



Reconquista and Reconciliation in the Dutch Revolt: The Campaign of Governor-General Alexander Farnese (1578-1592)

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Abstract

The campaign in the Low Countries led by governor-general Alexander Farnese from October 1578 onwards resulted in the reconquest of more cities for the King of Spain than had been achieved by any of his predecessors or successors. It serves here as a starting point for a contextual analysis of the relationship between the ruler and the city defiant during the Dutch Revolt, not only to cast new light on the oft-neglected and complex Spanish Habsburg policies, but also to understand the broader context of questions of resistance and reconciliation during the Dutch Revolt. Most capitulation treaties accorded by Farnese show at least four features at odds with the pattern of repression of urban revolts. The governor aimed at keeping the civic patrimony intact, he granted full pardon and oblivion, he conditionally restored urban privileges and he often felt obliged not to insist on immediate reconciliation with the Catholic Church. The divergent reactions to this Habsburg policy indicate that the Dutch Revolt showed striking features of a civil war, in which not only the conditions of revolt but also of reconciliation caused discord.

Keywords

Low Countries, Dutch Revolt, urban revolts, reconciliation, Alexander Farnese, Philip II, Habsburg dynasty, particularism, privileges

Introduction

In his recent and refreshing monograph on the political culture of the Dutch Revolt, Peter Arnade underlined (amongst many other things) how the urban centers of the Netherlands provided a resourceful laboratory for revolt against Philip II. In the sixth chapter of his book, Arnade shows how from 1572 until 1577 the repeated sacks of rebel cities and the mutinies of Habsburg troops fuelled civic resistance within city walls. The outrage was gradually framed as a legitimated fight for privileges and “freedom” against

the triad of “Spanish soldiers, Furies and King.”¹ Here, the subsequent campaign waged by the Habsburg governor-general Alexander Farnese from October 1578 onwards offers the starting point for a contextual investigation of the relationship between ruler and the city defiant during the Dutch Revolt. Contrary to the analysis offered by Arnade, this contribution will mostly shed light on the Spanish Habsburg strategies before and after besieging a city, while highlighting the ambiguities in the policymaking of the Spanish Crown. This reassessment of the strategies towards defiant and reconciled cities is not only necessary to cast new light on Habsburg tactics, which are often neglected, but also to understand the broader context of questions of resistance and reconciliation during the Dutch Revolt.

As a clever strategist, the Prince (and later Duke) of Parma reconquered many cities for Philip II, more than any of his predecessors or successors, and this despite the considerable losses at the end of his career.² Depending on the historiographical tradition, this campaign has been very differently assessed. Parma was held responsible for dividing the Netherlands with overwhelming military force as he accomplished a *reconquista* in the Low Countries, similar to the Spanish recapture of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors. In most accounts, early modern or subsequent, the “fall” of Antwerp in 1585 sealed the separation of the Seventeen Provinces into the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic.³ However, at the same time,

¹ Peter Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts & Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), especially chapter 6, “Spanish Furies: Sieges, Sacks, and the City Defiant,” 212-250. See also the different contributions in “The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt,” ed. Peter Arnade and Henk Van Nierop, *Journal of Early Modern History* 11:4-5 (2007); *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*, ed. Graham Darby (London, 2001) and *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555-1585*, ed. Henk Van Nierop, Marc Venard, Philip Benedict, Guido Marnef et al. (Amsterdam, 1999).

² Leon Van der Essen, *Alexandre Farnèse, Prince de Parme, Gouverneur Général des Pays-Bas (1545-1592)*, 5 vol. (Brussels, 1933-1937) and *Alessandro Farnese and the Low Countries*, ed. Hans Cools, Sebastiaan Derks, Krista De Jonge (Turnhout, forthcoming).

³ Jan Craeybeckx, “De val van Antwerpen en de scheuring der Nederlanden, gezien door de grote Noordnederlandse geschiedschrijvers van de eerste generatie,” in *1585: Op gescheiden wegen, Acta Colloquii Bruxellensis 22-23 XI 1985*, ed. Jan Craeybeckx, Frank Daelemans, Frank Scheelings (Leuven, 1988), 121-150; Guido Marnef, “Betreurd en/of gevierd: de val van Antwerpen (1585),” *Het geheugen van de Lage Landen*, ed. Jo Tollebeek and Henk Te Velde (Rekkem, 2009) 131-137; Violet Soen, “¿Más allá de la leyenda negra? Léon van der Essen y la historiografía reciente en torno al castigo de las ciudades rebeldes en los Países Bajos (siglos XIV a XVI),” in *El Ejército Español en Flandes 1567-1584*, ed. Leon Van der Essen, Gustaaf Janssens (Yuste, 2008), 45-72.

the campaign also gave birth to a *leyenda rosa*, a more rosy-colored legend, according to which Farnese won the Flemish and Brabantine cities by diplomacy and clemency, thus laying the foundation of “Belgian unity.”⁴ This may derive from the hagiographical tendency inherent in the genre of biography, but it also echoes sixteenth-century readings of Farnese’s campaign. The capitulation treaties signed by the cities he subdued were often presented as treaties of reconciliation.⁵ Farnese’s contemporary enemies also acknowledged his penchant for clemency when signing capitulations, although they evidently warned citizens not to put any trust in this.⁶

At first sight, this contradictory appreciation by contemporaries and historians makes Farnese’s campaign something of a puzzle, especially in comparison to the regime of his predecessors Alba and Don Juan. To make sense of it, we have to broaden our focus from the combat and the capitulation, to include the preceding negotiations and the clauses of the final treaties. At the same time, we should not only explore the city defiant, but also the city reconciled.⁷ In challenging the Black Legend, a leading historian such as Geoffrey Parker has thus concentrated too strictly on the “etiquette of atrocity” and the “logistics of warfare.”⁸ Warfare was part of a wider process; equally important were propaganda, political thought, and reconciliatory gestures, as has already been established for other major events during the Dutch Revolt. This contribution will therefore draw on three types of sources: the official and private correspondence between

⁴ Bart De Groof, “Alexander Farnese and the Origins of Modern Belgium,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Historique à Rome* 63 (1993): 195-221; Leon Van der Essen, *Alexandre Farnèse et les origines de la Belgique Moderne 1545-1592* (Brussels, 1943).

⁵ For instance by an anonymous secretary labeling them as *conférences et traictés de réconciliation* for the dossier in the *Archivo General de Simancas*, folder name for documents in AGS, SP 2562.

⁶ M.P.v.B., *Copie des Briefs gesonden door den Coninc van Spanien in dese onse Nederlanden aen den Prince van Parma gheschreven, (...)*, Brussels, 1583 (Knuttel 664/TEMPO 30592); James Tracy, “Princely *auctoritas* or the Freedom of Europe? Justus Lipsius on a Netherlands Political Dilemma,” *JEMH* 11 (2007): 303-329.

⁷ One exception is María Rodríguez-Salado, “Amor, menosprecio y motines: Felipe II y las ciudades de los Países Bajos antes de la Revolución,” in *Ciudades en conflicto (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, ed. J.I. Fortea and J.E. Gelabert (Madrid, 2008), 181-219.

