

= Battle of Orbetello =

The Battle of Orbetello , also known as the Battle of Isola del Giglio , was a major naval engagement of the Franco - Spanish War of 1635 . It was fought on 14 June 1646 off the Spanish - ruled town of Orbetello , on the coast of Tuscany , Italy , between a French fleet led by Admiral Armand de Maillé , Marquis of Brézé , and a Spanish fleet commanded by Miguel de Noronha , 4th Count of Linhares sent to break the blockade of Orbetello and relieve the town , besieged since 12 May by a French army under the command of Prince Thomas of Savoy . The Battle of Orbetello was tactically very unusual , since it was fought by sailing ships towed by galleys in a light breeze .

After a hard but inconclusive fight during which Admiral Brézé was killed , the French fleet withdrew to Toulon leaving the sea to the Spanish , who decided not to pursue them to relieve Orbetello . The land forces disembarked by Count of Linhares a few days later , however , failed to dislodge the French lines , and the siege could be undertaken until 24 July , when another Spanish army led by the Marquis of Torrecuso and the Duke of Arcos , which had come from the Kingdom of Naples across the Papal States , defeated the besieging French troops , forcing them to retreat with heavy losses .

= = Background = =

In 1646 , after several naval successes against Spain along the Mediterranean , Cardinal Mazarin planned a naval expedition to conquer the Spanish - held State of Presidi with the aim of interrupting Spanish communications with the Kingdom of Naples , threatening the initial stage of the Spanish military corridor , the so - called Spanish Road , and also to frighten pope Innocent X , whose Spanish sympathies displeased him . For this purpose , a fleet commanded by young Admiral Marquis of Brézé was assembled at Toulon . Made of 36 galleons , 20 galleys and a large complement of minor vessels , it had on board an army of some 8 ,000 infantry and 800 cavalry with baggage under the command of Thomas Francis of Savoy , who had previously been at the employ of the Spanish Crown .

Orbetello was erected in a spit between two inner bays of a big lagoon . Various fortified positions made it a strong defensive position : Porto Ercole at the east , San Stefano at the west , and the fort San Filippo on the Monte Argentario island , linked to the mainland by a narrow isthmus . In the end , the French army landed at Talamone , where Brézé left to the Prince a half - dozen of vessels and galleys to bombard the forts of the town . Meanwhile , he went to Porto San Stefano with 5 sailing ships and 4 galleys and bombarded the fort until it surrendered . After the loss of those positions , Don Carlo de la Gatta , the castellan of Orbetello , retreated to the hermitage of Cristo . The isthmus was occupied thanks to a battery mounted aboard the French galleys , and soon the lagoon was filled with armed boats gathered by Jean - Paul de Saumeur , Chevalier Paul . Don Carlo de la Gatta , supported by just 200 Spanish and Italian soldiers , had very few opportunities to resist without help . An early relief force of 35 boats and 5 escort galleys sent from Naples with munitions and supplies was beaten , so a major fleet action was expected .

When news of the siege reached Spain , Philip IV gave orders to assemble a relief fleet . Second - hand goods were purchased in the Netherlands and extraordinary levies were carried out across the country . The command of the expedition was entrusted to the Portuguese loyalist Miguel de Noronha , Count of Linhares , who was Captain General of the Galleys of the Mediterranean , and therefore supreme commander of the Spanish naval forces of this sea . He received orders to sail to Orbetello in command of 22 men - of - war of the Silver fleet and the Dunkirk squadron ; the later providing 8 frigates . At least 3 ,000 soldiers were brought aboard these ships for the relief . Linhares ' second in command was Admiral General Francisco Díaz de Pimienta , who displeased by his always secondary role , had recently resigned , claiming ill health . While Pimienta would be in charge of the sailing ships , Linhares would do so with the galleys . Once at sea , the Spanish fleet was joined off the Sardinian Cape Carbonara by 18 galleys from the squadrons of Naples , Sardinia , Genoa , and Sicily , which drove up its strength to 22 galleons and

frigates and 30 galleys . Grand Admiral Jean Armand de Maillé @-@ Brézé , Admiral de Maille Brézé , in the meantime , could be reinforced by the divisions of Montade and Saint @-@ Tropez , and was able to oppose Linhares and Pimienta with 24 sailing ships and 20 galleys .

= = Battle = =

At dawn on June 14 the Spanish fleet bore down off the Giglio Island in a line astern with the galleons and the galleys at the forefront and 8 lagging vessels closing the formation . Admiral Brézé formed his fleet in a line shortly after , alternating galleons and galleys , and sailed westward in a gentle breeze , closed with Linhares ' ships . At 9 : 00 PM . Brézé had approached four miles to the Spanish , when , due to the lightness of the wind , the galleons of the two fleets had to be towed by the galleys while awaiting to be at windward . Brézé , aboard his flagship Grand Saint @-@ Louis , stood in front of the line flanked by Vice @-@ admiral Louis de Foucault de Saint @-@ Germain Beaupré , comte du Daugnon 's la Lune and Rear @-@ admiral Jules de Montigny 's le Soleil . His ship was in tow of Lieutenant @-@ General Vinguerre 's Patrone galley . Fifteen other vessels composed the French line of battle , each one towed by a galley . Montade 's six @-@ ship division was left in reserve . Both fleets sailed along each other until Linhares , thanks to the superior number of galleys that he had , gained the windward and was able to move towards the French line , attempting to overrun its line to catch it between two fires . Linhares had in tow Pimienta 's flag galleon Santiago ; don Álvaro de Bazán del Viso , general of the Neapolitan galleys , the galleon Trinidad , flagship of Admiral Pablo de Contreras ; and Enrique de Benavides , general of the Sicilian galleys , other large Spanish galleons .

