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**‘NOTHING BUT YOUR WALLS’.
THE DUTCH STATES-GENERAL AND THE FORTIFIED TOWN OF WESEL (1629).**

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Introduction.

During the Eighty Years' War a large part of the fighting took place outside the borders of the former Hapsburg Netherlands. The continuous presence for over half a century of the Spanish 'Ejército de Flandes' and the army of the Dutch States-General scattered over various garrisons on the Lower Rhine had a huge influence on the course of both the 'Guerra de Flandes' and the Thirty Years' War.¹ Despite its obvious importance, this phenomenon has not been deeply studied by historians. In 1997 Jonathan Israel published an article on the Spanish garrisons in north-western Germany, but until now, no-one has taken up the challenge of doing the same on the Dutch garrisons, although there are some local studies on specific cities or episodes.²

One such episode was the Dutch surprise attack on the fortified town of Wesel, on August 19 1629, an eventful act of military bravado that shook many observers. Local historians have always considered the expulsion of the Spanish garrison as a liberation, and no less than three streets in the town commemorate this occasion.³ One might ask, however, whether this view corresponds to historical reality. The Lower Rhine was of nothing more than strategic value, both to the States-General and Spain. During the critical weeks following the capture of the town, the States-General and the local officials were obliged to negotiate their future position towards each other. Unlike other, similar cases, both parties did not sign a 'capitulation', a treaty regulating the relations between a town and its new masters. This was because Wesel was not occupied after a siege that would have been concluded by a treaty, but was taken by surprise. The discussions therefore reveal how the members in the States' government thought about strategic issues, the importance of garrisons and fortifications, and the role to be played by the civilian population. They also show to what extent the Wesel authorities went along with these views, and how they regarded the presence of the States' troops and the demands they made. I would like to make clear how the States-General tried to engage the town in their war effort, and how the town authorities responded to these attempts. Were they able to press through their viewpoints or was there no room for manoeuvring? Who gained from the negotiations?

The town of Wesel was situated in the duchy of Cleves, on a strategic location where the Lippe flows into the Rhine. Throughout history this has been both blessing and curse, as it made the town, in the words of a seventeenth-century author, 'well suited for the art of peace as well as for the art of war'.⁴ Economically the inhabitants were mainly oriented on the Low Countries and Westphalia. In the beginning of the war in the Netherlands Wesel profited from its advantageous geographical position, unlike many other cities on the Lower Rhine. Especially the trade in metal wares and textiles benefited.⁵ On the military side, Wesel had nearly always been a garrison town and it had played a role in the seemingly endless wars in the Lower Rhine area. It would remain a garrison right into the twentieth century, until the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and again from 1936 onwards. In February 1945 it paid a huge price

¹ The occupation of the cities and garrisons along the Lower Rhine started during the War of Cologne (1583-9). The Spanish troops left the region after the Peace of the Pyrenees (1659), while the Dutch garrisons were driven out by the French in 1672.

² J.I. Israel, 'Garrisons and Empire: Spain's Strongholds in North-West Germany, 1589-1659', in: Idem, *Conflicts of Empires. Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy 1585-1713* (London – Rio Grande, 1997) 23-44; H. Kipp, *Wesel unter Niederländischer Besatzung (1629-1672)*. (Schriftliche Hausarbeit im Rahmen der Ersten Staatsprüfung für das Lehramt für die Sekundarstufe II, Staatlichen Prüfungsamt Köln). Bonn, 1990; A. Th. van Deursen, *De val van Wesel*. Kampen, 1967.

³ The Mölderplatz and the Rohleerstraße are dedicated to the three 'traitors', two of which were brothers, while the Van Gentstraße commemorates the commander of the expedition.

⁴ Herman Ewich (1668), quoted in A. Langhans, *Wesel. Ein Geschichtsbild* (Wesel, 1958) 7.

⁵ Ch. Reinicke, 'Der Weseler Rheinkran im 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert', in: J. Prieur (red.), *Wesel. Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte* (Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte von Wesel 7; Wesel, 1985) 62-4.

for its strategic value, when it was heavily bombed and shelled by the Allied forces trying to capture the Rhine crossings. Nowadays Wesel is a beautifully situated, but rather unattractive town with a typical, unimaginative post-war architecture.

Spanish Hegemony, 1614-29.

The Spanish obtained hegemony in the region in 1614 when a strong army under the successful Italian general Ambrosio Spínola invaded the disputed territories of the late Duke of Jülich-Cleves, consisting also of the duchies of Mark and Berg and the counties of Ravensberg and Ravenstein. This invasion was preceded by several years of political and military struggle. Ever since the 1560s the Lower Rhine had seen conflict after conflict between the three confessions which disputed religious dominance. The situation became more complicated in 1609, when the last pro-Spanish duke of Jülich-Cleves died and two Lutheran princes, the Elector of Brandenburg and the Duke of Neuburg, claimed his inheritance. This caused worry in Brussels, where the Archdukes ruling the Netherlands were unhappy to see a protestant claimant on their eastern flank. In 1610 French and Dutch troops occupied Jülich, but this did not yet prove to be the spark to the tinder. The fragile status-quo, however, did break down in 1613, when both Brandenburg and Neuburg decided to throw their lots with the mighty neighbours of their claimed possessions. The former professed to be a Calvinist and thereby assured himself the support of the States-General, while the latter also conversed and took sides with the Catholic Hapsburgs.⁶

On pretext of ensuring the duke's inheritance, Spain was now able to move its army into the region. Spínola's invasion gave Spain a dominant position on the Lower Rhine, occupying ten different places in Cleves, the greater part of Jülich and several places in Mark and Berg. In the Republic the taking of so much predominantly protestant cities caused disturbance amongst the population, and discredited the policies of the States-General. Count Maurice of Nassau too was sent in to occupy and to secure as many places and strongholds as possible. What followed was some bizarre scramble for garrisons, in which the Dutch managed to take Emmerich, Rees and several towns in the duchy of Mark, also securing the situation for the threatened garrison of Jülich.⁷ In the years following the resumption of the war between Spain and the States-General after the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-21), the region saw some campaigning, during which the former bettered their positions. In 1621, for example, Jülich was forced to surrender. Spanish power was at its height between 1623 and 1628, when its armies enjoyed all the benefits of its strategically located garrisons.

