Chapter IV
Francisco de Valdés: the exemplary soldier

A Miles Christi

Francisco de Valdés is famous within the historiography on early modern military treatises. *His Diálogo militar*, later also published under the title *Espejo y desciplina militar*, is clearly the most important reason why Spanish historians remember this commander from the wars in the Low Countries. The 1989 edition by the Spanish defence ministry is still available in its series of military treatises. The first edition of the *Diálogo* was published in Madrid in 1578, while the author was still alive and active as a commander, followed by editions in Brussels, Antwerp and again Madrid. By the close of the century the treatise had been translated into English and Italian: enough evidence to claim that Valdés’s work had become a minor early modern bestseller.

Finishing his manuscript in Deventer on 20 October 1571, Valdés dedicated his work to Fadrique de Toledo, the son of the Duke of Alba, and he informs his readers that his friends had encouraged him to write a treatise on the position of the *Sargento mayor*, a function he had fulfilled within the tercio of Lombardy under Maestre de campo Sancho de Londoño. He had been in the Low Countries since arriving from Italy with the tercio in 1567. According to the first edition, Valdés had been a Maestre de campo already in 1571, but this was in fact not the case.

Valdés’s treatise was published in 1589 jointly with the first edition of the *Discurso sobre la forma de reducir la disciplina militar a mejor y antiguo estado*, written by his Maestre de campo Sancho de Londoño, and signed at the beginning of April 1568. Londoño would die in office in 1569 while acting as the military governor of Maastricht. University graduate Londoño wrote his treatise during a three-month period at the end of his stay in the Brabantine city of Lier, and he did so because the

1 Fagel, *Spaanse belegeraar* and Idem, ‘Maestre de campo’, were based on an earlier draft of this chapter.
2 Valdés, *Espejo*; González de León, ‘Doctors’.
Duke of Alba had asked him to write. Valdés therefore takes his place in a tradition within the Spanish army that stimulated its officers to write treatises on the military profession.

We can imagine officers like Valdés and Londoño debating their military profession during their long and probably often boring residence in the cities of the Low Countries, especially between 1569 and 1572 when little fighting was taking place. So maybe it is no coincidence that Valdés’s treatise took the form of a dialogue between two officers, his Maestre de campo Londoño and another officer called Vargas. Though generally it is thought that the latter refers to cavalry general Alonso de Vargas, it is highly probable that Valdés was thinking of Alonso’s brother, Sargento Francisco de Vargas, a member of the same tercio of Lombardy. Valdés and Francisco had fought together at the Battle of Dahlem in 1568 where Vargas had been severely wounded.

In his treatise Valdés defends the idea of the Sargento mayor as an individual trained in both military theory (el arte militar) and military discipline. It is all about creating balance and harmony between theory and practical experience. In the Diálogo we find one of the most quoted sentences of military historiography, for example to be found in Geoffrey Parker’s seminal work on the Spanish army in the Low Countries:

El día que uno toma la pica para ser soldado, ese día, renuncia a ser Christiano.

The day a man picks up his pike to become a soldier is the day he ceases to be a Christian.

This quotation is generally used to demonstrate the cruelty of early modern warfare. However, when we continue reading, we find an author who is perfectly aware of the not very Christian elements of his profession, but who at the same time wants to emphasise the Sargento mayor’s role as the guardian of the souls of the soldiers under his command. He has to take care that the army camp is free of any vices and he has to fight blasphemy: “que no se jure en nombre de Dios”. The Sargento mayor has to prohibit concubines and punish thieves. Valdés understands perfectly

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3 Sáenz Herrero, ‘Humanismo’; Martínez, Front lines, 234. Martínez claims the Leiden manuscript could be the original text of Londoño’s treatise: UBL, Codices Vulcanii, 92; González de León, ‘Doctors’.


5 Geoffrey Parker, Army 2004). 153 (translation Geoffrey Parker); Valdés, Espejo, 70.
that there were many soldiers who followed what he calls “the bad life” ("mal vivir"), but without fearing God it was completely impossible to function as a good soldier. So he does not accept the violence, and instead defends a very Christian posture as the essence of his profession. Of course, this is a difficult position to hold onto in practice, as the war might ask you to go against your Christian values. But his treatise shows that he wanted to see himself, and the same holds for his fellow soldiers, as being Milites Christi, soldiers of Christ.

At this point it is instructive to contrast this idea of a Miles Christi with a quotation by Valdés that has often been used within Dutch historiography on the Revolt. We have to move on to the moment Maestre de campo Francisco de Valdés writes a letter to his Governor-general and Captain-general, Luis de Requesens. It is 21 September 1574 and Valdés writes from the small village of Zoeterwoude, just outside the city of Leiden, besieged by Valdés and his troops:

It surely is devilish stubbornness by evil rebels who have taken such a strange resolution, not only to flood the whole country in a way that it can never be recovered, but also destroying three cities to save one; if it is relieved and Your Excellency gives me a licence to open the sluices of Maassluis I will drown these bad people, because they do not deserve less punishment than this.

In another letter from a few days earlier he had already defended a similarly aggressive solution to the situation:

It has seemed to me [important] to inform Your Excellency so he understands that if at any given time he would be served by flooding this country, it is in his hands, because they have started with it, and if they persist in their obstinate rebellion they deserve to be drowned.

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6 Valdés, Espejo, 70-71.
7 ‘Y cierto es diabolica ostinacion de malvados rebeldes que ayan tomado una tan estraña resolucion como es no solo anegar todo el pays sin que jamas se pueda recuperar pero destruyr tres villas por socorrer una la qual si se socorren y vuestra excelencia me da licencia abrir las esclussas de Meslanclus y acabare de anegar tan mala gente pues no merecen menos castigo que este’. AGS, E. 560, 91-94.
8 ‘Hame parecido dar dello aviso a vuestra excelencia para que entienda que siempre que fuere servido de anegar este pays esta en su mano y pues ellos han dado principio a lo hazer si perseveran en su obstinada rebellion bien merecen ser anegados’. AGS, E. 560, 91-94.
In Dutch historiography these quotations stand to illustrate the cruel reasoning and harsh behaviour of the Spanish military during the Revolt, especially by somebody close to the much-hated Duke of Alba. The violent nature of the quotations can be compared to aggressive formulations in letters written by the Duke, for example when defending the massacre at Naarden in December 1572.9 How can we reconcile our image of the Miles Christi of the treatise with that of the author of these unmerciful letters?

