

**MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR WAR: THE  
BRITISH AND SPANISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS  
DURING THE WAR OF JENKINS' EAR (1739-1744)**

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PhD DISSERTATION

I hereby declare, that the following dissertation was my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Ignacio Rivas

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12<sup>th</sup> December 2008

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## **ABSTRACT**

The topic of this study is the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739 – 1744) and this thesis concentrates on the close connection between the British and Spanish gathering of intelligence and the military decisions adopted in London and Madrid during the war. The ultimate purpose of this study is to put this war in a broader context and make a contribution to understand the development of the state in eighteenth century Europe.

The first part of this study analyses the structure and functioning of the several British and Spanish Intelligence Networks, i.e. diplomatic and political support to these networks, expenditures, flowing of intelligence, messengers, agents, collaborators and counter intelligence. This part consists of two chapters, as follows: (a) the British Intelligence System and (b) the Spanish Intelligence System.

The second part of the study explores the connection between the gathering of intelligence and decision-making in Madrid and London. However, the study of the use of intelligence can be problematic. This is because neither on the British nor the Spanish side are there official cabinet records for this period that could directly link one process with the other. In an attempt to solve this difficulty it has been decided to study the connection through four case studies. Each of them will concentrate on one of the military expeditions that Britain and Spain carried out or planned during the war.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

Add.	Additional Manuscripts
Adm.	Admiralty
AGI	Archivo General de Indias
AGS	Archivo General de Simancas
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional
AO	Archive Quai d'Orsay
BL	British Library
Ch(H)	Cholmondeley Houghton Papers, Cambridge University Library
CO	Colonial Papers
CPE	Correspondence Politique Espagne
Eg.	Egerton Papers
HL	House of Lords Record Office
LC	Library of Congress
NS	New Style
MAE	Ministère Affaires Étrangères
Mss	Manuscripts
NMM	National Maritime Museum
OS	Old Style
PRO	Public Record Office
SP	State Papers
TNA	The National Archives

## **DATES**

Some of the British documents for this period used the Julian Calendar (Old Style) as opposed to the Gregorian Calendar (New Style), which had been established in other European countries. The Old Style was eleven days behind the New Style and the new year started on 25 March. This can be problematic if information from the British and the Spanish documents are combined. As a result, in the present work, references to the British sources indicate the style in which they are written and are specifically translated into the New Style when necessary.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this work is to make a contribution to the better understanding of the mobilization of resources for going to war during early modern times. Traditionally, the historiography has devoted much attention to the raising of money and the mobilization of manpower. In recent years, most of the studies on the mobilization of money and manpower have also served as analyses of the formation of the modern state. State building is defined as a complex, uneven and long process that began in the Middle Ages and culminated in the nineteenth century. During this period, the main purpose of the state was the making of war and the political elites created the necessary structures to mobilize the country's resources for going to war.<sup>1</sup> It was the mobilisation of resources for warfare that continually challenged the state's expansion, and by the time of the Industrial Revolution, states developed new administrative responsibilities in terms of education, health care, urban infrastructure and social programs for the poor.

My work looks at the British and Spanish attempts to gather intelligence during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739 – 1744) and explores the connection between information gathering and the military decisions adopted by the British and Spanish governments during the war. It will be argued that the creation and development by the British and Spanish governments of precursor intelligence agencies served as part of the process of the growth of the power of the state. Knowledge was – and is – power, and by working to acquire more accurate information, the British and Spanish states increased their capacity to wage war successfully.

The literature indicates that fundraising was a highly important feature in the mobilization of resources for war. In 1989 John Brewer published *The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State, 1688 – 1783* and coined the term “Fiscal-Military State”. His purpose was to demonstrate that contrary to what had been commonly assumed, Britain's military success in the eighteenth century owed much to an efficient administration as well as a strong fiscal and financial

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<sup>1</sup> M. Mann, “State and Society, 1130 – 1815: An Analysis of English State Finances”, *States, War, and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology*, ed. M. Mann, (Oxford, 1988), 196.

system. The two elements put together enabled Britain to mobilize more military resources than any other country in Europe and after the Napoleonic Wars, Britain acquired the most extensive empire in history.<sup>2</sup> However, Brewer's work owed much to the work of other British historians such as Beckett, Dickson, Hoon, and O'Brien, who had identified the eighteenth century as one marked by increased taxation and a financial revolution.<sup>3</sup> Over the last decade, the work of Patrick O'Brien has contributed to a further understanding of military fundraising on the British side.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, in Spain the studies of historians such as Angulo, Artola, Enciso, Piepper, Sánchez and Torres have also yielded important information about the evolution of the Spanish finances and taxation as means of funding war.<sup>5</sup>

In Britain, the mobilization of manpower has been studied by historians such as Gradish, who analysed the manning of the British Navy and Cookson and Conway, who have looked at the raising of troops.<sup>6</sup> Both Cookson and Conway indicate that the state was obliged to negotiate with individual groups that were beyond its control. Cookson sees this as a sign of weakness that contradicts

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<sup>2</sup> J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York, 1989)

<sup>3</sup> J.V. Beckett, "Land Tax or Excise: The Levying of Taxation in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century England", *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985), 285-308; P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study of the Development of Public Credit, 1688 – 1756* (London, 1967); E.E. Hoon, *The Organization of the English Customs System 1696 – 1786* (New York, 1938); P.K. O'Brien, "The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660 – 1815", *Economic History Review*, 41 (1988), 1-32.

<sup>4</sup> P.K. O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections: Trade Economy, Fiscal State and the Expansion of Empire, 1688 – 1815", *Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. P. Marshall, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1998), i. 53-77; P.K. O'Brien, "Taxation for British Mercantilism from the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) to the Peace of Paris (1783)", *War, State and Development. Fiscal-Military States in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. R. Torres Sánchez, (Pamplona, 2007), 295-355; P.K. O'Brien & P.A. Hunt, "The Rise of a Fiscal State in England, 1485 – 1815", *Historical Research*, 66 (1993), 129-76.

<sup>5</sup> M.C. Angulo Teja, *La Hacienda Española en el Siglo XVIII. Las Rentas Provinciales* (Madrid, 2002); M. Artola, *La Hacienda del Antiguo Regimen* (Madrid, 1982); A. Gonzalez Enciso, "La Hacienda Castellana y la Economía en el Siglo XVIII", *Estudis: Revista de Historia Moderna*, 29 (2003), 21-41; R. Pieper, *La Real Hacienda bajo Fernando VI y Carlos III (1753 – 1788)* (Madrid, 1992); B. Sánchez, *La Política Fiscal en Castilla durante el Reinado de Carlos II* (Madrid, 1996); R. Torres Sánchez, *War, State and Development. Fiscal-Military States in the Eighteenth Century* (Pamplona, 2007)

<sup>6</sup> G.F. Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy during the Seven Years War* (London, 1984)

Brewer's hypothesis of a strong state.<sup>7</sup> However, Conway argues that rather than seeing eighteenth-century wars as demonstrating the strength or the weakness of the state, it would be better to focus on the state's capacity to increase the level of military resources in time of war. Indeed, according to Conway, the successful negotiations between the state and particular individuals can help our understanding of British success in the Seven Years War.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, in Spain it is important to mention the work of Enciso on "Spain's Mobilization of Resources for the War with Portugal in 1762". In this study, Enciso analyses the negotiations between the Spanish government and the *asentistas* to prepare the logistics for the Spanish attempt to invade Portugal. According to Enciso these partnerships between the government and the *asentistas* worked satisfactorily.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, he argues that the reasons for the Spanish defeat should be found in faulty military decisions and the resistance of the Portuguese people, rather than logistical failure.<sup>10</sup>

However, another important element in the successful mobilization of resources for war was the state's ability to gather information about the enemy's preparations. Much less has been written about this aspect of mobilization of resources than money or manpower; yet, it was just as important. Information enabled governments to know more effectively how to spend money and where to deploy troops. Without information, money and military power could easily be misapplied, leading to setbacks and defeat. During the early modern period, European states like Britain or Spain did not have an established intelligence agency such as the present MI6 or the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia (C.N.I.) As a result, information about the enemy's preparations for war was primarily obtained by the existing structures and organizations of the state, namely, the army, navy, colonial governments, the diplomatic body and the Post Office. In

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<sup>7</sup> J.E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation 1793 – 1815* (Oxford, 1997), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> S. Conway, *War, State and Society in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2006), p. 54-5.

<sup>9</sup> The *asentistas* were businessmen that provided supplies for state institutions, such as the army.

<sup>10</sup> A. González Enciso, "Spain's Mobilization of Resources for the War with Portugal in 1762", *Mobilising Resources for war: Britain and Spain at Work during the Early Modern Period*, ed. H. Bowen and A. González Enciso, (Pamplona, 2006), 185-218.

time of peace, the gathering of information was one of the responsibilities of functionaries operating within these different branches of the state apparatus. However, in time of war, the gathering of intelligence became even more important and in the absence of an established agency the state was obliged to go beyond its administrative limits to obtain information. For instance, it can be argued that an important part of the information that was used to prepare the British attacks and the Spanish defence of its colonies during the War of Jenkins' Ear was obtained through a partnership between independent, private and local interests beyond the control of the state.

This work also fits into the existing historiography that has analysed the gathering of intelligence during the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Moreover, it demonstrates that the effective mobilization of intelligence networks in Britain and Spain served to develop intelligence services in both countries that acquired the dimension of intelligence systems during the War of Jenkins' Ear. In Britain there are some studies about the Elizabethan secret services and the gathering of intelligence during the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> For the eighteenth century there are important works about anti-Jacobite intelligence systems, the use of British diplomats and diplomacy as a source of information, the interception of foreign correspondence by the Post Office and the use of intelligence on overseas expeditions.<sup>12</sup> In Spain, there are important studies about the secret services

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<sup>11</sup> J.M. Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence. Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford, 1993); A. Haynes, *The Elizabethan Secret Services* (Stroud, 1992); D.L. Hobman, *Cromwell's Master Spy. A Study of John Thurloe* (London, 1961); P. Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State. The Monopoly of Licensed News 1660 – 1688* (Cambridge, 1957)

<sup>12</sup> J. Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy 1688 – 1800* (Exeter, 2001), pp. 118-46; J. Black, "British Intelligence and the Mid-Eighteenth century Crisis", *Intelligence and National Security*, 2 (1987), p. 221; K.L. Ellis, *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century: A study in Administrative History* (Oxford, 1958); P.S. Fritz, "The Anti-Jacobite Intelligence System of the English Ministers, 1715 – 1745", *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), 189-265; W. Gibson, "An Eighteenth-Century Paradox: The Career of the Decipherer-Bishop, Edward Willes", *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 12 (1998), 69-76; R. Harding, "The Use of Intelligence on Overseas Expeditions in the Eighteenth Century", *New Interpretations of Naval History: Selected Papers from the Fourteenth Naval History Symposium*, ed. R.C. Balano and C.L. Symonds, (Anapolis, 2001), 3-20; D.B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1689 – 1789* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 259-84; P. Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories. The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 19-45.

during the reigns of Charles V and Philip II.<sup>13</sup> Also, there is a substantial number of publications for the seventeenth century that have looked at the role played by the council of state with regards to the managing of intelligence gathering, the use of Spanish diplomats as an important source of information and the gathering of intelligence in particular scenarios such as Flanders, Catalonia, or Virginia. However, much less appears to have been done for the first forty years of the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

The War of Jenkins' Ear between Britain and Spain was a conflict over the trading interests in America and it broke out after years of tension between the two countries in the West Indies. The origins of this tension are to be found in the peace treaty that finished the War of Spanish Succession (1702 – 1713). The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 awarded Britain two concessions that provided a legal trading route into the Spanish colonies. The first was the Navio de Permiso, which gave Britain the right to sell 500 tons of products that had to be transported in one single ship into the annual fair that took place in Portobello. Three years later, by the convention of 1716, these 500 tones were increased to 1000. The second concession was the Asiento de Negros, which gave Britain the monopoly of the sale of African slaves in the Spanish colonies. Immediately upon obtaining these concessions, the British government granted a monopoly of both to the South Sea Company.<sup>15</sup> However, from 1717 to 1739, the South Sea Company used its

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<sup>13</sup> M.J. Bertomen, *Cartas de un Espía de Carlos V. La Correspondencia de Jerónimo Bucchia con Antonio Perrenot de Granvela* (Valencia, 2006); C.J. Carnicer García & J. Marcos Rivas, *Sebastián de Arbizu. Espía de Felipe II. La Diplomacia Secreta Española y la Intervención en Francia* (Madrid, 1998); D. García Hernán, "Algunas Notas sobre el Servicio de Información de la Monarquía Católica en el Mediterraneo en tiempos de Felipe II", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Revista de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia. Serie IV: Historia Moderna*, 7 (1994), 145-258; E. Morán Torres, "Los Espías de la Invencible", *Historia* 16, 13 (1988), 31-7; E. Sola & J.F. de la Peña, *Cervantes y la Berbería: Cervantes, Mundo Turco-Berberisco y Servicios Secretos en la Época de Felipe II* (2ª ed. Madrid, 1996); H. R. Vargas, *Guerra y Diplomacia en el Mediterraneo: Correspondencia Inédita de Felipe II con Andrea Doria y Juan Andrea Doria* (Madrid, 2002)

<sup>14</sup> For the following years see T. Cezary, "El Marqués de la Ensenada y los Servicios Secretos Españoles en la Época de Fernando VI", *Brocar*, 25 (2001), 109-22; D. Téllez Alarcia, "La Misión Secreta de D. Ricardo Wall en Londres (1747 – 1748)", *Brocar*, 24 (2000), 49-122.

<sup>15</sup> A. del Castillo. *Tratados, Convenios y Declaraciones de Paz y de Comercio que Han Hecho las Potencias Extranjeras con los Monarcas Españoles. Desde el año 1700 hasta el Día* (Madrid, 1843), pp. 115-53.



privileged position to smuggle important quantities of British goods into the Spanish colonies.<sup>16</sup>

In Spain, the Bourbons introduced several administrative changes after the War of Spanish Succession. In the minds of the new generation of Spanish statesmen, effective control of the Spanish colonial empire was necessary to obtain the resources to carry out their policies more successfully. Meanwhile, in Britain the actions of the Spanish guarda costas were a growing reason for anxiety among certain merchant lobbies in London, whose business depended significantly upon their capacity to smuggle contraband into the Spanish colonies. During the 1720s tensions between Spain and Britain escalated due to the depredations of the Spanish guarda costas and they resulted into an undeclared war in 1727. After an unsuccessful Spanish attack on Gibraltar in that year, a truce was declared in 1728 and the peace that confirmed the previous status quo was concluded in 1729 with the Treaty of Seville.<sup>17</sup> However, only two years later, on 9 April 1731, Captain Robert Jenkins was captured off Cuba by the guarda costas and his ear was amputated as a punishment for carrying contraband.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the episode of Captain Jenkins, tensions between Spain and Britain diminished during the course of the 1730s. This was mainly because from 1733 to 1735 Spain engaged in the War of Polish Succession in pursuit of the Queen's personal ambitions in Italy. During this time, most of the British merchants employed by the South Sea Company were relatively undisturbed. With hindsight, it can be argued that this must have served to reaffirm their assumed rights to introduce British manufactures into the Spanish colonies. Also, during this period,

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<sup>16</sup> E.G. Hildner, "The Role of the South Sea Company in the Diplomacy Leading to the War of Jenkin's War, 1729 – 1739", *American Historical Review*, 18 (1945-6), 322-41; W.T. Morgan, "The Origins of the South Sea Company", *Political Science Quarterly*, 44 (1929), 16-37; G.H. Nelson, "Contraband under the Asiento, 1730-1739", *The American Historical Review*, 51 (1945), 55-67; H. Temperley, "The Causes of the War of Jenkins' Ear", *Translations of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1909), 197-236; P. Woodfine, "Suspicious Latitudes: Commerce, Colonies and Patriotism in the 1730's", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 27 (1998), 25-51.

<sup>17</sup> A. Gonzalez Enciso, *Felipe V: La Renovación de España. Sociedad y Economía en el Reinado del Primer Borbón* (Pamplona, 2003)

<sup>18</sup> P. Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories. The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 1.

new problems in America emerged between Spain and Britain. The first one was the presence of British settlers in the Mosquito Coast in Central America, an area that Spain claimed to be under its control. The second problem was the foundation by James Oglethorpe of the colony of Georgia in 1733. Officially, Georgia had been created to protect the British colonies, and specially South Carolina, against Spanish attacks conducted from Florida. But in Spain, the establishment of Georgia was seen as a direct threat to Florida, whose control was crucial to protect the homeward bound fleet when it sailed through the Florida Channel. After the end of the War of Polish Succession, the actions of the guarda costas intensified. Indeed, in 1737, ten British ships were seized and the merchant community in London reacted with fury.<sup>19</sup>

In Britain, the first minister Robert Walpole was a member of the Whig party, and an advocate of peace. However, after twenty-two years in government, he was being confronted by a strong opposition in parliament from some members of his own party, and from the Tories. Much of this opposition derived from the government's decision to remain neutral in the War of Polish Succession, where France and Spain had secured victory at the cost of Austria, which had been Britain's main ally in the continent. In October 1737, some merchant lobbies in the City of London launched a campaign to force the government to declare war on Spain. They perceived Spain as a weak country that could not protect its extensive and rich colonial empire, and they wanted to secure trade with America for the future. Indeed, merchants operating within the South Sea Company must have also have had in mind that the two clauses from the Treaty of Utrecht were due to expire in 1744. In Parliament, the Tory Party and opposition Whigs seized upon the uproar in the City to put further pressure on the government. And in the middle of the parliamentary debates in 1738, the anecdote of Captain Jenkins served to assist advocates for war.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> R. Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 16-22.

<sup>20</sup> B. Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat. The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714 – 1783* (London, 2007), pp. 274-306.

The diplomatic negotiations between the British and the Spanish governments to solve the rift over the depredations, the presence of British settlers in the Mosquito Coast, and the establishment of Georgia, led to the Convention of the Pardo in January 1739. Spain agreed to pay £95,000 to the South Sea Company as compensation for the Spanish guarda costas and Britain accepted that the South Sea Company would pay £68,000 in compensation for the contraband. However, on 1 March 1739, the directors of the company denied having ever agreed to pay compensation and the negotiations ground to a halt. Although the British government had information that Spain and France were conducting secret negotiations to sign a treaty of defensive alliance, orders were sent to reinforce the British squadron in the Mediterranean. Immediately upon the receipt of this information on 6 May 1739, the Spanish government suspended the Asiento de Negros and the Navio de Permiso. By the summer of 1739, diplomatic negotiations between the two countries had broken down. Tensions escalated rapidly after the dispatch of a British expeditionary force to the West Indies, and on the 22 October 1739, George II declared war on Spain.<sup>21</sup>

The War of Jenkins' Ear was the first war between two European countries in which the main military operations took place in America. During the war, Britain dispatched several expeditions to attack the main Spanish cities in America. The purpose of these attacks was the disruption of Spanish trading routes. In November 1739, British forces operating from Jamaica destroyed Portobello and Chagres. However, in January 1740, the British attack on San Agustín in Florida was repelled and the British forces returned to Georgia. Despite the arrival of further reinforcements at Jamaica in April 1741, the British forces failed to capture Cartagena de Indias. This defeat was followed by subsequent unsuccessful attempts to attack Santiago de Cuba and Panama. In March 1743, further attacks were launched against La Guaira and Porto Cabello, but the Spanish defenders repelled the British forces. Meanwhile, in October 1740 another expeditionary force was dispatched to the Pacific Coast of America. The British ships attacked the town of Paita, although they could not participate in a coordinated attack

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<sup>21</sup> P. Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories. The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain*, pp. 181-209.

against Panama after having suffered considerable damages in the rounding of Cape Horn. Nevertheless, in July 1743, the only surviving ship of this expedition captured the galleon from Acapulco just off the coast of the Philippines.<sup>22</sup>

After the end of the main military operations in America the war between Britain and Spain was subsumed into the War of Austrian Succession (1740 – 1748). However, according to Jeremy Black, from the British perspective, this war would be better understood as a different conflict that was determined by the necessity to preserve the balance of power in Europe.<sup>23</sup> A few years before his death, the Emperor Charles VI suspended the Salic Law to assure that his daughter Maria Theresa would inherit his territories. But, in October 1740, his death without a heir was a sufficient pretext for Frederick II of Prussia to invade Silesia, a rich province under Habsburg rule. France and Spain supported Prussia and entered the war to advance their own territorial interests in Europe. In Spain, the Queen saw the war as another opportunity to pursue her ambitions in Italy. Meanwhile, Britain and the Dutch Republic granted their support to Austria. From 1740 to 1743, Britain and France remained technically neutral. But tensions between the two countries grew rapidly as a result of French support for Spain during the war in America, as well as French ambitions in Germany. Then, in February 1744, the Franco-Spanish and British squadrons engaged in an inconclusive battle off Toulon. France declared war on Britain, and this impeded the dispatch of further British expeditions to attack the Spanish dominions in America. Nevertheless, the state of war between Britain and Spain continued until the Treaty of Aix-la-Chappell in 1748. This treaty ended the war in Europe, and also, confirmed the end of the Navio de Permiso and the Asiento de Negros.<sup>24</sup>

The methodology of this work follows an empirical approach and relies heavily on archival sources. In Britain, the archives are well catalogued and contain detailed descriptions of the material. The National Archives, (formely the Public

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<sup>22</sup> W. Biggs, *The Military History of Europe. From the Commencement of the War with Spain in 1739 to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748* (London, 1755), pp. 1-218.

<sup>23</sup> J. Black, *The Continental Commitment. Britain, Hannover and Interventionism 1714 – 1793* (New York, 2005), pp. 9-10.

<sup>24</sup> M. Anderson, *The War of Austrian Succession 1740 – 1748* (London, 1995); R. Browning, *The War of Austrian Succession* (New York, 1993)

Record Office) contains the State Papers, the Colonial Office Papers, and the Admiralty Papers, all of which have been extensively consulted. The British Library contains the Stuart Papers and in the Newcastle Papers there is further correspondence of the British government with the British diplomats, the colonial governments and the navy. Also, the Newcastle Papers contain an important collection of documents with information on the Spanish colonies that the British merchants provided at the request of the Secretary of State. In the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and the House of Lords' Record Office, there are several sections that contain additional correspondence between the government and the navy. Cambridge University Library contains the Cholmondeley Papers, which include Sir Robert Walpole's correspondence, and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. holds the Walpole-Vernon Papers.

In Spain, the main archives that contain archival material for this period are located in three different cities. Unfortunately, their catalogues do not have detailed descriptions of the material. In the Archivo de Simancas at Valladolid the Sección Estado contains the correspondence between the Spanish government and Spanish diplomats. The Sección Guerra contains the correspondence of the government with the Capitanes Generales and the Commanders of the Spanish army. The Sección Marina holds the correspondence of the government with the Intendants of Marine and the naval commanders of the Spanish squadrons. In Madrid, the Archivo Histórico Nacional contains additional correspondence between the Spanish government and Spanish diplomats. The Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores holds an important collection of the main international treaties in the eighteenth century. In Seville, the Archivo de Indias contains the correspondence between the Spanish government and the colonial governments in Spanish America. Due to the collaboration between France and Spain during the War of Jenkins' Ear, it has also been necessary to consult the Correspondance Politique Espagne in the Archive Quai d'Orsay at Paris. This archive contains the correspondence between the French government and the French embassy in Madrid.

The material contained in the British and the Spanish archives have two important limitations that have to be mentioned. First, neither the British nor the Spanish archives contain a detailed description of the deliberations and the subsequent decisions adopted in the cabinets of each country. The existence of cabinet minutes for this period in Britain and Spain might have been a useful instrument to link directly the gathering of intelligence with the decision-making. Unfortunately, no comprehensive set of minutes has survived for this period; we have merely an occasional note of those present and a brief mention of the matters discussed. In an attempt to overcome this problem, it was decided to undertake case studies. These concentrate on the main military episodes of the war and attempt to assess the British and Spanish military decisions in the light of the information provided by their respective intelligence systems. Second, although there is a substantial amount of archival material and secondary resources that contain personal details and information about the modus operandi of the main British and Spanish agents, there is a significant gap with regards to those that occupied secondary positions. The reason for this gap is because sometimes it was necessary for the agents to hide their personal details as well as the purpose of their activities. According to their letters, they obtained most of their information doing observation duties in public spaces, having conversations with a wide range of people and reading the local newspapers. This work barely uses material published in the newspapers or other material that is not directly mentioned by archive sources. The reason for this was to avoid speculation about the research subjects' living and working conditions.

This work comprises six chapters and is organized in two parts. Chapter one analyses the British intelligence system. Chapter two studies the Spanish intelligence system. Information contained in these chapters focuses primarily on the British and Spanish efforts to obtain information relevant to the War of Jenkins' Ear. Inevitably, however, some of the military episodes in the War of Austrian Succession influenced the war in America and they are mentioned as well. Reports produced by some agents contained information that was used for both conflicts. Although both chapters follow a similar sequence of four sections, information contained in them is determined by the uniqueness of each intelligence system and the different approaches to the war in Britain and Spain.

For example, in section one there is an analysis of the management of information gathering. Section two studies the flowing of information between the government and the agents. Sections three and four explore the gathering of intelligence in Europe and America, respectively.

The second part of this work is formed by chapters three, four, five and six. Each is a case study that explores the connection between the gathering of information and the military decisions adopted by the British and Spanish governments in one of the main military episodes during the War of Jenkins' Ear. Chapter three explores the Spanish and British gathering of information from the summer of 1739 to the autumn of 1740 and how this information was used while both sides considered the option of conducting operations in Europe. Chapter four studies the British and Spanish collecting of information in 1739 and 1740 and the use of this information in the attack and defence of Cartagena de Indias during the months of March and April 1741. Chapter five looks at the British and Spanish acquisition of intelligence from 1739 to 1744 and the employment of this intelligence before and during the military episodes that occurred in the Pacific during the war. Chapter six explores the British and Spanish gathering of intelligence from 1739 to 1744 and its application during the military operations that took place in the Mediterranean.

## **CHAPTER 1. THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM (1739-1744)**

### **I-THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT**

#### **I.1-THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE**

In 1739, Britain was ruled by George II of Hanover (1676-1760) and the first minister was Robert Walpole (1676 – 1745).<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Newcastle (1693 – 1768) was the Secretary of State for the Southern Department and he was in charge of diplomatic relations with France, Portugal, Spain, the Italian States and control of the British colonies. Lord Harrington (1683? – 1756) was Secretary of State for the Northern Department and he was in charge of diplomatic relations with the northern and eastern European countries. Other regular attendants at the cabinet at this time were the Archbishop of Canterbury John Potter (1673/4 – 1747), the Lord Chancellor, Philip Yorke Earl of Hardwicke (1690 – 1764), the Lord President, Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington (1674 – 1743), the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Hervey (1665 – 1751), the Lord Steward, Lionel Cranfield, Duke of Dorset (1688 – 1765), the Lord Chamberlain, Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton (1683 – 1757), the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Duke of Devonshire (1698 – 1755), the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Charles Wager (1666 – 1743), and the Privy Councillors, the Duke of Richmond (1701 – 1750) and the Duke of Montagu (1712 – 1790).<sup>2</sup>

However, for our purposes the Duke of Newcastle was the most important political figure in government. He had occupied the post of Secretary of State for the Southern Department since 1724. During that time he had accumulated experience on colonial affairs and he also had a good understanding of the political, military and economic situation in Spain and France. For example, in 1729 he coordinated from London the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Seville. Meanwhile, the other two important political figures in the government –

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<sup>1</sup> The Dictionary of British Bibliography is used throughout this work to provide details of individual biographies of British figures.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Cabinet minutes, 27 May 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Domestic, SP 36/50, Microfilm Part III, fols. 102-6.



Walpole and Harrington – took a secondary role in the military decisions during the war with Spain. In 1739, Walpole was 73 years old, and after the failure of the negotiations of the Pardo Convention, he started to face serious opposition in Parliament. So far as Harrington is concerned, from May to October 1740, and from May to October 1741, he accompanied the king on his visits to his Hanoverian homeland, all of which took much of his time to the benefit of Newcastle.<sup>3</sup> According to Reed Browning, Walpole’s commitment to the domestic problems and the better understanding of the international affairs by his Southern Secretary of State raised Newcastle to the status of “de facto minister of war”.<sup>4</sup>

The political fall of Walpole in 1741 did not dramatically change the makeup of government. However, it introduced some ministerial changes. Lord Carteret (1690-1763) became the chief minister, and from 1743 to 1744, the first minister was Henry Pelham (1694-1754). The Secretary of State for the Southern Department continued to be the Duke of Newcastle, although his political influence decreased with the enhanced prestige of the new Secretary of State for the Northern Department, Lord Carteret.<sup>5</sup> War with Spain in America continued under the oversight of Newcastle. However, by 1742 the main military operations in America had finished, and in the midst of the War of Austrian Succession in Europe, the new government concentrated its political and military efforts to securing the balance of power in Europe. Thus, in Europe, although Newcastle continued to direct British military and diplomatic initiatives in the Mediterranean, Carteret concentrated his in Central Europe, where most of the military operations took place.<sup>6</sup>

## I.2-GOING TO WAR AGAINST BOURBON SPAIN

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<sup>3</sup> C. Cook & J. Stevenson, *British Historical Facts, 1688 – 1760* (New York, 1988), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> R. Browning, *The Duke of Newcastle* (New Haven; London, 1975), p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Cook & Stevenson, *British Historical Facts, 1688 – 1760* pp. 116-7.

<sup>6</sup> J. Black, *Parliament and Foreign Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 41.

After the failure of the Pardo Convention, the British government, and specially the Duke of Newcastle, expected to force Spain into negotiations after attacking an important port in mainland Spain. However, in the summer of 1739, reports indicated that these cities were too well defended. This led Newcastle to prepare attacks in the Spanish cities of America.<sup>7</sup> Kathleen Wilson indicates that the British preparations for war were welcomed by the urban middling groups and particularly by some merchant lobbies that pressed for the acquisition of land in the Spanish empire. According to Wilson, this attitude “demonstrates the growing importance of Britain’s empire in the nascent political and national consciousness of ordinary people”.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that the instructions to the British commanders indicate that the purpose of the government was not to hold indefinitely a Spanish city in America. For example, despite the successful military episodes in Cuba and the Philippines at the end of the Seven Years War (1757-1763), Spain regained control of Havana and Manila in the subsequent peace.<sup>9</sup> As a result, with some historical hindsight, it can be claimed that if Cartagena de Indias or any other major city had fallen to the British forces, these cities would soon have been returned to Spain. The primary purpose of attacking the Spanish in America was essentially the same as attacking them in Europe: to bring them to terms as speedily as possible.

As the summer months of the year 1739 passed, the main concern for Newcastle was the gathering of intelligence about the Spanish empire. Even though the Spanish colonies were reckoned to be an extensive, very rich and ill defended territory, British ministers, including Newcastle, lacked the necessary understanding to conduct such attacks in an efficient manner. For practical reasons, the information needed can be divided into three different types.

First, the British government had to evaluate the Spanish diplomatic position with France because both countries were governed by members of the Bourbon family.

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<sup>7</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 14 July 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Spain, SP 94/133.

<sup>8</sup> K. Wilson, “Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon”, *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), 74-109.

<sup>9</sup> N. Tracy, *Manila Ransomed. The British Assault on Manila in the Seven Years War* (Exeter, 1995), p. 15.

The main threat of a Franco-Spanish military alliance was that the combination of the French and Spanish fleets could equal the strength of the Royal Navy.<sup>10</sup> Jan Glete suggests that in 1740, the number of sailing ships in Spain and France was 91 for each country and the total number of the two fleets was 182. Meanwhile, in Britain the number of sailing ships was reckoned to be 195.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, a Franco-Spanish alliance could pose a problem of national security as the House of Bourbon recognized the House of Stuart as the legitimate successor of the British crown. In Britain, particularly in Scotland, there were large numbers of Jacobites who were discontented with the Hanoverian dynasty. The Jacobites would have welcomed a Franco-Spanish invading army if this had been designed to restore the Stuarts to power, and the British government feared that during the war, the Spanish government would attempt to mobilize support for the Stuart Pretender.<sup>12</sup>

Second, the British government needed to assess the Spanish military and naval strength in the Peninsula. This strength was determined by the condition of their ports, the number of the regular troops and the number of war ships. Information about the ports – particularly Cadiz and Ferrol, which harboured the main Spanish fleets – had to include the strength of the fortifications, artillery, food and war supplies and the garrisons that defended them. Information about regular troops in the Spanish army had to include their numbers, location and disposition. This information was particularly important because Spain could employ its troops to defend the coast. Also, the Spanish army could be dispatched to reinforce Spanish towns in America. Most importantly, Spanish troops could be used as an invading force against Britain or any of Britain's allies in Europe. Meanwhile, information about Spain's naval forces had to be added to those of France. It was necessary to know not only the number of Spanish and French ships, but also their condition, rates, location and disposition.

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<sup>10</sup> J. Black, "Anglo-Spanish Naval Relations in the Eighteenth century", *The Mariner's Mirror*, 77 (1991), 249.

<sup>11</sup> J. Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500 – 1860*, 2 Vols. (Stockholm, 1993), i. 262.

<sup>12</sup> J.G. Hilton, *The Mainstream of Jacobitism* (Cambridge, Mass, 1954), pp. 207-8.

Third, it was necessary to gather economic and military information about the Spanish colonies in America. Economic information for the different regions in the Spanish colonies had to include their potential for activities such as trading, fishing, mining and agriculture. As a result, it was very important to listen to the opinion of the British merchants that had previous experience in the Spanish colonies. The military information had to concentrate on the defences of the main Spanish cities in America. This included details about the coast line, climatic conditions throughout the year, strength and disposition of fortifications, quantities of artillery and ammunitions, condition and numbers of garrisons, number of militia that the Spanish authorities could raise in case of an attack, attitude among the creole and native population towards the Spanish authorities and the size of the naval force that the Spanish either alone or aligned with the French, could bring against the British expeditionary force.

### I.3-THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the Duke of Newcastle consolidated the method that his predecessors had established with regards to the gathering of intelligence. For example, according to Peter Fraser, in the seventeenth century "the management of intelligence" was one of the most important functions of the Secretaries of State.<sup>13</sup> This information was obtained through the Post Office, and also, through a considerable number of spies that operated under the protection of the diplomatic body. The reports provided by British agents included information concerning enemy countries or domestic plotters, and also, a supply of every kind of news from home and abroad.<sup>14</sup> However, for most of the first half of the eighteenth century, the main task of the British agents was the gathering of information about the machinations of the Jacobites that supported the Stuart dynasty as the legitimate authority to occupy the throne of Britain.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> P. Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State. The Monopoly of Licensed News, 1660 – 1688* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> R. Deacon, *A History of the British Secret Service* (London, 1969), p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> J. Haswell, *Spies and Spymasters. A Concise History of Intelligence* (London, 1977), p. 50.

During the war between Britain and Spain, the British intelligence system continued to be organized by the Secretaries of State and it followed a pyramidal structure. At top of this figurative pyramid, there were the two Secretaries of State, the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Harrington from 1739 to 1742, and the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Carteret from 1742 to 1744. In the middle of the pyramid, there were the colonial governments, which were in contact through this period with Newcastle, and the British diplomats that were dependant on each of the secretaries of state respectively. However, due to the geographical dimension of the conflict with Spain, most of the necessary information was obtained by the colonial governors and the diplomats that operated under the directions of the Secretary of State for the Southern Department. The middle of the pyramid also consisted of the British squadrons at sea. Those operating within this level were generally British subjects and servants of the Crown. They were required to gather information according to their location, and to send it through the channels of communication to the secretaries of state. The bottom of the pyramid consisted of the agents employed by the British diplomats, the colonial governors or the British naval captains. They were not necessarily British subjects or servants of the Crown, and their roles varied tremendously. Most of these agents were used in observation duties in the ports, inns, cafés and streets of the major cities and their names hardly appear in the sources. But sometimes these agents were people placed in high posts in the enemy's political structure and they supplied material information after receiving expensive bribes and other favours.

The communication between Newcastle and the British agents in the middle of the pyramid was carried out through three different channels. The first channel was a land route that employed the ordinary post. It was complemented with the use of messengers to carry letters to the British diplomats on the Continent. The second channel was a packet boat system that was organized by the Post Office and operated from the ports of Falmouth in Britain, Marseilles-Toulon in France and Genoa and Leghorn in Italy. The packet boats carried dispatches to and from Gibraltar, Port Mahon and the British squadron operating in the Mediterranean. The third channel was organized by the admiralty and it used sloops or frigates to carry letters to the British squadrons operating in America.

In London, Newcastle's main adviser was Charles Wager, the First Lord of the Admiralty. During the War of Spanish Succession, Wager served as captain of the Experiment in the West Indies. Here, he was also given command of the Kingston and the Portland. Wager's orders were to gather intelligence about the French naval forces. When he learned that the French Admiral Duccasse was in Havana, he sailed with his squadron to the Isthmus of Panama and captured the Spanish Galeones before they reached Cartagena de Indias. Almost one year after his arrival in the West Indies, Wager returned to Britain a rich man. In 1718, he moved to the Board of the Admiralty, although this post did not exempt him from sea service. In 1727, he participated in the defence of Gibraltar, and in 1733, he was appointed First Lord. As Daniel Baugh points out, these military and administrative experiences provided Wager with a comprehensive knowledge of maritime geography, seaborne commerce and colonial affairs.<sup>16</sup>

The Duke of Newcastle was also assisted by a number of secretaries that helped him to process information. According to a list of officials at the accession of George II to the throne, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department had under his directions two under secretaries, one chief clerk, seven clerks and two office keepers. Among them, the most important was his personal secretary Andrew Stone (1703 – 1773), whom Pollard describes as “the indefatigable aide and constant companion of Newcastle”.<sup>17</sup> Also, according to the same list, the two Secretaries of State shared the assistance of one embellisher of letters, one writer of the gazette, one secretary of Latin tongue, one interpreter of oriental languages, three decipherers, one keeper of state papers, one deputy keeper of state papers, one collector of state papers, four clerks of the signet and one office keeper of the signet office.<sup>18</sup> However, the Secretaries of State also worked in partnership with

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<sup>16</sup> D.A. Baugh, “Wager, Sir Charles (1666 – 1743)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Sept 2004, Online ed, Jan 2008. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28393>, accessed 5 May 2008.

<sup>17</sup> A.F. Pollard, “Stone, Andrew (1703 – 1773)”, rev. M. J. Mercer, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26565>, accessed 30 April 2008.

<sup>18</sup> J.C. Sainty, *Office-Holders in Modern Britain. Officials of the Secretaries of State 1660 – 1782* (London, 1973), p. 60.

other public servants and the most important institution in this regard was the Post Office.<sup>19</sup>

For our purposes, the main role of the Post Office was the organization of the channels of communication and interception of foreign correspondence. From 1739 to 1745 the Postmaster General was John Eyles. The intercepted post was opened in “the Secret Department” which was located in the same building as the secretarship of state.<sup>20</sup> Among the three decipherers that were employed, the most important was Reverend Edward Willes (1694 – 1773). Appointed in 1716, he remained in post until his death, and during this time he worked in close connection with the British agents. As we will see in the next chapters, the intercepted correspondence about the Spanish forces did not in itself provide Newcastle with enough information about the Spanish military and diplomatic preparations for war. However, it did enable him to have a better understanding of the structure and organization of the Spanish intelligence system.

The British sources contain very little material about the counter intelligence operations that were undertaken by British agents. However, there is some evidence to suggest that these activities were also part of their regular work. In the Walpole Papers, there are two undated letters that indicate that one of the main Spanish agent operating in Britain after the break out of war – referred as Terrascon and Terry<sup>21</sup> – was discovered and identified by British agents. However, we know from Spanish material, that the last letter from Terrascon to the Spanish First Secretary, the Marquis de Villarias, was written in June 1741. The other Spanish agent was referred as Richmond and his last letter dates from May 1740.<sup>22</sup> The Spanish sources indicate that Terrascon died in Calais after crossing the English Channel, but they do not mention why Richmond stopped

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<sup>19</sup> J. Black, “British Intelligence and the Mid-Eighteenth Century Crisis”, *Intelligence and National Security*, 2 (1987), 209-29.

<sup>20</sup> K. Ellis, *The Post in the Eighteenth Century. A Study in Administrative History* (London, 1958), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Anonymous and undated, Cambridge University Library, Ch (H) Papers, Vol 72, fol. 15-6.

<sup>22</sup> Geraldino to Villarias, May 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

writing after his last letter.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it is possible that after being intercepted by the British agents, orders might have been given to kill both of them.

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the relationship of Newcastle and Wager was vital because it facilitated the connection between the gathering of intelligence and decision-making. Nevertheless, at least theoretically, the British military decisions during the war were adopted by the Cabinet as a whole. For example, according to the few surviving Cabinet minutes, the Secretaries of State were only intermediaries between the British agents and the Cabinet members. During the meetings, the colonial, naval and diplomatic correspondence was read, the content discussed, and after proper deliberations, the Cabinet members agreed a diplomatic or military response. The secretaries of state were responsible for the transmission of these decisions to the British diplomats, colonial governors and commanders of the British squadrons.<sup>24</sup> But it seems almost certain that during those meetings, Newcastle's control of the information, and the deference shown to his experience and expertise, meant that he was able to play the role of a "primus inter pares".

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<sup>23</sup> Anonymous and undated, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6910.

<sup>24</sup> See SP 36/47-52.



## II-THE FLOWING OF THE INTELLIGENCE

### II.1-THE LAND ROUTE WITH THE BRITISH AGENTS

The land route between the Secretaries of State and the British agents in Europe was organized by the Post Office and for the most part used the ordinary post. In Britain, the mail followed the existing roads and two of the roads were particularly important with regards to this work. The first was the road that connected London with the south-western towns of Portsmouth, Plymouth and Falmouth. Portsmouth and Plymouth were bases for the British fleet that operated in the English Channel and Falmouth was the port for the packet boats that provided connection with the British squadrons in the Mediterranean and the West Indies. The second route was the road from London to Dover. In Dover, the post was shipped to Dunkirk and Calais in packet boats organized by British agent Richard Hall.<sup>25</sup> In Dunkirk and Calais the post connected with the Dutch and the French posts, respectively, thanks to special treaties that were signed in time of peace.<sup>26</sup>

When the British post was given to the Dutch or the French post services, it could be sent to the British ambassadors in the Dutch Republic or France, or it could continue its journey to other European countries. Usually, letters dispatched through the post were directed to a British ambassador and it was the ambassador's duty to contact his consuls. In peacetime, the letters to the British agents passed through the ordinary post, but when war broke out or was in the offing, it was necessary to introduce measures to protect the secrecy of the letters, as Spain and its Bourbon allies also sought to intercept British diplomatic correspondence. For example, evidence that the British officials were concerned that their post was being opened can be found in a letter sent on 4 August 1739 from Cayley, the British consul in Cadiz, to the Duke of Newcastle. In the letter, Cayley employed a numerical code and reported that

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<sup>25</sup> For example: Hall to Newcastle, 25 May 1739 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 36/47, Microfilm Part II, fols. 66-7.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, *The Post in Eighteenth Century*, p. 29.

As I am watched in every action, and all the letters that are found going from me, or coming to me, are intercepted, I transmitted those I wrote to your grace on the two last posts, under cover to Mr. Vander Meer [Dutch ambassador in Madrid] to be afterwards forwarded by him... I shall therefore send this by the hands of a friend here, under a private cover to Madrid, to be delivered to Mr. Vander Meer, and to avoid it's being suspected at the Post Office, do send another short one addressed immediately to your grace, in the usual manner.<sup>27</sup>

However, further confirmation that these letters were still being opened led the British agents to make more frequent use of messengers. The messengers prevented the information from being opened and read. Also, they covered the distances between London and the British outposts in a much shorter time. The first route followed by the messengers covered the distance from London to Paris, and then on to Madrid (while the British ambassador was still resident there before war began). However, due to the delays that the messengers experienced in Paris, in the spring of 1739, this route was split in two. One from London to Paris, and the other from London to Madrid without stopping at Paris.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, the second route covered the distance between London and Turin-Genoa. On their arrival at Paris or Madrid, the messengers could be required to continue their journey and contact the British consuls operating in the ports of France and Spain. Likewise, on their arrival at Turin-Genoa, the messengers were usually required to contact the British agents operating in other Italian cities.

The archival sources contain information that can help us to understand the conditions in which the messengers covered these distances. They usually needed one week to travel from London to Paris and two weeks to cover the distance between Paris and Madrid. This means that they rode horses that covered an average distance of 124 miles per day, that their routes were well known by the local authorities, and that there were stops where the messengers rested before continuing their journey. This collaboration between countries, whose governments were preparing for war against each other, is particularly surprising

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<sup>27</sup> Cayley to Newcastle, 4 Aug. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 73989, fol. 150.

<sup>28</sup> Newcastle to Keene, 20 March 1738/9 (OS), BL, Add. 32800, fol. 227.

if we also take into account that the Spanish and British messengers usually travelled together.<sup>29</sup>

## II.2-THE COMMUNICATION WITH THE SQUADRON IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

During the war of Jenkins' Ear, the British Navy had squadrons that operated in the Mediterranean from the naval bases of Gibraltar and Port Mahon. The communication between the Duke of Newcastle and Charles Wager and the commanders of these squadrons was carried out by packet boats that operated between Falmouth and Gibraltar. Before the war, and on their way to Gibraltar, the packet boats could stop at Corunna, Porto, Lisbon and Faro. There were also packet boats operating between the ports of Marseilles in France, Genoa and Leghorn in Italy and Port Mahon in Minorca. On their way out, these packet boats carried correspondence from Newcastle and Wager, and on their way back, they brought the information that had been gathered by the British captains at sea and the British agents that operated at these ports.

The Post Office was the institution in charge of running this packet boat system. Indeed, according to its historian, the Post Office had agents or at least some sort of representation in the ports of Falmouth, Marseilles, Genoa, Leghorn, Port Mahon and Gibraltar. Usually, the captains were the legal owners of the boats and they were in charge of recruiting the sailors, which they did locally. However, the Post Office had the task of inspecting and mustering the boats, arranging supplies and repairs, and providing passage for the King's messengers.<sup>30</sup> In peace time, boats operating from Falmouth were directed to Gibraltar. This trip usually took three weeks, the packet boats met the British ships in the Channel and they encountered each other at the ports of Corunna (until the declaration of war), Porto, Lisbon and Faro.<sup>31</sup> The captains exchanged correspondence with the British

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<sup>29</sup> For example: Waldegrave to Keene, 28 Nov. 1738 (NS), BL, Add 32799, fol. 286.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis, *The Post in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 34-6.

<sup>31</sup> For example: Mathews to Corbet, 3 Jan. 1743/4, TNA: PRO, Adm. 1/381.

agents and in Gibraltar with the British governor. On their arrival at Gibraltar, the packet boats were refitted before making their way back. Meanwhile, the correspondence to Port Mahon was carried in navy ships.

Boats operating from Marseilles, Genoa and Leghorn were directed to Port Mahon and carried correspondence for the British naval officers in the Mediterranean and the governor of the island. The boats from Marseilles needed two days to carry the letters to Mahon. However, this time had to be added to that required by a messenger covering the route from London to the south of France or the north of Italy. For instance, a letter sent on 4 April 1740 from the Duke of Newcastle to the Governor of Minorca was replied to by General Anstruther on 22 April 1740.<sup>32</sup> On their arrival at Port Mahon the packet boats were refitted before making their way back to Marseilles. Meanwhile, the correspondence to Gibraltar was carried in navy ships.

During the war, this system of packet boats was often disrupted by the actions of the Spanish privateers that operated both in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. In July 1740 Captain Cooper's boat, the Townshend, was seized by a Spanish privateer operating in the Atlantic and taken to San Sebastian.<sup>33</sup> From that port, Cooper was taken to Pamplona and he was imprisoned in the citadel. One year later, Newcastle saw Cooper's name on a list of British prisoners in Pamplona and directed Rear Admiral Haddock to negotiate an exchange with the Spanish authorities so that he could be free.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, the arrival of the Cadiz squadron at Toulon, and the subsequent transportation of Spanish troops to Italy in the autumn of 1741, led to the complete disruption of the packet boats operating from Marseilles, Genoa and Leghorn. As a result, the British agents in Marseilles hired the services of ships that sailed under a neutral flag to send their dispatches to Port Mahon. A letter written at Marseilles in January 1742 by messenger Webster stated to the British ambassador in Paris, Thompson, that

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<sup>32</sup> Anstruther to Newcastle, 22 April 1740 (OS), HL/PO/JO/10/6/486, fols. 696-7.

<sup>33</sup> Letter to Harrington, July 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 35406, fols. 215-7.

<sup>34</sup> Haddock to Martín, 24 Jan. 1740, TNA: PRO, Adm. 1/87.

I am sorry I am obliged to inform you that I am still at this place and at present without any hopes of getting away. We have tried both French and Dutch vessels, that are bound for the Levant and other places; but without success which is occasioned by the quarantine they must perform, if they touch at Minorca. The plague being at Algiers.<sup>35</sup>

The packet boats complemented the land route by creating alternative routes that enabled the British government and agents to keep communications open. For example, a letter from Newcastle to Haddock, could follow three different routes. First, the letter could be carried by one of the packet boats that operated from Falmouth to Gibraltar. On its arrival at Gibraltar, the British governor would have sent it to Haddock in naval vessels. Second, in time of peace with Spain and France, this letter could be carried by a messenger following the London-Paris-Madrid route. Here, the British ambassador in Spain would have ordered the messenger to continue on his way to Gibraltar. Third, in time of peace with France, the letter could have also been sent to the British ambassador in Paris, who would have ordered the British messenger to continue his trip to Marseilles. Here, the messenger would have embarked in a boat designed for Port Mahon and the British Governor would have sent it to Haddock in a navy ship.

### II.3-THE COMMUNICATION WITH THE SQUADRON IN THE WEST INDIES

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, Britain's main naval force was in the West Indies. The British ships operated from the naval base at Port Royal in Jamaica and communication between the British government and the naval commanders was conducted through the correspondence between Newcastle and the governor of Jamaica. Letters were transported by the navy ships that sailed between Falmouth, Port Royal in Jamaica and Charleston in South Carolina. From August 1739 to September 1742, these ships intensified their sailing between Falmouth and Port Royal due to the presence in Jamaica of the British expeditionary forces that were designed to attack the Spanish settlements in America.

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<sup>35</sup> Webster to Thompson, 5/16 Jan. 1740/1, BL, Add. 32802, fol. 228.

From August 1739 to September 1742, letters from Newcastle to the governor of Jamaica were written on a weekly basis. Following the normal procedures, they were taken by the Post Office officials and carried to Falmouth. In Falmouth the letters were given to navy officials. The naval vessels usually needed two months to cross the ocean and after refitting their ships in Port Royal, they could be directed to join the British squadron, go back to Europe or sail to another British port in America. Usually, on their way to Jamaica, the ships carried directions from the British government and reports with information about the Spanish military preparations for war both in the Peninsula and America. On their way back to Britain, letters from the British commander contained reports about the proceedings of the ships under his command and further information about the Spanish preparations for war in America.

However, during the war, the Royal Navy was seriously overstretched by the need to attend to its many commitments. As a result, when naval vessels were not present in Falmouth, the British agents were directed to hire the services of merchantmen or privateers. Likewise, the British agents operating on the Continent were instructed to follow the same procedure if they discovered any alarming information. On 15 March 1740, for instance, British agents operating in Cadiz reported, probably by way of Faro, that eight Spanish ships of the line and three frigates had left the port of Cadiz under the command of Vice Admiral Marquis de la Blanca and Rear Admiral Andres Lejio. Their destination was unknown, but the British agents assumed that they could be used against the West Indies.<sup>36</sup> When this information arrived at Lisbon, the British ambassador Tyrawly decided to hire the services of a Dutch ship.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, orders to the British commander in the West Indies, Vice Admiral Vernon, included the protection of the British colonies, the gathering of information about the Spanish posture of defence in America and communications

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<sup>36</sup> Thompson to Couraud, 30 April 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers France, SP 78/222, fol. 304.

<sup>37</sup> Tyrawly to Vernon, 21 April 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, Adm. 1/232, fols. 246-7.

of his activities to the British authorities both in America and Britain.<sup>38</sup> As we will see in chapter four, Vernon complied with these instructions satisfactorily and several of the ships under his command were employed in gathering information about the Spanish defences. There was a constant correspondence between Vernon and the ship commanders. Also, Vernon succeeded in establishing communications with the governor of South Carolina and the governor of Georgia. Information from these southern mainland colonies was transmitted to the British governor in Jamaica in sloops and small frigates and these vessels usually sailed onto Britain after having stopped at Port Royal.

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<sup>38</sup> The King to Vernon, 16 July 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 40828, fols. 82-6.

### III-THE BRITISH GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE IN EUROPE

#### III.1-THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN SPAIN

Before the outbreak of the war, the British intelligence network in Spain was controlled by the British ambassador in Madrid, Benjamin Keene (1697 – 1757) and his secretary Abraham Castres. Other members of this network were the British consuls in Corunna, John Burnaby Parker, and in Cadiz, William Cayley. Each of them employed agents, informers and spies in the cities where they operated as well as in the surrounding territory. Also, there were British consuls in Malaga, Alicante and Barcelona. In Madrid, Keene was well acquainted with Spanish affairs before the war started. In 1724 he had arrived in Madrid as an agent of the South Sea Company. In 1727, he was promoted to the post of Minister Plenipotentiary, and in 1729, he became the British ambassador. He kept this position until the formal declaration of war. After the war, in January 1749, Keene returned to Madrid and continued working as the British ambassador in Madrid until his death in 1757.<sup>39</sup>

Due to the custom of the Spanish court to reside in the royal residences located around Madrid, Castres used to deal with the British consuls, while Keene followed the court. In addition to the Palacio de Oriente in Madrid, other royal residences were the Real Monasterio del Escorial in San Lorenzo, the Palace of Aranjuez in Aranjuez and the Palace of La Granja in Segovia. To facilitate the ambassador's work, the British diplomatic body acquired accommodation close to each of these palaces. Indeed, like any other European court, the court of Spain comprised a large number of people, including Spanish ministers, grandees of Spain and foreign diplomatic delegations. For the British ambassador, the corridors of the court of Spain were the perfect place to find a potential informer and the person that ultimately succumbed to Keene's ability to exploit this possibility was the Count of Montijo. In a letter written on 15 April 1738 to the Duke of Newcastle, Keene warned of the risks involved in that business:

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<sup>39</sup> D. B. Horn, *British Diplomatic Representatives 1689 – 1789* (London, 1932), p. 134.



I need not mention, that the person of consideration, at the conclusion of my letter is Mons. Montijo; but he obliged me so strictly, never to name his name, that I must humbly, and earnestly desire his grace that it may never be mentioned in publick. It is with great management, that I keep him, as he is; but, if by his confidence in me, he comes to be accidentally published, I, and all those, whoever will be employed here, will find him a mortal enemy.<sup>40</sup>

The Count of Montijo (1692 –1747) was a Grandee of Spain, and from 1737 he occupied the post of president of the Council of Indies. From 1732 to 1735 he had been the Spanish ambassador in London.<sup>41</sup> There is no record of his political affiliations. But it is possible that Montijo had identified Spain’s interests as best served by a good understanding with Britain as opposed an alliance between Madrid and Paris. If this is true, the time he spent in London might have served to create a diplomatic friendship that was used by Keene when tensions between Spain and Britain intensified. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know how much of Keene’s reports came from Montijo because after the letter of 15 April 1738 Keene always referred to his main source of information as “my friend”. Until his return to England, letters from Keene to Newcastle commonly mentioned meetings with Montijo in one paragraph and the expression “my friend” in another. This, and other hints, lead the reader to suspect that it was indeed Montijo who provided the British ambassador with some of the information contained in the letters.

Benjamin Keene also received information from the Dutch ambassador in Madrid Vander Meer and from the Venetian ambassador. In section two, we saw that consul Cayley sent letters to Newcastle under the cover of Vander Meer. Moreover, as we will see later in this section, this collaboration continued after the declaration of war as the Dutch and Venetian diplomats continued to provide information to the British ambassadors in Paris and British consuls in Genoa. Thanks to these initiatives, Newcastle obtained information about the content of the negotiations between Madrid and Paris, the state of the Spanish finances and the posture of defence in the Peninsula and the Spanish colonies. Also, in the summer of 1739, Keene provided Edward Willes with a valuable tool to decipher

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<sup>40</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 4/15 April 1738, TNA: PRO, SP 94/130.

<sup>41</sup> J.P. Alzina de Aguilar, *Embajadores de España en Londres* (Madrid, 2001), pp. 141-2.

the letters intercepted in the Spanish post: the Spanish code. In a letter dated 2 August 1738, Keene reported to Newcastle that

I herewith inclose copies and translations of two original letters which I have had in my hands in figures and decyphered and I transmit them to your Grace in that manner, because they may possibly sense to discover the Spanish cypher, and be of some use, if Mr. Geraldino [Spanish ambassador in London] writes in the same with that of Mr. de la Mina [Spanish ambassador in Paris].<sup>42</sup>

The British consul in Cadiz, Cayley, was particularly important because this port was the base of one of the main Spanish naval squadrons. The port of Cadiz was also the main centre for trade between Spain and America. Every year, the Flota de Nueva España and the Galeones de Tierra Firme were prepared in Cadiz before their departure to New Spain and New Grenade, respectively. In Cadiz, Cayley and his agents talked to the Spanish soldiers, travellers and merchants. Their reports included the actions of the Intendent of Marine; and preparations to send the Flota and the Galeones. Their reports also included the number, strength and condition of ships that formed the Cadiz squadron and plans to increase the existing naval force. These plans were based on rumours and news that arrived from America. Some of Cayley's reports also included information contained in the avisos to America.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that he had informers inside the Spanish navy in Cadiz.

John Burnaby Parker was the British consul in Corunna and his presence in this city was important because it was close to the port of Ferrol, which harboured another important Spanish squadron. In Corunna and Ferrol, Parker and his agents followed the movements of the Intendent of Marine and they reported about the condition and disposition of the existing fortifications, raising of new batteries and arrival of new Spanish regiments in Galicia. Parker also discovered that the observation of the British ships from the watch towers on the coast was complemented with operations conducted at sea by French and Genoese sailing craft. According to one of Parker's reports, which was dated August 1739, these

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<sup>42</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 2 Aug. 1738 (NS), BL, Add. 32798, fol. 256.

<sup>43</sup> The avisos were fast vessels, that transported the correspondence between Spain and the colonies, and also within the colonies themselves.

boats were used to identify the British ships operating off the coast of Galicia or en route to the Mediterranean. The captains of the French or Genoese vessels, were meant to sail about fifty leagues off the Cape Finisterre and to make signals to the watching towers when they found British squadrons passing by.<sup>44</sup>

There was a clear difference in the objectives between the British ambassador in Madrid and British consuls in Corunna and Cadiz. Benjamin Keene operated in the court. He talked to people well placed to provide him with information about the diplomatic position of the Spanish court and its military designs. Meanwhile, Parker and Cayley operated at street level. Their agents worked in the ports, inns and public houses. The consuls or their agents talked to soldiers, travellers and merchants and provided information that served to corroborate or cast doubt upon Keene's reports. This was a pattern that we will see in other intelligence networks in Europe. However, in September 1739, the British diplomats had to abandon the country. Benjamin Keene travelled to Lisbon and returned to Britain. Parker moved to Porto and continued his spying activities with the collaboration of the British consul. Jackson and Cayley moved to Faro and continued their reports with the assistance of Consul Hammond.

### III.2-THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN PORTUGAL

Before the War of Jenkins' Ear, the British Intelligence network in Portugal was controlled by the British ambassador in Lisbon, Lord Tyrawly, and his secretary Charles Compton. On 18 July 1741, Tyrawly returned to Britain after thirteen years in the post.<sup>45</sup> At that moment, Compton succeeded him as ambassador.<sup>46</sup> Other members of this British network of intelligence were the British consul in Porto, Robert Jackson, and the British consul in Faro, Hammond. In Lisbon, Tyrawly and Compton were furnished with information from Britain and received information from the British consuls operating in Porto and Faro. Also, Tyrawly and Compton succeeded in creating their own network of informers in Ferrol and

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<sup>44</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 4 Aug. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32692, fols. 229-31.

<sup>45</sup> J. Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy 1688 – 1800* (Exeter, 2001), p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Horn, *British Diplomatic Representatives 1689 – 1789*, pp. 98-9.

Cadiz, and sometimes, these agents were sent on special missions to gather further intelligence in Santander, Bilbao and San Sebastian.<sup>47</sup>

As mentioned before, in September 1739 British consuls in Corunna and Cadiz moved to Porto and Faro respectively. These consuls continued operating in collaboration with the British diplomatic body in Portugal. In Porto, Parker and Jackson succeeded in opening a channel of communication with Parker's network of agents in Galicia. There are two important documents that contain a list of spies employed by Parker. The first of those documents dates from 25 June 1740 and it is entitled "Account of disbursements for His Majesty's service made by John Burnaby Parker, employed in His Majesty's Service at Oporto in Portugal". According to this document, from October 1739 to May 1740, there were two agents operating in the harbour of Ferrol, two operating in Corunna and neighbouring ports, one agent working in Pontevedra, Vigo and neighbouring ports, and eighteen people employed to run messages between these agents and Parker.<sup>48</sup> The second paper dates from 31 December 1740, and records that between May 1740 and December 1740, Parker employed two people in Ferrol, two people in Groyne, one person in Pontevedra and fifteen other people to run the messages between these towns and Porto.<sup>49</sup>

The Spanish agents in Portugal soon discovered the existence of British spies operating under the directions of the British consuls in Porto. In a letter dated 24 May 1740 from the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, Jorge de Macazaga, to the Spanish First Secretary, the Marquis of Villarias, the Spanish ambassador mentioned that "a British ship that stopped at Porto left correspondence for the former British consul in Corunna, who has many agents operating in Galicia".<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For example: Compton to Newcastle, 8 April 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Portugal, SP 89/40, fol. 144.

<sup>48</sup> Parker to Tyrawly, 25 June 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 76-82.

<sup>49</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 31 Dec. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 198.

<sup>50</sup> Macazaga to Villarias, 24 May 1740, AHN, Estado, Legajo 7187: "Señor, doy respuesta al honor de la carta de V.E. de 12 del corriente, poniendo en su noticia, como el día 9 del mismo arribó a Oporto en 4 días de viaje un bergantín ingles armado en guerra con un pliego del duque de Newcastle para su cónsul, que es el que tengo avisado a V.E. lo ha sido antes del rompimiento en

Six weeks later the Spanish Intendent of marine in Corunna, the Count of Ytre, gave orders to intercept and capture British agents when they attempted to cross the river Miño, which serves as a natural border between Spain and Portugal.<sup>51</sup> As a result several agents were arrested and taken to Spanish prisons in Galicia to be interrogated. Indeed, the Spanish reaction provoked concern among the British in Portugal. Parker wrote to Newcastle on 6 July 1740 that

Five persons have been seized in that city [Ferrol] upon bare suspicion of a treacherous correspondence, and were closely confined in dungeons, and the greatest strictness is used on the frontiers in the examining of all people that pass, several of whom not having given a satisfactory account of themselves, have been stopt, and put in prison, and loaded with irons, to exhort from them as is pretended, a confession of the truth of their business; these difficultys makes a greater delay, in my getting the intelligence from thence than here to fore, but it will not put a stop to my obtaining information of what is transacting.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, in Faro Cayley was assisted by Consul Hammond. Cayley succeeded in opening a channel of communication with at least one of his former correspondents in Cadiz. This person was probably the same one whom Cayley had used before the declaration of war to send letters under cover of the Dutch ambassador in Madrid, Vander Meer. During the war this informer furnished Cayley with information regarding the number of ships and the condition of the squadron of Cadiz.

### III.3-THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN FRANCE

The British Intelligence Network in France was controlled by the British ambassador to Paris, James, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Waldegrave (1684 – 1741), and his secretary Anthony Thompson. Waldegrave was the British ambassador in Paris from 1730 to 1740 and then he was succeeded by Thompson, who remained in the post until 1744. In 1744 war finally broke out between France and Britain. While

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la Coruña, donde, como en otras partes de Galicia, dejó bastantes correspondencias para no ignorar nada, y participarlo todo a su ministerio, y habiéndose entregado el capitán, volvió este a salir a las 24 horas”.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from the Count of Itre, 20 July 1740, AHN, Estado, Legajo 549.

<sup>52</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 6 July 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 80.

Waldegrave followed the court, Thompson corresponded with the British envoy in Marseilles, Winder, and other British informers operating on French soil. Like the Spanish court, the French court also moved around the royal palaces located around Paris such as Versailles, Fontainebleau, Compiègne and Marly. As with the British diplomatic body in Spain, accommodation was secured close to each of these places to facilitate the ambassador's work.