In the first place, Spain now possessed several crossing points on the Rhine, like Wesel or Rheinberg, threatening the weak eastern border of the Dutch Republic, the defensive line of the river IJssel. All major thrusts into the States' territory – 1605, 1606 and 1629 - were launched from this part of Germany, rather than directly from the Southern Netherlands, where the so-called 'big rivers' proved too difficult to cross. With the possession of the crossings, furthermore, Spain was also fully able to exploit the regions potential as its 'plaza de armas' in north-western Europe, as it could send troops across the Rhine into the Holy Roman Empire. And last but not least, the garrisons made it possible to block the traffic on the river, thereby seriously hampering Dutch trade with its European hinterland.

The 1629 Campaign.

Unlike all apparent successes, Spain's schemes still had an Achilles' heel: money. In order to lower the costs of protracted warfare on various theatres in Europe and the Indies, the Spanish court had decided to switch from offensive to defensive warfare. From then on, there were no

⁶ Van Deursen, *Wezel*, 6-12.

⁷ Israel, 'Garrisons', 31-5; Van Deursen, *Wezel*, 12-22; J. Israel, 'Maurits en de wording van de buitenlandse politiek', in: K. Zandvliet (red.), *Maurits prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam – Zwolle, 2000) 67-8.

more grand offensives like the successful, but costly siege of Breda (1625). Instead, the Republic would be contained within its borders by a chain of garrisons, while an economic blockade on land and sea would have to drive the States-General to the bargaining table. Wesel was to play an important role in all this, being one of the most important strongholds controlling the Rhine traffic. According to all plans and estimates this kind of warfare required fewer soldiers and was therefore much cheaper.

Yet however clear this might have seemed to Philip IV and Olivares, the King's favourite, reducing the strength of the army essentially did not cut down the huge expenses needed to maintain an army in the Netherlands and to defend the house of Hapsburg's interests all over Europe. At the same time a deep economic and monetary crisis hit Castile.⁸ When the first signs of recovery finally appeared, a new blow followed around the end of the year 1628, when admiral Piet Hein, general of the Dutch West-Indies Company, surprised and captured the all-important Silver Fleet off the coasts of Cuba and thereby deprived Spain of the money it needed so badly. The loss of about 4,000,000 ducats tipped over Madrid's shaky financial base, but apparently misfortunes never came alone. About a year earlier, Olivares had embarked on an ill-considered enterprise in northern Italy, where the last Duke of Mantua was to be succeeded by a French relative closely connected to the court of Louis XIII and Richelieu. Against all plans the intentionally swift intervention stranded and for Spain the war became a new drain for much-needed money and troops.⁹ The consequences of this war in the south were to be felt in the Netherlands, where the Spanish army – chronically short on cash – was on the brink of a general mutiny. On top of all that, its generals were on bad terms with each other since Spínola had left Brussels for Madrid.¹⁰ In Rheinberg and Geldern, 'the soldiers [were] very riotous', a Lutheran from Wesel noted in his diary, and less than a month later the garrison even threatened to 'leave [his town] in the hands of the States-General'.¹¹ To prevent mutiny the Spanish governor forced the burgomasters and aldermen to procure two 'loans' of 4,000 and 8,000 guilders.¹² Prophetically, the archduchess Isabella wrote in February 1629 to her nephew that if the Dutch would attack Breda or 's-Hertogenbosch, there would be no way whatsoever to save either city.¹³ To the Dutch government in The Hague, the opportunity seemed too good to be wasted. On May 1, Frederick Henry of Orange-Nassau, captain-general of the States' army, laid siege to the Brabant stronghold of 's-Hertogenbosch, a town that was short on soldiers, good captains, money and gunpowder.¹⁴

⁸ J. Lynch, *Spain under the Habsburgs* (New York – London, 1981) II, 87-94; J.C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Bankers at the Court of Spain 1626-1650* (New Brunswick, 1983) 36-41.

⁹ J.H. Elliot, *The Count-Duke of Olivares. The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven – London, 1986) 323-408.

¹⁰ G. Parker, *Het Spaanse leger in de Lage Landen* (Bussum, 1978) 245-6; Boyajian, *Portuguese Bankers*, 40; R. Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog. Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden 1629-1648* (Maastricht, 2001) 32-3.

¹¹ K. Bambauer and H. Kleinholz (eds.), 'Die Chronik des Heinrich von Weseken, 1598-1632', in: Idem (reds.), *Geusen und Spanier am Niederrhein. Die Ereignisse der Jahre 1586-1632 nach dem zeitgenössischen Chroniken der Weseler Bürger Arnold von Anrath und Heinrich von Weseken* (Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte von Wesel 14; Wesel, 1992) 369-70.

¹² Wesel, Stadtarchiv [= StAW], *Missivenbücher*, 47, ff. 139 v° - 140 r°: Koenen to Rougemont, Wesel, 9 May; StAW, *Magistratsregistratur*, capsel 111, n° 10, ff. 27 r° - 28 v°: Declaration of the magistrate of Wesel, 29 Apr. 1630. All letters and other documents quoted in this paper were written in 1629, except when noted otherwise.

¹³ H. Lonchay, J. Cuvelier and L. Lefevre (eds.), *Correspondance de la Cour d'Espagne sur les affaires des Pays-Bas au XVIIe siècle. Tome II : Précis de la correspondance de Philippe IV avec l'infante Isabelle (1621-1633)* (Brussels, 1927) n° 1348: Isabella to Philip IV, Brussels, 13 Feb. I have used the Dutch version of the town's name, 's-Hertogenbosch (or Den Bosch), rather than the French, Bois-le-Duc, which is often used in English historiography. The town was known to the Spanish as Bolduque.

¹⁴ C.R. Hermans (ed.), *Verzameling van oorkonden betreffende het beleg van 's-Hertogenbosch in den jare 1629. Vierde stuk: stukken berustende in het Rijks Archief te Brussel en in het Provinciaal archief te Utrecht* ('s-Hertogenbosch, 1873) n° 14: 'Mémoire pour Bois-le-ducq', 1 May.