A love story

The idea of flooding Holland is also difficult to connect to the rather positive image the inhabitants of Leiden nowadays have of their former besieger. Generally referred to as ‘Francisco Valdéz’ his name has even been given to one of the streets in the neighbourhood dedicated to the history of the siege, albeit a rather small one. Just like Mondragón’s, his fame was not so negative as to make this impossible around 1900. The reason lies in the fact that the Leiden citizens of 1900, just like the ones living in the city today, would directly connect the name of Valdés with that of Magdalena Moons, the famous local heroine of the siege.10

As the story goes, the Maestre de campo got involved in a sentimental relationship with a woman from The Hague. Magdalena promised to marry Francisco if he refrained from attacking the city of Leiden where part of her family was living at the time. Although we will never know for certain whether Valdés did indeed make such a far-reaching promise to his loved-one, the fact that the commander did not have the necessary artillery to storm the city would have turned it into an easy promise.

We know that a marriage between the two did indeed take place some years after the lifting of the siege, as proven by Els Kloek.11 Around the time of the siege they were no longer young lovers. Magdalena had been born around 1541 and Valdés around 1518, making them about thirty-three and fifty-six when they met in The Hague. By the time they got married, Magdalena must already have been some thirty-seven years of age, making the marriage not so much the happy start of a young new family, but more a union of two mature individuals.

9 Alba to Philip II, 19 December 1572, EA III, 261.
10 The History department of Leiden University hosts a special chair in local history named for ‘Magdalena Moons’.
11 Kloek, Kenau. A laser technique was used to read the lines in the text that had been made unreadable.
Magdalena was the daughter of Pieter Moons, a lawyer working for the Court of Holland in The Hague, as had her brother, Reinier, who had recently died in 1571. It seems probable that Reinier, working for the Habsburg government, had remained loyal to Philip II. Another brother, Willem, was, however, removed as mayor of the city by Valdés when he took possession of The Hague. The fact that he returned again as mayor when the royal troops left the city seems to indicate he was a supporter of the rebellion. And of course, we do not have any evidence on the political ideas of Magdalena herself.

In her work, Els Kloek has already unravelled the development of this episodic narrative through time. Calvinist historian Pieter Bor in 1624 published a story about the love between Valdés and an unknown woman from The Hague, whom he maintained. Several years later, Italian historian Famiano Strada tells how Valdés had wanted to storm the city but a dinner party with a woman from The Hague then made him change his mind. But in these stories the woman still had no name. This would change only when the Leiden playwrights introduced her into their versions of the events.

The siege of Leiden, and its subsequent final lifting, may well be the single historical event sparking the largest theatrical interest in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is an impressive number of plays, and the number of editions is overwhelming. Though perhaps secondary to Magdalena Moons and especially hero and Leiden mayor, Pieter Adriaansz. Van der Werff, Francisco de Valdés developed into one of the most represented characters in Dutch Golden Age drama. There is no doubt that he has been larger on stage than classical Spanish heroes such as Don Juan or Don Carlos, albeit nowadays he has been largely forgotten outside Leiden.

Jacob Duym published a series of six plays in his Ghedenck-boeck of 1606. The author was a Brabantine rebel who had fled to Leiden many years before. In the introduction he directly stated that it was his intention to show the cruelties of the Spanish so people would not forget them, and he clearly sided with the House of Orange. At the top of the list of characters in his Leiden play we find Baldeso (Valdés), the King’s

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12 Kloek, *Kenau*, 244-245.
general, followed by two Spanish officers, Alonso and Carion.\textsuperscript{16} Valdés opens the first act and directly threatens the inhabitants:

\begin{quote}
The child in the cradle may shake and shiver freely:
If now you do not accept the mercy of the King…
In short, the city has to be destroyed\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

The Spaniard made clear that he wanted to win the city by trickery (soet met list) as he did not want to lose as many soldiers as had perished in the sieges of Haarlem and Alkmaar, but he remained rather polite, ending this speech in Act Two with a mere “If they don’t do it, I shall deny them all my mercy”.\textsuperscript{18} In Act Three, the threats do get stronger and the inhabitants have to fear worse treatment than that suffered by Naarden, Zutphen and Haarlem, as Valdés exclaims, “Oh Leiden, you have a knife to your throat”. In the same Act Baldeso showed himself as not very cultivated because when he received a letter in Latin he stated he did not understand the language (“twelck ick gants niet en weet”).\textsuperscript{19} This is clearly not the same person as the author of the \textit{Diálogo}, but the ignorance may relate to the idea of the Spanish commanders being of low birth. In a last dramatic scene in Act Five he had to flee the city to escape the rising water after the rebels had broken the dykes. His last sentence in the play shows some comical sense of reason: “with wet feet, it is very difficult for the men to fight”.\textsuperscript{20} Of his love affair, still no trace.\textsuperscript{21}