⁸ Geoffrey Parker, “The Etiquette of Atrocity: The Laws of War in Early Modern Europe,” in *Empire, War and Faith in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Geoffrey Parker (Allen Lane, 2002), 144-168; Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars* (Cambridge, 1972); Jean-Marie Charles, “Le sac des villes dans les Pays-Bas au seizième siècle: Étude critique des règles de guerre,” *Revue internationale d’histoire militaire* 24 (1965): 288-302.

Farnese and King Philip II, the treaties between the governor and the capitulated cities, and contemporary pamphlets discussing the Habsburg strategies.⁹ As will be shown, the military, political, legal, and religious spheres were closely intertwined, and as a result, Farnese was not always the protagonist in his own military campaign.

I

Assuming the governorship of the Netherlands upon the death of Don Juan de Austria in October 1578, Alexander Farnese was immediately trapped in the strategic dilemma of how to pacify the Dutch Revolt. From 1566 onwards, this conflict had developed out of noble discontent, reformed ambitions, and civic outrage over the repression and the behavior of “foreign” soldiers. Under the governorship of Don Juan, then, the political and religious crisis in the Seventeen Provinces had become wide-ranging: only the two provinces of Luxemburg and Namur still supported the King, while the other fifteen provinces defended the authority of the States General, based on the Pacification of Ghent of 1576. When Farnese was invested as governor, however, Philip II had already agreed to hold official peace negotiations with the States General under imperial mediation in Cologne. At the same time, Don Juan had started unofficial talks with contacts in Artois and Hainaut who were disposed towards reconciliation with the King after measures for religious toleration had been permitted by the States General. As the most desirable strategy for restoring order in the Low Countries, Farnese thus had the choice between three options: continuing the fight in Brabant and beyond, negotiating a *pacification générale* with imperial mediation or working towards a smaller *réconciliation particulière* with his own envoys. Initially, he ran all three strategies side by side. He agreed to the Cologne peace talks reluctantly, only permitting them on condition that they would not interfere with the ultimately

⁹ Abbreviations: Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels (AGR), *Papiers de l'État et de l'Audience* (PEA); Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), *Secretaría de Estado* (E), *Secretarías Provinciales* (SP); British Library London (BLL); *Bulletins de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* (BCRH); L.P. Gachard and J. Lefèvre, eds., *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas*, (Brussels, 1848-1960) (*CPhII*), W.P.C. Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamflettenverzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek* (The Hague, 1890-1920) (K.); *The Early Modern Pamphlets Online*, database Brill/UDC Publishers, Leiden (TEMPO).

successful siege of Maastricht. In any case, he preferred the option of a “particular reconciliation.”

Farnese had read the situation correctly: Artois, Hainaut, Walloon Flanders, and a series of nobles accepted a mediated reconciliation with the King. In May 1579, the Treaty of Arras was concluded, and in September 1579, a revised Treaty of Mons sealed the reconciliation of those regions with the King. Both treaties consented to the ratification of the Pacification of Ghent, a new political regime and above all, the departure of the “foreign” troops. All parties agreed on again accepting Catholicism as the exclusive religion. Afterwards, Mechelen, S-Hertogenbosch, and Groningen also accepted reconciliation on the same terms, just as did a number of nobles from the leading families Lalaing, Egmond, and Croÿ.¹⁰ The Revolt was now pacified amongst the majority of the noble elites, whose discontent had sparked the conflict, and the unrest had abated in the regions where Calvinism and the Iconoclastic Fury had been particularly strong. Still, the general peace negotiations with the States General in Cologne failed, after which Philip II decided to outlaw William of Orange and his adherents. The States General responded with the abjuration of the King in 1581, choosing the Duke of Anjou as their new protector.¹¹

For Farnese, it was clear that he could no longer aspire to a more broadly negotiated reconciliation comparable to that in and around the year 1579, but that he had to try to influence each city in Flanders and Brabant individually. In 1580, the governor vainly offered Brussels the opportunity of a negotiated reconciliation with the King, declaring that as the most important city of the *pays de pardeça*, it would be normal if they accepted a royal pardon and returned to the King.¹² The reconciled provinces and nobles, however, made a priority of the reconquest of Tournai, which,

¹⁰ Gustaaf Janssens, “Pacification générale ou réconciliation particulière? Problèmes de guerre et de paix aux Pays-Bas au début du gouvernement d’Alexandre Farnèse (1578-1579),” *Bulletin de l’Institut Historique de Rome* 63 (1993): 251-278; Violet Soen, “Les Malcontents au sein des États-Généraux rebelles aux Pays-Bas (1578-1581): Défense du pouvoir de la noblesse ou défense de l’orthodoxie?,” in *La noblesse et la défense de l’orthodoxie XIII-XVIII^e siècles*, ed. Ariane Boltanski and Frank Mercier (Rennes, 2011), 135-149.

¹¹ Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, “Spectacle and Spin for a Spurned Prince: Civic Strategies in the Entry Ceremonies of the Duke of Anjou in Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent (1582),” *JEMH* 11 (2007): 263-284.

¹² *Lettres de Monseigneur le Prince de Parme, . . . Adressantes aux Bourgeois, Eschevin, etc. . . et habitans de la Ville de Bruxelles: Par lesquelles son Excellence leur presente la grace de sa Maesté: moyennant leur reconciliation*, 6/10/1580, Mons, Velpius (K. 547, TEMPO 30666).

prior to its fall in November 1581, was the only remaining rebellious enclave in so-called Walloon territory. After the subsequent agreement for the return of Spanish and Italian troops, in April 1582, Farnese embarked on his military campaign by raising the siege of Oudenaarde, not coincidentally the birthplace of his mother, Margaret of Parma, natural daughter of Emperor Charles V. By the winter of 1583, despite several losses, he had conquered the ports of Flanders and encircled the larger cities there, taking Ypres, Bruges, and Ghent in the following year. In 1585, he led his troops through Brabant, winning back for the King the cities of Brussels, Mechelen, and most famously Antwerp.¹³ In this way, Farnese succeeded in ousting the Duke of Anjou and in crushing the Calvinist Republics in Flanders and Brabant.

Geoffrey Parker and many others have compellingly shown that Farnese demonstrated military supremacy, managing to control the ever insecure Habsburg logistics of war. In many ways, the Prince of Parma was the right man in the right place, and it may have been his own awareness of this that in 1580 led him to oppose the royal proposal that his mother should assume the task of governor-general while he concentrated exclusively on the task of captain-general.¹⁴ The young commander had gained his military experience as a lieutenant of his friend Don Juan in the victory of Lepanto in 1571 and in the Low Countries campaign from September 1577 onwards. Moreover, he was assisted by Italian engineers, who helped him construct a chain of fortresses and river blockades in Flanders and Brabant. With the same strategic insight, he soon turned the conquered Flemish harbors into landing stages and strongholds of royal privateers.¹⁵ However, his projects were often delayed by a shortage of funds. Philip II only made substantial sums available after the conquest of the Azores in 1583, at the urgent request of Alexander's main councilor, Jean Richardot, who was sent to Madrid to make the case in person.¹⁶ It is significant that Farnese's main victories took place after this money had arrived in the Netherlands, and after the Netherlands had regained priority in the Grand

¹³ Van der Essen, *El Ejército Español*, passim.