As the Infanta had feared the town of 's-Hertogenbosch was as good as lost right from the beginning, despite being, next to Antwerp and Cambrai, one of the best-defended and strongest strongholds of the Southern Netherlands. It took the government in Brussels more than a month to gather enough men and money to form a relief army, and to select a suitable general from the hornet's nest of the Spanish high command. When Count Henry van den Bergh¹⁵ finally marched onto the beleaguered garrison, the attackers were well entrenched behind their earthen siege works and flooded marshes. After some weeks of rather half-hearted attempts, Count van den Bergh decided to change his strategy and try to lure Frederick Henry away from the siege. His army moved to Wesel, where it crossed the Rhine and headed for the river IJssel. An Imperial auxiliary army under Count Ernst de Montecuccoli, an uncle of the later famous military writer Raimundo de Montecuccoli, would join it there.¹⁶ On July 22 a vanguard established and secured a bridgehead near Westervoort, and soon Spanish and especially Imperial troops were swarming over the Veluwe, the countryside between Arnhem and Utrecht, plundering and burning down farms and houses. Early in August the threat to the Dutch Republic seemed at its height, when Montecuccoli's soldiers captured Amersfoort, a town north-east of Utrecht, and the Spanish Count Salazar demanded the surrender of nearby Hattem and Harderwijk, though in vain. Yet at that moment, according to Calvinist preaching and propaganda, God showed His mercy to the beleaguered United Provinces.¹⁷ In the early morning of August 19, Dutch troops under the governor of Emmerich, Otto of Gent and Oijen, Lord of Dieden, surprised the garrison of Wesel and occupied the town in the name of the States-General.

To many people, even within the States' army, this event came as a total surprise.¹⁸ In fact, Dieden had planned the whole operation in secret. After having obtained permission of Frederick Henry and Count Ernst Casimir of Nassau, his superiors, he executed his plans with the knowledge of only a reduced circle of officers.¹⁹ The rumour spread by the Dutch that the troops were gathered for an attack on a Spanish convoy, acted as a perfect decoy.²⁰ Three inhabitants of the city, two serving in the States' army and another one still living within the walls, had given Dieden crucial information about the reduced strength of the garrison and the state of the fortifications, which were being repaired at a certain point.²¹ The attackers, about

¹⁵ I have used the more common Dutch version of the Count's name, although sometimes the French or Spanish version is used, Henri or Enrique de Bergues.

¹⁶ Some authors have mistakenly identified count Montecuccoli as his younger nephew Raimundo, see Kipp, *Wesel*, 14 (note 4) and B. de Meester de Ravestein (ed.), *Lettres de Philippe et de Jean-Jacques Chifflet sur les affaires des Pays-Bas (1627-1639)* (Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis, n° 55; Brussels, 1943) p. 104 (note 3). Dutch historiography uses the spelling of the Imperial commander's name which is found in the sources, Montecuculi. Although other English-speaking historians have adopted this spelling, I have chosen to use the original Italian one, which was also used by the Count himself.

¹⁷ See for instance J. Herzelius, *Hertzliche Dancksagung gegen Gott Für den gnedigen sieg vnd wunderbahre Eroberung der berühmten Stadt Wesel, Den [...] XVI. Augusti 1629 zu Emden gehalten [...]* (Emden, 1629; Knuttel 3876) 14.

¹⁸ See for instance: The Hague, Koninklijk Huisarchief, *Ernst Casimir* [= KHA, EC], 24: Johan Maurits to Ernst Casimir, Vught, 20 Aug., or Antwerp, Stadsarchief, *Insolvente Boedelskamer*, 964: C. van Ophoven to H. van Ophoven, Bruges, 2 Sep.

¹⁹ J.J. Poelhekke, *Frederik Hendrik, prins van Oranje. Een biografisch drieluik* (Zutphen, 1978) 283-4; P.J. Blok, *Frederik Hendrik, prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam, 1924) 117-8. About two weeks before the operation, Dieden reproached the governor of Emmerich, Johan Hessels, of having mentioned his plans to count Ernst Casimir, which gives an indication of the secrecy involved, see KHA, EC, 483: Hessels to Ernst Casimir, Emmerich, 5 Aug. (enclosure).

²⁰ Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief / Archives Générales du Royaume [= ARAB], *Audiëntie / Audience* [= Aud.], 634, ff. 52 r° - 54 r°: Van den Bergh to Isabella, Dieren, 17 Aug. However he may have been misled, it still is striking how accurate Van den Bergh's information on the strength of the Dutch troops was. He estimated their strength at about 3,000 soldiers.

²¹ Kipp, *Wesel*, 25-8.

2,800 men²², entered the city through a breach in the walls, where the old medieval wall had been torn down and had not yet been replaced by a new bulwark due to a lack of funds. After the Spanish guards had been eliminated and the gates were opened to the cavalry, some fierce fighting took place on the streets. About one hour and a half later 90 Spanish soldiers and three captains, and 13 Dutch soldiers and one sergeant were dead.²³ According to some sources only the Spanish soldiers had defended themselves, while the ‘German’ and Walloon companies had thrown away their weapons crying out for their pay. The narrative of the events in the ‘Ratsprotokolle’ of Wesel unfortunately fails to confirm this.²⁴ Most of the survivors, who were taken prisoner, were sent off to Rheinberg the next day, while only the governor and the officers were brought to Arnhem. The Dutch also captured a huge amount of supplies and ammunition belonging to the armies of Van den Bergh and Montecuccoli, as well as personal belongings of the Imperial officers.²⁵ This hugely upset their troops, who soon gave up Amersfoort and returned to the fortified crossing on the IJssel. There they stayed for two months longer, albeit firmly checked by the surrounding States’ troops, threatened by hunger, and utterly disgusted by their situation.²⁶ Eventually the new Imperial commander, Count John of Nassau-Siegen, a Catholic relative of Frederick Henry, was forced to withdraw his troops from all their positions.

Liberation.

For the 6,000 inhabitants of Wesel the taking of the city seemed to be their liberation from the ‘Joch der Spanier’, the yoke of the Spanish.²⁷ The treasurer even allowed a Latin poem to be entered into the usually dull municipal accounts, a poem in which God was thanked for chasing the Catholic oppressors back to Spain.²⁸ The Spanish garrison was indeed seen by the mostly Protestant population as a persecutor of their faith: a Lutheran ‘Prediger’ simply referred to them as ‘die Verfolger’.²⁹ For over seventy years the city of Wesel had been predominantly Calvinist, and during the troubles in the Netherlands in the 1560s, ‘Vesalia Hospitalis’ had been a safe heaven for protestant exiles from the Netherlands; in the 1620s a ‘Walloon church’ for the exiles from the French-speaking part of Brabant still existed.³⁰

The topic of oppression or even extermination, more specific of the Spanish and the Emperor collaborating to wipe out all traces of Protestantism in Germany was common during the 1620s. This view was spread in all kinds of pamphlets and propaganda, and from the pulpit.³¹ When the churches were returned to the Protestant congregations, this quite

²² StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, pp. 69-81: 19 Aug. According to Israel, the attackers counted 2,000 soldiers, see Israel, ‘Garrisons’, 40.