Jacob van Zevecote, born in Ghent (County of Flanders), was first ordained a Catholic priest, but after his arrival in Leiden in 1623 he converted to Calvinism.\textsuperscript{22} In his \textit{Belegh van Leyden} of 1626 the convert showed himself a great enemy of the Spanish, in language much more aggressive than that of Duym twenty years earlier.\textsuperscript{23} This also had an enormous effect on Valdés’ image and on the cruel words he spoke on stage:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{16}] Duym, \textit{Benoude belegheeringe}.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{17}] ‘Het jonck kind inde wiegh’ magh schudden en vrij beven: Soo ghy ons coninx gnaed’ dees reys niet en neemt aen… Die stad die moeter aen, dats nu int cort gheseyt’. Duym, \textit{Benoude belegheeringe}, Act 1.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{18}] ‘Doen sy’t niet, ick ontseg haer al mijn ghenade’. Duym, \textit{Benoude belegheeringe}, Act 2.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{19}] ‘O Leyden, Leyden, ghy hebt het mes op de keel’. Duym, \textit{Benoude belegheeringe}, Act 3.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{20}] ‘Mit natte voeten, ist voor t’volck, seer quert om vechten’. Duym, \textit{Benoude belegheeringe}, Act 5.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{21}] Bordewijk, ‘Lof’, 10-13.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{22}] Dambre, ‘Jacob’.
\item[\parnum\textsuperscript{23}] Zevecote, \textit{Belegh}.
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}
I see the city is mine, she cannot escape me any more
Then I shall cut the throats of small children everywhere
Play with the cut-off heads as if they were balls
I shall open the bellies of the pregnant women
And feed my strange lusts with the unborn child.24

The play is a perfect example of the aggressively anti-Spanish Black Legend that by that time dominated public discourse in the Republic, stating that all Spaniards were liars and cruel by nature: “The Spaniard who lives according to his style is the most cruel animal that ever lived”.25 But still no sign of Valdés’s love affair.

The next play is that of Leiden pastry baker Reinier Bontius, and it is this work that will have an enormous impact. Researchers to date have found 111 editions of the play, published between 1645 and 1850,26 a record in the history of Dutch Golden Age theatre. Though it was, of course, very popular in Leiden, it was also published in other cities with sixty editions issued in Amsterdam. More than three hundred performances in the Amsterdam theatre between 1645 and 1772 made it the third most popular play of the entire period.27 And with it, Commander Baldeus became the most important Spanish character on the Dutch stage, especially every year around the beginning of October when the lifting of the siege was commemorated in the Dutch Republic.

The first edition of 1645 shows that Bontius made use of the earlier plays, and Baldeus is as aggressive as in the play by Zevecote: “I am thirsty for the blood of burghers, and long for women’s shame”. Also present are the officers Carion and Alonso who joined in, telling how they cut unborn babies out of their mothers’ wombs and also killed all the Catholics they met.28 And still no love story to be found. However, in the second edition of 1646 we find the mention of Amelia, “byzit van Baldeus”, his concubine. On his way to storm the city Baldeus meets

24 Bordewijk, ‘Lof’, 14. ‘Ick sie de stat is myn, z’en kan my niet ontgaen; Dan sal ick overal de teere kinders kelen; Met ‘t afgesneden hoofd gelyck met bollen spellen; Ick sal den zwangren byuck der vrouwen open doen; Met onvolmaeckte wicht myn vreemde lusten voen’. Zevecote, Belegh, Act 2.
25 ‘Die eenen Spaignaert is of op zijn wijze leeft, is t’wreetste dier dat oyt natuer gewonnen heeft’. Zevecote, Belegh, Act 3; Rodríguez Pérez, ‘Leopardo’.
28 ‘Ick dorst na burgers bloet, en haeck na vrouwe schande’. Bontius, Belegering (1645), Act 1.
her for the first time, dressed in mourning clothes. She convinces him to stop the attack as she had family in the city. The scene ends with the following words of Baldeus: “Come, let’s go to my tent and rest for the night”. Though not yet a romantic love affair, it is the first introduction of a female protagonist into the play.

Kloek has argued that after this first appearance people started to connect the concubine in the play with Magdalena Moons, and her family then started a campaign to stop the rumours about her: a campaign that achieved important results. In 1659, after the author’s death, others continued to edit revised versions of the play and Amelia was turned into M.M. This change is explained in an introduction citing the history of the Revolt by Strada, who had written that the woman in question had been a noblewoman and lawfully married to Valdés after the siege. By this time Baldeus had changed into Francisco Baldeo, but he remained the blood-thirsty Spanish commander of the first edition. The scene between the two no longer ended with a reference to the tent, but with a promise of matrimony. However, it does not take the commander long to realise he has done wrong in listening to the plea of M.M. instead of to his Spanish advisors. In this sense, the anecdote serves as an alternative explanation for the fact that Leiden was never stormed by the Spanish commander.

In successive re-editions this new version with noblewoman M.M. was sometimes followed, but there also continued to reappear editions using the story of concubine Amelia, and even mixed versions with noblewoman Amelia. Over the course of time, the family also convinced the people responsible for the play to use N.N. instead of M.M. Though still very ambiguous, the very presence of Valdés and Magdalena Moons in this play was the beginning of the famous love story that has survived until today.

In H. Brouwer’s plays on the siege and the relief, both from 1683, Valdés finally changed character. He became brave instead of cruel, and true hearted instead of treacherous. He even received his correct name of Francisco de Valdés. However, there is no Magdalena and the love story in the play takes place between other protagonists.

29 ‘Com, gaen wy naer mijn tent en ruste daer de nacht’. Bontius, Belegering (1646), 15th sorting; Kloek, Kenau, 272-277.
30 The introduction of a secondary love plot in Dutch plays was strongly influenced by the Spanish comedias that had much success in the Low Countries.
31 Bontius, Beleg (1659), Act 5.
32 Kloek, Kenau, 277.
33 Harmsen, ‘Reinier Bontius’.
34 Meijer Drees, ‘Burgemeester’, 172; Brouwer, Ontset (1683).
of Spain in the Low Countries was maybe not a wholly continuous narrative from the sixteenth century onwards, right up to the modern era. It might well be that the threat of Louis XIV’s France had made the old Spanish enemy less diabolical.