During the war, France was Spain's most important ally and British informers provided intelligence about diplomatic negotiations between France and Spain. The informers also provided information about the French and Spanish initiatives to mobilize the Jacobites and naval preparations in France. There were two main informers about the negotiations between Spain and France. The first was François Bussy, an official in the French ministry of foreign affairs since 1733, who received the cover name of 101.<sup>53</sup> He had supplied information to the British ambassador since August 1735, and in return, he had a pension of 400 Louis d'Ors per quarter.<sup>54</sup> The second informer was the secretary of the Marquis of Castropiñano, Neapolitan ambassador in Paris and also the secret commander of the Neapolitan army. He received the cover name of Sicilian Abbot, and according to Waldegrave, he had started to provide information in January 1740.<sup>55</sup> Thus, this British informer should not be mistaken for the Sicilian abbots Montgon and Caracholo, who had provided information to Robert Walpole about the secret negotiations between Spain and Austria from 1727 to 1729.<sup>56</sup>

However, British diplomats, and Waldegrave was not an exception, were always concerned about the reliability of the information provided by the informers. For example, before the declaration of war Waldegrave expressed his doubts about the honesty of the accounts of 101. Bussy received considerable monetary rewards for his reports. However, he also knew that tensions between Paris and London could lead to a declaration of war between France and Britain. In that case, the British

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<sup>53</sup> J.C.D. Clark, *The Memoirs and Speeches of James, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Waldegrave: 1742 – 1763* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 27; E. Cruikshanks, "101 Secret Agent", *History Today*, 19 (1969), 273-6.

<sup>54</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 7 July 1740 (NS), BL, Add. 32802, fols. 153-6.

<sup>55</sup> 30 Oct. 1740 (NS), BL, Add. 32802, fols. 205-9.

<sup>56</sup> See BL, Add. 79973 and 79974.

diplomatic body would have left the country, Waldegrave would have found it very complicated to keep in contact and Bussy would have lost out financially. There was a strong possibility that he might have been manipulating reports to soften the British reaction towards France. Thus, Newcastle directed Waldegrave to use another spy in the French ministry of foreign affairs, Guyot, to check on Bussy's reports.<sup>57</sup> In a letter of April 1739 from Waldegrave to Newcastle, the British ambassador reported the following:

What view 101 can have in enlarging so much of this subject, and in endeavouring to alarm us with a fictitious treaty of this kind [Treaty of Defensive Alliance between Spain and France] if it should be so, is not to be accounted for, but by supposing that he thinks the laying these dangers before our eyes may make us more ready to comply with Spain, and consequently less likely to quarrel with France, which he takes for granted would put a stop to his allowance and gratifications, and therefore would use any artifice to prevent a rupture.<sup>58</sup>

Information about the negotiations between Spain and France was complemented by initiatives to follow the movements of the Jacobites. Information on Jacobites was also supplied by 101 and the Sicilian Abbot. However, the main British agent in Paris to obtain this information was a double agent called François Sempill (d.1748). Indeed, Sempill was a renowned Jacobite who acted as a courier between the French government and the Jacobites in England.<sup>59</sup>

It was also necessary to assess French naval preparations in Toulon, Brest and Rochefort. These ports harboured the main French naval squadrons and information from the British agents included the number of ships, the ships' condition, strength and designs. The information also related to preparations to fit more ships with armaments. Before the declaration of war, Waldegrave received regular reports about the French squadron in Toulon from the British envoy, Winder, whose network included two important British agents. The names of

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<sup>57</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 27 Dec. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32801, fols. 355-8.

<sup>58</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 20 April 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32800, fol. 259.

<sup>59</sup> B. Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689 – 1746* (London, 1980), p. 237.

these agents were Whately and Campert.<sup>60</sup> However, in the spring of 1739, when tensions between Spain and Britain were increasing, Waldegrave did not have regular information about the preparations that were being conducted either in Brest or in Rochefort. As a result, in a letter dated 8 May 1739, Newcastle wrote to the British ambassador that “you should endeavour to have persons in the several ports of France”.<sup>61</sup> Following these instructions, in July 1739 Waldegrave hired the services of a French man who operated in Brest and Rochefort “under a pretence of commercial affairs”.<sup>62</sup>

In the spring of 1740 the sailing of the Spanish squadron at Cadiz to Ferrol coincided with the presence of an important body of Spanish troops in Galicia that seemed designed for an invasion of Britain, the arrival in Spain of well known Jacobites and an increase in naval preparations in the ports of France. In Portugal, the British agents failed to obtain information about the destination of the Cadiz squadron. To solve this problem, in July 1740, Wadegrave employed the services of a French merchant in the southern port of Bayonne. According to Waldegrave, “the pretence [this agent] takes is trade, as being employ’d by his brother, who is a considerable banker here [in Paris]... will write regularly by every post, and upon an emergency will send an express”.<sup>63</sup> Also, in January 1741, Waldegrave’s successor, Thompson, employed the services of a former French East India company agent to provide further information about the ports of Brest and Rochefort.<sup>64</sup>

Further information about the Brest and Ferrol squadrons was obtained by the British ships operating in the English Channel. As William Richmond indicates in his work, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, several British ships were dispatched during the war to cruise off the coast of the Spanish region of Galicia

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<sup>60</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 16 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 5-8.

<sup>61</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 8 May 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32800, fol. 368.

<sup>62</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 18 July 1739 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/221, fol. 5.

<sup>63</sup> 7 July 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fol 158.

<sup>64</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 4 Jan 1741 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/224, fols. 368-70.



and the French region of Finisterre.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, during the war, the British squadron in the Channel was put under the command of Vice Admiral John Norris (1670/71 – 1749). However, Norris became a regular attendant at the Cabinet meetings and most of his observation duties were coordinated by two other naval officers: Vice Admiral John Balchen (1670 – 1744) and Rear Admiral Chaloner Ogle (1680/1 – 1750).

#### III.4-THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN ITALY

The British Intelligence Network in Italy was controlled from the British consulate in Genoa. The British consul, until March 1740, was Jackson, and thereafter, John Birtles. The importance of the British intelligence network in Genoa can be explained by its position in the north of Italy, which made it the last stop for the post and for the messengers travelling between Italy and Britain. Also, Genoa had a buoyant economy thanks to its being a free port. The city bustled with travellers, sailors and merchants, all of whom could potentially become an important source of information. At the same time, other British consuls in Italy who provided useful information were Villetes in Turin, Sir Horace Mann in Florence and Burrington Goldsworthy in Leghorn.

Initially, the main purpose of the British agents in Italy was to gather information about the negotiations between Spain and France and the Jacobite court in Rome. James Stuart (the Old Pretender) continued initiatives undertaken by his father to recover the throne after the commencement of his exile in 1689. For example, he had his own court in Rome, there were envoys operating under his directions in the main European cities and he possessed an extensive network of informers that provided information from Britain.<sup>66</sup> In Genoa, the main source of information were letters intercepted in the Spanish post. These letters carried the very full correspondence between the commander of the Spanish army, the Duke of

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<sup>65</sup> H.W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, 1920), i. 73-101, 179-97.

<sup>66</sup> See Royal Archive of Windsor: Stuart Papers.

Montemar, and the Neapolitan authorities.<sup>67</sup> Another source of information was a person in Genoa whose name does not appear in the records. According to Jackson, this anonymous informer had a correspondence with a cardinal in Rome who was “in some confidence with the Pretender”.<sup>68</sup> Also, as mentioned before, Jackson and Birtles had access to the correspondence between the Venetian ambassador in Madrid and the Venetian authorities, whose correspondence stopped at Genoa before continuing on to Venice.

The Cardinal that is mentioned in that letter from Consul Jackson to the Duke of Newcastle on the 11 June 1739 was probably Alesandro Albani (1692-1779). Albani was the nephew of Pope Clement XI and before taking the ecclesiastical orders in 1712, he had commanded one of the regiments in the papal army. In 1720, he entered the Papal diplomatic body and was sent to Vienna. One year later, in 1721, the Pope made him a Cardinal. According to Vincent Buranelli, at some point Albani succeeded in infiltrating several informers in Jacobite circles in Rome. Also, his interest in art and antiques gave him a good cover to meet British travellers.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it is possible that some of those travellers that are mentioned in Buranelli’s work had been British agents under cover. As a result, it is also relatively easy to speculate that the British might have bribed Albani.

In Genoa, Jackson and Birtles complemented their reports about the Jacobites with further initiatives that were taken by the British consul in Florence. Sir Horace Mann (1706-1786) had one informer in Rome who watched the movements of the Pretender.<sup>70</sup> This agent was Baron Sctoch, a Prussian aristocrat who operated under the cover name of “John Walton” and had “connections in the Roman underworld”.<sup>71</sup> Information provided by Alesandro Albani and Sctoch

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<sup>67</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 19/30 Dec. 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 79/18.

<sup>68</sup> 31 May/11 June 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 79/18.

<sup>69</sup> V. Buranelli, *Spy/Counterspy: An Encyclopaedia of Espionage* (New York, London, 1982), pp. 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> Mann to Walpole, 15 Sept. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 73988, fols. 63-4.

<sup>71</sup> W. Smith (ed.), *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence with Sir Horace Mann* (London, 1955), p.xxxiii.

enabled Newcastle to know that the Pretender and his son had regular meetings at their residence, the Palazzo Mutti. These meetings were with the Spanish ambassadors in Rome, Jose de Viena y Equiluz, the Spanish nuncio, Cardinal Acquaviva, the French ambassador in Rome, Aignan, and the French nuncio, Cardinal Tensin. However, in January 1740 the British intelligence network in France reported that after having received orders from the Pretender, the Duke of Ormond had left his residence in Avignon and was en route to Madrid.<sup>72</sup> From that point, the British agents in Italy focused their reports on the military activities in Italy and the Mediterranean theatre during the war.

Information about the military preparations in Barcelona and Naples and the negotiations between the courts of Madrid and Naples were obtained from the intercepted correspondence to the Duke of Montemar. Also, as mentioned before, Jackson and Birtles employed several informers in Genoa to interrogate travellers, sailors and merchants coming from other ports. For example, in the winter of 1740, Captain Luck Williams of the Argyle was seized by Spanish privateers operating in the Mediterranean. After his capture, he was taken to Palma, where he was released. However, before his arrival at Genoa, Williams passed by Barcelona. At Barcelona and in Palma, Williams noticed the military preparations that the Spanish were conducting in the ports. The report of Captain Williams confirmed that the initial designs of the Spanish were to make an attempt upon the island of Minorca and this report complemented some details obtained through the Spanish post.<sup>73</sup>

However, rather than being sent to Minorca, the Spanish troops in Catalonia were dispatched to the north of Italy. In Italy these troops fought against the Austrians and attempted to conquer Parma, Placentia and the Milanese. Information about the numbers, condition and organization of the Spanish troops during their transportation to Italy was obtained by the British agents that were posted in the cities along the southern French coast and the Ligurian sea. Also, during the military operations between the Spanish and Austrian armies, Jackson and Birtles

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<sup>72</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 24 Jan. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fols. 50-3.

<sup>73</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 30/10 Feb. 1740, TNA: PRO, State Papers Genoa, SP 79/19.

had agents that supplied information from the Spanish and Austrian camps.<sup>74</sup> This information was sent to the commander of the British squadron in the Mediterranean from 1742 to 1744 and enabled him to coordinate his operations with the movements of the Austrian army in Italy.

### III.5-THE BRITISH SQUADRON IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, a major British naval squadron operated in the Mediterranean. From May 1738 to February 1742, this squadron was commanded by Rear Admiral Nicholas Haddock (1685 – 1746), who had accumulated most of his war experience during the War of Spanish Succession. In 1705, he participated in the occupation of Barcelona, and in 1706, he was present at the capture of Alicante. A few years later, in 1727, Haddock participated in the defence of Gibraltar. This experience gave him a reasonably good understanding of the Spanish army. In March 1740, he was promoted Vice Admiral of the Blue in return for his good service in the Mediterranean and he held this commission until his health failed him. However, due to lack of sufficient naval power in April 1740, Haddock could not prevent the departure of the Cadiz squadron to Ferrol. Also in November 1741 he failed to prevent its sailing to Toulon, all of which facilitated the transportation of an important body of Spanish troops to Italy.<sup>75</sup>

In February 1742, Vice Admiral Haddock was succeeded by Vice Admiral Thomas Mathews (1676 – 1751) who was also appointed plenipotentiary to the king of Piedmont-Sardinia and the states of Italy. He first saw action during the War of Spanish Succession, and later, he participated in the 1719 – 1721 war with Spain. In 1718 he was sent to the Mediterranean as captain of the Kent with a fleet commanded by Vice Admiral Byng. Mathews distinguished himself in the Battle of Cape Passaro, and afterwards, Byng appointed him commander of the small squadron that was responsible for blockading Messina. His arrival in the Mediterranean coincided with a reinforcement of the British naval force, all of

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<sup>74</sup> For example: Birtles to Newcastle, 14/25 Oct. 1742, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>75</sup> J.K. Laughton, "Haddock, Nicholas (*bap.* 1685?, *d.* 1746)", rev. Richard Harding, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, Online ed, Jan 2008. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11848>, accessed 1 May 2008.

which enabled him to blockade the Bourbon squadron in Toulon and to hinder the dispatch of further Spanish reinforcements to Italy. However, despite a successful campaign, in February 1744, Mathews failed to destroy the Bourbon squadron at sea and he was called home. In 1746 he was expelled from the Navy.<sup>76</sup>

During the war, the British squadron operated from Gibraltar and Port Mahon. In 1739, the governor of Gibraltar, General Hardgrave, was succeeded by General Sabine. Meanwhile, the governor of Port Mahon continued to be General Anstruther. In February 1741, Anstruther was succeeded by Richard O'Farrell. The two naval bases had the necessary infrastructure to provide the squadron with logistical support and they were the destination of the packet boats that operated from the ports of Falmouth, Marseilles, Genoa and Leghorn. Orders from the British government in London to the British commanders of the squadron included the protection of the British merchants, the defence of the territories of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, the disruption of Spanish trade and the disturbance of Spanish communications. Also, in their instructions, the British commanders were directed to gather intelligence about the Spanish and French naval preparations in Cadiz, Cartagena and Toulon, and the Spanish military preparations in Catalonia and Mallorca.<sup>77</sup>

The British gathering of information and the implementation of military decisions in the Mediterranean by the British squadron was well studied by William Richmond. As Richmond points out, from 1739 to 1744, Haddock and Mathews sent several ships to observe the Spanish movements inside the ports of Cadiz, Cartagena, Barcelona, Mallorca and the French port of Toulon. During the autumn of 1739, the British squadron was initially divided into two equal parts. One operated off Cadiz from Gibraltar and the other one operated off Barcelona from Port Mahon. However, in the winter of 1740, the presence of Spanish troops in Catalonia and Mallorca appeared to threaten an invasion of Minorca. This led

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<sup>76</sup> D.A. Baugh, "Mathews, Thomas (1676 – 1751)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Sept 2004, Online ed, Jan 2008. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18332>, accessed 1 May 2008.

<sup>77</sup> For example see: Abstract of the Correspondence between Newcastle and Rear Admiral Haddock. Newcastle to Haddock, 6 July 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fol. 143.

Haddock to employ nearly all the British ships for the defence of the island. In 1740 most of the British ships continued to operate from Port Mahon and they were mainly dispatched to lay off Barcelona and Palma. After the dispatch of Spanish troops to Italy and the arrival of the Cadiz squadron at Toulon, some British ships continued to operate off the port of Barcelona and others were posted off Toulon.<sup>78</sup>

In Gibraltar, the British governors, Generals Hardgrave and Sabine, obtained information from Spanish deserters who had left the Spanish camp in San Roque. Their accounts included information about the Spanish troops in Andalusia such as their numbers, location, disposition and rumours among the troops with regards to their next destination. The British sources suggest that the British governors in Minorca took several initiatives to use the information obtained by British ships. The navy must have interrogated the merchants that stopped at Port Mahon and there is a strong possibility that special agents were sent to Mallorca. In a letter dated 23 July 1741 from Newcastle to Anstruther, the Secretary of State wrote that “the lords justices greatly commended your care and diligence to procure the earliest and best intelligence of the motions and preparations of the Spaniards, and were glad to find that you had been able to put yourself in so good posture of defence as not apprehensive of any attempt that might be made against the island under your government”.<sup>79</sup>

However, in his work, Richmond failed to notice that the main informers for the Spanish preparations for war were not the British captains. They were the British agents operating within the diplomatic body. It appears that information provided by these agents was contained in the letters transported by the packet boats that operated from the ports of Falmouth, Marseilles, Genoa and Leghorn. This information must have helped the British captains to understand the movements that they saw in the ports. It must have also been of a great assistance when they interrogated merchants, fishermen, travellers, deserters and prisoners. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to suggest that the main contribution of the

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<sup>78</sup> Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, i. 59-73, 151-79; 197-241.

<sup>79</sup> Newcastle to Anstruther, 23 July 1740 (OS), HL/PO/JO/10/6/486, fols. 712-3.

British ships to the British intelligence system was only to corroborate the information provided by the British agents on the Continent. Sometimes, the British agents did not have the means to report speedily if the Spanish government took an unexpected military decision. Information obtained by the ships' captains helped the British commanders to anticipate Newcastle's directions before the arrival of the official correspondence from London.

## **IV-THE GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE IN AMERICA**

### **IV.1-GOING TO WAR AGAINST SPAIN IN AMERICA**

The British decision to attack Spain in America started to take shape only when the British agents operating in Spain warned about the difficulties involved in successfully assaulting a Spanish city in the Peninsula. In a letter of 14 July 1739, Keene reported that all the ports in Spain were well fortified, provided with good artillery, ammunitions, strong garrisons, and in case of necessity, the ports could be strengthened by other troops. These troops were disposed in such a manner as to be able to join and assist the garrisons at the shortest possible warning. In his report, Keene warned that such a strong disposition was “particularly taken in Galicia”, and also, in Cadiz “where there might be a very glorious, but most dangerous enterprise in order to burn their men of war in that bay”. As a result, Keene told the Duke of Newcastle that “America therefore my lord is where we can do them much and important damage”.<sup>80</sup>

However, in America, the Spanish trading routes were organized with an efficient system of convoys that used fortified towns for their protection. Every May, the Flota de Nueva España left the port of Cadiz bound for Veracruz in New Spain. Also, every August, the Galeones of Tierra Firme, left the port of Cadiz. They were bound for Cartagena de Indias and the small town of Portobello in New Grenade. After wintering in Veracruz and Portobello, the Flota and the Galeones assembled in Havana and together they returned to Spain. This picture was completed with the Armada del Sur, which connected the Spanish ports along the Pacific coast of America and a galleon that connected the ports of Acapulco in New Spain with Manila in the Philippines. In the Pacific, Spanish authority had never been seriously challenged. However, in the West Indies, where the British attacks had been more frequent, the fortifications of Veracruz, Cartagena, and Havana provided the necessary protection for Spanish trade. Control of Veracruz,

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<sup>80</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 14 July 1739 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 94 /133.



Cartagena and Havana was fundamental for the Spanish territories in America.<sup>81</sup> But what did the members of the British Cabinet in 1739 know about these cities?

Of course, British colonies in North America and the Caribbean were close to Spanish trading routes. However, before the declaration of war, the British government did not have a clear picture of the Spanish colonies. The only substantial report before 1739 about the strength of the Spanish empire in America, and how to conduct military operations in case of war with Spain, dated from 1727. This report only contained information about Havana and was drawn up by Alexander Spotswood (1676 – 1740) governor of Virginia from 1710 to 1722.<sup>82</sup> The report was at the request of the Secretary of the State for the Northern Department, Charles Townshend (1674 – 1738). As a result, in the summer of 1739, the government realized that the necessary information for an attack on the Spanish colonies would have to be obtained afresh. The sources would have to be the British agents operating in Europe, British merchants who had conducted business in the Spanish colonies, and the British squadron in the West Indies.

Indeed, Charles Wager worked actively with the Duke of Newcastle to obtain this information. He compiled several reports that displayed in a well organized way all the information known about the main Spanish cities in America. This information was provided from the British sources. Wager's purpose was to supply other members of the Cabinet with the best information to prepare the British military expeditions against the Spanish dominions in America. For example, the first report that Wager drew up dates from 5 June 1738 and it contains basic information about Havana, Santiago de Cuba, San Juan de Puerto Rico, Veracruz, the Caracas Coast, Cartagena de Indias, Portobello, Buenos Aires and Manila. The report recognized the strength of Havana, but disregarded that of the other cities.<sup>83</sup> However, the last of these reports that were drawn up by Charles

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<sup>81</sup> G. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London, 1979), pp. 4-7.

<sup>82</sup> Spotswood to Townshend, 1727, BL, Add 32694, fols. 3-7.

<sup>83</sup> Sir Charles Wage's Paper, "Places where the Spaniards may be attacked (with proper force) in Europe and in the West Indies", 5 June 1738 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 51-2.

Wager dates from 14 April 1740 and recognized the general strength of the Spanish defences, particularly in the cities of Havana, Veracruz and Cartagena.<sup>84</sup>

#### IV.2-INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE BRITISH MERCHANTS

The Duke of Newcastle and Charles Wager found a good source for commercial and military information in the British merchants who had conducted business in the Spanish colonies. Most of these merchants had been to Spanish America as part of the South Sea Company and had become well acquainted with some parts of the Spanish dominions. The company had three main headquarters to supply the Spanish colonies with African slaves. One was in Jamaica to supply Florida. The second was in Barbados to supply the Caracas coast. The third was in Buenos Aires to supply Peru and Chile. In addition to the main factories, the company also had delegations in Arequipa, Panama, Portobello, Cartagena de Indias and Santiago de Chile.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, the sources do not contain much information about these merchants other than their surnames and the sort of information they provided.

The information about the commercial significance of Havana was provided by Knight and Hamilton. Further information about its military defences was provided by a former South Sea Company factor called Hubert Tassel. According to Knight, Havana was the most important city in Spanish America because its harbour was “the rendezvous of all their homeward bound fleets”.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Hamilton believed that “if the crown of England could come posses’d of the island of Cuba... Great Britain must, in that case, become posses’d of the whole trade of all the Spanish empire there”.<sup>87</sup> However, in his report to the Duke of Newcastle in October 1739, Tassel described Havana as a large city of 5,000

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<sup>84</sup> “Sir Charles Wager’s memorandum of places in old and new Spain that may be attempted”, 14 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 72-99.

<sup>85</sup> G. H. Nelson, “Contraband Trade under the Asiento, 1730 – 1739”, *American Historical Review*, 51 (1945), 56.

<sup>86</sup> Report by Knight, 3 Dec. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fol. 17.

<sup>87</sup> Report by Hamilton, 18 Aug. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fol. 33.

houses with a population of between fifty and sixty thousand people. According to him the city was surrounded with a strong wall with ten bastions towards the land. The harbour was protected by five castles that mounted one hundred and fifty two cannons. Moreover “in case of an attack they could mount as many more on the wall towards the land [and] ... in my opinion I humbly apprehend a descent on that island must be done with great strength”.<sup>88</sup>

There is a possibility that Knight and Hamilton were two politicians of the time: Robert Knight and Lord Archibald Hamilton (1763 – 1745). Robert Knight (1702 – 1772) was a Whig MP and the son of Robert Knight (1675 – 1744), a South Sea Company cashier.<sup>89</sup> In 1721, Knight’s father was accused of fraud and he fled to France where he became a banker in Paris. During the following years, Knight sought a pardon for his father, and according to Romney Sedwick, he obtained it after Walpole’s fall “on the ground that the ex-cashier has been sufficiently punished by the forfeiture of all his available assets in England”.<sup>90</sup> However, it is also possible that this pardon was granted in return for the intelligence that he would have provided in December 1739. The second, Lord Archibald Hamilton (1763 – 1745) was also an MP in 1739, and from 1710 to 1716 he was the Governor of Jamaica.<sup>91</sup>

Reports with information about the Spanish ports in the Caribbean were written by a variety of hands. However, among all the Spanish settlements in the Caribbean, the most important was certainly the city of Cartagena. In a letter dated 3 December 1739 to the Duke of Newcastle, Knight reported:

Cartagena is well fortified by land as well as by sea, but the garrison does not consist of more than 4 or 500 men and the militia of ten companys consisting of about 100 men each. Mons. Pontis took it in

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<sup>88</sup> Tassel to Newcastle, 29 Oct. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fol. 50.

<sup>89</sup> S. Handley, “Knight, Robert (1675 – 1744)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Online ed, May 2005, Online ed, Jan 2008. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/75056>].

<sup>90</sup> R. Sedwick, *The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1715 – 1754*, 2 Vols. (London, 1970), ii. 192.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

1695 with 7 ships of the line, some frigats two bombs and 3000 land forces part of which were privateers. The galloons and 8 or 10 men of war being there at this time ad greatly to their strength, but, when they are gone it will be no difficult matter to take it, with 3000 men, 8 or 10 ships of the line and some bombs.<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile, information about the Spanish ports in the Pacific coast of America and the Philippines was provided by Hubert Tassel, who had also produced useful material about Havana, and by Henry Hutchinson. Both men had been in the South Sea Company. However, in 1739 Tassel and Hutchinson were at odds with the company over their accounts. Tassel had been employed in Havana during the 1730s and Hutchinson had worked in the factories that the company had in Portobello, Lima and Panama.<sup>93</sup> In October 1739, they made a proposal for the expedition that the government was preparing for the Pacific and they provided comercial and military information about Manila, Acapulco, Trujillo, Guayaquil, Panama, Callao and Lima. In their report, they included information about the defences in those cities, the attitude of the local population towards the Spanish authorities, places where the British ships could be furnished with water and provisions during their trip, and an estimation of the necessary strength for a potential British expedition.<sup>94</sup>

Despite pursuing their own personal interests, these British merchants helped the British government have a better picture of the economic activities that were conducted in the different regions of the Spanish colonies. In his report of 3 December 1739, Knight suggested that Britain should not attempt an attack upon Havana. According to Knight, such an enterprise “will be attended with very great difficultys and expense... the French and Dutch should be uneasy at its being in our hands ... [and it] will not compensate the damages our sugar islands will sustain thereby”. He was probably referring to the danger of Cuban sugar under British control, entering the British market and depressing prices. Instead, Knight was more in favour of an attack against Cartagena de Indias, which certainly

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<sup>92</sup> Report by Knight, 3 Dec. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fol. 16.

<sup>93</sup> G. Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans: The Triumph and Tragedy of Anson's Voyage Round the World* (London, 1999), p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Tassel to Walpole, 11 Sept. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 41-5.

would not have harmed the profitability of sugar production on the plantations in Jamaica and Barbados.<sup>95</sup> However, it is important to note that both Newcastle and Wager must have understood that when reading these reports, it was necessary to separate the personal interests of the merchants from those of the state.

#### IV.3-INFORMATION OBTAINED BY THE BRITISH AGENTS IN EUROPE

The British Intelligence System had an extensive network of agents operating in Europe and some of them had access to material information about the Spanish colonies in America. For example, the British ambassadors in Madrid, Paris, and the British consuls in Genoa were able to obtain information from people that occupied high posts in the Spanish government. Meanwhile, the British consuls operating in the ports of Spain, particularly Cayley in Cadiz and Parker in Corunna, observed the preparations of the ships designed for America. And they discovered information that was contained in the avisos or the merchant vessels coming from the Spanish colonies. Indeed, the reports provided by Cayley and Parker were particularly useful because they could serve to corroborate or contradict the information that was obtained by Keene in Madrid, Waldegrave in Paris and Birtles and Jackson in Genoa.

In Madrid, the Count of Montijo was probably the main source of information, before the declaration of war, concerning the Spanish posture of defence in America. In the spring of 1738, Keene learnt that when Jose Patiño was Secretary of State in Spain, “large sums [of money] were allowed and expended every year in repairing and improving the fortifications in all places of consequence there”.<sup>96</sup> In case of war with Britain, Patiño had elaborated plans to attack the British colonies in America. To attack South Carolina would involve the mobilization of two bodies of troops, a contingent of 1,500 soldiers from Mexico and another of 2,000 from Havana.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, Keene discovered Spanish plans to keep open communications with the colonies by using French boats. For example, on 26 May

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<sup>95</sup> Report by Knight, 3 Dec. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fol. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 15/26 May 1738, TNA: PRO, SP 94/130.

<sup>97</sup> 23 Feb. 1738 (NS), BL, Add. 32797, fols. 86-90.

1738 he reported to the Duke of Newcastle “that if no other way could be found out during a war with us to carry on their trade to America, Spain would employ French bottoms, and then we could not attack them without declaring war against France as well as Spain”.<sup>98</sup>

Keene also obtained economic information about the situation of the commerce in the Spanish colonies. In the winter of 1738, he reported to Newcastle that New Spain was well provisioned with European commodities to stand in need of new supplies.<sup>99</sup> However, one year later, reports obtained from the British consul in Cadiz gave a different picture of the situation in America. In May 1739, Cayley announced that “... the Flota, designed for la Vera Cruz is getting ready in the usual manner, and it is thought, will sail about the end of August”.<sup>100</sup> On 29 June 1739, as tensions between Spain and Britain increased, Keene also reported that, according to Cayley, orders had been given to the azogues, coming from America, to steer to the northern coast of Spain.<sup>101</sup> This information was dispatched to Vice Admiral Vernon before he was ordered to the West Indies, but on 17 August 1739, Keene announced that “on the 13<sup>th</sup> at seven in the morning the Azogues came to an anchor in the bay of St. Ander”.<sup>102</sup>

In Paris, and during the war, British ambassador Waldegrave obtained information about the reinforcement of the Spanish defences in America with troops being sent from Spain. This information was probably provided by 101 and the Sicilian Abbot. Unfortunately, due to the measures that were undertaken to protect the identity of the informer, sometimes it is not possible to know which information was provided by whom. For example, on 10 February 1740, Waldegrave reported to Newcastle that “the court is greatly concerned for the two men of war, which sailed from the Groyne with the Viceroy of Santa Fe [Sebastian de Eslava] and the

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<sup>98</sup> 26 May 1738 (NS), BL, Add. 32798, fol. 49.

<sup>99</sup> 23 Feb. 1738 (NS), BL, Add. 32797, fols. 86-90.

<sup>100</sup> 7/18 May 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 94/133.

<sup>101</sup> 18/29 June 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 94/133. The Azogues were ships that transported quicksilver from Spain to America and were used as transports on their way back to Spain.

<sup>102</sup> 6/17 Aug. 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 94/133.

governor of Portobello in the beginning of October last. They had a good many soldiers and a quantity of warlike stores on board, and it is feared they are fallen into the hands of the British [ships]”.<sup>103</sup>

In Genoa, information about the Spanish dispatch of military reinforcements to America was completed with the reports provided by the British consuls Birtles and Jackson. Most of this information was obtained from an intercepted correspondence between the Duke of Montemar and the Neapolitan authorities. In a letter dated 1 June 1740 to Newcastle, Birtles wrote that “two ships were departed from Cadiz with troops and ammunition for the Havana”.<sup>104</sup> Three months later, on 3 September 1740, Birtles wrote that he had a letter from Montemar that mentioned that “the Havana was well provided with everything, having received a large reinforcement by the arrival of light ships there, which had been dispatched at several times from sundry parts of Spain”. In the same letter, Birtles wrote that Montemar had advised that “Cartagena was in a very good posture of defence, there being arrived a body of troops”.<sup>105</sup>

#### IV.3-THE BRITISH SQUADRON OPERATING IN THE WEST INDIES

During the war of Jenkins’ Ear the officers that commanded the British squadron in the West Indies were Commodore Charles Brown (1678/9 – 1753) from December 1737 to July 1739, Vice Admiral Vernon (1684 – 1757) from July 1739 to October 1742 and Rear Admiral Charles Knowles (d. 1777) from October 1742 to October 1748. However, the main military operations in the West Indies took place when Vernon was commander. Like most of the British commanders, he had obtained the bulk of his combat experience in the War of Spanish Succession. In 1708, Vernon was sent to the West Indies in a squadron under the command of Charles Wager and had the opportunity to see the walls of Cartagena de Indias for the first time. And, eleven years later, in 1719, he was given the command of the British squadron in the West Indies during the brief war with Spain. According to

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<sup>103</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 10 Feb. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fol. 83.

<sup>104</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 21/1 June 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>105</sup> 23 Aug./3 Sept. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

Richard Harding, when a new war with Spain began to appear more likely, Vernon's previous experience and proven abilities in command led to his being promoted vice-admiral of the blue and given command of the West Indies squadron in July 1739.<sup>106</sup>

The British squadron in the West Indies operated from the naval base of Port Royal in Jamaica, and from 1738 to 1751, the governor of Jamaica was Edward Trelawny (1699 – 1754). Before the British attack on Cartagena de Indias, Trelawny's assistance to the British commanders – Brown and Vernon – enabled them to comply successfully with instructions from the Admiralty. These instructions included the defence of the British dominions, the interception of Spanish communication and the procurement of intelligence to examine “in what part of the Spanish dominions in the West Indies, either on the continent, or in any of the island, it may be practicable to make a descent, that may be of the greatest detriment to the Spaniards”.<sup>107</sup>

The gathering of intelligence by the British commanders in the West Indies was considered by William Richmond, who indicated that Brown concentrated on gathering information on the strength, condition and disposition of the Spanish naval forces in the West Indies.<sup>108</sup> For example, on 30 March 1739, a British agent operating in Havana reported that the Spanish forces consisted of twelve ships. The agent also indicated that the Spanish ships were equally distributed among the ports of Cartagena de Indias, Veracruz and Havana.<sup>109</sup> When Vernon arrived in the West Indies in the autumn of 1739, he divided the British fleet into two squadrons. The first squadron remained in Jamaica under the command of Brown and his instructions included the defence of the island in case of a Spanish attack. Meanwhile, Vernon took command of the second squadron and dispatched some of his ships near the ports of Cartagena, Veracruz and Havana. It also

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<sup>106</sup> R. Harding, “Vernon, Edward (1684 – 1757)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Sept 2004, Online ed, Jan 2008. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28237>, accessed 2 May 2008.

<sup>107</sup> The King to Vernon, 16 July 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 40828, fol. 82.

<sup>108</sup> Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, i. 39-59, 101-38, 241-61.

<sup>109</sup> Anonymous, 30 March 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/232, fol. 106.



appears that other initiatives to obtain information about the Spanish naval forces included the capture of Spanish merchant ships to interrogate the Spanish captains.<sup>110</sup>

However, the British captains were not able to obtain relevant information about the defences of Havana, Cartagena and Veracruz. They needed to know such the strength and disposition of the walls that protected the cities, the number of pieces of artillery and the numbers of regular troops and militia that could be mobilized for their defence in the event of an attack. In the summer of 1739, Brown contacted South Sea Company factors in Cartagena. They provided abundant information about Cartagena's fortifications, general trade in the Spanish colonies and the treasure of Peru.<sup>111</sup> But, when news of the declaration of war reached America, the Spanish authorities arrested the South Sea Company factors. As a result, when Vernon arrived in the West Indies, he carried out several exchanges of prisoners with the Spanish authorities to obtain the liberation of British merchants. In a letter dated of 12 October 1739, Vernon reported to Newcastle:

I have hired the small sloop I mentioned to your Excellency... I intend sending her off to Cartagena, to see if they have had any ships arriv'd from Europe lately; and I shall be getting by her return, to be in a condition to undertake any service as shall be judg'd most for our Royal Master's Honour and service... but as intelligence is what I apprehend to be most wanted for his majesty's service... the most likely way for procuring the best, would be to endeavour to have it from the South Seas Companies agents at Cartagena.<sup>112</sup>

Instructions to Vice Admiral Vernon also included the interception of the Spanish communications in the West Indies which was mainly conducted by Avisos. This initiative was destined to harm the coordination of the Spanish defensive preparations, but it could also yield valuable information about them, as the Avisos also carried instructions from Spain with information about the initiatives that were being undertaken in the colonies. However, as the Count of Montijo had warned Keene in May 1738, communications between Spain and the colonies

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<sup>110</sup> Vernon to Burchett, 12 Dec. 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/232, fols. 266-7.

<sup>111</sup> Brown to Newcastle, 3 Aug. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32692, fol. 200.

<sup>112</sup> Vernon to Trelawney, 12 Oct. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fol. 12.

were partly conducted on French ships. Thus, the British ships also stopped vessels sailing under the French flag to seize any correspondence destined to the Spanish colonial authorities. In his letter of 12 December 1739, Vernon reported:

I have luckily met with pretty late intelligence of the motions and designs of our enemies, partly by a French sloop taken as she came out of St. Jago, by one of my cruisers, Capt. Warren in the Squirrel, and brought in here the 25<sup>th</sup> November. She threw overboard one of her packets, that were the dispatches for Spain, but trusted to hiding the packet they had for the French general Monsieur Larnage and I send you enclosed copies of the last letters to him of the 9<sup>th</sup> November new style, from Cartagena from His Excellency Don Blas de Lezo, the Spanish Admiral, to Mons. Larnage and his homme d'affaire Mr. Segretier.<sup>113</sup>

The British commanders in the West Indies obtained military information that complemented the reports provided by the British agents operating in Europe and the British merchants that were consulted in London. Following their instructions, British commanders dispatched ships on observation duties to the main Spanish cities in America. They stopped the ships coming from the Spanish ports to interrogate the crew and several initiatives were undertaken to contact the South Sea Company factors that remained in the Spanish colonies. It appears that other initiatives included the communication with the governor of Georgia, General James Oglethorpe and South Carolina, William Bull. Moreover, despite having a superior naval force, Commodore Brown and Vice Admiral Vernon employed several ships for the defence of Jamaica, which became a priority from the autumn of 1740, after the arrival of the Bourbon fleets from Ferrol and Brest. In the winter of 1741, after the arrival of the expeditionary forces from North America and Britain, Vernon had adequate information to chose his target and sufficient forces to accomplish it.

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<sup>113</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 12 Dec. 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fol. 193.

## **CHAPTER 2. THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM (1739-1744)**

### **I-THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT**

#### **I.1-THE MARQUIS OF VILLARIAS**

From 1739 to 1744, Spain was ruled by Philip V of Bourbon (1683-1746). His reign commenced in 1700, and in domestic politics, it initiated a period of reforms that were designed to modernize the country. The new reorganization required large amounts of money that could only be obtained in the Spanish colonies.<sup>1</sup> However, in addition to the necessity to protect America, the Spanish leaders were also influenced by the designs to recover territories that had been lost during the War of Spanish Succession. Among those lost territories were Gibraltar, Minorca and the former Spanish territories in Italy, where many aristocrats still had economic interests. As a result, during the reign of the first Bourbon, the country's foreign policy continued to be determined by two different approaches. The first identified the interests of the country with the protection of the American colonies. The second pursued the interests of a small minority and sought a renewed involvement in Italy.<sup>2</sup>

Philip V retained the councils that had dominated the administration during the reign of the Habsburgs. Also, he maintained the political figure of the First Secretary of State, which had been created by Philip IV to deal with the great amount of paperwork between the monarch and the councils. However, Philip V relegated the councils to a second stage. He raised the First Secretary to the role of a first minister and Philip also introduced into the government the French system of secretariships. From thereon, the First Secretary met the other secretaries of War, Marine, Indies, Finances and Justice, and, after a proper deliberation, decisions were taken. The First Secretary presented the resolutions to the king, and if the monarch acquiesced, the First Secretary validated them

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<sup>1</sup> A. González Enciso, *Felipe V: La Renovación de España. Sociedad y Economía en el Reinado del Primer Borbón* (Pamplona, 2003)

<sup>2</sup> F. J. Sabater Galindo, *Relaciones Políticas y Diplomáticas Hispano-Británicas durante el Reinado de Felipe V* (Madrid, 1990)

with the formula: “The king agrees”. These cabinet meetings were the foundation of what later would be called as the *Consejo de Ministros*, the Council of Ministers.<sup>3</sup>

From 1739 to 1744, the Marquis of Villarias was the First Secretary and directed the Secretariship of State. Meanwhile, Don José Rodrigo occupied the Secretariship of Justice until his death in December 1741, when the Marquis of Villarias also took on this responsibility. The Marquis of Ustariz occupied the Secretariship of War until his death in October 1741 and Pablo Diaz Marquis of Torrenueva occupied the Secretariships of Marine, Indies and Finances until his death in February 1741. After the death of Ustariz and Torrenueva, the Secretariships of War, Marine, Indies and Finances were transferred to José del Campillo. However, in April 1743 Campillo died and all the secretariships under his control were given to the Marquis of Ensenada.

As a result, we can identify two important periods within these five years. The first period, between 1739 to 1741, corresponds with the political preponderance of the Marquis of Villarias. This is also the moment when the main military operations in America between Spain and Britain took place. During the second period, from 1742 to 1744, the Marquis of Villarias was still the First Secretary but Jose del Campillo and the Marquis of Ensenada held much of the political power. Moreover, from a military point of view, the second period also corresponds with a decline in the military operations between Spain and Britain in America and an increase of the Spanish involvement in Italy during the War of Austrian Succession.

The Marquis of Villarias (1687 – 1766) became First Secretary in 1736 after the death of Joseph Patiño (1666 – 1736). By 1739, the Marquis of Villarias had accumulated three years of work experience in the administration of the country. According to the historiography, Villarias was very cautious and methodical. However, it has also been said that he lacked the ambition, courage, self-assurance and determination of his predecessor. To some historians this would

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<sup>3</sup> B. Badorrey Martín, *Los Orígenes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1714 – 1808)* (Madrid, 1999) pp. 25-6; 306.

explain why his political figure was overshadowed with the arrival of Jose Campillo and the Marquis of Ensenada in the Cabinet.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, as we will see in chapters three and six, Villarias' ability to manage the defence of the Spanish colonies contradicts the pejorative terms that have been used to describe his government.

Jose del Campillo (1693 – 1743) became Secretary of Marine, Indies and War in 1741. In contrast to the Marquis of Villarias, during his life Campillo had accumulated plenty of military experience. During the military campaigns in Italy from 1717 to 1721, he participated in the expedition to Sardinia. As a result of his good performance, Patiño promoted Campillo to Intendent of Marine in America. After returning to Spain, in 1733 he was appointed Intendent of the Army in Italy, and during the next few years he analysed the ability of Spain to rise from its economical and military lethargy.<sup>5</sup> However, according to Beatriz Badorrey Martín, Campillo's new appointments in 1741 owed much to the Queen's favour rather than to his constructive efforts. Elizabeth de Farnesio saw in him the best person to pursue her personal interests in Italy.<sup>6</sup>

Like Campillo, Cenón de Somodevilla y Bengoechea, Marquis of Ensenada (1702 – 1781), had accumulated extensive military and administrative experience before his new appointment. In 1720, Patiño appointed him to an official post under the Secretary of Marine, and during the following years, he worked in the ports that harboured the main squadrons: Cadiz, Ferrol and Cartagena. In 1732, he participated in the expedition against Oran under the command of Blas de Lezo, and during the War of Polish Succession, he took part in the military operations in Italy under the command of the Duke of Montemar. In 1736, Philip V made him a marquis in return for his services. One year later, in 1737, Ensenada was also appointed Intendent of Marine. During the war of Austrian Succession, he

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<sup>4</sup> Badorrey Martín, *Los Orígenes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1714 – 1808)*, pp. 76-7.

<sup>5</sup> J. Campillo, *Lo que Hay de Más y de Menos en España para que Sea lo que Debe Ser y no lo que Es*, ed. A. Elorza, (Madrid, 1969); J. Campillo, *Nuevo Sistema de Gobierno Económico para la América*, ed. Universidad de los Andes. Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, (Mérida, 1971)

<sup>6</sup> Badorrey Martín, *Los Orígenes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1714 – 1808)*, pp. 79-80.

participated in the Spanish expedition to Italy and accompanied the Infante Don Philip in the capture of Savoy in December 1742.<sup>7</sup>

## I.2-GOING TO WAR AGAINST HANOVERIAN BRITAIN

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the commander of the Spanish army was José Carrillo de Albornoz, Duke of Montemar (1671 – 1777). In 1709, he was marshal de camp in the Battle of Villaviciosa. A few years later, during the military campaigns in Italy, from 1717 to 1721, Montemar participated in the operations in Sicily and Sardinia. Also, during the War of Polish Succession, he commanded the Spanish army that captured Parma in 1731, and in 1734, his troops obtained a decisive victory against the Austrian army in the Battle of Bitonto. In 1732, he commanded the Spanish troops that conquered Oran from the Turks. Also, during the War of Austrian Succession in 1741, Montemar commanded the Spanish army that was dispatched to the north of Italy.<sup>8</sup>

In 1739, the Duke of Montemar designed the Spanish military strategy in the war with Britain. He intended to impede, or at least hinder, the dispatch of British forces to attack the Spanish colonies in America. To do that, Montemar sought to deceive the British authorities by giving the impression of preparing military expeditions against the British dominions in conjunction with France. French complicity in these initiatives was necessary, and in Paris, it was coordinated by First Secretary of State, Cardinal Fleury and the Spanish ambassador.<sup>9</sup> In Madrid, meanwhile, the Marquis of Villarias and the French ambassador worked closely together. Spanish efforts did not prevent the dispatch of the British expeditionary forces, but they hindered their preparation and limited their strength.

Both the successful implementation of Montemar's strategy and the actual defence of the Spanish dominions were dependant upon the information provided by the Spanish intelligence system. This information had to include the military,

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<sup>7</sup> Badorrey Martín, *Los Orígenes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1714 – 1808)*, p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> J. Albi, *La Caballería Española, un Eco de Clarines* (Madrid, 1992), pp. 56-7.

<sup>9</sup> The *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française* is used throughout this work to provide details of individual biographies of French figures.

naval and the political situation in Britain. Information about the military preparations in Britain was crucial to assess the scale of mobilization that was necessary in Spain to raise concerns among the British ministers. This information had to include the number of troops in Britain and Ireland, their location and disposition, reports about Catholic disaffection in Ireland and the Jacobite opposition in Britain to the Hanoverian dynasty. Also, Spanish agents had to provide information to evaluate the actual success or failure of Spanish deception. This was a difficult and complex process and was achieved at two different levels. First, in the British ports, inns and public houses, Spanish agents could listen for rumours, read journals and take notes on the general discussions with regard to military preparations on both sides. Second, the Spanish had to collaborate with other intelligence systems, and particularly, the French.

Information about the Royal Navy was necessary to evaluate Britain's capacity to attack Spain in the Peninsula and America. During the war, there were three British naval squadrons that needed particular attention. These included the squadron in the English Channel that operated from Portsmouth and Plymouth, the squadron in the Mediterranean that operated from Port Mahon and Gibraltar and the squadron in the West Indies that operated from Port Royal. In Madrid, Montemar and Villarias needed to know the exact location of these squadrons, the number of ships, their strength and condition, the number of their crews, how many soldiers they carried, the orders given to the officers that commanded them, their designs and intentions.

Meanwhile, the Spanish government also needed to obtain information about the posture of defence in the Spanish colonies. This information was necessary to organize the dispatch of further reinforcements from the Peninsula. Before the arrival of the British expeditionary forces in the West Indies and the Pacific, respectively, these reports had to include the strength of the fortifications that defended the main cities, the number of pieces of artillery and their condition, the quantities of ammunition, weapons, and supplies, the condition of the garrison, and the numbers and condition of the Spanish naval forces. After the arrival of the British expeditions, it was also necessary to learn the progress of the military operations. This information would serve to coordinate the collaboration among

the Spanish colonial authorities and to prepare a Spanish counter attack in case the British forces had succeeded in capturing a strong Spanish city.

### I.3-THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the First Secretary supplanted the Council of State as the leading element of the Spanish intelligence system. According to Diego Navarro Bonilla, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Council of State was responsible for the gathering of information that was required in time of war. This information was mainly obtained by the Spanish diplomatic body and it served to prepare both the Spanish military strategy and diplomatic relations. Navarro's work explains why the counsellors of state were also members of the Council of War.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, as Beatriz Badorrey Martín points out, when the Secretariship of State was created in 1714, it assumed control over the diplomatic body and adopted the previous functions of the Council of State. Indeed, these included royal counselling and international relations.<sup>11</sup>

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the Spanish intelligence system continued to be organized by the Secretaryship of State and – like its British counterpart – it followed a pyramidal structure. At the top was the Spanish First Secretary, the Marquis of Villarias. In the middle were the Intendents of Marine, Captain Generals in Spain, Spanish Viceroyes in America and Spanish diplomats in Europe. At the bottom of the pyramid were the people employed by those in the middle. In Spain, they were the naval and the army officers that were engaged in observation duties under the directions of the Intendents of Marine and the Captain Generals. In America, they were the local authorities under the direction of the Viceroyes. Elsewhere in Europe, these people were usually spies employed in the ports, the inns and the customhouses.

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<sup>10</sup> D. Navarro Bonilla, "Informes, Relaciones y Avisos: Producción Documental del Espionaje Hispano en Tiempos de Guerra (Siglos XVI-XVII)", *Revista de Historia Militar*, 95 (2004), 185-220.

<sup>11</sup> Badorrey Martín, *Los Orígenes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1714 – 1808)*, pp. 33-4.



The Spanish intelligence system had a strong resemblance to the British. However, there were also some differences. For example, whereas the British agents operating in the middle of the pyramid reported to the Duke of Newcastle, the Spanish agents reported to each of the Spanish secretaries of State. In Spain, the Intendents of Marine reported to the Secretary of Marine and the Captain Generals reported to the Secretary of War. In Europe, the Spanish diplomats reported to the First Secretary. In the Spanish colonies, the Viceroy of New Spain, New Grenade and Peru addressed their letters to the Secretary of Indies. However, despite this decentralization of the reporting of intelligence, the First Secretary met the other Secretaries of State on a regular basis to discuss their material and take decisions. He may not have had as much power as the Duke of Newcastle, but he was undoubtedly the most important of the Spanish secretaries.

The communication between the Spanish government and the Spanish agents was carried out through three different channels. The first channel was a land route that employed the ordinary post, and was under the control of the Secretariship of State. This route connected the government with the Spanish agents operating in the Spanish ports and the Spanish diplomats. The second channel connected the government in Madrid with the colonial authorities in America and it was carried out by the avisos. The avisos were light frigates that operated under the directions of the Secretariship of State between the ports of Ferrol and Cadiz and the ports of Buenos Aires, Cartagena de Indias and Havana. The Spanish colonial authorities in America organized the third route aimed to keep the information flowing between the ports of Buenos Aires, Cartagena de Indias and Havana and the other cities in the Spanish colonies.

The First Secretary coordinated and organized the transfer of information between the government and the Spanish agents. This was a necessary procedure that enabled him to have effective control over the information provided by the Spanish agents operating within the several branches of the Spanish intelligence system. On the arrival of the post at the Secretary's office, the correspondence that related to state issues was given to professional decipherers. In 1720, the First Secretary of State employed three decipherers, namely, Morales, Cuadra and Vicuña. After being deciphered, the correspondence was handed to each of the

Secretaries of State so that they could read the information contained in their letters before holding their meetings with the First Secretary.<sup>12</sup>

The material contained in the Spanish archives does not mention the interception of foreign letters in Madrid. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, letters from Cayley, the British consul in Cadiz, to Keene, the British ambassador in Madrid, show concerns that the correspondence, all of which used the cipher, was being opened by the Spanish authorities.<sup>13</sup> As a result, it can be argued that from 1739 to 1744, either Morales, Cuadra or Vicuña, or their successors in the post, must have devoted much of their time and effort to reading these letters and attempting to discover the British cipher. However, the Spanish sources do contain information about other activities of counter espionage that were adopted by the Spanish intelligence system. As we saw in the previous chapter, some of the British agents operating in Galicia were discovered by the Spanish Intendent of Marine in Ferrol, the Count of Ytre. As a result, measures were taken to intercept their crossing of the river Miño.

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the collaboration between the Marquis of Villarias and the Duke of Montemar was rather like the relationship between Newcastle and Wager because it facilitated the connection between the gathering of intelligence and decision-making. Villarias controlled the information provided by the Spanish agents and he increased this control by opening lines of communication with some agents who should have theoretically corresponded with other Secretaries of State. For example, the Intendent of Marine in Ferrol, the Count of Ytre, or the Captain General of Catalonia, the Count of Glimes, should have corresponded with the Secretaries of Marine and War, respectively. However, both of them were key elements of the Spanish military strategy that had been designed by Montemar and their correspondence with Villarias was essential to assure the secrecy and effectiveness of the Spanish plans.

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<sup>12</sup> Badomey Martín, *Los Orígenes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (1714 – 1808)*, pp. 291-7.

<sup>13</sup> Cayley to Newcastle, 4 Aug. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 73989, fols. 149-50.

## II-THE FLOWING OF INFORMATION

### II.1-THE LAND ROUTE WITH THE SPANISH AGENTS

The connection between the Spanish Government and the agents operating in Europe was conducted by the Post Office. In 1716, Philip V announced the end of the monopoly held by the Tassis family.<sup>14</sup> Also in 1720, Philip V established the “*Reglamento General para la Dirección y Gobierno de los Oficios de Correo Mayor y Postas de España*”. The postal services reverted to the crown and they were put under the control of the First Secretary.<sup>15</sup> The new organization of the Post Office (*Oficina de Correos*) divided Spain into five postal zones and fifteen postal districts.<sup>16</sup> In Madrid, the messengers received a box with the correspondence and followed the main roads. By the first half of the eighteenth century, these roads formed an extensive network that connected the capital with the main Spanish cities. In the Peninsula, the messengers rode horses and they covered a daily distance of one hundred and five miles. Meanwhile, the connection with the Balearic Islands was conducted by boats that operated between Barcelona and Palma.<sup>17</sup>

The Spanish Post connected with other European postal services through diplomatic agreements that were carried out in time of peace. For example, in 1728, France and Spain agreed to exchange the post along three towns on the border. These cities included Irun, Jaca and La Junquera. According to Ricardo Ortiz Vivas, the Spanish messengers handed to the French messengers the correspondence that was destined to France and other European countries.

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<sup>14</sup> C. Rodríguez, “Las Tarifas Postales Españolas hasta 1850 (del Pago Aplazado al Franqueo Previo)”, *Investigaciones Históricas*, 2 (1980), 114.

<sup>15</sup> J. Ortega Jiménez, “Privilegios y Exenciones de los Dependientes de las Postas y Correos de España hasta el Reglamento General de 1720”, *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos*, 10 (1983), 279.

<sup>16</sup> C. Rodríguez, “Las Tarifas Postales Españolas hasta 1850 (del Pago Aplazado al Franqueo Previo)”, 115.

<sup>17</sup> F. Aranaz del Río, “La Estructura del Correo Español y los Itinerarios Postales en el Primer Tercio del Siglo XVIII” *Las Comunicaciones entre Europa y América (1500 – 1993): Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Comunicaciones*, ed. A. Bahamonde Magro, (Madrid, 1995), pp. 59-98.

Meanwhile, similar agreements were signed between Spain and Portugal in 1718 and 1738.<sup>18</sup> Also, according to Fernández Aranaz, in addition to the existing postal offices in Spain, the Spanish Post Office had bureaus in Lisbon in Portugal; Paris, Bayonne, Lyon and Marseilles in France and Rome, Genoa, Naples, Sicily, Florence and Parma in Italy.

However, the necessity to protect the information in the letters and reduce the time of delivery led the Spanish government to introduce further measures. For example, in addition to the use of numerical ciphers, in 1715 the First Secretary Alberoni created an alternative channel to communicate with the Spanish ministries overseas and the diplomats in Europe. This channel of communication was called the *Via Reservada* or Reserved Way.<sup>19</sup> The Reserved Way employed messengers that used the structure of the Post Office. The use of the Reserved Way coexisted with the use of the Post Office, but in time of war, the use of the *Via Reservada* increased. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Spanish couriers rode horses, usually travelled abreast of the British and covered an average distance of one hundred and twenty four miles per day. This is a similar distance to that covered by the Post Office, although the couriers rode for longer periods of time.

From Madrid, the Spanish couriers en route to Paris left Spain by way of Irun and needed two weeks before reaching their destination. From Paris, it took them one extra week before they arrived in London or The Hague. The couriers that left Madrid en route to Italy travelled by boat from Barcelona to Genoa and needed seven days before reaching Genoa. Then they travelled by land and it was eleven days before they reached Placentia and Parma, sixteen days before they arrived at Rome and twenty days to complete the journey from Madrid to Naples. Meanwhile, letters from the Spanish government to the Spanish agents in Portugal were dispatched by way of Merida and the couriers took less than one week before arriving at their destination in Faro, Lisbon or Porto. However, it is also

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<sup>18</sup> R. Vivas Ortiz, “El Correo de España en sus Relaciones Internacionales”, *Boletín de la Academia Iberoamericana y Filipina de Historia Postal* (Madrid, 1960), p. 115.

<sup>19</sup> H.M.A. Braudillart, *Philippe V et la Cour de France*, 5 Vols. (Paris, 1890 – 1900), iii. 244.

important to mention that the figures given here are approximate and they were dependant on several factors such as the climate conditions.

The outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear in October 1739 altered the picture that has been described. In the Autumn of 1739, the Spanish diplomats left London and the Spanish agents that continued their activities in Britain had to make use of the French post to dispatch their reports to Spain. Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, from the summer of 1739, the Spanish packet boats had to avoid the British ships. The Spanish boats that operated from Barcelona to Genoa and Palma were replaced by French boats, which profited from the neutrality between France and Britain. However, although they succeeded in carrying out their task quite effectively during the war, their trips were not exempt from problems with British ships.<sup>20</sup>

The outbreak of the War of Austrian Succession in December 1740, led to increasing tensions between Madrid and Vienna due to the Queen's determination to acquire the Milanese, Parma and Placentia. Austrian troops in Italy became increasingly hostile and the messengers had to alter their routes to avoid them. Initially, the Spanish messengers travelled by land from Genoa, stopping at Placentia, Parma, Florence, Rome and Naples. However, in March 1741, the presence of Austrian troops in the Duchies of Parma and Massa led the messengers to travel on French boats from Genoa to Viareggio in Lucca. From Lucca, they crossed to Modena, and then, continued all the way to Bologna in the Papal States. Once in Bologna, the couriers took the Royal Way to Rome and Naples.<sup>21</sup>

## II.2-THE COMMUNICATION WITH THE SPANISH COLONIES

The communication between the Spanish government and the Viceroy in America was carried out by small and fast vessels called avisos that operated

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<sup>20</sup> For example: Igosa to Ensenada, 7 Oct. 1743, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2119.

<sup>21</sup> Beltrán to Villarías, 16 March 1741, AGS, Estado Génova, Legajo 5551.

under the directions of the Secretariship of State. Initially, these ships were intended to announce in America and Spain the departure of the Flota, and the Galleons, respectively. However, they ended up carrying with them all the colonial correspondences. On 20 July 1718, the Crown established that an annual number of eight avisos would have to be employed to carry the colonial correspondence. Two years later, on 31 May 1720, the Consulado de Cadiz and the Crown signed an agreement.<sup>22</sup> The Consulado agreed to add another eight vessels to work as avisos every year. By the 1730s, the avisos arrived at Buenos Aires, Cartagena de Indias and Havana on a monthly basis.<sup>23</sup>

In the first half of the eighteenth century, according to Francisco Garay Unibaso, the avisos left Spain simultaneously from the ports of Cadiz and Ferrol. The aviso from Ferrol sailed to Cartagena de Indias, which was the destination of the correspondence from New Grenade and Peru. In Cartagena de Indias, the avisos exchanged correspondence with the governor and they continued their trip to Havana. The avisos from Cadiz sailed to Veracruz, which was the destination of the correspondence from New Spain. In Veracruz, the avisos exchanged correspondence with the governor of the city and they sailed to Havana. In Havana, the avisos coming both from Veracruz and Cartagena took the existing correspondence in the city and brought it to Spain.<sup>24</sup> However, there is also clear evidence in the Spanish archives to indicate that before the declaration of the War of Jenkins' Ear, there were avisos being regularly sent to the governor of Buenos Aires.<sup>25</sup>

The avisos were frigate type vessels and their characteristics were subject to strict regulations. For example, according to Jose Jurdado Martin, their weight varied from 171 to 401 tons, although Francisco Garay Unibaso indicates that the actual

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<sup>22</sup> The Consulado de Cadiz was the the central trading house and procurement agency for the territories under Spanish control in America.

<sup>23</sup> J. Jurdado Martín, "El Correo Marítimo Español de Indias", *Boletín de la Academia Iberoamericana y Filipina de Historia Postal*, 120-1 (1977), 13.

<sup>24</sup> F. Garay Unibaso, *Correos Marítimos Españoles* (Bilbao, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> For example: Letter to Salcedo, 10 Jan. 1740, AGI, Buenos Aires, Legajo 42. This letter indicates that the previous letter had also been sent with an aviso in August 1739.

range did not exceed 100 tons.<sup>26</sup> They were armed to defend themselves in case they encountered pirates, privateers, or in this case, British ships. Their armament usually consisted of sixteen guns, eighty bombshells, twenty muskets provided with bayonets, thirty pistols and forty sabres. Their crew consisted of one captain, who had to be a reliable sailor with previous experience in the crossing of the Atlantic, a pilot, two overseers, one surgeon, one priest and a number of sailors that ranged from twelve to forty six in time of war.<sup>27</sup>

The sailing times that the avisos needed to reach Buenos Aires, Cartagena de Indias and Havana substantially varied. For example, in Buenos Aires, replies to the letters that were dispatched by the government were written five months after being stamped in Madrid. Meanwhile, in Cartagena and Havana, these times were reduced to two months. If we take into account that the time that the ships took in their outward trip was similar to that in their homeward trip, it is possible to estimate that the time to obtain an answer to a letter dispatched from Madrid would range from four months in the case of Cartagena and Havana to ten months in the case of Buenos Aires. However, we must also bear in mind that the seat of the Viceroy were Santa Fe, Lima and Mexico city, all of which were situated inland. As a result, unless the Viceroy moved to the coast, which they did in time of war, their replies could take a few more months to arrive.

During the war, the British squadrons attempted to cut Spanish communications by ordering ships to lay off the ports of Ferrol, Cadiz, Cartagena and Havana. Some of the avisos took the risk and attempted to slip through the British frigates with more or less success. However, most of the correspondence had to be dispatched in French bottoms. Letters from Madrid to America were sent to the Spanish ambassador in Paris, who gave them to the French Secretary of Marine Maurepas.<sup>28</sup> From Paris, the correspondence was sent to Saint Louis in the French colony of Saint Domingue and the French governor forwarded it to Cartagena and

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<sup>26</sup> Garay Unibaso, *Correos Marítimos Españoles*, p. 32; Jusdado Martín, “El Correo Marítimo Español de Indias”, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Jusdado Martín, “El Correo Marítimo Español de Indias”, 13.

<sup>28</sup> For example: Mina to Villarías, 17 May 1740, AGS, Estado, Legajo 4406.

Havana in the French packet boats that operated between these cities.<sup>29</sup> However, this Franco-Spanish collaboration was soon discovered by the British intelligence system. For example, a letter written on 10 January 1741 to Ensenada from Admiral Torres states that

We have the same news by way of the French colonies that the British squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Vernon still remains in Jamaica. Their ships register every French vessels they come across. They seize those that are used to bring us correspondence, foodstuffs and other supplies, and they set free the others.<sup>30</sup>

### III.3-THE COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE SPANISH COLONIES

During the War of Jenkins's Ear, the communication within the Spanish colonial authorities was carried out by a similar system to the Reserved Way. The flowing of information across the Spanish colonies followed the main routes that connected the Vice Kingdoms of New Spain, New Grenade and Peru, and the Capitanias Generales of Cuba, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. The correspondence was given to army officers who carried the letters until the correspondence reached its destination. Meanwhile, as many historians point out, in 1739 the colonial postal services for private affairs was still a monopoly of the Carvajal family. The next paragraphs will outline the routes that the correspondence followed after the arrival of the avisos from Ferrol and Cadiz at Buenos Aires, Cartagena de Indias and Havana.

In Buenos Aires, the avisos exchanged correspondence with the governor of the city. This correspondence contained letters for the governor and that destined to the Viceroy of Lima. Letters to Lima generally followed three different routes. One was by sea through Cape Horn to Santiago de Chile and was conducted by merchant ships. A second route went by land across the Andes and connected Buenos Aires with Santiago. From Santiago, the letters were shipped to Callao,

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<sup>29</sup> For example: Lezo to Cenon de Somodevilla, 29 Oct. 1739, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 131.

<sup>30</sup> Torres to Cenon de Somodevilla, 10 Jan. 1741, AGS, Marina. Legajo 396-1, n. 172. "Las mismas noticias tenemos aqui por las Colonias Francesas; y que la exquadra de Vernon se mantiene en Jamaica. Que sus corsarios reconociendo quantas embarcaciones Francesas se encuentran apressan las que conducen Pliegos, Víveres o Pertrechos para nosotros, y las que no les encuentran lo referido les dan libertad".



which was the port of Lima. The third route left Buenos Aires by land and reached Lima by way of Potosi. In terms of time, as we have seen before, it took five months for a letter from Spain to reach Buenos Aires. From this moment it took at least one month before the messengers reached Santiago<sup>31</sup> by land and two months and a half from Santiago to Lima.<sup>32</sup>

In Cartagena de Indias, the Avisos similarly exchanged correspondence with the governor of the city. This correspondence contained letters for the governor, the Viceroy in Santa Fe and Lima, and the governors of Panama, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. Letters to Santa Fe travelled by land and letters to Lima and Panama were sent by boat to Portobello. After crossing the isthmus, the messengers were shipped to Callao-Lima in one of the boats that ran along the Pacific coast of America. This packet boat system was organized with trading vessels and the Armada del Sur. They operated in safe waters, touching at Valdivia, Concepcion, Santiago de Chile, Arica, Callao-Lima, Paita, Guayaquil-Quito, Panama and Acapulco.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the communication between Cartagena and Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, was conducted by packet boats. Often, these packet boats were also employed to send dispatches to Veracruz, Havana, the French colony of Saint Domingue and the Caracas coast.