²³ StAW, *Stadtrechnungen*, 276, pp. 124 and 127.

²⁴ Israel, ‘Garrisons’, 40; KHA, *EC*, 3: Ernst Casimir to [Frederick V?], shortly after 19 Aug. (draft); StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, pp. 79-82: 19 Aug.

²⁵ Israel, ‘Garrisons’, 40; The Hague, Nationaal Archief [= NA], *Staten-Generaal* [= SG], 4955: ‘Staet vant canon tot Weesel’, ‘Staet vant cooren gevonden binnen Weesel [...]’, and ‘Lijste vande officieren gevangen binnen Wesel’, s.d.; StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, pp. 69-82: 19 Aug.; ARAB, *Aud.*, 634, f. 76 r^o - v^o: Van den Bergh to Isabella, Dieren, 23 Aug.; ARAB, *Audiëntie – Zendbrieven / Audience – Lettres Missives* [*Aud. - Zb.*], 2053: Nassau to Isabella, Steenderen, 13 Sep.

²⁶ ARAB, *Aud.*, 634, ff. 96 r^o - 97 r^o and 141 r^o - 142 v^o: Van den Bergh to Isabella, Bocholt, 31 Aug. and 9 Sep.; ARAB, *Aud. - Zb.*, 2053: Nassau to Isabella, Steenderen, 13 Sep.

²⁷ Kipp, *Wesel*, 127-8; F.H. Westermann, ‘Die Spanische Herrschaft in Wesel. I. Teil: 1598-1614’, in: *Historische Blätter aus der Geschichte von Wesel und vom Niederrhein. Folge 3* (1964) 13. Westermann was mayor of Wesel between 1808 and 1814. The text of his article was written in August 1829 on the bicentennial of the ‘liberation’ of the city.

²⁸ StAW, *Stadtrechnungen*, 276, p. 123.

²⁹ Bambauer and Kleinholz, ‘Weseken’, 370.

³⁰ Israel, ‘Garrisons’, 33; Langhans, *Geschichtsbild*, 27-32; NA, *SG*, 3188, f. 531 r^o: 21 Sep.

³¹ Herzelius, *Danksagung*, passim; D. Souterius, ‘Eben-Ezer, tot hier toe heeft ons de Heere geholpen. Waer voor wy schuldich zijn, dancksegginge van wegghen, de groote victorie over de vermaerde stadt Wesel [...]’, in: D.

understandably caused ‘huge joy’ under the inhabitants, but there is no reason to believe that the States-General were interested in liberating their oppressed co-religionists.³² The capitulation signed with Spínola on September 5, 1614 had guaranteed religious freedom for Wesel, implicating that the Catholics, too, were allowed to worship.³³ Some churches had already been handed over earlier to the old faith by order of the Duke of Neuburg before the Spanish takeover, and a few religious orders had been allowed to return or set up new cloisters, but the Catholic rule did not fundamentally affect the status of the Protestants. Wesel had even seen the arrival of new Lutherans from Hessen during the fifteen-year occupation.³⁴ There are indications that the policy of privileging the Catholics tended to become more and more pronounced as time passed by, but the days that Spain intervened in the Rhineland for strictly religious reasons, as it had done in the 1580s, were over.³⁵ Nevertheless, Calvinist clergymen hoped that the new regime would restore their monopoly as they asked for the replacement of all Catholic priests and, if possible, the banishment of the Hessian Lutherans. To their surprise, the States-General were not interested.³⁶ They were convinced that the religious freedom granted by the Spanish should be maintained and that all congregations had to be allowed to keep their possessions, although some of the larger churches would have to be returned to the Protestants.

The States-General were even less so concerned with changing the town council, which was to stay in place. In general the Dutch military were not to meddle with local questions, which was indeed one of the ‘pointcs’ that the delegates of the city had defended in September 1629.³⁷ The States-General had a good reason to maintain the status quo. After all, they were interested in nothing else but the preservation of ‘the gates, the fortification, and the walls of the city’.³⁸ Although they liked to stress their concerns about the ‘intolerable sufferings’ of the inhabitants of Wesel, the main and, ultimately, only concern of the States-General was indeed the strategic value of the town and its fortifications.³⁹ On the other hand, the topic of having liberated the town was widely used for propaganda purposes. The frontispiece of Daniel Heinsius’ well-known account of the 1629 campaign, for example, shows a woman holding the coat of arms of Wesel and a lance adorned with the hat of liberty, while a Latin motto points out to the reader that the town’s freedom was restored.⁴⁰ It is for that reason also highly questionable that the States-General wanted to turn Wesel into an exclave of the Dutch Republic, as Herbert Kipp assumed.⁴¹ As I have said before, the crossing points on the Rhine were of crucial importance to the position of the Spanish army in north-western Europe; hence the possession of these garrisons was as imperative to the government in The Hague as it was to those in Brussels and Madrid. In the short term, the conquest of

S[outerius], *Seer uytmuntende Nederlandtsche victorien [...] insonderheydt, de veroveringhe van twee vermaerde steden, de stad VVesel, ende Shertogenbosch [...]* (Haarlem, 1630) 26-44.

³² Kipp, *Wesel*, 127-8; NA, SG, 4954: Deputies in Wesel [= DiW] to the States-General [= SG], 27 Aug.

³³ Westermann, ‘Herrschaft I’, 22.

³⁴ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 603 r^o and 635 r^o: 23 Nov. and 21 Dec.

³⁵ Israel, ‘Garrisons’, 23-4 and 34; Langhans, *Geschichtsbild*, 40.

³⁶ NA, SG, 3188, f. 635 r^o: 21 Dec. If expelling the Lutherans were to prove impossible, the Calvinists asked for the stationing of Lutheran companies, or companies of which the captains were Lutheran. It is unclear to me what could be the reason behind this particular request.

³⁷ Kipp, *Wesel*, 128; NA, SG, 3188, ff. 605 v^o - 606 v^o: 26 Nov.; NA, SG, 3188, ff. 531 r^o - 532 v^o: 21 Sep.

³⁸ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 605 v^o - 606 v^o: 26 Nov.

