

= Battle of Borgerhout =

The Battle of Borgerhout was a battle during the Eighty Years ' War , of the Spanish Army of Flanders led by Alexander Farnese , Prince of Parma , upon a fortified camp at the village of Borgerhout , near Antwerp , where several thousand French , English , Scottish and Walloon soldiers in service of the recently created Union of Utrecht were stationed . It took place during the reconquest by the armies of Philip II of Spain of the Burgundian Netherlands , whose different provinces had united in 1576 under the Pacification of Ghent to drive out the foreign troops out and to grant religious liberty to Protestants .

Despite the rebel victory at the Battle of Rijmenam in July 1578 , much of the Southern Netherlands were lost to the Spanish Army during the autumn ; Brussels was menaced , and the States General were moved to the safer Antwerp . Taking advantage of the Dutch rebel army 's indiscipline , Farnese decided at the beginning of 1579 to besiege Maastricht . As a feint to distract the Dutch rebels from his goal , but also aiming to scare Antwerp 's inhabitants , Farnese moved with his troops to surprise the village of Borgerhout , very close to Antwerp , where a part of the Dutch States Army had its quarters , namely 3 @, @ 000 or 4 @, @ 000 infantry which were the backbone of the rebel army and consisted of French Calvinists under François de la Noue , and English and Scottish troops under John Norrey 's orders .

On 2 March Farnese deployed elements of his army in a plain stretching between his position at the village of Ranst and the Dutch camp at Borgerhout , which Norreys and De la Noue had fortified with moats , palisades and earthworks . The assault was divided into three columns , each one provided with a mobile bridge to pass over the camp 's moat . After one of the attacks , undertaken by Walloon troops , succeeded in securing a bridge , the Spanish forces were able to attack the States @-@ General 's soldiers inside their camp . Norreys and De la Noue 's men opposed a strong defence , but Farnese , throwing his light cavalry to the battle , forced the Dutch troops to abandon Borgerhout and look for shelter under the artillery of Antwerp 's walls . William of Orange , leader of the Dutch revolt , and archduke Matthias of Habsburg , Governor @-@ General of the Netherlands appointed by the States General , witnessed the fight from Antwerp 's walls .

The battle meant the destruction of the villages of Borgerhout and Deurne and saw up to 1 @, @ 500 men killed between both armies . Farnese then proceeded to besiege Maastricht , which the Spanish Army invested less than a week after the battle and was taken by assault on 29 June of the same year . Farnese 's successful campaign opened the way to a nine @-@ year period of Spanish reconquest of much of the Netherlands .

= = Background = =

In 1566 the Burgundian Netherlands , Charles V of Habsburg 's original realm , which had passed to his son Philip II of Spain on his abdication in 1556 , were in disarray due to religious tensions between Protestants and Catholics and the nobility and cities ' unwillingness of funding Philip 's wars and ceding its powers to the Royal administration . In 1567 Philip sent an army to the Netherlands under Fernando Álvarez de Toledo , Duke of Alba , to restore his authority , but Alba 's persecution of the religious and political dissenters led William of Orange , the leader of the nobility , to exile into Germany and prepare an invasion of the Netherlands to expel Alba . Orange invaded the Netherlands twice , in 1568 and 1572 , but in both occasions Alba defeated him . The second time , however , the revolt spread into the provinces of Holland and Zeeland , and Alba was unable of quelling it . In 1576 , the lack of an authority due to the death of Alba 's successor Luis de Requesens , together with a Spanish general bankruptcy , led the Spanish mutinous soldiers to sack several towns , including Antwerp . In reaction , the loyal and rebel provinces united to expel the foreign troops under the Pacification of Ghent .