The connection between New Spain and the Philippines was through ships that sailed between Acapulco and Manila. Every year the Armada del Sur took Peruvian silver from Callao-Lima to Acapulco. The Acapulco Galleon sailed in March bound to the Philippines, usually arriving at Manila in June. In July, the Spanish authorities in the Philippines dispatched the Manila Galleon bound to Acapulco. This galleon usually arrived at Acapulco between the months of December and January.<sup>34</sup> From Acapulco, the correspondence from the Philippines, New Grenade and Peru was sent by land to Mexico and Veracruz.

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<sup>31</sup> For example: Manso to Quintana, 2 July 1741, AGI, Chile, Legajo 186.

<sup>32</sup> 18 July 1741, AGI, Chile, Legajo 186.

<sup>33</sup> P. Pérez Maína & B. Torres Ramírez, *La Armada del Sur* (Sevilla, 1987), pp. 189-95.

<sup>34</sup> G. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700 – 1789* (London, 1979), p. 6.

Also, as we have mentioned before, after touching at Veracruz the avisos continued their trip to Havana.

Havana was the destination of the avisos coming from Cartagena and Veracruz. The governor of the city also served as an intermediary for the correspondence between the Spanish government and the governor of Florida, Manuel de Montiano.<sup>35</sup> From Havana, the Avisos initiated a two months return trip to Spain, before they reached Ferrol or Cadiz. On their arrival at these Spanish ports, the correspondence was given to messengers that operated through the Reserved Way.

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<sup>35</sup> For example: Horcasitas to Montijo, 29 July 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo, Legajo 386.

### **III-THE GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE IN EUROPE**

#### **III.1-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN SPAIN**

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the Spanish intelligence system in Spain was directed by the Marquis of Villarias, who communicated with the Intendents of Marine and the Captain Generals at Corunna (Galicia), Cadiz (Andalusia) and Barcelona (Catalonia). The Spanish authorities in each of these places took initiatives to obtain information about the British squadrons in the English Channel, the Straits of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. Their reports included information about the defences, numbers and condition of the British garrisons at Gibraltar and Port Mahon. To obtain their information, these initiatives included the use of watch towers and sailing craft off the coast, the interrogation of deserters from the British bases and the dispatch of Spanish agents, particularly to the island of Minorca.

In Galicia, the Captain General was Don Bernardino Freire, who operated from Corunna. Meanwhile, the Intendent of Marine, the Count of Ytre, was based at the port of Ferrol. During the war, they both obtained regular reports about the number, strength and direction of the British ships that were discovered sailing off the coast of Galicia. This information was obtained from a system of watch towers that used French and Genoese sailing craft off the coast. When the enemy ships were on sight, the soldiers made fires to transmit information of their direction, north or south, with smoke signals. Usually, after making the signal, the soldiers dispatched a letter to Corunna that contained a more comprehensive report. More specific information about the operations that were carried out by the sailing craft can be found in a letter of 4 August 1739 from the British consul in Corunna, Parker, to the British ambassador in Lisbon, Tyrawly. According to Parker,

[these vessels] have been sent to Corunna with Spanish officers on board, who carry orders to get the length of cape Finisterre and afterwards to stretch off to sea about fifty leagues and keep cruising them for ten or twelve days and then to stand in as far as the point of Ferrol and to make such a signal as hath been agreed on, to shew if they

have met any thing and they are to be answered by another from the shore by w'ch they are to know, if they must come in, or go off again.<sup>36</sup>

Freire and Ytre also succeeded in hampering the spying activities of the British agents operating in Galicia. For example, as it has been mentioned before, on 3 May 1740, the Spanish ambassador in Lisbon Jorge de Macazaga reported to the Marquis of Villarias that “although the English consul that was in Corunna returned to London, his court ordered him with a salary of five hundred pounds per year to go to Porto so that he can provide reports with regards to the preparations that are being conducted in Spain”.<sup>37</sup> Immediately after receiving this information, Villarias sent a letter to Freire with orders to capture the British agents in Galicia. Villarias also directed Macazaga to open a direct channel of communication – without going via Madrid – with Freire.<sup>38</sup>

In Andalusia, information about the British ships operating off Cadiz was obtained from the watch towers along the coast. In his work, Rodrigo Valdecantos mentions that in time of peace these towers were used to discover fishing shoals, and in time of war, they provided information about enemy ships.<sup>39</sup> During war, the operations conducted from these towers was complemented with the use of avisos that were sent to intercept the ships coming from America. These avisos carried instructions to the captains, which usually included the modification of their route. For example, in a letter written at Gibraltar on 9 August 1739 from Sabine to Newcastle, it was reported that “Admiral Haddock had stopped and taken a Spanish ship under French colours coming from the bay with warlike stores for Cadiz, the same had done with two

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<sup>36</sup> Parker to Tyrawly, 4 Aug. 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Portugal, SP 89/40, fols. 62-3.

<sup>37</sup> Macazaga to Villarías, 3 May 1740, AGS, Estado Portugal, Legajo 7187: “El cónsul de Inglaterra que estaba en la Coruña, habiéndose referido a Londres con el motivo de la guerra, de orden de su corte y con 500 libras esterlinas de sueldo al año, ha venido a Oporto, a fin de avisar y dar cuenta de lo que llegase a entender de España”.

<sup>38</sup> Macazaga to Villarías, 24 May 1740, AGS, Estado Portugal, Legajo 7187.

<sup>39</sup> L. Mora Figueroa, *Torres de Almenara en la Costa de Huelva* (Huelva, 2003); R. Valdecantos, “La Reciente Restauración de Torres Vigía en el Litoral Gaditano: De Respeto Ocioso al Utilitarismo Mixtificador”, *Estudios de Historia y Arqueología Medievales*, 10 (1994), 257-307; R. Valdecantos, “Las Torres de Almenara del Litoral de la Provincia de Cádiz (las Torres de Marina): Estudio Tipológico y Consideraciones Terminológicas”, *Estudios de Historia y de Arqueología Medievales*, 11 (1996), 481-501.

or three tartans [small vessel with one latin sail] under the same colours that were sent out in quest of the same azogues”.<sup>40</sup>

In Catalonia, the gathering of intelligence about the British squadron in Port Mahon was directed by the Captain General of the Spanish army, the Count of Glimes. In addition to the watch towers along the coast, he had the collaboration of the governor of Palma, José Vallejo. During the war, Vallejo had four sources of information. First, the inhabitants of Minorca that fled the island in fishing boats, usually to escape compulsory service in the British ships. Second, British soldiers that deserted to Mallorca. Third, the Spanish agents sent to Minorca on special missions. Fourth, the French vessels that were employed to carry the correspondence between Palma and Barcelona. Indeed, sometimes these vessels were sent to Port Mahon with under cover missions. For example, in a letter written in Palma on 24 January 1742 from Joseph Vallejo to Jose Campillo by way of Barcelona, Vallejo says that

From the Capitan General and the Intendente of Marine in Catalonia, who has dispatched to me a French tartan, I have understood the desire of His Majesty to learn the whereabouts of Admiral Haddock with his squadron... Following the instructions from Barcelona, that tartan is going to Minorca with a feigned purpose, that being its trip to Sardinia, it was forced to do it by the bad weather, so that on its return to Barcelona, it can give an account of what it has seen in Port Mahon.<sup>41</sup>

### III.2-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN BRITAIN.

Before the declaration of war, the Spanish intelligence network in Britain was directed by the Spanish ambassador in London, Sir Thomas Fitzgerald (1682 – 1755). However, even in diplomatic circles, Fitzgerald was commonly known with the name of Tomas Geraldino. He was born in Jeréz de la Frontera, near

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<sup>40</sup> Sabine to Newcastle, 9 Aug. 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, Colonial Papers, CO 91/10, fol. 709.

<sup>41</sup> Vallejo to Campillo, 24 Jan. 1742, AGS, Suplemento, Legajo 1282: “Muy señor mío, por el capitán e Intendente de Cataluña que me han despachado una tartana francesa, acabo de comprender el deseo con que se halla S.M. de saber el paradero del Almirante Haddock con su escuadra (...) La referida tartana, siguiendo la instrucción que se le ha dado en Barcelona, pasa a Menorca, con el fingido motivo, que siendo su viaje a Cerdeña, le ha de hacer a Barcelona, lo que haya visto en Puerto Mahon ...”

Cadiz and he belonged to an Irish family that had moved to Spain before his birth. According to Didier Ozanam, Geraldino was an expert in commercial affairs. From 1732 to 1735, he had worked in London as an envoy of the Spanish government and dealt with affairs connected with the South Sea Company. This experience enabled him to become well acquainted with British affairs, and in 1735, he was appointed Spanish ambassador in Britain after the departure of the Count of Montijo. Geraldino left Britain on 16 September 1739, and on 23 December 1739, he was appointed a member of the Council of Indies.<sup>42</sup>

The Spanish network of intelligence in Britain from 1735 to the autumn of 1739 employed agents, spies and informers that operated in London, the main shipbuilding yards on the Thames, in Torbay, and the ports of Bristol, Plymouth, Portsmouth and St. Helens. Moreover, with some historical hindsight it can be argued that before the declaration of war, Geraldino could have also obtained further information from the French intelligence network operating in Britain. Reports provided by these informers contained information about the state of the public finances and the economy of the country, the public discussions in Parliament, rumours in the streets of London and the ports, the opinion among the European diplomats operating in London, the movement of troops within Britain, the state of the army and the state of the naval forces.

From November 1739 to May 1740, Geraldino had an agent operating in Britain. His is referred to as “Richmond” and he provided information about the preparations for war in Britain. Every week he handed his reports to the French ambassador in London and these were sent to Geraldino in Madrid, by way of the French post.<sup>43</sup> From his reports, it can be easily deduced that he conducted most of his activities in London, although it is possible that he could have also employed other spies and informers in the southern ports of Britain. He obtained copies of the public discussions held in Parliament and provided very extensive and complete reports about the activities in the British ports with particular

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<sup>42</sup> J.P. Alzina, *Embajadores de España en Londres* (Madrid, 2001), p. 143; D. Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle* (Madrid/Bordeaux, 1998), p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> For example: Traducción de la carta de Richmond, 15/26 Nov. 1739, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

regards to the two British expeditions destined to America. Also, on one occasion, Richmond provided a description of a British agent, Captain Cole, that had been sent to Galicia. A paper sent to Geraldino on 4 May 1740 explains that

Richmond says that he has indications that an individual called Captain Cole, who has been employed by the English court in several foreign countries as a spy, had recently gone to Spain. Cole is a man of good height, dark hair and forty five years of age. He was branded with the fleur de leis in Aix, in France and was condemned to the galleys in punishment for his crimes.<sup>44</sup>

In July 1740 the Spanish intelligence system employed another agent in Britain. His name was Luis Terrascon and he operated until June 1741, when he died, probably killed after he was discovered by British agents. Terrascon sent his reports by way of Bourdeaux to the Intendent of Marine in San Sebastian, Manuel de las Casas y la Quadra, who was the brother of the Marquis of Villarias. Terrascon's reports had very detailed descriptions of the preparations in Torbay, Portsmouth and Saint Helens. They included the numbers, strength and condition of the ships that operated in the squadrons of Vice Admiral Norris, Vice Admiral Ogle and Commodore Anson. Unfortunately, the Spanish archives do not contain information about Terrascon's personal details. However, according to the correspondence of the British agents who discovered him, Terrascon had a residence just above the Café de Paris in Suffolk street, which is near to Piccadilly. An undated letter, probably addressed to Robert Walpole, states that

There is one Terry, which I knew abroad. He commanded one of the ships in the Flota... Whether he is an agent from the court of Spain or the Spanish ambassador Fitzgerald alias Tomas Geraldino... or what his business is I don't know. But he was down with our fleet all or the greatest part of the time they were in the downs, and is now with it at Spithead. He has been at Portsmouth and whether any of the people he converses with, know him or not I cannot say, but is supposed he has

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<sup>44</sup> Extracto de las cartas de Richmond, 4 May 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908: "En la carta expresa Mr. Richmond que tiene indicios de que un sugeto que toma el nombre del Cap. an Cole que ha sido empleado por la corte de Inglaterra en varios payses extrangeros como espía, havia salido ultimamente para venir a España, que es un hombre de buen talle, moreno, de hasta 45 años, el cual por sus delitos le pusieron la flor de lis en Aix en Francia y fue ally condenado a galeras".

not spent so much time purely to take the air. It may be to know the strength and condition of the fleet and ports.<sup>45</sup>

### III.3-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the Spanish intelligence network in the Dutch Republic was controlled by the Spanish ambassador in The Hague, Joaquin Bazán y Melo Marquis de San Gil (1682 – 1754). According to Didier Ozanam, before his diplomatic appointment, San Gil had studied law. In 1697, he started his studies at the University of Salamanca, but in 1700, he moved to the University of Seville, where he obtained his degree in Cannon Law in 1704. During the next years, San Gil accumulated extensive professional experience. He worked as judge from 1706 to 1707 in Naples; from 1708 to 1732 in Valladolid and from 1732 to 1734 in Seville. In 1734, he was appointed Spanish ambassador in the Dutch Republic and he occupied this position until 7 July 1746, when he was called to Madrid to become president of the Council of Finances.<sup>46</sup>

Felipe Rodríguez (1670 – 1758) was the Spanish consul in Amsterdam. He had served in the Spanish army that was based in Flanders from 1696 to 1703, and he obtained the rank of Captain. In 1703, he was appointed secretary of the Spanish diplomat, the Marquis of Bereti, and Rodríguez assisted him in several trips: from 1703 to 1716 in Switzerland, from 1716 to 1720 in the Dutch Republic and from 1721 to 1725 in the Congress of Cambrai.<sup>47</sup> In 1725, the Marquis of Beretti died and Rodríguez was appointed official in the Spanish embassy in London. Eight years later, in 1733, Rodríguez was appointed consul in Ostende, and in 1737, he was appointed Spanish consul in the Dutch Republic, although his official residence was set in Amsterdam.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Undated and Anonymous, Cambridge University Library, Ch (H) Papers, Vol. 72 fol. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 179.

<sup>47</sup> During the Congress of Cambrai (1721-1727), Spain, France, Britain and Austria negotiated Spanish claims over Parma and Tuscany and Spanish recognition of Maria Theresa as the legitimate heirness of her father's (emperor Charles VI) territories.

<sup>48</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 416.



Before the declaration of war, San Gil cultivated good relations with the Dutch authorities and the ambassadors of other countries with whom Spain had a common cause against Britain. In The Hague, the chief informers were the French ambassador de la Vile, who received reports from his counterpart in London, de Cambisse; the Neapolitan ambassador, who received reports from the ambassador in London Giuseppe Como; the Polish ambassador Debrosse, who obtained reports from his equivalent in London; and the Swedish ambassador, who also received reports from his Swedish ambassador in London. During the war, these diplomats became the main source of information for the Marquis of San Gil and the nature of the information they provided can be divided into two types. First, information regarding the effectiveness of the Spanish deceptive measures and second, information regarding British naval movements and military preparations in Britain.

Information regarding the effectiveness of the strategy orchestrated by the Duke of Montemar was used to evaluate its effects in the decisions of the British authorities. This information was mainly obtained from the conclusions extracted by other European intelligence systems with regards to the military camps in Galicia and Catalonia. For example, if the Polish, Swedish and Neapolitan agents reported that the camp in Galicia was designed to invade Britain, and the camp in Catalonia was aimed to invade Minorca, then there were strong possibilities that the British agents had drawn the same conclusions. Indeed, according to San Gil, in the winter of 1740, Britain feared that the Spanish army in Galicia was intended to land in either Ireland or Scotland and that the Spanish army in Catalonia was intended to land in Minorca.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, information about the British squadron operating in the English Channel included a detailed list of the ships, their strength and condition, and the number of troops waiting to be embarked. Moreover, San Gil put this information into a broader context and he attempted to explain the movements of the British Squadron in the English Channel in connection with the threat posed by the Spanish army in Galicia in the winter and spring of 1740. For example, in a letter

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<sup>49</sup> San Gil to Villarías, 4 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

written on 4 February 1740 to the Marquis of Villarias, the Spanish ambassador says that

With regards to the armament in Galicia, whereas some people think that it is designed to stop the preparations that Britain is making for America, others deem that the invasion could actually happen. However, all seem to agree that the Spanish preparations are successfully slowing down the pace of the British preparations.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the good relationship between San Gil and the Dutch authorities, the Dutch government was playing both sides in the war between Spain and Britain. During the war, the British ambassador in The Hague, Horace Walpole, had agents operating in the Dutch Post Office that were employed in the interception of letters. When a Spanish letter was intercepted, a copy was sent to Edward Wiles. Today copies of the intercepted materials can be consulted in the State Papers. However, after a further analysis of this material, nothing seems to indicate that the British intelligence system was ever aware of the collaboration between the Spanish intelligence network in the Dutch Republic and those of Poland, Sweden and Naples. As a result, there is a possibility that San Gil was aware of the British practises and that he had made use of messengers when he had to transmit information that was provided by the intelligence system of another country.

#### III.4-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN ITALY

During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the Spanish intelligence network in Italy was directed by the Spanish consul in Genoa Cayetano Nicolas de Arpe (d. 1752), and his secretary, Luis Martínez de Beltrán. Arpe had become consul after the death of his father, Nicolas de Arpe consul in Genoa from 1670 to 1712, and he was an experienced observer of Italian affairs.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, as stated earlier, Genoa,

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<sup>50</sup> Villarías to San Gil, 4 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado, Legajo 6262: "Sobre el armamento en Galicia unos discurren es para detener el que se hace en Inglaterra para la América con el temor de la amenaza de invasión, la que puede tener efecto conforme a las fuerzas de una y otra potencia, y de la oportunidad que el tiempo ofreciere... pero todos convienen en que dicha amenaza y disposición de embarco, es siempre muy importante para bridar el orgullo ingles, y para embarazar o aminorar los embarcos para la América".

<sup>51</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 163.

was the first and last stop of the Spanish messengers to Italy, and Arpe had access to the reports from other Spanish agents in Italy. As a result, while the Spanish ambassador Joaquin Cornejo attended the diplomatic affairs in Rome, Arpe concentrated his efforts in directing the operations of other Spanish agents in Italy.<sup>52</sup> Initiatives conducted by the Spanish agents included the acquisition of information about the British squadron in the Mediterranean. Also, they were responsible for the coordination of the negotiations with the Piedmontese government in Turin and the Stuart court in exile in Rome.

In Genoa, information about the British squadron in the Mediterranean was obtained from three different sources. First, from the informers that Arpe employed in collaboration with other Spanish agents along the French and Italian coasts. From 1741 there were informers in Antibes, Nice, Finale, Savona, Genoa, Rapallo, La Spezia and Leghorn. These informers conducted observations from the coast, interrogated deserters from the British squadron and questioned the merchants in the ports. Second, information about the British squadron was obtained from initiatives undertaken by the Spanish ambassadors in Naples: the Count of Fuenclara (1687 – 1752) from 1738 to 1740 and the Marquis of Salas (1692 – 1771) from 1740 to 1746.<sup>53</sup> Third, information was gathered from the French vessels that carried the Spanish post between Barcelona and Palma, Barcelona and Genoa and also between Genoa and Viareggio. Evidence of this collaboration can be found in a letter written on 20 January 1743 from Arpe to Villarias:

On Wednesday two French vessels arrived to this port. One passed by the Hyeres islands five days ago and the other left Mahon six days ago. Their captains have reported that Vice Admiral Mathews was in the Hyeres with seventeen ships. Also they say that there were twelve ships at Port Mahon. From Mahon two vessels recently left to join Mathews. Also, another vessel left to Leghorn to join a small squadron of four ships. These four ships together with the two that operate from

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 484.

<sup>53</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 355; E. Sarrabalo Aguarales, *El Conde de Fuenclara, Embajador y Virrey de Nueva España (1687 – 1752)*, 2 Vols. (Sevilla, 1955-1966)

Port Spezia, are employed in searching all the vessels they come across.<sup>54</sup>

Naples became involved in the War of Austrian Succession but it was technically neutral in the conflict between Spain and Britain. Nevertheless, the good relationship between the two Bourbon countries – Charles VII of the Two Sicilies was the son of Philip V of Spain – facilitated the cooperation between the Neapolitan authorities and the Spanish ambassadors. The Marquis of Salas was appointed Duke of Montealegre in 1740 and employed several agents in the Neapolitan Post Office, which intercepted some of the correspondence between the British consul in Naples, Allen, and the Duke of Newcastle. The content of these letters was particularly useful because the reports from Allen contained remarks regarding the Spanish deceptive measures.<sup>55</sup> Other initiatives in collaboration with the Neapolitan authorities consisted of the employment of several informers in the port of Naples to gather information from the ships coming from Minorca. Also, it was a common practise to dispatch ships with agents under cover to observe the British squadron. For example, in a letter from the Marquis of Salas to the Marquis of Villarias, the Spanish ambassador mentions that

I obtained further information from an officer of marine that I sent on a particular mission and from the accounts provided by the captains of several ships recently arrived to Naples from Genoa. They confirm that the British ships that were operating off the coast of Tuscany sailed towards the west to join the main squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Mathews. Their departure has enabled the reestablishment of the British trading routes.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Aire to Villarías, 20 Jan. 1743, AGS, Estado, Legajo 5559: “Tocante al movimiento de ingleses puede decir a V.E. que arribada el miércoles dos polacas francesas faltándola una cinco días de las islas de Hieres y la otra seis de Tolón y nueve de Mahon han referido sus capitanes que el almirante Mathews se mantenía a las islas con diecisiete bajeles y que doce se hallaban en Mahon, de cuyo puerto habían partido tres, dos para dichas islas y uno para Liorna, en donde existían los cuatro avisados, y en el Golfo de la Especia los dos reconociendo todas las embarcaciones”.

<sup>55</sup> For example: “Copia de la carta escrita por Allen al Duque de Newcastle”, in Fuenclara to Villarías, 18 Aug. 1739, AGS, Estado Nápoles, Legajo 5825, fol. 174.

<sup>56</sup> Salas to Villarías, 28 Aug. 1742, AGS, Estado Nápoles, Legajo 5838: “La escuadra inglesa prosiguió su viaje a Poniente y a incorporarse con la del vicealmirante Mathews, según me refirió a su vuelta el oficial de marina que despaché en su observación, y según me han confirmado estos días varios bastimentos procedentes de Génova, que han llegado a este puerto y la dejaron en los mares de la Toscana. Después de la retirada de la referida escuadra, a la cual seguían otros navíos

In Rome, the Spanish ambassador from 1734 to 1750 was José Viana y Eguiluz (1695 –1750).<sup>57</sup> During the war, he became the intermediary between the Spanish court in Madrid and the Stuart court in exile. The material in the Spanish archive of Simancas contains a detailed record of the exchange of correspondence between the two courts.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, none of those letters have survived. However, the British agents operating in Rome reported that there were regular meetings between Eguiluz and the Pretender at his residence, the Palazzo Muti. Other attendants to these meetings were the Spanish nuncio Cardinal Acquaviva, the French ambassador the Duke of Saint Aignan, the French nuncio Cardinal Tensin and the Pretender's son.<sup>59</sup>

Meetings in the Palazzo Muti must have designed the role to be played by the Jacobites to forward Spanish deceptive measures. Also, they must have served to provide information about the political, economical, military and social situation of Britain. This information was contained in the letters addressed to the Duke of Ormond after his arrival at Madrid in the spring of 1740. They included the number of troops in England, Scotland, Ireland, Minorca and America, the total number of ships and the feelings among the native population towards the dynasty of Hanover. They also included comprehensive assessments of the number of troops and arms that would have been necessary to convince the Jacobites in Britain to rise up against the Hanoverians. For example, in a letter written in Madrid on 22 May 1740 to the Marquis of Villarias, the Duke of Montemar mentioned that

In the country, the friends of the Duke of Ormond speak with freedom and hopes that this present war with Spain, will give a powerful prince the opportunity to relieve them from their grievances. It is with this belief that they eagerly expect and offer to support the side of the Duke [of Ormond] as long as an army of between twelve and fifteen thousand

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de guerra, que cruzaban en estos mares, no se ha oído en ellos hostilidad alguna, y se ha vuelto a poner corriente el comercio, y la introducción tan necesaria de víveres en esta capital”.

<sup>57</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 466.

<sup>58</sup> See AGS, Estado Roma, Legajos 4913-4923.

<sup>59</sup> For example: Jackson to Newcastle, 6/17 Dec. 1739, TNA: PRO, State Papers Genoa, SP 79/18.

men, with artillery, ammunitions, provisions, supplies and twenty thousand spare weapons is set in England.<sup>60</sup>

However, the main contribution of the Spanish agents in Italy was the gathering of diplomatic and military information about the Italian states. For example, in Turin, the Spanish ambassador from 1734 to 1742 was Manuel de Sada (1694 – 1764), and he was assisted by his secretary Antonio Santos de Oreytia (1700 – 1777).<sup>61</sup> Both of them participated in the unfruitful negotiations between Spain, France and Piedmont-Sardinia, and they provided further information about the military preparations in Piedmont-Sardinia. Meanwhile, information about the military preparations of the Austrian army was obtained by the Spanish agents operating from Tuscany and Venice. In Tuscany, the Spanish ambassadors at Florence were Salvador Ascanio from 1708 to 1741 and Raniero Vernaccini from 1741 to 1759. Their work was complemented by initiatives undertaken by the Spanish consul in Leghorn, Duarte de Silva. Also, in Venice, the Spanish ambassadors during this period was the Prince of Campoflorido until 1740 and thereafter the Marquis de Mari.<sup>62</sup>

### III.5-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN FRANCE

From 1739 to 1744, the Spanish intelligence network in France was organized by the Spanish ambassadors in Paris. Jaime Miguel de Guzmán Dávalos y Espinola, Marquis of la Mina (1790 – 1767) was the ambassador from 5 January 1737 to 4 July 1740. During this time, he was assisted by his secretary Juan Manuel Dominguez. Mina had an extensive military career and he had obtained the post after his campaigns in Naples and Lombardy during the War of Polish

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<sup>60</sup> Montemar to Villarías, 22 May 1740, AGS, Suplemento, Legajo 2085: “Que en el país, los amigos del duque de Ormond hablan con libertad y esperanzas de que la presente guerra con España, dará ocasión a que los alivie de sus agravios algún príncipe poderoso, con cuya mira concurren a que se haga con el mayor vigor, y ofrecen seguir el partido del duque siempre que en Inglaterra se ponga un ejército para sostenerlos de 12 a 15 mil hombres, con artillería, municiones, provisión, pertrechos y veinte mil armas de repuesto, que lo consideran suficiente, y también dicen que acudirán a la corte de Francia persuadidos, de que esta corona se unirá con España para esta empresa”.

<sup>61</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomates Espagones du XVIIIe Siecle*, p. 421-9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 506-12.

Succession. However, contrary to his successor the Prince of Campoflorido, he never enjoyed the admiration for the French court. In October 1740, he was appointed director of the Spanish dragoons and in November 1742, he received the command of the Spanish expeditionary force that captured Savoy in the following month.<sup>63</sup>

Campoflorido was the Spanish ambassador until the 9 July 1746, and during this time he was assisted by his secretary Bartolomé Pont. Campoflorido was born in Palermo when Naples was still under Spanish control. Before his diplomatic appointment, Campoflorido had accumulated a long administrative experience in the Spanish service, which included Captain General of Guipuzcoa from 1715 to 1719, governor of Ceuta from 1719 to 1722 and Captain General of Grenade in 1722. In 1723, Campoflorido was appointed Captain General of Valencia. In 1737, as we have seen, he was appointed Spanish ambassador in Venice.<sup>64</sup>

The Spanish diplomatic body in France was organized from the embassy in Paris. However, due to the custom of the French court to reside outside Paris, it was necessary to provide them with a residence that was close to the Royal Palaces. According to Didier Ozanam, the Spanish ambassadors rented one house in Versailles and they were offered accommodation when they visited the Royal Palaces of Fontainebleau, Compiègne and Marly.<sup>65</sup> Also, at the beginning of the war, Spain had a consulate in Marseilles. From 1724 to 1742, the Spanish consul in Marseilles was Pedro Vert. In 1743, he was succeeded by Francisco Mauricio de Sala who remained in the post until 1759. Also, in 1742, orders were given to create a new consulate in Antibes, which was directed by Juan Agustín Badín until 1770.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 294-5.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>65</sup> D. Ozanam, "Los Embajadores Españoles en Francia durante el Reinado de Felipe V", ed. J.L. Pereira Iglarias, *Felipe V de Borbón (1701 – 1746): Actas del congreso de San Fernando (Cádiz) de 27 de Noviembre a 1 de Diciembre de 2000* (Cadiz, 2002), pp. 583-4.

<sup>66</sup> Ozanam, *Les Diplomats Espagnoles du XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 513.

Although France remained neutral in the conflict between Spain and Britain, its government supported the functioning of the Spanish intelligence system. First, France provided Spain both in Europe and America with the means to keep the lines of communication open. Second, the French ambassador in London, Cambisse, provided cover for the Spanish agents Richmond and Terrascon. Orders to Cambisse also included the dispatch of reports to the French ambassador in the Dutch Republic, which were read by the Spanish ambassador in The Hague. Third, as we will see in chapter three, the French government provided the necessary means to orchestrate the strategy that was formulated by the Duke of Montemar at the beginning of the war. Fourth, as we will see in chapter four, the French Secretary of Marine the Comte of Maurepas (1701 – 1781) ordered the French governor in Saint Domingue to collaborate actively with the Spanish authorities in Cartagena.

During the war, the French First Secretary Cardinal Fleury (1653 – 1743) had regular meetings with the Spanish ambassador in Paris. Also, Fleury had a channel of communication with the Spanish First Secretary, the Marquis of Villarias. This communication was through the correspondence between the French Secretary for Foreign Affairs Amelot (1689 – 1749) and the French ambassadors in Madrid during the war: the Count de la Marck until 1740 and the Eveque of Rennes (1688 – 1760) until 1749. The material contained in the Section Correspondance Politique Espagne, in the Archive Quai d’Orsay, shows that these channels of communication were used for two purposes. First, they served to coordinate the Spanish and French negotiations in Madrid and Paris leading to a treaty of commerce and another of defensive alliance. Second, they enabled the exchange of information about British military preparations that the Spanish and the French intelligence systems had obtained separately during the war.



## IV-THE GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE IN AMERICA

### IV.1-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN NEW GRENADE

The Spanish intelligence network in New Grenade was directed by the Viceroy in Santa Fe. From 1739 to 1749, the Viceroy was Sebastian Eslava (1685 – 1759) and he was assisted by the general commander of Cartagena de Indias Blas de Lezo (1689 – 1741). Before his appointment, Eslava had accumulated plenty of military and administrative experience. In the War of Spanish Succession, he had participated in the military campaigns in Portugal in 1704 and the capture of Barcelona in 1714.<sup>67</sup> Also, during the military campaigns in Italy from 1717 to 1721 he took part in the capture of Messina and the Battles of Melarzo and Francavilla. In 1731, he was ordered to reorganize two battalions of the Regiment of Castilla. Also, during the War of Polish Succession he took part in the expedition to Sicily under the command of the Duke of Montemar. He received his new appointment in America on 20 August 1739 and arrived at Cartagena de Indias on 23 April 1740 after avoiding British ships in the Caribbean.<sup>68</sup>

The Vice Kingdom of New Grenade was re-established in 1739 after having been suspended in 1723. The capital was in Santa Fe de Bogota and its extension encompassed the current territories of Panama, Colombia, Venezuela and part of Ecuador. However, Santa Fe was much isolated from the actual trading routes and the most active commercial centres were Panama and Cartagena de Indias.<sup>69</sup> Panama was governed by Dionisio Martínez de la Vega from 1735 to 1743 and Dionisio de Alcedo Ugarte y Herrera from 1743 to 1749. Meanwhile, Cartagena de Indias was under the control of the General Commander of the city Blas de Lezo from 1737 to 1741. Like Eslava, Lezo had much military experience. During the War of Spanish Succession, he took part in the Battle of Velez-Malaga in 1704 and the capture of Barcelona in 1714. In 1720, he was ordered on board

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<sup>67</sup> J. Restrepo Saénz, *Bibliografía de los Mandatarios de la Real Audiencia (1671 a 1819)* (Bogota, 1952), pp 81-2.

<sup>68</sup> Rodríguez Maldonado, “Don Sebastián de Eslava y Don Blas de Lezo”, 76-84.

<sup>69</sup> Navarro García, *Hispanoamérica en el Siglo XVIII* (Sevilla, 1975), pp. 93-9.

the Lanfranco to attack the pirates that were operating along the Pacific coast of America. Lezo returned to Spain in 1730 and commanded the navy during the military expedition to capture Oran in 1732. In 1737, he was promoted General Commander of Cartagena de Indias, and during the British attack, he worked under the directions of the Viceroy.<sup>70</sup>

In Cartagena, the main source of information about the military preparations in Britain was provided by the avisos. Indeed, their correspondence contained the reports provided by the Spanish and French intelligence networks in Europe. Also, there is evidence to suggest that orders from the French Secretary of Marine Maurepas to the governor of Saint Domingue included the dispatch of this information in the packet boats operating between Saint Luis and Cartagena de Indias. Moreover, in addition to Saint Domingue, which controls the Windward Passage between Cuba and Hispaniola, France also controlled the Leeward Island of Guadaloupe. This means that the French could also report the arrival of British reinforcement from the northern colonies, which needed to pass through the Windward Passage,<sup>71</sup> and the arrival of the British forces under the command of General Carthcart, which passed by the Leeward Islands before reaching Jamaica.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, Blas de Lezo took further initiatives to gather information about the British squadron in the Caribbean. First, there is evidence to suggest that he employed an agent in the island of Jamaica. For example, in a letter of the 16 September 1740 to Joseph de la Quintana, Lezo mentions that “we know that Vice Admiral Vernon received two letters from Lisbon to inform him of the departure of eighteen Spanish ships bound to America. This news caused him much concern and he decided to remain in Jamaica until the dispatch of further

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<sup>70</sup> J.J. Barcáiztegui, *Un General Español Cojo, Manco y Tuerto: Don Blas de Lezo Natural de Pasajes* (Irun, 1927); J. M. Rodríguez, *El Vasco que Salvó al Imperio Español* (Barcelona, 2008); P. Victoria Wilches, *El Día que España Derrotó a Inglaterra* (Barcelona, 2005)

<sup>71</sup> Lezo to Quintana, 21 Dec. 1740, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 1021.

<sup>72</sup> D'Antin to Torres, 7 Jan. 1741, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 1021.

reinforcements from Britain”.<sup>73</sup> However, probably for security reasons the Spanish sources do not contain either the personal details of the informer or the channel of communications that he used. We do know, however, that Lezo, and the governor of Panama, Dionisio Martínez de la Vega dispatched several ships from Cartagena de Indias and Portobello, respectively, to observe the British ships. These ships were also ordered to deal with British vessels employed on observation duties, thus playing the role of a counter intelligence measure. In a letter of the 24 December 1739 to the Intendent of Marine Ensenada, Lezo mentions that

On 23 November 1739 a British frigate of twenty-four cannons was discovered off the coast and on the 24 November it was verified that it was a British man of war. This vessel had been employed before in the chasing of two Spanish sloops that had left this port bounded to Cuba... On the 26 November I dispatched Rear Admiral Don Benito Antonio de Espinola with the battleships Europa and Africa to chase this and another frigate of fifty cannons that was discovered on the same day.<sup>74</sup>

However, the main British source of information about the defences of the city were the South Sea Company factors. Many of them were in the Spanish colonies when the war between Spain and Britain broke out. Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, at the beginning of the war Commodore Brown and Vice Admiral Vernon conducted several exchanges of prisoners with the Spanish authorities to obtain their freedom. The British merchants were taken to Port Royal to be interrogated and they produced some of the most useful accounts about the Spanish defences. However, in the Autumn of 1739, the main Spanish

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<sup>73</sup> Lezo to Quintana, 16 Sept. 1740, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 1021: “Muy seño mío, desde el día 25, 27 y 30 de junio que se mantuvieron sobre Santa Marta los navíos ingleses de que tengo dado cuenta a V.S. con fecha de 5 de julio, mandados por el vicealmirante Vernon he sabido que este gentleman re retiró a Jamaica con sus escuadras por el motivo de haber recibido dos Avisos de Lisboa, en los que le participaba Monsieur Kin [Probably Benjamín Keene], que diez y ocho navíos del rey habían salido con destino para esta América, cuya noticia causó en Jamaica bastante consternación y se mantenía en aquel puerto, habiendo despachado a Londres una flota de 50 velas convoyadas de dos fragatas de guerra”.

<sup>74</sup> Lezo to Cenon de Somo de Villa, 24 Dec. 1739, AGS, Marina, Legajo 398, n. 835: “El día 23 de noviembre se descubrió sobre esta costa una fragata como del porte de 24 cañones y el 24 se verificó ser Inglesa de Guerra, por haver dado caza a dos balandras españolas, que salieron de este puerto para el de Cuba, las que consiguieron volver a este surgidero, y el día 26 despaché al Gefede Escuadra D Benito Antonio de Espinola con los navíos Europa, y Africa en seguimiento de la citada fragata, y de otra que el mismo día 26 se avistó, como de porte de 50 cañones”.

agent operating in Britain, Richmond, sent a letter to Madrid that contained the necessary information for the Spanish authorities to understand the real purpose of the exchange of prisoners. The letter was addressed to the former Spanish ambassador in London, Thomas Geraldino. A few months later, on 13 January 1740, a letter to Blas de Lezo stated that

My letters from Britain mention that in London there were letters from Cartagena de Indias. These letters are dated 14 September 1739 and they say that a ship had been dispatched [probably from Portobello] to inform Blas de Lezo that the treasure of Lima, which contained 13 million pesos, was in Panama and waiting to be transported to Portobello.<sup>75</sup>

#### IV.2-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN THE VICE KINGDOM OF PERU

The Spanish intelligence network in the Vice Kingdom of Peru was organized by the Viceroy in Lima. From 1736 to 1745, the Viceroy was José Antonio de Mendoza y Sotomayor, Marquis of Villagarcía (1688-1767). His appointment in 1735 also coincided with the despatch to Peru of a French scientific expedition that attempted to determine the size of the earth by measuring the meridians. Some of the members that formed this expedition were the Spanish officials Jorge Juan and Antonio Ulloa. Before the declaration of war, Villagarcía took two major initiatives in the Vice Kingdom of Peru. First, he augmented the production of silver in the mines of Potosi and improved the finances of Peru.<sup>76</sup> Second, he ordered the reinforcement of the fortifications of the Callao, which was the port of Lima and the naval base of the Armada del Sur.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Copy of one of Geraldino's letters in the correspondence of Blas de Lezo, 13 Jan. 1740, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 1021: "Por las noticias publicas de Inglaterra que de otra mano he recibido en algunos papeles, sólo he hallado digno de pasar a la de V.E. el que había en Londres cartas de Cartagena de las Indias con fecha de 14 de septiembre en que avisaban haber llegado allí despachada a Blas de Lezo una embarcación con noticia de hallarse en Panamá el comercio de Lima con trece millones y medio de pesos, en virtud de la cual había el comandante de los galeones empezado a cargar sus navíos para pasar a Portobello".

<sup>76</sup> D. Vivero, *Gobernadores y Virreyes del Perú (1532 – 1824)* (Barcelona, 1909), pp. 137-9.

<sup>77</sup> G. Lohmann Villena, *Las Defensas Militares de Lima y Callao. Academia Nacional de la Historia del Perú* (Sevilla, 1964), p. 147.

The Vice Kingdom of Peru was created in 1542, and in 1739, it encompassed the current territories of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina.<sup>78</sup> The Vice Royalty exerted its control most effectively in Lima, Quito and Charcas. Meanwhile, due to the big distances and the state of constant war with the native tribes in Araucania and Patagonia, Chile and the territories along the River Plata enjoyed a bigger autonomy.<sup>79</sup> Other important figures in the Vice Kingdom during the War of Jenkins' Ear were the governor of Buenos Aires Miguel Salcedo, the governor of Santiago Joseph Manson and the Commander of the Armada del Sur Jacinto de Segurola. As we have mentioned before, the Armada del Sur was the Spanish squadron that sailed along the Pacific coast of America and protected the Spanish merchants and the Spanish cities from attacks by pirates, privateers and other intruders.

However, such intruders were rare, and since the arrival of the conquistadors, the Pacific coast of America had lived in almost complete peace for more than two centuries. The main threat in the Spanish Pacific was from buccaneers, and by the eighteenth century, the age of buccaneers was effectively over.<sup>80</sup> During the buccaneering time there was an established but unofficial procedure to gather information about the enemy and defend the coast. Nevertheless, the success or failure of these measures depended much on the individual initiatives undertaken by the colonial governments.

For example, in letters from Madrid, dated in August and December 1739, the governor of Buenos Aires Miguel de Salcedo was informed that the Spanish agents in London had reported rumours about a British expeditionary force to be sent to the Pacific. In his instruction, Salcedo was commanded to put the territory in the best posture of defence.<sup>81</sup> During the next two years, Salcedo must have

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<sup>78</sup> Navarro García, *Hispanoamérica en el Siglo XVIII*, pp. 103-15.

<sup>79</sup> L. León Solís, "Las Invasiones Indígenas contra las Localidades Fronterizas de Buenos Aires, Cuyo y Chile, 1700 – 1800", *Boletín Americanista*, 36 (1987), 75 –104.

<sup>80</sup> G. Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans: the Triumph and Tragedy of Anson's Voyage Round the World* (London, 1999), p. 123.

<sup>81</sup> Letter to Salcedo, 10 Jan. 1740, AGI, Buenos Aires, Legajo 42.

cultivated a very good relationship with José Silva Pais, the governor of the Portuguese island of Santa Catarina, which was situated off the southern coast of Brazil. The papers that Commodore Anson intercepted in the Pacific showed that Silva had reported to the Spanish the departure of the British ships for Cape Horn.<sup>82</sup>

During the buccaneering period, unless the buccaneers could be intercepted by Spanish ships operating in the Plata, the route to the Pacific via Cape Horn was long and difficult and the climate in those latitudes was very cold. When ships reached the Pacific, the death toll among the crews was usually very high due to the low temperatures, scurvy and poor living conditions inside the vessels. However, whereas the Spanish ships could use the ports of Valdivia, Concepción and Santiago de Chile, the buccaneers would have had to rely on the virgin islands of Mocha, Santa Maria or Juan Fernandez. These islands had fresh water, wood, food and a good and warm climate where the crews could recover.<sup>83</sup> A further disadvantage for unfriendly vessels was that by the time of their arrival in the Pacific, letters from Buenos Aires to Santiago and Lima would have alerted the Spanish authorities in these cities.

The Spanish authorities along the Pacific coast of the Vice kingdom of Peru therefore had sufficient time to prepare the defence of their territories before the arrival of enemy ships. The first initiative from the governor of Santiago would have been the dispatch of ships to the islands of Mocha, Santa María and Juan Fernandez to detect the presence of the enemy and obtain information about their number, strength, condition and nature. If, on their arrival, the Spanish did not find the ships, the Spanish captains could give orders to dry the water wells and kill the wild animals that could serve for food. But, if they found that the crews had suffered too much, and they could not stand an attack, the Spanish captains would have probably given orders to capture and imprison the remaining crew. A

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<sup>82</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 34.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

letter written in Madrid on 24 August 1740 by Joseph de la Quintana to the governor of Santiago explains that

His majesty desires that the squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Pizarro should be supplied with proper information in case the squadron under the command of Commodore Anson succeeds in crossing into the South Seas. Immediately upon the receipt of this letter you should fit for sea two vessels of medium size and good speed. These vessels must be dispatched to the islands of Juan Fernandez to gather information. Also, this information must also be sent to the governors of Valdivia, Concepción and Valparaiso.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, information provided by these sloops also reached the Viceroy of Lima by way of Callao. In Lima, after assessing the information, if the enemy vessels did not prove to be a serious threat, the Viceroy could order the commander of the Armada del Sur to attack the intruders. Otherwise, the Viceroy could direct the ships to come to the protection of a particular town in case the local authorities feared that they were too weak to confront the enemy. However, if the Armada del Sur was not sufficient to counter the enemy, further instructions would have been dispatched in the packet boats operating from Valdivia to Acapulco. In their instructions, the local authorities would have been told to raise the local militia and conduct additional observations from watching points.<sup>85</sup>

Usually, enemy ships sailing from the islands of Mocha, Santa María or Juan Fernandez, would have moved northwards after having recovered and refitted after rounding the Horn. In the Pacific, they would spend most of the time in uncharted territory, and in a short period they would have been in need of water, food and wood. During the times of the buccaneers, the main places to refit were the Galapagos Archipelago, which is located close to the port of Guayaquil, and

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<sup>84</sup> Quintana to Manso, 24 Aug. 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 397-2, n. 1000: “Para que la expresada escuadra [de Pizarro] pueda obrar sin pérdida de tiempo, con conocimiento de lo que ocurra en esos mares, en el caso de haverse anticipado a ellos el enemigo: manda S.M. que luego que V.S. aya recibido esta, haga armar dos embarcaciones medianas, y de buena vela, y las despache a las Islas de Juan Fernandez, para que reconozcan aquel surgidero, y aguada, y den cuenta de lo que fuere ocurriendo en ellas, estando siempre a la mira por los medios y en la forma que se estimase por más combeniente del navío, o, navíos que arribaren a ellas por los medios y en la forma que se estimase por más conveniente del navío o navíos que arribaren a ellas ... o de si hubieren descubierto algunas recientes señales de haver estado anteriormente en ellas, y quando en esta razón se adquiera lo participará V.S. a los gobernates de Baldivia, la Concepción y Balparaiso”.

<sup>85</sup> For example: Letter to Villagarcia, 28 July 1742, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

the island of Quibo, which is close to the city of Panama. Both places were well known by the Spanish authorities, and ships would have been dispatched from Guayaquil and Panama on observation duties. This information would be then reported to the governors and transmitted through the usual channels of communication. Villagarcia reports on 31 May 1741 that

In the letters that I have received from the president of Panama, which are dated 21 January 1741, he acquainted me with the latest events in the Caribbean. However, he did not seem to have been informed with the designs of Anson's squadron. As a result I sent to him letters with this information by way of Paita and Guayaquil. In the letters he is also informed that Pizarro's squadron will also pass to these seas and he is commanded to observe the Galapagos to obtain information.<sup>86</sup>

#### IV.3-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN NEW SPAIN

The Spanish intelligence network in the Vice Kingdom of New Spain was organized by the Viceroy in Mexico. From 1736 to 1740, he was the Archbishop of Mexico, Antonio de Vizarrón y Eguirreta (1682-1747). In 1740, he was replaced by Pedro de Castro de Figueroa, Duke of the Conquista (1685-1741), who governed from 1740 until his death in 1741. In 1742, Pedro Cebrián y Agustín Count of Fuenclara (1687 – 1752) took over the government of the Vice Kingdom and he held the title of Viceroy until 1746. Fuenclara had been the Spanish ambassador in Vienna and Dresden, and as mentioned in the previous section, he was also the Spanish ambassador in Naples from 1738 to 1740. He, and his predecessors were faced with the difficult task of administrating the affairs in a Viceroyalty that was equally orientated to the Pacific and the West Indies.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Villagarcia, 31 May 1741, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489: "En cartas que he recibido del presidente de Panamá con fecha de 21 de enero en que me participa lo acaecido en las costas de tierra firme y mar del norte, con la ocasión de la presente guerra, no me comunica, ni parece tener noticia de los designios de la escuadra de Anson por lo que se le ha encaminado por las vías de Paita y Guayaquil, y la de pasar a estos mares la escuadra del cargo de Don Joseph Pizarro y el cuidado con que deben observarse las islas Galápagos y otros lugares peligrosos, para que adelantándose las vigilancia no exponga el descuido de Panamá a otra fatalidad como la de Portobello".

<sup>87</sup> Sarrablo Agualeles, *El Conde de Fuenclara, Embajador y Virrey de Nueva España (1687 – 1752)*



The Vice Kingdom of New Spain was created in 1535 and its capital was established in Tenochtitlan, which was given the new name of Mexico. During the War of Jenkins' Ear, its territory encompassed Central America, current Mexico, the southern territory of the current United States of America and the Philippine Islands.<sup>88</sup> In addition to Mexico, there were four other important cities that included Veracruz and Yucatan in the Gulf of Mexico and Acapulco and Manila in the Pacific. The governor of Acapulco was Francisco de Elias Saldivar, and in 1730, the city had undergone an intense reconstruction under the directions of Francisco Álvarez Barreiro. Meanwhile, the governor of Manila was Gaspar Antonio de la Torre and as José Antonio Calderón points out in his work, in 1738, the fortifications of the city had been recently reinforced under the direction of Tomás de Castro y Andrade.<sup>89</sup>

In the Pacific, the main concern of the Vice Kingdom of New Spain was the protection of the galleons that sailed between Acapulco and Manila. In Acapulco, and its nearby territory, there were watch towers to observe the arrival of the galleon, indicate the direction of Acapulco and give notice of its arrival to the Spanish authorities. Usually, soldiers were posted in these towers in autumn and winter, which was the time scheduled for the arrival of the galleons. However, if necessary, the towers could also be manned at the earliest notice, particularly if the colonial authorities were alerted with the presence of enemy ships.<sup>90</sup>

In Manila, initiatives to observe the arrival of the galleon and indicate to its captain the entrance to the Strait of Saint Bernardino, included the use of lookouts on the tops of Cape Espíritu Santo. These sentinels could also give the alarm if they saw any enemy ship in the horizon. Other initiatives to obtain further information depended upon the individual efforts of the colonial authorities. During the War of Jenkins' Ear, the governor of Manila relied on the reports provided by Chinese merchants. He also employed one agent in Macao and

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<sup>88</sup> Navarro García, *Hispanoamérica en el Siglo XVIII*, pp. 75-83.

<sup>89</sup> J.A. Calderón Quijano, *Las Fortificaciones Españolas en América y Filipinas* (Madrid, 1996), p. 136.

<sup>90</sup> Junta Gobernadora de México to the Secretary of Indies, 12 May 1742, AGI, México, Legajo 538.

Canton, who operated in close collaboration with the Jesuit missions. In a letter written from Manila on 6 February 1743, by governor Gaspar de la Torre to the Secretary of Indies in Madrid, we learned that

At the beginning of the year the Chinese merchants brought me a letter from China. This letter was written by a trustworthy person, although he did not sign it, probably for security reasons. The letter contains information about the British squadron that was sent to the South Seas and is at present at Canton. I have enclosed this letter with mine and I am sure that the person who wrote it will continue reporting about the movements of the enemy.<sup>91</sup>

As mentioned in the second section, information from the governor of Manila was sent to Acapulco in the galleons that covered the distance between the two cities. From Acapulco, the letters travelled by land to Mexico and they continued to the port of Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico. During the war of Jenkins' Ear, although Veracruz was never under attack, the Viceroy of Mexico moved to Veracruz to prepare the defence of the city. Here, the gathering of intelligence about the strength, number, condition and designs of the British expeditionary forces in the Caribbean was conducted by the governor Antonio Venavides and the governor of Yucatan. Initiatives to obtain this information did not vary much from those that we have seen in this section and they included the use of watch towers, sailing craft operating off the coast and the dispatch of sloops on particular missions.

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<sup>91</sup> Gaspar de la Torre to the Secretary of Indies, 6 Feb. 1743, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 256: "En los primeros champanes que este presente año vinieron de la China al comercio de estas islas recibí una carta, cuyo duplicado es el adjunto, y de su contexto se hará manifiesto V.M. los efectos que produjo la armada de Inglaterra que vino a intr oducirse a la mar del sur, y el estado en que a la vista de la ciudad de Canton se mantenía el jefe de la mencionada escuadra nombrado el almirante Anson y aunque esta carta vino sin firma por las razones que allá pudiera tener el que la escribe, es persona de todo confianza, y no se tiene duda de que escribirá lo cierto, y continuará participar otras noticias por lo que advierte de las determinaciones de aquel enemigo".

## **CHAPTER 3. THE DECEPTIVE EXPEDITION TO “HIS MAJESTY’S DOMINIONS”**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explores the Spanish and British gathering of information from the summer of 1739 to the autumn of 1740 and the use to which this information was put before America became the main theatre of operations. It will be argued that Spain engaged in effective deception to hinder the British military preparations to attack the Spanish colonies in America, which the British government finally realized. The chapter is organized in five sections. The first explores the Spanish military strategy at the beginning of the war, which attempted to prevent the dispatch of British forces to America by creating the impression that the Spanish were preparing expeditions to invade the British dominions. For practical reasons, this chapter will focus upon the feinted expedition to invade Scotland; the feinted expedition to invade Minorca will be studied in chapter six. The second section analyses the British gathering of intelligence about the negotiations between Spain and France and Spanish military preparations. The third section evaluates the connection between the gathering of this information and the defensive dispositions in Britain, Ireland, the Mediterranean and the West Indies. The fourth section explores the Spanish gathering of information about the British defensive dispositions and the mechanisms that enabled the Spanish government to assess the effectiveness of its strategy. The fifth section explores the British, Spanish and French military decisions in the summer of 1740, all of which appear to have been based on information gathered by their respective intelligence systems.

The first work that mentions military activities in Europe during the first year of the War of Jenkins’ Ear is *The Military History of Europe. From the Commencement of the War with Spain in 1739 to the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle in 1748*, which was published in 1755 by William Biggs. In this work, Biggs refers to the existence of two military camps in Spain, one in Catalonia directed against Minorca and another in Galicia directed against Britain and Ireland.<sup>1</sup> With regards

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<sup>1</sup> W. Biggs, *The Military History of Europe. From the Commencement of the War with Spain in 1739 to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748* (London, 1755), p. 23.

to the present chapter, Biggs' work also mentions the preparations that were taken in Ireland to put it in a good defensive posture in case of a Spanish invasion.<sup>2</sup> However, the first historian to recognize the Spanish strategy in 1739 – 40 was Cesareo Fernández, in his work *Armada Española*, which was published in 1900.<sup>3</sup> Less sure on the matter considered in this chapter is Richmond's *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, which is still considered an important reference for modern historians.<sup>4</sup> As Richard Harding points out, Richmond's work was published after the First World War and his intention was to protect the navy from civilian interference. Richmond made selective use of the material in the Public Record Office, concentrating on naval material and disregarding the diplomatic correspondence, which contains the information provided by the agents.<sup>5</sup> As a result, he erroneously accused the British government of ignoring the threat posed by France as well as negligence in the conduct of war.

For many years the publication of Richmond's work, the study of British military operations during the first year of the War of Jenkins' Ear received little attention by the historiography. The threat of a Franco-Spanish invasion of Britain and the limitations that it posed on the movements of the Royal Navy is briefly mentioned in the works of Jeremy Black, Richard Harding, Paul Vaucher and Philip Woodfine.<sup>6</sup> Yet, despite Richmond's failure to consult the diplomatic correspondence, there has not been any systematic attempt to reassess the decisions of the British government in the light of this material. Meanwhile, the study of Spanish strategy has been restricted to the analysis of some of its

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> C. Fernández Duro, *Armada Española desde la Unión de los Reinos de Castilla y Aragón*, 9 Vols. (Madrid, 1900), vi. 234-303.

<sup>4</sup> H. W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, 1920)

<sup>5</sup> R. Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the 18th Century: The British Expedition to the West Indies*, (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 13-4.

<sup>6</sup> J. Black, "Anglo-Spanish Naval Relations in the Eighteenth century", *The Mariner's Mirror*, 77 (1991), 249; J. Black, "The British Navy and British Foreign Policy in the First Half of Eighteenth Century", *Studies in history and politics*, 4 (1985), 149-50; R. Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the 18th Century*, pp. 27-8; P. Vaucher, *Robert Walpole et la Politique de Fleury 1731 – 1742* (Paris, 1924), p. 320; P. Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 163.

elements. For example, the negotiations between Spain and France were studied in 1900 by Alfred Braudillart in his work *Philip V et la Cour de France*, and in 1936, they were mentioned in the work of Arthur Wilson, *French Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726 – 1743*.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Spanish initiatives to mobilize the Jacobites are mentioned in the works of George Hilton Jones, *The Mainstream of Jacobitism*, and Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole*.<sup>8</sup> However, there is not as yet a study that integrates all the elements of Spanish military strategy in a comprehensive way.

The main contribution of this chapter is a study of the Spanish and British use of intelligence – before the departure of the British expedition to the West Indies and the Pacific – which aims to fill the gaps in the historiography. On the Spanish side, this chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the Spanish military strategy. It also looks at the Spanish gathering of information about the dispositions that the British government adopted to defend its dominions. This information helped the Spanish government to assess the effect that its strategy was having on the British military preparations to attack the Spanish colonies. Ultimately, it enabled the government in Madrid to take the necessary measures to ensure that the threat of an invasion continued to be a cause for concern in Britain.

On the British side, the chapter explores the gathering of information about the Spanish preparations for war. This information included the military preparations to invade the British dominions, the negotiations between Spain and France, the mobilization of the Spanish and French naval forces and the use of the Jacobites. Such information helped the British government to assess the Bourbon threat so that the appropriate defensive preparations could be undertaken. Ultimately, until British agents could confirm that this threat was only a feint, the British government could not give orders for the departure of the expeditions to the West Indies and the Pacific.

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<sup>7</sup> H. M. A. Braudillart, *Philippe V et la Cour de France*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1890-1900), iii; A.M. Wilson, *French Foreign Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726 – 1743* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936), p. 322;

<sup>8</sup> J. Black, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole* (Edinburgh, 1985); G. H. Jones, *The Main Stream of Jacobitism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1954), pp. 207-8.

## **I-THE DUKE OF MONTEMAR AND SPANISH MILITARY STRATEGY**

As early as the Summer of 1739, the Duke of Montemar defined Spanish military strategy for the first year of the War of Jenkins' Ear. In May, after the government's decision to suspend the *Asiento de Negros* and the *Navío de Permiso*, war between Spain and Britain was seen as inevitable. Montemar assumed that Britain would attack the Spanish colonies in America and expected that whereas the British forces would take the offensive, the Spanish be forced on to take the defensive. His intention was to strengthen the Spanish position, and to do that, he sought to create false invasion alarms in the British dominions. In the best-case scenario, the threat of invasion should have prevented altogether the departure of British expeditionary forces to America. In the worst case, it would at least hinder their departure and during that time Spain could have reinforced its posture of defence in America. The problem for the Spanish was that although their land forces were more numerous than the British, the Spanish navy was smaller than the Royal Navy. However, Spain and France were allies and the Spanish and French navies combined could equal the strength of the British fleet. Thus, turning the Spanish defensive posture into a more offensive one required the collaboration of the French fleet.

During the negotiations to sign the Pardo Convention in the winter of 1739, Spain and France ran a parallel negotiation to sign a treaty of defensive alliance. This treaty contained several initiatives that contemplated Spanish and French collaboration to attack the British dominions. In Europe they included the recovery of the island of Minorca and Gibraltar, and the conquest of the Italian duchies of Parma and Placentia. Spain and France also planned to carry out a landing of troops in Scotland to raise a Jacobite rebellion in Britain and overthrow the Hanoverian dynasty. In America, they sought to expel the British settlers from the bay of Campeche and attack Georgia, the Carolinas and the island of Jamaica. Negotiations between Spain and France to sign a treaty of defensive alliance continued alongside the war and they were accompanied by a French insistence on signing a treaty of commerce. Indeed, despite Fleury's advocacy of peace, France saw an opportunity in the tensions between Spain and Britain to eliminate the British interference in the Spanish colonies and obtain an advantageous legal

channel for the French products in the Spanish colonial market.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, French demands were considered too great by the Spanish, who refused to accept them. As a result, neither the treaty of commerce, nor the treaty of defensive alliance was signed during the war.<sup>10</sup>

In July 1739, Montemar proposed to form three military camps in Spain. The first of those camps was to be created in Galicia under the command of the Duke of Ormond and it was intended to threaten Britain with a Bourbon landing in Scotland. The second camp was to be created in Catalonia under the command of the Count of Glimes and was designed to threaten with a landing in Minorca. The third camp was to be created near Gibraltar. The most immediately exposed, and proximate British presence, so far as the Spanish were concerned. However, the Gibraltar project only materialized in the reinforcement of the existing garrison of San Roque, and during the war, these troops did not pose a serious threat to the British outpost. The purpose of the Spanish camps, particularly that in Galicia, was to raise concerns in the British dominions. These concerns it was hoped, would oblige the British government to reinforce the squadrons operating both in the home waters and the Mediterranean, and would hinder the preparations of the British expeditionary force directed against the Spanish colonies.<sup>11</sup> However, in order to comprehend Montemar's strategy, it is necessary to bear in mind three important factors that must have influenced him.

First, the decision of Montemar to create these military camps was shaped by the political negotiations between Madrid and Paris and the military dispositions adopted in France at the beginning of the war. From a political perspective, in the summer of 1739 Montemar knew that Britain could not take French neutrality for

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<sup>9</sup> S.J. Stein & B.H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, 2000), p. 148. Despite the Franco-Spanish alliance, throughout the eighteenth century, French policy-makers provided limited protection for the Spanish empire as well as little support for Spain's efforts to reform its internal polity and economy. Moreover, when war between Spain and Britain was declared, rather than providing military support to Spain, the French authorities often regarded it as an opportunity to participate directly in the trade with the Spanish colonies.

<sup>10</sup> Mina to Villarias, 7 March 1740, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4397.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, 23 July 1739, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2082.

granted. Negotiations between Spain and France to sign a treaty of commerce and a treaty of defensive alliance continued during the spring of 1739, and were particularly intense from the summer of 1739 to the summer of 1740. Meanwhile, from a military perspective, in June 1739, although Fleury seemed reluctant to declare war on Britain, he told the Spanish government of his intention to cover any Spanish military efforts with the squadrons in Brest, Toulon and Rochefort. Although in the summer of 1739, French ambiguity did not allow Montemar to prepare offensive initiatives against Britain, the French position gave the Spanish the necessary political and military means to turn the Spanish defensive posture into a more offensive one. A letter from the Marquis of la Mina, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, dated 29 June 1739, reported that

There is a great fervour here, and last night I had a long meeting with the Count of Maurepas. He thinks that their naval forces should be mobilized so that France is prepared. Also, last night I made an appointment with the cardinal [Fleury] to meet him after the dispatch of this post so that we can take further measures regarding what has to be done, all of which I will punctually report to you.<sup>12</sup>

The second consideration for Montemar was that, before the declaration of war, the defences of Ferrol were not considered to be strong enough to stand a British attack. The port of Ferrol harboured the Spanish squadron that was eventually sent to America and in the summer of 1739 Spain needed to put this port into a good posture of defence to protect it from a British assault. Thus, an army in Galicia could be used to play two different roles: an offensive one indeed, but also a defensive one.<sup>13</sup> From the summer of 1739 to the summer of 1740, several Spanish engineers were employed under the command of the Count of Ytre to work on the fortifications of Ferrol. They made new dispositions to prevent the British ships from entering the port, and in case that this still happened, orders were also given to build new batteries, repair the existing fortifications and mount new pieces of artillery to bombard potential landing places.

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<sup>12</sup> Mina to Villarias, 29 June 1739, AGS, Estado, Legajo 4395: “Lo cierto es que aquí están fervorosos, y tuve anoche larga conferencia con el conde de Maurepas, que es de sentir, que se apresten luego sus fuerzas navales, porque no se halle la Francia desprevenida en el caso urgente, y anoche quedé con el cardenal en que pasado el ordinario de hoy, tomaremos medidas para lo que se haya de hacer, y de lo que resultare daré cuenta puntual”.

<sup>13</sup> Quintana to Ustariz, 21 July 1739, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2082.



A third influence on Montemar's thinking was no doubt recent history. There was a precedent of a Spanish attempt to invade Scotland and raise a Jacobite rebellion in Britain. In 1719, the Spanish First Secretary Alberoni organized an expedition from Cadiz with twenty-nine ships that had to carry 5,000 Spanish troops and transport arms for 30,000 local supporters. On its journey to Scotland, the expedition had to stop in Corunna to take on board the Pretender to the throne of Britain and Ireland and his military commander the Duke of Ormond. This expeditionary force was to be supported by two other small expeditions. The first one was organized in San Sebastian and it consisted of two frigates that carried 307 men from the regiment of León. The second one was organized in the French port of Le Havre by an even smaller number of British who remained loyal to the House of Stuart. On 29 March 1719, a violent storm disrupted the expeditionary force from Cadiz, just before its arrival at Corunna, and only the two small expeditionary forces from San Sebastian and Le Havre actually arrived in Scotland. The commanders of the expedition recruited 1,400 Jacobites, but on 10 June 1719, they were defeated in the valley of Glensheil by a British army under the command of General Wightman.<sup>14</sup> While the Spanish expedition to Scotland in 1719 was a complete fiasco, Montemar knew that it had caused alarm in Britain, and that the threat of a similar (or more powerful) landing would again preoccupy ministers in London.

Indeed, Montemar's plans for a projected invasion of Scotland owed much to the 1719 attempt. He used information provided by the Pretender and the French intelligence system. The expedition was again to be commanded by the Duke of Ormond. It would consist of six foot regiments on foot (Aragon, Granada, Navarra, Toledo, Lisboa and Irlanda)<sup>15</sup> one regiment of cavalry, (Edimburgo)<sup>16</sup> and would have been designed to carry an additional 20,000 arms. Montemar planned to make a landing in Scotland either after the Spanish and the French

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<sup>14</sup> M. González-Arno, "La Última Invasión Española a Inglaterra", *Historia 16*, 106 (1985), 30-9.

<sup>15</sup> Montemar to Villarias, 11 Dec. 1739, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2082.