³⁹ NA, SG, 6062: SG to Wesel, Utrecht, 4 Sep. (draft)

⁴⁰ D. Heinsius, *Histoire du siege de Bolduc et de ce qui s’est passé es Pais Bas Unis, l’an MDCXXIX* (Leiden, 1631).

⁴¹ Kipp, *Wesel*, 127-8.

Wesel was even more important than ‘Antwerp, Brussels and the whole of Brabant’, as one cheerful newsletter stated.⁴²

Difficult beginnings.

However optimistic the prospects might have seemed by late August 1629, the States’ occupation started on bad terms. Contrary to what some deputies believed, plundering did occur after the town had been conquered.⁴³ The soldiers had received permission to loot the houses of Catholics, Jews, and those where Spanish soldiers and officers had been living, but the situation quickly got out of hand. All houses and shops on the central marketplace, those of the Spanish officers and officials, the cloisters and other Catholic goods, and of various other people were plundered.⁴⁴ Under pretext of searching goods belonging to the Spanish military, soldiers robbed many a civilian, Catholics and Protestants alike.⁴⁵ In the Catholic churches statues and altars were smashed, leaving the city council with the costs of the cleaning.⁴⁶ For days the troops were out of control: according to several sources, the soldiers made ‘incredible booty’, which they all kept for themselves rather than reserving a share for their commanding officers.⁴⁷ The governor and the deputies sent to Wesel soon pleaded to replace these unruly soldiers. If not, the town would be impossible to defend against an expected Spanish counterattack.⁴⁸ The major problem was in fact that the troops used in the attack were brought together from different companies and garrisons near the eastern border and on the Rhine, while their regular officers had stayed behind. Without proper supervision the soldiers were likely to exploit this vacuum and to take whatever they saw fit. It is indeed remarkable that Heinrich von Weseken’s diary, the Lutheran resident mentioned earlier, never speaks about liberation, joy, or even relief, but only mentions stealing and other misbehaviour by the States’ troops.⁴⁹ The misconduct of the soldiers soon caused an open antipathy towards the garrison among many inhabitants. Near the end of September several citizens were heard saying that they would fight the soldiers when the situation would not change.⁵⁰

The council of Wesel, shocked by the experience of being attacked and plundered, appealed for a restoration of its neutrality. The town, and the whole of Cleves for that matter, were indeed officially neutral, not being part of the Netherlands, but that had not stopped the Spanish or the Dutch from sending in garrisons. The vacuum created by the death of the last duke needed to be filled, that was the logic of war. It isn’t surprising, therefore, that the somewhat naïve plead of the town council was met with quite some resistance by both warring parties. One deputy of the States-General stated that it appeared as if the town wanted rather to be ‘Hispanisch’ than ‘Goëß’, while another one warned them that ‘the inhabitants

⁴² ‘Stukken betrekkelijck den inval van Montecuculi in de Betuwe (sic!), ten jare 1629’, in: *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht* 23 (1867) 203: ‘Copia van een tijdinge uyt Arnhem’, 11 Aug. [old style]. Some provinces of the United Provinces still used the Julian calendar in 1629, indicated as ‘old style’. Sometimes the date was given in both ‘styles’.

⁴³ ‘Montecuculi in de Betuwe’, 216-7: Veldtriel aan Clant, Arnhem, 10/20 Aug.

⁴⁴ P. Bor, *Geleenthey van ’s Hertogen-Bosch, vierde hooft-stadt van Brabant [...]* (Den Haag, 1630) 300-1.

⁴⁵ StAW, *Magistratsregistratur*, capsel 111, n° 10, f. 5 r° - v°: Statement of Jaecques Wijnantz, Jan Tibau, Thomas Wenbers, and Nicolas de Vos, Wesel, 30 Aug. See for instance StAW, *Missivenbücher*, 47, f. 165 r° - v°: Wesel to the SG, 10 Sep., and NA, SG, 3188, f. 584 r°: 3 Nov.

⁴⁶ StAW, *Stadtrechnungen*, 276, p. 124.

⁴⁷ NA, SG, 4954: DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.; KHA, EC, 482: Ernst Casimir to Dieden, Arnhem, 10/20 Sep. (draft), and Dieden to Ernst Casimir, Wesel, 23 Sep.

⁴⁸ NA, SG, 4954: Dieden to the SG, Wesel, 19 Aug., Ernst Casimir and the deputies in Arnhem to the SG, Arnhem, 13/23 Aug., and the DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.; NA, SG, 4955: DiW to the SG, [29 Aug.].

⁴⁹ Bambauer and Kleinholz, ‘Weseken’, 377-9.

⁵⁰ NA, SG, 3188, f. 550 v°: 9 Oct.

would not like to become Spanish again'.⁵¹ This last remark can be seen as a concealed threat, as Spanish reprisals were indeed possible.

The requests of the town's authorities became in fact overshadowed by the question as to whether the inhabitants had violated Wesel's neutrality by helping the Dutch attackers, as indeed was Henry van den Bergh's first opinion.⁵² To their horror, the council had heard rumours being spread in nearby Spanish-held towns and garrisons, that some people had hidden Dutch soldiers in their houses and cellars.⁵³ Catholic merchants and members of the clergy were asked to make statements to assure Count van den Bergh, the Infanta and the representative of the Duke of Neuburg in Brussels that these rumours were not true. A few weeks later, after having received a rather distrustful answer by the Spanish general, the burgomasters openly denounced the 'treason' of the three civilians who boasted having assisted the States' troops.⁵⁴ In one of their first requests they quoted a former Spanish governor, Don Francisco Medina, who was said to have doubted the strategical importance of Wesel. As far as he was concerned, according to the council, Medina had not seen 'how [the possession of] this garrison served His Majesty'.⁵⁵ The Spanish military completely ignored this statement and surely agreed with the States' point of view that Wesel had but two options: either be Spanish or 'Goeß'.⁵⁶ No decision was taken until May 1647, when the peace negotiations between Spain and the Dutch Republic in Münster were well under way.⁵⁷ At that point, it was not the town as a whole that was granted neutrality, but only its population.