We have to wait until Cornelis Boon in 1711 to find the modern story with ‘Magdaleene’ and ‘Baldes’ on stage. The Spanish commander had an internal conflict between his love for Magdalena and his duties as a soldier. Though he put honour above love, in the end he decided not to storm the city. The stereotype of the cruel commander of the plays by Zevecote and Bontius had finally given way to a much more humane character, though the Spanish cruelty of the Black Legend can still be found in the play, with the classical Spanish vices of infanticide, rape and murder:

He hung the wet nurse by her breasts
While the milk, mixed with blood, dripped down along them.³⁶

Magdalena’s sister stated to her that Baldes could never lose his Spanish character, while Magdalena thought highly of him. When they finally met in the play, it was very clear it was true love. Baldes called himself her slave, and he loved her more than he loved himself.³⁷

The love story received its final shape with the play on the siege by Lucretia van Merken, who also wrote works in which we can find Cristóbal de Mondragón as their protagonist.³⁸ In the introduction to the 1774 edition, the history of Magdalena Moons is explained using the available historical knowledge of the time, and for the first time she appears in a play with her full name. She is even turned into the main protagonist. Magdalena stated that she trusted Valdés completely, and the author of the play introduced fellow Spanish commander Julián Romero as the one who wanted to attack the city. In this way Valdés could be described as the one who tried to stop Romero. Valdés himself wanted to negotiate a surrender in order to save Magdalena’s relatives, but the city magistrates did not trust him.

³⁶ ‘Hy hang de zoogster aan haar’ volle borsten weder; T erwyl de melk, met bloedt gemengt, daar langs druipt neder’. Boon, Leiden, 4.
³⁷ Boon, Leiden, 50.
³⁸ Merken, ‘Beleg’ (1774).
Disguised in the clothes of a plain soldier, Valdés secretly met with Magdalena, telling her he could no longer stop Romero. He himself had, “never than through coercion, spilled the blood of burghers”. Though he tried to tell her he had no choice other than to attack the city, in the end he promised to refrain from storming: “if Magdalena loves me, this is enough fame for Valdés”, leaving the scene with a “goodbye my bride”. At the end of the play, as the Spanish army left, Magdalena is celebrated as the great heroine who will be remembered forever. The love story finally softened Francisco de Valdés’ memory, turning him into an example of the good Spaniard. However, in contrast to Cristóbal de Mondragón, this occurred only from the eighteenth century, and only on stage.

What a terrible man!

His image during his own lifetime was maybe even the very opposite. One night in March 1576, Fernando de Lannoy, the Lord of La Roche and brother-in-law of Cardinal Granvelle, was dining in the palace in Brussels with other noblemen from the Low Countries, such as the Duke of Aarschot. When they saw passing below their window Maestre de campo Francisco de Valdés, Lannoy, immediately enfuriated, uttered, “If he would meet such a mean man, he would not be able to sustain from treating him badly and beating him”. He took his leave of the Duke and went down to get his horse, together with all of his men. In front of a large group of people he openly stated that “If he could find the unfortunate coward Valdés, he would break his head and finish him off”.

Morillon, Granvelle’s confidant in the Low Countries, explained that Valdés had written very negatively to the King about Lannoy. The story continued. Lannoy told his men to mount their horses and prepare their guns. The Lord of Lalaing tried to stop them: “My cousin, do not harm him and yourself, to lead us against one who before was not more than a lackey”. It was a classic argument in those days. Most of the Spanish commanders that governed the Low Countries were supposedly of very low birth, like chimney sweeps and basket makers. Drummer was another possibility. Even though this was an exaggeration, their relatively low

41 Morillon to Granvelle, Brussels, 31 March 1576, CG VI (1887) 42-44.
(and non-noble) birth was taken as an enormous affront by the high nobility of the Low Countries.

When royal councillor Gerónimo de Roda appeared, Lannoy confronted him with his complaints:

Don Fernande [Lannoy] asks Roda how it is possible that the King is using such a mean man, who had prevented the reduction of Leiden, and as a result, of the whole of Holland.

Morillon even informed Granvelle that it was said that Lannoy had opened a letter from Valdés to Luis de Requesens and that he had found “wickedness” (“villaquerie”) in the letter. According to chronicler Everhard van Reyd, Lannoy had also complained to the court in Brussels about Valdés’s behaviour.42

The enmity between the two men went back a long way. On 30 April 1574 Valdés had arrived near Utrecht with his troops and he had asked Lannoy, who at the time was governing the city, for permission to lodge his soldiers on the outskirts of the city, outside the city wall, “because the major part of the soldiers carried their arquebuses without the cases and their equipment badly treated”.43

Lannoy gave permission to quarter the soldiers on the outskirts, but before he did so he had given its inhabitants the opportunity to remove all objects of worth from their houses. He also did not provide food and drink to the men. Some of Valdés’s soldiers got so angry they set fire to some of the houses. The commander had them arrested directly and made them pay for the damage. At least, this is how the story is told by Valdés in his letter to Requesens.

The commander explained how the burghers had started to act against the Spaniards in the city, with their swords in their hands. Some Spaniards did not succeed in escaping and “they hurt and mistreated them and they were deadly wounded”.44 He especially mentioned the case of a wounded Spanish soldier who had been badly treated by the inhabitants:

42 Álvarez Francés, ‘Fabrication; Van Reyd, Voornaemste gheschiedenissen, 18.
43 ‘Porque la mayor parte de los soldados trayan sus arcabuzes sin caxas y sus coseletes mal tractados. Asimismo venian los mas sin zapatos y casi todos sin vaynas en las espadas’. Valdés to Requesens (copy), Utrecht, 2 May 1574, AGS, E. 557, f. 160; CP III (1851) n. 1343.
44 ‘Los hirieron y maltractaron y estan heridos de muerte’.
They took the crutches from a disabled soldier in the middle of the street and they forced him to dance, mocking him, and they talked – not in secret but in public – in their conversation and their drunkenness about where they could attack and take the castle.\textsuperscript{45} It is in this letter that he accused Lannoy of defending the burghers of Utrecht better than the interests of the royal army. And he was perhaps right in saying so. In his own letter Lannoy described the tense situation in Utrecht in a completely different way. He wrote that more than two thousand people had witnessed the Spaniards burning down houses and this had caused great disorder among the inhabitants of the city. According to the governor, only a few Spanish soldiers were hurt and they had only thrown some stones and taken out some knives. Nothing about mortal injuries, and no swords drawn. Both Lannoy and Valdés were serving Philip II, but their descriptions of the situation had little in common.\textsuperscript{46} We have seen the same conflict played out, for example, in Zeeland between the Spanish commanders and the nobility from the Low Countries, and between Champagney and Sancho Dávila in Antwerp.