John of Austria , the victor of Lepanto and replacement to Requesens , had no choice but to sign the Perpetual Edict in 1577 , accepting the Pacification of Ghent , but later , frustrated by the intransigence of Orange and his supporters , he seized the citadel of Namur and recalled his troops . John 's striking victory at the Battle of Gembloux in January 1578 , was followed by a tactical

defeat at Rijmenam in July , and John himself died of plague in October . However , despite the Spanish failure to exploit militarily the victory of Gembloux , it rendered important political benefits to the royal cause in the Netherlands , as it shattered the unity of the Dutch rebels . As a consequence of the battle 's outcome , the leaders of the main families of the Southern provinces lost faith in Orange 's cause and the promises of aid made by the English queen Elizabeth I , which meant an important setback to Orange . Aiming to restore the military capability of the Dutch rebels , Elizabeth arranged with John Casimir , son to the Calvinist Elector Palatine , the raising of a German Army under English pay to assist the Dutch troops John Casimir brought to the Netherlands 11 @, @ 000 men , but instead of fighting the Spanish , he sided with the Calvinist extremists at Ghent and widened the gap between the Catholic and Protestant rebels . The States General also called for help Francis , Duke of Anjou , brother and heir of the King of France , who entered Mons in July 1578 , but was back in France in a short time .

The Catholic nobility and southern provinces ' defections , already started in the autumn 1578 , expanded further when the provinces of Hainaut and Artois concluded on 6 January 1579 , the Union of Arras , which the Walloon Flanders joined soon ? the Catholic provinces of Namur , Luxembourg and Limburg were already controlled by the Spanish ? . The Union of Arras opened talks in February with Alexander Farnese , who succeeded his uncle John of Austria as the Royal @-@ appointed Governor @-@ General of the Netherlands , to reconcile with Philip II . In response , a meeting took place in Utrecht shortly thereafter between deputies from the northern provinces of Holland , Zealand , Utrecht , Friesland , Gelderland and Ommelanden , which signed an alliance and union on 23 January . In the south , meanwhile , Farnese was planning the capture of Maastricht to use the city with its stone bridge over the Meuse as a base to conquer Brussels and Antwerp in the following campaigns . In November 1578 , the Spanish Army left Namur and crossed the Ardennes and Limburg . However , Farnese deemed too risky starting the siege of Maastricht at midwinter and with the John Casimir 's numerous cavalry on the countryside .

= = Campaign = =

For the 1579 campaign , Farnese planned two different movements . A portion of his army , under Cristóbal de Mondragón , was to clean the area between Maastricht and the German border from Dutch garrisons , while Farnese himself , ahead of the main army , decided to move against Atwerp with two objectives : to neutralize the Dutch field army , or primarily its German cavalry , before laying siege to Maastricht and to distract the Dutch from the campaign 's real objective . The first part of the plan was accomplished when Mondragón took the towns of Kerpen , Erkelenz and Straelen between 7 and 15 January . On 24 January , Farnese moved to attack the States General army , which was at Weert , east of Antwerp . Outnumbered , François de la Noue , who had taken to role of field commander of the States ' army after the Count of Bossu 's death , left some States ' troops in the Castle of Weert and withdrew to Antwerp with his unpaid men . They asked the city council to allow them to enter the city , but it was refused , and De la Noue had no choice but to entrench his army outside the walls , in the village of Borgerhout . This was a residential area for the wealthy inhabitants of Antwerp where they had country houses and gardens , among them Peeter van Coudenberghe 's botanical garden , which had more than 600 exotic plants .

In the meantime , Farnese entrusted to Count Hannibal d 'Altemps the capture of Weert and continued his advance upon the Dutch Army . D 'Altemps encircled Weert with 6 @, @ 000 men and breached its walls with a two @-@ cannon battery . The defenders of the castle surrendered at discretion but , on Farnese orders , were hanged on the windows , which the Count willingly did because his steward had lost an eye during the siege . Farnese , instead of following the Dutch Army to its quarters , lodged in Turnhout with his troops and his court to forage . Before moving to Antwerp he dealt with John Casimir 's German Army . Spanish troops attacked and defeated part of the German reiters near Eindhoven on 10 February . Moreover , while John Casimir himself was in England dealing with Elizabeth I , Farnese agreed with his lieutenant , Maurice of Saxe @-@ Lauenburg , the withdrawal of the Calvinist Army , which the Spaniards allowed to leave the Netherlands freely . Once this matter was finished , Farnese advanced upon Borgerhout .