¹⁴ Hugo de Schepper, "Le voyage difficile de Marguerite de Parme en Franche-Comté et en Flandre 1580-1583," in *Margherita d'Austria (1522-1586: Costruzioni politiche e diplomazia, tra corte Farnese e Monarchia spagnola*, ed. Sabina Mantini (Rome, 2003), 127-140.

¹⁵ Robert Anthony Stradling, *The Armada of Flanders: Spanish Maritime Policy and European War, 1568-1688* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹⁶ Leon Van der Essen, "La mission du président Richardot en Espagne en 1583. Documents inédits tirés des Archives farnésiennes de Naples," *BCRH* 97 (1933): 321-336.

Strategy of the King.¹⁷ Alexander Farnese's campaign in the Low Countries thus reflects the changes brought by the Military Revolution in early modern warfare: the explosive growth of expensive armies, the importance of fortifications, and the concomitant rise in significance of protracted sieges.¹⁸

Despite his impressive military record for the period up to 1585-1586, Alexander Farnese's reputation was subsequently tarnished by the loss of Nijmegen, Zutphen, Deventer and the fortified cities around Groningen, and above all by the defeat of the Invincible Armada in 1588 and the perilous campaign in France in 1591-2. In fact, during his triumphant march through Flanders and Brabant, Farnese had above all exploited the setbacks of his enemies. The "French Furies," by which Anjou seized several smaller cities in January 1583, eventually meant the end of French support for the States General. The murder of Prince William of Orange in July 1584 further weakened the position of the United Provinces. These were the moments when Farnese won his most important victories. As the States General established its own power, the Prince of Parma was put in a weaker position. The English military aid to the States General in August 1585 seriously diminished the Habsburg chances of recovering Holland and Zeeland, even if Farnese was temporarily helped by English furies and English defections.¹⁹ The appointment in 1589 of Prince Maurice of Nassau, once hailed as the most notable protagonist of the early modern Military Revolution, contributed to the emerging professionalization of the army of the States General. Faced with these challenges, Farnese lost much of the more northern territory.²⁰ Admittedly, Farnese had never approved of the Habsburg campaigns against either the English or the French, but by then Philip II no longer heeded the advice of his governor-general, who

¹⁷ Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven, 1998).

¹⁸ Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 1996, revised edition); *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁹ Simon Adams, "The Decision to Intervene: England and the United Provinces, 1584-1585," in *Felipe II (1527-1598): Europa y la Monarquía Católica. Tomo I: El Gobierno de la Monarquía*, ed. José Martínez Millán (Madrid, 1998), 19-32.

²⁰ Geoffrey Parker, "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): 331-372; Erik Swart, *Krijgsvolk: militaire professionalisering en het ontstaan van het Staatse leger, 1568-1590* (Amsterdam, 2006).

was regarded as a maverick. However brilliant Farnese may have been as a military commander, his campaign was affected by the much broader system of Habsburg international relations.²¹

In the end, as a Prince and from 1586 as Duke of Parma, Farnese's actions were in keeping with his noble status and ancestry. On the battlefield, he fought for his King, ultimately aiming to safeguard the monarchy as the most viable political system. He defended the will of God, ultimately aiming to maintain the exclusive position of Catholicism. And of course he fought for fame, ultimately aiming to gain honor for the House of Parma, in accordance with the desire of his "Italian" dynasty to regain the citadel of Piacenza, as has been set out by María Rodríguez-Salgado.²² In 1556, Alexander's father had received Parma and Piacenza as a fief from the King of Spain, but Philip II had kept a Spanish garrison in the citadel of Piacenza. As a result, Alexander himself had been raised at the Spanish Court, effectively a hostage to reinforce the Habsburg-Farnese agreement. The Farnese lineage, however, proved resilient: their many tasks in the Habsburg composite state were aimed at recovering the citadel of Piacenza. Alexander realized that military success in the Netherlands could gain favors not only for himself, but for the Farnese dynasty in general.²³ And indeed, after the fall of Antwerp Philip II showed his gratitude to Farnese by returning the citadel of Piacenza to him and by honoring him with a knighthood in the Order of the Golden Fleece. Nonetheless, as soon as Farnese thereafter started monopolizing the King's patronage in the Low Countries, by diverting funds for the army, he fell out of grace with his patron and he placed himself in a vulnerable position at the Spanish Court.²⁴ Farnese might have been the superior strategist, but he only achieved his military victories when the necessary funds were available and when the enemy was internally weakened, and only at times when Philip II favored him personally.

²¹ Geoffrey Parker and Fernando González de León, "The Grand Strategy of Philip II and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1559-1584," *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War*, 215-232.

²² María Rodríguez-Salgado, "Almost a royal eagle': Alexander Farnese and the Spanish Monarchy," *Alessandro Farnese and the Low Countries* (forthcoming).

²³ Farnese to Juan de Idiáquez, 14/04/1584: AGS E 1486 fo. 47 (original).

²⁴ José Eloy Hortal Muñoz, "Alessandro Farnese y la Corte de Felipe II: Luchas y facciones cortesanas en Madrid y Bruselas entre 1585 y 1592" and Alicia Esteban Estríngana, "Veeduría general del ejército de Flandes. Sobre las raíces del descrédito político del príncipe de Parma (1585-1587)" in *Alessandro Farnese and the Low Countries* (forthcoming).

II

The struggle between cities and their rulers has long been interpreted as a clash of different logics, particularly since the studies conducted by Charles Tilly and Wim Blockmans.²⁵ For the highly urbanized Low Countries, this analysis seems particularly accurate: the Burgundian Dukes and their Habsburg successors aimed to crush urban opposition—if necessary by the total destruction of a city—whereas the rich and powerful cities fought for privileges and so-called “liberties.”²⁶ Wim Blockmans and Marc Boone even discerned a “Burgundian scenario of repression” of city revolts with removal of privileges, the imposition of heavy fines,²⁷ the dismantling of crucial urban spaces, and ritual punishments. Peter Arnade has more recently shown how the same antagonism between ruler and city was at play during the Dutch Revolt. The royal troops’ cruel sacks and furies, most notably in Mechelen, Zutphen, and Naarden in 1572-1573, certainly echoed the Burgundian sacks of Dinant and Liège, and the Habsburg destruction of Théroanne and Hesdin.²⁸ In the same light, Alexander in 1578 sacked the small Brabantine city of Zichem and in 1579 the more important city of Maastricht. Like many of his predecessors,

²⁵ *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe A.D. 1000 to 1800*, ed. Wim Blockmans and Charles Tilly (Boulder, CO, 1994), 218-250.