A local Utrecht chronicle, very hostile to the Spanish presence, stated that Valdés possessed a “great hatred and envy against the city of Utrecht”. In this story the Spaniards threatened to burn down all the suburbs of Utrecht if they were not let into the city, something Valdés had promised them, in order to receive their payment. The chronicle does not refer to violence on the part of the inhabitants, only that “there almost started a riot among the burghers”. The description of the relationship between the two men is, however, very different: “Lannoy, whom he had to slightly provoke because it was a good man and committed to the Spaniards”. Finally, one banner at a time was allowed to enter the city to be reviewed in front of Lannoy.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} ‘Quitar en medio de la calle las muletas a un soldado estropiado y haziendole por fuerça baylar escarneciendo del y hazer discursos no en secreto sino publicamente en sus conversaciones y borracheras de que parte podrian batir y tomar el castillo’. Valdés to Requesens (copy), Utrecht, 2 May 1574, AGS, E. 557, f. 160.

\textsuperscript{46} Requesens wanted Lannoy to communicate all his letters with Valdés, ‘como á persona de tanta experiencia y conianza’. Requesens to Lannoy, 4 April 1574, NCD II, 86-88.

\textsuperscript{47} ‘Groote haet ende nijdt jeghens die stadt van Utrecht’. Also: ‘Uuyt ranceur van zijn eyghheen giericheyt ende ambitie’; ‘Bynae een oploeepe onder die borgheren in die stadt gecommen soude hebben’; ‘Lanoy, die hy daertoe lichtelick te induceren hadde, soe het een goet man was, den Spangaerts wel toegedaen sijnde’. ‘Utrechtsche kroniek’, 137-140.
Also during the siege of Leiden, Lannoy and Valdés did not collaborate at all. Lannoy left Valdés out of the negotiations with the defenders of the city. It all would build up to the tense night in Brussels. Also his soldiers did not always like their Maestre de campo. During the great mutiny of 1574 they wanted to kill Valdés, “who had just arrived in Antwerp, called by the Comendador [Requesens] to receive instructions on the affairs of Holland; he was forced to hide himself to escape from their anger”. So, beside the image of the learned author of a military treatise and the story of Francisco and Magdalena, there has also existed a very negative image among some of the nobility from the Low Countries, and even among his own soldiers. The question is whether we can get any closer to the real Valdés.

The unknown Valdés (and the story of his wounds)

If we try to reconstruct the facts of his life it becomes clear that we do not know much about this Spanish protagonist of the Revolt. We are unaware of his year and place of birth, we do not know who his parents were, and we hardly have a clue as to his descendants. In this sense Valdés occupies a very different position compared to the much-better-studied Romero, Dávila and Mondragón.

The origin of the Valdés family most surely must be found in Asturias, the cold and rainy mountainous region in the north of Spain, where we can find a village with this name. The Valdés family in the city of Gijón was very important, and it owned a palace in the city. We can also find his name in local histories and genealogies of this family, but it is never clear what place the commander occupied within the family. The new Spanish national biographical dictionary mentions Gijón as his place of birth, but with a question mark.

Requesens was aware of the communication problems between Valdés and Lannoy: ‘estando el conde de la Roche tan cerca, y también Francisco de Valdés, es necesario irles avisando de cuando en cuando lo que se ofreciere, y que ellos hagan lo mismo, para que los unos entiendan lo que los otros hacen para tener buena correspondencia y se haga mejor el servicio de Su Magestad’. Requesens to Romero, 27 July 1574, NCD IV, 162-166.

Requesens to Philip II, Antwerp, 15 May 1574, CP III (1851) n. 1348.

Fernández Secades, Valdés. The author also confirmed personally that she had not been able to situate our Francisco; Valdés, Memorias. The manuscript from 1622 can be found in the BNM, ms. 11.457; Menéndez Valdés, Avisos, 145, 147.

Sánchez Martín, ‘Valdés’.
However, the fact that he cannot be traced in Asturias might indicate that Francisco belonged to another branch of the family. In the beginning of the sixteenth century we can find this last name spread all over Castile. There was a Francisco de Valdés in the times of Isabel of Castile, Governor of the castle of Zamora. Other examples show a Francisco de Valdés born in Abarca de Campos in Castile, and in the city of Segovia a certain Francisco de Valdés had brought a court case against a convent. At the moment, neither of these lines can, however, be directly connected to the commander, but it shows that there is no reason to limit the search to Asturias.\textsuperscript{52} We must not forget that Julián Romero and Cristóbal de Mondragón had fathers with a Basque origin, but were born in Castile.

Other letters prove that the commander had a daughter, Francisca, from an earlier relationship, who lived in Spain. It was precisely during the last months of the siege of Leiden that he was occupied with this daughter. He had given orders to pay Juan de Albornoz, the Duke of Alba’s secretary, by then back in Spain, the sum of one thousand ducats through a Spanish merchant in Antwerp, Juan de Cuéllar. Albornoz himself worked with the well-known merchant Juan de Curiel. It was all to help out his daughter Francisca.\textsuperscript{53} But there were in fact two daughters, as in 1571 there was mention of one daughter who was going to marry while another one had entered a convent. Valdés had already asked permission to travel to Spain because the wedding could not go ahead without his presence.\textsuperscript{54} What we know for sure is that in 1575 besides a daughter in a convent he still had an unmarried daughter in Madrid.\textsuperscript{55} But it is striking that Valdés was occupied with the future of his daughters during the tense final months of the Leiden siege.