<sup>16</sup> Montemar to Villarias, 6 April 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036. It is assumed that this regiment was that of Edimburgo because in this letter, Montemar remarks that if one regiment of cavalry had to pass to Scotland, that should be that of Edimburgo in which most of the officers were Irish and therefore spoke English.

fleets had, presented battle to the Royal Navy, or created a diversion to open the way for the transport ships. Once in Scotland, and according to the (perhaps exaggerated information provided by the Pretender) it was anticipated that Jacobites would have flocked in to serve under Ormond, defend the Stuart cause and overthrow the Hanoverian government in London.<sup>17</sup> However, although Montemar committed himself to making it look like a serious project, it is very likely that neither Montemar nor the Spanish ministers were ever confident of the actual departure of the expedition.

In July 1739, Montemar gave orders to the commander of the Spanish troops in Galicia, the Count of Ytre, to reinforce the fortifications of Ferrol and to distribute the army to withstand a British attack. Preparations to fortify Ferrol included the building of one battery in Punta de Segano to help the three existing castles cover the entrance to the port. It also included the raising of one battery in Punta de Ares to fire over Playa de Ares and the reinforcement of Fuerte Fontan with a battery to fire against the small craft that could have attempted to approach it. Lastly, the preparations included the building of several batteries in the embankment of Casino to protect the castle of San Felipe, and the movement of a naval factory in Sada to the port of Ferrol.<sup>18</sup> The distribution of the army to withstand a British attack included (a) orders to the regiments of Toledo and Navarra to move to the surrounding areas of Ferrol; (b) orders to the regiment of Lisboa in Betanzos to be ready to move to Ferrol at the first notice; (c) orders to the regiments of Irlanda and Batavia in Ferrol to be ready to reinforce that of Montesa in case a landing happened and (d) orders to the militia to be ready at the earliest notice.<sup>19</sup>

In January 1740, Philip V accepted Montemar's project to create a military camp in Catalonia that was designed for a descent upon Minorca.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the defensive deployment of the existing Spanish army in Galicia started to gain a more offensive character. Following the plans of Montemar, in January 1740

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<sup>17</sup> Montemar to Villarias, 22 May 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2085.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to Montemar, 22 July 1739, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2082.

<sup>19</sup> Ytre to Ustariz, 27 July 1739, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1263.

<sup>20</sup> Letter to Montemar, 4 Jan. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

several Spanish regiments were ordered to march towards Galicia and its bordering regions. For example, the first and the second battalions of the regiment of España that were in Santander and Ciudad Rodrigo respectively were ordered to march to Corunna. The regiment of Granada was ordered to march from Pamplona to Corunna. The regiment of Valencia was ordered to march from Cadiz towards Galicia.<sup>21</sup> These military preparations should be seen alongside the naval dispositions that were conducted in the Spanish ports of Cadiz and Ferrol and the French ports of Toulon, Brest and Rochefort. In December 1739, the squadrons in these ports and their numbers were as follows: in Ferrol, eight ships of the line and one frigate; in Cadiz, eleven ships of the line and six frigates; in Cartagena, three ships of the line and two frigates;<sup>22</sup> in Toulon, twelve ships of the line; in Brest nineteen ships of the line and in Rochefort, four ships of the line.<sup>23</sup>

Also, in December 1739, the Pretender James Stuart responded favourably to the suggestion of the Spanish First Secretary the Marquis of Villarias to send to Madrid the Duke of Ormond from his residence at Avignon, and the Earl Marishal, who was at Valencia. Villarias apparently convinced the Pretender that on their arrival at Madrid, Ormond would be given command of the Spanish army in Galicia. Villarias also indicated that the aim of this army was to go to Scotland under the protection of a Franco-Spanish squadron. From Scotland, this army would then march to England and would attempt to overthrow the Hanoverian dynasty. However, there is evidence that soon after Ormond's departure, the Pretender became concerned about the actual collaboration to be expected between the French and the Spanish governments. In a letter written on the 24 February 1740 to Ormond and Marishal, he informed them that "by some private intelligence I have received, I am convinced, there is as yet no perfect union and

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<sup>21</sup> Letter to Siruela, 2 Jan. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

<sup>22</sup> Estado de los bageles que presentemente tiene el Rey con distinción de los armados y desarmados, sus Nombres, cañones que montan y destinos en que se hallan, 26 Dec. 1739, AGS, Marina, Legajo 397-1, n. 115.

<sup>23</sup> Mina to Villarias, 21 Dec. 1739, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4936.

harmony between the two courts of France and Spain, much less a concert in my favour”.<sup>24</sup>

Once in Madrid, Ormond met Montemar and according to a letter written by Marishall to the Pretender, Montemar made “a short discourse” in which he described the military forces that had been gathered in Galicia over the last months: sixteen battalions on foot and a train of field artillery. In Castile, there were two regiments of dragoons ready to march at the first notice. Orders had been given to prepare 600,000 rations of biscuits and it was expected that the expedition would be transported in the summer under the protection of a squadron of twenty eight vessels. However, when the Duke of Ormond was asked to go to Galicia, he refused to do so because in his view that would have only served to put the British government on its guard.<sup>25</sup> Over the next months Ormond and Marishall remained in Madrid and the relation between the two men with the Spanish government deteriorated. Indeed, in a letter of 20 May 1740 Marishall informed the Pretender that things in Galicia did not go “in such a manner as to give any conviction of their being in earnest. Their intention hitherto, I believe, has only been to stop the embarkation in England, by which they would reckon to have made a good campaign”.<sup>26</sup>

In the summer of 1739, Montemar outlined the military strategy that the Spanish government would follow until the summer of 1740. His strategy relied on the principle of deception and during this period it provided a framework for the decisions of the Spanish ministers. Montemar sought to maximize the Spanish military forces, the Spanish diplomatic position and the international situation, to create a perception of a threat to the British dominions that would impede the dispatch of the British squadrons to attack the Spanish colonies in America. However, this does not mean that the decisions taken by the Spanish government during this period all followed a pre established agenda. As we will see in the next

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<sup>24</sup> James Stuart to Lord Marishall and the Duke of Ormond, 24 Feb. 1740, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle: Stuart Papers, Vol. 220; BL, Film 96590, Reel 109, p. 153.

<sup>25</sup> Marishall to James Stuart, 1 Apr. 1740, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, Stuart Papers, Vol. 221; BL: Film 96590, Reel 109, pp. 124-7.

<sup>26</sup> Marishall to James Stuart, 20 May 1740, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, Stuart Papers, Vol. 222; BL: Film 96590, Reel 110, p. 107.

section, and in chapter six, several developments such as the coordinated Bourbon naval movements in the spring of 1740 owed much to factors that had to do with the unpredictable development of war. Furthermore, had the French government decided to participate fully in the expedition to invade Britain, the Spanish might well have decided to launch an invasion, rather than merely try to persuade the British that an invasion was distinctly possible.

## **II-THE BRITISH GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE FROM 1739 TO 1740**

During the negotiations between the British and Spanish governments leading to the sign of the Pardo Convention, the Duke of Newcastle received distressing news from the British ambassador in Paris. Waldegrave's reports contained information that had been obtained by agent 101 and indicated that Spain and France were conducting a parallel negotiation to make a new Pacte de Famille. Newcastle was told that negotiations were taking place with the intention of signing both a treaty of defensive alliance and a commercial agreement. However, according to 101, Spanish refusal to sign the treaty of commerce until the treaty of defensive alliance had been completed was preventing the two sides from reaching an agreement.<sup>27</sup>

On the 20 April 1739, agent 101 provided information about the content of the two treaties. He revealed that the treaty of defensive alliance between Spain and France was meant to be secret and looked upon as a Pacte de Famille, a perfect union of good understanding, friendship and a perpetual alliance between the Spanish and the French monarchs, their heirs, successors and subjects. In military terms, the treaty contemplated French commitment to help Spain to recover Gibraltar, proper engagements between the two crowns to obtain the duchies of Parma and Placentia for Don Philip, and protection to assure the integrity of the territorial possessions for the king of Naples and Sicily. Ultimately, the aim was to negotiate a treaty between Spain, France and Portugal to undermine the British commerce. However, in this report, there was not mention yet of Minorca, Georgia, Jamaica or Scotland, which were the other clauses that were being negotiated, as seen earlier.<sup>28</sup>

So far as the the treaty of commerce was concerned, Waldegrave reported that there were two key elements. First, France would enjoy all the prerogatives contained in all the treaties that had been signed between France and Spain since

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<sup>27</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 5 Jan. 1738/9 (OS), BL, Add. 32800, fols. 23-38.

<sup>28</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 20 April 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32800, fols. 257-70.

the Treaty of the Pyrenees. Second, the monopoly of the slave trade between Africa and the Spanish colonies in America would revert to France. There were also measures to provide French merchants with sufficient cover to conduct further trade in the Spanish colonies. For example, the judge's conservators would not have been allowed to search the houses of French merchants in the Spanish colonies. Also, the French consuls would pay no duty for entering provisions or other necessities for their own use. The examination of French books of accounts and boarding of French ships by the Spanish authorities would be forbidden. Moreover, in case any prohibited goods were found in port, only the merchandise could have been confiscated and neither the vessel nor its crew would be detained.<sup>29</sup>

In Italy, the British consuls operating in Genoa obtained further information that complemented the reports provided by Waldegrave, about the Franco-Spanish negotiations. During the spring of 1739, the British agents operating in Rome reported to the British consul at Genoa that the ambassadors and the nuncios from Spain and France in the Vatican had regular meetings in the palace of the Pretender. Soon, letters from consul Jackson to Newcastle reported the existence of information that suggested that the Pretender and his eldest son were probably preparing to leave the city.<sup>30</sup> On 9 April 1739, after having intercepted one of Montemar's letters to the court of Naples, Jackson reported to Newcastle that

Montemar writes from Madrid to a friend here, that there seems to be an indissoluble union between the courts of Spain and France, and that they are concerting to make some attempts ... The same thing is wrote from Paris, and that for this purpose the French are putting their marine in the best order they can, taking an exact account of the sea officers and sailors, building of new ships and refitting the old. Spain does the same in her ports, especially at Cadiz and in the Bay of Biscay. It is further hinted, that the French are to supply the Spaniards with what seamen and officers they may want, and to have the direction of the forces by sea of both kingdoms.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 8 May 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32800, fols. 389-405.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 21/2 July 1739, TNA: PRO, State Papers Genoa, SP 79/18.

<sup>31</sup> 29 March/9 April 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 79/18.

Immediately after receiving this letter, on 8 May 1739, the Duke of Newcastle wrote to the British ambassadors in Spain and France to give them further instructions. First, he informed them that the king had reasons to think that there was an offensive alliance between Spain and France. Second, he told them that it was very important to know whether or not this offensive alliance was set to take place only in the event of Britain coming into a war with Spain. Third, he directed them not to mention this issue in their correspondence and to proceed with the utmost secrecy. A paragraph in the letter that Newcastle sent to Waldegrave with these instructions illustrates the sentiments of the secretary of state in the spring of 1739:

Upon the whole, as the present is a most critical situation, and the views of France appear, and are universally acknowledged to be very extensive, and as His Mty has received advices, that the interests of the Pretender are mixed with them, and that even the present situation is not thought by the Jacobites an unfavorable one for some attempt to be made upon His Mtys' Dominions, in which both France and Spain are represented to concur, The King is persuaded, from your Ex.y's zeal for His Service, and from your attachment to His Majesty's person and Government, that you will exert yourself, with more than ordinary activity upon this occasion.<sup>32</sup>

Due to his failure to analyse the diplomatic correspondence, Admiral Richmond concluded that the British government discovered the threat of invasion in the winter of 1740, and that it came as a surprise.<sup>33</sup> In fact, from July 1739 to March 1740 the British intelligence system had focused its espionage activities on four elements that were connected with the threat of invasion. First, information about the negotiations between Spain and France, which was reported by agent 101, and after January 1740, by the secretary of the Neapolitan ambassador in Paris, the Sicilian Abbot. Second, information about the meetings in Rome among the Spanish and French ambassadors, the Spanish and French nuncios and the Pretender, which were reported by the British agents operating in Rome under the directions of Jackson, the British consul in Genoa. Third, information about Spanish military preparations in Galicia, which was mainly reported by consuls Parker and Jackson and the British ambassador in Lisbon, Tyrawly. Fourth,

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<sup>32</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 8 May 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32800, fols. 366-7.

<sup>33</sup> Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, i. 75.



information about the Spanish naval preparations in Ferrol and Cadiz, which was reported by the British intelligence network in Portugal.

Information about negotiations between France and Spain confirmed the difficulties encountered by the two Bourbon countries in reaching an agreement. On 19 September 1739, agent 101 reported that the French ambassador in Madrid, the Count de la Marck, had observed that Spain did not seem to be ready to sign the treaty of commerce, without which the French court was determined not to sign the treaty of defensive alliance. De la Marck was convinced that the Spanish ambassador in Paris, the Marquis de la Mina, was obstructing negotiations in Madrid by telling his court that he could defend the Spanish interests without the obligations created by formal treaties.<sup>34</sup> However, the negotiations between the two courts continued, and by the winter of 1740, Newcastle had learnt that other provisions in the treaty of defensive alliance included an attack on Port Mahon.<sup>35</sup>

Information about the conferences in Rome between the ambassadors and the nuncios of Spain and France and the Pretender continued to be sent to Britain in the autumn of 1739 and proved to be particularly worrying. Newcastle needed to know the exact connection between the Bourbon military preparations, particularly the military camp in Galicia, the negotiations between the courts of France and Spain and also the content of the conferences in Rome between the ambassadors and the nuncios of Spain, France and the Pretender. On 30 December 1739, a letter from Jackson in Genoa to the secretary of state explained that

My friend here, who at my instance keeps a correspondence with one at Rome that is extremely affectionate to the Pretender, has shown me two letters from him. In the first he writes the conferences between the cardinals Acquaviva and Tensin and the Pretender, are very frequent ... In the second letter he expresses himself as follows: Here the conferences are continued between the ministers of France and Spain, with the intervention of the Pretender (whom he always calls king James) and one of his most trusty ministers; and it is affirmed for

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<sup>34</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 19 Sept. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32801, fols. 258-68.

<sup>35</sup> 24 Jan. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers France, SP 78/222, fols. 50-3.

certain, that his son will shortly leave Rome ... I have been told here by another hand, that the Spanish men of war in the Bay of Biscay were getting ready to go and join the French men of war which are in Brest and other parts of west France, which, with some transports, were to embark troops, ammunition, and arms to make a descent in Scotland, where it is given out they have intelligences in favour of the Pretender.<sup>36</sup>

Information about the Spanish military preparations in Galicia was obtained primarily by consul Parker. According to Parker's reports, in July 1739, the works in the fortifications of Ferrol were supervised by the Count of Ytre. Works in the mouth of the port consisted of three new batteries of eighteen, fifteen and seven guns on the larboard side, and one of five guns on the starboard side. There were plans to raise three other batteries of seven guns each within the harbour, one of which had to be near the town of Ferrol upon a point that faced the entrance to the port, another upon the larboard side, between Ferrol and Graña and another in the castle of San Felipe, which was on the larboard side. Other preparations included mounting twenty-four guns on a barge and positioning it as near the town as possible. It was also intended to deploy ships in a line below the castles from Graña to Ferrol to reinforce their fire power.<sup>37</sup>

Consul Parker also obtained information about the numbers and dispositions of the Spanish regiments in Galicia. According to him, in July 1739, the number of Spanish troops in Galicia suggested a defensive posture.<sup>38</sup> In August, of the six Spanish regiments of foot (Toledo, Navarra, Lisboa, Irlanda, Montesa and Batavia) he discovered that orders had been given to those of Toledo, Navarra, Lisboa and Irlanda to defend Ferrol. The regiment of Toledo had been ordered to leave Corunna and extend itself as far as the port of Vivero, putting detachments into every creek and bay. The regiment of Navarra at Puentedeume had been ordered to move to Ferrol. The regiment of Lisboa and a battalion from the regiment of Irlanda had been ordered to cover the coast from the island of

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<sup>36</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 19/30 Dec. 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 79/18.

<sup>37</sup> Parker to Tyrawly, 4 Aug. 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Portugal, SP 89/40, fols. 62-3.

<sup>38</sup> In Keene's correspondence to Newcastle. Extract of a letter from Cónsul Parker at Coruna, 18 July 1739, TNA: PRO, State Papers Spain, SP 94/133.

Sysarga to Corunna. Also, one regiment of horse in Castile (probably that of Edimburgo) had been ordered to move to the boundaries of Galicia in order to be ready to enter upon the first notice from the Count of Ytre.<sup>39</sup>

In January 1740, Parker discovered that all the Irish regiments together with some other troops were marching in all haste towards Galicia.<sup>40</sup> One month later, he wrote that in most of the towns they were creating magazines for the subsistence of this army, which was expected to be formed by forty thousand men.<sup>41</sup> In April 1740, Parker reported the arrival of the regiment of Granada, which was located in Pontevedra and the regiment of España that was ordered to Graña.<sup>42</sup> There were a great number of muskets and bayonets that had been sent from Santander to the magazines of Ferrol and this news was accompanied by rumours that twenty thousand more arms and three million piastres were going to be sent to Scotland. Also, it was reported that the house at Corunna where the Pretender had resided in 1719 had been taken up and refurnished for the reception of the Duke of Ormond and the Earl Marishall of Scotland.<sup>43</sup>

Information about the Spanish naval preparations was reported to Newcastle by the agents operating within the British intelligence network in Portugal and complemented former information provided by the British ambassador in Paris. On 10 June 1739, Parker reported that in Ferrol there were six ships equipped. Another ship was being careened, and on the arrival from Corcubion of the Prince, on board of which was Rear Admiral Liaño, the squadron would consist of eight ships, including the Prince of eighty guns, the Queen of seventy, the Galicia of seventy, the St. Charles of sixty and the Santiago of sixty.<sup>44</sup> In January 1740, Parker confirmed that the total naval force in Ferrol consisted of nine men

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<sup>39</sup> Parker to Tyrawly, 4 Aug. 1739 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/40, fols. 62-3.

<sup>40</sup> Extract of a letter from Vigo of the 12 Jan. 1740, (NS) TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Extract of a letter from Galicia of the 24 Feb. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 15-7.

<sup>42</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 30 April 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 35-6.

<sup>43</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 18/29 April 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 20-1.

<sup>44</sup> 10 June 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 73990, fol. 216.

of war.<sup>45</sup> On 28 July 1739, Cayley reported from Cadiz that there were ten ships equipped in an imperfect manner and that they were expecting orders to prepare the Royal Philip of one hundred and fourteen guns and the Santa Isabella of eighty guns.<sup>46</sup> In March 1740, letters from Paris reported that in Cadiz, the armament of the Royal Philip was still going on and that orders had been given to arm eight other ships of war. The same letter from Waldegrave reported that the squadron in Cartagena consisted of four men of war and one frigate.<sup>47</sup>

Waldegrave, also provided information about the naval preparations in France. On 2 November 1739, he reported that France “seems to show some signs of vigour”. Indeed, the navy was arming in all her ports and it was given out that soon she would have thirty to thirty-four men of war. On the other hand, in the same report, Waldegrave wrote that it seemed that the real designs of Paris “were to let England exhaust herself with the expense of great and useless armaments”.<sup>48</sup> Even so, in December 1739, Newcastle told Waldegrave that according to his own information it was to be expected that sooner or later the court of France would do something with her squadrons in favour of Spain. Thus, he commanded Waldegrave to take further initiatives to learn the real designs of the court of France and Spain.<sup>49</sup> Two months later, a letter of Waldegrave of 2 March 1740 confirmed Newcastle’s concerns. Waldegrave reported that

At last orders are sent to Brest and Toulon to get several men of war in readiness to put to sea upon the first occasion. Twelve are ordered at Brest and six at Toulon ... The common notion about their destination is that they are merely to protect the commerce of France, and to convoy their ships, though some pretend there are other views ... I will make the best enquiries I can, and whatever other matters come to my knowledge relating to this, your grace shall have the most early notice of.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Extract of a letter from Vigo of Jan-1740, in Parker to Newcastle, 22 Feb. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Cayley to Newcastle, 28 July 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 73989, fols. 143-4.

<sup>47</sup> Waldegrave to Anstruther, 3 March 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fols. 309-11.

<sup>48</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 2 Nov. 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32801, fols. 300-6.

<sup>49</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 27 Dec. 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/221, fols. 356-9.

<sup>50</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 2 March 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fol. 114.

Indeed, the naval preparations in France during the winter of 1740 honoured the words of the Count of Maurepas in the summer of 1739. At that time, he had announced to the Spanish ambassador in Paris that the French naval forces would be mobilized so that France was prepared for war.<sup>51</sup> On the 5 April 1740, the Cadiz squadron consisting of twelve ships of the line sailed to Ferrol. Their sailing was only possible because one month before, the transport of Spanish troops from Barcelona to Mallorca had forced the British ships that were cruising off Cadiz to join the British forces employed in the defence of Minorca. Meanwhile, on 5 May 1740, consul Jackson reported from Portugal that according to his agents in Galicia, the total naval force in Ferrol amounted to twenty ships of the line and three frigates.<sup>52</sup> On the 14 May 1740, the secretary of the British ambassador in Paris, Thompson, confirmed this information.<sup>53</sup>

In London, Newcastle thought that there were strong possibilities that an invasion was imminent. Information about the Bourbon naval movements added to the impression created by the recent reports about the negotiations between Spain and France, the arrival of the Duke of Ormond at Madrid and the reinforcement of the Spanish camp in Galicia. On 23 May 1740, Waldegrave reported that according to his agent at Bayonne, letters from Ferrol mentioned that there were eighteen thousand effective men and that Admiral Pintado's squadron had arms on board for eighteen thousand more. Also, as a result of the strictness with which the embargo on all merchant vessels was enforced, it was believed that the court had some considerable embarkation in view.<sup>54</sup> In his reply to Waldegrave, Newcastle manifested his concerns and wrote that

The greatest reflection upon, us is the want of intelligence. The Cadiz squadron sailed from thence, without our knowing they were in a condition so to do, and it was weeks, and near months before we knew, where they were gone. For God sake, think of some method of knowing immediately, whenever they stir. Could not you have some French,

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<sup>51</sup> Mina to Villarias, 29 June 1739, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 4395.

<sup>52</sup> Letter to Jackson, 5 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/40, fol. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson to Couraud, 14 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fol. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 23 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 20-4.

Italian, Portugal, or Spanish spy, in every Spanish port, where they have any ships. Money will do any thing with those nations, and it must not be spared upon this occasion.<sup>55</sup>

Despite his frustration at the lack of hard evidence, in the spring of 1740, Newcastle's concerns about a Spanish invasion were reasonable, given the information supplied by the British intelligence system. There were reports that suggested the Spanish military preparations, the negotiations between Spain and France and the mobilization of the Jacobites, could have only been "a show to raise apprehension and oblige England to put herself in a posture of defence".<sup>56</sup> However, most of the information provided by the British agents indicated that these preparations were for real, and that there was a formed design to invade. Under the circumstances, the secretary of state could not take the risk of disregarding the threat. Had he ignored the Spanish preparations and the Spanish had proceeded to land troops in Scotland, he would have been remembered as one of the most incompetent, careless and negligent politicians in British history. Instead, Newcastle adopted a cautious approach and set about preparing the defences of the country.

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<sup>55</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 12 June 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fol. 112.

<sup>56</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 24 Jan. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fols. 50-3.

### **III-THE BRITISH MILITARY AND NAVAL DECISIONS IN 1739 AND 1740**

In the summer of 1739, there were few doubts in Britain that the theatre of operations during the war ought to be America. However, in the twelve months that elapsed until the summer of 1740, there were concerns that the negotiations between France and Spain, news from Rome about the Jacobite movements and the military preparations in Galicia were all part of the same scheme to invade Britain. Indeed, letters to the Duke of Montemar in Genoa in April 1739, intercepted by British agents, only served to confirm these concerns.<sup>57</sup> Inevitably, this apprehension affected the decisions of the British government and the military preparations to attack the Spanish dominions in America were hindered by the precautions that were thought necessary to protect the British Isles.

In the correspondence between Newcastle and Benjamin Keene in the summer of 1739, the secretary of state confirmed to the British ambassador in Madrid, that upon the whole, the nature of the preparations being conducted in Ferrol seemed to be intended for their own defence. However, Newcastle also pointed out that there was strong evidence to suggest that the Spanish troops gathered in Galicia could have been designed to make an attempt upon the British dominions. Newcastle commanded Keene to endeavour to obtain information about the intentions and destination of these preparations and acquainted him with the military deployments to prepare Britain and its dominions from an attack.

In a letter dated the 14 June 1739 from Newcastle to Keene, the secretary of state reported that,

His majesty will soon have a strong squadron ready for Home service, as well as a reinforcement for those in the West Indies and the Mediterranean; so that the king will soon be in a condition to defend His Kingdoms against any attempt, that can be made against them by any power; and at the same time, to employ his squadron, so as may make the king of Spain repent the part he has now taken.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 29 March/9 April 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 79/18.

<sup>58</sup> Newcastle to Keene, 14 June 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 94/134.

In the autumn of 1739, the total naval force of Britain in the Caribbean amounted to six ships of the line, viz. two seventies, four sixties and two fifties, five frigates, viz. two forties and three twenties, and one sloop.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, according to the information provided by British agents, the Spanish naval force in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico amounted to twelve ships of the line, viz. three seventies, six sixties, three fifties and three frigates of twenty guns each. The Spanish ships were harboured in different ports, five ships of the line in Havana, three ships of the line in Veracruz and four ships of the line and three frigates in Cartagena de Indias. Had the Spanish naval force been concentrated or reinforced with further ships from the squadrons in Europe, the Spanish could have posed a serious threat to Jamaica.<sup>60</sup> As a result, Vice Admiral Vernon was ordered to be prepared to protect the island from an attack.<sup>61</sup>

In the Mediterranean and before the declaration of war, the British squadron under the command of Rear Admiral Haddock amounted to ten ships of the line, viz. two eighties, three seventies, four sixties and one fifty, four frigates, viz. one of forty guns and three of twenty, one sloop and two fire ships. Reinforcements arrived through the autumn of 1739 and winter of 1740. By March 1740, the British squadron in the Mediterranean consisted of seventeen ships of the line, viz. two eighties, three seventies, nine sixties and three fifties, five frigates of twenty guns each, one sloop, three fire ships and one bomb vessel.<sup>62</sup> Haddock's instructions included the blockade of the ports of Cadiz and Cartagena and the protection of Gibraltar and Port Mahon.<sup>63</sup>

The British squadrons that protected the home waters operated under the instructions of Vice Admiral Norris and were commanded by Rear Admirals Balchen and Chaloner Ogle. In October 1739, there were twenty six ships of the

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<sup>59</sup> Cambridge University Library, Ch (H) Papers, Vol. 16, n. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Anonymous, 30 March 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/232, fol. 106.

<sup>61</sup> For example: The King to Vernon, 16 June 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 40828, fols. 82-6.

<sup>62</sup> Cambridge University Library, Ch (H) Papers, Vol. 15, n. 17.

<sup>63</sup> For example: Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock. Newcastle to Haddock, 7 Nov. 1739, BL, Add. 35876, fols. 148-9.



line and four frigates in Plymouth and Portsmouth, viz. one ninety, four eighties, four sixties, seven seventies, five sixties, five fifties and four frigates of forty guns each.<sup>64</sup> Certainly, this was a formidable force, but in London, it was not considered as sufficient to maintain Britain's superiority at sea in the face of the Franco-Spanish naval preparations. Furthermore, as we have seen, from the summer of 1739 to the summer of 1740, although this naval force was initially designed to protect the home waters, some of the ships under the command of Vice Admiral Ogle had to be employed in the Mediterranean to reinforce the British ships operating there.

During the summer and the autumn of 1739, information provided by the British agents in Europe indicated that the destination of a Spanish invasion force was Ireland. As a result, in October 1739, the Duke of Newcastle sent orders to the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to watch carefully the Catholic population.<sup>65</sup> Within the next months, Devonshire proceeded to disarm the Catholics and made enquires about attempts to enlist Irish recruits for the Spanish and the French service.<sup>66</sup> In February 1740, Devonshire was exhorted to pass a temporary law to enable the government of Ireland to quarter troops in such places as would be considered necessary for the safety of the island in case of an invasion.<sup>67</sup> However, during the winter of 1740, new reports provided by the British agents indicated that the real destination of the expedition was not Ireland but Scotland.<sup>68</sup>

In February 1740, Newcastle had information about Spanish military preparations in Catalonia and he sent orders to Vice Admiral Haddock to abandon his present station off the bay of Cadiz and to move part of his squadron into the Balearic Islands. His instructions included the acquisition of intelligence regarding the

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<sup>64</sup> Cambridge University Library, Ch (H) Papers, Vol. 15, n. 14.

<sup>65</sup> Newcastle to Devonshire, 2 Oct. 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Ireland, SP 63/402, fol. 26.

<sup>66</sup> 20 Dec. 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 63/402, fols. 170-2.

<sup>67</sup> 16 Feb. 1739/40, TNA: PRO, SP 63/403, fols. 39-40.

<sup>68</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle. 24 Jan. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fols. 50-3.

preparations that the Spanish were making in Catalonia, the prevention of the embarkation of their troops and the defence of Minorca. Also, as Newcastle presumed that the Spanish would send the small squadron in Cartagena to join the embarkation at Barcelona, he directed Haddock to detach a proper number of ships under the command of Sir Chaloner Ogle to intercept and destroy it. In March 1740 despite reports that orders had been given by the court of Madrid to prepare six months's provisions for the ships at Cadiz, there were only four British ships operating off Cadiz under the command of Captain Hervey.<sup>69</sup> The Spanish squadron in Cadiz exploited the diversion created by the Spanish camp in Catalonia and on 30 March 1740 set sail for Ferrol.

On 18 April 1740 Newcastle was informed of the departure of the Cadiz squadron and he dispatched the Tilbury to the Mediterranean and a messenger through France to carry orders to Rear Admiral Haddock in Port Mahon. His new instructions, commanded him to employ eight ships of the line to defend Port Mahon and to detach ten ships under the command of Chaloner Ogle. If there had been news that the Spanish squadrons were gone to the West Indies, Ogle was to proceed with the utmost expedition to Jamaica to put himself under the command of Vice Admiral Vernon. But if the Spanish had sailed towards Britain or Ireland, Ogle was to be ordered to make his way home.<sup>70</sup> Following these instructions, during the month of May 1740, Ogle kept a constant watch upon the port of Ferrol. On the 27, he was ordered back to England to reinforce the squadron under the command of Vice Admiral John Norris, and keep a watch upon the Spanish squadron at Ferrol.<sup>71</sup>

On the 12 May 1740 the government decided that in addition to the naval reinforcements in home waters, there had to be several military camps in the south of England. The first camp was created in Hounslow under the command of Charles Wills and it quartered the troops of horse guards and the regiments of

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<sup>69</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock. Newcastle to Haddock, 14 Feb. 1739/40 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fols. 151-2.

<sup>70</sup> 18 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fols. 158-9.

<sup>71</sup> Stone to Ogle, 27 May 1740 (OS), HL/PO/JO/10/6/472, fol. 463.

foot guards. The second camp was near Newbury under the command of General Wade. It was designed to quarter the regiments of horse commanded by Henry, Earl of Pembroke and General Wade, the regiments of dragons commanded by General Campbell, Lieutenant General Kerr and Charles, Lord Cadogan, the regiments of foot commanded by Major General Harrison, Major General Handasyde, General Whitman, Lord James Cavendish, Colonel Bland and Colonel Onslow. The third camp was near Windsor under the command of Lieutenant General Philip Honeywood. It contained the regiments of horse commanded by Algernon, Earl of Hertford and John, Duke of Montagu, the regiments of dragoons commanded by Lieutenant General Honeywood and Sir Robert Rich, and the regiments of foot commanded by Lieutenant General Barret, Colonel Pulteney, Colonel Peers, Colonel Handasyde and Colonel Campbell. There was a fourth camp in Bristol under the command of General Harrison. However, it consisted of one regiment of foot only and was designed to move into Wales in case any disturbances occurred there.<sup>72</sup>

However, despite these defensive preparations, in the spring of 1740 the British agents in Europe provided relevant information that confirmed that the pretended expedition to Britain could have only been a feint, or at least was unlikely to occur. On 21 May 1740, the British ambassador in Lisbon, Tyrawly, reported that in Galicia there were not enough vessels to make the embarkation, and as time passed, the condition of the Spanish soldiers was deteriorating.<sup>73</sup> Two days later, on the 23 May 1740, the British ambassador in Paris, Waldegrave, reported that the Duke of Ormond had not been given the payment in return for his commission to go to Scotland.<sup>74</sup> Also, letters dated on 11 June 1740, from the British embassy in Lisbon reported that despite having a superior number of ships, Vice Admiral Pintado had refused to sail after the squadron of Vice Admiral Balchen.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> George II, Instructions to the Lord Justices, 12 May 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Domestic, SP 36/50, Microfilm Part III, fols. 64-71.

<sup>73</sup> Tyrawly to Newcastle, 10/21 May 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/40, fol. 165.

<sup>74</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 23 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 20-4.

<sup>75</sup> Compton to Newcastle, 11 June 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 89/40, fol. 173.

In June 1740 Newcastle told Waldegrave that “I agree entirely in opinion with you, that France will take no part, this year at least, especially if the cardinal [Fleury] lives and I am also of opinion, that the equipment in their ports, is to alarm us [and] put us to expense”. Newcastle admitted that this was “a terrible consideration” but he remarked that the French preparations had necessarily obliged the British keep a big squadron for the protection of the home waters.<sup>76</sup> In June 1740, Lord Harrington, who was in Hanover with the king, sent word to Newcastle that George II agreed with his perception that the real purpose of the military preparations in Spain and France was to prevent Lord Carthcart’s expedition from proceeding to America. The king gave his consent to the military and naval dispositions to protect the country from an invasion, but he was also determined that the design of sending the expeditionary force to America “ought not upon any account to be laid aside”.<sup>77</sup>

In the summer of 1740, the threat of an invasion lost intensity, which allowed Wager and Norris to make a proposal for the dispatch of an expedition commanded by Norris himself to burn and destroy the Spanish fleet in the port of Ferrol. The first time that Wager had assessed the possibilities of an attack upon Ferrol was in the summer of 1739, when tensions between Spain and Britain were escalating. In July 1739, Wager wrote a report titled “Attempts that may be made upon the Spanish coast of Europe and America”. The report contained little information, but acknowledged the difficulty and the hazardousness to be encountered if an attack was carried out.<sup>78</sup> The second report was drawn up before the summer of 1740 and it was entitled “Sir Charles’ Wager memorandum about the places in old and new Spain that might be attempted”. The second report stated that despite the difficulties, an attack upon Corunna-Ferrol was possible.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Newcastle to Waldegrave, 12 June 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fol. 111.

<sup>77</sup> Stone to Newcastle, 4 June 1740, Nottingham University Library, Newcastle of Clumber, Mss. Nec. 103, fols. 1-3.

<sup>78</sup> “Attempts that may be made upon the Spanish coast of Europe or America”, July 1739 (OS), LC, Wager Manuscripts 17137, Series 8D, Item 181, 7-9, in Reel 91, pp. 512-24.

<sup>79</sup> Sir Charles Wager, “Memorandum of places in old and new Spain, that may be attempted”, 1740, BL, Add. 32694, fols. 53-7.

The proposal to attack Ferrol was backed by Sir Robert Walpole, Wager and Norris for the navy and General Wade and Lieutenant General Honywood for the army. In July 1740, a letter that was probably written by Newcastle was sent to Harrington, who continued at Hanover with the king. Further intelligence obtained by Captain Cole had convinced them of the liability of the operation. However, the same letter indicated that such an attack had to take place only after Carthcart had sailed to America, and the force proposed for the action had to consist of the squadron under the command of Norris and five regiments of foot under the command of Lieutenant General Honywood.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Letter to Harrington, July 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 35406, fols. 215-7.

#### **IV-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM IN 1739 AND 1740**

In the summer of 1739, reports regarding the military and naval preparations in Britain started to arrive from the Spanish ambassador in London, Thomas Geraldino, to the Spanish First Secretary, the Marquis of Villarias. But, like the other Spanish ambassadors, Geraldino did not know the details of the military strategy designed by the Duke of Montemar. This is because the success of Montemar's strategy owed much to the secrecy with which it was to be treated. If the Spanish agents had been acquainted with this strategy and had they mentioned it in their reports, it would have been easily intercepted by the British. Also, their unawareness of Montemar's plans meant that their reports were not viased by a willingness to provide comprehensive analysis of British preparations to repel a feared Spanish invasion. The receipt of such information on British preparations enabled ministers in Madrid better to assess the success of their startegy of deception.

According to Geraldino, in June 1739, the British government had plans to have a standing army in England of thirty thousand troops and proper arrangements had been made to mobilize these forces. Orders had been sent to ten regiments based in Ireland, so that four of them would travel to Scotland and the other six would be moved to England. In his report, Geraldino also remarked that although they only consisted of four hundred men each, the government had given orders that all the regiments in the army should be augmented by ten soldiers per company.<sup>81</sup> In a letter of 9 July 1739, Geraldino reported to Villarias the arrival of the Irish regiments at Bristol and he also mentioned that there was a new recruiting drive of troops underway.<sup>82</sup> Over the following months, these military preparations ran in parallel to the naval arrangements to prepare the navy for war.

A report contained in the correspondence of the French ambassador in Madrid in August 1739 suggested that the number of ships that the Royal Navy had under

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<sup>81</sup> Geraldino to Villarias, 25 June 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4304.

<sup>82</sup> 9 July 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4304.

commission amounted to fifty ships of the line and twenty-eight frigates.<sup>83</sup> On 6 August 1739, Geraldino reported that the government had resolved to have twenty five ships of the line and twelve frigates to protect the home waters, under the command of Admiral Norris. Another twenty ships of the line were under the command of Vice Admiral Haddock and twenty more were in America under the command of Vice Admiral Vernon.<sup>84</sup> In other words, the total number of war vessels under commission in the summer of 1739, amounted to one hundred and six. It was also reported that in the summer of 1739, of the twenty five thousand sailors that the navy had expected to raise, twenty one thousand were ready.<sup>85</sup>

After the departure of Geraldino from London, information about the military and naval preparations in Britain was obtained by the Spanish agent Richmond and his reports were complemented with information obtained by other Spanish agents operating on the Continent. In the late autumn of 1739, Richmond reported that the recruitment of thirty thousand troops for the army had been completed. There were another thirty thousand troops in Hanover and the government aimed to raise a total number of eighty thousand before the spring of 1740. To achieve that number, orders had been given to obtain six thousand troops from Denmark, four thousand troops in Hesse Cassel and to raise six more regiments of marines in Britain.<sup>86</sup> Some of these troops, such as the regiments of marines were certainly designed to participate in the expedition against the Spanish dominions. However, they also showed a defensive disposition to be prepared in case of a landing of Spanish troops.

In February 1740, reports from the Spanish ambassador in the Dutch Republic indicated that the military preparations in Galicia had caused apprehension among the European diplomatic body in The Hague. San Gil reported that it was common knowledge that in Spain there were three military encampments: one near

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<sup>83</sup> Letter from de la Marck, 24 Aug. 1739, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 454, fol. 84

<sup>84</sup> Geraldino to Villarias, 6 Aug. 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4304.

<sup>85</sup> 9 July 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4304.

<sup>86</sup> Traducción de los impresos diarios de Londres, 21 Nov./2 Dec. 1739, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

Gibraltar (in San Roque), another in Catalonia, and another in Galicia, with twenty five thousand troops in each. Certainly, the camp at Galicia was the one that caused the most concern because it was reported to be commanded by the Duke of Ormond and rumour had it that it was designed to invade Ireland.<sup>87</sup> From England, Richmond reported that there was talk that the British agents operating in Spain had said that a courier had been sent to Corunna to give the necessary dispositions for a secret expedition, that there were thirty five thousand troops in Galicia, many of which were Irish and that they were indeed designed to make an embarkation against Ireland under the command of Ormond.<sup>88</sup>

The amount of speculation in Europe regarding the real designs of the Spanish camp in Galicia was probably seen in Spain as a reflection of the anxieties of the British government. By March 1740, San Gil reported that the common feeling among the diplomats in the Dutch Republic was that the Spanish expedition was designed to prevent the British preparations for an attack on the Spanish colonies. San Gil added that it was given out that the invasion forces would need French support to be taken seriously. However, it was widely suspected that Cardinal Fleury was more interested in seizing the benefits of neutrality than going to war.<sup>89</sup> From Britain, Richmond pointed out that rumours circulated that the actual purpose of the Spanish camp was not to threaten Britain, but Portugal.<sup>90</sup> Such a rumour was plausible, as Portugal was a long standing British friend, yet was vulnerable to Spanish attack. Furthermore, Portuguese neutrality in the war allowed British ships to use Portuguese ports, but it also prevented Spanish ships from conducting any kind of attack in Portuguese waters.

Despite Fleury's refusal to declare war on Britain, it can be argued that the coordinated mobilization of the Franco-Spanish squadron in the spring of 1740

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<sup>87</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 4 Feb. 1740. AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>88</sup> Traducción de los extractos de las gacetas diarias de Londres, 26 Jan./6 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

<sup>89</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 10 March 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>90</sup> Traducción de los extractos de las gacetas diarias de Londres, 16/27 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.



must have been plotted in secret negotiations between the courts of Spain and France. From a historiographical point of view, this mobilization contradicts William Richmond's view, that the French and Spanish navies "worked separately, each pursuing its own policy".<sup>91</sup> In February 1740, orders were given in France to put the naval squadrons ready for sea, all of which provided Montemar with the missing element in his strategy: the collaboration of the French navy. In a letter of the 6 February 1740, Spanish agent Richmond, reported that the British government knew that proper orders had been given to put the French ships in such a disposition that they could be ready within one-month notice.<sup>92</sup> Just one month later, in a letter dated the 4 March 1740, Richmond announced that the French war ships were ready for sea.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, on 24 March 1740, San Gil reported that as soon as the British government had received this news, immediate orders had been then given to reinforce the squadron operating in the Channel under the command of Vice Admiral Norris.<sup>94</sup>

When news of the naval preparations in the French ports, and the expected arrival of Ormond at Madrid reached The Hague, San Gil was called to have an audience with the Grand Pensionary and the Secretary of State in the Republic. San Gil denied that Spain had any designs for an invasion of Ireland or Scotland. He claimed that there were no agreements with the Jacobites and the Spanish court did not want to turn its conflict with Britain into a general war.<sup>95</sup> San Gil was certainly following orders from Villarias, and with some historical hindsight, it is clear that this declaration must have been the result of a Spanish compromise in Spain's secret negotiations with France. From the Spanish perspective, if the expedition was not going to take place, then it was in the interest of Spain to guarantee Dutch neutrality before the departure of the Cadiz squadron to Ferrol. In 1740, the Dutch navy had twelve ships of the line ready for sea. These ships could

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<sup>91</sup> Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, i. xx.

<sup>92</sup> Traducción de extractos de las gacetas de Londres, 26 Jan./6 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo, 6908.

<sup>93</sup> 22 Feb./4 March 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

<sup>94</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 24 March 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>95</sup> 10 March 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

have easily been sent to protect the island of Curacao, from where they could have attacked the Caracas coast.

From the Dutch Republic, on 28 April 1740, San Gil reported that as soon as the British government had news that the Spanish squadron from Cadiz was in Ferrol, orders had been given to send a squadron of between ten and twelve ships under the command of Balchen to reinforce the squadron under the command of Vernon. However, in the same letter, San Gil also indicated that the dispatch of these British ships could not be executed as quickly as was desired.<sup>96</sup> On 5 May 1740, San Gil reported that the actual number of these ships amounted to five or six only and according to his intelligence, their destination continued to be the Caribbean.<sup>97</sup> In fact, Balchen was ordered to sail off Ferrol to replace the ships operating off Galicia under the command of Ogle. Ogle's ships must have been those that are mentioned in the report sent from Ytre on 11 May 1740 to the Marquis de Ustariz:

The letters from the sentinels in the towers that we have along the coast mention that the squadron of five English ships continue their sailing off Cape Finisterre. They sail at a regular distance from the coast of between ten and twelve leagues. Some sentinels claim that they have seen up to seven ships, all of which I transmit to your excellence so that His Majesty is acquainted with regards to this issue.<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, in May 1740, the British government ordered the return of the squadron of ten ships under the command of Ogle to reinforce the squadron in the Channel. However, the ships were in such bad condition after serving in the Mediterranean for approximately two years that they had to be repaired before they could be ready for action again. On 14 June 1740, San Gil reported that according to some

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<sup>96</sup> 28 April 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>97</sup> 5 May 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6292.

<sup>98</sup> Ytre to Ustariz, 11 May 1740, AGS, Suplemento, Legajo 1267: "Muy señor mío, según los Avisos que llegan diariamente de los fachos y atalayas de la costa, se sabe que la escuadra de cinco barcos que participe a V.S. cruzaban sobre el cabo Finisterre, se mantienen en el mismo ejercicio bordeando hasta dejarse ver todos, a lo más de los días a distancia regularmente de diez a veinte leguas y participándose de algunos puestos haberse descubierto hasta 7, de la diferencia del número, dudosa la fuerza de los enemigos en estos mares lo que pongo en noticia de V.S. para que S.M. se halle enterado de lo ocurre en este asunto".

information, provided by the French ambassador in The Hague, the number of ships under the command of Vice Admiral Norris was between eighteen and twenty. However, in the same letter, San Gil also indicated that further resolutions had been taken to increase their number to twenty-five or twenty-six.<sup>99</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, we can speculate that if the Spanish and French squadrons had been sent to the West Indies in April or May 1740, they would have certainly outnumbered the squadron of Vice Admiral Vernon by three to one. On 1 June 1740 San Gil met the French ambassador at The Hague. The previous day de la Ville had received letters from the French ambassador in London that contained intelligence obtained by the French agents operating in Britain under the cover of the French embassy. One of these letters contained a report from one of the clerks in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Françoise Bussy, British agent 101, who had been recently sent to London. The next day, 2 June 1740, San Gil wrote to Villarias that

De la Ville came yesterday to talk to me and he read the letter that he received from Bussy. In it he reports his arrival to Britain and the things that he learnt in the meetings at the British court. There were apprehensions that if the two squadrons from Cadiz and Ferrol had gone to America they would have been able to ruin the squadron under Vice Admiral Vernon, which was not properly manned and needed between three and four months to put his ships in good condition.<sup>100</sup>

It is very possible that the real intention of this report was to put further pressure on the Spanish court to sign the treaty of commerce. However, whatever its intentions were, by the summer of 1740, the Spanish and French governments were surprised by the sudden arrival of reports that indicated that the British government was now moving from the defensive to the offensive. Indeed, in June 1740, further information obtained by the French intelligence system indicated

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<sup>99</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 14 June 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6263.

<sup>100</sup> 2 June 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6263: “M. de la Ville vino ayer a verme y me leyó la que recibió de M. Bussy en que le participa su arribo y lo que por entonces había entendido de discursos de aquella corte, en la que se recelaba, que si las dos escuadras de Cádiz y del Ferrol se hubieran dirigido a la América, no sólo hubieran arruinado la escuadra de Vernon, que se halla en el más trabajoso estado sin gente, y con necesidad de tres o cuatro meses para acomodar y radobar sus navíos, según él ha escrito, sino que los soldados que llevaban de desembarco, pudieran apoderarse de la Jamaica, que se halla sin ellos, y en continua guerra con los indios rebeldes”.

that the British government was preparing an attack upon Ferrol to destroy the fourteen ships of the line that the port harboured. According to this information, the attack was to be commanded by Vice Admiral Norris with a squadron of thirty-six ships of the line. This squadron was to be created with twenty-four ships that were under his command, ten ships that were under the command of Chaloner Ogle and two that had to be added.<sup>101</sup> On 22 July 1740, the Spanish consul in Amsterdam, Felipe Rodríguez, reported that the British government planned to land 5,000 troops to land at Galicia.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Letter to Mina, 17 June 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 461, fol. 114.

<sup>102</sup> Rodríguez to Villarias, 22 July 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6263.

## **V-THE DEPARTURE OF THE BOURBON FLEETS TO AMERICA**

In the summer of 1740 the departure of the Spanish and French fleets to America was based on decisions made in London, Madrid and Paris. The decisions adopted in all three countries were determined by information provided by their respective intelligence systems. The threat of a British attack upon Ferrol was not something new. It had been one of the reasons for the creation of the military camp in Galicia. But in the summer of 1740, this threat worked as a catalyst for the military decisions in Spain and France, and eventually, in Britain. The Spanish and French fleets sailed to America before the departure of the British expeditionary force in the Caribbean. As a result, the theatre of military operations moved from Europe to America much earlier than had been envisaged. In the meantime, further Spanish military dispositions in Catalonia announced the creation of a second front in the Mediterranean.

In Britain, orders to Norris to go to Portsmouth were handed to him on 19 June 1740. On his arrival at this port, he was instructed to take Ogle's ships under his command and dispose them as he thought best. He was to proceed to the coast of Galicia, and if the Ferrol squadron was still in port, to cruise the coast to keep the Spanish ships at that port or intercept them if they attempted to depart. But, if on his arrival at Galicia, he met with reports that the Spanish squadron had sailed to the West Indies or the Mediterranean, he was commanded to detach such a number of ships, as he would have judged necessary to reinforce the British squadron in those parts and to make them equal or superior to the Spanish naval forces.<sup>103</sup> These instructions were confirmed on 8 July when Norris was still in Portsmouth waiting for a proper wind, and they did not include any mention of an attack upon Ferrol.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, despite the initial enthusiasm with which Norris and Wager had embraced the proposal to attack Ferrol, there were serious doubts about its feasibility. After the return of Captain Cole to Britain, in July 1740, British agents operating in

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<sup>103</sup> Instructions for Sir John Norris, 19 June 1740 (OS), HL/PO/JO/10/6/485, fols. 265-6.

<sup>104</sup> Letter to Norris, 8 July 1740 (OS), HL/PO/JO/10/6/485, fols. 283-6.

Galicia contradicted his reports and suggested the impossibility of conducting such an attack. On 18 July 1740 the British consul in Porto reported that he had information that indicated that it would have been very difficult to attack the Spanish men of war in Ferrol's harbour. These ships were below the castle of San Felipe, and the passage that led to it was very narrow and only eighteen fathoms of depth, which could easily be blockaded with a sunken vessel. Meanwhile, the former British consul in Corunna, Parker, also pointed out that if an attack had been carried out by land, it would have required massive manpower. This was probably as a result of the number of Spanish soldiers in the surrounding areas of Ferrol, and the defences that had been recently built at the likely landing places.<sup>105</sup> Thus, once again, failure to analyse the diplomatic correspondence accounts for Richmond's lack of understanding about the decisions of the British government during the war, particularly when he accuses it of negligence for refusing to attack Ferrol.<sup>106</sup>

In Spain, in June 1740, Villarias started to receive alarming reports that contained rumours of British intentions to employ the squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Norris either to blockade the port of Ferrol or to attempt an attack upon that port. As we have seen in the previous section, on 17 June 1740, Mina reported from Paris that the British government sought to put together the squadron of twenty four ships of the line under the command of Norris with that of twelve ships of the line under the command of Sir Chaloner Ogle. However, on the 30 June 1740 San Gil wrote from The Hague that the command of Ogle's squadron had been given to Balchen instead. Now, Norris and Balchen were at Portsmouth and they only waited for a favourable wind to sail.<sup>107</sup>

In Madrid, the news caused tremendous apprehension because the Ferrol squadron was designed to sail to America. In July 1740, the Spanish and French governments were still negotiating a French dispatch to America that included a squadron of twenty ships of the line. If everything went according to plan, Spain

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<sup>105</sup> Jackson to Newcastle, 7/18 July 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 87.

<sup>106</sup> Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, i. 85.

<sup>107</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 30 June 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6234.

expected to counterbalance the British naval force in the Caribbean with forty-four ships of the line. This squadron would have been formed with the twelve ships from Ferrol, twenty from Brest and Toulon and twelve that were already stationed in America. Therefore, to prevent the destruction of the squadron, and instead of waiting for the French ships, on 10 July 1740, the Spanish government brought the dispatch of the Ferrol squadron to America forward.<sup>108</sup> On 14 July 1740, orders were received by Bernardino Freire at Corunna, and the next day, proper dispositions were given to close the port of Ferrol and stop all the correspondence in Galicia until the squadron had sailed.<sup>109</sup> These measures were destined to hamper the activities of the British agents operating in Galicia. On 31 July 1740, probably after the sentinels in the towers had reported that the sea was clear of British ships, the squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Torres sailed to America. It consisted of twelve ships of the line after having been reinforced with some of the ships from Cadiz, and it transported two thousand troops.

The Spanish closure of the port of Ferrol stopped the correspondence in Galicia and delayed the arrival of reports from British agents to Jackson and Parker. Only on the 13 August 1740 did the British consuls received news of the departure of the Spanish squadron. According to Parker, the squadron sailed under the command of Vice Admiral Torres and consisted of twelve large ships from sixty to eighty guns and two fire ships. These ships had on board three battalions of foot, a thousand marines, large numbers of arms and tents and food supplies for three months.<sup>110</sup> On the 25 August 1740, this information was confirmed by Waldegrave. The British ambassador in Paris added that Torres was carrying three thousand troops. According to Waldegrave's correspondent at Bayonne, it seemed that the sudden departure of the squadron had been motivated by apprehensions in Spain that the squadron under Norris might have been intending to attack Ferrol.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Quintana to Cenon de Somodevilla, 10 July 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 358.

<sup>109</sup> Torres to Ensenada, 15 July 1740, AGS, Marina, 396-1, n. 364.

<sup>110</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 5/16 Aug. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 109-10.

<sup>111</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 25 Aug. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 324-30.

In Britain, the departure of the Spanish fleet was viewed with apprehension because its destination was uncertain and it occurred precisely when the French were making their preparations for the sailing of their squadrons. Reports from consuls Jackson and Parker agreed that the squadron from Ferrol was designed for Jamaica and that its purpose was to conduct an attack upon the squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Vernon.<sup>112</sup> But, on 26 August 1740, Waldegrave in Paris contradicted this information and reported that some of his correspondents thought that its real destination was Cadiz.<sup>113</sup> Then, on the 4 September 1740, Norris was ordered to Torbay. There were reasons to believe that the Spanish squadron had sailed to the West Indies, and in the face of the French preparations, it was considered a reinforcement of the expedition under the command of Carthcart was necessary.<sup>114</sup>

Indeed, in August 1740, the negotiations between the courts of Madrid and Paris to obtain French commitment to dispatch a naval force of twenty ships of the line yielded good results for Spain. On 15 August 1740, Cardinal Fleury informed the Spanish that the French squadrons at Toulon and Brest had been sent to America. He emphasized the importance of keeping this decision secret because the British squadrons in the Channel and the Mediterranean were superior in number to the French ships. In the summer of 1740, there were eighteen ships of the line at Brest, and another twelve at Toulon. According to Fleury, although each of the squadrons had sailed with their whole force, orders had been given so that only fourteen ships from Brest under the command of the Marquis d'Antin, and six ships of the line, under the command of Rouchelard, would continue their journey to America. The other ten were expected to return to port after having accompanied the squadron for part of the way.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Jackson to Tyrawly, 2/13 Aug. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/40, fol. 185.

<sup>113</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 26 Aug. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 335-6

<sup>114</sup> Newcastle to Vernon, 12 Sept. 1740 (NS), BL, Add. 32695, fols. 47-52.

<sup>115</sup> Fleury to the Spanish Monarchs, 15 Aug. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 461, fols. 284-6.



The letter from Cardinal Fleury arrived at Madrid on 23 August 1740, and it can be assumed that it brought much relief to the Spanish court.<sup>116</sup> However, the threat of a British attack upon Ferrol still existed in the minds of the Spanish ministers, and during the month of August, works on the fortifications continued. On the 17 August 1740, Ytre reported to Ustariz that there were eight battalions in the neighbourhood of Ferrol ready to repel a British landing. The defence of the city had to be undertaken by one battalion from the regiment of España, five hundred men from the local militia and one squadron of cavalry.<sup>117</sup> On the 4 September, Ytre reported that the works in the batteries of Casino, the castle of San Felipe and the castle of Parma, had been concluded. He added that there were enough sailing craft to reinforce the fortifications if these were assaulted.<sup>118</sup>

Information about the departure of the French fleets from Brest and Toulon on the 11 August 1740 was reported by Waldegrave, although he was not able to discover their destination.<sup>119</sup> On the 12 October, Waldegrave reported having read letters from Cadiz dated on 27 September, which made no mention of D'Antin's squadron. Waldegrave assumed that the French squadrons had gone directly to the French colony of Saint Domingue.<sup>120</sup> One week later, on 19 October, consul Parker reported having a letter from Faro in which the British consul Cayley wrote of the arrival of the twelve ships belonging to the Toulon squadron at Cadiz. According to Cayley, only some of these ships had continued their journey to the West Indies. The others remained in Cadiz for something that he described as an "other expedition".<sup>121</sup>

Information about works on the fortifications of Ferrol, and the dispositions to defend the city, continued to reach Newcastle in the late months of the summer of

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<sup>116</sup> Letter to Torres, 29 Aug. 1740, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4407.

<sup>117</sup> Ytre to Ustariz, 17 Aug. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1267.

<sup>118</sup> 4 Sept. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1267.

<sup>119</sup> Cabinet minutes, 4 Sept. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 36/52, Microfilm Part I, fols. 80-2.

<sup>120</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 12 Oct. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/224, fols. 125-6.

<sup>121</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 8/19 Oct. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 136.

1740. On 16 August, consul Parker reported that the Spanish regiment of Irlanda was not among the troops that had gone in the ships. In the same letter, he also mentioned that a small party of dragoons had been ordered to march from Pontevedra to be distributed between Ferrol and Vigo.<sup>122</sup> Two weeks later, on 27 August, Parker informed Newcastle that the militias and several regiments of foot, which were at Lugo and Betancos, were being sent to defend the landing places on the coast near Bayonne and Vigo.<sup>123</sup> According to Parker, writing again in October 1740, the troops in Galicia consisted of ten battalions of foot, eight battalions of militia, fifteen hundred invalids, a regiment of horse, a small party of dragoons and about four hundred artillery men, which took the total number to thirteen thousand men.<sup>124</sup>

Despite the considerable number of troops remaining in Galicia, as the military operations moved to America, the threat of a British landing to capture Ferrol diminished. As a result, the Spanish government realized that there was no need to have such a big and expensive body of troops in Galicia. A further consideration was that in October 1740, the emperor Charles VI died without a male heir and war broke out for the succession to his titles and territories. As we will see in chapter six, the queen of Spain saw Charles' death as the perfect opportunity to obtain the duchies of Parma and Placentia and the Milanese for her son, the Infante Don Philip. In November 1740, in accordance with the queen's wishes, letters from Madrid to Galicia ordered several regiments to march towards Catalonia.<sup>125</sup> The purpose of this deployment was to reinforce the existing military camp in Catalonia. Two years later, these Spanish troops in Catalonia were transported to the north of Italy to fight against the Austrian army.

In the meantime, in a letter written on 7 December 1740 by Parker to Newcastle, it was stated that,

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<sup>122</sup> 5/16 Aug. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 109-10.

<sup>123</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 16/27 Aug. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 111-2

<sup>124</sup> 8/19 Oct. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fols. 135-7.

<sup>125</sup> Letter to Montenegro, 14 Nov. 1740, AGS, Suplemento, Legajo 2085.

Since my last letter to your grace by His Majesty's ship the Mary Galley, I have received advice from Galicia, that orders have come from court, for most of the troops in that province to begin their march immediately for Castile, which it was reported they were to continue to Catalonia; and that in consequence thereof the two battallions of Ireland had left the Groine the 28<sup>th</sup> past.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Parker to Newcastle, 26 Nov./7 Dec. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 89/41, fol. 176.

## **VI-CONCLUSION**

The military strategy designed by the Duke of Montemar in the spring of 1739 did not prevent the departure of the British expeditionary forces to America. However, it hindered their preparation and delayed their dispatch. The threat of a Spanish invasion served to postpone the decision to commence the military preparations of the two expeditions intended for the Spanish colonies. In the meantime, as we will see in chapters four and five, this delay gave the Spanish government sufficient time to put the Spanish cities in America in a good posture of defence. For example, in the Spring of 1740, due to the threat of an invasion, the British government had to employ the squadrons under the command of Ogle and Balchen in the defence of home waters. Had they been sent to the Caribbean, they would have enabled Vernon to protect Jamaica while he conducted further attacks on the Spanish. During this period, the Spanish intelligence system obtained information about the British defensive dispositions, which enabled the Spanish government to take the necessary modifications in the elements of its military strategy, specially the strength and depoyment of the army in Galicia, the negotiations with France and the mobilization of the Jacobites.

The threat of a Bourbon invasion was taken very seriously by the British government, and more particularly, by the Duke of Newcastle. Under the directions of Newcastle, the British intelligence system carried out a well-coordinated, effective and successful operation to gather information about Spanish plans. While the British agents gathered information on each of the elements of the Spanish military strategy, Newcastle was able to put these reports together to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the Spanish designs. This better understanding of the Spanish preparations enabled the British government to take the steps required to defend British dominions from a Spanish invasion, without stopping completely the preparations for attacking the Spanish colonies. Eventually, in the summer of 1740, information provided by the British agents enabled the British government to conclude that the Spanish plans for an invasion had only been a well-constructed feint. As a result, orders were given to the commanders of the two British expeditionary forces, Lord Carthcart and

Comodore Anson, to sail immediately to the West Indies and the Pacific Ocean respectively.

## **CHAPTER 4. THE BRITISH ATTACK ON CARTAGENA DE INDIAS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter four explores how the British and Spanish used intelligences in 1739 and 1740, during the attack and defence of Cartagena de Indias in the months of March and April 1741. To accomplish this purpose, the chapter is organized in five sections. The first section looks at the British intelligence system in Europe and the military preparations conducted in Britain and the British colonies in 1739 and 1740. The second section explores the Spanish intelligence system in Europe and the negotiations between Madrid and Paris in 1739 and 1740 to send reinforcements to the Spanish colonies in America. The third section analyses the Spanish intelligence system in America and Spanish initiatives to put the Spanish colonies in a good posture of defence. The fourth section evaluates the elements involved in the British decision to attack Cartagena de Indias. The fifth section looks at the use of intelligence during the attack.

The first publications relating to the British expedition to the West Indies were published by the protagonists or their friends or successors, on their return to Britain and Spain.<sup>1</sup> These publications were mainly continued by Anglo Saxon historians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Since then, there have been a steady number of publications and the attack on Cartagena de Indias has attracted more attention than those on Portobello, Santiago de Cuba and Panama.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Anonymous, *A Journal of the Expedition to Cartagena, with Notes* (London, 1744); Anonymous, *An Account of the Expedition to Cartagena* (London, 1743); Anonymous, *Authentic Papers Relating to the Expedition against Cartagena* (London, 1744); C. Knowles, *An Account of the Expedition to Cartagena under Admiral Vernon, and General Wentworth* (London, 1744); E. Vernon, *Admiral Vernon's Ghost* (London, 1758); See also J.E. Oglethorpe, *An Impartial Account of the Late Expedition against St. Augustine under General Oglethorpe* (London, 1742)

<sup>2</sup> C.W. Hall, *Cartagena; or, the Lost Brigade: A story of Heroism in the British War with Spain, 1740 – 1742* (Boston, 1898); J.T. Lanning, "The American Colonies in the Preliminaries of the War of Jenkins' Ear", *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 11 (1927), 129-55; J.K. Laughton, "Jenkins' Ear", *English Historical Review*, 4 (1889), 741-9; H.W.V. Temperley, "The Causes of the War of Jenkin's Ear, 1739", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1909), 197-236.

<sup>3</sup> A. Lozano, "La Toma de Porto Bello por el Almirante Vernon", *Historia 16*, 209 (1993), 39-47; J.C.M. Ogelsby, "The British and Panama, 1742", *Mariner's Mirror*, 58 (1972), 71-9.

Also, there have been some publications about the procurement of American regiments for the war, Oglethorpe's attack on San Agustin and the attacks on the Caracas coast in 1743.<sup>4</sup> These studies looked almost exclusively at the British side, having used archival material from the British repositories. For practical reasons, their approaches to the topic can be divided into three different perspectives. First, the study of the West Indian trade and the conflict between Britain and Spain.<sup>5</sup> Second, the study of the naval and military dimension of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Third, the study of domestic politics, the administration and the

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<sup>4</sup> C. Dainton, "General Oglethorpe, in Georgia and in England", *History Today*, 29 (1979), 13-9; J. Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, 1999), 29-59; R. Harding, "The Growth of Anglo-American Alienation: The Case of the American Regiment, 1740- 42", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17 (1989), 161-84; J.C.M. Ogelsby, "The British Attacks on the Caracas Coast, 1743", *Mariner's Mirror*, 58 (1972), 27-40; C. Sturgill, & E. R. Turner, "The Importance of Being at War: General James Oglethorpe's Accounts and Imperial Affairs in Early Colonial Georgia", *Military Affairs*, 40 (1976), 129-34; D. Syrett, "The Raising of American Troops for Service in the West Indies during the War of Austrian Succession, 1741 - 2", *Historical Research*, 72 (2000), 20-32.