²⁶ Wim Blockmans, “La répression de révoltes urbaines comme méthode de centralisation dans les Pays-Bas bourguignons,” in *Milan et les Etats bourguignons: deux ensembles politiques princiers entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance (XIV^e-XV^e siècles)* (Bâle, 1988), 5-9; Marc Boone, “Destroying and Reconstructing the City: The Inculcation and Arrogation of Princely Power in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands (14th-16th centuries),” in *The Propagation of Power in the Medieval West*, ed. A. Gosman, A. J. Vanderjagt and J. Veenstra (Groningen, 1997), 1-33; Wim Blockmans, “Alternatives to Monarchical Centralization: The Great Tradition of Revolt in Flanders and Brabant,” in *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Koenigsberger (München, 1988), 145-154; Marc Boone and Maarten Prak, “Patricians and Burghers: The Great and the Little Tradition of Urban Revolt in the Low Countries,” *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective*, ed. Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen (Cambridge, 1995), 99-134; Peter Stabel, “Te vuur en te zwaard. Typologie, oorzaken en consequenties van de verwoestingen in de kleinere Vlaamse steden tijdens de late Middeleeuwen,” *Verwoesting en wederopbouw van steden van de middeleeuwen tot beden* (Brussels, 1999), 97-126.

²⁷ Wouter Ryckbosch, “Stedelijk initiatief of hertogelijke repressie? Financiële hervormingen en kredietbeleid te Gent (1453-1495),” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 4 (2007): 3-28.

²⁸ Arnade, *Beggars*, 212-215.

he routinely allowed his troops to pillage the countryside when he was short of funds.

Nevertheless, Farnese continually reassessed this general “Burgundian scenario” in the light of the changing circumstances of war and economy. After the fall of Oudenaarde, for example, Farnese argued that it was now better to keep cities intact and undamaged, abandoning the path of “rigor,” even though the Habsburgs were entitled to destroy the city and banish the rebels. When, in 1585, Philip II suggested destroying a city in Gelre in order to prompt others to seek reconciliation—as had happened in Zutphen in 1573—Farnese reiterated that it was better not to punish cities that had already capitulated. He thus wanted to inspire reconciliation by limiting royal destruction. The King readily agreed to this new approach, probably under the influence of Cardinal Granvelle. Philip II even urged his governor to consult local civic magistrates more often, instead of the military commanders “who always choose the most severe solution.”²⁹ In any case, the long blockades had reduced most of the besieged citizens to starvation and penury already, so the military commander did not feel the need to punish the citizens further by dismantling their civic patrimony. Time and again, the governor-general expressed his concern at economic setbacks, poor harvests, and epidemics in the reconciled cities.³⁰

Remarkably, after the capitulation, Farnese was always willing to grant a full pardon to the conquered cities and citizens to facilitate reconciliation. This had not been the case under Alba, who had been very selective in offering pardon to reconquered cities.³¹ A pardon provided immunity from prosecution, the resumption of all political and economic activities, and the return of any confiscated property. The clauses of pardon included in the capitulation treaties were cast as a sign of the virtue of “clemency.” As legal anthropologists have pointed out, a pardon also re-established the dialogue between the King and his repentant vassals.³² Usually, Farnese

²⁹ Matthew C. Waxman, “Strategic Terror: Philip II and Sixteenth-Century Warfare,” *War in History* 4 (1997): 339-347; Philip II to Farnese, 15/09/1584: AGR PEA 180 fos. 44-45 (original); for a city in Gelre, Philip II to Farnese: 7/03/1585: AGR PEA 180 fos. 132-136 (original, decryption in the margin), see Lefèvre, *CPh* III, 16-19 (35).

³⁰ Farnese to Mondragón, 17/7/1582: AGR PEA 1751/2, unnumbered leaf, see *CPh* II, 318 (645); on the Flemish cities, Farnese to Philip II, 20/04/1584: AGR PEA 188 fos. 22-24 (minute), see *CPh* II, 466-467 (999).

³¹ Parker, “The Etiquette of Atrocity.”

³² *Le pardon*, ed. Pascal Texier and Jacqueline Hoareau-Dodinau (Limoges, 1999), 11-13.

granted a pardon to the *corps de la ville* as well as the *bourgeois et anciens manans*; increasingly, he also granted *oubli du passé*, a kind of amnesty wider than a pardon.³³ This *oubli du passé* was an important means of forgiving and forgetting what had happened. Also in the French Wars of Religion, it provided a tool for political and confessional reconciliation. In the Southern Netherlands, however, it served as a means of forgetting the “heretical past,” whereas the political culture of the insurgents was very much founded upon the duty to spread the tales of persecution and repression to keep their memory alive.³⁴

In addition, the Habsburg position on the restriction of urban privileges was continuously reassessed throughout Farnese’s campaign. Backed by the Council of Troubles, the Duke of Alba had abrogated many privileges in his repression of the Iconoclastic Fury and of the rebellion of the Prince of Orange and the Beggars. The most enigmatic event was probably the transfer of the privileges of Utrecht from the city hall to the Habsburg citadel Vredenburg. Nevertheless, as early as 1574, Alba’s successor promised the States General that he would respect all local and provincial privileges, in order to appease discontent. This promise was endorsed by the King and later codified in the Eternal Edict of 1577 and the Treaty of Arras and Mons in 1579.³⁵ Similar offers were made in 1579 during the peace negotiations in Cologne, showing that not all privileges had yet been restored, but at least that the new royal approach favored appeasement and reconciliation on the sensitive issue of privileges. In this context, it makes sense that most treaties of reconciliation negotiated by Farnese did not overtly restrict the city’s privileges, as had previously been the practice. On the contrary, most treaties announced the *restoration* of all privileges, whether “those held before the troubles” or “those held under the Emperor.” However, beneath these rather clement promises was another more menacing level: for a city like Ghent the restoration of privileges meant a return to the loathed imperial *Concessio Carolina* of 1540, which had been

³³ *Traicté de reconciliation de la ville de Niemmegen*, 15/04/1585: AGR PEA 591 fo. 68v (copy) and AGR PEA 1437/5 (folder 5), unnumbered leaf.

³⁴ Penny Roberts, “The Languages of Peace during the French Religious Wars,” *Cultural and Social History* 4 (2007): 293-311; see the VNC-project led by Judith Pollmann at the University of Leiden: *Tales of the Revolt, Memory, Oblivion and Identity in the Low Countries, 1566-1700*: <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/history/talesoftherevolt/>.

³⁵ Declaration of Requesens to the States General, 06/11/1574: AGS E 2842, unnumbered (point 6, f. 2/1v); *Eeuwich edict ende gebodt opt accord gedaen, tusschen heere Johan van Oistenrijck...*, Antwerp, Christoffel Plantijn, 1577 (Van Alphen 19/TEMPO 46273).

annulled during the Calvinist Republic. In the case of Brussels and Mechelen, the privileges remained subject to a later negotiation. In addition, guilds, civic militias, chambers of rhetoric and confraternities faced heavy problems in the restoration of their privileges.

