

FOREWORD

Geoffrey Parker

According to a 1616 English edition of the *Tactics* of Aelian (originally composed in the first century A.D.)

The practice of Aelian's precepts hath long lien wrapped up in darkness and buried (as it were) in the ruines of time, until it was revived and restored to light not long since in the United Provinces of the Lowe-Countries, which Countries at this day are the schoole of war, whither the most martial spirits of Europe resort to lay downe the apprenticeship of their service in armes.¹

The English flocked to learn in this "schoole of war". Between September 1637 and September 1638, of 339 passengers who sailed from Great Yarmouth in Norfolk to Holland, no less than 45 (13 per cent) stated that they intended to serve in the Dutch Army; more still left from Harwich, Hull and other ports. Some were "swallows", who went only for a single campaign; others made their career fighting for the States. Thus Thomas, first Lord Fairfax, accompanied the earl of Leicester to the Netherlands in 1585, and was still there in 1621; his grandson of the same name, later commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary Army in the English Civil War, served at the siege of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629 but returned home the following year. A survey of Scots who married and settled in the Republic between 1574 and 1665—the overwhelming majority of them soldiers—produced almost 5,000 names; many more must have returned home. No doubt even more French and German volunteers also came to the Netherlands to 'lay downe the apprenticeship in the service of armes'.²

The Dutch military system that forms the subject of this volume also spread in other ways. On the one hand the Dutch received—and responded to—various requests to send experts who could train

¹ John Bingham, *The tactics of Aelian. The exercise of ye English by ye order of that great generall Maurice* (London, 1616), foreword, quoted by W. Hahlweg, *Die Heeresreform der Oranier und die Antike* (Berlin 1941), 176. See in general the excellent survey of W. Reinhart, "Humanismus und Militarismus. Antike-Rezeption und Kriegshandwerk in den oranischen Heeresreform" in *Krieg und Frieden im Horizont der Renaissance-humanismus* (Wernheim 1986), 185-204

² See the data in J.W. Stoye, *English travellers abroad 1604-67. Their influence in English society and politics* (London 1952), 293-67; J. MacLean, *De huwelijksintekeningen van Schotse militairen in Nederland, 1574-1665* (Zutphen 1976).

troops to other countries. Johan van Nassau paid a brief visit to Sweden in 1601-2; Brandenburg imported "zwei holländischen Drillmeistern aus dem Heere des Moritz von Oranien" in 1610; others later went to the Palatinate, Baden, Württemberg, Hesse-Kassel, Braunschweig and Saxony. Such a rapid diffusion encouraged similar developments among Catholic states: in 1615 the perceived threat from the new model armies of 'die Holender und Protestierender Fürsten' led the duke of Bavaria to consider following suit.³

On the other hand, Dutch military doctrine spread through the printed word. The most influential tract was undoubtedly the *Wapen-handlinghe van roers, musquetten ende spiessen*, devised by Count Johan van Nassau, engraved by Jacob de Gheyn, and first published in 1607. Danish, German, French and English translations soon followed (the English version of 1608 was dedicated to Prince Henry, heir to the British throne).⁴ Other countries produced their own versions: in 1615 the *Kurzer Begriff und Anleitung des Kriegs Exercitij* appeared at Bern, probably composed by Valentin Friedrich, the city's military engineer who declared himself to be 'Discipulos nach der Holendischen Militia'; and in 1650 a Russian text based on De Gheyn appeared in Moscow.⁵

Yet other authors wrote treatises of their own praising the Dutch system. As early as 1603 *La milice françoise*, written by Louis de Montgomery, lord of Courbouzon, contained a section describing 'Les évolutions et les exercices qui se font en la milice de Hollande'; in 1637, Henry Hexham (who described himself as 'een oudt soldaet, die den meesten tijdt van mijn leven in den dienst van dese Vereenighde Nederlanden versleten hebbe') published his *Art Militarie*, which portrayed the military methods 'practised in the Warrs of the United Provinces (the nurserie of soulderie)'.⁶ The Dutch system of

³ Details from E. Von Frauenholz, *Das Heerwesen in der Zeit des dreissigjährigen Krieges* (Munich 1938-9), 2: 10-11, 30 and 133; and F. Redlich, *The German military enterpriser and his workforce, 13th to 17th centuries*, 1 (Wiesbaden: Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beiheft 47), 157ff.

⁴ See the useful introduction of J.B. Kist, ed., *Jacob de Gheyn; the exercise of arms* (New York 1971). On the first English edition see A.E.C. Simoni, "A present for a prince", in J.A. Van Dorsten, ed, *Ten studies in Anglo-Dutch relations* (Leiden 1974), 51-71

⁵ F. Walter, *Niederländische Einflüsse auf das eidgenössische Staatsdenken im späten 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert* (Zürich 1979), 23; W. Reger, "In the service of the Tsar. The military revolution in Russia" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Ph.D. thesis, 1998).

⁶ Hahlweg, *Heeresreform*, 166 (in 1617 Johan Jacob von Wallhausen translated Courbouzon's work into German); and H. Hexham, *A copious English and Netherduytsch dictionarie/het groot woorden-boeck gestelt in 't Engelsch ende Nederduytsch* (2 vols., Rotterdam 1648), quotations from the preface to the English and Dutch volumes.

fortification was described by others still—some of them Dutch, like Simon Stevin, others from elsewhere, like the Pole Adam Freitag.⁷

The diffusion of Dutch military culture in the seventeenth century was by no means limited to Europe, however. In America, recent excavations at Flowerdew Hundred, an early settlement in colonial Virginia, yielded a silver medallion of Count Maurice of Nassau. It probably belonged to George Yardly, a former volunteer in the Dutch army who served at the battle of Nieuwpoort: no doubt took it across the Atlantic with him when he became governor of Virginia in 1616-17. Meanwhile, in Asia, the Portuguese began to organize their troops to fight in the Dutch manner. ‘We have tried many times to reorganize our troops in India according to the European manner’, Philip III reported wistfully in 1617, ‘since experience has shown that without it we have suffered several important losses. But now that we are at war with the Dutch, who are disciplined soldiers, it is more important than ever.’⁸

It is this global dissemination of the Dutch way of war that makes the information presented in this volume so important. The developments described here in siegecraft, public finance, naval warfare and munitions production, as well as in tactics and fortifications, spread literally around the world—proving beyond doubt that, in the seventeenth century, the Low Countries were indeed ‘the schoole of war’.

⁷ See, for example, S. Stevin, *Nouvelle manière de fortifications par escluses* (Leiden 1618: a French translation of his *Stercktenbouwinghe*); idem, *La castrametation...selon l'ordonnance et usage du très-illustre, très-excellent prince et seigneur Maurice* (2nd edn., Leiden 1618); and A. Freitag, *Architectura militaris nova et aucta, oder Fortification...auff die neweste Niederländische praxin gerichtet* (Amsterdam 1631).

⁸ R.A. de Bulhão Pato, ed., *Documentos remetidos da Índia ou livros das Monções* (Lisbon 1893), 4: 168-9, Philip III instructions to Viceroy redondo, 21 March 1617. See also the reminder in *ibid.*, 4: 287-8, Philip III to viceroy, 23 January 1618, and the viceroy's discouraging replies of 8 February 1619 (*loc.cit.*) and 8 February 1620 (*ibid.*, 5: 326-8.)