<sup>5</sup> E. Donnan, "The Early Days of the South Sea Company, 1711 - 1718", *Journal of Economic and Business History*, 2 (1930), 419-50; C.E. Fayle, "Economic Pressure in the War of 1739 - 48", *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, 68 (1923), 434-46; E.G. Hildner, "The Role of the South Sea Company in the Diplomacy Leading to the War of Jenkin's Ear, 1729 - 1739", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 18 (1938), 322-41; E.A. Jones, "The American Regiment in the Cartagena Expedition", *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 30 (1922), 1-20; J.T. Lanning, "American Participation in the War of Jenkins' Ear", *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 11 (1927), 191-215; F.J. Manning, *The Duke of Newcastle and the West Indies: A study of Colonial and Diplomatic Politics of the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, 1713 - 1754*, 2 Vols. (Yale University, 1926, unpublished Ph.D.), ii. 399-455; J.O. McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667 - 1750: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1940); J.R. McNeill, "The Ecological Basis of Warfare in the Caribbean, 1700 - 1804", in *Adapting to Conditions: War and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marteen Ultee, (Tuscaloosa, Al, 1986), 26-42; G. H. Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento 1730 - 1739", *The American Historical Review*, 51 (1945), 55-67.

<sup>6</sup> R. Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century: The British Expedition to the West Indies, 1740 - 1742*, (Woodbridge, 1991); R. Harding, "Sir Robert Walpole's Ministry and the Conduct of the War with Spain, 1739 - 41", *Bulleting of the Institute of Historical Research*, 60 (1987), 299-320; R. Pares, "American Versus Continental Warfare, 1739 - 63", *The English Historical Review*, 51 (1936), 429-65; R. Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights, 1739 - 1763* (Oxford 1938); R. Pares, "The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies, 1702-63", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20 (1937), 31-60; R. Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739 - 1763* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 1-264; R. W. Ramsey, "The Defeat of Admiral Vernon at Cartagena, 1741", *Southern Historical Quarterly*, 1 (1963), 332-55; H.W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 - 48*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, 1920) i; J.A. Robertson, "The British Attack on Cartagena in 1741 and Plans for an Attack on Panama", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 2 (1919), 62-71; C.E. Swanson, "The Profitability of Privateering: Reflections on British Colonial Privateers During the War of 1739 - 1748", *American Neptune*, 42 (1982), 55-67; P.L. Woodfine, "The War of Jenkins' Ear: A New Voice in the Wentworth-Vernon Debate", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 65 (1987), 67-91; J. Zulueta, "Health and Military Factors in Vernon's Failure at Cartagena", *Mariner's Mirror*, 78 (1992), 127-40.

diplomatic dimension of the war.<sup>7</sup> In comparison with the British side of the war, the number of publications that cover the Spanish side is significantly smaller. These publications began to appear at the beginning of the twentieth century and were mainly conducted by Spanish and South American historians who used only Spanish archives. Like the works that cover the British side, these publications have focused primarily on the attack to Cartagena.<sup>8</sup> However, other publications also look at the defence of Florida, the defence of the Caracas coast, the contribution of the Spanish privateers to the defence of the Spanish colonies and the role of the Havana squadron in the preservation of the balance of power in the Caribbean after the departure of the British expeditionary force.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> D.A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, NJ, 1965); J. Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy 1688-1800* (Exeter, 2001); J. Black, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole* (Edinburgh, 1985), 49-117; D. Crewe, *Yellow Jack and the Worm: British Naval Administration in the West Indies, 1739 – 1748* (Liverpool, 1993); G. Jordan & N. Rodgers, “Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England”, *The Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), 201-24; R. Lodge, “Sir Benjamin Keene, K.B.: A Study in Anglo-Spanish Relations in the Earlier Part of the Eighteenth Century”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 15 (1932), 1-43; P. Vaucher, *Robert Walpole et la Politique de Fleury, 1731 – 1742* (Paris, 1924); K. Wilson, “Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon”, *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), 74-109; K. Wilson, *The Sense of People: Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715 – 1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 187-205; P. Woodfine, *Britannia’s Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Woodbridge, 1996)

<sup>8</sup> C. Bermudez Plata, *Narración de la Defensa de Cartagena de Indias contra el Ataque de los Ingleses en 1741* (Sevilla, 1912); J. Kuethe Allan, “La Batalla de Cartagena de 1741: Nuevas Perspectivas”, *Historia y Biografía Americanista*, 18 (1974), 19-38; C. Martínez-Valverde, “La Marinería en la Defensa de Cartagena de Indias, en 1741”, *Revista General de Marina*, 191 (1976), 121-32; A. Marzal Martínez, “Las Fortificaciones de Cartagena en el Siglo XVIII”, *Revista de Historia Militar*, 41 (1976), 29-42; A. Marzal Martínez, “Plan de la Defensa del Puerto de Cartagena 1700 – 1760”, *Revista de Historia Militar*, 43 (1977), 119-39; C.E. Nowell, “The Defence of Cartagena”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 42 (1962), 477-501; J.C.M. Oglesby, “England vs Spain in America, 1739 – 1748: The Spanish Side of the Hill”, *Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers*, (1970), 147-57; G. Quintero Saravia, *Don Blas de Lezo Defensor de Cartagena de Indias* (Bogota, 2002); J.M. Serrano Alvarez, “La Gobernación de Cartagena de Indias y el Sistema Defensivo Indiano en el Siglo XVIII”, *Revista de Historia Militar*, 98 (2005), 37-73; J.M. Silos Rodríguez, “La Defensa de Cartagena de Indias”, *Revista de Historia Naval*, 87 (2004), 45-62.

<sup>9</sup> S.L. Hilton, “El Conflicto Anglo-Español en Florida: Utopía y Realismo en la Política Española, 1732-39”, *Quinto Centenario*, 5 (1983), 97-128; J.C.M. Oglesby, “Spain’s Havana Squadron and the Preservation of the Balance of Power in the Caribbean, 1740 – 8”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 49 (1969), 473-88; E. Otero Lana, *La Guerra de la Oreja de Jenkins y el Corso Español (1739-1748)* (Madrid, 2004); H. Parra Márquez, “El Capitán Hernández de Sanabria, Defensor de la Guaira contra los Ingleses (1739 y 1743)”, *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos*, 26 (1980), 445-90.



This chapter contributes to two of the existing lines of research. The first is the study of the British and Spanish domestic politics, administration and the diplomatic dimension of the war. The second is the study of the military and naval aspects of the conflict. On the British side, the chapter explores the existence of proper mechanisms within the British state to obtain the necessary intelligence about the Spanish colonies in America. This intelligence enabled the government to choose the correct target and to more efficiently conduct the attacks. On the Spanish side, the chapter aims to look at the competence of the Spanish intelligence system in Europe and America. The intelligence gathered by Spanish sources enabled the government in Madrid to discover the destination of the British expedition and to prepare the Spanish defences in America.

## **I-BRITISH MILITARY PREPARATIONS AT HOME AND AMERICA**

From the summer of 1739 to the winter of 1740, while a British squadron operated in the Caribbean under the command of Vice Admiral Vernon, the British government also conducted military preparations in Britain and America to attack the Spanish colonies. There were preparations to send two expeditions, a small one against the Pacific and a much larger one designed to attack an important Spanish city in the West Indies. These military preparations, particularly those to send the expedition to the West Indies, were well organized by the government. A lot of attention was given to the intelligence provided by British agents. However, in the summers of 1739 and 1740, reports about the Spanish and French military preparations, as we saw in the last chapter, produced major delays in the dispatch of the expeditionary forces.

After the failure of the Pardo Convention, war with Spain was seen as inevitable, and on 8 June 1739, the Duke of Newcastle wrote to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to transmit new orders to Commodore Brown. His squadron was destined for the West Indies and there were reports that the Spanish might have been preparing to attack Georgia or South Carolina. Brown was ordered to prepare his squadron for the defence of those colonies and he was also commanded to engage in any appropriate hostilities against the Spanish in America.<sup>10</sup> The offensive instructions were similar to those dispatched to Rear Admiral Haddock in the Mediterranean, and in essence, they were a declaration of war.<sup>11</sup> However, before the war was formally declared, the British government still needed to decide if the theatre of operations was going to take place in Europe or America.

The decision to attack Spain in America was rendered in the summer of 1739 and it must have owed much to a report provided by the British ambassador in Madrid, Benjamin Keene. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter one, in a letter of the

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<sup>10</sup> Newcastle to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 8 June 1739 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Naval, SP 42/22 Part II, fol. 458.

<sup>11</sup> Abstract of the correspondance between Newcastle and Haddock. Newcastle to Haddock, 6 June 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fol. 143.

14 July 1739, Keene indicated that the ports of Spain were well fortified, provided with good and copious artillery, and a large amount of ammunition. Not only were the ports defended by strong garrisons, but also they could easily be strengthened by other troops, deployed for such a purpose. In Keene's own words "America therefore, my lord, is where we can do them much and important damage".<sup>12</sup> The conclusion of this report was similar to that of a report produced by Charles Wager in July 1739 and entitled "Attempts that may be made upon the Spanish coast of Europe or America".<sup>13</sup>

The first cabinet meeting to decide the target of the British expeditionary force was delayed until 4 September 1739. The government of Sir Robert Walpole had information that the azogues ships were being laden with American silver.<sup>14</sup> In March 1739, the Spanish government suspended payments with its creditors and had the azogues been seized, Spain would have had serious difficulties in coping with the financial requirements of war.<sup>15</sup> To intercept the homeward silver, Rear Admiral Haddock and Vice Admiral Vernon placed their squadrons off Cadiz and the coast of Galicia, respectively. However, Spain dispatched avisos to divert the azogues to the port of Santander. When the British government received this information, Vernon was commanded to proceed to the Caribbean. His instructions dated from July 1739, and they included the defence of the British colonies in America in case of a Spanish attack, to open hostilities and procuring the best intelligence about Spanish designs.<sup>16</sup>

The diary of John Norris indicates that during the autumn of 1739 the cabinet was discussing two projects to attack the Spanish colonies. The first project was to send an expedition to the Pacific, which was approved as early as the month of

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<sup>12</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 3/14 July 1739, TNA: PRO, State Papers Spain, SP 94/133.

<sup>13</sup> LC, Wager Mss. 17137, Series 8D, Item 181, 7-9, in Reel 91, pp. 512-22.

<sup>14</sup> As mentioned before, the Azogues were ships that transported quicksilver from Spain to America and were used as transports on their way back to Spain.

<sup>15</sup> P. Fernández Albaladejo, "El Decreto de Suspension de Pagos de 1739: Analisis e Implicaciones", *Moneda y Crédito*, 142 (1977), 51-85.

<sup>16</sup> Instructions to Vice Admiral Vernon, 16 June 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32692, fols. 128-40.

October. The second project was to send an expeditionary force to the West Indies to destroy one of the main cities in America that was vital for the control of the Spanish trading routes. Approval of the second project was delayed until the month of December, but according to the recent work on the West Indies expedition, this delay of six months should not be attributed to governmental mismanagement. Richard Harding agrees that in the summer of 1739 war with Spain could have been avoided if Haddock or Vernon had succeeded in seizing the azogues. At the same time, France seemed disposed to go to war if Britain had declared war on Spain, although by the autumn, the French position was much less clear.<sup>17</sup> However, as we have already seen, an additional reason for delay was the threat of a Bourbon invasion, with Jacobite support.

By November 1739, the threat of an invasion appeared less serious than in earlier months, and on 5 December 1739, the Cabinet Council gave orders to prepare the West Indies expedition. From the beginning, Newcastle and Wager saw Havana the most desirable place because it protected the natural passage for the Spanish homeward-bound fleets. However, the fortifications of Havana were reckoned to be very strong, and the entrance of the harbour very narrow for the ships to enter. Worse still, the Spanish were capable of mustering between eight and ten thousand troops for the defence of Havana. As a result, it would have been necessary to invest the city with an army of no less than six or eight thousand troops that had to be supported by a powerful naval squadron. Two other cities, Cartagena de Indias and Veracruz, were thought to be less well defended.<sup>18</sup>

The composition of the expeditionary force was determined in December and in April 1740 Newcastle told Vernon that it had been decided to send to the West Indies six thousand soldiers under the command of Carthcart. These troops were proposed to be joined by a regiment already posted in the Leeward Islands, and some independent companies at Jamaica, which would make the whole contingent near eight thousand men. Directions were also sent for raising an additional body

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<sup>17</sup> Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Sir John Norris' daily "Journal of My Proceedings", 18 Oct. 1739 (OS) to 17 Dec. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 28132, fols. 56-100.

of three thousand men in the British colonies in North America, which were to be put under the command of Colonel Spotswood. Vernon was also told that the expeditionary force from Britain was expected to be convoyed by a sufficient number of ships to assure British superiority at sea. In addition, to avoid the hurricane season that usually took place in August and September, the expedition would not sail till the end of July.<sup>19</sup>

Until the publication of Harding's and Woodfine's works, the historiography had generally described the military preparations in Britain and the British colonies as a shambles. Nevertheless, that is not the impression that emerges from Newcastle's correspondence. On 5 January 1740, Newcastle urged the colonial governments in America to further preparations for raising as many men as possible. On 27 April 1740, Colonel Blakeney, who was appointed Adjutant General was dispatched to New York with the commissions for the officers of the American levies, arms, some clothing and other necessaries. Meanwhile, preparations in Britain went ahead despite the threat of invasion and on 26 June transports that were to carry the troops were ordered to the Isle of Wight.<sup>20</sup>

During this time, the presence of Vernon's squadron in the Caribbean served to protect the British colonies, particularly the island of Jamaica, and also, to gather information about the Spanish dominions. This information complemented intelligence obtained in London by Newcastle, and by the summer of 1740, both Vernon and Trelawney were well prepared to select the Spanish city that was to be attacked in America. In a letter written on 10 July 1740, the king told Vernon that it was proper to leave this decision to a council of War to be held on the arrival of the expeditionary force. The Council of War was to be formed by Vernon or the commander in chief of the squadron for the time being and Lord Carthcart or the officer commanding the land forces for the time being; such sea officer, as would be next in rank to Vernon, or the commander in chief of the squadron for the time being; and such general officers of the land forces, as would be next in rank to Lord Carthcart, or the officer commanding the land forces for

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<sup>19</sup> Newcastle to Vernon, 18 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40828, fols. 80-1.

<sup>20</sup> "An account of all orders that have been given by His Majesty or the Lords Justices, and signed by the Secretary of State for raising and embarking land forces and marines for the expedition to America, under the Command of Lord Carthcart", Undated, TNA: PRO, SP 42/23, fols. 261-5.

the time being. Trelawney, the governor of Jamaica, was also to be a member of the council.<sup>21</sup>

Until the publication of Harding's work, the resolution to leave the decision to a council of war, rather than Vernon alone, was largely condemned by historians. It was claimed that this resolution hindered the adoption of rapid decisions against an enemy whose strategy sought to delay the advancement of the invading army to enable the adverse environment and climate to take their toll in heavy casualties before any military confrontation.<sup>22</sup> However, although the decisions had to be taken collectively, this does not mean that all the voices had the same value. Vernon invariably succeeded in making his ideas prevail. Moreover, due to the high casualty rate caused by the climate, it was necessary to have more than one person involved in the decision taking. The presence of Trelawney, a civilian, has been similarly criticised by Pares.<sup>23</sup> But Pares did not take into account the fact that most of the elements that implicated military operations in the Caribbean were not themselves military. On the contrary, they included the understanding of the geography, the climate as well as the mentality of the inhabitants, and in these aspects the governor of Jamaica was well qualified to advise.

By the end of July 1740, the expeditionary force in Britain was ready to sail. On 14 August, a letter from Newcastle to Carthcart explained that the Lords Justices had received Colonel Blakeney's letters with information relating to the successful recruitment of 3,000 men in the northern colonies. In the same letter, it was stated that these troops would arrive in Jamaica just in time to meet Carthcart's force.<sup>24</sup> However, a long delay that consumed most of the provisions in the ships and provoked a notable increase in sickness among the crews was

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<sup>21</sup> George II to Vernon, 10 July 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40828, fols. 82-6.

<sup>22</sup> J. Creswell, *Generals and Admirals: The Story of Amphibious Command* (London, 1952), p. 55; M. Storer, "Admiral Vernon's Medals", *Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3 (1919), 206; A. Vogts, *Landing Operations: Strategy, Psychology, Tactics, Politics, from antiquity to 1945* (Harrisburg, 1946), p. 821.

<sup>23</sup> Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739 – 1763*, 65-127.

<sup>24</sup> Newcastle to Carthcart, 14 Aug. 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 472-3.

caused by a lack of favourable wind and news of the departure of the Spanish squadron from Ferrol and the French squadrons from Brest and Toulon.<sup>25</sup>

Immediately upon learning of the departure of the Bourbon fleets, a ship was sent to Vernon to inform him of the strength of each of these squadrons and the reinforcements sent to escort Carthcart. The new escort was to be commanded by Ogle and consisted of ten eighty gun ships, nine seventies, ten sixties, four fifties, one twenty, six fire ships and two hospital ships.<sup>26</sup> In his secret instructions, Ogle was told that in the event of his meeting with one of the Bourbon squadrons, he was to attack and endeavour, by all possible means to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy them. Ogle was also commanded to acquaint Lord Carthcart with these instructions, but both men were directed to observe the greatest secrecy to avoid the plans becoming known to the enemy, and the French in particular.<sup>27</sup>

The British expeditionary force arrived at Port Royal in Jamaica in the month of December 1740 after having briefly stayed at the British Leeward Islands to collect the seasoned troops. There was no fighting with the Bourbon squadrons during the crossing of the ocean and war with France was avoided. However, the severe delay until the final departure meant that the British forces had lost three very valuable months from its original schedule. There was very little time before the onset of the sickly season. The importance of the climate, which was not ignored by the British command, seems to have been well understood and managed by the Spanish government and it became an essential element in the Spanish defensive strategy during the military operations in the West Indies.

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<sup>25</sup> Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Newcastle to Vernon, 12 Sept. 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32695, fols. 47-52.

<sup>27</sup> Lords Justices to Sir Chaloner Ogle, 25 Sept. 1740 (OS), NMM: OGL/4.

## **II-THE SPANISH INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM FROM 1739 TO 1740**

In the summer of 1739, war with Britain was certainly inevitable and the Spanish government assumed that a British attack would be directed at America. Between the summer of 1739 and the winter of 1741, the Spanish agents operating in Europe discovered the preparations for the two British military expeditions, their strength and destination. Also, they provided useful assessments of the influence that the Spanish and the French initiatives had exerted on British military preparations. In Spain, this information was thoroughly analysed by the government ministers. It appears to have directly influenced their military decisions and it was punctually reported to Vice Admiral Torres. Moreover, most of this information was shared between the Spanish and French governments.

In June 1739, Geraldino reported the general feeling among the British merchants in the streets of London when he wrote to Villarias that “both the people and the government members flatter themselves with being able to commit successful hostilities in the colonies, particularly in the island of Cuba”.<sup>28</sup> On 17 September 1739, the secretary of the Spanish ambassador in the Hague, Nicolas Oliver y Fullana wrote to Villarias that “they are increasing their land and naval forces in such a way that it can be inferred that they are planning a landing in our colonies. Some say that they are destined for Havana, others for Buenos Aires”.<sup>29</sup> Only three days before, the Spanish ambassador in London had reported the departure of Vice Admiral Vernon to the West Indies. Geraldino explained that Vernon’s squadron of nine ships of the line was going to be added to the eight existing ships under the command of commodore Brown.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Geraldino to Villarias, 25 June 1739, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6909: “En el ministerio se lisongean de poder cometer con suceso grandes hostilidades en aquellos parages particularmente en la Isla de Cuba”.

<sup>29</sup> Oliver y Fullana to Villarias, 17 Sept. 1739, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6233: “Infierese de la actividad con que aumentan sus fuerzas por mar y tierra los ingleses, que se disponen para intentar sus desembarco en nuestras indias como tiempo ha lo he prevenido a V.E. Unos suponen procurarán apoderarse de la Habana, y otros de Buenos Aires”.

<sup>30</sup> Geraldino to Villarias, 14 Sept. 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6909.



Geraldino left Britain in September 1739 in advance of the declaration of war. After his return to Spain, the gathering of information in Britain about the British military preparation and the designs against the Spanish colonies was managed by Richmond and Terrascon. On 5 December 1739, the British government took the decision to send an expedition to the West Indies, and only the next day, Richmond wrote to Villarias that “they work to print other maps of Cartagena de Indias, Portobello, Veracruz, Havana as well as other places in the Spanish dominions in America ... and it is my humble opinion that it should not be doubted that our principal aim is against the Spanish territories in America”.<sup>31</sup>

On the 26 December 1739, Villarias transmitted this information to the Marquis of Torrenueva. Immediately afterwards, the Secretary of Marine summoned a meeting and Montemar was invited to attend it. Montemar informed the Secretary of Marine that the king had given his approval to having two fleets ready for action in the spring, one to accompany an expedition in the Mediterranean and another one in Ferrol to be employed in the protection of the coasts of America. According to Montemar, the purpose of arming these two squadrons was “to force the English to forget their designs upon the Indies and to keep their forces at home”. There was no mention, however, of military preparations in Galicia to threaten Britain with a landing either in Ireland or Scotland. This omission suggests the secrecy with which this project was carried out even among the Spanish ministers. The Secretary of Marine considered these instructions and a proposal was raised to augment the squadron at Ferrol with some of the ships that were being armed at Cadiz and to equip two that had been recently built in Havana.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Traducción de los impresos diarios que salen en Londres, 6/17 Dec. 1739, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908: “Se trabaja en imprimir otros [mapas] de Cartagena, Puertovello, Vera Cruz, La Havana y en general toda la America española ... y es mi humilde parecer que no se debe ya dudar que nro principal intento es contra alguno de los territorios de España en America”.

<sup>32</sup> Torrenueva to the King, 26 Dec. 1739, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 193: “[Montemar] reflexionó sobre la importancia de las expediciones del ferrol y Cartagna pa inclinar con ellas aquellos inges reserven en su Rno las tropas, y degen de poner lamira en Indias, ú, otras partes queuedan dar mas cuidado”.

By the beginning of 1740, the Spanish government must have been convinced that at least one of the two expeditions that the British government intended to send to America was designed against the West Indies. There was no evidence, however, whether the big expedition was to target Havana, Veracruz or Cartagena de Indias. This uncertainty continued until the winter of 1741. However, while the city of Havana was at the top of the list until the summer of 1740, new evidence as early as that June, suggested that the city of Cartagena could be the real target of the British strike. In a letter written on 23 June 1740 by the secretary of the Spanish ambassador in The Hague to Villarias, Oliver y Fullana said that

The court sent directions [to Vernon] not to undertake anything against the Spanish territories in America until the arrival of a sufficient body of troops. These troops will attack Cartagena or the island of Cuba. The people that have been to Cartagena think that it is possible to become masters of this place with an army of between three and four thousand regular soldiers.<sup>33</sup>

Information about the British military preparations to attack the Spanish colonies started to arrive in Spain in the winter of 1740. In January, Richmond reported that the British government had given instructions to muster 6,000 troops for embarkation to America.<sup>34</sup> In February 1740, Richmond discovered that orders had been given to Colonel Blakeney to depart to New York with orders to raise three regiments of one thousand men each in the northern colonies.<sup>35</sup> By the end of March 1740, the Spanish ambassador in The Hague was receiving regular reports from his informers in London. According to these reports, despite the Spanish and French naval armaments, preparations to send the expedition to America went ahead according to schedule. In a letter of 31 March San Gil wrote to Villarias that “Your Excellency will see in the reports provided by Como and la Ville, that the two armaments, the small one of five ships with five hundred men

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<sup>33</sup> Oliver y Fullana to Villarias, 23 June 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6234: “La cour lui [Vernon] ayant envoyé ordre de ne rien entreprendre contre les territoires espagnoles en Amérique jusqu’à ce qu’il ait reçu de nouvelles instructions qu’on lui enverra si on le juge à propos, avec un renfort suffisant de troupes pour pouvoir réussir sûrement contre Carthagène ou contre l’Isle de Cuba ... Le personnes qui ont été à Carthagène disent qu’il est impossible de se rendre maître de cette place si on n’a pour le moins 3 ou 4 mil hommes de troupes réglées”.

<sup>34</sup> Traducción de extractos de las gacetas diarias de Londres, 7/18 Jan. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

<sup>35</sup> 16/27 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

and the big one of six or seven thousand men, are going forward in London with the greatest diligence ”.<sup>36</sup>

In the spring of 1740, the Spanish agents announced that proper initiatives were being taken to prepare the ships to transport the troops to the West Indies. On the 19 April San Gil reported that there were eighty vessels for this purpose. The ships’ capacity amounted to sixteen thousand tons, and on 4 May, Richmond said that they had been commissioned for a period of seven months at 13 shillings per ton.<sup>37</sup> According to one of San Gil’s informers, it was expected that the troops would not depart until the month of July so that they would arrive in the West Indies in September, when the hurricane season had finished.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the documents of the Spanish Secretary of Marine contain enough evidence to state that, as early as June 1740, the Spanish government knew that the departure of the expedition to the West Indies had been fixed for the end of July.<sup>39</sup>

As a result, on 10 July 1740, Torres was ordered to sail with his squadron to the West Indies. This decision was taken in the middle of negotiations with France to send a combined squadron to America. The timing of the decision must have relied on two pieces of information. First, Britain was planning to send a military force to attack Ferrol. Second, there were reports that referred to the bad state of Vernon’s squadron. On 2 June 1740, San Gil reported that the French ambassador in London had obtained reports from Bussy, which indicated that the British squadron in Jamaica was unmanned and in need of repair.<sup>40</sup> Orders to Torres commanded him to take the best twelve ships of Ferrol and put on board two thousand of the best Spanish troops in Galicia. Once he reached the West Indies,

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<sup>36</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 31 March 1740, AHN, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262: “Los dos armamentos, el pequeño de cinco navíos con quinientos a seiscientos hombres de desembarco con algunos brulotes y el grande de los seis, o siete mil hombres, se procuran adelantar en Londres con la diligencia posible, como verá V.E. de la bien escrita adjunta carta de M. Como y del papel adjunto de M. la Ville”.

<sup>37</sup> Extracto de las cartas de Richmond, 14 May 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908.

<sup>38</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 19 April 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, 13 June 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 229.

<sup>40</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 2 June 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6263.

and before the arrival of the expeditions from New York and Britain, Torres was to attempt an attack upon Vernon's squadron.<sup>41</sup>

Evidence in the Spanish archives contradicts the claims in much of the historiography about the departure of the Ferrol squadron. For example, according to Ogelsby, when the Spanish government gave Torres command of the expedition, it "was not looking for a bold or adventurous leader to conduct an aggressive campaign", but "a cautious man of average attainments for the period", who "did not have instructions to take aggressive action".<sup>42</sup> However, there is clear evidence to suggest that Torres was given a more ambitious task – to attack Vernon if at all possible. Nor should it be forgotten that Torres had considerable combat experience. As Ogelsby himself indicates, Torres had taken part in the battle of Cape Passaro in 1718. Eight years later he received the command of the Armada de Barlovento, and in 1727, he was called to Spain to command the unsuccessful attack on Gibraltar. We might also note that the command of the Ferrol squadron had been initially granted to Vice Admiral Pintado, and it was only after his failure to offer battle to Balchen, that the command passed to Torres – a further indication surely, that the Spanish government wanted an active and aggressive commander for the expedition.<sup>43</sup>

However, the departure of the Ferrol squadron did not serve as the deterrent to British military preparations that the Spanish government had envisaged in December 1739. In the summer of 1740, one of San Gil's informers, de la Ville, reported that Colonel Blakeney had recruited three thousand men in the northern colonies and that this body was ready to be sent to Jamaica at the earliest notice.<sup>44</sup> On 8 August 1740, Bussy reported from London to the Spanish ambassador in Paris, the Marquis of Campoflorido, that the expedition in Britain went ahead according to schedule and that the escort to accompany Carthcart would consist

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<sup>41</sup> Quintana to Somodevilla, 10 July 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 358.

<sup>42</sup> Ogelsby, "Spain's Havana Squadron and the Preservation of the Balance of Power in the Caribbean, 1740 – 1748", 476.

<sup>43</sup> A. del Solar y Tobaoda, *Don Rodrigo de Torres. Primer Marqués de Matallana* (Badajoz, 1930)

<sup>44</sup> Oliver y Fullana to Villarias, 14 July 1740, AHS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6234.

of fourteen ships of the line.<sup>45</sup> As result, a letter to Torres of 29 August 1740 informed him that

In England there is one squadron of twenty two ships of the line, two fire ships, some bombships and two thousand soldiers. It is commanded by Vice Admiral Norris and is designed for Ferrol. There is another one of six vessels, one hundred transport ships with six thousand soldiers, plenty munitions and some frigates. This is commanded by Lord Carthcart and is destined for America. It will be escorted until a certain latitude by Vice Admiral Balchen with fourteen ships of the line. Also there is another squadron of five ships and some troops. It is under the command of captain Anson. Some say it is designed against Panama and others to Buenos Aires.<sup>46</sup>

In August 1740, negotiations between the courts of Spain and France finally succeeded in obtaining French commitment to dispatch a squadron to the West Indies. There is no record of discussions between the Spanish and the French ministers, but it can be argued that the continuation of the British military preparations in Britain and America served to tilt French neutrality into a more aggressive posture. However, despite the early departure of the Spanish and French fleets, orders to Torres<sup>47</sup> and D'Antin<sup>48</sup> were sent to them as late as the month of October. Their orders included the protection of the Spanish and French colonies, the shipping of the Galeones to Spain and attempting to destroy the squadron under the command of Vernon, which was to be followed by a landing of Bourbon troops on the island of Jamaica.

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<sup>45</sup> Bussy to Campoflorido, 8 Aug. 1740, AHS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4407.

<sup>46</sup> Orders to Don Rodrigo de Torres, 29 Aug. 1740, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4407: "Los considerables armamentos de la Inglaterra que según los más puntuales Avisos que se han podido tener, se componen de una escuadra de 22 navíos de línea, 2 brulotes y algunas bombardas y 2000 hombres de desembarco destinada al Ferrol bajo el mando del Almirante Norris. Otra de 6 bajeles y cerca de 100 embarcaciones de transporte con 6000 hombres de desembarco, municiones de guerra en abundancia y algunas fragatas de 20 cañones, al comando de Lord Carthcart, destinada a la América, y escoltada hasta cierta altura por el contra almirante Balken con 14 gruesos navíos, de los cuales debe dejar algunos al referido Carthcart, y pasar con los restantes a unirse con Norris, y otra escuadra de 5 navíos y tropas de desembarco bajo las ordenes del capitán Anson, que unos dicen debe ir a Panama y otros a Buenos Aires".

<sup>47</sup> Instructions to Torres, 3 Oct. 1740, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4408.

<sup>48</sup> Letter to the King of Spain, 8 Oct. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fols. 81-8.

When the British government learnt of the departure of the Bourbon squadrons to America, orders were given to augment the number of the ships to escort Carthcart. However, this meant that more time was needed to refit the squadron. On the 18 September 1740, Terrascon reported to Villarias that Rear Admiral Ogle had been ordered to take Balchen's squadron under his command and that some of the ships were being filled with more provisions and ammunition.<sup>49</sup> The Spanish and French agents reported that the preparations were being undertaken "*sans relâche*", and by the end of September, only windy conditions prevented the departure of the expedition.<sup>50</sup> In Portsmouth, there were reported to be twenty-five ships of the line, seventy-four transport ships and fifty merchant ships. However, both the Spanish and French agents noticed the damage that the long wait was causing to the morale of the crews. On the 7 October 1740, Amelot wrote to the French ambassador in Spain that one thousand sailors and four hundred soldiers were sick.<sup>51</sup>

The departure of the British expedition from Portsmouth on 24 October 1740 was reported by Amelot to the French ambassador in Madrid on the 30 October 1740. According to French agents, the squadron of Rear Admiral Ogle consisted of twenty-four ships.<sup>52</sup> However, despite their departure, the Spanish agents operating in the ports continued to be attentive for any piece of information that came from America. On 7 December 1740, Terrascon reported news from New England, perhaps brought by merchant vessels engaged in the transatlantic trade, confirming the departure of the colonial troops from New York.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Letter from Terrascon, 18 Sept. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6910.

<sup>50</sup> 22 Sept. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6910.

<sup>51</sup> Amelot to de la Marck, 7 Oct. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 464, fol. 184.

<sup>52</sup> 30 Oct. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fol. 155.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Terrascon, 7 Dec. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6910.

### **III-THE SPANISH MILITARY PREPARATIONS IN AMERICA**

From the summer of 1739, to the winter of 1741, several avisos were dispatched from Spain to inform the Spanish authorities in America of the progress of British military preparations. Orders were sent to put the colonies in a good posture of defence, and in the meantime, several initiatives were undertaken to gather more information. Before the British attack on Cartagena was actually implemented, there were two military episodes that deserve particular attention. The first was the capture of the city of Portobello in November 1739 by Vernon and the second the British failure to take the city of San Agustín in Florida in July 1740.

On 24 September 1739, a British ship that had been seized by a Spanish guarda costas, was brought to Cartagena de Indias. After the captain was interrogated, he revealed that war with Spain had been publicly announced in Jamaica on 13 August 1739. According to the captain, on that date, the British ships in the West Indies had received instructions to seize or otherwise destroy all the Spanish ships they came across.<sup>54</sup> This news must have arrived almost at the same time as an aviso from Spain with information about the departure of Vernon's squadron from Britain.

The letter brought by the aviso had been written on 28 August 1739, three weeks after Vernon's departure to America. It did not mention that war between Spain and Britain had been officially declared, but the Spanish colonial authorities were directed to take the utmost precautions, to put the coasts in the best posture of defence, to call out the local militias, to observe the most strict discipline among the troops and to provide other places with as much help as possible if they were under the attack by British forces.<sup>55</sup> The Spanish government even speculated where the blow may fall. The governor of Panama, Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, was informed that Vernon's squadron had not taken troops with him. As a result,

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<sup>54</sup> Anonymous and undated, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to Don Gabriel de Zuloaga, 28 Aug. 1739, AGI, Caracas, Legajo 56.

it was believed that the British Vice Admiral might be planning to attack Portobello.<sup>56</sup>

The city of Portobello was a small port, which had been created because of its strategic location in the Caribbean coast of the Panama Isthmus. The climate was unhealthy due to the high temperatures and a suffocating humidity, and the defences relied on the principle of “defence by lack of defence”. According to this principle, some strategic places necessary for the control of the Spanish colonies did not have strong fortifications so that they could easily be recovered in a counter attack by seasoned Spanish troops. Portobello was noted for the annual arrival of the Galeones, which usually took place in October or November after a short visit to Cartagena. For these two months, Portobello held a fair with the treasure of Peru and the trade of Lima, and the city pulsated with activity before falling again into the *tiempo muerto* or dead time.<sup>57</sup>

In the summer of 1739, despite tensions between Spain and Britain, British agents in Europe reported that preparations to dispatch the Flota went ahead in Cadiz.<sup>58</sup> On 14 September 1739, Blas de Lezo learnt of the arrival at Panama of the trade from Lima and the treasure of Peru. As a result, he gave orders to prepare his ships to sail to Portobello. However, this information had slipped out of Cartagena through South Sea Company factors and had arrived in London by way of Jamaica.<sup>59</sup> When Vice Admiral Vernon learned of this news, he gave orders to gather further information about Portobello and on 31 October 1739, he wrote to Newcastle that according to information from one of Captain Knowles’ prizes, orders had been given to open the fair.<sup>60</sup> Although unrecorded, it seems that sometime in October 1739, Lezo was told of the arrival of Vernon to the Caribbean and that orders had been given to cancel the fair.

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<sup>56</sup> Letter to Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, 29 Aug. 1739, AGI, Panamá, Legajo 255.

<sup>57</sup> Lozano, “La Toma de Portobello por el Almirante Vernon”, 39-40.

<sup>58</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 7/18 May 1739, TNA: PRO, SP 94/133.

<sup>59</sup> Geraldino to Lezo, 13 Jan. 1740, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 1021.

<sup>60</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 31 Oct. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fol. 18 .



Vice Admiral Vernon attacked and took Portobello on 2 December 1739, although he had to abandon his capture because he did not have sufficient strength to hold it. Early in November, he received information from South Sea Company factors that the fair had been cancelled.<sup>61</sup> However, the capture of Portobello was more important for its symbolism than for its actual value. In Britain, the significance of the capture was exaggerated by public opinion and served to boost national pride, which was very important in the midst of the military preparations that the state was conducting. More serious, it led to an underestimation of Spain's capacity to defend the American colonies.<sup>62</sup> The fall of Portobello also triggered French concerns about the strength of the Spanish in America. As a result, from the autumn of 1739 to the summer of 1740, Paris declared itself more reluctant to abandon neutrality to turn the Spanish defensive position into a more offensive one. This reluctance manifested itself in French opposition to Spanish plans to invade Scotland.

After the declaration of war, two sets of letters were sent from Madrid to the Spanish authorities in America and the Philippines. Letters to New Spain were written in Madrid on 8 December and sent by way of Cartagena de Indias.<sup>63</sup> This aviso must have also carried the letter written in Madrid on 3 December 1739 and destined to the Spanish governor in the Philippines.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, letters to Peru were written in Madrid on 10 December 1740 and sent to Peru by way of Buenos Aires.<sup>65</sup> In their instructions, the colonial authorities were ordered to put their territories in a good defensive posture, to cooperate and assist each other and to take initiatives to annoy, hinder or otherwise destroy the British forces. However, despite the macro level orders that the colonial authorities received, there were some micro preparations with regards to the British plans. For example, the aviso

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<sup>61</sup> Vernon to Wager, 5 Nov. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fol. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Wislson, "Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon", 74-105.

<sup>63</sup> For example: Letter to Antonio de Benavides, 8 Dec. 1739, AGI, México, Legajo 2844.

<sup>64</sup> Quintana to the Governor of the Philippines, 3 Dec. 1739, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 384.

<sup>65</sup> For example: Letter to Miguel de Salcedo, 10 Jan. 1740, AGI, Buenos Aires, Legajo 42.

dispatched in December, by way of Cartagena, contained orders to the Viceroys of New Spain and Peru to send provisions and gun powder to Cartagena.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, orders were given to the bishops in the colonies to mobilize the clergy and ensure that the local population remained loyal to the king of Spain if the British succeeded in taking control of their area.<sup>67</sup> No doubt the British underestimated the loyalty of the native, creole and Spanish population. But it is also true that the British had been very successful in gaining the friendship of some native tribes such as the Moskito Indians. Of course, life in colonial America was never easy for the European population. If a rebellion had begun in a certain area, it would have been difficult to mobilize the necessary resources to bring it under control. To avoid that, the Catholic church and its armies of priests had a very important role to play.

During the following months, the Spanish government took several military initiatives in Spain to reinforce the defences of the colonies. Unfortunately, and probably due to the need for secrecy as much as the haphazard organization of the records, most of these initiatives for the period from the winter of 1739 to the summer of 1740 are not illuminated by the Spanish archives. As a result, once again, it is necessary for the researcher to rely on material in the British archives. For example, on 3 March 1740, Waldegrave learnt that in October 1739, two large men of war had left Cadiz with the new Viceroy of Santa Fe and the new governor of Portobello. The ships were also reported to be carrying a body of six hundred soldiers.<sup>68</sup> Two weeks later, on 16 March 1740, Waldegrave reported that the Marquis de García Real, the new Viceroy of Mexico, had also embarked at Cadiz. In the same letter, Waldegrave wrote that on 28 February 1740, two Spanish men of war from San Sebastian had departed for the Caracas Coast. One was a sixty-

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<sup>66</sup> Letter to Dionisio de la Vega, 12 Dec. 1739, AGI, Panama, Legajo 255.

<sup>67</sup> Letter to the Archbishops and the Bishops in America, 8 Jan. 1740, AGI, Indiferente, Legajo 1294.

<sup>68</sup> Waldegrave to Anstruther, 3 March 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers France, SP 78/222, fols. 309-11.

four guns, the other of fifty-six, and together, they carried three hundred land soldiers on board.<sup>69</sup>

In the summer of 1740, almost one year after the commencement of hostilities, the Spanish governors in America wrote back to Madrid to provide the government with reports regarding their posture of defence. The main concerns of the Spanish government were for Havana, Veracruz and Cartagena. On 23 August 1740, Montijo wrote to Quintana, and responded to a letter from Villarias. According to Montijo, Veracruz was well defended by the castle of San Juan. There were five companies of dragoons, each of seventy men, a company of infantry with one hundred and fifty men, one hundred artillerymen and four companies of marines, each of fifty-seven soldiers.<sup>70</sup> In September 1740, a report from Francisco Cornejo stated that the defences of Havana were strong enough to stand against eight thousand British soldiers. However, according to Cornejo, “what I have said and I say is that (with the exception of Havana, Cartagena and even Veracruz) the military governments of the east coast of America are sick and helpless bodies”.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1740, there were also concerns about Florida. The fall of San Agustin would have given Britain control of the Florida Channel, which was used by the Spanish fleets in their homeward passage after leaving Havana. Since the summer of 1739, there had been reports that in Georgia, General Oglethorpe had been very active in mobilizing a body of colonial volunteers.<sup>72</sup> As a result, in November 1739, the governor of Havana made preparations to assist San Agustin in case of a British attack. Six months later, on 24 May 1740, Oglethorpe attacked San Agustin with 600 regular troops, 400 volunteers, 1,200 Seminol Indians and a small squadron of seven frigates under the command of Commodore Pearce.<sup>73</sup> During the months of June and July 1740,

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<sup>69</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 16 March 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fols. 171-5.

<sup>70</sup> Montijo to Quintana, 23 Aug. 1740, AHN, Estado, Legajo 2330.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from Cornejo, Sept. 1740, AHN, Estado, Legajo 2330: “Lo que he dicho y digo es que (a excepcion de la Havana, Cartagena, y aun la Vera Cruz) todos los demás Gobiernos, Militares de las Costas orientales de la America, son unos cuerpos enfermos...”

<sup>72</sup> De la Marck to Amelot, 5 Oct. 1739, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 455, fol. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, pp. 35-9.

Spanish vessels operating from Havana kept San Agustin well supplied.<sup>74</sup> But on 27 June, the Spanish sentinels in Cape Corrientes, Cuba, reported the presence of ten British ships of the line, and on 3 July, the British squadron under the command of Vernon could be seen off Havana by the sentinels of the Morro castle.<sup>75</sup> Inevitably, the supplying convoys had to be abandoned and San Agustin was left to its own fate.

The letter from the governor of Havana to Montijo reported his frustration when the supply lines between Havana and San Agustin were cut. This letter must have arrived at Madrid almost at the same time as another, written on 8 September 1740, by the Marquis of San Gil at The Hague. According to information obtained in London, there were reports that General Oglethorpe had met with problems and failed to capture San Agustin.<sup>76</sup> One week later, on 15 September 1740, San Gil confirmed that on 24 July, the British siege of San Agustin was broken by a Spanish counter attack that left one hundred of the British forces as casualties and forty as British prisoners. The British fleet that blockaded San Agustin had been damaged by a heavy tempest, and under these circumstances, Oglethorpe was forced to raise the siege and return to Georgia. According to San Gil, this news had caused consternation in London.<sup>77</sup> In September 1740, the Spanish ministers probably used this success to put more pressure on France.

Indeed, in that month, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, the Prince of Campoflorido and the French First Secretary, Cardinal Fleury, started talks about the possibility of conquering Jamaica and exchanging it for Gibraltar. In the summer of 1740, the French government learnt, probably by way of Saint Domingue, that there were 12,000 Maroon rebels in the mountains of Jamaica and plans were made to mobilize them against the British colonial government. On 17 September 1740, Campoflorido reported that whereas he argued that the British fortifications on the island should be returned after the conquest, Cardinal Fleury

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<sup>74</sup> Horcasitas to Montijo, 20 June 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo, Legajo 386.

<sup>75</sup> 27 July 1740, AGI, Santo Domingo, Legajo 386.

<sup>76</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 8 Sept. 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6264.

<sup>77</sup> 15 Sept. 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6264.

thought it more appropriate to destroy them, particularly if Jamaica was going to be exchanged.<sup>78</sup> These negotiations never went further. It is possible that reports of a massive British mobilization after the departure of the Bourbon fleets might have served as a deterrent to further French commitment. Indeed, although both D'Antin and Torres were commanded to act in conjunction to attack the British in the Caribbean, the French fleets were supplied with only six months provisions.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Campoflorido to Villarias, 17 Sept. 1740, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4399.

<sup>79</sup> Fleury to the King of Spain, 26 Sept. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fols. 26-7.

#### **IV-THE BRITISH DECISION TO ATTACK CARTAGENA DE INDIAS**

In the summer of 1739, instructions to the British squadron in the Caribbean included the gathering of intelligence about the Spanish naval forces in America and the protection of the British colonies, particularly Jamaica. However, as early as 16 July 1739, Vernon was sent secret instructions that directed him that “you shall, upon your arrival in the West Indies, make it your business to procure the best intelligence, you possibly can, in what part of the Spanish dominions in the West Indies ... it may be practicable to make a descent, that may be of the greatest detriment to the Spaniards”.<sup>80</sup> During the following year the presence of his squadron in the Caribbean was a sufficient deterrent for a Spanish attack on Jamaica. Following his orders, Vernon also conducted several initiatives to gather intelligence about the Spanish dominions in America. He identified which cities were of strategic importance in the Spanish colonies, and in the summer 1740, he decided that after the arrival of the British expeditionary forces, he should attack Cartagena.

Despite the pressure of the Duke of Newcastle to consider an attack upon Havana, it soon became clear that such an enterprise was impracticable. The strength of the city had been noted in Wager’s reports and there was information that revealed that Havana had been recently reinforced with more Spanish troops. On 4 August 1740, the British consul in Genoa John Birtles discovered that on 11 July, two Spanish ships had been sent from Cadiz to Havana. On board these ships, there were two hundred dragoons of the regiment of Italy, and there was intelligence that they were preparing two other ships to take one hundred and fifty more dragoons.<sup>81</sup> One month later, on 3 September Birtles reported that, according to the Spanish intercepted correspondence, “Havana was well provided with everything, having received a large reinforcement by the arrival of light ships there, who had been dispatched at several times from sundry parts of Spain”.<sup>82</sup> However, the main deterrent to attacking Havana was of a natural rather than

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<sup>80</sup> Letter to Vernon, 16 July 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32692, fol. 140.

<sup>81</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 24/4 Aug. 1740, TNA: PRO, State Papers Genoa, SP 79/19.

<sup>82</sup> 23 Aug./3 Sept. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

military sort. In the Caribbean, the currents flow East to West, and in the Gulf of Mexico, this direction changes West to East. Because Havana is in the north west of Cuba, a British squadron would have needed a long time to return to Jamaica if the Spanish had decided to seize the opportunity when the British were occupied on Cuba.<sup>83</sup>

Despite these setbacks, an attack on Havana would have been a very important achievement, particularly if Oglethorpe had succeeded in taking San Agustin. On 7 January 1740, Oglethorpe had taken the forts of San Francisco and Picolata, which guarded the pass over the river Saint John.<sup>84</sup> On 22 January, he wrote to Vernon to announce that he planned to attack San Agustin in March. According to his intelligence, the city was not well defended, “besides their Negroes and militia, they have about eight hundred regular troops” and after the fall of San Agustin, Oglethorpe wanted to join his forces with those of Vernon to attack Havana.<sup>85</sup> During the siege of San Agustin in the early summer of 1740, Oglethorpe and Vernon coordinated their forces very well, and the presence of Vernon off Havana, served to cut the Spanish lines of communication. But Vernon’s sailing off Havana, also enabled him to become more acquainted with the defences of the city, and on 5 July, just before the crumbling of the British siege of San Agustin, Vernon wrote to Oglethorpe that

All the north coast of Cuba, as far as has past within my own observation, I found to be mostly an iron shore, and fear, there are no convenient landing places near the Havanna, tho’ there may be some little bays, a sloop may get anchor ground in, and the bays to leeward, that are fit to receive a fleet, are near twenty leagues distant, too great fatigue for marching troops, in a mountainous woody country, without any road for carriages.<sup>86</sup>

Veracruz, the other city in the Gulf of Mexico, had also been recognized to be a strongly defended location. As early as April 1740, there were well-reported

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<sup>83</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 24 July 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40827, fols. 18-24.

<sup>84</sup> Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, p. 30.

<sup>85</sup> Oglethorpe to Vernon, 22 Jan. 1739/40 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fols. 116-7.

<sup>86</sup> Vernon to Oglethorpe, 5 July 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fol. 118.

projects to invest the city.<sup>87</sup> However, further intelligence in the Summer of 1740 revealed that its defences had been overestimated, and that if taken, Veracruz could have been easily recovered by a Spanish counter attack from Mexico.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, according to Wager, if something was to be attempted against Veracruz, this had to be followed by an attack upon Mexico.<sup>89</sup> According to the surviving correspondence of Vernon, it seems that he gave little thought to such expedition. First, like Havana, Veracruz is located in the Gulf of Mexico, which made it difficult to return speedily to Jamaica in case of a Spanish or combined Franco-Spanish attack to conquer the island. Second, if the conquest of Veracruz had to be followed by a march into the Mexican hinterland, this would have implied leaving the fleet under-manned and badly exposed to an attack by the Bourbon fleets.

Cartagena was not easily reached, but offered a more tempting target to Vernon. Founded by Pedro de Heredia in 1533, it stood in the southern end of a lagoon, which was dominated by a big island called Tierra Bomba. The lagoon had an extension of ten miles and it opened to the sea through two channels of water, Boca Grande, which was the closest to the city and was too shallow for the Galleons to go in, and Boca Chica, much narrower, but deep enough for the transit of these vessels. Before Cartagena, the lagoon also created a natural harbour. Indeed, all these natural dispositions soon attracted the attention of the Spanish conquistadors. The city had been successfully attacked on several occasions, and after the last attack in 1697, by the baron de Pontis, orders were given to Juan de Herrera y Sotomayor to rebuild and strengthen the city's defences.<sup>90</sup>

After the destruction of the forts of Portobello, a successful attack upon Cartagena would have given the British direct access to the Isthmus of Panama. The communication between the Vice Kingdoms of Peru and New Grenade with the

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<sup>87</sup> Sir Charles Wager's memorandum of places in old and new Spain, that may be attempted, 14 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 72-99.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, fols. 53-7.

<sup>89</sup> Wager to Newcastle, 3 June 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 35406, fols. 191-2.

<sup>90</sup> Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 93.



Vice Kingdom of New Spain, and also, with Spain itself, would have been cut off and the British would have been left in a very advantageous position to provide the Spanish colonies with European goods. Also, and in contrast to Havana and Veracruz, Cartagena is located in the Caribbean, and the five hundred miles that separate it from Jamaica mean that this distance can be covered in a few days sailing.<sup>91</sup> However, intelligence was the crucial element that ultimately led Vernon to opt for an attack upon Cartagena.

Since his arrival in the West Indies, Vernon had complied with his instructions, one of which included the defence of Jamaica. This had obliged him to spend most of the time in the Caribbean and the city of Cartagena had inevitably drawn most of his attention. By the summer of 1740, Vernon had become very well informed about the city. In the winter of 1741, his intelligence included the soundings of the waters off Cartagena, an account of the firepower of the castles that protected Boca Chica, information about the passage between Boca Chica and the port of Cartagena and detailed accounts about the defences of the city such as the strength of its garrison. Also, thanks to the South Sea Company's factors who had recently resided in the city, Vernon had been given advice on the best way to invest the city, and through the work of British agents operating in Europe, he obtained precise accounts of the reinforcements that the Spanish government had sent.

In January 1740, Vernon sent Captain Burn to reconnoitre Cartagena, and learnt that within Boca Chica, there were three small castles with from eight to ten guns each.<sup>92</sup> Two of these castles were probably the batteries of Santiago and San Felipe, which had been raised to hinder a landing of troops for an attack upon Boca Chica. The other one was probably San Jose, which had been built in a rock just beyond the narrow passage. However, in the report there was no mention of the castle of San Luis, the main defence before the lagoon. Two months later, in March 1740, Vernon himself saw that Boca Chica was well defended with the castle of San Luis, a fortification which he described as a regular square fort of

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<sup>91</sup> Campbell to Newcastle, 12 Jan. 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 40827, fols. 69-75.

<sup>92</sup> Trelawney to Newcastle, 31 Jan. 1739/40, BL, Add. 40815, fols. 60-4.

four bastions containing eighty pieces of cannon.<sup>93</sup> In one of his reports, Wager noted that the walls of San Luis were very high, with a parapet that was built of brick. The castle had been designed for the ships to be exposed on both sides as they went into Boca Chica.<sup>94</sup>

During his first visit to Cartagena in March 1740, Vernon took several initiatives to further his understanding of its defences and the best way to conduct a landing of troops. According to a letter written to Newcastle on 5 April 1740, on his arrival at Cartagena, Vernon ordered his squadron to anchor in nine fathoms in the open bay. His first initiative was to direct the captains to approach the shore with their boats “to conduct soundings everywhere”. When the soundings were completed, he gave the signal for the line of battle and coasted the shore towards Boca Chica as if he intended to attempt the harbour. In fact, his real intentions were to keep the Spanish alarmed, and also, to inform himself of their real strength.<sup>95</sup> Some of the captains and crews that Vernon employed on this reconnaissance expeditions, were probably those who participated in the actual attack on Cartagena one year later.

As early as April 1740, Wager had information, most of which had been obtained by Vernon, of the passage between Boca Chica and Cartagena. There were twelve miles distance between Boca Chica and the anchoring place of the Galeones. Before the ships came to the harbour, they had to pass a very narrow straight with fortifications on both sides. Castillo Grande, on the larboard side, mounted sixty guns in two tiers. Its greatest strength pointed towards the harbour. Opposite to it, there was a small castle called Manzanillo, which had been put in good order. At the farther end of the basin, there was a narrow channel that led to the city. This channel could only be used by small boats, which meant that the ships could not approach close enough to the city to discharge all their firepower against it. In

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<sup>93</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 10 March 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40808, fol. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Wager’s memorandum of places in old and new Spain, that may be attempted, 14 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 72-99.

<sup>95</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 5 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fol. 82.

other words, contrary to Richmond's perception in *The Navy in the War of 1739-1748*, the navy was not able on its own to take the city.<sup>96</sup>

Wager described Cartagena as a regular and well-fortified city, whose defences stood towards the sea, one part towards the harbour and the other two parts towards the land. The city was surrounded by an irregular ditch, always full of water and the wall had been reinforced with several bastions that protected the gates and were particularly strong towards the sea. The suburbs of the city, called Gethsemane, were also surrounded by a wall and a ditch that were connected with those of Cartagena and they had been designed to hold off an enemy for long enough to enable the defending army to withdraw to the city. Cartagena, with the suburbs, was reckoned to have a population of 10,000. The usual establishment for the garrison was of 1,000 regular soldiers and a militia of 1,000 men. On a hill opposite to Cartagena, there was a fort called San Lazaro, which commanded all the plain round about. This fort had been attacked by Pontis in 1697 and its fall had given him the control of the city. However, the accesses to San Lazaro were difficult. Beyond the reach of the fire from the batteries, the sandy shores and banks of the harbour were covered with mangrove trees that gave way to a thick bush. There were no water wells, only some salt lakes and the heat, sun, flies, mosquitoes and other pests, made it very slow and uncomfortable for an invading army to advance. To take Cartagena was thought to be a really difficult, but not necessarily an impracticable enterprise.<sup>97</sup>

The defences of Cartagena had been very well planned to slow the advance of an invading army so that weather could increase the casualties of combat. However, if the castle of San Lazaro fell, Cartagena could be easily compelled to surrender as Vernon knew very well. On the 3 June 1740, Vernon wrote to Newcastle requesting a good train of artillery as well as field carriages. He also indicated that slaves "must be hired to draw them, or such fatigues would soon destroy our men

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<sup>96</sup> Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, i. 133-7.

<sup>97</sup> Wager's memorandum of places in old and new Spain, that may be attempted, 14 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 72-99.

in the sun”.<sup>98</sup> Four months later, on 9 October 1740, Vernon wrote to Lord Carthcart that despite the government’s interest in Cuba, he had too many objections against an attack on Havana. Vernon wanted to attack Cartagena and he told Carthcart that it was crucial to avoid the sickly season, which lasted from May to November.<sup>99</sup> These letters are very revealing because they contain evidence that Vernon anticipated the role that the land troops were going to play during the siege of Cartagena and the difficult conditions under which they would have to work.

After the summer of 1740, Vernon devoted most of his attention to furthering his knowledge of Cartagena. He continued to send ships on observation duties, made plans to prepare the attack and interrogated people who were well acquainted with its defences. For example, in July 1740, Vernon met John Gray, a former South Sea Company agent who had resided in Cartagena. Gray had arrived at Port Royal after an exchange of prisoners and was waiting for his passage to Britain. He was an expert in mathematics, had written *A Treatise on Gunnery*, and before sailing to Britain, agreed to produce a report with his observations about Cartagena and his opinion of where it could be attacked with best prospect of success.<sup>100</sup> Also, in July 1740, two of the British ships operating off Cartagena succeeded in intercepting the ships carrying the new Viceroy of New Granada Sebastian de Eslava in their passage from Puerto Rico to Cartagena. The Spanish Viceroy managed to escape in a sloop before being captured, but in his hurry he left behind a trunk with all his commissions and instructions.<sup>101</sup>

On 4 February 1741, three weeks before the official decision to attack Cartagena, Vernon obtained very material information about the most recent dispositions in the city. According to this information, Boca Chica was well defended. In San Luis, there were three hundred men under the command of Benito Antonio Espinola and the castle mounted forty-nine cannons, two mortars for grenade

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<sup>98</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 3 June 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40827, fol. 15.

<sup>99</sup> Vernon to Carthcart, 9 Oct. 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40815, fols. 160-1.

<sup>100</sup> This suggests that Gray was John Gray, author of *A Treaty of Gunnery* (London, 1731)

<sup>101</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 24 July 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 40827, fols. 18-24.

shells and one for bombs. In San Jose, there were one hundred and fifty men and the castle had thirteen pieces of cannon. The fort of San Felipe, with eleven cannons and the fort of Santiago with seven cannons were commanded by officers from the Europa, Dragon, Africa and Conquistador. The first two of those ships had been placed between San Jose and San Luis, while the other two had been ordered to protect the harbour. On one side of the harbour, Castillo Grande was defended by Don Blas de Lezo, and on the other side there was a company of horse, armed with lances and machetes to prevent any landing. Also, although the Spanish expected the British to attack Boca Chica, they were concerned about the soundings that Vernon had ordered in the spring and they had positioned several troops in the places suspected as landing points. In La Boquilla, three miles south of Cartagena, Captain Gil had under his command two hundred regular troops, three hundred militia and forty pieces of artillery. In Punta Canna, two miles further south, there was a company of artillery with six cannon and one hundred and fifty indian archers.<sup>102</sup>

On 23 February 1741, a council of war held on the Princess Caroline in Irish Bay, Hispaniola, decided to attack Cartagena.<sup>103</sup> However, it can be argued that Vernon had probably taken this decision as early as the summer of 1740. Also, there is evidence to suggest that by the autumn of 1740, the Spanish government must have taken this attack for granted. This evidence is contained in a letter sent to Vice Admiral Torres on 13 January 1741. The intelligence, having been obtained probably by Bussy, had been dispatched to Madrid by the French government.<sup>104</sup> Torres was informed that “In a letter written in London on 28 November 1740

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<sup>102</sup> The State of Cartagena in its present Posture of defence this 4 Feb. 1739/40, LC, Wager Mss. 17137, Series 8D, Item 181, 7-9, Reel 91, fols. 335-40.

<sup>103</sup> Council of War on board the Princess Carolina, Vernon, Wentworth, Ogle and Guise, 23 Feb. 1741, BL, Add. 40776, fol. 100.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from the Viceroy of México, 16 Aug. 1741, AGI, México, Legajo 508: “Desde la isla de Habana me dirigió el teniente general Don Rodrigo de Torres y Morales la real orden expedida por la vía reservada su data de enero de este año, en que mandó V.M. prevenirme las seguras noticias, que por la corte de Francia y por persona de fe y seguridad se dieron a V.M. de los fijos designios de ingleses, quienes habiendo variado sus proyectos, que era de atacar y los tomar la plaza de la Habana, los dirigían a Cartagena.” Translation: “Lieutenant Don Rodrigo de Torres y Morales acquainted me from Havana with the royal order that was sent on 13 January by the reserved way, in which your lordship informed me that the court of France had learnt by somebody of confidence that the British had modified their projects, and that instead of attacking Havana they will attack Cartagena”.

somebody of confidence reported that the directions sent to Carthcart and Ogle had been modified, and their troops will attack Cartagena instead of Havana. This is because they are well informed that we have sent only 2,000 men and 600 recruits”.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Letter to Torres, 13 Jan. 1741, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4408: “Al mismo tiempo y por propio conducto, ha participado que por carta de 28 de noviembre escrita desde Londres se daba por sujeto apreciable que se habían mudado las instrucciones de M. Carthcart que la escuadra del almirante Ogle que conduce las tropas de su cargo en lugar de ir a la Habana ira a Cartagena, por hallarse los ingleses bien informados de que no hemos enviado más de 2000 hombres y 600 reclutas”.

## **V-THE BRITISH ATTACK ON CARTAGENA DE INDIAS**

The British attack on Cartagena and the Spanish defence of the city was the culmination of a long process of gathering information that had been conducted over the last two years on both sides. The historiography has generally argued that in the attack on Cartagena, the British based their military decisions on those adopted by Pontis in 1697 during his attack on the city.<sup>106</sup> As we saw in the previous section, this is a misconception. The attack on Cartagena lasted two months. During this time, the Spanish were on the defensive, while the British took the military initiative and used the intelligence that they had previously collected. There are many factors that explain the British failure to take Cartagena, but intelligence played a significant role. Vernon was well informed about his target, but he remained uncertain about Bourbon naval dispositions during the British attack to Cartagena. His concerns about the Spanish and French fleets effectively distracted his attention and inhibited his actions at a time when he needed to be concentrating on Cartagena.

In Spain and the Spanish colonies, there were strong reasons to believe that Britain would attack Cartagena. In September 1740, orders were sent to Sebastian Eslava to put the city on the defensive and there is evidence that one of the first initiatives that Eslava took was to reinforce the castle of San Lazaro.<sup>107</sup> On 24 October 1740, after the arrival of Torres, the Spanish council of war ordered 2,000 troops in the squadron to reinforce the garrison of the city. Also, proper dispositions were given to repair the damage that some of the ships had suffered during the crossing of the Atlantic.<sup>108</sup> On 23 November, an aviso from Saint Domingue reported the arrival of D'Antin's squadron with twelve ships from Brest. In December 1740, the naval power of the Bourbons in the Caribbean consisted of an overwhelming force of forty-four ships of the line.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> For example: J.C.M. Oglesby, "England vs Spain in America, 1739 – 1748: The Spanish Side of the Hill", *Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers*, (1970), 147-57.

<sup>107</sup> Eslava, *Diario de Todo lo Ocurrido en la Expugnación de los Fuertes de Boca Chica y Sitio de Cartagena de Indias*, p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> Eslava to Quintana, 27 Oct. 1740, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 572, fols. 613-5.

<sup>109</sup> Council of War at Cartagena, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 572, fols. 624-8.

Nothing was done, however, to attack Jamaica, and on 20 January 1741, when D'Antin learnt of the arrival of the British expeditionary force in the Caribbean, he decided to return to France. Although he left Roquefuelle in Port Luis with six ships of the line, the Bourbon naval force was not enough to contest the British. And in the face of a British attack, with superior naval forces, the presence of a Spanish squadron in Cartagena was pointless. Off Cartagena, the Spanish ships would have been easily overwhelmed by the British squadron, and in the lagoon, they would not have had manoeuvrability. On 2 February 1740, the council of war directed Torres to sail with his squadron to Havana, where he would be safe and ready for action if an opportunity arose. On Lezo's request, two ships were joined to the five galleons that were in the city and the seven vessels were prepared to hinder the advance of the British force, first in Boca Chica, and thereafter, in the harbour.<sup>110</sup>

In the summer of 1740, Vernon had seen the attack on Cartagena as a promising enterprise that could be achieved if there was a good collaboration between the army and the navy. However, the arrival of a strong Bourbon fleet in the Caribbean shattered his plans because the Franco-Spanish ships posed a threat to Jamaica. The navy would need to be ready to contest that threat and this would inevitably hamper the collaboration between the navy and the army during the attack. On the 23 February 1741, the council of war had news that D'Antin had returned to France. However, this could not be confirmed: "we had no absolute certainty, which way the Marquis D'Antin was moved".<sup>111</sup> The sickly season was getting closer, and on that day it was decided to take the risk and move the army to Cartagena. In the next months, no confirmation of D'Antin's return to Europe reached the British command, and during the attack, Vernon refused to take further risks. It was the threat of a Bourbon naval counter attack that ultimately undermined the cooperation between the navy and the army.

The British expeditionary force arrived at Cartagena at the beginning of March 1741. The city was well defended, and on 6 March, Vernon gave orders to Ogle to

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Council of War on board the Princess Caroline, 23 Feb-1740/1, NMM, VER/1/2/V.



attack the Spanish defences of Boca Chica. The bombardment of the batteries of San Felipe, Santiago and Chamba was rapidly executed and the landing of troops was conducted using information that suggested the best disembarkation points. After the fall of the batteries, orders were given to the troops to prepare an assault on the castle of San Luis and here is where problems began: the castle of San Luis could not be destroyed by the firepower of ships of the line at close range. The siege troops suffered very much because of the climate during the attack and Vernon was reluctant to spare some of his sailors because he could not leave the ships undermanned. On top of that, the Spanish made a fierce defence at San Luis and San Jose and raised a new battery called Albanicos opposite to San Luis, neither of which was expected by Vernon.