The most crucial point concerning privileges of the city was the appointment of a new civic magistracy, which in circumstances of war often required the establishment of an entirely new city council. Philip II attached great importance to this “purification” of the city councils, as he thought it to be the most important means for restoring “order” and “the obedience of his subjects.”³⁶ On the ground, however, Farnese had to mediate between immediately integrating the *reconciliati* and rehabilitating those loyalists that had fled or been exiled during the rebellion.³⁷ Often, he lacked candidates meeting the conditions of good past behavior and Catholicism. For the Flemish port cities, he even admitted to having chosen “Catholics and the *moins mauvais*.”³⁸ Obviously, in this context, the appointment of a new city council involved an outright violation of the city’s privileges, which often provided for an element of continuity and even co-optation between successive councils. In Antwerp, for example, it was impossible to allow the rebel council, which included many Calvinists, to appoint its successor. Instead, Farnese relied on the advice of his most important ministers and even of the archbishop of Mechelen. Still, only 4 of the 18 newly appointed members in the magistrate of Antwerp had even held office before 1579.³⁹ For the royal commissioners, however, there was less of a contradiction between the appointment of a new council and the restitution of privileges to reconquered cities. In Zutphen, for example, the citizens wanted the magistrate to comprise eighteen men, representing the four guilds, as had been the case before Alba’s reduction of the council to twelve representatives. The royal commissioners protested that it was

³⁶ Philip II to Farnese: AGR PEA 179 fos. 153-156 (original), see Lefèvre, *CPb* II, 448-449 (963): “avecq le renouvellement des magistratz consideré que le principal point de l’obeissance des subiectz avecq tout ce qui depend de la police, gist en la bonne election et choix des magistratz.”

³⁷ Geert Janssen, “Exiles and the Politics of Reintegration in the Dutch Revolt,” *Historical Journal* 94 (2009): 36-52.

³⁸ Farnese to Philip II, 26/09/1583: AGR PEA 187 fos. 185-191 (minute), see Lefèvre, *CPb* II, 409-411 (867): “prenant les catholicques et moins mauvais.”

³⁹ Guido Marnef, “Reconquering a Rebellious City: Alessandro Farnese and the Siege and Recatholicization of Antwerp,” in *Alexander Farnese and the Low Countries* (forthcoming), passim.

not even possible to find twelve Catholics who had not fled and were wealthy enough to hold office. Nevertheless, the royal commissioners insisted on restoring and respecting the city's privileges.⁴⁰

The organization of urban defense was historically another bone of contention between cities and their rulers. Under the regime of the States General, many so-called "Spanish" citadels had been destroyed, out of revenge against the Spanish soldiers stationed or mutinying there. However, in most cities Farnese thought it prudent to reconstruct the citadel, so that the soldiers did not have to be billeted on citizens. Farnese therefore urged the reconstruction of the citadels of Antwerp and Ghent, but he was wise enough not to put townspeople too much in charge. For his Joyous Entry into Antwerp, he even covered the citadel with luxury textiles, in order to soften its symbolic threat.⁴¹ Which troops were permitted to enter the city was also a sensitive matter, especially given the many "furies" that cities had endured. For the Flemish port cities for example, Farnese negotiated an agreement in which only troops approved by the citizens could enter the city.⁴² In Bruges, he even agreed no longer to maintain a garrison in the city, although he admitted that this made him feel subject to the "good will" of the citizens.⁴³

So, as Alba had done, Farnese tried to find an individual compromise between punishment and clemency for each city. He wanted to hit Ghent harder than Bruges, to punish the city for breaking off reconciliation negotiations. So while prepared to forgive the city, like a lenient father towards *enfants desvoyez*, he wanted "just like Charles V" to have six citizens put to judgment, and the city council "to humiliate themselves, to show all subservience and obedience necessary and to declare to accept everything what the King offered to them." Due to renewed war, the ceremony never took place.⁴⁴ Equally, harsher conditions were imposed on Brussels and Mechelen

⁴⁰ *Memorandum on the renewal of the magistrate in Zutphen*: AGR PEA 1437/6 (folder 6), unnumbered leaf.

⁴¹ Farnese to Philip II, 30/09/1585: AGS E 589 fo. 80, see Lefèvre, *CPhIIIII*, fos. 55-56 (131); M. Thöfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt* (Zwolle, 2007).

⁴² *Points et articles accordés par le prince de Parme aux bourgeois de Nieuport et aux soldats étant en garnison dans cette ville*, 23/7/1583: AGR PEA 591 fos. 38v-39 (copy).

⁴³ Farnese to Philip II, 15/1/1585: AGR PEA 188 fos. 119-120 (minute), see Lefèvre, *CPh III*, 5 (6).

⁴⁴ Reconciliation treaty Ghent, 17/10/1584: AGR PEA 591 fo. 95, ed. L.P. Gachard, *BCRH*, 3.s., 13, 104-108, "en que lesdicts députez, se humilians et démonstrans toute

than on their Flemish counterparts. Only Antwerp, thanks to its central importance, was really able to negotiate a better deal, even though the city had resisted the longest before capitulation.⁴⁵ On the whole, Farnese did show a willingness to make some concessions in the political sphere, but each of these was carefully measured, and ultimately aimed at restoring royal authority.

III

The provision of a temporary *ius emigrandi* for Protestants has often been cited as the most concrete example of Spanish concessions during Farnese's campaign. Some, but certainly not all, treaties of reconciliation allowed Protestant citizens to remain in the reconquered city for a limited period of time, and even to profess their religion privately during this period of grace as long as they did not cause scandal. These protestant citizens were also given permission to sell their property when they decided to emigrate, and even some time after they had left. Protestants who wanted to stay permanently, however, would still have to be reconciled to the Catholic Church. Such clauses in the treaties of capitulation could easily serve to stress that the King had designs upon neither "the body nor the property" of his subjects, and that he wanted in so far as possible to keep the economy running. The length of the term allowed for reconciliation or departure served as a means of more lenient or severe punishment: Bruges received the most favorable conditions, with no deadline whatsoever being imposed; the protestants of Ghent and Brussels were granted two years, those of Mechelen seven months, and of Ypres nothing. Again, only Antwerp's magistrates negotiated hard on this point and obtained a *ius emigrandi* for four years, where Farnese had only wanted to grant three.

Even if the *ius emigrandi* was only a temporary concession, the clauses were remarkable for many reasons. Firstly, royal anti-heresy legislation had always prescribed confiscation of goods and imprisonment for heretics, with all property rights forfeit, so there would never have been any question of selling goods when or after emigrating.⁴⁶ Secondly, Philip II had always refused solutions that too closely resembled the Peace of Augsburg

submission et obéissance, déclaroient estre prestz d'accepter et se contenter de tout ce que de la part de Sa Majesté leur seroit offert."

⁴⁵ Marnef, "Reconquering a City," *passim*.