= = Order of battle = =

The Dutch States ' troops quartered in the village of Borgerhout numbered 25 or 40 infantry companies which comprised from 3 @, @ 000 to 4 @, @ 000 soldiers , plus 100 additional mounted troops . They were the backbone of the rebel army and William of Orange referred to them as " his braves " . Moreover , they were led by officers of renown such as François de la Noue and John Norreys . To confront the Spanish Army , they were detached along the village of Borgerhout , which they had fortified by digging a moat and building an earth rampart around the village , from the bridge of Deurne over the Groot Schijn stream , which flowed into the Scheldt , to the road of Voetweg , which ran parallel to the canal of Herentals . Orange deployed four additional French infantry regiments and Walloon troops from the nearby garrisons of Ath and Termonde behind Borgerhout and under the protection of Antwerp 's citadel and moat . The city 's civic guard , numbering 80 flags of armed and trained burghers , was ready to defend the city if necessary , but not willing to get out to join the battle nor to allow the regular troops to come within Antwerp . The Spanish soldier and chronicler Alonso Vázquez claimed that Orange 's army had , in all , 25 @, @ 000 men .

Farnese deployed a 5 @, @ 000 @-@ man vanguard , both infantry and cavalry , in the plain which separated his camp at Ranst from Borgerhout . Three small battalions , not surpassing 12 companies each one , but made up of chosen men , went in advance ; the right was taken by the Spanish tercio of Lope de Figueroa , the center by a Lower German regiment under Francisco de Valdés and the right by a Walloon regiment under Claude de Berlaymont , known as Haultpenne . Each formation was supported by a sleeve of 100 musketeers , a group of men armed with axes to cut the palissades and a wheeled bridge to cross the moat . A corps of light cavalry led by Antonio de Olivera followed the infantry at some distance with instructions to cover its withdrawal if the attack went bad , or to follow up the victory , if it took place . According to Alonso Vázquez , Farnese made the Walloon soldiers of the Spanish Army wear white shirts over their armors , a practise common in night attacks known as camisades , to distinguish themselves from the Walloons who fought for the Union of Utrecht . Thus the Walloons look , in his words , like " a very colorful procession of clerics and sacristans " .

In reserve , Farnese deployed a large battalion made up by the German regiments of Hannibal d 'Altemps and Georg von Frundsberg , flanked on its right by troops of reiters under Duke Francis of Saxe @-@ Lauenburg , elder brother of Duke Maurice , John Casimir 's former lieutenant , and on its left by lancers under Pierre de Taxis . The remaining Spanish cavalry , led by Ottavio Gonzaga , covered the rear . Farnese led his troops personally , and before the battle was started , he scouted the Dutch position , having ordered his troops not to move until his return . On the Dutch side , while De la Noue and Norreys directed the men standing in Borgerhout , William of Orange witnessed the battle from the walls of Antwerp in company of archduke Matthias , brother of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II , whom the States General had elected as Governor of the Netherlands in opposition to the deceased John of Austria .

= = Battle = =

The fight started with the three battalions of the Spanish first line advancing upon the Dutch camp , each one trying to be the first to laid its bridge over the moat . Haultpenne 's Wallons , headed by Sergeant @-@ Major Camille Sacchino , moved up to Deurne , crossing the Schijn river at the small village of Immerseel . Valdés ' Germans advanced frontally to Borgerhout across the Borsbeek road , and Figueroa 's Spaniards took the Voetweg road to assault the Dutch camp from the south . While the sleeves of musketeers from the Spanish and German units exchanged fire with the Dutch troops covered by the rampart , Sacchino 's Walloons drove the defenders of Deurne behind the Groot Schijn stream and took its bridge . De la Noue sent reinforcements there to content the assault , but they arrived too late to prevent the Walloons from laying their bridge over the moat and began to climb the rampart , starting a close combat with the Dutch troops . In the meantime , the Spanish

and German troops , supported by two or three artillery pieces , breached the rampart , crossed the moat and also started to come inside Borgerhout , where De la Noue and Norreys ' men reorganized and stood on the barricaded streets .