On 25 March, the Spanish garrison fled San Luis and the British army took control of the castle after three weeks' fighting. Lezo ordered the burning and sinking of the Africa, the San Carlos and the San Felipe to hamper the entrance to the lagoon, but he could not prevent the capture of the Galicia. Between the 25 and the 30 March, while the fleet was being brought into the lagoon, Lezo ordered the abandonment of Castillo Grande and Manzanillo and sank the two remaining ships, the Conquistador and the Dragon in the entrance of the harbour. This decision would cost the British army another week of work before the invading force could make its way into the harbour. In the meantime, Vernon devoted much of his time to preparing the attack on San Lazaro and on 29 March he obtained a valuable report from Alexander McPherson, a sailor with great experience in the Caribbean, who claimed to have an extensive knowledge of Cartagena.<sup>112</sup>

McPherson's report provided an accurate description of the best landing place in Cartagena's harbour, the terrain between the harbour and San Lazaro and the best place to raise a battery for an attack upon the castle. According to him, Texar de Gracias was the natural place where the barges from the Spanish men of war landed and it was reckoned that these vessels drew more water than the British twelve oared boats. From Texar, there was a three mile road that led to San

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<sup>112</sup> Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, p.108.

Lazaro. The first mile had room for only one carriage. After a mile, it came into an opening for about half a mile until it came into a narrow pass with room only for two coaches. The narrow pass continued for about three hundred more yards and it came to an opening where there were two roads. The road to the right came into an open plain dominated by the castle of San Lazaro. About a hundred and fifty paces before the bottom of the hill, there was a byroad on the right, that was covered from the castle by bush for about a quarter of a mile, and then, it came into an open plain. At the end of this plain, there was a small hill. McPherson regarded it as the perfect place to construct a battery against the town and against the castle.<sup>113</sup>

On the 30 March, a council of war met on the Princess Caroline and decided to gain control of the hill that was mentioned in McPherson's report. Vernon agreed to supply General Wentworth with all the American forces as he should judge proper, and also, with the detachments of Lord James Cavendish's and Colonel Bland's regiments. Meanwhile, several ships were employed in making a channel in the harbour through the sunken Dragon and the Conquistador, and others, including the Galicia, were deployed to serve as floating batteries for the protection of the landing forces. The command of the castles of Boca Chica was left to Captain Lestock and that of Castillo Grande and Manzanillo was given to Captain Knowles.<sup>114</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, it seems that the prospect of the rapid fall of Cartagena must have looked rather gloomy, but on 1 April, Vernon wrote to Newcastle of his conviction that such was about to happen.<sup>115</sup>

Some 1,400 troops under the command of Colonel Blakeney landed in Texar de Gracias on 5 April 1741, ten days after the fall of Boca Chica. The rainy season was approaching and there was no confirmation that the French squadron had returned to Europe, all of which created much anxiety and apprehension among the British command. This, in essence, explains the tense collaboration between

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<sup>113</sup> Copy of the landing places near the town of Cartagena, 29 March 1741 (OS), LC, Wager Mss. 17137, Series 8D, Item 181, 13-15, Reel 93, fols. 154-7.

<sup>114</sup> Council of War on board Princess Caroline, 30 March 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 40776, fols. 109-10.

<sup>115</sup> Vernon to Newcastle, 1 April 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 40816, fols. 28-34.

the navy and the army when Wentworth requested sailors from Vernon's ships. On the 7 April 1741, Vernon promised to send more men when the battery between San Lazaro and Cartagena had been completed. Three days later, on 10 April, after a failed attack on San Lazaro, the army replied that "[we] find that our remaining force is not sufficient for that purpose; much less for exerting or guarding any batteries ... if he [Vernon] cannot by his sailors not only fire, but guard the said batterys, the troops under our command are in no wise capable of undertaking it".<sup>116</sup>

In his work, Harding points out that Wentworth's decision to stop the advance of the troops was largely condemned by historians in the early twentieth century, notably Richmond. The Spanish had fled Castillo Grande and Manzanillo before the arrival of the British force, they had not been able to pose any resistance to the landing of troops in Texar de Gracias, and on top of that, McPherson's report had provided a detailed description of how to take the castle of San Lazaro. However, as Harding says, there are other things that should be taken into consideration. The communication lines between the battery bellow San Lazar and the ships covered two miles. The enemy had suffered little since the beginning of the attack and had proved capable of a fierce defence in Boca Chica.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, it can be argued that Vernon's hands were tied by the need to keep his ships well manned. For him, those two miles were a very long distance that added to the ten miles between Cartagena's harbour and Boca Chica. Time was running out and unless Vernon took what seemed to him a considerable risk, Cartagena would be lost.

Vernon decided not take the risk, and the first drops of rain signaled the arrival of the rainy season. On 12 April, Vernon called Ogle and Lestock to hold a naval council of war and they decided upon "a safe and honourable retreat".<sup>118</sup> The next day, the army council of war confirmed its decision, and on the 14 there was a general council of war that both the army and the navy attended. Nothing had yet

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<sup>116</sup> Council of War at the head quarters at la Quinta. Wentworth, Guise, Blakeney, Wolfe, Robinson, Lowther, Wynward and Moretón, 10 April 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 40776, fol. 113.

<sup>117</sup> Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, p.111.

<sup>118</sup> Council of War on board the Princess Caroline, Vernon, Ogle and Lestock, 12 April 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 40776, fol. 116.

been done to raise the battery, after a month and a half, there were only 3,567 effective servicemen and there was no prospect of carrying on a siege against such an extensive town as Cartagena. Under these circumstances it was unanimously agreed to desist from the pursuit of the attack. Orders were given for the destruction of the outward defences of the city and the British forces started a slow process of withdrawal until they finally left in May for Jamaica.<sup>119</sup>

During that year, the British expeditionary force still attempted two further attacks on the Spanish, one in the summer against Santiago de Cuba and another in the autumn against Panama. Both were unsuccessful. Meanwhile in Britain, Vernon's letter of the 1 April to Newcastle had led to exaggerated reports, and soon, news of a British victory at Cartagena spread across Europe.<sup>120</sup> For two weeks, the fall of Cartagena was taken for granted. Soon, other reports started to contradict this news, and on 20 June 1741, French agents operating in London reported that "a messenger from Cartagena that carried letters for the Admiralty dated 21 April, informs that our army [the British army] had been severely damaged by the Spanish forces after an attack against the castle of San Lazaro".<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> General Council of War, 14 April 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 40776, fols. 119-20.

<sup>120</sup> For example: San Gil to Villarias, 8 June 1741, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6266.

<sup>121</sup> Extrait d'une lettre de Londres du 20 juin de 1741, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4413: "nous avons reçue un courrier de Carthagene qui porte des lettres à L'aumirauté, seulement datés du 21 avril, avec avis que notre armée devant cette place a été terriblement maltraité para les espagnoles dans l'attaque du fort Saint Lazare et qu'elle a été obligé d'abandonner tous leurs bagages et gagner le bord de la flotte".

## **VI-CONCLUSION**

There are many elements that explain the British failure to take Cartagena de Indias in 1741. There was not a good understanding between the army and the navy and cooperation failed at a crucial moment of the attack. Vernon probably also underestimated both the Spanish capacity and determination to defend their positions, despite recent events such as the Spanish holding of San Agustin. On the face of it, intelligence was not a factor. We have seen that Vernon was supplied with abundant information both by British agents in Europe and through his own local initiatives. Cartagena's defences and strength were well understood. Yet intelligence did play a role. However well informed he was about Cartagena's defences, Vernon was much less clear about the limitations of the Bourbon naval forces in this theatre. This uncertainty in Vernon's mind led to the lack of collaboration between the army and the navy, and thus, to a failure to take Cartagena. Likewise, on the Spanish side, this chapter shows that the Spanish intelligence system in Europe and America succeeded in identifying the destination of the British expeditionary force. As a result, proper dispositions were taken in Cartagena to put the city in a good posture of defence, all of which served to delay the advance of the British army, which contributed significantly to its failure.

## **5-THE BRITISH ATTACK AND THE SPANISH DEFENCE OF THE PACIFIC**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter five explores the British and Spanish gathering of intelligence from 1739 to 1744 and the use to which this information was put before and during the military episodes that occurred in the Pacific during the war. The chapter is organized in five sections. The first explores the British initiatives in 1739 and 1740 to gather information about the Spanish dominions in the Pacific and the subsequent decision to organize a military expedition under the command of Commodore Anson. The second looks at the initiatives taken by the Spanish intelligence system in 1739 and 1740 to discover the intentions of the British government and the decision to send a squadron to the Pacific under the command of Rear Admiral Pizarro. The third section evaluates the military initiatives undertaken by the Spanish colonial authorities in the Pacific to put their dominions in the best posture of defence. The fourth section analyses the use of intelligence by Commodore Anson and the Spanish colonial authorities during the presence of the British squadron in the Pacific and the fifth section continues this analysis by looking at the capture of the Acapulco Galleon.

The first of the publications relating to these military episodes were published by participants in the British expedition or their contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> On the Spanish side, the expedition was also mentioned in the account that Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa wrote on their return from their scientific expedition to South America.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent works that look at the British side were written largely by

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<sup>1</sup> G. Anson, *A Voyage round the World by George Anson* (London, 1748); J. Bulkely & J. Cummins, *A Voyage to the South-Seas, by His Majesty's Ship Wager* (London, 1743); A. Campbell, *The Sequel to Bulkeley and Cummin's Voyage to the South Seas* (London, 1747); I. Morris, *A Narrative of the Dangers and Distresses which Befel Isaac Morris and Seven more of the Crew Belonging to the Wager Store-Ship, which Attended Commodore Anson, in His Voyage to the South Sea* (London, 1750); T. Pascoe, *A True and Important Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas and Round the Globe, in His Majesty's Ship Centurion, under the Command of Commodore George Anson* (London, 1745); J. Philips, *An Authentic Journal of the Late Expedition under the Command of Commodore Anson* (London 1744)

<sup>2</sup> J. Juan. *Relación Histórica del Viaje a la América Meridiona Hecho de Orden de S. Mag.: Para Medir Algunos Grados del Meridiano Terrestre y Venir por ellos en Conocimiento de la*

Anglo Saxon historians. Most of them are biographies of Anson, who came to be First Lord of the Admiralty, and, in some accounts, the “father of the British navy”.<sup>3</sup> There is also work that looks at the expedition as a good case study to analyse the effects of scurvy on the crews before the discovery of the reasons for the disease.<sup>4</sup> Other historians, have paid attention to the shipwreck of the *Wager*, one of the ships in the expedition and the mutiny that followed it.<sup>5</sup> There are also a few publications that focus on the expedition itself. Among them, the most remarkable one is the work of Glyn Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*.<sup>6</sup> Williams’ work is a well informed book and contains references to material from the archive of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, section Correspondance Politique Espagne. Compared with the British, the Spanish side of the conflict has been studied in a smaller number of publications. Moreover, most of the work that covers the Spanish side appears in general studies.<sup>7</sup>

The main contribution of this chapter is a study of the use of intelligence with regards to the military operations that took place in the Pacific during the War of

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*Verdadera Figura y Magnitud de la Tierra y con otras Varias Observaciones, Astronómicas y Físicas* (Madrid, 1748)

<sup>3</sup> W.V. Anson, *The Life of Admiral Lord Anson, the Father of the British Navy, 1697 – 1762* (London, 1912); J. Barrow, *The Life of George Lord Anson* (London, 1839); S.W.C. Pack, *Admiral Lord Anson* (London, 1960); N.W.G. Walker, *With Commodore Anson* (London, 1934)

<sup>4</sup> E.C. Gordon, “Scurvy and Anson’s Voyage Around the World: 1740 – 1744. An Analysis of the Royal Navy’s Worst Outbreak”, *American Neptune*, 44 (1984), 155-66; J. Watt, “The Medical Bequest of Disaster at Sea: Commodore Anson’s Circumnavigation 1740 – 1744”, *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 32 (1998), 572-79.

<sup>5</sup> S.W.C. Pack, *The Wager Mutiny* (London, 1964); P. Shankland, *Byron of the Wager* (London, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> R.A. Houston, “New Light on Anson’s Voyage, 1740 – 4: A Mad Sailor on Land and Sea”, *Mariner’s Mirror*, 88 (2002), 260-70; F.E. Knight, *Captain Anson and the Treasure of Spain* (London, 1959); A.C. Murray, *An Episode in the Spanish War, 1739 – 1744* (London, 1952); P. Sapunar, “Lord Anson en el Pacifico”, *Revista de Marina [Chile]*, 2 (1994), 149-60; S. H. B. Townshend, *Commodore Anson’s Voyage into the South Seas and Around the World* (London and Toronto, 1934); G. Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans: The Triumph and Tragedy of Anson’s Voyage round the World* (London, 1999)

<sup>7</sup> J. de la Concepción, *Historia General de las Philipinas*, 14 Vols. (Manila, 1791), ix; C. Fernández Duro, *Armada Española desde la Unión de los Reinos de Castilla y León (Aragón)*, 6 Vols. (Madrid, 1900) vi. 286-8; P. Gerhard, *Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain 1575 – 1742* (Glendale, 1960); L. Ramos Gómez, “Los Intentos del Virrey Eslava y del Presidente Araujo en 1740 para Obtener Préstamos del Comercio del Perú Desplazado a Quito y la Requisa de 100.000 Pesos en 1741”, *Revista de Indias*, 63 (2003), 649-74; W. L. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (Manila, 1985)

Jenkins' Ear that includes both the British and the Spanish sides. On the British side, the chapter explores how the British government obtained information about the Spanish dominions in the Pacific. This information helped the government to select the right targets and learn the preparations for war that the Spanish might have been making in Europe and America. Ultimately, it enabled the British government to prepare their expeditionary force in the best possible manner. The chapter also analyses the use that Anson made of this intelligence when he arrived in the Pacific. On the Spanish side, the chapter analyses the effectiveness of the Spanish intelligence system in discovering any threat to the Spanish dominions in the Pacific. This information was sent in time for the Spanish government and the Spanish colonial authorities to make the proper military response to the threat. The chapter also analyses the capacity of the Spanish intelligence system in America to discover the position and strength of the British expedition. This information was shared among the colonial authorities and it was followed by a coordinated military response.



## I-BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS IN EUROPE

In the summer of 1739, tensions between Spain and Britain gave some cabinet members a good excuse to revive old designs to attack Spain in the Pacific or even to look for a northern passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific. One of them was the First Lord of the Admiralty, Charles Wager. During the months that preceded the declaration of war, Wager held private meetings in his house to discuss these and other projects, and in the autumn of 1739, he invited several people who were acquainted with the Spanish colonies in the Pacific, to add further information to his existing knowledge. Included amongst them were Hubert Tassel and Henry Hutchinson, two former South Sea Company agents who had spent some time living in the factories that the company had in Havana and Panama respectively, and James Naish, a former factor of the East India Company with experience in Chinese trade. Information provided by Tassel, Hutchinson and Naish proved to be crucial to identify the targets, assess the necessary force and give proper directions to the commanding officer of the British expedition that was eventually dispatched to the Pacific.

Beyond these individual accounts, the only useful information that the British government could obtain in 1739 about the Spanish colonies in the Pacific were the narratives of previous voyages. The most relevant ones were those of William Dampier, Captain George Shelvocke and François Frezier.<sup>8</sup> During his voyage, Commodore Anson used their works as a regular source of information.<sup>9</sup> However, as Glyn Williams also points out in his work *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and Encounters 1570 – 1750*, both the British government and Anson had reasons to be sceptical. Few of these expeditions to the South Seas had ended without controversy and the resultant accounts were often exercises of self-justification. Other concerns were the existing technical difficulties in measuring

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<sup>8</sup> W. Dampier, *A New Voyage round the World* (London, 1697); W. Dampier, *A Continuation of a Voyage to New Holland in the Year 1699* (London, 1709); A. F. Frezier, *A Voyage to the South Sea and Along the Coasts of Chili and Peru in 1712, 1713 and 1714* (London, 1717); G. Shelvocke, *A Voyage round the World by Way of the Great South Sea, Performed in the Years 1719 – 1722* (London, 1726)

<sup>9</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 34.

the winds, the currents, the pressure and the longitude. As a result of these technical problems, a comparison between two different accounts could sometimes give the impression that some of the islands wandered in the ocean.<sup>10</sup>

The first project to send an expedition to the South Seas was made by Wager in July 1739 and it was noted in his report “Attempts that may be made upon the Spanish coast of Europe and America”. In fact, his idea was to target the Philippine Islands, thousands of miles west of America. His project consisted of the capture of the Spanish galleon from Acapulco, which was reckoned to carry between eight and ten million pieces of eight. To do that, Wager thought that two ships of fifty guns, which would involve no weakening of the navy, could be sufficient to intercept one of these vessels. After capturing the galleon, the ships could also be employed to assist the Portuguese to recover the island of Salssete in India, which they had lost in 1737 to the Marathas.<sup>11</sup> There is no record to indicate his sources of information at this point, but it is possible that he had looked at the accounts given after the return of the expedition commanded by Woodes Rodgers to the Pacific. During his expedition in 1709, Rodgers had taken the small ship that accompanied the Manila Galleon.<sup>12</sup>

A second project was drawn up in September 1739 with information provided by Tassel and Hutchinson and it was more ambitious. It included the places where the expeditionary force could get supplies, such as the islands of Santa Catarina, John Norborough, Chilve and Juan Fernandez. It also contained the means to obtain further information about the Spanish colonies when the expeditionary force was in the Pacific, and a list of the places that could be used for rendezvous. Moreover, the project contained a description of the main Spanish cities in the Pacific, their defences, garrisons, and further intelligence about the Acapulco Galleon, as well as some directions on how to capture it. A settlement was to be established in some island off the Pacific coast of America, most preferably Juan

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<sup>10</sup> Williams G, *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and Encounters 1570 – 1750* (New Heaven; London, 1997), pp. 10-1.

<sup>11</sup> “Attempts that may be made upon the Spanish coast of Europe or America”, July 1739 (OS), LC, Wager MSS 17137, Series 8D, Item 181, 7-9, Reel 91, pp. 512-24.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 123.

Fernandez, to destroy the Armada del Sur, to attack the cities of Panama, Truxillo and Guayaquil, to conduct attacks on Santiago de Chile and Lima, and to capture both the treasure of Peru and the Acapulco Galleon. To accomplish these aims, Tassel and Hutchinson proposed a force of four men of war with a compliment of 1,250 sailors, two snows with 120 sailors and two sloops with eighty sailors. The total compliment of troops that were reckoned necessary to achieve the targets was between 1,500 and 2,000 men.<sup>13</sup>

According to the diary of John Norris, the decision to proceed with the expedition to the Pacific was officially taken on 16 October 1739. The government was particularly interested in an attack on Panama because it could have been easily coordinated with the British forces in the West Indies. However, both Wager and Newcastle considered that the body of 2,000 troops that had been proposed had to be substantially reduced. Indeed, it is possible that French hostility, and the threat of an invasion in the autumn of 1739, might have played a significant role in this decision. The answer to their problem came two days later, on 18 October. Wager met Naish, who knew Wager's interest in an attack on the Philippines. Having been involved in the Chinese trade, Naish knew very well the functioning of the trade between China and New Spain by way of the galleons. He also had some relevant information about the defences of Manila and it seems that he convinced Wager that the expedition he had in mind could be achieved with a smaller force than that proposed by Tassel and Hutchinson.<sup>14</sup>

The third project was that proposed by Naish and it aimed to capture the galleon from Acapulco and attack the city of Manila. According to Naish, the fortifications of Manila were not very strong, the garrison consisted of a body of 150 Spanish soldiers, and in case of a British attack, the expeditionary force would be welcomed by the native population of the island. The Philippines did not have many Spanish settlers, and Naish thought that after the fall of Manila, the Spanish government and the garrison could have been easily taken to China. On

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<sup>13</sup> Tassel to Walpole, 11 Sept. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 41-5.

<sup>14</sup> Sir John Norris' daily "Journal of My Proceedings", 11 Oct. 1739 (OS) to 18 Oct. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 28132, fols. 51-6.

the 20 October 1740, Naish proposed that such an enterprise would only require three ships, one sixty, one fifty and one forty as well as a body of only 300 troops.<sup>15</sup>

In November 1739, the British government met to discuss the existing information and to decide on what type of expedition they wanted. On 1 November, Wager also decided to give command of any expedition to Anson. The 300 men that Naish had proposed were reckoned to be too small of a force, and instead it was decided to send a body of 500 soldiers. The expedition would stop at the Plata River, and then it would wait for the best moment to proceed into the South Seas either by the Horn or through the Straits of Magellan. During his cruise from the island of Juan Fernandez to the Isthmus of Panama, Anson would be instructed to commit all kinds of hostilities against the Spanish and to promote rebellion against their colonial authorities. Once the squadron was off Panama, Anson was to attempt to open a channel of communication with the British expeditionary force in the Caribbean and to launch a coordinated attack against the city. After the fall of Panama, Anson would have to choose between returning to Britain by the Horn or by way of China, in which case he would come across the route of the galleon.<sup>16</sup>

In December 1739, discussions among the British ministers focused on whether or not the expedition would make an attempt against Buenos Aires or Montevideo before heading to the south. In November, it was agreed that in his instructions Anson would be directed to wait in the mouth of the Plata for the best moment to cross into the Pacific. According to their information, whereas an attack on Montevideo was an easy enterprise because the city had a garrison of only 200 Spanish soldiers, it was reckoned that an attack on Buenos Aires would require 4000 British troops. If the British attacked Montevideo, the city would have easily fallen. However, the possibilities of the British keeping the city under their control would have been limited as the Spanish would have immediately launched a counter attack from Buenos Aires. Also, the garrison would have depended much

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<sup>15</sup> 20 Oct. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 28132, fol. 57.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Nov. 1739 (OS) to 26 Dec. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 28132, fols. 73-108.

on cooperation with the Portuguese colonies of Sacramento and Nova Collona, and in December 1739, the Portuguese government wanted to remain neutral in the conflict between Britain and Spain.<sup>17</sup>

On 6 January 1740, Newcastle made a proposal in the Cabinet with regards to the necessary force to be sent on the expedition. Present at that meeting there were Sir Robert Walpole, Lord Harrington, Lord Wilmington, Wager and Newcastle himself. In addition to the 500 soldiers, the squadron to be put under Anson's command would consist of the flagship Centurion (1,005 tons, 60 guns, 400 men), the Argyll, which in late March was replaced by the Gloucester (853 tons, 50 guns, 300 men), the Severn (853 tons, 50 guns, 300 men), the Pearl (600 tons, 40 guns, 250 men), the Wager (599 tons, 24 guns, 120 men) and the Tryal (200 tons, eight guns, 70 men). Two merchant vessels, the Anna and the Industry, would carry the supplies of the expedition. Also, on 10 January 1740, Captain Anson was officially appointed commander in chief of the squadron with the rank of commodore.<sup>18</sup>

During the winter and the spring of 1740, the gathering of more information about the Spanish colonies was conducted in two different ways. In London, Charles Wager continued to put together the pieces of information that were given to him and produced useful reports that were handed to Anson before his departure. For example, in April 1740 his "Memorandum of places in old and New Spain, that may be attempted", provided very useful information about the city of Panama.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, in the West Indies, Vernon obtained material information about the location and the value of the treasure from Peru. This had been reported to be in Cartagena in the summer of 1739 and Venon himself had expected to capture it before his attack on Portobello. However, in a letter dated 19 July 1740 he reported that

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<sup>17</sup> 28 Dec. 1739 (OS) to 4 Jan. 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 28132, fols. 109-16.

<sup>18</sup> 5 Jan. 1739 (OS) to 10 Jan. 1739 (O.S), BL, Add. 28132, fols. 117-9.

<sup>19</sup> "Sir Charles Wager's memorandum of places in old and new Spain that may be attempted", 14 April 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fols. 72-99.

They say that all the treasure is removed out of Cartagena, which they compute at about twelve hundred thousand pounds sterling, they having been in daily expectation of being attack'd by me; and that orders were gone, for removing the treasure from Panama, by Guayaquil, to Quito, and that it was actually shipp'd off from Panama, for Guayaquil, in May last, from thence to be sent to Quito.<sup>20</sup>

Also during this time, the British government attempted to conceal the real destination of the expedition to the Pacific. For example, ministers agreed to refer to the expedition as an "Expedition to the West Indies". In the words of Glyn Williams, this "caused more confusion among Admiralty filing clerks and the London press than to the enemy".<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in June 1740, Captain Douglas, who was destined for the West Indies under the command of Vernon, intercepted a Dutch vessel bound from Cadiz to Veracruz, which carried the Viceroy of Mexico. The Viceroy managed to escape in a sloop, but he left behind a letter from Joseph de la Quintana acquainting him of the preparations in Britain. These papers also showed that the Spanish government was not only aware of the destination of Anson's expedition, but had also sent proper instructions from Madrid to Lima, Mexico and Manila to order the colonial authorities there to put their territories in a state of readiness for an attack.<sup>22</sup>

In September 1740, just before the departure of the expedition, the British ambassador in Paris Waldegrave learnt that in addition of alerting the Spanish settlements on the Pacific coast, the Spanish government had recently prepared a squadron to go to the South Seas. This information certainly took the British government by surprise. The squadron consisted of six ships of the line and it had been recently formed by ships from the Ferrol squadron and from Santander.<sup>23</sup> One week later, on 7 October 1740, the British agent operating in the north of Spain from the French port of Bayonne confirmed the presence of six ships under the command of Vice Admiral Pizarro in the port of Santander. There were three

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<sup>20</sup> Vernon to Burchet, 19 July 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/232, fol. 226 .

<sup>21</sup> Willims, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Stone to Carthcart, 7 Aug. 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 32694, fol. 415.

<sup>23</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 28 Sept. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers France, SP 78/224, fols. 72-6.

ships from 60 to 74 guns, one of 46, one of 50 and an English packet boat that had been previously captured by Spanish ships. They had on board a battalion of troops and they were intended for Buenos Aires and the Pacific.<sup>24</sup>

This information must have shattered Anson's hopes of enjoying unchallenged military superiority during his voyage. In the Atlantic, the strength of the Spanish squadron would equal that of the British. But once they were in the Pacific, the Spanish squadron would soon be reinforced with the Armada del Sur and it would enjoy the logistical support of the Spanish ports in America, as well as the full cooperation of the Spanish colonial authorities. The crossing of the Horn was well known for the fierceness of the currents, the ferocity of the winds, and the effects on the ships that ventured there were like a lottery that could bring destruction, delay or both. Indeed, it was probably as a result of information about the Spanish ships shadowing him that it was decided that Anson would not wait at the mouth of the Plata. Instead he would have to continue further south towards the Horn and his squadron would have to enter into the Pacific precisely at the time of the year when the currents and the winds were at their strongest.

Orders for the departure of the expedition were given in Whitehall on 5 September 1740. However, the same contrary winds that prevented the departure of Carthcart's expedition to the Caribbean also impeded Anson's departure until 28 September. On their departure from Portsmouth, the squadron escorted a convoy of 152 ships bound for the American colonies, the levant and the western Mediterranean. Three weeks later, on the 25 October 1740, the expedition arrived at Funchal in Madeira. Here, the British heard news from the captains of some Portuguese fishing ships that had seen the sails of Spanish vessels. This must have been Pizarro's squadron. On 5 November, the British squadron left Madeira at night with no lights to avoid being detected by the Spanish. The squadron headed south bound for the island of Santa Catarina off the southern coast of Brazil, and during its cruise, it lost the first of its vessels, the transport ship Industry.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 12 Oct. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/224, fols. 125-6.

<sup>25</sup> Pascoe, *A True and Important Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas and round the Globe*, p. 6.

The departure of the British squadron under the command of Commodore Anson to the South Seas deserves some further attention because it should not be considered as an isolated event. First, as we have mentioned before, instructions sent to Vernon on 10 July 1740 show that both Vernon and Anson were given a special cipher to attempt some communication across the Spanish colonies.<sup>26</sup> This initiative was intended to facilitate the fall of Panama. Second, in July 1741 Captain Middleton was sent to Hudson's Bay to explore a northern passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Middleton was informed that Anson was expected to be on the coast of California by December 1741, and in case of success, he was directed to look for him to join forces for the capture of the Spanish galleon. However, during the following months there were several setbacks that impeded a proper coordination of these initiatives. In Hudson's Bay, Middleton could not make his way through the ice. In the Caribbean, Vernon's failure to take Cartagena prevented the British forces from exerting control over the Isthmus of Panama. And, as we will see in the next section, Spanish military initiatives succeeded in countering British initial plans in the Pacific.

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<sup>26</sup> The King to Vernon, 10 July 1740 (O.S), BL, Add. 40828, fol. 76.



## **II-SPANISH INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS IN EUROPE**

The Pacific coast of America was the backbone of the Spanish colonial empire. However, because of the long distances from Europe, and the difficulties for an enemy squadron to reach the Pacific by Cape Horn, the Spanish control over this territory had hardly been challenged over the last two centuries. Here, the Spanish dominions were not as well defended as those in the Caribbean. As a result, any rumour of an expedition being prepared to the South Seas had to be treated with the utmost concern. In America, and even more so in the Philippines, where the avisos took more than a year to arrive, it was necessary to alert the colonial authorities to give them time to prepare their defences.

In the summer of 1739, the debate among British Cabinet members about the dispatch of two expeditions, one to the West Indies and the other to more southern latitudes, went beyond the walls of Whitehall. British intentions to send an expedition to the Pacific were confirmed by the Spanish ambassador in The Hague, the Marquis of San Gil. In September 1739, he received information from his informers in Britain that there was talk of sending an expedition to Buenos Aires.<sup>27</sup> Only two months later, on 17 November 1739, in a letter dispatched from London to the Marquis of Villarias, Richmond reported that “they say in a very reserved way that some privateers will be sent to the South Seas”.<sup>28</sup> It is possible to conclude that this information alone was enough to trigger concerns among the Spanish ministers that the British government was planning to send an expedition to the Pacific. As we will see in section three, immediate measures were taken in Madrid to alert the colonies.

In January 1740, French agents in London confirmed that rather than sending privateers, the real intention of the British government was to send an expedition with regular troops. This information was transmitted to the Spanish government by way of the French ambassador in Madrid. In a letter of the 30 January 1740,

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<sup>27</sup> Oliver y Fullana to Villarias, 17 Sept. 1739, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6233.

<sup>28</sup> Traducción de la carta de Richmond, 6/17 Nov. 1739, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908: “Se dize reservadamente que se enviarán algunos corsarios a la Mar del Sur”.

from Amelot to the Count de la Marck, the first reported that “there are letters from England which report that orders have been given to put six frigates under the command of Anson. He has to take them and cross Cape Horn to enter into the South Seas”.<sup>29</sup> Glyn Williams mentions in several of his works that this letter is an impressive testimony to the efficiency of the French secret service. Indeed, the letter is particularly revealing because these details had been agreed by the British government only two weeks earlier.<sup>30</sup> However, by the time that this information arrived in Madrid, several avisos were already at sea bound to America with information that had been provided by the Spanish agents the previous year.

During the spring of 1740, the French and Spanish agents continued to look for more information about British preparations with regards to this expedition to the Pacific. However, in order to do that, they also had to overcome British attempts to thwart their work. For example, British attempts to convince the Spanish that the expedition was destined to the West Indies were soon undermined when it was discovered that the expedition planned to carry more quantities of alcohol than the average quantity for an expedition destined to the Caribbean. It was concluded that the purpose of this alcohol was to help the crews to overcome the low temperatures in the crossing of Cape Horn.<sup>31</sup> In the summer of 1740, after the interception of the Viceroy’s of Mexico correspondence, the British government perhaps took one last initiative to deceive the Spanish government. Rumours that the British expedition was destined to Buenos Aires were probably deliberately propagated to wrong foot the Spanish ministers.

Although the Spanish and French governments assumed that the British expedition was destined for the Pacific, they had reasons to wonder whether it would head for Buenos Aires first. These concerns continued through the summer. On 17 March 1740, the secretary of the Spanish ambassador in The Hague, Nicolas Oliver de Fullana, wrote to Villarias that he had “learnt from a person

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<sup>29</sup> Amelot to de la Marck, 30 Jan. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 463, fol. 35: “Il y a des lettres d’Angleterre qui portent qu’on expédú six frégates sous le commandement de M. Anson qu’ont ordre de doubler le Cap de Horn pour entrer de la mer du Sud”.

<sup>30</sup> Williams, *The Great South Sea*, p 223.

<sup>31</sup> For example: Letter to Miguel de Salcedo, 10 Jan. 1740, AGI, Buenos Aires, Legajo 42.

who is well informed, that although in London it is being published that they plan to attack Buenos Aires, their real designs are for the kingdom of Chile”.<sup>32</sup> But two months later, Richmond was still trying to convince Villarias that rumours that the British expedition was destined to Buenos Aires were deliberately misleading and that its real destination was “to cross Cape Horn to go to the South Seas to loot and destroy everything they come across”.<sup>33</sup>

Also, letters from the Spanish agents included information with regards to the number of ships and troops, and their orders. The letter of the 26 January 1740 from Amelot to de la Marck mentioned the existence of a small squadron of six frigates. Subsequent reports provided by Spanish and French agents did not mention any significant change. For example, on 24 March 1740 San Gil wrote from The Hague that the small squadron in Portsmouth was formed by five ships of the line.<sup>34</sup> On 26 May 1740, he augmented this number to seven, although he did not specify the number of ships of the line, frigates, or transport ships.<sup>35</sup> In the summer of 1740, Bussy introduced some further uncertainty when he reported that in the port of Bristol, there were some privateers with a project in mind to send four ships with 1,500 tons of merchandise to the Pacific.<sup>36</sup> This appears to have been untrue or at least never materialized, but it must have certainly increased the concerns of the Spanish government.

Most of the reports regarding the number of soldiers to be embarked in the squadron mentioned a regular figure of 500 troops.<sup>37</sup> Only on 21 April 1740 did

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<sup>32</sup> Fullana to Villarias, 17 March 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6234: “He sabido por sujeto muy bien instruido que, sin embargo de publicarse en Londres que quieren acometer a Buenos Aires, la verdadera intención es de apoderarse del reino de Chile”.

<sup>33</sup> Extracto de una de las cartas de Richmond a Geraldino, 4 May 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908: “parece haberse mudado el destino de los seis navíos que se creya enviar a Buenos aires, despachándolos ahora por el Cabo de Horno a la Mar del Sur, afin de saquear y destruir quanto encuentren”.

<sup>34</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 24 March 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>35</sup> 26 May 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6263.

<sup>36</sup> Traducción del papel escrito por el Mto Amelot al Marqs de la Mina, 13 June 1740, AGS, Marine, Legajo 396-1, n. 229.

<sup>37</sup> For example: Fullana to Villarias, 24 March 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6234.

San Gil report that, according to the Swedish ambassador in The Hague, the actual number of landing troops could be 600.<sup>38</sup> The difference was certainly small and these figures corresponded with six ships that were reported to be in Portsmouth. The reports also agreed that the ships had been supplied for a period of twenty two months. As time passed, there were some further reports about the cargo of the ships, and on 4 August 1740, San Gil discovered that out “of the seven ships that go to Buenos Aires and the Pacific, five are men of war and two will be loaded with merchandise for contraband in the coasts of Peru and Chile”.<sup>39</sup>

In the summer and the autumn of 1740, the Spanish government was also concerned about the security of Panama.<sup>40</sup> The two British expeditions, the big one under the command of Vernon, and the smaller one under Anson, could very well coordinate their forces to launch an attack upon the city from the two sides of the isthmus. During this time, new reports obtained in London by the Spanish agent Terrascon increased concerns among the Spanish ministers in Madrid. On the 8 September 1740, Terrascon confirmed British intentions to conduct contraband activities in the coasts of Peru and Chile. He also added that their designs included continuing further north than Panama and reaching Acapulco. Here the British ships under the command of Anson would attempt to capture the galleons that covered the route Acapulco-Manila and Manila-Acapulco.<sup>41</sup>

The first reaction of the Spanish government when it had information about the British designs to send an expedition to the Pacific was to inform the colonial authorities in America and the Philippines. Also, in the spring of 1740, the king of Spain gave orders to arm two frigates in the port of Santander to be put under the command of Vice Admiral Pizarro and to dispatch them to the Pacific to reinforce the Spanish naval presence in these parts. However, in the spring of 1740, the

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<sup>38</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 21 April 1740 AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6262.

<sup>39</sup> 4 Aug. 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6263: “Que de los siete navíos que van a Buenos Aires y al Mar Pacífico, los cinco son de guerra y los dos cargados de mercancías para hacer el contrabando en las costas del Perú y de Chile”.

<sup>40</sup> Quintana to Manso, 24 Aug. 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 397-2, n. 1000.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Terrascon, 8 Sept. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6910.

Spanish government still hoped that the threat of a Bourbon invasion on British soil would serve as a deterrent to hold back the departure of the two British expeditions. On the 26 May 1740, San Gil reported to Villarias that “there are some doubts with regards to the departure of the small expedition because they are concerned about our military camp in Galicia, the embargo that we have made on all the transport ships to carry it and the squadrons of Brest and Toulon”.<sup>42</sup>

However, it soon became clear that the Spanish deception with regards to the threat of an invasion had been discovered, and according to the Spanish agents, preparations in Britain proceed as fast as ever. On 10 June 1740, Joseph de la Quintana wrote to the Marquis de la Ensenada with new royal orders. According to these instructions, a new squadron with one ship of the line and two frigates from Ferrol were to go to Santander to join the two in this port. These ships were the Guipuzoca (74), Asia (66), Hermiona (54), Esperanza (50), San Esteban (40) and the transport ship Mercurio. They were to take 500 troops on board from the second battalion of the regiment of Portugal. These troops were well provided with powder, ammunition, foodstuffs and 1,200 muskets.<sup>43</sup> Five days later, after reading the instructions, Torres gave directions to comply with the royal orders.<sup>44</sup>

The decision to send a Spanish squadron to the Pacific under the command of Vice Admiral Pizarro was entirely a Spanish initiative, and not the result of French pressure on the Spanish government as Glyn Williams suggests.<sup>45</sup> On 15 August 1740, Cardinal Fleury wrote to the Spanish monarchs to exhort them to take some initiatives to contest Anson’s squadron. The reply to his letter went on 24 September 1740 when the king of Spain acquainted Fleury with the military decisions that had been taken in the previous months: “[the squadron] that the king has ordered to send to that sea [the Pacific Ocean] is awaiting orders to sail

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<sup>42</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 26 May 1740, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6,263: “se duda mucho de la menor expedición por dicha ausencia del rey, y por el recelo de nuestro campo de Galicia, y embargo en los puertos de navíos para su transporte y de las escuadras de Brest y Tolon”.

<sup>43</sup> Quintana to Cenon de Somodevilla, 10 July 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 358.

<sup>44</sup> Torres to Ensenada, 15 July 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 364.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *The Great South Sea*, p. 223.

under the command of Vice Admiral Pizarro with five vessels that have between fifty and sixty four guns”.<sup>46</sup> However, Williams correctly notes that the collaboration between the Spanish and French systems of intelligence became crucial to learn the moment of Anson’s departure to the South Seas.

In September 1740 the squadron under the command of Pizarro was ready to sail. The Spanish government was not completely sure about whether or not Anson was going to attack Buenos Aires. The Spanish and French agents had discovered what they thought were British intentions to attack Buenos Aires. However, they did not know that the British intelligence had overestimated the Spanish strength in the Plata. Indeed, the British thought that Buenos Aires alone was defended by 4,000 Spanish soldiers, much more than the actual number. Of course, the Spanish ministers were concerned that if Anson had attacked Buenos Aires and Pizarro had crossed Cape Horn, it would have been too difficult for Pizarro to make recross in order to join battle at Buenos Aires. Therefore, it was decided that Pizarro’s squadron should wait until the departure of Commodore Anson and follow him, either into the Plata or straight into the Pacific.<sup>47</sup>

The British squadron sailed from Portsmouth on 28 September, and three weeks later, on 17 October, the French minister Amelot passed on this information to the French ambassador in Madrid. When the French ambassador in Madrid communicated the news, orders were sent to Santander for the departure of Pizarro. However, according to de la Marck, contrary winds in the Bay of Biscay kept Pizarro in port for some days. This setback was the first of a series of problems that were going to hamper Pizarro in the following months. Had he been able to sail on time, Pizarro could have easily intercepted Anson’s squadron either when it was at the island of Madeira or before it got to the Horn. In a letter dated

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<sup>46</sup> The Spanish King to Cardinal Fleury, 24 Sept. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, pp. 63-8: “La que el rey tiene mandado aprestar para dicho mar del su resta proxima a hacerse a la vela, bajo el comando del jefe de escuadra Don Jose Pizarro, compuesta de cinco bajeles de 50 hasta 64 cañones y un paquebot”.

<sup>47</sup> Letter to Pizarro, 3 Sept. 1740, AGS, Marina, 397-2, n. 1022.

on 1 November 1740, the French ambassador wrote from El Escorial that the squadron had finally managed to sail after three attempts.<sup>48</sup>

The Spanish squadron, under the command of Admiral Pizarro, sailed for Maldonado in the Plata. However, during the voyage, on 6 November 1740, the Spanish ships were battered by a storm and Pizarro decided to repair the damages in the Canary Islands. On 13 November 1740, he arrived at the Canary island of Santa Cruz de Tenerife where the ships received the necessary assistance.<sup>49</sup> After being repaired, sometime between November and December 1740, the Spanish squadron sailed from Tenerife bound to the Plata. It arrived on 17 January 1741. Three weeks before, on 21 December 1740, the British squadron under the command of Commodore Anson had arrived at the island of Santa Catarina off southern Brazil.

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<sup>48</sup> De la Marck to Amelot, 1 Nov. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fol. 237.

<sup>49</sup> Pizarro to Cenon de Somo de Villa, 17 Nov. 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 397, n. 989.

### III-SPANISH INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS IN AMERICA

In the autumn of 1739, the Spanish government took very seriously reports that mentioned British plans to attack Buenos Aires as well as to send privateers to the South Seas. As a result, in December 1739, while the British ministers were still drafting orders for Anson, letters in Madrid were being written with orders for the colonial authorities in America to put their territories in the Pacific in a good state of defence. In January 1740, these letters were sent in two different avisos. The first aviso arrived to America by way of Cartagena de Indias with letters for the Spanish authorities in the Philippines, New Spain and Peru. The second aviso was sent to Buenos Aires with letters for the governor of the city and the Viceroy of Peru. The dispatch of avisos with further orders and intelligence continued while the British and Spanish squadrons were being prepared in Europe and avisos continued to cross the oceans even when hostilities started in the Pacific.

The letter from Madrid to the governor of the Philippine Islands was written on 3 December 1739, probably right after the arrival of the letter from Richmond to Madrid. The governor was informed that the British intended to send privateers to the Pacific. He was ordered to take proper initiatives to prevent any British trade with the Philippines, to seize any British vessels that were found and to take the necessary precautions in case of an attack. These precautions related both to the archipelago and the galleons that sailed between Manila and Acapulco.<sup>50</sup> One year later, when Gaspar de la Torre read his instructions, he immediately summoned a council of war in Manila. On 1 July 1741, de la Torre wrote back to Madrid and announced that orders dated on December 1739 had been obeyed and that “the galleon that sails this year for Acapulco has been reinforced with men, arms and artillery”.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Quintana to the Governor and Captain of the Philippine Islands, 3 Dec. 1739, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 384.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Gaspar de la Torre, 1 July 1741, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 255: “tuve por conveniente este negocio en juntas de guerra y hacienda asegurar que el galeón que este presente año sale para Acapulco, con el refuerzo de gente, armas y artillería, que es constante del testimonio adjunto”.



In January 1742, Spanish informers in Canton reported that news from Europe suggested that six British vessels had been sent to the Pacific and that they would reach it via Cape Horn. According to this information, the British expedition was designed to attack the coasts of Peru and New Spain. Also, it was said that the British planned to wait for the Manila galleon by the coast of New Spain and if it did not appear, “they will come to the Marianas and Cape Espiritu Santo, and if these initiatives fail their purpose, they will attack the Philippines and its capital”. Immediately after the receipt of this news, de la Torre ordered the recruiting of all people that could bear arms in the city of Manila and the surrounding area. The recruits were organized in companies according to their class – *españoles, mestizos, naturals y criollos* – and they were given positions to defend in the city when the invaders came. Considerable quantities of rice were taken in and the suppliers of meat were commanded to be prepared to provision the city with cattle at the earliest notice. A letter of the 12 July 1742, from Gaspar de la Torre reported that further orders had been given in Manila and Puerto Cavite to reinforce the fortifications, rebuild those parts of the defences that were in need of repair and to provide them with all the necessary artillery and ammunition. These orders were also extended to the local authorities of all the provinces in the archipelago and complemented with other initiatives. For example, in Puerto Cavite, de la Torre ordered an embargo on all the vessels in the port and defences were prepared to prevent any landing of British troops. In the same letter, de la Torre announced that a message had been sent in the last galleon to Acapulco. In it, he had made an official demand to the colonial authorities in New Spain for a reinforcement of troops to be sent to Manila with their correspondent equipment.<sup>52</sup>

Letters from Madrid to the Vice Kingdom of Peru and the Vice Kingdom of New Grenade were written before the 26 December 1739. On that day, the king of

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<sup>52</sup> Gaspar de la Torre, 12 July 1742, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 255: “Habiéndose difundido por la vía de Cantón en el mes de enero de este año la especie de que seis navíos británicos salían en demanda del cabo de Hornos, para pasar a esta mar del sur, corriendo primero las costas del Perú y Nueva España, suponiéndose que con ordenes de esperar el galeón de esta carrera, en las cercanías de Acapulco, y que en caso de no poder apresarle en aquellos parajes, vendrían a esperarle sobre el paralelo de las islas marianas o este embarcadero sobre el cabo Espiritu Santo y cuando fuesen inútiles unas y otras ideas, entrarían hostilizando todo lo posible estas provincias hasta penetrar a esta capital”.

Spain was told that the Governor of Panama had been particularly informed that there was information relating to British plans “to try something by the Horn”. Indeed, further intelligence obtained by the Spanish agents within the next months confirmed that the British squadron was intending to attack Panama. In his instructions, the governor of Panama, Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, was ordered to remove the treasure of Peru to Lima so that it could be put in greater safety.<sup>53</sup> In the winter of 1740, Lezo sent five tons of iron from Cartagena to reinforce the batteries of Panama and he gave de la Vega recommendations to prepare the city for an attack. He proposed de la Vega, to line ships between the castles of Gloria and San Jeronimo to create a wall of fire that would help to prevent the British squadron from entering into the port.<sup>54</sup>

In Lima, the Viceroy of Peru, the Marquis of Villa García, took steps to protect his territory. For example, a letter dated the 6 July 1740 indicated that instead of taking the treasure to Lima, as the orders from Spain had instructed him, Villa Garcia ordered its shipment from Panama to the port of Guayaquil. From Guayaquil the treasure travelled by land to Quito. This decision was probably taken because Lima, close to the seashore, was more exposed to a British attack than was Quito. Indeed, as we saw in the first section, the project that Tassel and Hutchinson presented to Wager in September 1739 included an attack upon Lima.<sup>55</sup> According to Luis Ramón Gómez, in addition to these security reasons, there was another explanation: if the British squadron arrived in the Pacific it would have been easier to carry the treasure to the Caribbean ports from Quito than from Lima.<sup>56</sup>

Also, in the summer of 1740, the Marquis of Villa ordered the mobilization of one thousand cavalry and one thousand infantry, although due to lack of money both

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<sup>53</sup> Torrenueva to the King, 26 Dec. 1739, AGS, Marina, Legajo 396-1, n. 193: “que se estimase por segura de invasión [de Panama] que puedan intentar Ings por Portovelo o Cavo de Hornos”.

<sup>54</sup> Lezo to Eslava, 13 March 1740, AGI, Santa Fe, Legajo 1021.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from Villa Garcia, 6 July 1740, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

<sup>56</sup> L. Ramos Gómez, “Los Intentos del Virrey Eslava y del Presidente Araujo en 1740 para Obtener Préstamos del Comercio del Perú Desplazado a Quito y la Requisa de 100,000 Pesos en 1741”, *Revista de Indias*, 63 (2003), 649-74.

bodies had to be eventually reduced to five hundred. The cavalry men were organized in two regiments, the first with seven companies and 350 horses under the command of Colonel Diego de Chavez, and the second with 270 horses under the command of Colonel Diego Carrillo de la Presa. The five hundred infantry were organized in ten companies and put under the command of the Marquis of Monterrico. In the meantime, in Callao, new directions were given so that the garrison of 1,299 soldiers, carried out “exercises with the militia for one hundred days”.<sup>57</sup>

From the summer of 1740 to the winter of 1741 Villa completed his preparations with further orders to reinforce the fortifications of Valdivia, Chile, Callao, Guayaquil and Panama. In Callao, for instance, he ordered the raising of two new batteries to reinforce the walls that faced the sea and works were also made to repair those parts of the wall that had crumbled down after the persistent battering of the waves. Villa ordered that a sufficient quantity of powder was sent from Lima to Callao, Valdivia and Concepcion. Also, following his instructions, twelve pieces of cannon, together with the correspondent ammunition and powder, were sent to reinforce the batteries of Guayaquil. In a letter of 14 January 1741, he reported that despite his lack of weapons, he had managed to obey his orders and that Peru was ready, at least in its most important cities, to repel a British attack.<sup>58</sup>

By the spring of 1741, Villa expected that the British expedition would consist of “an squadron of six men of war and one transport ship with artillery, arms, ammunitions and one thousand soldiers to conduct an important operation against Panama”. According to Spanish intelligence, after the fall of Panama, British plans included the reinforcement of its fortifications and extending its control to Portobello. As a result, several ships were employed in observation duties off Juan

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<sup>57</sup> Letter from Villa, 2 Jan. 1741, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489: “De la guarnición de Callao, tengo hoy de tropa pagada mil doscientos noventa hombres, incluidos oficiales, sargentos, cabos de escuadra, tambores y trompetas con el ánimo de adelantarla y lo pidiese la necesidad para que junta esta con las milicias que también he dispuesto tengan señalados cuarteles y hagan ciento días sus ejercicios”.

<sup>58</sup> 14 Jan. 1741, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

Fernandez and in his instructions Villa was directed to put his land and naval forces at the disposal of Pizarro when his squadron arrived in the Pacific.<sup>59</sup>

Letters from Madrid to the governor of Buenos Aires, Miguel Salcedo, were sent in January 1740 and informed him that news from London mentioned rumours of British intentions to conduct an attack on his city. In his instructions, Salcedo was commanded to put Buenos Aires and Montevideo, the two most important cities in the Plata, in a state of readiness. The garrisons of the two cities were to be reinforced with the militia, the surrounding territory was to be covered with cavalry patrols as well as militia and proper dispositions had to be taken to move forces from one place to another at the earliest notice.<sup>60</sup>

In August 1740, another letter sent to Buenos Aires contained further information about the squadron under Anson's command. There were still doubts whether he would attempt something in the Plata before moving into the Pacific. However, the Spanish government seemed to know that before reaching the Plata Anson would stop at the island of Santa Catarina to get water and supplies. According to the Secretary of Marine, if Anson was to make an attempt at the Plata, he would attack the fort that protected the bay of Barragan, and so Salcedo was directed to join the two existing batteries. Also, since Pizarro's instructions included harbouring his squadron in the port of Maldonado on his arrival in the Plata, Salcedo was instructed to find the best way to communicate with him without leaving his post in Buenos Aires.<sup>61</sup>

As we saw in the previous section, Pizarro's squadron sailed from the Canary Islands sometime between November and December 1740 and arrived at Maldonado on 17 January 1741. During the crossing of the Atlantic the squadron

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<sup>59</sup> Letter from Villa García, 31 May 1741, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489: "Me escribe Don Joseph de la Quintana su secretario del despacho universal con fecha de 24 de agosto de dicho año, haberse esparcido saldría luego de Portsmouth el jefe Anson, con una escuadra de seis navíos y otro de transporte con artillería, armas, municiones y mil hombres de tropa para ejecutar operación importante sorprendiendo algún puerto o atacar Panamá con la idea de fortificarla y dándose la mano con Portobello y Chagre, cuyos castillos han demolido".

<sup>60</sup> Letter to Salcedo, 10 Jan. 1740, AGI, Buenos Aires, Legajo 42.

<sup>61</sup> Quintana to Ensenada, 24 Aug. 1740, AGS, Marina, Legajo 397-2, n. 994.

experienced considerable damage. The Mercurio suffered so much that it was decided to leave it in the Plata. In Montevideo Pizarro learnt from Salcedo that Anson had stopped at Santa Catarina from where he had continued his voyage to the South Seas.<sup>62</sup> As soon as he received this news, Pizarro ordered his ships to sail to intercept the British squadron before it reached the Horn. Meanwhile, letters were sent to Chile and Lima to announce the arrival of the squadron at Concepción.<sup>63</sup>

The Spanish squadron reached the Strait of La Maire, the gateway to the Pacific, in March 1741. However, during the crossing, the squadron was battered by storms, and the crews suffered terribly, not least because in his haste to intercept the British squadron, Pizarro had left Maldonado without adequate food supplies. Although orders had been sent to Chile to have foodstuffs ready on their arrival, Pizarro decided to return to Maldonado. A few weeks later, in an undated letter written from Buenos Aires in the spring of 1741, Manuel Diego de Escobedo reported to Joseph de la Quintana the arrival of “the remains of the squadron”. The Guipuzcoa and the Hermiona had been lost and there was a high number of casualties among the crews in the other ships.<sup>64</sup> This inevitably ended the Spanish plans to counter at the British squadron with a superior naval force.

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<sup>62</sup> Letter to Alonso Pérez Delgado, 29 Jan. 1741, AGS, Marina, Legajo 398-1, n. 2

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Villa Garcia, 31 May 1741, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

<sup>64</sup> Escobedo to Quintana, 28 Dec. 1741, AGS, Marina, Legajo 398-1, n. 50.

#### **IV-BRITISH AND SPANISH USE OF INTELLIGENCE IN THE PACIFIC**

The British squadron reached the Pacific in a very bad condition. Anson also had to deal with the unreliability of the information contained in the published accounts on which he was relying for guidance. He soon realized that some of the necessary information had to be obtained locally. The arrival of the British squadron in the Pacific became a new test for the Spanish intelligence system in these part of America, and also, for the colonial authorities, which had to defend their territory. The main military episodes in the Pacific will be discussed in three parts. First, the British attack on the town of Paita; second, the Spanish initiatives to put the Isthmus of Panama in a good defensive posture; and third, the British attempt to capture the galleon from Manila off Acapulco.

The British squadron reached the Strait of La Maire in March 1741, just ahead of Pizarro. In his instructions to the other captains, Anson indicated three places for rendezvous in case the ships were dispersed. First, the island of Socorro; second, Valdivia; and third, the island of Juan Fernandez. As feared, a series of storms broke up the squadron. On 10 April, the Severn and the Pearl were separated, and eventually, their captains decided to return to Britain as a result of the damage that their ships had suffered. Their loss was followed by that of the Wager, which was wrecked on what is known today as Wager Island. On 24 April, the Centurion, Gloucester, Tryal and Anna lost contact with one another. At that point, Anson sailed to the island of Socorro, but short of men of his ship the Centurion, he decided to avoid confrontation with the Spanish in Valdivia and continued his voyage to Juan Fernandez.<sup>65</sup> Eventually, the other captains in the squadron also headed in the same direction.

On the Spanish side, in the spring of 1741, the Armada del Sur consisted of four small vessels under the command of Jacinto Seguro. Following the orders of the governor of Chile, Jose Manso, these ships had been employed to reconoitre the island of Juan Fernandez. The Spanish captains were commanded to dry out the water wells and to exterminate the goats that had been left in the times of the

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<sup>65</sup> G. Anson, *A Voyage round the World by George Anson*, pp. 16-7.

buccaneers. On the arrival of Pizarro in the Pacific, Segurola was to put the ships under his command, and at that point, the Spanish naval force in the Pacific should have been superior to the British.<sup>66</sup> However, in June 1741, Segurola realized that something must have gone wrong as neither Pizarro nor Anson had yet made their appearance. As a result, he decided to move the squadron to Callao.<sup>67</sup> Two weeks later, on 1 July 1741, governor Manso received a letter from Buenos Aires that informed him of the return of the Spanish squadron to the Plata.<sup>68</sup> During the summer of 1741 no more Spanish ships were sent to Juan Fernandez, and the Spanish authorities probably assumed that the British squadron had been destroyed when trying to cross the Horn.

Ironically, the reason why the British squadron did not arrive at Juan Fernandez when the Spanish ships were looking for them was that they were unable to find the island. Whereas the information Anson had gave the correct latitude, Juan Fernandez was thought to be only 45 nautical miles away from the coast of Chile. In fact, the real distance is 323 nautical miles. Fortunately, all the British captains were furnished with George Shelvocke's account, and it is possible that they used it as a source of information when they realized that some of their directions were simply incorrect. According to Shelvocke, Juan Fernandez was 90 leagues from the coast, that is 275 nautical miles and it is possible that the ships' lookouts were able to see the island from that position.<sup>69</sup>

The Centurion, Tryal and Gloucester eventually arrived at Juan Fernandez in June, just after the Spanish had left the island; and the Anna appeared in August. In the past, the island had been the refuge of buccaneers that ventured into the Pacific and it was well known in Europe. Woodes Rogers had described the solitary existence of Alexander Selkirk and this account inspired the publication in 1719 of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Also, in 1720, George Shelvocke had visited the island, and in his account, praised it for the kindness of the climate,

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<sup>66</sup> Letter from Villa Garcia, 31 May 1741, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

<sup>67</sup> Manso to Quintana, 18 June 1741, AGI, Chile, Legajo 186.

<sup>68</sup> 2 July 1741, AGI, Chile, Legajo 186.

<sup>69</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 54.

fertility of the soil, good water and the presence of goats.<sup>70</sup> His account proved to be reliable, but on his arrival, Anson found indications that the Spanish had been on the island very recently. There were pieces of pottery, ashes, remains of food on the shore, and also, the dogs that the Spanish had left to kill the goats.<sup>71</sup>

In September 1741, when Anson left Juan Fernandez, he was determined to follow his original instructions. However, at this point, he desperately needed reliable intelligence. Anson did not know if Pizarro had succeeded in crossing the Horn; he did not know if the war was still going on between Britain and Spain; or if France had joined with Spain. More particularly, he did not know if Vernon had succeeded or failed in the attack on Cartagena de Indias. This information was obtained on 12 September from the Nuestra Señora del Monte Carmelo, the ship carrying letters from the Viceroy of Peru to the governor of Chile. According to these intercepted letters, the squadron of Pizarro had returned to the Plata in a very bad condition, the Armada del Sur was refitting in Callao after having been damaged by a storm and the Spanish thought that the British squadron had been destroyed at the Horn. Meanwhile, Britain and Spain were still at war in the Caribbean and Vernon had failed in his attack on Cartagena.<sup>72</sup>

The failure of the attack upon Cartagena was indeed one of the reasons for Anson to abandon plans to participate in a coordinated attack on Panama. Meanwhile, if the Armada del Sur was under repairs in Callao and the Spanish assumed that his squadron had been destroyed, Anson could use the element of surprise. On 3 October 1741 the Tryal captured the Aránzazu and the Spanish captain proved to be a very good source of information on the best way to attack and “plunder the town of Payta, which, though but a small town, was very rich”.<sup>73</sup> Before the actual attack, other prizes, such as the Santa Teresa de Jesús and the Nuestra Señora del

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<sup>70</sup> Shelvocke, *A Voyage Round the World by Way of the Great South Sea, Performed in the Years 1719 – 1722*, p. 246.

<sup>71</sup> Anson, *A Voyage Round the World by George Anson*, p. 44.

<sup>72</sup> Anson to Captain Mathew, 18 Sept. 1741, BL, Add. 15855, fol. 91.

<sup>73</sup> Philips, *An Authentic Journal of the Late Expedition under the Command of Commodore Anson*, pp. 79-80.



Carmén, were also captured by the British ships and provided further information.<sup>74</sup>

The attack on Paita on 13 November 1741 took the Spanish authorities completely by surprise. Following the advice of the Spanish captain from the Aránzazu, the landing was conducted at night with four boats, each carrying between sixty and seventy men. There were also two Spanish pilots who were forced to act as guides. They entered the harbour undetected and went into the houses, “their beds were as warm as if they got out of them, and their day cloths lay all about their rooms”.<sup>75</sup> As soon as the alarm spread, the Spanish followed the common procedure at the day of the buccaneers and assembled on a hill overlooking Paita. Here they were joined by two hundred mounted militia that were sent from Piura and they prepared an attack to recover control of the city. At that point, Anson gave orders to burn the town, sink some of the prizes, land the prisoners and leave.<sup>76</sup>

Immediately after the departure of the British ships, messengers were sent from Paita to Lima, Santa Fe and Guayaquil. The attack showed that, contrary to what had been assumed in the summer of 1741, the British squadron had succeeded in reaching the Pacific. Without a sufficient naval force ready to oppose Anson, orders were given to put the territory along the Pacific coast of America back to its previous posture of defence, to send further supplies to the troops and to activate all the mechanisms of vigilance. From Guayaquil, a ship was sent to give the alarm in Panama and another was dispatched from Isquande through the river Barbacoas to Quito. As soon as this information reached Panama, on 23 December 1741, the governor of the city Dionisio Martínez de la Vega wrote a letter to inform the government in Madrid of the latest events in the Pacific.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Log Book of the Centurion, 6 Nov. 1741, NMM, ADM/L/C/300.

<sup>75</sup> Philips, *An Authentic Journal of the Late Expedition under the Command of Commodore Anson*, pp. 81-8.

<sup>76</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 117.

<sup>77</sup> Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, 23 Dec. 1741, AGI, Panama, Legajo 356, fols. 162-6.

In the winter of 1742 the security of Panama became the most important concern of the Spanish authorities. In January 1742, governor de la Vega manifested his concern that Vernon and Anson could be preparing to launch a coordinated attack against the city. However, the answer to this threat could not come from New Grenade. The city of Cartagena had been severely damaged during the British siege the previous year and the Viceroy Sebastian de Eslava was still concerned that the British were planning a second assault. The response came from Peru. In Lima, orders were given by the Viceroy, Villa Garcia, to add one vessel to the existing four ships in Callao. Following his orders, on the 22 March, the five ships of the Armada del Sur arrived at Panama with a combined crew of 1,400 men.<sup>78</sup>

In March 1742, Vernon obtained the first news about Anson's Pacific campaign. This information was obtained by the Experiment, her captain having intercepted a canoe that carried a letter from the governor of Panama to the Viceroy of New Grenade, who was at Cartagena. From that letter, Vernon learnt that Anson had made his passage round the Horn, that he had successfully attacked the town of Paita in November and that his presence in the Pacific had caused substantial distress to Spanish trade and communications. In a letter dated the 31 March to Newcastle, he also added that "five ships had come from Lima to Panama in quest of him, and were put to sea again in pursuit of him".<sup>79</sup>

In the Caribbean, news regarding Anson's whereabouts reached Vernon too late to influence his own plans to attack Panama via Portobello. It was not until he got to the isthmus that he realized that his presence there had been particularly helpful for the survival of Anson's ships. Indeed, in a letter written on 1 May 1742 by Vernon to Thomas Corbett, he referred to the news "I have had from Panama, that our arrival at Porto Bello has occasion'd their detaining at Panama the five ships from Lima, that were putting to sea in quest of him".<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Eslava to Campillo, 16 May 1742. AGI, Panama, Legajo 356, pp. 196-8.

<sup>79</sup> Vernon to Newcastle. 31 March 1742 (OS), BL, Add. 40817, fol. 60.

<sup>80</sup> Vernon to Corbett, 1 May 1742 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/232, fol. 329.

During his voyage north, Anson never tried to open a line of communication with Vernon and there is evidence to suggest that even before the attack on Paita, he had already decided to take the galleon rather than conduct a coordinated attack on Panama. In a letter written from Macao in December 1742 to Newcastle, Anson indicated that in November 1741 he had been told, probably by the captain of the Nuestra Señora del Carmen, that the end of December was the usual time for the arrival of the Manila ship at Acapulco. It was at that point that he had resolved to devote all his efforts to intercept and capture it.<sup>81</sup> The plunder of Paita fitted into his instructions, it was an easy target and it must have served to increase the confidence among the crew and to reinforce Anson's own prestige. However, whereas an attack upon Paita probably did not consume more than one or two weeks of his time, a coordinated attack against Panama would have required much more. Its outcome was clearly uncertain and the prospects of booty, and perhaps also glory, could not compare with that of a Spanish galleon.

In Acapulco, the Spanish authorities learnt of the presence of the British squadron on 19 January 1742. This information was obtained by Spanish lookouts in Motines and it was received precisely on the same day that the Manilla Galleon Nuestra Señora del Pilar made her entrance into the port.<sup>82</sup> On 29 January 1742, confirmation came in a letter of 12 January from the governor of Guatemala.<sup>83</sup> The letter contained a report from the Spanish authorities in Piura that had witnessed the British forces during the attack on Paita. According to them "they only have 300 men among the four ships, 90 in the Centurion, 70 in the Gloucester, 45 in the Aránzazu, 40 in the Carmelo and the rest in the other ships".<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Anson to Newcastle, 7 Dec. 1742, BL, Add. 15855, fols. 154-60.

<sup>82</sup> The Viceroy of New Spain to the Governor of the Philippines, 30 Jan. 1743, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 255.

<sup>83</sup> La Audiencia Gobernadora de México, 26 May 1742, AGI, México, Legajo 1505.