⁴⁶ Aline Goosens, *Les Inquisitions modernes dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux (1519-1633)*, 2 vol. (Brussels, 1997-1998).

or other imperial concessions, and here there was a clear resemblance to that treaty's *Abzugsrecht*.⁴⁷ Thirdly, when the King had previously granted general pardons during the Revolt, he had always insisted on prior reconciliation with the Catholic Church as a condition of clemency. The system of the *ius emigrandi* thus temporarily abandoned this condition by only imposing conversion at the end of the period of grace.⁴⁸

Still, Farnese himself never gladly granted the *ius emigrandi*, doing so only when constrained to by his representative at the negotiation table. Often, instigators or prominent Calvinists were not granted a pardon, even though the treaties for Zutphen and Steenberghe, for instance, allowed them to appeal for clemency after reconciliation with the Catholic Church.⁴⁹ On each occasion, the governor asked the advice of bishops and theologians. For the negotiations with Bruges, he invited not only the bishop of Bruges, but also those of Roermond and Tournai for a four-hour deliberation.⁵⁰ During the siege of Antwerp, he consulted the bishops of Mechelen and Antwerp, but also the papal nuncio Francisco Bonhomini.⁵¹ Whenever possible, Farnese did not include the *ius emigrandi* clause. Like his predecessors, he did not understand why the bishops would concede even more than he himself would permit.⁵² Despite the official pardon and terms of reconciliation, the governor still ordered enquiries into the 'most pernicious' heretics, or those "causing scandal."⁵³ Whereas in the political

⁴⁷ Monique Weis, "La Paix d'Augsbourg de 1555: Un modèle pour les Pays-Bas? L'ambassade des princes luthériens allemands auprès de Marguerite de Parme en 1567," *Entre Royaume et Empire: Frontières, rivalités et modèles* (Neuchâtel, 2000), 87-100; *Ibidem*, *Les Pays-Bas espagnols et les États du Saint Empire (1559-1579): Priorités et enjeux de la diplomatie en temps de troubles* (Brussels, 2003).

⁴⁸ Violet Soen, *Geen pardon zonder paus! Studie over de complementariteit van het koninklijk en pauselijk generaal pardon (1570-1574) en over inquisiteur-generaal Michael Baius (1560-1576)* (Brussels, 2007); *Ibidem*, "De reconciliatie van 'kettters' in de zestiende-eeuwse Nederlanden (1520-1590)," *Trajecta* 14 (2005): 357-359.

⁴⁹ *Pardon de la ville de Zutphen*, 02/1585: AGR PEA 591 fo. 51 and ARA PEA 1437/6, unnumbered leaf (minute); *Pardon de la ville de Steenberghe*, 2/1584: AGR PEA 591 fos. 44-46.

⁵⁰ Farnese to Philip II, 21/05/1584: AGS E 588 fo. 32, see Lefèvre, *CPh* II, 477-479 (1014).

⁵¹ Marnef, "Reconquering a Rebellious City," and Van der Essen, *Alexandre Farnèse*, I, 114-116 and 125-127.

⁵² Philip II to Farnese, 17/08/1585: AGS E 589 fo. 33, see Lefèvre, *CPh* III, 45 (109) and Farnese to Philip II, 6/06/1585: AGS E 589 fo. 101, see Lefèvre, *CPh* III, 35 (81).

⁵³ Farnese to Philip II, 26/09/1583: AGR PEA 187 fos. 185-191 (minute), see Lefèvre, *CPh* II, 409-411 (867): "aïans aussi ordonné commissaires, pour informer des plus pernicious demourez en villes."

sphere, he showed a readiness to make concessions, in the religious sphere he was much more reluctant.

What to the King and his governor looked like a generous concession *in fide*, brought little comfort to convinced Protestants: in the end, they still had to leave and sell their goods, and they received no formal recognition of their faith. When the offer of *ius emigrandi* was discussed in the peace negotiations at Breda in 1575 and at Cologne in 1579, it was vetoed by the insurgents as insufficient. When advocating peace negotiations, the Ghent leader Jan van Hembyze thought that Philip II would allow the same conditions as his father had done in the Peace of Augsburg.⁵⁴ The Antwerp burgomaster Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde also tried to convince Farnese that “real clemency” consisted of permitting things that went against one’s heart and opinion, such as freedom of religion.⁵⁵ According to Michel de Waele, Alexander Farnese was therefore “stronger and wiser” than the French Henri IV, whose clemency involved far-reaching concessions to the Reformed.⁵⁶ Still, during the reconciliation period, many Protestant and better-off citizens emigrated to the Dutch Republic, the Holy Roman Empire, France, or England. The concession of the *ius emigrandi* thus proved detrimental to Farnese’s policy of reviving the economies of reconquered cities. From an economic point of view, the concession of *ius emigrandi* made his position weaker, not stronger.

The ultimate aim of the *ius emigrandi* was still to encourage conversion and reconciliation to the Catholic Church, to underpin a broader Counter Reformation, and ultimately to implement Tridentine Catholicism. In cities that did not receive a reconciliation period, citizens were required to convert immediately. In Bruges, the city council decided in 1587 to amend the seventh article of its treaty of reconciliation to insist now on the reconversion of all citizens to the Catholic Church within a month, “as it was

⁵⁴ *Middelen ende conditien, door de welcke d’Inghesetenen der gheunieerde Provincien, met der Majestyt vanden Coninck van Spaignen (...) mits behoorlicke verseekertheyt, zouden moghen accorderen*, n.p., 1584 (K. 676); Refutation of: *Ondersoekinghe ende examinatie vande middelen. Ende conditien, door de welcke de Inghesetene der geunieerde Provincien... Van sommigen ghepretendeerde Vredemakers inde stadt van Ghendt voorghedraghen*, n.p., 1584 (K. 677).

⁵⁵ Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde to Richardot, 14/07/1585: AGR PEA 586 fo. 30, see BCRH (3e s.) 9 349-352 (no. 17).

⁵⁶ Michel De Waele, “Entre concorde et intolérance: Alexandre Farnèse et la Pacification des Pays-Bas,” in *De Michel de L’Hospital à l’édit de Nantes. Politique et religion face aux Églises*, ed. Thierry Wanegfellen (Paris, 2002), 51-70.

always dangerous for a *res publica* to treat heretics too leniently, as they always desired rebellion and revolt.”⁵⁷ Generally, Catholic priests and bishops were pleased with citizens’ apparent willingness to be reconciled, especially when the number of conversions peaked at the end of the period of reconciliation. The Antwerp bishop Laevinus Torrentius noted 1,500 conversions five days after the end of the reconciliation term, 1,800 some weeks later, 3,000 three months later, and 6,000 two years later. Degrees of opportunism and abuse were present, but the bishop made an effort to identify and punish fraud.⁵⁸

Farnese himself tried hard to engage good priests and preachers, trained in the arts of religious conversion and able to explain doctrine “in detail.” The governor organized special meetings between bishops, magistrates, and members of the mendicant orders, particularly the Jesuits and the Capuchins, to discuss how to bring the “multitude of heretics” back on to the right path. In his opinion, unskilled preachers could do more harm than good.⁵⁹ He took a personal interest in the restoration of sacred places and the return of church property to the clergy, a process described in depth by Andrew Spicer.⁶⁰ The magistracy of Ghent had tried to retain confiscated church properties, but Farnese argued that everybody, including the clergy, should get their property back. Moreover, he forced the reconciled city councils to pay for the renovation of clerical properties.⁶¹ In 1586, Pope Sixtus V rewarded the governor with the distinction of a papal sword and hat, despite the fact that he had granted some concessions to the Reformed. Therefore, at the height of his campaign, Farnese had achieved

⁵⁷ Philip II to Olivares, 22/10/1584: AGS E 945 fo. 6 (minute); *Acte du duc de Parme portant approbation d’une résolution des bourgmestres et échevins de la ville de Bruges par laquelle il était enjoint aux réformés de revenir au giron de l’Eglise catholique dans le délai d’un mois, à peine d’avoir à sortir de la ville*, 26/1/1587: AGR PEA 587 fo. 259 (copy), see AGR PEA 189, fo. 109 (copy).

