JULIEN GUINAND, CAROLINE LE MAO (dir.), *Atlas des guerres à l’époque moderne, XVI^e - XVII^e - XVIII^e siècles*,
(by LUCA DOMIZIO)
- JAAKKO BJÖRKLUND et al., (eds.), *The Business of War in the Early Modern Baltic Sea Region, 1530-1765*
(by LUCA DOMIZIO)
- LOTHAR HÖBELT, PAVEL MAREK (eds.), *The Escalation of the Thirty Years’ War in the 1620s. The Threats to Habsburg Hegemony and the Rise of Wallenstein*
(by LUCA DOMIZIO)
- MARZIO MAGNO, *Venezia in 10 battaglie navali*
(di FEDERICO MORO)
- CHANNA WICKREMESEKERA, *A Modest Arsenal. Gunpowder Weapons in Sri Lanka*
(by KAUSHIK ROY)
- GEOFFREY PARKER, *Il re imprudente. Una nuova vita di Filippo II*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- STEPHEN ALFORD, *All His Spies. The Secret World of Robert Cecil*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- EMRAH SAFA GURKAN, *Spies for the Sultan*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI (ed.) *Giovanni Marco Isolani Compendio di molti anni di guerre seguite in Ungheria*
(by VIKTOR KANÁSZ)
- IAN GENTLES, *The New Model Army*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- TOBY GREEN, *The Heretic of Cacheu. Struggles Over Life in a Seventeenth-Century West African Port*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- ANNA BRINKMAN, *Balancing Strategy. Sea Power, Neutrality, and Prize Law in the Seven Years’ War*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- SUZANE SUTHERLAND, *The Rise of the Military Entrepreneur*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- VALERIA MANFRÉ, *Immagini cartografiche e ingegneri in Sardegna e Sicilia nel Settecento*
(per DANIEL CRESPO DELGADO)
- DOMENICO ANFORA, *L’istruzione pubblica ai tempi dei Borbone*
(di ROSA CARNEVALE)
- Compte rendu d’ouvrages 2025-2026,
(par ROBERTO BARAZZUTTI)