

El apoyo de Inglaterra a Felipe II (English version)

English participation in the war of 1557-9 was politically natural. Philip was king of England and his subjects fought under his command. It was historically traditional. The French had been the 'ancient enemies' of the English since the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) and the two nations had fought four wars in the past fifty years. And yet it was apparently contrary to the treaty under which Philip of Spain had married Mary of England.

When Mary came to the throne in 1553, many of her subjects urged her to marry an Englishman. She, in contrast, decided to marry Philip, the son of her first cousin and long-term protector the Emperor Charles V. Her councillors set out to negotiate terms for the marriage which would neutralise English fears about the prospect of a foreign king. Philip's powers in England were limited. The marriage treaty specified that England should not 'directly or indirectly be entangled' in the war then raging between Charles and Henry II of France.

The treaty was insufficient to prevent a series of revolts against the marriage. But opposition was defeated and in July 1554 Philip and Mary married at Winchester. Philip's first stay in England was taken up with establishing his role in government and encouraging the restoration of English obedience to the papacy and Catholic religious practice. He returned in March 1557 determined to secure English involvement in the war with France.

English councillors were strongly averse to a renewal of the wars with France and Scotland fought by Mary's father Henry VIII and her brother Edward VI. Those wars had spent money the kings did not have. They had to sell crown land, debase the coinage to devastating economic effect and contract large international debts. The strains of war had encouraged widespread popular revolts in 1549. Boulogne had been captured but then returned to the French. Attempts to absorb Scotland had failed spectacularly, leaving Mary Queen of Scots betrothed to the son of Henry II. Peace and a restoration of financial and social stability looked best. That conclusion was reinforced as economic conditions worsened. There were difficulties in the cloth export trade, disastrous harvests in 1555 and 1556 and successive waves of epidemic disease, probably typhus in 1556-7 and influenza in 1557-9.

One key adviser and one timely event helped Philip. William Lord Paget, once Henry VIII's secretary, was low-born but wily. He had helped to arrange the marriage and his relationship with Philip had made him a leading figure in the regime despite Mary's mistrust. From November 1556, working with Philip's confidant Ruy Gómez de Silva and with the queen, he began planning for an English contribution to the war effort and pressed his fellow-councillors to agree. Sidestepping the restrictions of the marriage treaty, the support was to be given under a mutual defence treaty agreed as long ago as 1543. So important was this distinction that it was still being raised in the peace talks of 1558-9. The councillors' resistance was worn down only very slowly. Then, at the end of April 1557, the log-jam broke.

The cause was an extraordinarily unsuccessful attempt at rebellion. Thomas Stafford was the grandson of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, executed by Henry VIII in 1521. He took part in the revolt of 1554 and then joined the set of English exiles in France tolerated by Henry II, sometimes even encouraged, to cause trouble for Philip and Mary. In April he sailed for England in two ships with a few dozen men and landed at the dilapidated castle of Scarborough on the Yorkshire coast. He proclaimed himself Lord Protector of the kingdom. He disavowed any ambition for the throne, though in the past he had claimed to be rightfully king. He warned that the Spanish

were about to garrison castles such as Scarborough and subject England to military tyranny. No-one supported him and he was rapidly captured. Henry II denied involvement. Even Stafford's fellow-exiles laughed at him as 'King of Scarborough'. But it was enough to convince the council of French hostility.

Detailed planning and recruitment immediately began for an English army to serve in the king's campaign against France. On 7 June war was proclaimed at London, blaming the French for their support of Stafford and other intrigues. The same day an English herald reached the French court with a formal declaration of hostilities. The English fleet was already at sea to patrol the Channel. Preparations were made to raise men for home defence and fortify the coasts. Skirmishes with the French began around Calais, the English advance base on the continent. Philip crossed on 6 July and two weeks later his English army followed. He told his Spanish agents of the importance of keeping the English happy. But as the English requests for additional carts, horses and guides kept increasing, he complained of their unreasonableness. Only on 30 July, having made provision for the defence of Calais and its satellite fortresses at Guînes and Hammes, did the English set out.