⁵⁸ J. Hendriks, *Reconciatie te Antwerpen (1585-1600)*, unpublished license thesis (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1965), 57-72.

⁵⁹ Farnese to Hauchinus, 6/10/1585: AGR PEA 1806 unnumbered leaf, see Lefèvre, *CPh* III, 58-59 (137) and *Instructions to Hauchinus and Vendeville*, 31/10/1585: AGR PEA 192/7 unnumbered leaf.

⁶⁰ Andrew Spicer, “After Iconoclasm: Reconciliation and Resacralisation in the Southern Netherlands, c. 1566-1586,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* (forthcoming).

⁶¹ Again, the governor tried to mobilize as many bishops and clerics as possible for this reconciliation process: One bishop, Rythovius, died in the process of reconsecrating *églises et lieux saints*; Farnese to Philip II, 30/11/1583: AGR PEA 187 fos. 209-210 (minute).

his wishes: the restitution of the citadel of Piacenza, the election as Knight of the Golden Fleece, and the honor of papal distinctions.

IV

The way that rebel pamphlets disputed the promises, concessions and clemency of Philip II and his governor Farnese shows that the new Habsburg strategy was perceived as credible by parts of the population, or at least, that the insurgents felt obliged to respond to it.⁶² *Un gentilhomme amateur de la patrie et du repos publique*, most probably Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde, a key advisor to the Prince of Orange and burgomaster of Antwerp at its fall, acknowledged the royal strategy of clemency, but he was convinced that this was a temporary expedient and that the King would still seek revenge in the end. And had Homer and King Solomon not warned never to underestimate the possibility of royal vengeance?⁶³ Another pamphlet discussed at length a letter from Philip II to Farnese recommending the use of pardon and reconciliation. But, the pamphleteer argued, Philip's clemency was only a ploy to disguise his desire for war and destruction. Habsburg leniency (*soeticheyf*) was a trap.⁶⁴ Yet another author, a *bon patriot et bourgeois de la ville de Gand*, pointed out that the proffered clemency was useless, as it did not include a pardon for the Reformed, and claimed that the King acted on the principle that *haereticis non est servanda fides*.⁶⁵ The States of Holland also denounced Farnese's "virtues" as the dissembling of a Machiavellian prince.⁶⁶ In turn, Farnese urged citizens not to believe these rumors and reiterated his offer of pardon and amnesty, promising *entière oubliance*.⁶⁷

⁶² Monica Stensland, "Not as Bad as All That: The Strategies and Effectiveness of Loyalist Propaganda in the Early Years of Alexander Farnese's Governorship," *Dutch Crossing* 31 (2007): 91-112.

⁶³ *Discours d'un gentilhomme amateur de la patrie et du repos pubicque, sur le fait de la paix et de la guerre en ces pays-bas* (...), n.p., 1584, (K. 705-706 in Dutch, TEMPO 30580).

⁶⁴ M.P.v.B., *Copie des Briefts gesonden*..., see footnote 6.

⁶⁵ "La religion est en son endroit une faute inexpiable & l'abiuration de son nom un peché irremissible"; *Response d'un bon patriot et bourgeois de la ville de Gand* (...); s.n., n.p., 1583 (Knuttel 633-634, TEMPO 30604).

⁶⁶ Martin Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555-1590* (Cambridge, 2002), 281.

⁶⁷ Farnese to the dean of the archers' guild in Antwerp, 13/11/1584: BLL Ms. Add. 33.954 fos. 29-30.

For these reasons, Alexander Farnese's most recent biographer, Juan Carlos Losada, characterizes his triumphs in Flanders and Brabant as "diplomatic successes" rather than military victories.⁶⁸ Similarly, Leon van der Essen, his first scholarly biographer, depicted the Prince as both a skilful commander and a lenient diplomat.⁶⁹ Farnese indeed always offered the possibility to negotiate, but such offers seldom led to successful and voluntary negotiations as they had in the period from 1578 until 1580. During the renewed offensive against Oudenaarde, two diplomats were sent to the city to offer a royal pardon and moderate surrender conditions. Later, the same was done in Brussels, Ghent, and Antwerp. And after the fall of Antwerp, Farnese reiterated the offer of reconciliation to the rebel cities in Holland and Zeeland.⁷⁰ Of course, these negotiations and offers of reconciliation were strategic moves to further the aims of his campaign. Closer investigation even reveals that the governor was usually urged to proceed with negotiation offers by the main advisors in his *conseil d'état, de guerre et de prince*. After the French Furies for example, the governor strongly doubted whether his "just and reasonable offers" would convince the many "heretics" seeking "freedom of religion." Nevertheless, his council decided in favor of as many offers of reconciliation as possible, both by the governor and by the reconciled advisors themselves. Such a diplomatic solution was mostly advocated by the Walloon noblemen who had been reconciled with the King in 1579 and who now acted as *moienneurs et intercesseurs*.⁷¹ Only in 1584 was their intervention decisive, with their peer Charles of Croÿ, governor of insurgent Bruges, where negotiations indeed prevented a lengthy siege. In most cases, however, the negotiations were prematurely aborted, as was the case in Oudenaarde, Brussels, Ghent, and Antwerp.⁷²

⁶⁸ Juan Carlos Losada, *Los generales de Flandes, Alejandro Farnesio y Ambrosio de Spinola*, (Madrid, 2007), 101-139 (capítulo III: los éxitos diplomáticos).

⁶⁹ Van der Essen, *Farnèse*, II, 6.

⁷⁰ Chris Hibben, *Gouda in Revolt: Particularism and Pacifism in the Revolt of the Netherlands 1572-1588* (Utrecht, 1983), 218.

⁷¹ "pour offrir d'estre moienneurs et intercesseurs vers moy au nom de V.M. a fin de pourveoir a ladite reconciliation," quoted from Farnese to Philip II, 25/01/1583: AGR PEA 187 fos. 134-140 (minute).

⁷² Alastair Duke, "Calvinist Loyalism: Jean Haren, Chimay and the Demise of the Calvinist Republic of Bruges," in *Dissident Identities in the Early Modern Low Countries*, ed. Alastair Duke, Judith Pollmann, and Andrew Spicer (Aldershot, 2009), 251-272; Herman Vanderlinden, "Beleg en val in 1584," *Het eind van een rebelse droom* "Opstellen over het calvinistisch bewind te Gent (1577-1584) en de terugkeer van de stad onder de gehoorzaamheid van de koning van Spanje (17 september 1584)", ed. Johan Decavele (Ghent, 1984), 103-112.