<sup>84</sup> La Junta gobernadora, 12 May 1742, AGI, México, Legajo 538: "sólo tienen 300 hombres repartidos en las cuatro embarcaciones, 90 en la capitán, 70 en el Gloucester, 45 en el Aranzazu, 40 en el Carmelo y el resto en los demás barcos de presa".

On 6 February 1741, Anson gave orders to Peter Dennis, third lieutenant of the Centurion to proceed with a boat along the shore to gain intelligence. Some days later, Dennis captured a fishing canoe from Acapulco, which he took back to the Centurion. According to the Spanish fishermen, “there are two ships in the harbour, one belonging to Lima and the other to Manila and the latter is to sail in 15 days”.<sup>85</sup> As soon as he heard this news, Anson ordered his five ships to go to Acapulco with instructions for their captains to keep a distance of ten miles between each other. This initiative was designed to create a cordon that would extend for forty miles outside the port to prevent the galleon from slipping out undetected. Also, in case the galleon had attempted to leave under cover of darkness, he sent two cutters near the shore with orders to get close to the harbour’s entrance each night.<sup>86</sup>

After one month of waiting, the squadron was running out of water and on 26 March 1742 Anson decided to put an end to the cordon. However, before setting sail with the entire squadron, he ordered the Centurion’s cutter to remain off Acapulco. On the 8 April, and probably following Dampier’s “Continuation of a voyage to New Holland in the Year 1699”, Anson discovered the “good fresh water” in the bay of Chequetan. According to Dampier, “a mile and a half from the shore there is a small key, and within it is a very good harbour where ships may careen; there is also a small river of fresh water”.<sup>87</sup> One month later, Anson returned to Acapulco to recover the Centurion’s cutter and to leave the Spanish prisoners. He then ordered the burning of the Spanish prizes, and on 6 May 1742 the Centurion and Gloucester set sail together, bound for China.<sup>88</sup>

In Acapulco, as soon as the Spanish authorities had news of the presence of Anson off the coast of Mexico they held a meeting to discuss what to do. On the 28 February, they decided that the galleon should remain in the harbour until December. A month later, when the cordon was raised, the departure of the British

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<sup>85</sup> Log Book of the Centurión, 20 Feb. 1741/2, NMM, ADM/L/C/300.

<sup>86</sup> Anson, *A Voyage round the World by George Anson*, p. 124.

<sup>87</sup> Dampier, *A Continuation of a Voyage to New Holland in the Year 1699*, p. 249.

<sup>88</sup> Anson to Newcastle, 7 Dec. 1742, BL, Add. 15855, fols. 154-60.

ships to Chequetan only served to convince the Spanish that Anson's intentions were to allow the sailing of the galleon in order to attempt its capture afterwards. On 28 April, while Anson was in Chequetan, it was decided to send an Aviso to Manila to acquaint the Spanish authorities in the island with this decision. The letter must have been written in May, after the departure of the British ships because it said that although Anson pretended to be preparing his return to Europe by way of Batavia, "this should not be taken for granted and further care is required so that he does not capture other vessels".<sup>89</sup>

In the Philippines Islands, on 22 July 1742, governor de la Torre ordered the departure of the Manila Galleon Nuestra Señora de Covadonga. Whether or not the aviso had arrived at Manila by this time is unclear: de la Torre had already learnt by his informers in Canton that Anson had been sent to the Pacific, and his decision to send the galleon was probably taken on the grounds that ships covering the route between Asia and America followed two different routes.<sup>90</sup> When the galleons went from Manila to Acapulco they followed a northern semicircular track that took six months to complete. Meanwhile, those bound from Acapulco to Manila followed a southern route that took three months.

Anson knew that he had to go southwards because this was the advice of Shelvocke and Dampier.<sup>91</sup> However, instead of the usual three months, it took him eight months to reach Canton. Only three days after his departure from Acapulco, the foremast of the Centurion split, and in the middle of June, the same happened to the mainmast of the Gloucester. Also, contrary to the recommendations of Shelvocke and Dampier, the ships were pushed by south winds down to equatorial latitudes dominated by light winds. By the end of June, the ships managed to steer

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<sup>89</sup> La Audiencia Gobernadora, 26 May 1742, AGI, México, Legajo 1505: "el enemigo no se mantendrá en las costas y que desahuciado de la salida del patache, tome la derrota se su restitución a Europa por la Batavia, pero se queda en la jurisdicción del ser con atento cuidado y en observancia de lo que hace, si bien no se pueden tener informe seguro porque no se debe aventurar embarcación para conseguirlo porque no la aprese".

<sup>90</sup> Letter from Gaspar de la Torre, 12 July 1742, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 255.

<sup>91</sup> Dampier, *A New Voyage round the World*, p. 281; Shelvocke, *A Voyage round the World by Way of the Great South Sea, Performed in the Years 1719 – 1722*, p. 434.

North West, but then, the first cases of scurvy broke out and working the vessels became more difficult.<sup>92</sup> On 23 August, a few days after the loss of the Gloucester, the Centurion arrived at the island of Tinian in the Mariana Archipelago. On 20 October, the Centurion left Tinian, and, using some Dutch charts, and further information that had been provided by James Naish, in November 1742 Anson arrived in China.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, the Spanish colonial authorities in America did not know if Anson was planning to return to Europe by the Cape Hope of Good Hope or by Cape Horn. As a result, further military initiatives were taken to strengthen the defences in the colonies. In December 1742, the Viceroy of Lima gave orders to the Belen and the Rosa to sail from Callao to reconoitre the islands of Juan Fernandez and Santa María.<sup>94</sup> Also, in January 1743, the ships were joined by the Esperanza, Captain Mendinueta, and on 21 February, they were put under the command of Pizarro after his arrival from Buenos Aires. The city of Panama continued to be under the protection of the five ships commanded by Captain Pedro Medrona. This is was particularly important because in the Caribbean, the presence of a British squadron in Jamaica continued to be a threat.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Pascoe, *A True Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas and round the Globe in His Majesty's Ships the Centurion under the Command of Commodore Anson*, p. 145.

<sup>93</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, p. 149

<sup>94</sup> Letter from Villa Garcia, 31 Dec. 1742, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

<sup>95</sup> 12 May 1743, AGI, Lima, Legajo 1489.

## **V-THE CAPTURE OF THE COVANDONGA**

The first port where the Centurion stopped at in China was Macao, which was under Portuguese control. From Macao, the Centurion sailed to the Chinese port of Canton, where Commodore Anson took steps to refit and supply the vessel. Even from the time that the Centurion was in Macao, there is very revealing evidence to suggest that Anson's intentions to capture the galleon had certainly survived the long voyage across the Pacific Ocean. He knew that the galleon usually set sail from Acapulco in March and reached Manila in June. In a letter dated the 7 December 1742, to Newcastle, Anson confessed that after refitting the Centurion "if the season of the year should be too far advanced for me to get round the cape of Good Hope I shall employ my self cruizing upon the Spaniards [near] Manila till October".<sup>96</sup>

During his stay in Canton from December 1742 to April 1743, Anson obtained further information about the Spanish galleons, particularly about that coming from Acapulco that year. Joseph Allen, the former surgeon in the Tryal, contacted "a Manila Jesuit with whom he was acquainted with relation to the Spanish ships trading from Acapulco to Manila". He also met a British deserter called Collet, who claimed to have been employed previously in the Spanish service in Manila, and convinced him to join the expedition.<sup>97</sup> Their information must have served to confirm Anson in his belief that the capture of the galleon was still possible. However, at the same time that he was developing his plans, Anson probably grew concerned that his movements were being followed very closely by Spanish agents in Canton. Therefore, it was necessary to deceive the Spanish authorities in Manila and to convince them that his intentions were only to return to Britain by the Cape of Good Hope.

Anson's attempts to deceive the Spanish authorities in Manila consisted of two initiatives, both of which were discovered by the Spanish. The first was to exaggerate the damages that the Centurion had suffered during the expedition and

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<sup>96</sup> Anson to Newcastle, 7 Dec. 1742 (OS), BL, Add. 15855, fol. 160.

<sup>97</sup> Papers of Sir George Lee, Lord of the Admiralty, Undated, NMM, HAR/4, fol. 18.

this objective ran in parallel with the actual necessity to repair the ship. By the beginning of April, perhaps earlier than what he had expected, the Chinese workers finished the repairs in the Centurion and it was in a perfect condition for the seas. There were no excuses to remain there any longer, and on 19 April 1743, he set sail from Macao. The second initiative was to announce publicly his intention to return back to Europe via the Cape of Good Hope. To reinforce this idea, Anson took letters and gifts from East India factors in Macao to Batavia and he wrote in advance to the Dutch governor.<sup>98</sup>

In January 1743, the governor of the Philippines received a letter from one of his agents in China, which informed him of Anson's arrival. The letter was written on 12 December 1742, and the agent obtained a very accurate report with regards to the proceedings of the British expedition since the moment it entered the Pacific until its arrival at Canton. The agent paid particular attention to the condition of the Centurion, which was in a miserable state, without anchors and sails and with many leaks. During the negotiations with Anson, the Chinese authorities had made him promise that he would not try to attack Manila. Indeed, the presence of the British ship in Canton was resented by those traders that awaited the opportunity to send their products to Manila in return for American silver. According to the Spanish agent, he did not think that the Centurion would make an attempt on Manila.<sup>99</sup>

During the following months, the Spanish continued to obtain information about repairs to the Centurion, and in March 1743, the Canton agent's opinion changed dramatically from that held in the preceding December 1742. In January, the Spanish agent learnt that after negotiating with the Chinese a payment of seven or eight thousand taeles, Anson had obtained 120 Chinese carpenters and caulkers to repair the ship. Despite the new improvements, Anson continued to complain about the state of the ship. The contradiction between the reality, and Anson's remarks, led the Spanish agent to suspect that he was planning something against

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<sup>98</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Ocean*, pp. 158-60.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Canton to Gaspar de la Torre, 12 Dec. 1743, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 256.



Manila. In a letter that was written, probably in February 1743 to Gaspar de la Torre, the Spanish agent reported that

The more that the British commander exaggerates the state of the ship and the more he insists that he wants to go to Europe by way of Batavia because he is not in a good condition to take the galleon, the more it is suspected that his designs are otherwise. He does not have 215 men but 350, the vessel is in a pretty good condition and it has 60 guns. The careening of the ship is going so slowly that it seems that he is not in a hurry. I do not think that he will try to attack Manila with such a small force, although he could try to burn some of the ships in the harbour. However, if I am not mistaken, he is coming for the galleon.<sup>100</sup>

When these reports reached Manila, governor de la Torre summoned a Council of war. During the deliberations, in March 1743, the Nuestra Señora del Pilar arrived after a three month voyage from New Spain. It is possible that among the instructions brought in the Pilar in March 1743, the Spanish authorities in Acapulco had announced their intention to send the Nuestra Señora de Covadonga back to Manila as soon as possible. The departure of the Covadonga occurred in March 1743, and almost at the same time, the council of war in Manila decided to arm the Pilar to wait for the galleon in the strait of San Bernadino. The ship was put under the command of Captain Juan Domingo de Nebra, who was reckoned to be an experienced sailor.<sup>101</sup>

The Centurion left Macao on 19 April 1743, and reached Cape Espiritu Santo on the 20 May. Cape Espiritu Santo was a landmark that pointed the galleons to the entrance to the strait of San Bernardino. In June, Spanish lookouts were posted there to make bonfires and help the galleon find its way into the strait of San

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<sup>100</sup> Letter from Canton to Gaspar de la Torre, undated, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 256: “y por más que su comandante exagera el mal estado de su navío y desea aprovechar el resto del monzón para pasar a Batavia y no estar en estado de atacar el galeón sino seguir su camino a Europa, se recela tenga otros designios. Tiene a su bordo trescientos y cincuenta hombres en medio que antes decir no tener más que doscientos y quince, lleva sesenta cañones, y es navío sumamente velero. Ha tenido muchos trabajos en vencer a los mandarines y muchos gastos, habiendo seguido en derechura a Batavia donde no hubieran negado nada, va con tal lentitud en la carena que bien se percibe no lleva mucha prisa, en medio que la monzón par Batavia casi se acaba, cuyas circunstancias comprendidas por la gran prudencia de V.S. y el gran disimulo del comandante no se puede dudar haya algunos designios de mucha importantes. No creo que sus intentos lleguen a atacar la plaza de Manila con tan poca gente pero si podría ir a quemar los navíos que encontrasen en la rada. Pero si no me engaño es ir a atacar el galeón que viene...”

<sup>101</sup> Letter from de la Torre, 2 July 1743, AGI, Filipinas, Legajo 256.

Bernardino, that leads to the port of Cavite. Seems likely that Anson had obtained this material information in Canton from Collet. As a result, to prevent the ship from being discovered by the Spanish lookouts, he ordered the topgallant sails to be taken out. However, as the Spanish sources indicate, the Centurion was discovered and his position reported to Manila.<sup>102</sup> In the meantime, the Centurion remained off Espiritu Santo for more than one month, and during this time the crew conducted drills and exercises to prepare for battle. According to the information supplied by the Jesuit from Manila, and more particularly by Collet, the galleon or the galleons – Anson did not know that the Pilar was already in Manila – were expected in June.<sup>103</sup>

Meanwhile, in Manila, and despite the arrival of reports from the Spanish lookouts in Cape Espiritu Santo that the Centurion was already there, preparations to make the Pilar ready for action went on slowly. Part of the delay was due to the damages that the ship had suffered during the three-month cruise from Acapulco to Manila. But it seems that negligence on the part of Gaspar de la Torre could have also played a major role in this delay.<sup>104</sup> In 1749 he was found guilty of negligence in relation to this episode.<sup>105</sup> The Pilar sailed from Manila at the beginning of June, but before reaching Cape Espiritu Santo, it ran aground in the harbour of San Jacinto in the island of Ticao. Only a few days later, on 20 June 1743, when the Covadonga was making her appearance off Espiritu Santo, it was discovered by one of the lookouts of the Centurion.<sup>106</sup>

The Covadonga's cargo included 1,313,843 pesos in coined silver and 35,862 ounces of silver bullion, under the command of Geronimo Montero. However, the ship was not strong enough to fight the Centurion.<sup>107</sup> In Acapulco, Montero must have learnt of the strength of the British expeditionary force, which had been

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<sup>102</sup> de la Concepción, *Historia General de las Philipinas*, ix. 138.

<sup>103</sup> Anson, *A Voyage round the World by George Anson*, p. 194.

<sup>104</sup> de la Concepción, *Historia General de las Philipinas*, ix. 138-9.

<sup>105</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, p. 272.

<sup>106</sup> Anson, *A Voyage round the World by George Anson*, p. 316.

<sup>107</sup> Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, p. 270.

sailing off the port while he was in harbour. Even so, instead of heading for Manila by the northern island of Luzon, Montero decided to go to Cape Espiritu Santo to enter the strait of San Bernardino. It is possible that this decision was taken after his arrival at the island of Guam. Here Montero was told that when the British expedition had reached the Marianas, it consisted of only one ship. He was impressed by the accounts regarding the condition of the ship and the misery of the crew, all of which served to convince him that his ship was not under serious threat.<sup>108</sup>

The Centurion was certainly a much stronger vessel than the Covadonga. In terms of size, it was 1,000 tons and 124 feet long against the 700 tons and 104 feet of the Spanish ship. In terms of artillery, the Centurion carried 60 guns, whereas the Spanish vessel only had 32 operative ones. Also, whereas the Centurion had been built to be a man of war, the Covadonga was essentially a trading vessel. The only advantage of the Covadonga was its larger crew. During the battle, it became necessary to compensate for this imbalance, and to force the quick surrender of the galleon, Anson ordered most of his crew to be on the main deck. This served its purpose, because the Spanish thought that not only were they fighting against a stronger ship, but also, that they did not have a chance to obtain a victory in a close engagement. The deception worked, and the Spanish surrendered the galleon.<sup>109</sup>

From Cape Espiritu Santo, the Centurion and the Covadonga sailed to China. Both ships had suffered during the battle, and in the next months, while the Centurion was repaired from the damages, several initiatives were taken by the Spanish authorities in Manila – notably, bishop Arevalo – to bring back the Spanish prisoners. On their return to Manila, their accounts were considered in a council of war. The council took the decision to arm four ships of war: the Pilar, the Rosario, the Remedios and the Jerusalem. These ships were put under the command of Antonio Gonzalez Quijano. The plan was to attack the Centurion in the mouth of Canton, or proceed into the China Sea or the Indian Ocean in order

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<sup>108</sup> de la Concepción, *Historia General de las Philipinas*, ix. 155.

<sup>109</sup> Williams, *The Prize of all the Oceans*, pp. 171-5.

to recover the lost treasure. The four ships departed from Cavite on 16 March 1744, only to find that the Centurion had already departed for Europe. During the next year, the presence of this squadron in the China Seas served to cause much disruption to the activities of the East India Company.<sup>110</sup>

After repairing her damages and obtaining the necessary supplies for the return trip, the Centurion set sail from Macao on 15 December 1743. There is no evidence to indicate that Anson had learnt that the Spanish were preparing a squadron to attack him. Six months later, on 15 June 1744, the few surviving members of the expedition arrived in Britain where the entire country awaited them. In London, Anson's voyage round the world was interpreted as a great success.<sup>111</sup> On the one hand, the expedition experienced a high death toll, four ships were lost, the city of Panama was not taken and the British failed to raise rebellions within the Spanish colonies. On the other hand, Anson had succeeded in disrupting Spanish trade and communications in the Pacific. Moreover, Anson's arrival in Britain occurred precisely at the time when there was much resentment at Vice Admiral Mathew's failure to destroy the Bourbon fleet in the Mediterranean in February 1744.

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<sup>110</sup> de la Concepción, *Historia General de las Philipinas*, ix. 195-250.

<sup>111</sup> For example: *General Advertiser*, 18 June 1744.

## **VI-CONCLUSION**

The British capture of the Acapulco galleon Nuestra Señora de Covadonga was, at least in part, the result of successful British intelligence gathering. At the beginning of the war, the British intelligence system obtained the necessary information to identify the potential targets in the Spanish dominions, and the capture of the galleon owed much to this information. However, some information that Anson had been furnished with proved to be unreliable. As a result, much time and energy was devoted to increasing his local knowledge. Lack of reliable information for the voyage must have provided a serious warning to against sending any further expeditions to the Pacific. Meanwhile, in Spain, the capture of the galleon was a terrible loss in what could have been considered otherwise as an efficient and well-coordinated defence of the colonies. At the beginning of the war, the Spanish agents discovered the British intention to send an expedition to the Pacific. Proper orders were given to put the colonies in a good defensive position and a squadron was prepared under the command of Rear Admiral Pizarro. Initial Spanish plans to enjoy superiority at sea were shattered by the loss of Pizarro's squadron in attempting to cross the Horn. One of the consequences of this failure was the British plunder of Paita. Even then, the main Spanish cities in the Pacific were well defended thanks to previous initiatives. There was an effective coordination among the Vice Kingdoms and the communications of information continued between regions.

## CHAPTER 6. SPANISH AND BRITISH OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the British and Spanish gathering of intelligence and the use to which this information was put during the military operations that took place in the Mediterranean during the war. It also serves to explain how the War of Jenkins' Ear merged into the War of Austrian Succession. There are five sections. The first explores the Spanish military preparations in 1740 to create the impression of an expedition to Minorca, and the Spanish gathering of information to assess effectiveness of their deception. The second section looks at the initiatives taken by the British intelligence system in 1740 to obtain information about Spanish preparations against Minorca and their connection with the instructions sent to Rear Admiral Haddock. These Spanish preparations were part of the same scheme designed by the Duke of Montemar in the summer of 1739 and their study complements the analysis in chapter three about the feinted expedition to the British Isles. The third section explores the Spanish plans to dispatch an expedition to Italy in the winter of 1742 and the gathering of information about the British squadron in the Mediterranean that might have impeded the transporting of the Spanish troops. The fourth section analyses the British gathering of information about the Spanish plans against the Austrians troops in Italy and the consequent actions taken by the British squadron in the Mediterranean. The fifth section explores the Spanish and the British gathering of information about the naval situation in the Mediterranean, the arrival of British reinforcements and the Battle of Toulon in February 1744.

The first work that considered the military episodes in the Mediterranean during the War of Jenkins' Ear was published by William Biggs in 1755. *The Military History of Europe. From the Commencement of the War with Spain in 1739 to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748*, was mentioned in chapter three and it contains a detailed sequence of the operations in the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> In 1900, Cesareo

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<sup>1</sup> W. Biggs, *The Military History of Europe. From the Commencement of the War with Spain in 1739 to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748* (London, 1755)

Fernández wrote *Armada Española desde la Unión de los Reinos de Castilla y León*, and mentioned that the designs of the Spanish camp in Catalonia from the summer 1739 to the summer of 1740 were not so much to invade Minorca but to create a diversion of British naval forces to the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later, the first historian to analyse the effect that the Spanish military initiatives in the Mediterranean produced in the Royal Navy during the War of Jenkins' Ear was William Richmond. As has been mentioned in chapter three, his work is well documented with naval material and offers a very detailed account of the British naval operations in the Mediterranean during the war. However, Richmond neglected the use of the diplomatic correspondence and this resulted in his seriously underestimating the importance of intelligence gathering.<sup>3</sup>

After the publication of Richmond's work, the study of military and diplomatic affairs in the Mediterranean during the War of Jenkins' Ear concentrated on the analysis of particular episodes. The Spanish strategy in the Mediterranean and its connection with the protection of America during the first year of war is mentioned in some of the works of Antonio Béthencourt and Jeremy Black<sup>4</sup>. The Spanish feinted expedition to Minorca was studied by Simón Gual Truyol and Miguel José Deyá Bauzá.<sup>5</sup> The military operations of the Spanish troops in Italy and the diplomatic negotiations between the Bourbons and the court of Sardinia were studied by Fernando Gil Osorio Arthur McCandless and Henry Wilkinson.<sup>6</sup> The study of the British naval operations in the Mediterranean, until the battle of Toulon, and British diplomatic initiatives in Turin attracted attention from some

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<sup>2</sup> C. Fernández Duro, *Armada Española desde la Unión de los Reinos de Castilla y León*, 9Vols. (Madrid, 1900), vi. 234.

<sup>3</sup> H.W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739 – 1748*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, 1920). i.

<sup>4</sup> A. Béthencourt Massieu, *Relaciones de España bajo Felipe V: Del Tratado de Sevilla a la Guerra con Inglaterra 1729 – 1739* (Alicante, 1998), pp. 583-5; J. Black, "Anglo-Spanish Naval Relations in the Eighteenth Century", *The Mariner's Mirror*, 77 (1991), 235-58.

<sup>5</sup> M.J. Deyá Bauzá, "El Apoyo Logístico en el Intento de Toma de Menorca de 1738 – 1741", *Actas de la VIII Reunión Científica de la Fundación Española de Historia Moderna. El equilibrio de los Imperios: de Utrecht a Trafalgar*, 2 (2004), pp. 503-17; S. Gual Truyol, *La Expedición de Mahón, 1738 – 1741* (Mahon, 1993)

<sup>6</sup> F. Gil Osorio, "La Batalla de Camposanto", *Revista de Historia Militar*, 41 (1976), 7-28; A. McCandless, *French Foreign Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury 1726 – 174: A Study in Diplomacy and Commercial Development* (Cambridge, 1936); H. Wilkinson, *The Defence of Piedmont 1742 – 1748. A Prelude to the Study of Napoleon* (Oxford, 1927)

historians such as Jeremy Black and Baudi di Vesme.<sup>7</sup> In 1994 and 1995, Reed Browning and Mathew Smith Anderson published two different works entitled *The War of Austrian Succession*.<sup>8</sup> Both historians integrated in the same study the Spanish and British military and diplomatic initiatives in the Mediterranean during the war. However, their primary purpose was to add further understanding to the episodes that took place in central Europe from 1740 to 1748.

As we have seen, the War of Jenkins' Ear was mainly a conflict over trading interests in the West Indies and the main military episodes took place in America. However, chapter three indicated that during the war, Spain used its diplomatic position with France to create the impression that it was about to launch offensive operations in order to hinder and delay the dispatch of British expeditionary forces to America. In the Mediterranean, the Spanish government created a feinted expedition from Catalonia to invade Minorca. This initiative was meant to complement the supposed expedition from Galicia to invade Scotland. Eventually, the Spanish expeditionary force from Catalonia was dispatched to the north of Italy to fight against Austria, which was Britain's main ally on the continent during the War of Austrian Succession. Inevitably, these Spanish initiatives in the Mediterranean consumed substantial resources that could have been dedicated to the defence of America. But, they also had the effect of forcing Britain to send significant numbers of ships to the Mediterranean, weakening its squadrons in America.

This chapter explores the ways by which the Spanish government obtained information about naval preparations in Britain, the strength and location of the British squadron in the Mediterranean, the British defences in Port Mahon and concerns among the British ministers with regards to the security of Minorca. This information was to help the Spanish government assess the effectiveness of its deceptive strategy and to take the necessary dispositions to protect the Spanish

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<sup>7</sup> C. Baudi di Vesme, "L'influenza del Potree Maritimo nelle Guerra di Successione d'Austria", *Nuova Revista Storica*, 73 (1983), 19-43; J. Black, "The Development of Anglo-Sardinian Relations in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century", *Studi Piemontesi*, 12 (1983), 48-60.

<sup>8</sup> M. Anderson, *The War of Austrian Succession 1740 – 1748* (London, 1995); R. Browning, *The War of Austrian Succession* (New York, 1993)



forces in the Mediterranean from the British squadron. The chapter also explores the means by which the British government gathered information about the Spanish and French military and naval preparations, and the diplomatic negotiations between Madrid and Paris during the war. This information was sent to the commander of the British squadron in the Mediterranean, whose instructions included the disruption of the Spanish military and naval preparations as well as the protection of Minorca and Gibraltar from Spanish attack. Also, the intelligence helped the British government to organize the naval preparations so that the British squadron in the Mediterranean could be properly reinforced when necessary.

## **I-SPANISH INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS FOR MINORCA**

In the summer of 1739, the main concern among the Spanish ministers was the defence of the Spanish dominions in America. As a result, in July 1739, the Duke of Montemar proposed that during the military preparations in Galicia, the army in Catalonia should take preparations for an attack on Mahon. Chapter three indicated that the main purpose of this project was to overstretch the resources of the Royal Navy and impede the dispatch of further naval forces to America. However, the actual implementation of this project depended upon French collaboration, and for security reasons, only the king and a few Spanish ministers were acquainted with its real designs. From a political perspective, an expedition against Minorca was in accord with the Spanish determination to recover the territories that had been lost during the War of Spanish Succession. At the same time, the concentration of troops in the Mediterranean was necessary due to the Elizabeth de Farnesio's aspirations in Italy.

The project of Montemar in Catalonia was authorised by Philip V on 4 January 1740, and its scheme was based on a plan that Montemar had drafted in 1738 for the conquest of Minorca.<sup>9</sup> The necessary troops to accomplish it were to consist of twenty-three battalions of infantry, one battalion of artillery, one regiment of carabineers and a company of one hundred and fifty dragoons. The troops had to be taken to Mallorca where they would have to wait to be transported in small sailing craft to a landing site on the island of Minorca. The landing site was referred to as Playa de Bini de Collas, less than three miles from Port Mahon and reckoned to be protected from the winds by the island of Aire. The landing site was deep enough for the landing craft to approach without danger. The landing of troops would be protected by two batteries that would be erected for the occasion. While four battalions would march to Citadella to blockade the town, the other nineteen would attack the castle of San Felipe, in Port Mahon.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Letter to Montemar, 4 Jan. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

<sup>10</sup> Montemar to Villarías, 20 June 1738, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

The Count of Glimes was chosen as the commander of the Spanish expedition, and in October 1740, six battalions of the forty that were destined to Catalonia were transported from Barcelona to Palma.<sup>11</sup> These military dispositions ran in parallel with two other important initiatives. The first was the gathering of intelligence about the British forces in the Mediterranean. This included the acquisition of intelligence about the British squadron under the command of Rear Admiral Haddock, the number of British troops in the island of the Minorca, the strength of the fortifications, the artillery, food, ammunitions, and sentiments of the Spanish population on the island. Also, since the expedition had been planned to be a feint, it was necessary to assess the extent to which the British government was fooled. The second initiative took place within the diplomatic negotiations in Paris and Madrid to sign a treaty of alliance between France and Spain. One of its clauses included French commitment to a combined attack to expel the British forces from Minorca, which suggests that, in the right circumstances, the feint might have turned into a real military operation.

During the summer of 1739, the Spanish ambassador in London, Thomas Geraldino, provided information about the British squadron under Haddock's command. On 16 July 1739, Geraldino reported that two ships of sixty and seventy guns had been sent to the Mediterranean.<sup>12</sup> One week later, on 22 July 1739, he reported that there were nine ships being equipped to be put under the command of Rear Admiral Ogle, and that their destination was again Haddock's squadron in the Mediterranean.<sup>13</sup> According to his reports, other preparations in Britain included the dispatch to Gibraltar of several ships with ammunition for the squadron.<sup>14</sup> In August 1739, Geraldino indicated that the purpose of the British government was to have twenty ships in the Mediterranean to be employed in the protection of the British naval bases of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, and to have some of the ships cruising off Cape Saint Vincent to blockade the port of Cadiz.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, 29 Oct. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2085.

<sup>12</sup> Geraldino to Mina, 16 July 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4120.

<sup>13</sup> 22 July 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4120.

<sup>14</sup> Geraldino to Villarias, 6 Aug. 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4304.

<sup>15</sup> Geraldino to Mina, 6 Aug. 1739, AHN, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 4120.

In the autumn of 1739, the Spanish agents intensified their espionage activities in Minorca. One report dated on 24 January 1739 stated that there were five British regiments of infantry on the island, each with one battalion. Each battalion had ten companies and each company contained fifty men. That meant that the total compliment was about 2,500 troops. Two battalions were quartered in the castle of San Felipe in Port Mahon together with a company of one hundred artillerymen. There was one battalion in the city of Port Mahon, another in Citadella and another batallion in Villa Leon. The troops were “well provided ... with good food supplies, salted meat, wine and bread”. Also, according to the same report, while the biggest ships were at sea, there were eight frigates under the command of Captain Clinton, which were employed in the protection of the island. The sailing of these frigates was organized in two shifts, so that while four of them were in port, the other four frigates would be circumnavigating the island.<sup>16</sup>

Further information about Minorca indicated that in the event of a Spanish landing, the local population would welcome the invaders. On 10 February 1740, orders were given to start the movement of troops to Mallorca. The governor of Mallorca, Joseph Vallejo, sent a report to the Marquis of Villarias containing information that had been obtained from a native from Minorca, who had arrived on Mallorca in the previous November. The informer corroborated information provided by the Spanish agents with regards to the number of British troops, their disposition in Citadella, Port Mahon and Villa Leon, as well as large quantities of food and war supplies. He also mentioned that General Anstruther had taken two important initiatives to mobilize the local population against Spain. One was to man nine privateers with sailors from the island; the other to raise 20,000 men to take up the arms on behalf of George II. However, both initiatives had been in vain, as “people in the island await the Spanish conquest of the island”.<sup>17</sup>

Information obtained by Spanish agents elsewhere in Europe indicated that the British government might have been taking the military camp in Catalonia as a

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<sup>16</sup> Letter to Villarias, 24 Jan. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

<sup>17</sup> Vallejo to Ustariz, 10 Feb. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1268: “Todos los naturales esperan el día en día vayan lar reales armas de S.M. a la conquista de aquella isla”.

serious threat to Minorca. For example, in January 1740, Richmond reported from London that “there is rumour that the Spanish might attempt something against Port Mahon”.<sup>18</sup> One month later, in February 1740, one of his reports explained that it was believed in London that “in Spain there are orders to use all the vessels that they have in the ports to transport a body of troops to Minorca”. The same report mentioned that “His Catholic Majesty has already named the commanders of the expeditions. The Duke of Ormond will command that in Galicia and the Count of Glimes that which goes to Minorca”.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in an intercepted letter dated 20 February 1740, from the British consul in Genoa to the British consul in Naples, the first mentioned that “it seems as if the Spanish, by reason of the armaments in Catalonia, had some designs against Port Mahon”.<sup>20</sup> However, the best way to corroborate that the British government believed the expedition to be serious was to watch for movements of British ships.

Such corroboration was obtained during the embarkation of the Spanish troops. On the 2 March 1740 Montemar wrote to Villarias to inform him that eight British ships had been ordered to sail from their naval base in Gibraltar to Port Mahon. These vessels had been hitherto employed in the blockade of Cadiz. However, under the new circumstances, they had been ordered to reinforce the defences of the island of Minorca.<sup>21</sup> One month later, on 3 April 1740, the Spanish consul in Naples, Cayetano de Arpe, wrote to the Marquis de Ustariz to acquaint him with the information brought recently from Minorca. According to Arpe, the number of ships employed by Haddock for the protection of Mahon consisted of fourteen

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<sup>18</sup> Traducción de los extractos de las gazetas diarias de Londres, 16/27 Jan. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908: “Corre voz de que los españoles intentan algo contra Puerto mahon”.

<sup>19</sup> Traducción de extractos de las gazetas diarias de Londres, 16/27 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Inglaterra, Legajo 6908: “Avisan de España que hay orden de embargar todos los navíos que se hallan en aquellos puertos como assi mismo los que fueren llegando a fin de transportar un cuerpo de tropas a Minorca, adonde se han de inviar también 60 cañones de 24, y municiones de guerra a proporción. S.M.C. ha nombrado ya los generales que deven mandar sus ejersitos. el duque De Ormond, ha de comandar en gefe el que está en Galicia [y] el conde de Glimes el que va a Menorca”.

<sup>20</sup> Jackson to Allen, 20 Feb. 1740, AGS, Estado Nápoles, Legajo 5829, fol. 143 : “Il paraît que les espagnoles, part rapport aux armements qui se font en Catalogne, ont quelques vues sur Port Mahon. J’en ay donne avis, il y quelque temps au Duc de Newcastle, et je viens de le lui confirmer”.

<sup>21</sup> Montemar to Villarias, 2 March 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

men of war. Haddock had given orders to land 500 men to be employed in the defence of the castle of San Felipe, and in Mahon, there were concerns because the French were putting their ships in Toulon to be in readiness to set sail.<sup>22</sup>

Following Montemar's strategy, in January 1740, orders were given for the transports to proceed from Barcelona to Mallorca. This transportation of Spanish troops drew the attention of the British government and orders were given to the ships operating from Gibraltar under the command of Vice Admiral Haddock to abandon the blockade of Cadiz. In his instructions, Haddock was told to sail to Minorca to reinforce its defences.<sup>23</sup> However, as mentioned in chapter three, Haddock's departure also enabled the sailing of the Cadiz squadron to Ferrol. This naval movement coincided with the presence of a strong army in Galicia and the mobilization of the French squadrons in Brest and Toulon. These coordinated movements gave reasons for concern in Britain that the Bourbons were preparing to invade some of "His Majesty's dominions".

The Cadiz squadron consisted of twelve ships of the line, and on 4 April 1740, it sailed to Ferrol. Ironically, on that same day, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, Mina, alerted Villarias that "the last news from Barcelona indicates that either as a result of the storms or due to the lack of vessels, the transportation of the troops to Mallorca is moving very slowly".<sup>24</sup> This was also noticed by the British. In attempting to understand the Spanish decision, the British agents mentioned French refusal to provide necessary cooperation,<sup>25</sup> the actions of the British ships<sup>26</sup> and lack of Spanish funding to pay for the expedition.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the British

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<sup>22</sup> Arpe to Villarias, 3 April 1740, AGS, Estado Nápoles, Legajo 5562.

<sup>23</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock, Newcastle to Haddock, 27 Feb. 1739/40 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fol. 152.

<sup>24</sup> Mina to Villarias, 4 April 1740, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4406: "La empresa de Mahon pudiera satisfacernos, y borrar aquella censura, pero las noticias de Cataluña hablan con tanta pereza de los transportes a Mallorca, sea por los temporales, o por falta de embarcaciones, que es temible se envíen municiones y refuerce la guarnición".

<sup>25</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 23/4 May 1740, TNA: PRO, State Papers Genoa, SP 79/19.

<sup>26</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 23 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers France, SP 78/223, fols. 20-4.

<sup>27</sup> Newcastle to Harrington, 13 July 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 168-70.

missed the most important element. The Spanish ministers had concluded that the recovery of Minorca was not their primary interest.

It is necessary to remember that the presence of forty Spanish battalions in Catalonia appeared to give substance to British concerns. During the summer of 1740, the Spanish agents operating in Minorca continued to report that the British were making military preparations to put the island in a good defensive posture. These preparations can be well appreciated in the report that five sailors from Minorca gave in Palma on 19 August 1740. The sailors had left the island the day before to escape compulsory service in the Royal Navy. According to them, there were thirteen British vessels stationed in Port Mahon. Six of them were employed cruising between Mallorca and Minorca, and the other six remained in port under the supervision of Haddock. The force of this squadron consisted of three ships of the line, six frigates and one bomb vessel. Also, there were concerns that although the transportation of troops had become to a halt, Spain could revive its designs against Port Mahon at any time. For that reason, they had continued reinforcing the defences in the castle of San Felipe.<sup>28</sup>

In the autumn of 1740, after the departure of the Bourbon and British squadrons to the West Indies and the Pacific, the main theatre of operations in the war between Spain and Britain moved from Europe to America. However, Montemar's decision to use the army in Catalonia to draw the attention of the British government to the Mediterranean proved successful. The presence of a strong British squadron in the Mediterranean to protect the island of Minorca and Gibraltar was an important diversion of ships for the navy and hindered the dispatch of reinforcements to the West Indies. Meanwhile, in Spain some ministers expected the king to give orders to divert some of the military resources in Catalonia to the defence of the Spanish dominions in America. Instead, over the following years, the Spanish troops in Catalonia were to be dispatched to the north of Italy to fight against the Austrian army.

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<sup>28</sup> Vallejo to Ustariz, 21 Aug. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1268.

## II-BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AND THE SQUADRON OF VICE ADMIRAL HADDOCK

During the summer and autumn 1739 neither the reports from the British ambassador in Madrid, Benjamin Keene, nor those from other British agents operating in Europe, mentioned that Spain might have been conducting military preparations in the Mediterranean to invade Minorca. In his accounts about the Spanish forces, Keene usually mentioned the existence of a large number of troops, between twenty and thirty thousand men, in Catalonia and Mallorca. Their purpose was assumed to be the control of Catalonia, which had taken the Austrian side during the War of Spanish Succession, and also, to prevent a British invasion of Mallorca.<sup>29</sup> On 14 July 1739, Keene reported that the Spanish forces on the island of Mallorca consisted of six battalions of land troops.<sup>30</sup> Seven months later, the picture that the British agents drew with regards to Catalonia was completely different.

The British squadron in the Mediterranean under the command of Vice Admiral Haddock consisted on a respectable naval force that gave Britain superiority at sea. By March 1740, this naval force had been augmented to seventeen ships of the line, five cruisers, one sloop, three fire ships and one bomb vessel.<sup>31</sup> The main purpose of this squadron was the defence of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, the protection of British trade and the blockading of the Spanish squadron in Cadiz. To accomplish these objectives Haddock's command was divided in two. One part operated from Gibraltar and the other from Port Mahon. We saw in Chapter one that there were several sloops employed to send letters from one naval force to the other. Also, the two squadrons communicated with London by way of the packet boat system operating from Falmouth to Gibraltar, and by way of the ports of Toulon, Genoa and Leghorn, where there were British agents.

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<sup>29</sup> For example: Keene to Newcastle, 15/26 May 1738, TNA: PRO, State Papers Spain, SP 94/130.

<sup>30</sup> Keene to Newcastle, 14 July 1739 (NS), BL, Add. 32801, fols. 117-26.

<sup>31</sup> Admiralty Office, 25 Nov. 1742 (OS), Cambridge University Library, Ch (H), Vol. 17, n. 19



In the winter of 1740, reports provided by the British agents operating in Paris and Genoa suggested that the Mediterranean was about to become a major theatre of operations. On 31 January 1740, Waldegrave in Paris learnt from the Sicilian Abbot that in addition to the existing camp in Galicia, the Spanish government had decided to create a second military camp in Catalonia “which is thought to be intended to attack Minorca”.<sup>32</sup> This information was confirmed three weeks later, on 19 February 1740, in a report that contained information provided by Bussy, or agent 101 as he was known to the British government. According to this report, “they propose to have twenty battalions, and eighty pieces of cannon or mortars, with which they will make and secure their entrenchments [in Minorca]”.<sup>33</sup> From Genoa, on 2 March 1740, British consul Birtles wrote to Newcastle that “the Spaniards continue to carry over troops, guns and ammunitions from Barcelona to Mallorca, in order to transport them in small vessels to Minorca”.<sup>34</sup>

During this transportation of Spanish troops to Mallorca, Newcastle must have had in mind an account of the fortifications at Port Mahon drawn up (probably at his request) in April 1739 by Charles Whiteford, a marine officer. This report indicated three elements to be taken into account in the event of a Spanish landing: the animosity of the local population towards the British troops, the small British garrison, and also the weakness of the castle of San Felipe’s defences. According to the author, the moment the Spanish land, “as by the best information could be had, their number will be so superior that our troops must be shut up in the castle of Saint Phillips [San Felipe]”. However, the walls of the castle were described as “little else than dry stones unskilfully placed, with mortar plaistered upon the front to hide the defects of the work, and several of them are shamefully crack’d”.<sup>35</sup> As a result, it was not difficult to conclude that the defence of Minorca would owe much to the navy.

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<sup>32</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 31 Jan. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/222, fol. 61.

<sup>33</sup> 19 Feb. 1740 (NS), BL, Add. 32802, fol. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 2 March 1740 (NS), PRO: TNA, SP 78/222, fols. 114-6.

<sup>35</sup> Report by Charles Whiteford, 19 April 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 35406, fol. 183.

Indeed, as soon as the British government received the first reports regarding Spanish dispositions in Catalonia, letters were sent to Rear Admiral Haddock with new instructions. For example, the abstract of a letter from Newcastle to Haddock of 14 February 1740 states that “he is immediately to send a sufficient force (if he has not already done it) to prevent any embarkation from Catalonia for Mallorca or towards Minorca, and he is to endeavour, if possible, to destroy the Spanish embarkations”.<sup>36</sup> Ironically, evidence that Haddock had anticipated Newcastle’s orders is contained in the letter that the Duke of Montemar sent to the Marquis of Villarias on the 2 March 1740. According to Montemar, as soon as Haddock received information in Gibraltar with regards to the Spanish embarkation he sailed to Minorca with eight ships of the line.<sup>37</sup> This information must have been provided by one of the ships that Haddock employed off the coast on reconnaissance duties.

The sailing of the British squadron from Gibraltar to Port Mahon enabled the departure of the Cadiz squadron. However, in April 1740, the British government did not know the real designs of the Spanish ships, and on 18 April, Newcastle sent further instructions to Haddock. If Haddock had news that the Spanish squadron had gone to the West Indies, he was to order Ogle with ten ships of the line to proceed to Jamaica and to put himself under the command of Vice Admiral Vernon. If the Spanish ships sailed towards Ferrol, then Ogle was to follow them to Galicia. But if they sailed towards Britain or Ireland, Ogle was to return home.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, Haddock’s intelligence network yielded the necessary information to anticipate the orders that were sent from London by Newcastle. He obtained information that the Spanish squadron had gone to Ferrol, and on 19 April, he dispatched twelve ships of the line under Ogle’s command to the coast of Galicia.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock. Newcastle to Haddock, 14 Feb. 1739/40 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fols. 151-2.

<sup>37</sup> Montemar to Villarias, 2 March 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2036.

<sup>38</sup> Newcastle to Haddock, 18 April 1740 (OS), BL, Eg. 2528, fols. 219-20.

<sup>39</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock, Haddock to Newcastle, 21 April 1740 (OS), Add. 35876, fols. 159-60.

In the spring of 1740, the British intelligence system reported that the embarkation of Spanish troops from Barcelona to Mallorca had come to a halt. The British government attributed this to the actions of the Royal Navy, and the lack of funding to carry on with Spanish operations. In a letter dated the 23 May 1740, Waldegrave told Newcastle that “the [Spanish] court still presses the transportation of the troops to Mayorca with the utmost expedition, but that seven English ships of war laying before that port had made him [the Spanish commander] suspend the execution of his orders”.<sup>40</sup> One month later, Waldegrave reported to Harrington that letters from Barcelona indicated “that the Intendent, who was promised a supply of money to pay troops, had not yet received a penny, and that the officers clamoured much for want of it”.<sup>41</sup> However, even then, further information in the summer of 1740 with regards to the negotiations between Spain and France led the British government to remain on the alert in the Mediterranean.

In the summer of 1740, the British government discovered that during the negotiations between Spain and France, the Spanish government was pressing for a Bourbon expedition to Minorca. On 7 July 1740, Waldegrave reported that his informers in Paris claimed that there were plans that “the Toulon squadron would put to sea and assist the Spaniards in the project against Minorca, reckoning that the twelve Toulon ships, joined with what the Spaniards can muster up at Cadiz and in the Mediterranean will be an over match for Rear Admiral Haddock”.<sup>42</sup> One month later, on 12 August 1740, agent 101 confirmed the existence of Franco-Spanish talks to Newcastle during one of his visits to London as a French diplomat.<sup>43</sup> There were now serious grounds for concern in London. In the Autumn 1740, after the departure of the Bourbon fleets to the West Indies, the total Bourbon naval force in the Mediterranean consisted of ten ships of the line in Cadiz, five men of war in Cartagena and twelve ships in Toulon and Brest. That

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<sup>40</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 23 May 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fol. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Waldegrave to Harrington, 13 July 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fol. 169.

<sup>42</sup> Waldegrave to Newcastle, 7 July 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/223, fols. 144-5.

<sup>43</sup> Newcastle to Harrington, 12 Aug. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Domestic, SP 36/52, Microfilm Part I, fols. 25-6.

made the total number of Bourbon ships twenty-seven, if we count both ships of the line and frigates.

In the autumn of 1740, the British squadron operating in the Mediterranean consisted of nine ships of the line, five frigates, one sloop, three fire ships and one bomb vessel.<sup>44</sup> Orders from Newcastle to Haddock commanded him “to remain at Port Mahon for the defence of that place”. Haddock complied with his instructions, but while he remained in Minorca with most of the ships, several vessels were detached from his squadron to sail off the ports of Toulon, Barcelona and Cadiz. These ships were supposed to gather further information about the military and naval preparations that the Spanish and French were conducting in each of these places.<sup>45</sup> Information obtained by these ships confirmed that although the embarkation of troops from Barcelona to Mallorca had been abandoned, Spain continued to conduct important military preparations in Catalonia. The reports also mentioned considerable activity in Cadiz and Toulon. Soon this information was accompanied by new rumours with regards to Spanish plans to intervene in Italy.

Indeed, in November 1740, the British agents operating in France received a report from Barcelona, probably from the Dutch consul, that the court of Spain intended to send a considerable body of troops to Italy. According to this report, “the design of sending a considerable body of Spanish troops to Italy is so far confirmed by it, that part of the troops designed for that expedition, are said to be actually on their march towards the place of rendezvous”.<sup>46</sup> This report was reinforced by the British governor of Gibraltar, General Hargrave, who reported the existence of rumours among Spanish soldiers in the camp of San Roque. In a letter of 7 November 1740, Hargrave acquainted Haddock that “by a deserter that came in this morning, a good intelligible fellow, he acquaints me that they talk much of the friendship between the Spaniards and France”.<sup>47</sup> As a result, orders of

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<sup>44</sup> Admiralty Papers, 25 Nov. 1742, Cambridge University Library, Ch (H), Vol. 17, n. 19.

<sup>45</sup> For example: Haddock to Captain Smith, 1 Sept. 1740 (OS), BL, Eg. 253,1 fol. 126.

<sup>46</sup> Newcastle to Thompson, 18 Dec. 1740 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/224, fol. 364.

<sup>47</sup> Hargrave to Haddock, 7 Nov. 1740 (OS), BL, Eg. 2529, fol. 43.

the 10 December 1740, from Newcastle to Haddock also included the requirement to “procure the earliest notice, whether their design is to go by land through France, or to embark at Barcelona, or at Antibes, as they did in the last war; and you will endeavour to destroy them in any of the Spanish ports; or if they should go from any port of France, to lie for them so, as to intercept them at sea”.<sup>48</sup>

The British intelligence system was not able to discover the true purpose of the Spanish military camp in Catalonia. However, even if the British agents had realized the real purposes of the Spanish encampment, it would have been necessary to reinforce the defences of Minorca. There is little doubt that had the British government not taken proper defensive measures, the Spanish government would have sent orders to the Count of Glimes to invade the island. The Franco-Spanish negotiations reveal that the Spanish ministers continued to aspire to reconquer Minorca, and if the British had left it poorly defended, the Spanish would almost certainly have seized the opportunity. The British were not entirely wrong fooled, however. During this period, the British diplomatic body and the navy took well-coordinated and efficient initiatives to gather information about military preparations. Indeed, Haddock’s own efforts to obtain information enabled him to understand the Spanish movements before the arrival of letters from London. As a result, Haddock was able to make decisions such as the reinforcement of Minorca in March 1740 with eight ships from Gibraltar and the detachment of twelve ships to Galicia under the command of Rear Admiral Ogle. These decisions were made before the arrival of sloops from Falmouth with instructions from the Duke of Newcastle.

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<sup>48</sup> Newcastle to Haddock, 10 Dec. 1740 (OS), BL, Eg. 2529, fol. 60.

### **III-SPANISH INTELLIGENCE AND THE MILITARY EXPEDITION TO ITALY**

Between November 1741 and March 1742 a body of thirty thousand Spanish troops and fifteen thousand Neapolitan soldiers were sent to the north of Italy. This expedition was launched in the midst of the military operations in Central Europe and its purpose was to conquer the Milanese, Parma and Placentia for the Infante Don Philip. The project owed much to the personal ambitions of the queen of Spain, but it was in accord harmony with the Spanish government's determination to recover the territories that had been lost after the War of Spanish Succession. True, many Spanish ministers would have preferred to devote these resources to defending the colonies in America. However, in historical hindsight, it can be argued that the military objective of this armament continued the role of the feinted expedition to Minorca. During this period, the British government was obliged to send further naval reinforcements to the British squadron in the Mediterranean, first for the defence of Minorca and Gibraltar, and second, to help Austria.

In the autumn of 1740, Cardinal Fleury did not welcome the Spanish designs "of sending an army to Italy, because that will prevent the dispatch of the necessary assistance that America requires at this juncture". In the Mediterranean, Rear Admiral Haddock was reckoned to have fourteen ships under his command, and according to French agents in London, the British government intended to reinforce him with twenty-six more.<sup>49</sup> Fleury had been impressed by the effectiveness of the feinted expeditions to Scotland and Minorca in hindering British naval preparations to send two expeditions to attack the Spanish colonies. In October 1740, he proposed that "if we had a strong squadron the British will be forced to have one to protect their coast and another in the Mediterranean, all of which would serve to prevent further dispatches of naval forces to America".<sup>50</sup> Consequently, in November 1740, the French government began to arm fifty

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<sup>49</sup> Fleury to the Spanish monarchs, 13 Dec. 1740, MAE : AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fols. 334-7 : "Si LL MM CC foncent elles a présent a envoyer une armée en Italie, il leur sera bien difficile de pouvoir en même temps aux besoins de l'Amérique, et je les supplier de me permettre de leur démontrer les inconvénients".

<sup>50</sup> Fleury to the King of Spain, 8 Oct. 1740, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fols. 81-8.

ships, and one month later, the Spanish government similarly prepared twenty of its ships.<sup>51</sup>

The Duke of Montemar, began to plan an expedition to Italy as early as November 1740. These plans included a diplomatic dimension as well as a military one. On the diplomatic side, Montemar manifested the necessity to seek an alliance with Paris and Turin even at the cost of yielding some territories in northern Italy to Piedmont-Sardinia. On the military side, Montemar proposed that whereas the cavalry could travel by land to the north of Italy, the infantry would have to be sent by sea in small convoys that had to be protected by a naval force. Also, according to Montemar, this body of Spanish troops would have to be reinforced with a body of ten Neapolitan battalions of infantry and five hundred cavalry. The two armies would meet in Gaeta where they would prepare for the attack on the Austrian forces.<sup>52</sup>

The Spanish army that was camped in Catalonia consisted of forty battalions of infantry and Montemar proposed to increase it with further regiments of infantry, cavalry and dragoons. The new regiments of infantry were those of Castilla, Ibernia and Velez, encamped in Valencia; the regiment of Irlanda, encamped in Galicia and the regiments of Lombardia and Flandes, which were encamped in Andalusia. The new regiments of cavalry were those of Principe, Sevilla and Montesa, which were in Castile. The regiment of cavalry of Calatrava would also have to participate in the operations, and in November 1740, it was already stationed in Catalonia. The regiments of dragoons that appeared in Montemar's list were those of Reina and Sagunto, which were encamped in Valencia; Belvia and Numancia, which were in Andalusia and the regiments of Pavia and Frisia, that were already in Catalonia.<sup>53</sup> The march of these troops to Catalonia ran in parallel with three other enterprises. First, the gathering of information about the Austrian forces in the north of Italy; second, the diplomatic initiatives to draw

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<sup>51</sup> The King of Spain to Cardinal Fleury, 13 Dec. 1739, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 462, fols. 334-7.

<sup>52</sup> Montemar to the King, 17 Nov. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2085.

<sup>53</sup> Montemar to Villarias, 15 Nov. 1740, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2085.

Sardinia and France to the war; third, the gathering of intelligence about the British squadron in the Mediterranean.

The Spanish intelligence network in Italy obtained information about the Austrian army. According to one letter, provided in the summer of 1741 by the Spanish ambassador in Genoa, Cayetano de Arpe, Austrian troops were evenly distributed among the territories under Austrian control in northern Italy and they consisted of eighteen thousand men. In Mantua, there were 3,500 infantry and some squadrons of cavalry. In Tuscany, there were 3,000 infantry and three squadrons of cavalry. In Florence and Leghorn, there was one regiment of infantry. In Siena, there were 1,000 soldiers. In Ferrario, there were 800 soldiers. In Pisa, there were three squadrons of cavalry. In Parma and Placentia, there were also 4,000 troops and in Milan, 6,000.<sup>54</sup>

The success of the negotiations between Spain and Sardinia was a condition sine qua non for the passage of Spanish troops through French territory. These negotiations were carried out in Paris with French support, and in March 1741 they resulted in a project of alliance between the two countries. The purpose of this project was to send a military expedition comprising 20,000 Spanish troops and 10,000 Sardinian. These troops were intended to campaign together and conquer the Austrian dominions in Italy. Parts of the Milanese were to be given to Sardinia, while the rest of the Milanese and all of Placentia, Parma and Modena were expected to be handed over to Spain and given to the Infante Don Philip. The treaty was to be signed by Spain, Sardinia and France, and it would include the protection of their new territories as well as the existing ones of the king of the Two Sicilies.<sup>55</sup> Eventually, as we will see in section four, these negotiations were discovered by the British agents in Paris, and diplomatic pressure exerted by the British consul in Turin, Arthur Villetes, succeeded in persuading the Sardinian authorities not to sign the treaty.

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<sup>54</sup> Campo Florido to Villarias, 6 Jan. 1741, AGS, Estado Genova, Legajo 5549.

<sup>55</sup> Villarias to Campoflorido, 8 March 1741, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 465, fols. 207-9.



Despite this diplomatic failure, in the spring of 1741, international relations in Europe were altered by the latest developments in the War of the Austrian Succession and they presented a favourable situation for Spanish designs. In May 1741, Spain and Bavaria signed the Treaty of Nympeburg directed against Austria. In the following months, France and Prussia signed a treaty of alliance, and in July 1741, two French armies crossed the Rhine. The first, under Maillebois marched to the frontier of Hanover. Half of the second army marched to invade Bohemia, and the other half joined the Bavarian army in the invasion of Austria.<sup>56</sup> As a result, in the summer of 1741, Cardinal Fleury understood that a Spanish intervention in northern Italy could be beneficial to France because it would create a significant diversion for the Austrian forces.<sup>57</sup>

French support for the Spanish expedition to northern Italy materialized in two ways. First, although the dispatch of the Spanish infantry was to be carried out in small sailing craft, France authorized the passage of the Spanish cavalry and supplies through French territory. Second, in order to protect the Spanish embarkations from the British squadron, France and Spain agreed to provide naval cover in the form of the squadrons from Toulon and Cadiz. Inevitably, this decision could put France and Britain in conflict, particularly if Haddock decided to attack the Franco-Spanish forces. However, according to the French intelligence system, the British squadron in the Mediterranean was inferior to the combined Bourbon fleet.

On 16 June 1741, the Spanish ambassador in The Hague, the Marquis of San Gil, reported that plans to reinforce the British squadron were being hindered by the necessity to strengthen naval forces in home waters. According to his informers in London, “of the forty ships that were designed for the defence of the English Channel, only fifteen are already equipped, although ten others will be ready soon”.<sup>58</sup> However, one week later, on 22 June 1741, San Gil added that according

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<sup>56</sup> Wilkinson, *The Defence of Piedmont, 1742 – 1748*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to the King of Spain, 15 June 1741, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 466, fols. 96-7.

<sup>58</sup> Extraite d’une lettre de Londres du 16 June 1741, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6235: “Des 40 vaisseaux destinés á la garde des côtes et de la Manche il n’y a encore que une quinzaine qui sont équipés, dix autres le pourront également être en peu”.

to the Swedish ambassador in Britain, rather than forty, the total number of ships being equipped in Britain was sixty and their designs were to reinforce the squadron in the Mediterranean as soon as possible with twelve ships.<sup>59</sup> Montemar therefore knew that the dispatch of Spanish troops to the north of Italy was best carried out before the arrival of this British naval reinforcement.

The negotiations over the terms of cooperation between the Spanish and French squadrons were carried out in Paris between the Spanish ambassador, the Prince of Campo Florido, and the French secretary, Amelot. In October 1741, instructions to the commander of the Toulon squadron, de Court, commanded him to sail towards the Straits of Gibraltar to join with the Cadiz squadron under the command of Juan Navarro. The two squadrons were to sail together back to Barcelona, where they would escort the transportation of Spanish troops to the north of Italy. De Court was told that if the British squadron attempted to attack the Spanish fleet, or the Spanish transports, he was to engage the British ships in battle.<sup>60</sup> On the 15 October 1741, thirteen French ships passed by Barcelona. In the meantime, the Spanish lookouts in Cartagena reported that they had seen the British squadron near the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>61</sup> Immediately after receiving this information, Montemar gave orders to proceed with the embarkation.

Montemar ordered the first embarkation of troops on 3 of November 1741, before the arrival of the Franco-Spanish squadron at Barcelona. When he learnt that the British squadron was heading to the Straits of Gibraltar, he ordered Agustin de Iturralde to sail from Cartagena to Barcelona with the three ships under his command. Iturralde's ships escorted the transportation of the Spanish troops that arrived at Orbitello on 20 November 1741.<sup>62</sup> Among those troops, there were the infantry regiments of Reina, Lombardia and Irlanda; the infantry battalion of Velez, which consisted mainly of Swiss soldiers; the cavalry regiment of Sagunto;

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<sup>59</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 22 June 1741, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6266.

<sup>60</sup> Campo Florido to Montemar, 30 Oct. 1741, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2083.

<sup>61</sup> Montemar to Campillo, 21 Oct. 1741, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2084.

<sup>62</sup> Salas to Villarias, 28 Nov. 1741, AGS, Estado Nápoles, Legajo 5834.

four hundred artillerymen and a detachment of engineers.<sup>63</sup> On their arrival, they were to meet fifteen thousand Neapolitan troops under the command of the Duke of Castropiñano that had been recently ordered to move from Naples to Abruzzo.<sup>64</sup>

Montemar himself arrived at San Esteban, Italy, on 10 December 1741. As soon as his arrival was announced in Naples, on the 13 December, orders were given to the Duke of Castropiñano to take command of the Neapolitan army.<sup>65</sup> Montemar had intended to move his army to Modena, which was strategically located between the Austrian duchies and the papal territories of Bologna, Ferrara and Rimini. As Wilkinson noted, Montemar, once in possession of Modena, would have been in a central position to attack the Austrians along either bank of the Po. However, as we will see in the next section, keeping the Spanish army away from Modena was also important for Sardinia. The court of Turin was persuaded by British diplomatic initiatives to take the Austrian side, and in 1742, king Emmanuel III expected that his support for Austria would yield him Lombardy.<sup>66</sup>

In the winter of 1742, the Spanish troops encamped in Catalonia continued to be transported to Italy under the protection of the Franco-Spanish squadron. In the meantime, on 8 January 1742, Montemar ordered the Spanish and Neapolitan troops to Ancona. At the end of January the Spanish troops from the second embarkation arrived at Spezia under the command of the Marquis of Castellar. Montemar ordered Castellar to march to Rimini through neutral Tuscany. By April 1742, the Spanish and Neapolitan troops were quartered along the Adriatic coast from Rimini to Ancona. When the last Spanish body of troops arrived in Italy, Montemar planned to move the army to Bologna, cross the Panaro and invade Lombardy.<sup>67</sup> At that juncture, Montemar probably thought that after the fall of Lombardy, the Spanish and Neapolitan troops would have found it easy to

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<sup>63</sup> Sartine to Campillo, 3 Nov. 1741, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2084.

<sup>64</sup> Letter to Montemar, 3 Nov. 1741, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2088.

<sup>65</sup> Salas to Villarias, 19 Dec. 1741, AGS, Estado Nápoles, Legajo 5836.

<sup>66</sup> Wilkinson, *The Defence of Piedmont, 1742 – 1748*, p. 41.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

march into Parma and Piacenza. A letter dated 16 April 1742 written from Paris by the Count de Bene to the Marquis of Villarias, reported brightly that

We have news from Italy that mentions the successful incorporation of our troops with those of Naples. The soldiers have started to enjoy the benevolences of the spring and it is expected that the military operations of the present campaign will start very soon under the command of the Duke of Montemar.<sup>68</sup>

Ironically, these optimistic remarks arrived in Madrid precisely when the Spanish agents were reporting the arrival of naval reinforcements to the British squadron in the Mediterranean. On the 4 January 1742 San Gil wrote from The Hague that his informers from London had reported that a reinforcement with ten ships had been sent to Haddock under the command of Vice Admiral Lestock.<sup>69</sup> One week later, on 11 January 1742, this report was corroborated by information obtained by Diego Ponce de Leon in San Roque.<sup>70</sup> In March 1742, reports obtained by the governor of Palma, Joseph Vallejo, from a Dutch captain that had stopped at Port Mahon indicated that the total naval force of the British squadron consisted of five ships with three decks, twenty of sixty guns, three fire ships and one sloop.<sup>71</sup> Two weeks later, Joseph Vallejo wrote that in addition to those mentioned in his previous report, it was necessary to add twelve frigates. It appeared that all the British ships were now in a good state, ready to go to sea and their design was to attack the Franco-Spanish squadron in Toulon.<sup>72</sup>

British reinforcements in the Mediterranean disrupted the Spanish plans for the north of Italy. However, by the spring of 1742, the Spanish ministers, must have been confident that the Spanish territories in the Americas would remain intact at

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<sup>68</sup> Bene to Villarias, 16 April 1742, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4416: "De Italia se extiende la gustosa noticia de la total incorporación de nuestras tropas y respecto de la anterior sucedida de las del rey de Nápoles, y de la benignidad, que ya empieza a experimentarse de la presente estación, se espera, que en breve haya de dars principio a las operaciones de la campaña, por parte de su general el Duque de Montemar".

<sup>69</sup> San Gil to Villarias, 4 Jan. 1742, AGS, Estado Holanda, Legajo 6269.

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Diego Ponce de Leon, 12 Jan. 1742, AHN, Estado, Legajo 580.

<sup>71</sup> Glimes to Campillo, 29 March 1742, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 2090.

<sup>72</sup> Vallejo to Campillo, 16 April 1742, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1282.

the end of the war. In the West Indies, the British attack on Cartagena de Indias, and the attempts to attack Santiago and Panama had resulted in a complete disaster. Also, although the presence of Commodore Anson in the Pacific had caused much disruption, letters from Acapulco soon confirmed that the British expedition had failed to raise any rebellion or occupy any major town.<sup>73</sup> The transportation of Spanish troops to Italy had indeed consumed resources that could have been sent to America. But, the supporters of the queen of Spain could claim that, as with the feinted expedition to Minorca, the expedition to Italy had forced Britain to send to the Mediterranean ships that it would otherwise have sent to America.

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<sup>73</sup> La Junta Gobernadora to the Council of Indies, 12 May 1742, AGI, México, Legajo 538.

#### IV-BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AND THE SQUADRON OF VICE ADMIRAL MATHEWS

Even though the main theatre of military operations between Spain and Britain was America, Britain continued to be concerned about the security of Minorca because it was expected that the Spanish government would seize any opportunity to recover it. Once the War of Austian Succession began at the end of 1740, the British government also had to consider the position of its Habsburg ally: Spain was known to have territorial ambitions in Italy, and the Austrian forces there were likely to be attacked. From 1740 to 1743, the British intelligence system sought information about the diplomatic negotiations between the Bourbon powers, the military preparations in Catalonia and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and naval preparations in Cadiz and Toulon. This information was sent to the commanders of the British squadron in the Mediterranean, Vice Admiral Haddock until March 1742, and Vice Admiral Mathews until February 1744.