The council, after the rejection of the first requests, had indeed adjusted its aims and no longer requested special status for the town as a whole, but only for its inhabitants. Very soon after the Dutch takeover, Count of Isenburg, a high ranking officer in the Spanish army, let know the council that from that moment on the possessions of those residing in Wesel would be considered a 'good prize', meaning that they could be seized at will by Spanish troops.⁵⁸ The reason for this threat was the fact that the council apparently had agreed to reform the civil guard disbanded by the Spanish in 1614, albeit in a reduced form, in order to assist the States' garrison. Together with the rearmament of the citizens, this was regarded as another violation of the town's neutrality. Although several members of the guard wanted to put down their weapons rather than offend the Spanish, it was too late for the council to back down.⁵⁹ Nevertheless they succeeded in limiting the deployment of the guard to a simple night watch near the town hall and in a walled outskirt called Mathena, and asked the States-General to protect the inhabitants against the consequences of the Spanish threats.⁶⁰ The latter

⁵¹ StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, p. 159-60, 13 Dec. 'Goeß' is a German translation of 'Geus' or 'Gueux', the originally pejorative 'nom de guerre' adopted by the Dutch rebels and still in use at the time to indicate the States-General and its army.

⁵² ARAB, *Aud.*, 634, f. 60 r^o - v^o: Van den Bergh to Isabella, Dieren, 20 Aug.

⁵³ StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, p. 84-5: 23 Aug.

⁵⁴ StAW, *Missivenbücher*, 47, ff. 160 r^o, 160 v^o - 162 r^o, and 167 v^o - 168 v^o: Wesel to Rougemont, 10 Sep., Wesel to Van den Bergh, 22 and 30 Aug., and Wesel to Isabella, 10 Sep.; StAW, *Magistratsregistratur*, capsels 111, n^o 10, ff. 4 r^o - 6 v^o and 9 r^o: Declarations of the magistrate of Wesel, 23 Aug., of Jaecques Wijnantz, Jan Tibau, Thomas Wenbers, and Nicolas de Vos, 30 Aug., and of the Dominicans and the 'Fraterherren' of Wesel, 30 Aug., and Van den Bergh to Wesel, Bocholt, 2 Sep.; ARAB, *Aud.*, 634, ff. 103 r^o - 112 r^o: Van den Bergh to Isabella, Bocholt, 1 Sep. (with attachments).

⁵⁵ StAW, *Missivenbücher*, 47, ff. 160 v^o - 161 r^o: Wesel to Van den Bergh, 22 Aug.

⁵⁶ Kipp, *Wesel*, 88.

⁵⁷ Kipp, *Wesel*, 93.

⁵⁸ StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, pp. 86-7: 26 Aug.

⁵⁹ Kipp, *Wesel*, 89-90.

⁶⁰ NA, SG, 3188, f. 525 r^o: 14 Sep.; NA, SG, 6062: 'Vordere poincten en articulen op dewelcke de magistraet der stadt Wesel door hare gedeputeerde eene genadige en favorable resolutie syn versoekende ende biddende', 7 nov. 1629.

could not mean anything less than to guarantee neutrality. The reluctance of the council and the inhabitants was a great worry and caused some resentment amongst the Dutch. According to the delegates of the States-General in Wesel the local authorities were obsessed with the need of neutrality. The Dutch Council of State even suggested on September 4 to depose the burgomasters and to replace them by some ‘other benevolent persons’.⁶¹

Maybe more troubling was the fact that the population openly doubted the capabilities of the Dutch to preserve their town.⁶² This explains the ‘obsession’ of the town with its neutrality and the fear of retaliation, as well as it explains the pressure exercised by the States-General. The Dutch, too, knew that Wesel would be hard to defend. The Council of State stressed that the inhabitants had no other option than to cooperate, for if the town were to be recaptured by the Spanish, they would not be excused for their earlier behaviour.⁶³ Yet the States-General did not have much of a choice either than to seek the assistance of the local population. The strains on Dutch manpower were still extremely high as long as the Spanish and Imperial troops were still threatening various strongholds and towns, and the siege of ‘s-Hertogenbosch was not yet concluded. Few soldiers could be sent to Wesel, though Dieden continually stressed the need for more troops and pressed the commanders of nearby garrisons to send him even more companies.⁶⁴

It was not only fear of direct retaliation that made the local authorities sue for neutrality, but also economic interests. The council had noticed that trade between Wesel and other neutral cities like Frankfurt am Main already suffered soon after the Dutch takeover and they feared the economic position would deteriorate even further.⁶⁵ In fact, industry and trade had already been shrinking in the Wesel area in the years preceding 1629 because of the continuous warfare in the region, while the town itself had more or less managed to maintain its position. The Spanish river blockade of 1625 had more serious and direct consequences.⁶⁶ The income of the municipal crane on the Rhine, for example, dropped spectacularly in 1626, after it had been more or less constant for several decades.⁶⁷ Not surprisingly the delegates of the States-General could only confirm the image of a ‘poor citizenry’ depicted by the town council.⁶⁸

Whatever the reasons, the town council had to walk a tight rope between Spain and the Dutch Republic in the years following the Dutch occupation, trying not to offend either side. While they called the town’s loss a ‘disaster’ in their letters to the Infanta and other Spanish officials, they congratulated Frederick Henry on the conquest of Wesel and the capitulation of ‘s-Hertogenbosch.⁶⁹ Former governor Don Francisco Lozano, who was later executed for his failure, and his officers received some arrears on their payments, even though the city was solid in Dutch hands. The commander of the nearby stronghold of Geldern, too, received gifts from town officials. In doing so, the council hoped to appease the Spanish, just as much as they offered presents to Frederick Henry and his circle to obtain his support.⁷⁰

⁶¹ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 510 v^o - 511 r^o: 4 Sep.

⁶² NA, SG, 4954: DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.; NA, SG, 4955: DiW to the SG, [29 Aug.], and 1 Sep.

⁶³ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 510 v^o - 511 r^o: 4 Sep.

⁶⁴ KHA, EC, 374: Frenzt to Ernst Casimir, Rees, 10/20, 23 and 28 Aug. 1629; KHA, EC, 407: Misslich to Ernst Casimir, Wesel, 13/23 Aug.; NA, SG, 4954: Ernst Casimir and the deputies in Arnhem to the SG, Arnhem, 12/22 and 14/24 Aug., and the DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.

⁶⁵ Kipp, *Wesel*, 89-90.

⁶⁶ Langhans, *Geschichtsbild*, 39-40.

⁶⁷ Reinicke, ‘Rheinkran’, 64. See also M. Wensky, ‘Zur Geschichte von Alt-Büderich’, in: J. Prieur (red.), *Büderich. Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte* (Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte von Wesel 9; Wesel, 1987) 35.