So not the negotiations, but the discourse of royal and personal clemency was pivotal in Farnese's strategy of reconciliation. The power of pardon was a royal prerogative, but the governor gradually turned the granting of clemency and pardon into personal propaganda. In Ypres, the governor referred to the royal preference for clemency over rigor, while stressing that *he* pardoned the citizens and would henceforth treat them equally to those who had already pledged allegiance to the King.⁷³ In Oudenaarde and in Diksmuide he promised not to prosecute anybody for past crimes.⁷⁴ It is hardly surprising that the Conseil Privé protested against this usurpation of the royal prerogative of pardon.⁷⁵ This new discourse of clemency and reconciliation enabled Farnese to undermine rebel political theory and propaganda, which denounced the innate cruelty of the Spaniards.⁷⁶ As in classical and humanist thought, clemency served as the antonym of tyranny and cruelty, and it helped to dissociate Farnese's policy from the Alba regime and the associations of Spanish tyranny. As Caesar had shown, many victories should include clemency. Farnese's steady string of triumphs belied Alba's old fear that clemency could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Farnese was well aware of the challenge of this kind of propaganda, as shown by his refusal to send out royal letters with the word *réduction*, asking for new ones with the word *réconciliation* instead.⁷⁷

Michel de Waele has argued that the treaties of reconciliation with Farnese could be considered "contrats de fidélité," in which reciprocal pardon

⁷³ *Traité de réduction de la ville d'Ypre à l'obéissance de Philippe II*, 7/04/1584: AGR PEA 591 fo. 99, published in *BCRH Série III*, 13 (1872), 80-82 (CCCXXXII).

⁷⁴ *Capitulation accordée par le prince de Parme aux gouverneur, magistrat, gens de guerre et bourgeois de la ville d'Audenarde*, 5/07/1582: AGR PEA 591 fos. 37v-39, see *BCRH Série III*, 13 (1872), 75-77 (CCCXXIX), 76; *Points et articles accordés par le prince de Parme aux officiers et soldats ainsi qu'aux magistrat, bourgeois, manants et habitants de la ville de Dixmude*, 31/07/1583: AGR PEA 591 fos. 46v-47, see *BCRH Série III*, 13 (1871), 79-80 (CCCXXXI).

⁷⁵ Conseil Privé to Farnese, 12/09/1584: AGR PEA 1056 fos. 31-39.

⁷⁶ Stensland, "Not as Bad"; Koenraad Swart, "The Black Legend during the Eighty Years War," *Britain and the Netherlands*, ed. J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman (The Hague, 1975), V: 36-57.

⁷⁷ Michel De Waele, "Entre concorde et intolérance: Alexandre Farnèse et la Pacification des Pays-Bas," 51-70, whereas the Duke of Alba had refused to do so because he saw it as signaling equality between the parties; Alba to Chantonnay, 25/11/1568: AGS E 659 fo. 16 (copy): "y en las dichas letras no trata el emperador de perdon sino de reconciliacion como si fuesse entre yguales."

was crucial.⁷⁸ However, Farnese's pardon was that of a victor and the city had to accept it.⁷⁹ The restitution of privileges and the pardon and oblivion were intended to lead people to forget the insurgent demand for the ratification of the Pacification of Ghent and to overlook the Act of Abjuration, on the basis of which the States General assumed wide powers and granted degrees of religious toleration. Moreover, the offer of clemency only worked when Farnese was strong on the battlefield and thus did not yield success anymore after 1586. In any case, the threat of war and of mutiny was the most potent argument for cities finally to accept the clemency of the Habsburg governor and return to royal obedience. Clemency was the carrot, warfare the stick. Even when negotiations were started, they were broken off when citizens were prepared to continue their fight for more honorable conditions of surrender. The offer of negotiation and the granting of a pardon and oblivion may thus not have facilitated the capitulation itself, but it supported the subsequent reconciliation process. Nonetheless, many citizens, and especially Protestants, did not accept the "clement offers" and decided to depart from the reconquered territory to seek a safe haven elsewhere. As a result, Antwerp for example was left with only half of its original population, and in an economically deplorable state. There was less such emigration when the Republic (re)conquered some of the cities that had previously been under royal authority, allowing equally full pardon, restitution of most privileges and some degrees of toleration.⁸⁰ As a result, the Dutch Revolt was not only a civil dispute concerning the legitimacy of the *ius resistendi* against the King, but also concerning the appropriate conditions for reconciliation with him.

V

To conclude, then, if we are in the process of reassessing the Grand Narrative of the Dutch Revolt, the archetypal antagonism between the Habsburg

⁷⁸ Michel De Waele, "Henri IV, politicien monarchomaque? Les contrats de fidélité entre le roi et les Français," in *Le traité de Vervins*, ed. J.-F. Labourdette, J.-P. Poussou en M.-C. Vignal (Paris, 2000), 117-134, 122.

⁷⁹ Michel Cassan, "La réduction des villes ligueuses à l'obéissance," *Nouvelle Revue du Seizième Siècle* 22 (2004): 159-174, 161 and 166-167.

⁸⁰ Paul Brood, "Het 'Tractaat van Reductie' van 1594: Overzicht van de gebeurtenissen en tekst van het Tractaat," *Van beeldenstorm tot reductie van Groningen* (Groningen, 1994), 11-26.

dynasty and the Dutch cities should also be reconsidered through contextual political analysis.⁸¹ The Spanish Habsburg governors were willing to reassess their own policies and those of their predecessors. In this context, Farnese proved a skilful strategist indeed, wanting to prevent his regime from being associated with that of Alba. Still, each treaty of capitulation and reconciliation was forged on the battlefield as well as around the conference table, and as a result, capitulation treaties included clauses to which Farnese agreed only reluctantly. The analysis above has shown that the treaties signed during Farnese's campaign therefore to some extent diverged from the traditional "Burgundian scenario of repression," as well as from the pan-European struggle between "voracious states" and "obstructing cities."⁸² Most (but not all) of the treaties concluded between cities and Farnese show at least four remarkable sets of clauses. Firstly, even if the governor did reserve to the King the right to destroy the city, he aimed to keep the reconquered city unharmed so that the economy could revive as quickly as possible. Secondly, he granted full pardon to the city and its citizens. Thirdly, rather than curtailing urban privileges, he restored them in full, even if he often required further clarification. Fourthly, despite Farnese's reluctance, there was no insistence on immediate orthodoxy or reconciliation with the Catholic Church. So the age-old antagonism between rulers and cities took place at a much more subtle level during this campaign. Fines were often replaced by subsidies for the restoration of ecclesiastical property. The restitution of the city's privileges did not exclude exceptional procedures for the establishment of a new city council or later rounds of clarification. The temporary *ius emigrandi* in fact aimed ultimately at Catholic uniformity and Tridentine orthodoxy. So, even if some rebel pamphlets went as far as recognizing Farnese's clemency, they could easily warn of the threat of a Spanish *reconquista*, a Spanish inquisition and a Machiavellian prince. In the end, many citizens did not accept the terms of the treaties and chose to emigrate, an option offered by the capitulation treaties themselves. This confirms again that the Dutch Revolt showed striking features of a civil war, in which there was contention not only about the conditions of revolt but also of reconciliation.

⁸¹ Laura Cruz, "Reworking the Grand Narrative: A Review of Recent Books on the Dutch Revolt," *The Low Countries Historical Review* 125 (2010): 29-38.

⁸² Wim Blockmans, "Voracious States and Obstructing Cities: An Aspect of State Formation in Preindustrial Europe," *Theory and Society* 18 (1989): 733-755.