Farnese , seeing that his attack was going well , ordered Olivera to advance with his cavalry to support the infantry 's push . While the light horsemen penetrated into Borgerhout across the breach opened by Figueroa 's men , Farnese himself took the command of Taxis ' lancers and did the same across Valdés ' path . The French and English soldiers offered a strong resistance , but after two hours of battle inside the quarters , De la Noue began to withdraw his forces to Antwerp to avoid destruction . The retreating troops set fire to their lodgements and looked for shelter under the coverage of Antwerp 's artillery . Many of the Spanish soldiers went in persecution , despite their officers ordered them to stay together , and chased the rebels until Antwerp 's moat . At William of Orange 's orders , the artillery of the city walls fired then sharpnel over the Spanish troops with different results , depending on the sources . The Spanish soldier Alonso Vázquez claimed that the shots were ineffective because the battlefield was covered of the smoke produced by the fire of Borgerhout . On the other hand , the Flemish official Guillaume Baudart claimed that it was precise and made " arms and legs fly on the air " .

By then , Farnese , unwilling of having for a longer time his troops close to Antwerp 's cannons , made drums and trumpets to call for withdrawal and gathered his men at Borgerhout . Meanwhile , people from Antwerp sallied to carry the wounded French , British and Walloon officers and soldiers into the city to receive treatment . The Spanish soldiery , once the fire of Borgerhout was finished , looted the basements of the burned buildings and had a meal before praying to thank God . After that , the Spanish Army marched across the roads of Lier and Herentals to Turnhout , where Farnese wanted to arrive the next day . Fearing a new attack , Antwerp 's civic guards spent the night at their posts .

= = Aftermath = =

The number of casualties endured by both armies differs according to the authors . The Italian Jesuit Famiano Strada noted that Farnese , in a letter to his father Ottavio , Duke of Parma , put the Dutch loss as 600 men killed and gave eight men killed and 40 wounded amongst his troops . Strada also mentions that other estimations pointed to 1 @, @ 040 men killed in the Dutch ranks . On the other hand , the Flemish author Guillaume Baudart set the Dutch loss as 200 men killed and claimed that the Spanish Army lost 500 men . The villages of Deurne and Borgerhout were seriously damaged by the fire during the battle : in 1580 Deurne had 133 standing buildings , while 146 had been destroyed by the fire ; in Borgerhout 206 buildings remained and 280 were ruined .

Farnese 's attack achieved his goal of distracting the Dutch States forces from Maastricht . After the battle , the Spanish Army moved quickly to Turnhout , taking the castle of Grobbendonk on its way and appearing before Masstricht on 8 March , just six days after the battle of Borgerhout . François de la Noue followed the Spanish till Herentals with some troops , but when he realized that Farnese was to lay siege to Maastricht , it was too late for him to reinforce the city 's garrison . Moreover , mutinies and defections hampered the Dutch efforts to save the city . The English soldiers under John Norrey 's orders , who remained out of Antwerp , kidnapped the abbot of St. Michael 's Abbey in demand for back pays , and William of Orange 's had to mediate to placate them . In political terms , the battle increased the Walloon defections from the States General to the Spanish party in the following months . Emanuel Philibert de Lalaing joined the Spanish Army with 5 @, @ 000 Walloon troops of the Dutch States army and expelled from Menen a garrison loyal to the States General .

Farnese besieged Maastricht in command of 15 @, @ 000 infantry , 4 @, @ 000 cavalry , 20 cannons and 4 @, @ 000 sappers , joined later by 5 @, @ 000 additional troops . In May , while the siege developed , peace talks were held at Cologne under the mediation of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf to preserve the unity of the Netherlands . However , divisions become more serious during the process . In Brussels , fight erupted in early June between Catholics headed by Philip of Egmont , son of Lamoral of Egmont , whom the Royalist authorities had executed in 1568 and

Calvinists under Olivier van den Tympel , resulting in the expulsion of Egmont and his supporters . At Mechelen , the Catholic inhabitants forced the Dutch garrison to leave , while in ' s @-@ Hertogenbosch an armed struggle resulted in the magistrates declaring support to the Royalist side . The revolt took a character of civil war , and as a result of the religious problem , the peace conference at Cologne failed . Henceforth , Farnese reconquered Flanders and the Brabant town after town , even forcing Antwerp to surrender after a long and exhausting siege in 1585 .