A final clue that may help to reconstruct his family is a very short memorial from García de Rojas y Valdés, Francisco’s nephew, who had been active in the armies of Flanders and Portugal. In 1594 he participated in an armada sent to the French coast. This son of a sister of Valdés must have thought that he could strengthen his petition by stating he was a

\textsuperscript{52} Vigil, Asturias. Several documents in the ARCV: Pares: http://pares.culturaydeporte.gob.es/inicio.html; Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Justicia 1149, N.1, R.2; Cubero Garrote, Atar cabos.
\textsuperscript{53} Juan de Albornoz to Alonso Díaz de Aguilar, 22 October 1574; Albornoz to Maestre de campo Francisco de Valdés, 22 October 1574, AA, C66, 54b-54c; EA III, 600-601. The letters refer to a marriage with Antonio de Brito, someone who is said to have the Queen of Portugal on his side.
\textsuperscript{54} Philip II to Alba, Madrid, 2 February 1571, AGS, E. 547, f.54; EA III, Alba to Philip II, Brussels, 23 March 1571.
\textsuperscript{55} Valdés to Philip II, Antwerp, 18 April 1575, AGS, E. 563, f. 39.
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nephew of the Maestre de campo, who had died in 1580: “García de Rojas y Valdés, nephew of the maestre de Campo Francisco de Valdés, states he always has had extra pay (ventaja) of xxx in the Low Countries and Portugal”.

Antwerp merchant Juan de Cuéllar, who helped Valdés transfer money to Spain, must have been an important contact of the commander. Cuéllar had come from Segovia to Antwerp where he can already be found in 1531, aged around twenty-four. It is during this period that Ignatius of Loyola, the future founder of the Jesuits, visited him in his house on the corner of the Lombaerdstreet, close to St. James Church. He was married to a local woman, Clara Pels, and would remain in the city of Antwerp until his death in 1583. His two sons traded with Germany and Spain, and we can find them later residing in Seville.

In a letter dated 26 July 1574 Cuéllar wrote from Antwerp to another Spanish merchant, Simón Ruiz, in Medina del Campo, informing him that Francisco de Valdés was residing in The Hague with 2,500 Spaniards, ten banners of Germans, fifteen to twenty banners of Walloons, and eight hundred cavalrymen. To increase the value of the information, Cuéllar added on Valdés, “who generally writes me what is happening” (“el cual me escreve de hordinario lo que pasa”). In an earlier letter he explained that he had received Valdés’s letters from Holland:

To Holland, from where I have letters from Maestre de campo Francisco de Valdés, who had returned to take all the strongholds and he also took ten banners from the enemies, and he killed all the people and was lord of the countryside, and that Orange was in Rotterdam with forty banners and did not dare to go out of the town.

In yet another letter he speaks about the great mutiny of 1574 in Holland, explaining why the soldiers had taken Valdés prisoner: “Maestre de campo

56 The full text: ‘Garçia de Rrojas y Valdes, sobrino del maestre de campo Francisco de Valdes dize que siempre a tenido ventajas de xxx en Flandes y Portugal abiendo se señalado y bendio com horden como compta por sus lizenzias y xxxx aunque supplica le aga merced de una bentaja para las galeras y cerca de la persona de don Diego Brochero que se le ara merced y la rreçibira en renumerazion de sus serbiçios y los de sus pasados’. Memorial 17 July 1594, AGS, Guerra y marina 418, f. 193.
57 Ródenas Vilar, Vida cotidiana, 66; Stols, Spaanse Brabanders II, 23; Fagel, Hispano-Vlaamse wereld, 362; Vázquez de Prada, Lettres marchandes I, 217-218.
58 Agellakis, Civilian lives’, 55; Vázquez de Prada, Lettres marchandes II, 117-118.
Valdés tells them not to steal from the friends and for this reason they have taken him prisoner". Most probably again an assumption based on first-hand information from the commander himself. Years later, in a letter of 20 April 1576, he tells the story of how Valdés was wounded in 1572:

And a Maestre de campo, called Francisco de Valdés, was wounded before Mons in the same manner, that they had broken the joints of his elbow and he could not close or open his hand, nor bring it to his head. Afterwards he was recovering over here every summer, with the result that he now can write properly with his hand, and he can open and close it, though his fingers remain weak and he carries his sword as a left-handed man.

These wounds were the reason for the Duke of Alba to propose Valdés for a place within the military bureaucracy in the Low Countries. He had written to the King that now that veedor general Jordán de Valdés had died, “he had laid eyes on Captain Francisco de Valdés, who is a very good man and on top of it he had ended up disabled (estropeado) from the wound he received before Mons". In the end this important office was left vacant and Valdés had to stay in active service. The letter does not mention any family relationship between Francisco and Jordán, who did come from Gijón and was even the founder of the important Gijon branch. Jordán had died during the same siege of Mons in which Francisco had been wounded. He had been hit by a cannonball that took away his left leg and had subsequently died of his wounds.

By 1572, this man from a humble background had already reached a high position in the Spanish army, but few heroic deeds can be identified with him up to that year. This might be related to the fact that his descendants (who did not have the same means as Romero, Mondragón or Dávila) and historians have not really looked for facts and stories to reconstruct his earlier life. The two most important moments up to then were the finishing of his treatise in 1571 and his severe wounds before
Mons in 1572. Alba was even thinking about giving him a job away from the front line. Born around 1518, he must have been about fifty-four years old at the time, just a little younger than Charles V when he abdicated in 1555.

The correspondence

Though Valdés, with the help of his secretaries, must have written thousands of letters and brief notes in his career, especially since he was away from Spain for so many years, only a small part of his correspondence has been preserved, in particular the letters from the years 1573 and 1574. Unfortunately, there are no love letters between Magdalena and Francisco. Most of the some eighty letters are to be found in the archive of the Duke of Alba in Madrid.\(^64\) In the second part of this chapter I want to use these letters to study his experiences in the Low Countries. What was it like to be a Spanish commander during the Revolt? How did he see his job? And how did he look at the inhabitants of the Low Countries? At the same time, these letters make it possible to confront his view of these experiences with the different narratives on the commander we have seen so far.

The best introduction to his career is through a letter written by Valdés in Antwerp on 18 April 1575, asking for compensation for his services from Philip II. It is the only letter presented in full in this chapter, and it gives an example of his letter writing:\(^65\)

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\(^64\) These letters are studied by Beatriz Santiago Belmonte in her forthcoming PhD thesis at Leiden University on the correspondence of the Spanish commanders during the first decade of the Revolt. This chapter owes much to her research.