⁶⁸ StAW, *Missivenbücher*, 47, ff. 160 v^o - 161 r^o: Wesel to Van den Bergh, 22 Aug.; NA, SG, 4954: DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.

⁶⁹ StAW, *Missivenbücher*, 47, ff. 167 v^o - 168 v^o: Wesel to Isabella, 10 Sep.; StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, p. 159: 13 Dec.

⁷⁰ Kipp, *Wesel*, 91 and 95.

Managing the Garrison.

The States-General, having stated that there was no other option for Wesel than to be dragged into their war-effort against Spain, had to make sure that this high-prized booty would not slip from their hands again. The Dutch government now needed to balance several interests, such as keeping a strong garrison in place, lowering the costs as much as possible, and not upsetting the council and the population of Wesel. As I have shown, there were various problems.

In September 1629, Dieden published a ‘Wachtordnung’, aiming at disciplining the still disorderly garrison.⁷¹ The articles contained in this document give an overview of the inhabitants’ complaints, such as swearing, drunkenness, fighting, housebreaking and vandalism. Other points concern raiding outside the walls without knowledge of the officers or selling stolen goods. This ordinance was the town council’s first success – albeit a small one. In the end of August the States-General had sent a delegation of two deputies to Wesel to facilitate the quartering of the Dutch troops, and to negotiate with the local authorities. The ‘Wachtordnung’ followed soon afterwards.⁷² The States-General and the military were well aware that the enemy would try to recapture Wesel and the prospects of putting up a strong defence were slender, so a disciplined garrison was a first step.

Another problem the deputies had to cope with was the extent and the state of the fortifications. The reparations were executed by the troops and on the expense of the Dutch themselves in the first weeks after their arrival. The council proved itself cooperative and delivered nearly 4,000 loaves of bread, over 8,000 pounds of cheese and 200 barrels of beer.⁷³ This support was necessary indeed, as the garrison suffered a lack of basic foodstuffs at that moment.⁷⁴

Most of these soldiers working on the fortifications had not yet found decent accommodation, and had even spent the first week sleeping out in the open on the walls.⁷⁵ Under Spanish rule the city council was permitted to spread the soldiers over the town and it merely continued to do so. Still, the soldiers were not always particularly pleased with the barracks (built by the Spanish) or special ‘soldiers’ houses’ that were assigned to them, as they often lacked basic needs. Although the town council had decided to buy new beds, blankets and sheets, the officers soon complained. There simply was not enough room for the soldiers, and there was hardly any straw or blankets. The unhealthy climate created by this situation, caused diseases and unrest among the troops. The States-General had asked the council of Wesel to quarter the soldiers in civilian houses, for which they promised a compensation for the inhabitants, the so-called ‘serviesgeld’.⁷⁶ They also invited a delegation to Utrecht, their temporary seat since the invasion of the Veluwe, to negotiate the introduction of a tax to cover the expenses made for the Dutch troops.

The council responded with several demands that implicated that they wished full control of the billeting and quartering of the soldiers. The delegates insisted during the talks that only the local authorities and its representatives would be allowed to allocate the quarters, and that the military would be obliged to follow these orders. Furthermore, they wanted all house-owners to be compensated for the lodging of the soldiers, and the city should not be charged for candles, peat, or burning wood delivered to the watch houses. On the financial side they asked for an exemption of all of the States’ duties, the so-called ‘licenten’ and

⁷¹ StAW, *Magistratsregistratur*, capsels 111, n° 11, ff. 3 r° - 6 v°: ‘Wachtordnung’, 27 Sep.

⁷² Kipp, *Wesel*, 93-4; StAW, *Ratsprotokolle*, 81, pp. 158-9.

⁷³ Kipp, *Wesel*, 67; NA, *SG*, 4954: DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.; NA, *SG*, 3188, f. 586 r°: 6 Nov.

⁷⁴ NA, *SG*, 4955: DiW to the SG, 1 Sep.

⁷⁵ NA, *SG*, 4954: DiW to the SG, 27 Aug.

⁷⁶ NA, *SG*, 6062: SG to Wesel, Utrecht, 4 Sep. (draft).

‘convoyen’, while in turn they defended their rights on the excises levied within the city.⁷⁷ Quite adroitly, they referred to the Spanish occupation, which too had granted these last demands. In early November the delegates presented a new set of demands to the States-General. They agreed that the importance of the town and the extension of the fortifications made the presence of a large garrison unavoidable. But the population was too small to carry this burden all by itself, they argued, and therefore it was necessary to build more barracks or huts for the soldiers. Secondly, they wanted all expenses for the new garrison repaid, amongst others for the foodstuffs delivered in August. And finally, they wished an interdiction of ‘civilian’ crafts and trade for soldiers, in order to protect the commerce of the local people.⁷⁸

The straightforward approach of the Wesel council paid off. The States-General gave up the idea of having the civil companies guard the city and approved the limitation of their tasks to a simple night watch.⁷⁹ They also agreed with the requested ban on the ‘civilian’ crafts, but such a ban was common for all Dutch garrisons. In January 1630, about a month after the proclamation of a ‘Servisordnung’ regulating the compensations for the population, the Dutch government decided to have more soldiers assigned to civilian houses, but the barracks remained in use, just as the delegates had asked. The officers were offered houses to rent, often owned by the city council, which was another demand made by the council.⁸⁰ The governor took up his stay in the ‘Fürstenhof’, an old residence of the dukes of Cleves.⁸¹ Cavalrymen were usually assigned to the houses (and stables) of the wealthier inhabitants, as the aforementioned Heinrich von Weseken was to experience.⁸² During the further Dutch occupation, the council appointed eight officials in charge of the billeting and housing of the garrison. In the first place there were four ‘Quartermeister’, one ‘Bewahrer der Baracken’, one ‘Bürgerwachtmeister’, and one ‘Servismeister’. A so-called ‘Aufseher’, or inspector, who was to keep an eye on the housing of the troops, acted on behalf of the governor. When the garrison was expanded during tensed periods a ‘Barackenschreiber’ or ‘secretary of the barracks’ was appointed as well to lighten the burden placed on the regular officials.⁸³