William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, led the English force. He had risen to senior command among the revolts of 1549 and led the queen's forces against the rebels of 1554. The seriousness of his military ambitions can be judged not only by the high quality of his own armour, which survives in Glasgow, but also in the large quantities he bought for his followers. He had expensive warhorses and was the dedicatee of a translated life of Scipio. Yet even the military author Humphrey Barwick who served under him judged that, though valiant, he was not expert in modern war.

His subordinates included other noblemen, the earls of Bedford, Rutland and Worcester, Viscount Montagu and Lords Bray and Chandos. Though young, many already had some experience from the wars of the 1540s and they were eager to learn. Rutland, for example, later praised the performance of Philip's German cavalry. They were stiffened by two veteran campaigners, William, Lord Grey de Wilton as marshal of the army and Edward Fiennes, Lord Clinton, as colonel of the infantry. Alongside them served some of the most experienced English captains of their generation.

The expedition played an important role as a way back to favour for those who had opposed Mary. Leaders of the revolts of 1554 and subsequent conspiracies served. Even the three sons of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, who had tried to stop Mary becoming queen, found rehabilitation and one was killed in action.

The troops were raised by captains in the traditional way from among their household servants, farming tenants and neighbours and those under their rule in royal offices. This spread the burden across England and Wales, north to Yorkshire and Cumberland, west to Anglesey, Pembrokeshire and Cornwall. The locations of the leading captains' estates made some counties especially prominent. Lincolnshire provided many troops for Clinton and Rutland, Sussex for Montagu, Gloucestershire for Chandos. Many northerners were held back in case the Scots attacked. But it was a genuinely national army.

Pembroke arrived with rather more men than originally planned. Round numbers were 5,000 foot, 1,000 horse, half of them light cavalry and half the more heavily-armoured demilances, a dozen cannon, 1,300 pioneers and 200 miners. They were dressed in blue with the traditional English red crosses. In some ways the recent wars had made the English catch up with new developments. They had drums and fifes to issue infantry drill commands and some of their leaders were designated with the latest terminology, as colonels, a serjeant-major and a master of the camp. Spanish and Italian observers, on the other hand, thought they were good men but inexperienced.

They judged that the infantry had too many bows and too few firearms. The French thought the English cavalry too lightly-armed to count for much.

The English had only just succeeded in clearing their foreign debt from the previous wars. Now they raised fresh money. They sold crown lands, imposed forced loans on taxpayers, planned reforms for the customs levied on trade. But little of this was available in summer 1557, so Philip met the bill for wages throughout the campaign.

Philip wanted the English to accompany him to Saint-Quentin, writing in his own hand to encourage Pembroke to hurry. Miners and pioneers were sent ahead with an infantry escort. They reached the siege camp on 7 August, but the progress of the main force was slow. Philip was still waiting for Pembroke when the battle was fought. The English arrived only on 12 August. How central they were in the siege is unclear. Even their pioneers and miners probably made up only a quarter of the engineering workforce. More distinctive was the role of the archers who fired arrows into the town with messages urging the townsfolk to surrender. Their horsemen joined sweeps into French territory and as the siege tightened their camp was moved to block the last possible access route.

On 27 August the town was stormed. One of the storming parties mixed 2,000 English with companies of Spaniards, Burgundians and Germans. The Spaniards were led by Julian Romero, who had fought for the English in Scotland. The English made the first assault on their quarter of the town. They were thrown back with significant losses but returned to the attack. In England it was said that their persistence had been decisive in the town's capture. By other reports, they fought for an hour to overcome all resistance on their part of the walls after Spaniards and Germans had broken through elsewhere. English chroniclers happily simplified matters to record that 'the towne was wonne by the King with the helpe of Englishmen' or 'by the speciall aid & helpe of the Englishmen' with their 'stout courage'. Even a Spanish observer, Juan de Piñedo, said that the English fought particularly well.