Information about Spanish plans to obtain the duchies of Parma, Placentia and the Milanese was obtained before the beginning of the hostilities between Spain and Britain. For example, in May 1739, agent 101 discovered that the treaty that Spain and France were negotiating in Madrid and Paris included a clause to provide Spain with these Italian territories.<sup>74</sup> In May 1739, this information was corroborated by the British ambassador in Madrid, Benjamin Keene. Probably through Montijo, Keene learnt that France was attempting to bring the courts of Madrid and Turin into an alliance. Negotiations were being carried out in Paris in the utmost secrecy.<sup>75</sup> One year later, on 24 December 1740, the British ambassador in Paris, Thompson, said that there was a report, probably provided by either 101 or the Sicilian Abbot, “of an alliance offensive and defensive between Spain, Naples and Sardinia, according to which they are to have an army of ninety thousand men in Italy by the month of March”.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Newcastle to Keene, 8 May 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32800, fols. 389-98.

<sup>75</sup> Keene to Trevor, 11 May 1739 (OS), BL, Add. 32800, fols. 346-8.

<sup>76</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 24 Dec. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/224, fol. 339.

British diplomatic initiatives to counteract the negotiations between the Bourbon powers and Sardinia were conducted by the British consul in Turin, Arthur Villettes, and coordinated by Newcastle in London. During the autumn of 1740, Villettes cultivated good relations with the Sardinian First minister, the Marquis d'Ormea. The two men agreed that keeping a balance of power in Europe in opposition to the ambitious views of France was in the best interest of their countries. Then, on 27 December 1740, d'Ormea asked the British government for a subsidy "to increase his military force to the number of five and forty thousand men". D'Ormea said that his intention was that the "frontiers towards France may be put in a perfect state of defence". D'Ormea also requested the presence in the Mediterranean of a strong British squadron to signify "to his Neapolitan majesty, that the least motion on his part, or the least facility he might give to any coup de main of Spain's or France, might render his abode at Naples very precarious and unsafe".<sup>77</sup>

In the summer of 1741, French diplomatic initiatives to bring Turin in to an alliance against Vienna intensified.<sup>78</sup> However, Franco-Spanish military and diplomatic initiatives also served to put pressure on the British government. For example, a letter of 26 July 1741 from Villettes to Newcastle reported that new British terms had just been communicated to the Sardinian court. A subsidy of £200,000 to increase the number of Sardinian troops was agreed. Furthermore, negotiations between Britain and Austria led Maria Theresa to give up the Pavese, the pass of Stradella and the Marquisate of Final to the king of Sardinia if he joined the Austrians. The British government also agreed to increase the number of British ships in the Mediterranean.<sup>79</sup>

In February 1742, Villettes's diplomatic efforts produced a convention between Sardinia and Austria signed in Turin. As Wilkinson notes, under the terms of this convention Maria Theresa undertook to mobilize Austrian forces against the

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<sup>77</sup> Villettes to Newcastle, 27 Dec. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Savoy and Sardinia, SP 92/42.

<sup>78</sup> For example: Villettes to Harrington, 15 July 1741 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 92/43.

<sup>79</sup> Villettes to Newcastle, 26 July 1741 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 92/43.

Bourbon army in Italy, and in particular, to cover Modena and Mirandola, which were considered the bulwark of her Italian possessions. Meanwhile, the king of Sardinia agreed to send a large body of troops to Pavia, Placentia and Parma, which were under Austrian control. The king also agreed that these troops would be put under the command of Count Von Traun, the Austrian general.<sup>80</sup> In the winter of 1742, the British Parliament approved £500,000 to enable the government to form alliances, and enter into engagements for the support of the Queen of Hungary. In a letter dated 2 April 1742, Newcastle informed Villetes that the £200,000 would be sent in four instalments of £50,000 each to the king of Sardinia.<sup>81</sup>

In the autumn of 1740 and winter of 1741, information provided by the British agents about the diplomatic initiatives conducted by France and Spain matched the reports about the Spanish and Neapolitan military preparations for war in the north of Italy. For example, on the 7 December 1740, Waldegrave in Paris received letters from the Dutch consul in Barcelona telling him that the Spanish intended to send a body of thirty or forty thousand troops to Italy.<sup>82</sup> Exactly two weeks later, on 21 December 1740, the British consul in Genoa, Birtles, reported that orders had been given in Naples to prepare fifteen thousand men.<sup>83</sup> In January 1741, General Hargrave reported that the Spanish troops that had been encamped in San Roque (outside Gibraltar) were on the march to Catalonia.<sup>84</sup> In February 1741, Vice Admiral Haddock wrote that some of the battalions in Mallorca were being taken back to Barcelona.<sup>85</sup> Further information obtained by Haddock confirmed that by the spring of 1741, the number of Spanish troops that were

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<sup>80</sup> Wilkinson, *The Defence of Piedmont, 1742 – 1748*, p. 41.

<sup>81</sup> Newcastle to Villetes, 2 April 1742 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 92/44.

<sup>82</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 17 Dec. 1740 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/224, fols. 323-7.

<sup>83</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 10/21 Dec. 1740, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>84</sup> Hargrave to Newcastle, 27 Jan. 1740/1 (OS), TNA: PRO, Colonial Office Papers, SP 90/10, fol. 729.

<sup>85</sup> Haddock to Burchett, 20 Feb. 1740/1 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/380.



encamped from Valencia to Barcelona consisted of between fifty and sixty thousand men.<sup>86</sup>

The British agents also reported that the gathering of troops in Catalonia ran in parallel with the naval preparations in the Spanish and French ports. In the face of these preparations, Haddock demanded a reinforcement of his squadron. He also reported that after such a prolonged service in the Mediterranean, some of his ships needed to be refitted.<sup>87</sup> However, in 1741, the navy was overstretched. British squadrons were fighting in the West Indies and the Pacific, and the war in Europe required a strong squadron to protect the home territories from enemy invasion. As a result, in December 1740, instructions from Newcastle directed Haddock to “remain at Port Mahon for the defence of that place and to continue the gathering of information about any embarkation carrying on at Barcelona”.<sup>88</sup> By May 1741, Haddock’s situation was so desperate because of a lack of sailors that Andrew Stone wrote to authorise him to supply his ships with five hundred soldiers from the garrison of Minorca.<sup>89</sup>

In the summer of 1741, Haddock reported that there were seventeen ships in Cadiz under the command of Navarro and three in Cartagena under the command of the Count of Bene.<sup>90</sup> However, according to the British consul in Faro, Cayley, eight of the ships in Cadiz were merchant ships of the Flota that had been equipped as men of war.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, information about the French fleet was obtained by British agents operating in France and it was sent to Haddock through the usual channels of communication. For example, according to a letter dated 30 April 1741, from Thompson in Paris, there were only eleven ships of the line in

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<sup>86</sup> Letter from Haddock, 29 April 1741 (OS), BL, Eg. 2529, fols. 187-9.

<sup>87</sup> Burchett to Newcastle, 30 March 1741 (OS), TNA: PRO, State Papers Naval, SP 42/24, fol. 114.

<sup>88</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock, Newcastle to Haddock, 18 Dec. 1740 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fols. 143-6.

<sup>89</sup> Stone to Haddock, 14 May 1741 (OS), HL/PO/JO/10/6/483, fol. 90.

<sup>90</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock. Haddock to Newcastle, 19 June 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fols. 169-70.

<sup>91</sup> Cayley to Haddock, 10 March 1741 (NS), BL, Eg. 2529, fols. 151-2.

Brest, although the number of frigates and sloops in Brest, L'Orient and Rochefort was reported to be quite numerous.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, on 2 August 1741, Birtles reported from Genoa that "at Toulon they go on at equipping thirteen ships, and take all sailors that come thither".<sup>93</sup>

In the autumn of 1741, the British discovered the orders to the French and the Spanish squadrons in Toulon and Cadiz, respectively. In September, Andrew Stone wrote to Haddock that "the Toulon squadron, consisting of fourteen ships, were to sail from thence the beginning of this month".<sup>94</sup> On 11 November 1741 Newcastle wrote that "by his letter of Oct. 3<sup>d</sup> ... the Spanish squadron at Cadiz, said to consist of 14 ships, were come bellow the Puntales (as was supposed) to put to sea".<sup>95</sup> On 25 October Thompson reported from Paris that there were letters from Barcelona, probably provided by the Dutch consul, which confirmed that orders had been given to Navarro to be ready to join the French squadron.<sup>96</sup> However, even though he had the information, Haddock could do nothing to prevent the Bourbon squadrons combining as his squadron only consisted of twelve ships of the line and nine frigates.<sup>97</sup>

During the transportation of Spanish troops and the march of Neapolitan soldiers to the north of Italy, the British intelligence system obtained sufficient information to know much about their progress. For example, as early as November 1741, the Admiralty knew that the Spanish troops had begun their embarkation at Barcelona. The British also knew that orders had been given in Naples for 10,000 men to march with a train of artillery to join the Spanish troops.<sup>98</sup> On 10 January 1742, Birtles in Genoa reported that while some troops

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<sup>92</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 30 April 1741 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/225, fols. 251-6.

<sup>93</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 22/2 Aug. 1741, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>94</sup> Stone to Haddock, 15 Sept. 1741 (OS), BL, Eg. 2529, fol. 237.

<sup>95</sup> Abstract of the correspondence between Newcastle and Haddock, Newcastle to Haddock, 11 Nov. 1741 (OS), BL, Add. 35876, fol. 171.

<sup>96</sup> Thompson to Couraud, 25 Oct. 1741 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/226, fols. 241-3.

<sup>97</sup> Council of War on board H.M.S. Marlborough, 7 Dec. 1741 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/380.

<sup>98</sup> Lords of the Admiralty to Newcastle, 20 Nov. 1741 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 42/24, fol. 652.

had already landed at Orbitello, others were still waiting to be embarked in Barcelona.<sup>99</sup> Five days later, Birtles reported the dispatch of a second embarkation that consisted of 10,000 soldiers.<sup>100</sup> On the 13 February, he wrote that their arrival at Porto Spezia had occurred two weeks before.<sup>101</sup> On the 7 March, Birtles reported the dispatch of the third embarkation of 12,000 troops from Barcelona to Porto Spezia.<sup>102</sup> On 21 March, he wrote that letters from Barcelona of the 14 March contained information that while the cavalry was on its way to Italy by way of France, further preparations were being made in Barcelona to make another embarkation.<sup>103</sup>

Between November 1741 and March 1742, the British squadron under Haddock failed to impede the transport of Spanish troops to Italy. During this period, the Navy sent several ships to reinforce Haddock's squadron, and in the spring of 1742, the Royal Navy recovered naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. However, this was only possible thanks to the return to Britain in the autumn of 1741 of nineteen ships of the line that had been intended for the West Indies. In February 1742, the strength of the British squadron in the Mediterranean consisted of twenty three ships of the line, eight frigates, one xebec, three fire ships and a bomb vessel. In March, the number had been increased to twenty-seven ships of the line, seven frigates, one xebec and one bomb vessel. In May, this number had been augmented further to twenty-seven ships of the line, seven frigates, one xebec, three fire ships and one bomb vessel.<sup>104</sup> In March 1742 Vice Admiral Mathews replaced Haddock. But before Mathew's arrival in the Mediterranean, Vice Admiral Lestock took command.

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<sup>99</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 30 Dec./10 Jan. 1741/2, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>100</sup> 4/15 Jan. 1742, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>101</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 13 Feb. 1742 (OS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/227 A, fol. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 24 Feb./7 March 1742, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>103</sup> 10/21 March 1742, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>104</sup> Admiralty Office, Nov. 1742 (OS), Cambridge University Library, Ch (Houghton), Vol. 17, n. 19.

In the spring of 1742, the British squadron in the Mediterranean was now strong enough to disrupt the transportation of Spanish troops to Italy. On the 12 April, Lestock sailed with his squadron to the coast of France and forced the combined Bourbon fleet to take shelter in Toulon. While Lestock remained off Toulon, two small squadrons of three ships each were detached to harass the transportation of Spanish troops. The first squadron was commanded by Captain Barnett and its instructions were “to range along the coast of Provence”. Captain Lee commanded the second squadron and its instructions were to “go to the coast of Catalonia, and look into all the ports, from Roses to Barcelona”.<sup>105</sup> As a result, the Spanish troops could not continue their journey, all of which undermined Montemar’s plans. At sea, the British ships would have destroyed the transports, and by land, the troops could not cross Piedmont because the court of Turin was now a Bourbon enemy. In a letter of 9 June 1742, Birtles told Newcastle, that the “Duke of Montemar has declared to his army, that he will not undertake any thing until he receives a reinforcement”.<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, in the summer of 1742, Captain Martin forced the withdrawal of the Neapolitan army from the north of Italy by threatening to bombard the city of Naples if king Charles VII did not give orders for the return of his soldiers.<sup>107</sup> We know that Mathews was following orders because in a letter dated 30 September 1742, Newcastle wrote to him that “the making an attempt upon Naples had been suggested to you, as well as to Mr. Haddock formerly, in case you and the commander of the Queen of Hungary’s troops in Italy, and such person as should be appointed by the king of Sardinia, should be of opinion, that it was adviseable to do it”.<sup>108</sup> The effect that this withdrawal had on the Spanish troops was devastating for the operations in the north of Italy, as it added to the disruption caused to the last transportation of Spanish troops. In September 1742 Montemar was replaced by General Gages, and according to the British agents in Italy, in

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<sup>105</sup> Lestock to Corbett, 29 April 1742 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/381.

<sup>106</sup> Birtles to Newcaslte, 29 May/9 June 1742, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>107</sup> A.M. Rao, “Carlos de Borbón en Nápoles”, *Trienio*, 24 (1994), 16.

<sup>108</sup> Newcastle to Mathews, 30 Sept. 1742 (NS), BL, Add. 23812, fol. 417.

October “the Spanish army in Italy, was by the last advices from thence, quarter’d at or near Bologna, and consisted of twelve thousand men”.<sup>109</sup>

In the summer of 1742, the Austrian forces under Traun were reinforced with Sardinian troops and over the following months they remained in their camps in Modena, Parma, Placentia and Mirandola, all of them north of the Panaro River. Meanwhile, as the British agents had mentioned in October 1742, Gages moved the Spanish army from Fuerte Urbano to Bologna, which is less than fifteen miles south of the Panaro river. The Spanish army consisted of 14,000 soldiers and Gages solicited further reinforcements. Instead, the letters from Madrid commanded him to engage in immediate action against the Austrian army, which was reckoned to consist of 18,000 troops. Following these orders, on 3 February 1743 the Spanish army crossed the Panaro, and on 8 February, the two armies faced each other near the town of Camposanto. The battle lasted the entire day, and it concluded at dawn when Traun ordered his forces to withdraw from the battlefield. However, instead of chasing the Austrian troops, Gages gave orders to cross the Panaro and return to Bologna.<sup>110</sup>

In historical perspective it can be claimed that the real winners of Camposanto were British intelligence gatherers and the Royal Navy. From 1740 to 1742, British agents obtained information about the diplomatic position between the courts of Madrid, Paris, Turin and Naples. The agents also reported the military preparations in Spain and Naples and followed the naval preparations in the ports of Toulon and Cadiz. This information triggered a successful British diplomatic offensive to persuade the Sardinian court not to sign a treaty with the Bourbons. In the spring of 1742, after the arrival of a sufficient reinforcement, Mathews took several initiatives to undermine the Bourbon army in Italy. In April 1742, the last transportation of Spanish troops was disrupted, and the soldiers could not continue their journey by land. No less importantly, in July 1742, Captain Martin forced the Neapolitan authorities to withdraw their troops after threatening Naples itself with bombardment.

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<sup>109</sup> Birtles to Newcastle, 14/25 Oct. 1742, TNA: PRO, SP 79/19.

<sup>110</sup> Gil Osorio, “La Batalla de Camposanto”, 7-28.

## **V-BRITISH NAVAL REINFORCEMENTS AND THE BATTLE OF TOULON**

The twelve months that elapsed between the Battle of Camposanto in February 1743 and the Battle of Toulon in February 1744 marked the transition from the War of Jenkins' Ear to the War of the Austrian Succession. In the Caribbean, as early as April 1742, Vice Admiral Vernon reported Commodore's Anson failure to raise rebellions and conquer any Spanish city along the Pacific coast of America.<sup>111</sup> One year later, in the spring of 1743 Vice Admiral Charles Knowles failed to take the cities of La Guaira and Puerto Cabello on the Caracas coast. From 1743 to 1748, the war between Spain and Britain in America was largely limited to fighting between privateers.<sup>112</sup> In Europe, after the death of Cardinal Fleury in January 1743, France became more involved in the War of the Austrian Succession and the French government was less reluctant to go to war against Britain, all of which acted as a sufficient deterrent to further British expeditions to America. As tensions between France and Britain escalated, Spain and France signed a treaty of defensive alliance, and in February 1744, the Franco-Spanish fleet at Toulon sailed to engage the British squadron in battle.

Diplomatic negotiations between Spain and France culminated in 1743 with the Treaty of Fontainebleau, which was considered to be "the second family compact, or treaty of secret alliance, defensive and offensive between the crowns of Spain and France". In article four, France committed to declare war on Sardinia and to contribute to the campaign in Italy with thirty five battalions of infantry and five battalions of militia. In article six, France accepted the Spanish desire to put the territories of Parma, Placentia and the Milanese under the rule of the Infante Don Philip. However, with regards to the war between Spain and Britain in America, the most important articles were indeed ten and eleven. Article ten obligated France to take military action if any of the Spanish territories in America fell to the British troops, and article eleven stated the expiration date of the Asiento de

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<sup>111</sup> Vernon to Corbett, 27 April 1742 (OS), TNA: PRO, Adm 1/232, fols. 326-32.

<sup>112</sup> J. Ogelsby, "British Attacks on the Caracas Coast, 1743", *Mariner's Mirror*, 58 (1972), 27-40.

Negros and the Navio de Permiso. The treaty was ratified in Spain on 5 November 1743 and in France on 21 December 1743.<sup>113</sup>

During this period, information about the British squadron in the Mediterranean continued to be gathered by the Spanish and French intelligence systems. For example, on 10 June 1742, Captain Miguel Fernan of the Santa Teresa de Jesus sailed from Port Mahon in Minorca. On his arrival at Palma he reported that most of the British ships were employed between Villafranca and Nice to keep watch upon Toulon. Fernan discovered that there were seven other frigates sailing along the coast of Provence, to harass the Spanish troops under the command of the Infante Don Philip on route to Italy. In Port Mahon, there were always two ships being refitted and communication between Minorca and the British ships was carried out by small frigates.<sup>114</sup> However, it was not until December 1743 that the French agents in London reported the dispatch of further naval reinforcements.<sup>115</sup> It seems, then, that when the Spanish and French governments sent orders for the two squadrons to be put at sea, they must have known that the British ships were not in their best condition.

In the autumn of 1743 the British learnt that negotiations between Spain and France had made a significant breakthrough. This information was provided by the Sicilian Abbot and reported to London on 20 November 1743 by the British ambassador in Paris, Thompson. According to the Sicilian Abbot, Louis XV had declared that “to prevent the ill effect of the reports of the officers lately come from Piedmont, who say it is impossible to force a passage by land” thirty battalions had been ordered to march from Lorraine into Dauphine to accompany Don Philip in his next expedition. Also, according to the account of the Sicilian Abbot, the French Secretary Maurepas had received money to fit the French men of war. Maurepas had “wrote to the ports to have all hands set to work, and that

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<sup>113</sup> A. del Castillo. *Tratados, Convenios y Declaraciones de Paz y de Comercio que han Hecho las Potencias Extranjeras con los Monarcas Españoles de la Casa de Borbón. Desde 1700 hasta el Día* (Madrid, 1843) pp. 367-71: “Segundo pacto de familia o tratado secreto de alianza ofensiva y defensiva entre las coronas de España y Francia”.

<sup>114</sup> Vallejo to Campillo, 12 June 1743, AGS, Guerra, Legajo 1282.

<sup>115</sup> Letter to the Evêque de Rennes. 10 Dec. 1743, MAE: AO, CPE, Vol. 477, fols. 286-7.

the officers are ordered directly to their respective posts". In his letter to Newcastle, Thompson claimed that if something had happened between Spain and France, that must have been "since my return from Fontainebleau".<sup>116</sup> Indeed, if he was using the old style calendar, the Treaty of Fontainebleau had been ratified only five days before.

In the spring of 1743, Vice Admiral Mathews estimated that the combined Bourbon fleet in Toulon consisted of thirty two ships of the line, six frigates and six fire ships.<sup>117</sup> Six months later, in a letter dated 21 September 1743, Mathews reported to Newcastle that the Spanish and French captains had started to take dispositions that seemed to suggest that they were able to sail. According to this letter, "the French at Toulon are careening all their ships, have called in their seamen and ... they work as if they were to put to sea with the utmost expedition".<sup>118</sup> At the same time, British agents Luis d'Acuntia and de la Cerda were operating in Brest and Rochefort. On 25 December 1743, Thompson was able to report to Newcastle that there were fourteen ships of the line and three frigates in Brest and three ships of the line and two frigates in Rochefort. According to Thompson, although these ships were intended for the Mediterranean, it was not clear if they were heading to Naples or Toulon.<sup>119</sup>

However, the Brest squadron was actually meant to provoke concern in Britain and so prevent the dispatch of further reinforcements to the British squadron in the Mediterranean. This, in essence, was another attempt at deception. On the 10 December 1743, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, Campo Florido, reported to Villarias that French ministers Amelot and Maurepas had learnt that Britain was preparing to send a reinforcement to the British squadron under the command of Vice Admiral Mathews. The French government decided to give orders so that the Franco-Spanish squadron in Toulon could sail from that port on 20 January 1743. Their departure was to be accompanied by that of the squadrons in Brest and

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<sup>116</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 20 Nov. 1743 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/229, fol. 54.

<sup>117</sup> Mathews to Newcastle, 13 March 1742/3 (OS), NMM: TUN/189, fols. 27-8.

<sup>118</sup> 21 Sept. 1743 (OS), NMM, TUN/189, fol. 48.

<sup>119</sup> Thompson to Newcastle, 25 Dec. 1743 (NS), TNA: PRO, SP 78/229, fols. 88-90.



Rochefort, and according to the Spanish ambassador in Paris, their purpose was “to contain the English and to oblige them not to send their ships to the Mediterranean”.<sup>120</sup>

In December 1743 the British government was concerned that the Brest squadron might be used against Britain itself and the reinforcement to Mathews therefore had to be reduced. On the 13 December 1743, Newcastle informed Mathews that a squadron formed by the Kingston, Princessa, Elizabeth, Berwick, Guernsey and Boyne, were to be immediately sent to him. The ships arrived to the Mediterranean on the 11 January 1744, and the 14 Mathews replied that “all I say now is, that if the ships from Brest do not get to Toulon, I hope we shall be able to do our duty with those now at Toulon”.<sup>121</sup> On the 23 December 1743 Newcastle wrote a second letter to inform Mathews that “you shall have farther reinforcements according to the advices we shall have of the number of ships that shall sail from Brest or Rochefort”.<sup>122</sup> However, on 26 January 1744, Captain Broderick reported the departure of the Brest squadron consisting of twenty one ships and one week later, on 3 February 1744, Newcastle revealed that “the uncertainty of the destination of that squadron and the necessity there was of keeping a sufficient number of ships for the defence of these kingdoms” was a enough reason for not sending further reinforcements.<sup>123</sup>

The departure of the Bourbon squadron from Toulon on 19 February 1744 led to a battle between the two fleets. The engagement took place off Cape Sicie, and today it is known as the Battle of Toulon. While the Bourbon squadron consisted of twenty eight ships of the line, carrying 1,806 guns and 19,100 men, the British consisted of thirty two ships of the line, carrying 2,208 guns and 16,585 men. On the 22 February 1744, the Bourbons sailed eastwards with de Court in the avant-garde and Navarro in the rearguard. The British squadron approached it describing

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<sup>120</sup> Campo Florido to Villarias, 10 Dec. 1743, AGS, Estado Francia, Legajo 4436: “para contener a los ingleses a que no envíen al Mediterráneo las suyas”.

<sup>121</sup> Mathews to Newcastle, 14 Jan. 1743/4 (OS), NMM, TUN/189, fols. 65-6.

<sup>122</sup> Newcastle to Mathews, 23 Dec. 1743 (NS), NMM, TUN/189, fols. 57-8.

<sup>123</sup> 3 Feb. 1743/4 (OS), NMM, TUN/189, fols. 66-7.

a curve from the northeast with Rear Admiral Rowley in the avant-garde, Vice Admiral Mathews in the middle and Rear Admiral Lestock in the rearguard. The two squadrons exchanged fire as they ran parallel to each other and moved eastwards. However, the position of Lestock in the rear impeded the British squadron from maximizing its fire power. After this first exchange of fire, there were some further engagements between the Spanish ships and those in the rear guard of the British squadron. At dawn, some French ships were sent to assist the Spanish. The two squadrons assembled together and the Bourbon fleets sailed to the northwest. During the next days, although the two squadrons remained in sight of each other, Mathews decided not to chase the Bourbon ships. Eventually, the British ships returned to their naval base in Port Mahon, and the Spanish and French navies sailed to Cartagena.<sup>124</sup>

In Britain, this battle was seen as a failure. Two years later, in 1746, a court martial found Mathews guilty of negligence for not pursuing the Bourbon fleet and he was dismissed from the navy.<sup>125</sup> However, in the twentieth century, historians have debated how much Mathews was at fault. Whereas some historians such as Richmond blame Lestock and Mathews equally, others like Wilkinson have tried to judge Mathews in the light of what he knew at the time. According to the last information that Mathews received before the battle started, the Brest fleet should have already been in the Mediterranean. As Wilkinson points out, if the Cadiz and Toulon squadrons had come together with the Brest fleet, the result might have been disastrous.<sup>126</sup> While it can be argued that the outcome of the battle was determined by the actions taken on the day itself, there can be little doubt that intelligence gathering played an important role. If the British had been more confident about the intentions of the Brest fleet, they could have reinforced Mathew's Mediterranean squadron, giving it greater numerical superiority over the Franco-Spanish forces in Toulon. As it was, the French succeeded in deceiving the British, and Mathews was not able to bring British superiority to bear.

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<sup>124</sup> Gil Osorio, "La Batalla de Camposanto", 7-28.

<sup>125</sup> P.A. Luff, "Mathews vs. Lestock: Parliament, Politics and the Navy in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England", *Parliamentary History*, 10 (1991), 45-62.

<sup>126</sup> Wilkinson, *The Defence of Piedmont 1742 – 1748*, p. 105.

Meanwhile, in Spain, the Battle of Toulon was considered as a great success, not because it was a triumph in itself, but because it marked the beginning of the war between Britain and France. Thereafter, war between Spain and Britain continued, but Britain's necessity to commit fully to European affairs marked a definitive end to the British designs in America. The result of the battle owed something to the misleading impression that the French government had given to the British, who did not know if the Brest squadron was designed for Britain or for the Mediterranean. In reality, it was intended to remain in Brest. This initiative culminated a series of successful Spanish and French operations during the war that prevented Britain from maximising its superiority at sea. Temporarily, at least, the Spanish colonies in America were saved from further attacks.

## **VI-CONCLUSION**

During the first year of the War of Jenkins's Ear, Montemar's strategy to protect the Spanish colonies by forcing the British government to divert ships for the protection of Britain, Minorca and Gibraltar, proved a success. The Spanish intelligence system obtained information to assess the concerns among the British ministers and the strength and location of the British forces at home and the Mediterranean. In the spring of 1740, this information enabled the Cadiz squadron to sail to Ferrol without facing a superior British force. Also, when Montemar gave orders for the embarkation of Spanish troops in Catalonia, he knew that Vice Admiral Haddock would not have been able to challenge the Franco-Spanish squadron. However, he also knew that the British government was preparing to send a strong reinforcement. In the meantime, information provided by the Spanish authorities in America confirmed that the reinforcement of the British navy in Europe had been achieved at the expense of abandoning their designs in the Spanish colonies. In February 1744, the Bourbon fleet avoided destruction and the outcome of the Battle of Toulon owed much to the use of deception that prevented the British navy from effectively using its numerical superiority.

In Britain, information provided by the British agents enabled the government to discover the designs of the Spanish expeditions to Scotland and Minorca. Also, despite the delay caused by Montemar's initiatives, in Autumn 1740, orders were given to Lord Carthcart and Commodore Anson to sail to the West Indies and the Pacific, respectively. Over the following years, information provided by the British agents led the government to take further dispositions to protect British interests in case of a Bourbon attack. For example, during the transportation of Spanish troops to Italy, several reinforcements were sent to Vice Admiral Haddock. These reinforcements enabled Vice Admiral Mathews to disrupt the Spanish transportation and force the withdrawal of the Neapolitan troops from the north of Italy. As a result, in February 1743, the Marquis of Castelar could not march into Modena despite having obtained victory at Camposanto. The presence of a British squadron in the Mediterranean continued to assist the Austrian army.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The War of Jenkins' Ear was the first war between European powers that was mainly fought in America. This geographical dimension of the war posed an unprecedented challenge to the governments of Britain and Spain for the gathering of information about the enemy's preparations and movements. During peacetime, the gathering of intelligence was one of several tasks allocated to existing institutions such as the army, navy, colonial governments, diplomatic body and the Post Office. When war was declared, information gathering became a priority for officials operating in many of these institutions. Cooperation among the disparate institutions and increased spending became imperative. It is important to mention that in 1739, Britain and Spain did not possess anything similar to modern spy agencies, such as MI6 or C.NI. Even so, British and Spanish agents furnished their governments with plentiful information about the enemy's military preparations. Moreover, it can be seen that military decisions during the war were effectively undertaken on the basis of this information.

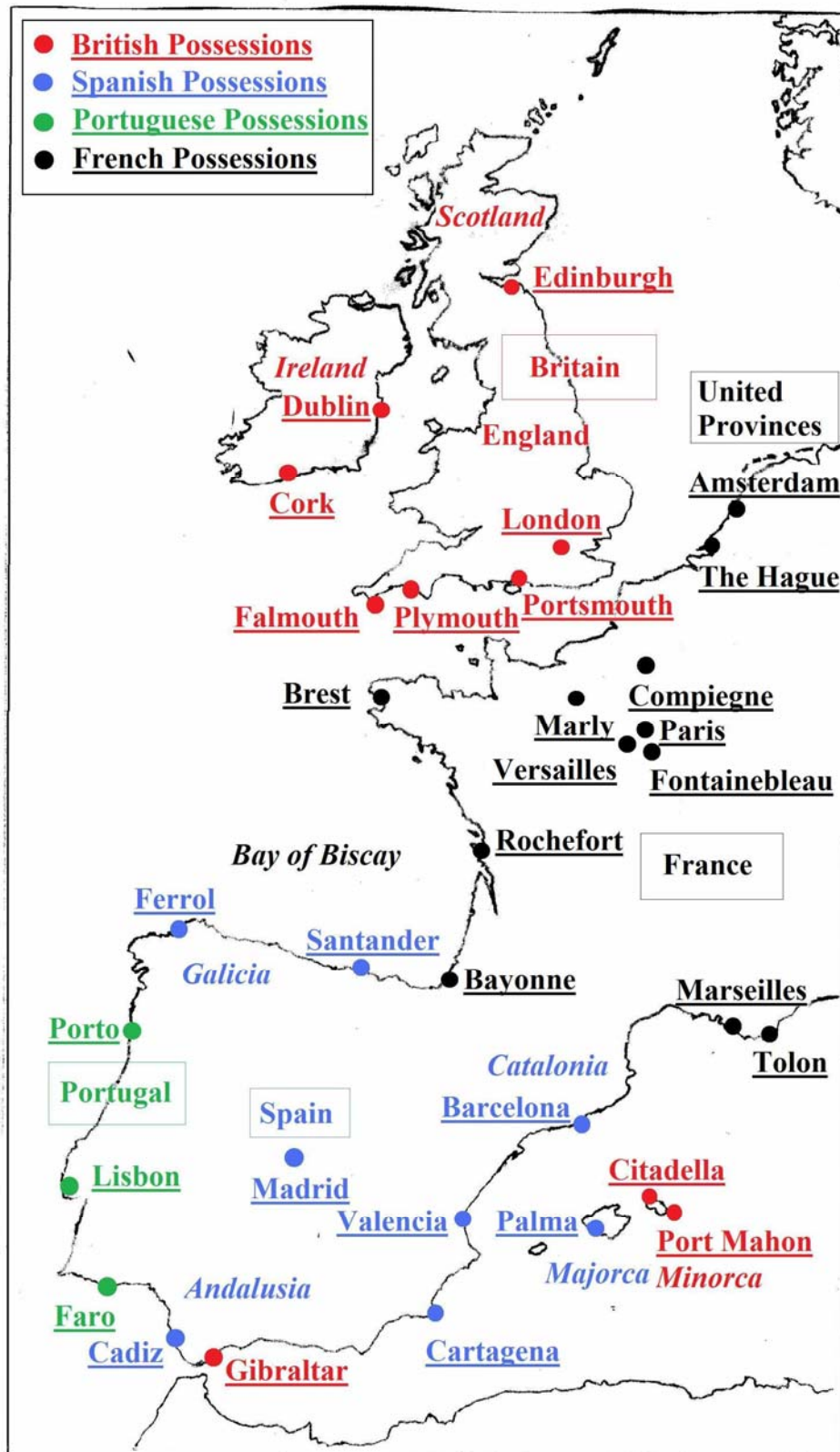
Research gathered from the archives shows that the British and Spanish organization of information-gathering mean that it is appropriate to write of "intelligence systems". For practical reasons, chapters one and two depicted these systems as having a pyramidal structure. At the top of the figurative pyramids were the Secretary of State for the Southern Department in London, and the First Secretary in Madrid. Newcastle and Villarias directed the operations of the agents in the middle of the pyramid, which contained the diplomatic body, colonial governors, the army and navy. At the bottom of the pyramid were the agents employed by the diplomats, colonial governors, army and navy. However, the impact of the lower echelon of the pyramid should not be understated. For example, this level was occupied by agents such as 101, who had a major impact on the war with his reports about the secret negotiations between Spain and France.

The archival material suggests that intelligence was a very important resource for the governments of Britain and Spain during the War of Jenkins' Ear. However, proving the connection between the gathering of information and decision-making

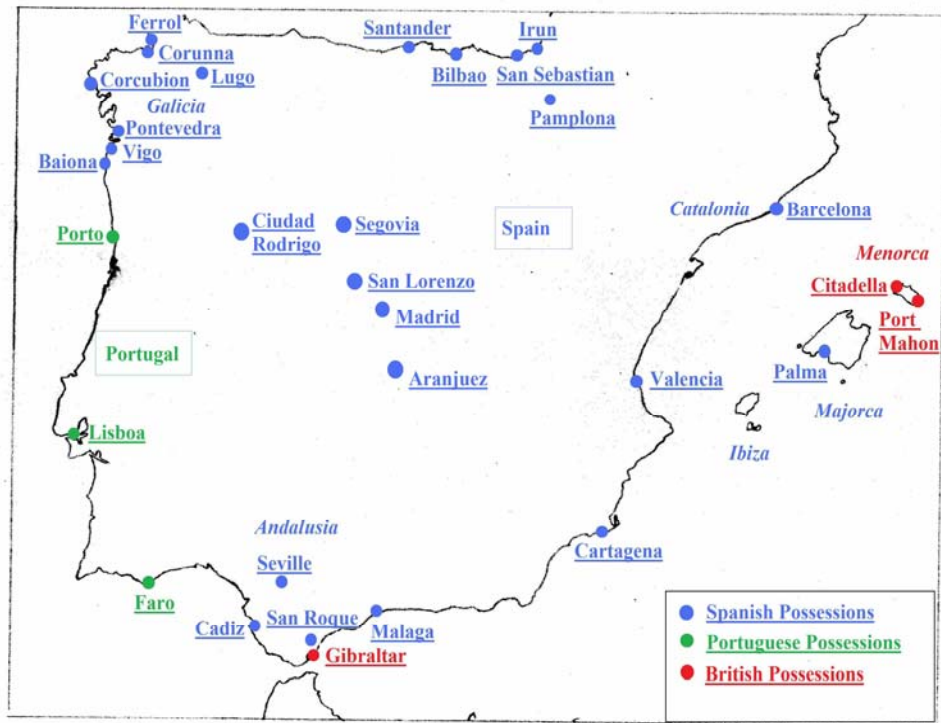
is problematic because there are not official records of deliberations in the British or Spanish cabinets. This dissertation attempts to reconstruct the link between intelligence gathering and decision making with case studies. The first case study analysed Spain's attempts to prevent the dispatch of the British fleets to America and British success in discovering the Spanish plans. The second case study looked at the British and Spanish gathering of intelligence to prepare for war in America. Whereas Britain obtained information to attack Cartagena de Indias, Spain sought to discover British intentions and organize her defences accordingly. The third study case explored the British and Spanish gathering of information and the effective use to which this information was put in the operations that took place in the Pacific. The final case study explored the British and Spanish gathering of intelligence in the Mediterranean and Italian Peninsula.

Historians have tended to neglect the study of the gathering of information during the early modern period. Most of the studies that analyse the mobilization of resources for going to war have concentrated on the raising of manpower, material and money. These items were unquestionably of critical importance. However, the gathering of information was no less important if governments were to know where to send the troops and ships. The eighteenth century witnessed frequent wars between European states. It was inevitable that these wars would push states to improve their mobilization of resources. The War of Jenkins' Ear was, by the standards of the eighteenth century, a small conflict. But what made it demanding for the belligerents was the distances involved. To fight a war across the Atlantic and even in the Pacific, stretched the capacity of the British and Spanish states. Their intelligence systems had to gather information in Europe and America, and even in China. The ability to make sense of information became as important as mobilizing troops and ships and raising money. To paraphrase Francis Bacon, in the final analysis, knowledge is power.

MAP 1

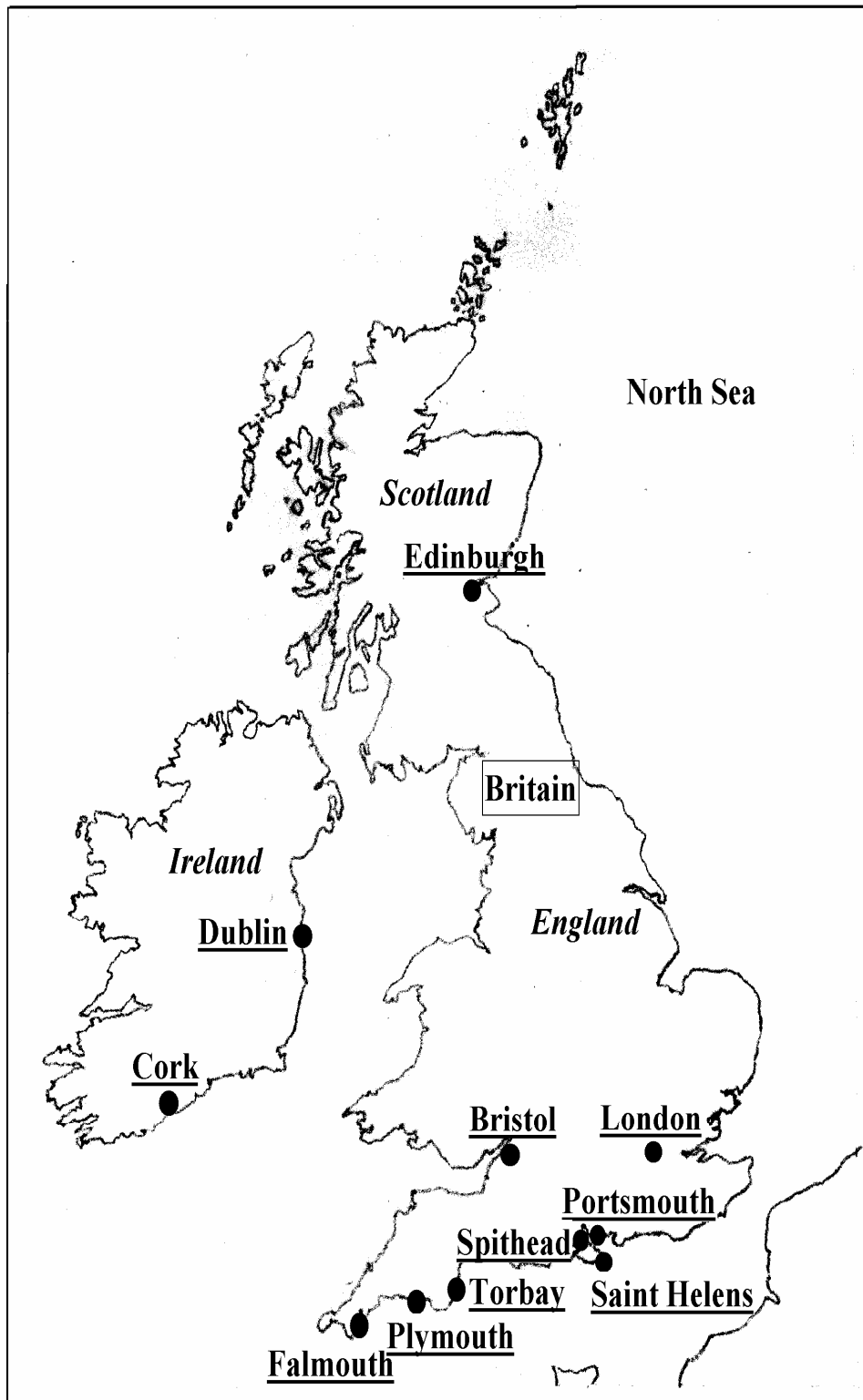


**MAP 2**

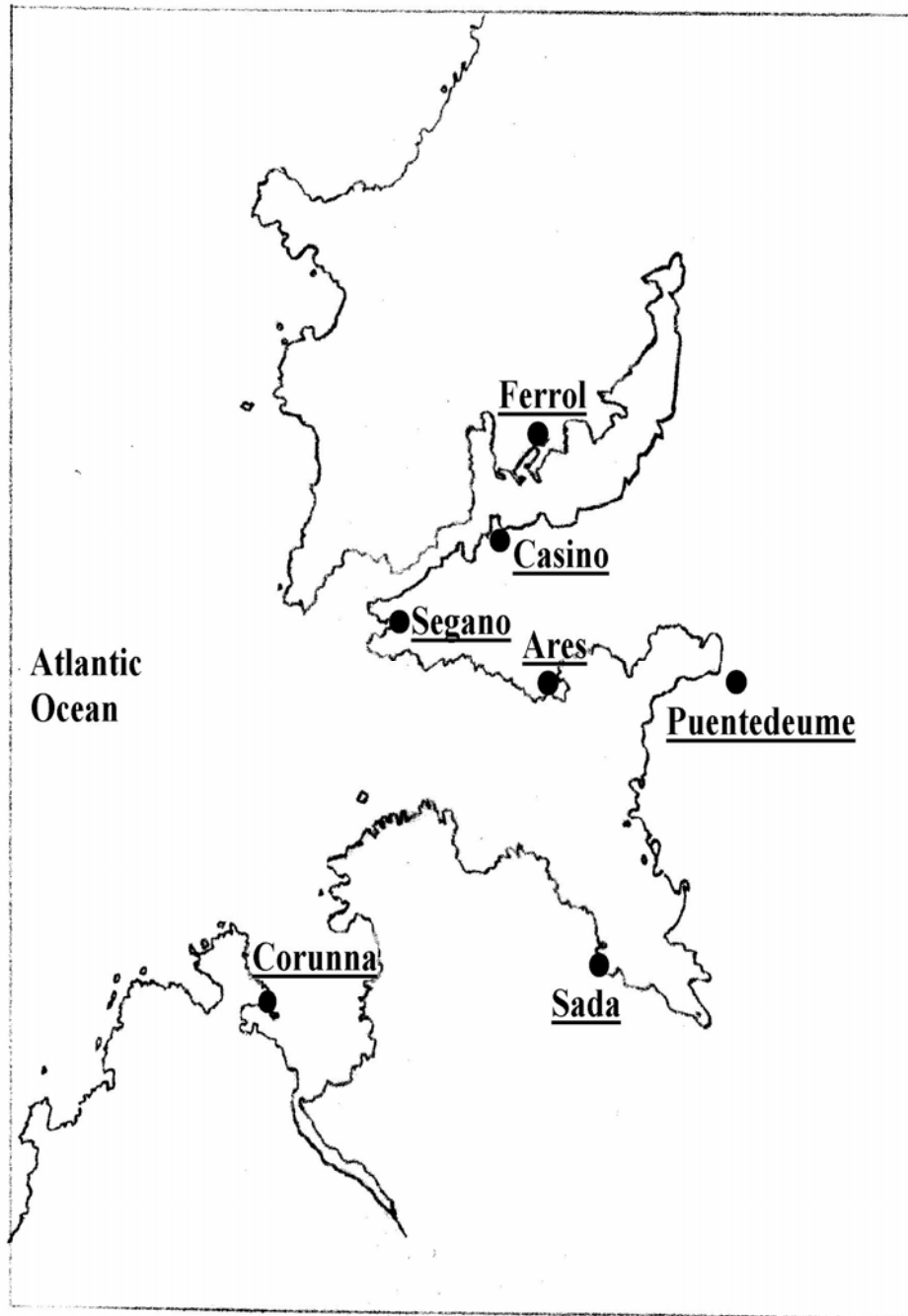




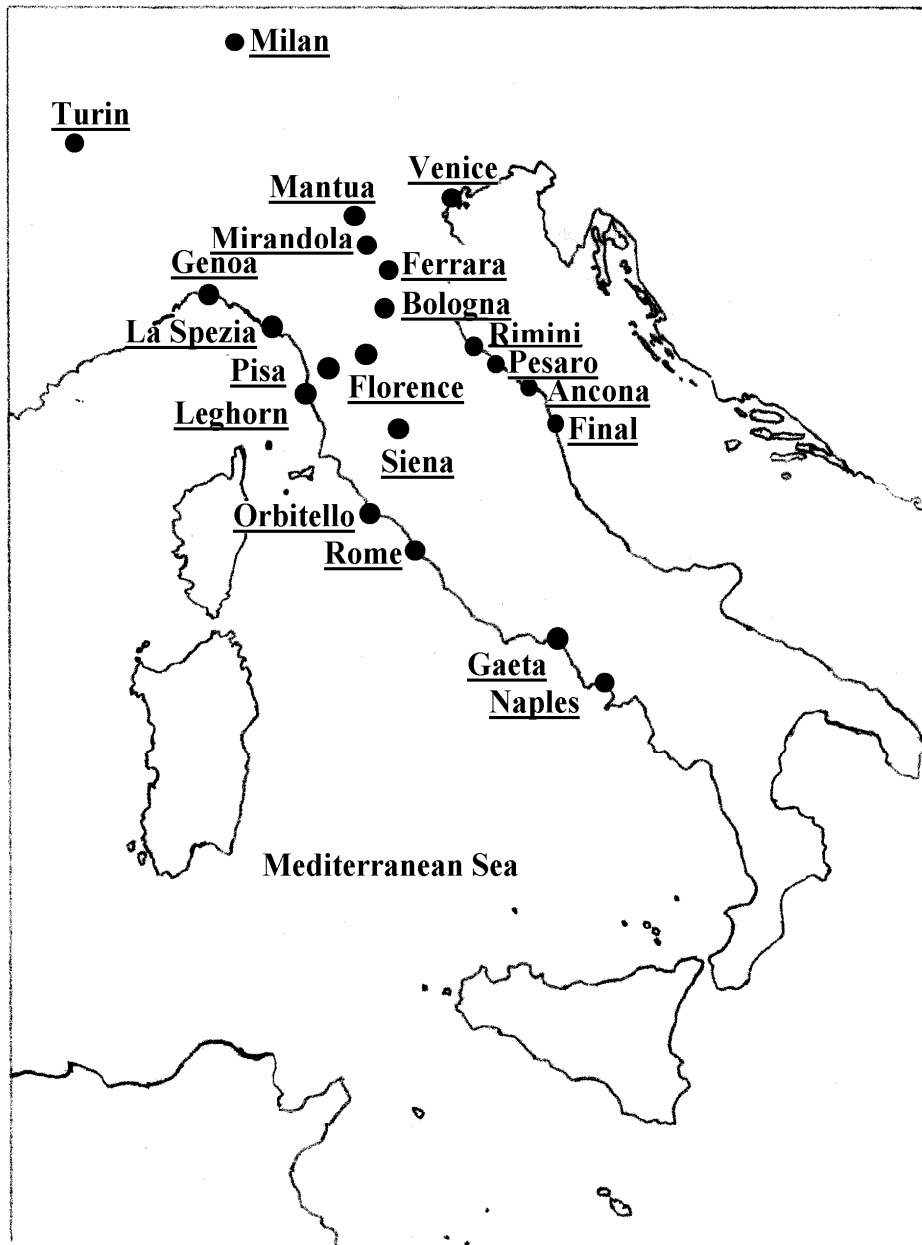
MAP 3



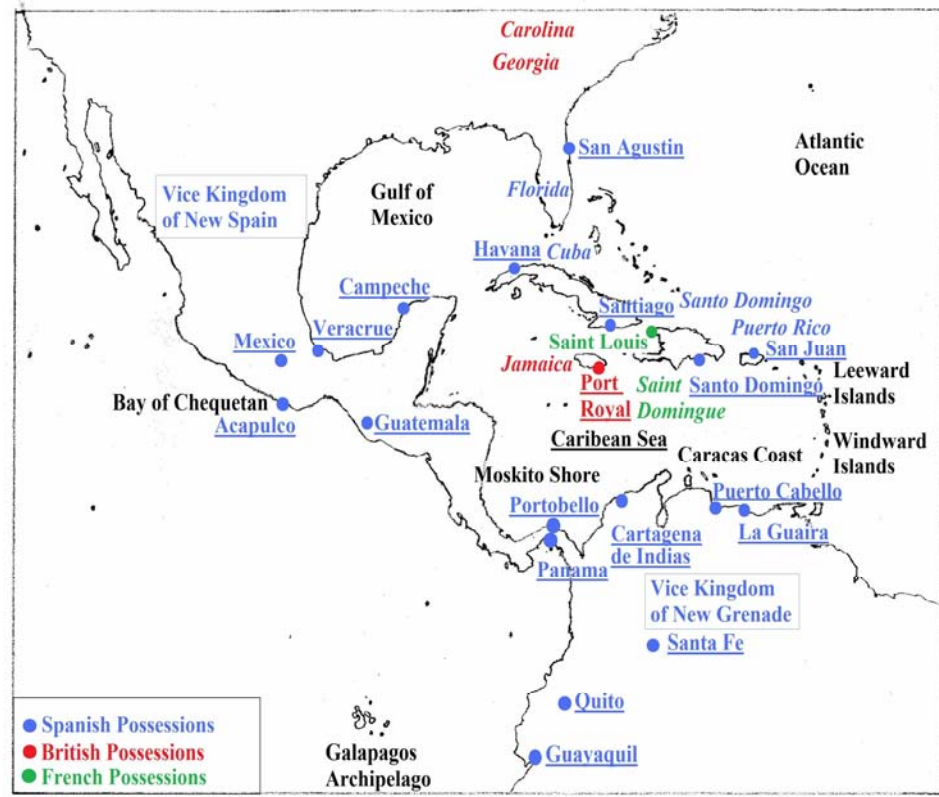
MAP 4



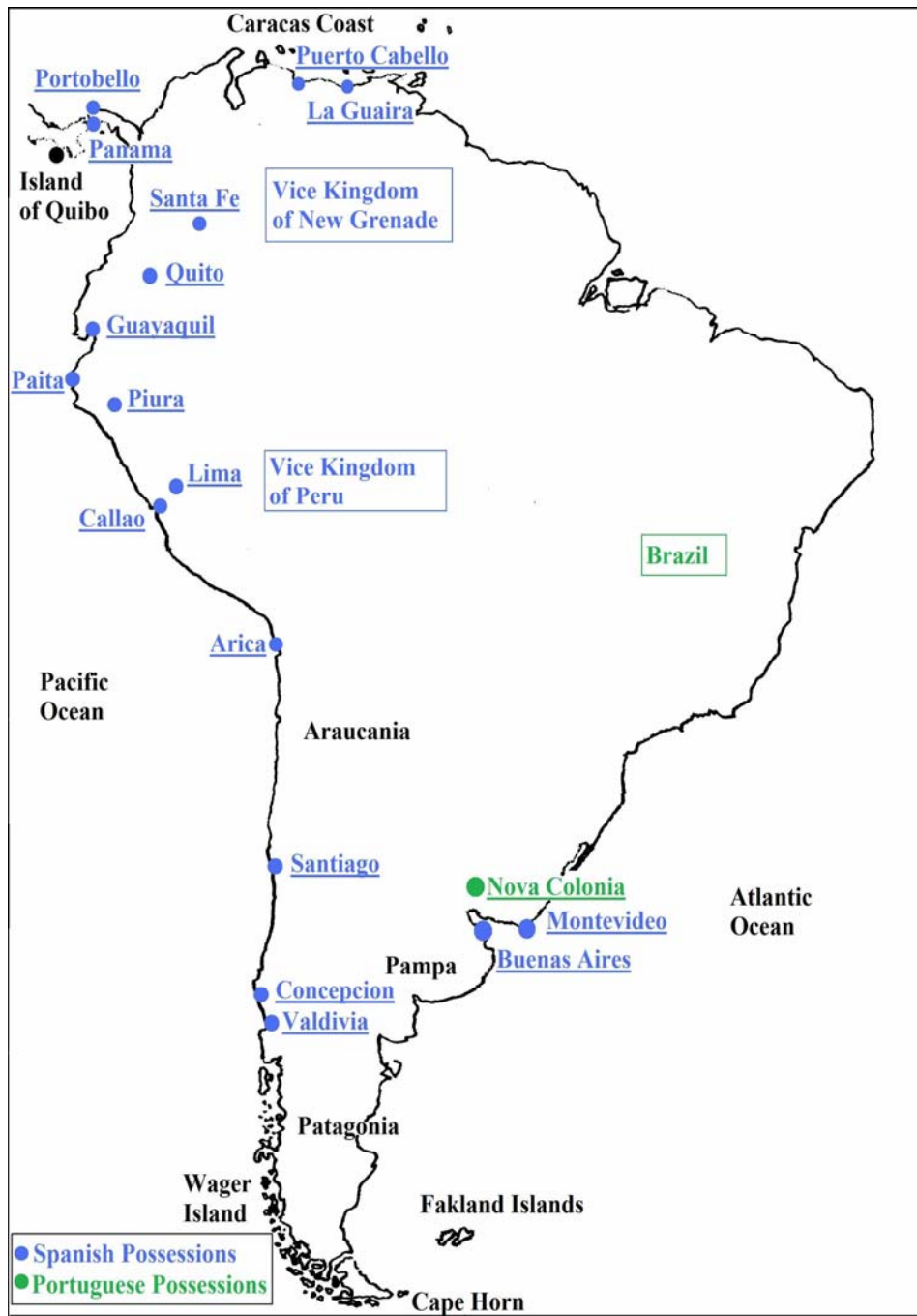
MAP 5



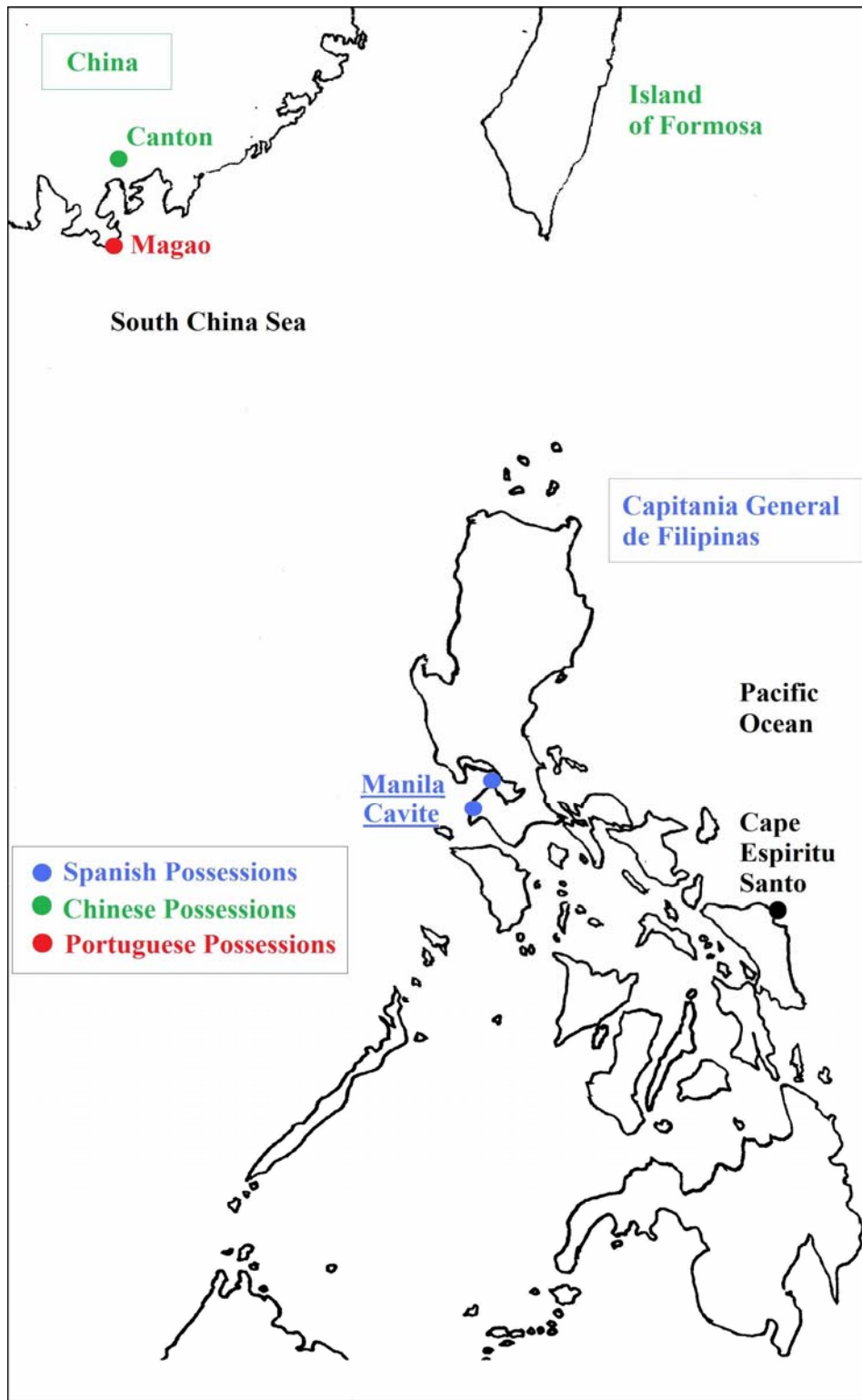
**MAP 6**



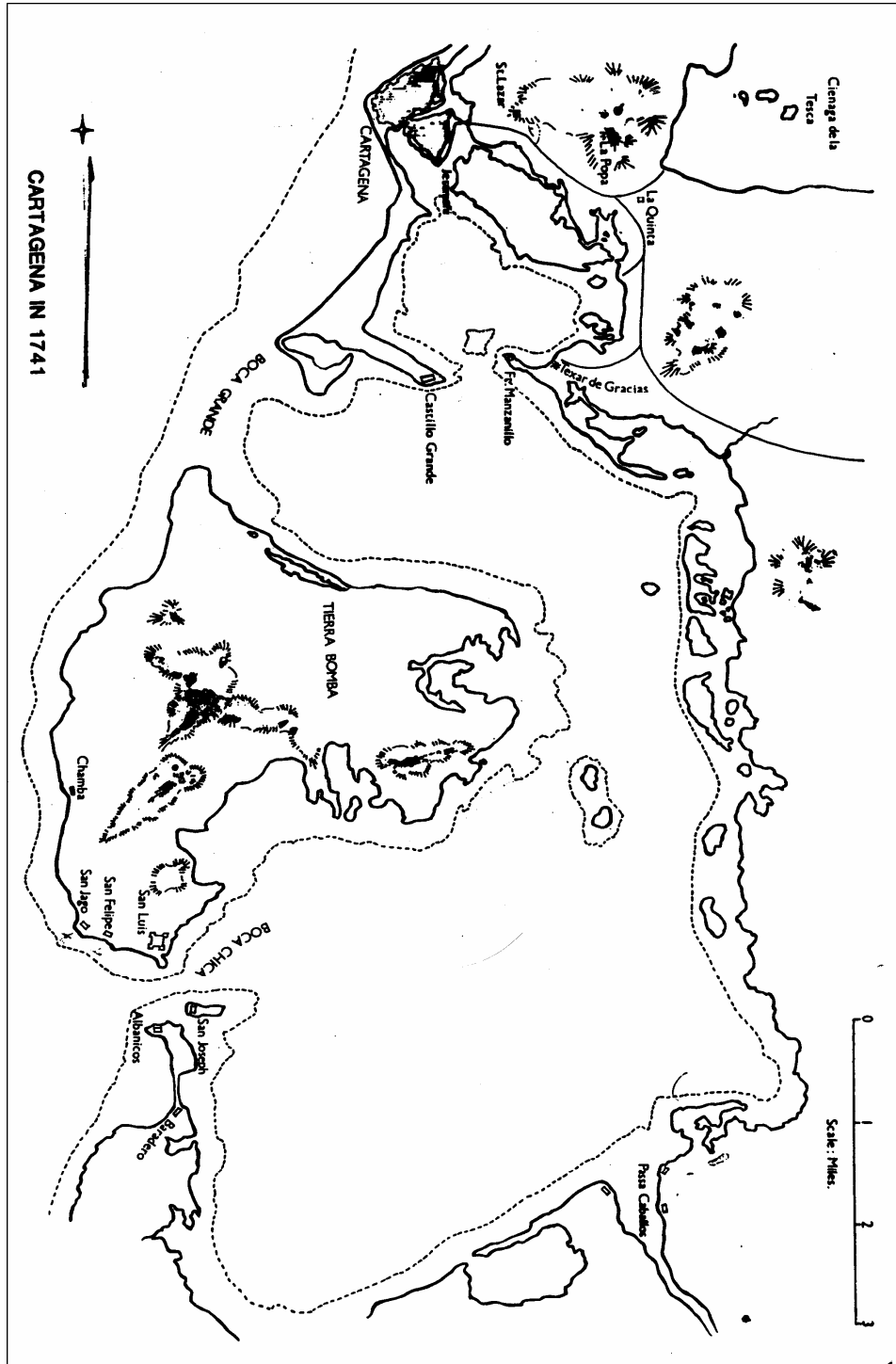
MAP 7



**MAP 8**



**MAP 9**



## ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

### FRANCE

#### ARCHIVE QUAI d'ORSAY

-Correspondance Politique Espagne 454, 455; 461, 462, 464, 465, 466, 477.

### SPAIN

#### ARCHIVO GENERAL DE INDIAS

-Buenos Aires 42.

-Caracas 56.

-Chile 186.

-Filipinas 255, 256, 384.

-Indiferente 1294.

-Lima 1,489.

-Mexico 508, 538, 1505, 2844.

-Panama 255, 356.

-Santa Fe 572; 1021.

-Santo Domingo 386.

#### ARCHIVO GENERAL DE SIMANCAS

-Estado 4395, 4397, 4399, 4406, 4407, 4408, 4413, 4416, 4436, 4913, 4914, 4915, 4916, 4917, 4918, 4919, 4920, 4921, 4922, 4,923, 4936, 5272, 5549, 5551, 5559, 5562, 5825, 5829, 5834, 5836, 5838, 6908, 6910, 6233, 6234, 6262, 6263, 6264, 6266, 6269, 6908, 6909, 6910, 7187.

-Guerra 1282, 1263, 1268, 1282, 1297, 2119, 2036, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2090, 2119.

-Marina. Legajo 396, 397, 398.

-Suplemento 1282.

#### ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO NACIONAL

-Estado 549, 580, 2330, 4120, 4304, 7187.



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- Additional MSS. 15855, 23812, 28132, 32691, 32692, 32694, 32695, 32798, 32799, 32800, 32801, 32802, 32797, 32798, 32799, 35406, 35876, 40776, 40808, 40815, 40817, 40827, 40828, 73988, 73989, 73999, 79973, 79974.
- Egerton Mss. 2528, 2529, 2531.
- Stuart Papers. Film 96590 Reel 109, 110.

### NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

- (ADM/L/C/300) Navy Board, Lieutenant's Logs.
- (HAR/4) Lee, Sir George (Lord of the Admiralty), 1700-1758.
- (OGL/4) Ogle, Sir Chaloner, Admiral of the Fleet, 1681?-1750.
- (TUN/189) Tunstall.
- (VER/1/2/V) Vernon, Edward, Admiral, 1684-1757.

### NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

- Newcastle of Clumber Mss. 103.

### PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

- Admiralty Papers. Adm 1/87, 232, 380, 381.
- Colonial Office Papers. CO 90/10.
- Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, George II, SP 36/47,50, 52.
- Secretaries of State: State Papers Naval, SP 42/22, 23, 24.
- Secretaries of State: State Papers Ireland, SP 63/402, 403.
- Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, France, SP 78/221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227A, 229.
- Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Genoa, SP 79/18; 19.
- Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Portugal, SP 89/40, 41, 42.

-Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Savoy and Sardinia, SP 92/42, 43, 44.

-Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Spain, P 94/130, 133, 134.

#### HOUSE OF LORDS RECORD OFFICE

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#### UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY

-Cholmondeley (Houghton) Papers, Ch (H) 16, 17, 72.

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-Vernon Wager Mss 17137

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