\(^65\) ‘El dia que tome la pica en los exercitos de Vuestra Magestad viendome desnudo de todo favor, propuse de procurarlo tener de mis obras y propia virtud y assi en treinta y ocho años que a sirvo en esta profesion a Vuestra Magestad. Los treinta y dos de los quales sin jamas salir ni me aparter de sus reales vanderas, he trabajado de no faltar punto a mi obligacion como se han hecho fee y testimonio sus generales de Vuestra Magestad y particularmente el duque de Alba y comendador mayor de Castilla. Ha veynte años que enpece a servir a vuestra magestad en la jornada de Sena en los oficios de capitan de ynfanteria comisario general de la gente darmas y cavalleria ligera y despues en Lombardia de capitan y sargento mayor continuando otros seis años en estos estados en los mismos oficios y ultimamente el duque de Alba antes de su partida me eligio por maestro de campo general del exercito que quedo en Hollanda y al presente sirvo a vuestro magestad con el cargo de maestro de campo de ynfanteria. No quiero sacra magestad dezir particularmente los muchos y particulares servicios que en tanto tiempo he hecho a vuestra magestad sino remitirme a lo que el duque dAlba podra ynformar demas de lo que otros capitanes generales han ynformado solo dire que acabo de tantos años aviendo muchas vezes derramado mi sangre en su real servicio me hallo estroppeado
The day I took up the pike in the armies of Your Majesty, I was deprived of all favour, and I decided to obtain it through my deeds and my own virtue and so for thirty-eight years I have served Your Majesty in this profession. During thirty-two of these years I have never left nor separated myself from your royal banners; I have always worked and complied with my obligations, as can be testified and sworn by the generals of Your Majesty, especially the Duke of Alba and the Comendador Mayor of Castile [Requesens].

Twenty years ago I started to serve Your Majesty in the expedition to Siena in the ranks of infantry captain, commissioner general of the infantry and the light cavalry and afterwards in Lombardy as captain and sergeant-major, continuing another six years in these states in the same ranks and finally, before his departure, the Duke of Alba choose me as Maestre de campo general of the army that remained in Holland and at present I serve Your Majesty in the office of Maestre de campo of the infantry. I do not want to tell Your Holy Majesty in particular the many and specific services I have rendered to Your Majesty over such a long period, but only to refer to the information given by the Duke of Alba and other Captains-general. I only want to say that after so many years having many times spilt my blood in Your royal service, I find myself with a ruined right arm and so poor that in order for a daughter to enter a convent I was forced to sell part of the patrimony my parents had left me, and in order to find a solution for another unmarried daughter I have in Madrid with no possibilities, I find myself only with the hope that the greatness of Your Majesty, who as a just prince I hope will not allow that only I will be left without reward. During the little time I have left of my life I remain with the desire and the obligation as a loyal vassal and debtor, to offer and sacrifice my life for the royal service of Your Majesty.

del braço derecho y tan pobre que para meter monja una hija me fue fuerça vender parte del patrimonio que mis padres me dexaron y para remediar otra hija donzella que tengo en Madrid con ninguna posibilidad me hallo sino solo la esperança en la grandeza de vuestra magestad que como principe tan justo espero no permitira para mi solo falte el premio, pues lo poco que de la vida me queda con la voluntad y obligacion que como fiel vasallo soy deudor me contento ofrecerla y sacrificarla en el real servicio de vuestra magestad. Guarde nuestro señor por muchos años la real persona de vuestra magestad con aumento de mayores reynos como la christianad a menester y sus vasallos deseamos de Anveres a 18 de abril de 1575'. Valdés to Philip II, Antwerp, 18 April 1575, AGS, E. 563, f. 39.
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May Our Lord guard the royal person of Your Majesty for many years, augmenting his realms and christianity, as is your vassal’s wish, from Antwerp, 18 April 1575.

He had entered the army because he lacked sufficient means, somewhere around 1537, unfortunately too late to participate in the famous attack on Tunis in 1535, unlike Cristóbal de Mondragón and maybe also Julián Romero. As Francisco was born around 1518, he was probably just under twenty years of age, joining the army at a somewhat later age than Mondragón. As from around 1543 he continuously served the King in his army, and since the expedition to Siena in 1553-1554 he had been active in Italy, from 1558 as part of the tercio of Maestre de campo Sancho de Londoño, though they had already met in 1553 in Montalcino.66 In Italy, he was first promoted to Captain and later to Sargento mayor. Philip II had started to follow his own political strategies in Italy after becoming Duke of Milan and King of Naples in July 1554, even sometimes in confrontation with his own father. In May 1555 the Duke of Alba became Philip’s general and superintendent of Italy, governing both Naples and Milan.67 At least from that time onwards, Valdés entered the world of Alba, who was to become his main protector. Just before Alba left the Low Countries at the end of 1573 he had him promoted to Maestre de campo general of the army in Holland. Afterwards, he functioned as an ordinary Maestre de campo of the Spanish tercios.

The first years in the Low Countries (1567-1572)

Francisco de Valdés arrived in the Low Countries with the Duke of Alba’s army in 1567, as Sargento mayor of the tercio of Lombardy, serving under Maestre de campo Sancho de Londoño. As far as we know, this was his first visit to the north of Europe, and certainly his first visit to the Low Countries. This makes his story again very different from those of Julián Romero and Cristóbal de Mondragón, who had spent many years in the north before the outbreak of the Revolt and who had had affectionate relations with women from the Low Countries. Valdés and Sancho Dávila did not have such a history with the Low Countries, and this has most surely influenced their ideas on the country and its inhabitants. For example, both Sancho Dávila and Valdés probably did not speak French at the time of their arrival.