Most of the requests appeared to be reasonable to the Council of State, Frederick Henry and Ernst Casimir, who were all asked for their advice. The Spanish had indeed let the city council its freedom to handle all local affairs, both political and religious. And since the Dutch Republic was only interested in the strategic value of the town, it would be unjust to charge the population with extra taxes or military expenses. For that reason all advances made by the city should be repaid. On the other hand the huge expenditures for the garrison would put a dangerous strain on Dutch military finances. Hence it would only be right if the inhabitants contributed to the maintenance of the troops. To achieve this, the Council of State and the two noblemen proposed the introduction of the ‘gemene middelen’, the ‘common revenues’ or excise revenue. This proposal did not turn a blind eye to the needs, and especially the poverty, of the inhabitants and agreed to the postponement of the introduction for one year.⁸⁴ The delegates of Wesel successfully opposed the introduction of the new excises, but eventually had to agree to a payment of 24,000 guilders, or about half of the

⁷⁷ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 531 r° - 532 r°: 21 Sep. These demands can also be found in NA, SG, 6062: ‘Poincten ende articulen waerop de gedeputeerde der stadt Wesel genaedige ende troostelycke resolutie onderdaenich syn biddende’, 21 Sep.

⁷⁸ NA, SG, 6062: ‘Vordere poincten en articulen’, 7 Nov.

⁷⁹ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 605 v° - 606 v°: 26 Nov

⁸⁰ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 531 r° - 532 r°: 21 Sep.

⁸¹ Kipp, *Wesel*, 62-5 and 70.

⁸² Bambauer and Kleinholz, ‘Weseken’, 379. See also NA, SG, 6062: ‘Vordere poincten en articulen’, 7 Nov.

⁸³ Kipp, *Wesel*, 54-6 and 64.

⁸⁴ NA, SG, 3188, ff. 605 v° - 606 v°: 26 Nov.

estimated total 'serviesgelden'. Some months later, the States-General tried again to introduce the taxes, but again the council effectively blocked their attempts again.⁸⁵

The outcome of another negotiation was less successful for the city of Wesel. At first it seemed as if the States-General had agreed to the exemption of all duties, but it soon became clear that the 'licenten' and 'convoyen' were collected on commodities entering and leaving the city.⁸⁶ In doing so, the Dutch imposed more and higher taxes than the Spanish had ever done during their fifteen-year occupation, but on the other hand trade with the Republic was no longer prohibited. The collecting of the duties was not the only promise the States-General broke: the payment of the 'Serviesgeld' also did not go as planned. Contrary to all assurances that these compensations would be effectively paid and, even more, were going to benefit the inhabitants more than they had ever done under Spanish rule, a large part remained unpaid for years. In August 1630 the city complained for the first time to the States-General, but it was not until 1633 that the first payments were actually made. In September 1634, still half of the claimants had not seen any money.⁸⁷

Gains and losses.

What can be said, by way of conclusion, about the Dutch takeover of August 1629?

To the States-General, the optimism seemed just. Not only did the conquest of Wesel boost morale within the Republic, it also enhanced its reputation within Europe. 'Wesel' was to become part of one of the greatest successes of the States-General during the Eighty Years' war and marked a turning point in the war, together with to the taking of the Silver Fleet and the surrender of 's-Hertogenbosch. In the rest of Europe it was regarded as a Protestant answer to the apparently unstoppable Catholic successes of the previous years.⁸⁸ On the strategic level, the capture of Wesel dramatically altered the balance of power on the Lower Rhine. Spain had lost its most important garrison in that region and was no longer able to control the Rhine trade, especially when the town of Buderich, opposite Wesel on the left bank, too, was lost a few weeks after Wesel. The Spanish crown possessed some other important crossing points until the middle of the 1630s, such as Rheinberg, and managed to achieve some small successes, but it had lost its predominance, both political and strategic. 'Wesel' marked the beginning of the end. With the possession of this town, the Dutch Republic's eastern border was more secure, at least until 1672, when the army of Louis XIV swept across the Lower Rhine into the United Netherlands.

Yet if we focus on the town and the garrison itself, the picture becomes less clear. The States-General obviously succeeded in achieving their first goal, keeping the stronghold secure during the first weeks of the occupation, although this might be partially attributed to the shortcomings of the Spanish army. It seems however unlikely that the States-General and their representatives were able to uphold their image as 'liberators' of the oppressed people of Wesel. There had indeed been abuses by the Spanish governor and the blockade of all trade with the Northern Netherlands had been harmful, but did that change dramatically when the new garrison imposed new and sometimes heavier burdens? The actions of the States-General must have damped the enthusiasm of the Wesel population for their liberators. To many inhabitants, the extensive garrison and the huge costs for the troops and fortifications made it look as if they were not better off under Dutch occupation than under Spanish 'oppression'.

⁸⁵ Kipp, *Wesel*, 94-5.

⁸⁶ Kipp, *Wesel*, 97-8.

⁸⁷ Kipp, *Wesel*, 67-9 and 95.

⁸⁸ See for instance these letters written by the States' ambassadors and representatives abroad: NA, *SG*, 6026: Aitzema to the SG, Hamburg, 19 Aug. [old style]; NA, *SG*, 6023: Brederode to the SG, Basel, 7 Sep.; NA, *SG*, 6761: Langerak to the SG, Mélnun, 12 Oct., or the felicitations by foreign states and princes, such as NA, *SG*, 3188, ff. 590 v^o and 591 r^o: 10 Nov. A recent study on the Southern Netherlands in the latest stage of the war uses 1629 not without reason as starting point, see Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog*.

Yet when one merely looks at the goals and interests of the States-General, one might agree that in the long run they achieved a considerable success in imposing their military rule.

Looking from the point of view of the local authorities, Herbert Kipp, who wrote that the council showed a good diplomatic judgment of the new situation, is right.⁸⁹ They started negotiations with the new military government almost immediately after the occupation of the town and did not appear to be intimidated at all. In an assertive way the delegates of the town made clear requests, defended their point of view, and even approached Frederick Henry to get his moral support. It is true that they failed to restore their neutrality, but on the other hand, did they really hope to realize something as ambitious as that? The immediate outcome of the talks with the States-General consequently was a considerable success, but the translation into tangible, long-term results somehow failed. Despite this failure Dutch presence might have been a blessing to the inhabitants of Wesel. The States-General filled the gap left by the last Duke of Cleves-Jülich and replaced an uncertain and weak rule of quarrelling claimants with a strong government. As a result, the town was spared from much of the suffering that befell many other towns and villages during that period. Maybe that is exactly what the town council hoped to achieve.

⁸⁹ Kipp, *Wesel*, 127-8.