In England, news of Saint-Quentin was met with the usual repertoire of rejoicing at London, Bristol, Cambridge, Norwich and no doubt other towns. Te Deum was sung, church bells rung and there were bonfires and barrels of beer in the streets. How the English performed mattered. The countess of Bedford was glad to hear from the queen's confidante Susan Clarencius that good reports were being made of the earl's valiant conduct. Later there were generous rewards, a gold chain with rubies for Sir Edward Windsor, a ceremonial serving dish depicting the siege for Pembroke.

There was another side to the story. Some German accounts barely mentioned the English contribution. Philip claimed that the sack of the town was accomplished without notable disorder and some Englishmen came away with trophies, Windsor, for example, with a case of pistols. But there was trouble over the division of plunder. The English maintained that they and others had been pushed aside, even killed for their booty, by the Germans. Two Englishmen claimed to have secured the reliquary of the head of St Quentin, only to have it taken from them.

It was also said that the English soldiers slew their opponents on the walls rather than let them surrender. Worse, there were reports that they massacred thirty-four women and children in one house in the market-place, though the king had expressly forbidden that the vulnerable be harmed. Later the Spanish told Mary that it was not true that, as she believed, her Englishmen had been first into the town and indeed that the poor performance of her troops had been kept from

her. The view from Brussels was that even the English miners had been disappointing compared with those who had served the Habsburgs as mercenaries in previous years.

The English went with the rest of the army to the siege of Ham, some of them honourably escorting the king on the march. The town and castle fell on 9-11 September, prompting more celebrations at London. They were still there on 21 September, their pioneers playing an important part in the work of re-fortification. When Philip left on 12 October, they accompanied him and two weeks later they were at Calais. Viscount Montagu attended a meeting of the royal council on 7 November and Lord Clinton on the 14th.

Many came home sick. Disease had already taken hold among the English in the siege camp, where food supplies were intermittent. At the musters of 7 September, only 83% of the men counted in July were fit for action. Less than 1% had been killed, 4%, mostly pioneers, wounded or disabled, a handful taken prisoner, but 10% were ill. By 21 September Pembroke himself was unwell and by 24-26 October only just over half the original force was fit to serve. Lord Bray's illness or wounds killed him at London on 18 November.

The aftermath of the campaign brought disillusionment. The Scots were traditional allies of the French and currently governed by their queen's French mother, Mary of Guise. They joined the war in July 1557 and threatened the North for the next eighteen months. Far worse, the French moved with startling speed in early January 1558 to isolate and besiege Calais. One by one, as their commanders pleaded for Philip's help, Calais, Guînes and Hammes fell. Serious efforts were made to send English relief armies, but unpreparedness and violent weather doomed them. Pembroke was too ill to command again. Rutland hurt his leg on board ship trying to get to Calais. Grey de Wilton was forced by mutiny to surrender Guînes and enter French captivity after a hard-fought siege.

Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy wrote in fury of the gross neglect and poor service of the English. The English said what they would say to the end of Mary's reign and beyond, that they had entered the war in compliance with Philip's wishes and, by implication, against the natural interests of their kingdom. Philip came close to admitting it, writing to his sister that England had gone to war on his account. The English spent 1558 worrying about fortifying the coasts and the North, stressing the weight of taxation they were paying, complaining that the Netherlands had not reciprocated their sacrifices by ceasing trade with the Scots. Philip's envoy the count of Feria grew exasperated with them, judging that they lacked the courage to take revenge for Calais. When they praised Grey's defence of Guînes, he said that Spanish captains who surrendered fortresses had their heads cut off.

The English did play some part in the war in 1558. They sent miners to build fortifications and money to pay German infantry. Their navy bombarded the French at the battle of Gravelines and raided the Breton coast. Their part in peace talks secured a face-saving formula that the French should return Calais in eight years' time or pay a large indemnity. But their role in the war had come uncomfortably close to confirming the view of Venetian diplomats, that the kingdom was 'feeble for offensive operations, with the exception of plundering at sea' and its people 'not adapted for war, having neither discipline, weapons, nor judgment'. England, decided Europe, had a powerful fleet but a fragile economy, an unreliable governing class, a volatile common people and a brave but antiquated army. Only with the defeat of the Armada in 1588, the Battle of the Dunes in 1658 or even the campaigns of Marlborough would observers change their minds.