Brézé , unable to dispatch his fireships over the Spanish vessels , as he had done in his victories at Cádiz , Barcelona and Cartagena , lunged over Pimienta 's galleon Santiago and riddled the ship with his artillery Santiago lost its main @-@ mast and had to be succored by Linhares and Pablo de Contreras . Fearing the attack of the French fireships or the boarding of Brézé 's galleys , Contreras covered the damaged galleon at the head of six vessels , while Linhares flag galley towed it out of danger . The remaining ships engaged Brézé in an inconclusive action which lasted until both fleets separated at dusk . The Spanish lost the frigate Santa Catalina , burnt by its own crew to avoid capture when she was surrounded by the French la Mazarine and three other vessels . The foremost Spanish galleons Testa de Oro , León Rojo and Caballo marino received heavy damage , while a French fireship blew up . Two French galleons were also badly damaged . The human loss aboard the Spanish fleet is unknown . Forty men were killed or wounded aboard the French fleet One of them was Admiral Brézé , cut in half by a cannonball which hit the stern of his flagship Grand Saint Louis .

The following morning the Spanish and French fleets were 12 miles apart . Comte du Daugnon , Brézé 's successor , decided set sail to Porto Ercole to make repairs instead of pursuing the Spanish fleet , which had sought refuge behind the Giglio island . Linhares chased him during all the 15th and part of the 16th . 4 French storeships , unaware of the main fleet 's departure , fell amidst the Spanish fleet the first night , but managed to escape by following Linhares maneuvers . The Spanish admiral finally abandoned the pursuit to relieve Orbetello . This proved to be impossible because a storm dispersed most of the ships during the night . Some of them took refuge in Sardinia ; others at Giglio and Montecristo . The galley Santa Bárbara sank off Giglio , causing the death of 46 rowers . The French also suffered from the storm . One of their galleys , la Grimaldi , sank off Piombino , although its crew and artillery was taken aboard the Spanish fleet . Another ship , Saint @-@ Dominique , lagged behind along with a fireship and was captured by Pimienta off Cape Corse .

= = Aftermath = =

On 23 June the Spanish fleet anchored off Porto Longone , where it was decided during a war council to relieve Orbetello after the most essential repairs had been made . Two days later several Dunkirkers were dispatched to force the Talamone 's port mouth , and 8 ships arrived from Naples

at Porto Santo Stefano , destroying or capturing about 70 tartanes and barges which contained the supplies of Thomas of Savoy 's army during the operation . Du Daugnon , meanwhile , returned to Toulon . Despite his failure , reinforcements could later be carried to Talamone aboard five ships , and Linhares ' attempts to dislodge the French siege lines were unsuccessful . Linhares disembarked 3 @. @ 300 soldiers led by Pimienta , who divided them in two corps and advanced upon the French lines . The first one managed to occupy a hill on which a French cavalry attack was repulsed , but the second corps was dislodged after a 6 @- @ hour battle and forced to reembark . 400 wounded men were evacuated ; the killed were left on the battlefield . The siege was not lifted until an army under the Duke of Arcos and the Marquis of Torrecuso stormed the besieger camp a month later , killing or capturing over 7 @, @ 000 men and taking all the artillery and the baggage , which turned the whole French campaign into a failure .

Dissatisfied with the outcome of the naval battle , Philip IV , who expected that the French fleet would have been destroyed , and the honour of his navy restored , dismissed and imprisoned Count of Linhares and Admiral Pimienta , among other officers , accusing them of mismanagement and abandonment of their forces . Linhares was replaced by Luis Fernández de Córdoba , Pimienta by Jerónimo Gómez de Sandoval , and Bazán del Viso by Giannettino Doria . Philip IV also appointed his 17 years old illegitimate son John of Austria as Príncipe de la mar , commander of all the Hispanic maritime forces , giving them widespread orders and powers in order to end with the misrule of the Spanish Navy . The French failure at Orbetello , nevertheless , contributed greatly to the reduction the French pressure in Italy . 6 @, @ 000 soldiers from Naples could be consequently carried to Valencia to fight against the French armies in Catalonia . On September , a French expedition led by Charles de la Porte de la Meilleraye , with Portuguese help , succeeded in capturing both the presidis of Piombino and Porto Longone , which encouraged the Francesco I d 'Este , Duke of Modena , to change his allegiance from the Spanish monarchy to France .