Valdés participated in the Battle of Dahlem in 1568. Londoño praised his first officer’s conduct in a letter: “Francisco de Valdés did very well perform the office of Sergeant major and Captain, giving his orders and fighting in a ditch”. With five companies he succeeded in defeating a large number of the enemy, taking the survivors prisoner together with all their belongings. He would also participate in the Battle of Jemmingen in July and the battle near the river Gete in October of that same year. In the chronicles his presence is hardly noticed. He is missing from Antonio Trillo’s chronicle, and Bernardino de Mendoza related only how he left the city of Lier with several regiments of the tercio. In his descriptions of the Battle of Jemmingen and that of the almost totally forgotten battle near the river Gete, he is just one more name in the story. In 1568 he was clearly not yet one of the great names of the Spanish army, and in the quiet subsequent years no opportunities arrived to establish a reputation on the battlefield.

If he resided close to his Maestre de campo, it is probable he returned to Lier after the battles of 1568. Londoño, who had signed his treatise in this small town in April 1568, could still be found there in May 1569. After that, his health deteriorated and he left for the Spa waters, in a last attempt to recover from his illnesses. As he was also Governor of Maastricht at the time, Londoño died in the castle of Severenborn, near Maastricht, on 30 May 1569. We can only guess whether Valdés was present at his funeral in the Saint Servatius Church of Maastricht, or whether it was his duty to remain with the tercio.

Most likely, Valdés travelled with all ten banners of the tercio of Lombardy to the city of Utrecht, where they arrived on 21 August 1569. As Utrecht had blocked the payment of new subsidies, Alba had decided to burden them with quartering a complete tercio. Most of the tercio of the new Maestre de campo Fernando de Toledo would remain there for a longer period, but its stay was certainly not continuous. Soon two banners were sent to Waterland to fight the Sea Beggars, and two banners went to Culemborg. In August 1570 another banner left for Nijmegen, and in January 1571 six banners were sent to Arnhem. These last troops returned to Utrecht in February. In March 1571, four hundred men left to protect the coastline, and in May all remaining Spanish troops, up to six banners, left Utrecht for Amsterdam and other cities in the County of Holland. When in August 1571 Philip II ordered the retreat

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68 Londoño to the Duke of Alburquerque, 26 April 1568, CD XXX, 442.
69 Sánchez Martín, ‘Valdés’; Trillo, Historia; Mendoza, Comentarios (1948) 411, 425, 435.
70 García Hernán, ‘Londoño’; Ubachs and Evers, Historische encyclopedie, 317.
of all Spanish troops from the city, it is unclear how many troops were actually there. In any case, Alba again sent eight Spanish banners to the city on 18 November 1571, six from the tercio of Lombardy and two from the tercio of Naples.\(^1\) By that time, Valdés had already travelled in the direction of Deventer, in the east of the Low Countries. But we may assume that Valdés had become well acquainted with Utrecht and its inhabitants before the conflict between him and Lannoy took place in 1574.

We have already seen that Valdés took up the pen during this relatively quiet period, and on 20 October 1571 he signed the manuscript of the *Diálogo militar* in the city of Deventer. Six months earlier, Alba had written on his behalf to the King:

> Captain Valdés is a good man and has served much, deserving that Your Majesty will honour and reward him, especially to solve the situation of the daughter he has; Your Majesty would be served by returning me his licence, or I shall take him with me or I shall give it to him when he wants to make use of it, because he is a man that would be very missed in his office, and it is convenient that Your Majesty rewards such men without them having to go there [to court] to ask for it.\(^2\)

So, he had a licence finally to return home to resolve his daughter’s situation, and it could be decided whether he would return with Alba or on his own account. The first letter we have from Valdés himself demonstrates that plans had changed in the meantime. On 25 June 1571 Valdés wrote from Deventer to Juan de Albornoz, Alba’s secretary, expressing his dissatisfaction: “it seems that when I try to get closer to my journey to Spain, situations occur that make that I am exiled even further”\(^3\)

Don Fadrique had ordered him to take over the government of Deventer as other captains and their companies had not performed well in this office. Though Mondragón had been governor of that city in 1569, residing there with his Walloon troops, it seems Valdés followed in the footsteps


\(^{2}\) Alba to Philip II, Brussels, 23 March 1571, EA III. Also a letter from secretary Zayas with the same date about Valdés. Philip had sent this licence on 2 February 1571 from Madrid. AGS E. 547, f. 54.

\(^{3}\) ‘Pareçe que quando pretendo llegarme mas cerca al viaje de Spaña se ofereçen ocasiones de desterrarme mas lexos’. Valdés to Albornoz, Deventer, 25 June 1571, AA C/54, 18.
of Captain Hernando Pacheco of his own tercio of Lombardy. Pacheco had arrived in August 1570, and during his government an attempt had been made by traitors from within to hand the city over to the rebels. According to a chronicler present at the time, seventeen inhabitants were executed as a result. Pacheco was later executed in Flushing by the rebels, and his cruel behaviour in Deventer was used as an argument for his death sentence. After Valdés, the next governor would be Francisco de Vargas in 1572, another colleague from the tercio of Lombardy and perhaps even one of the protagonists of his treatise. Strangely enough, Dutch and local historiography has never acknowledged the presence of Valdés in Deventer.

In his letter of 25 June, Valdés explained to Alba’s secretary that he had decided to wait in order to return to Spain together with Alba, his protector. He did ask for permission to return to Brussels somewhat earlier in order to prepare for the journey, as this was impossible to organise from Deventer. The fact that he described his new office again as an exile (“destierro”) shows he did not particularly like his new residence. In August 1571 he was still in Deventer, writing a second letter to remind Albornoz of the first one. He now wanted permission to come to Brussels, and he asked the secretary for payment of his overdue wages, all in order to prepare for his journey to Spain. Finally, after years in the Low Countries and now even banishment in far-away Deventer, it was time to go home. Valdés could hardly wait, but it was not to happen. The same feeling can be found with the Duke of Alba, writing in the autumn of 1571: “I should wish to see the Duke [his replacement as Governor-general the Duke of Medinceli] here already, that I might get out of this place, be it by the window, but I shall be patient”.

Both Valdés and Alba were still in the Low Countries when, on 1 April 1572, the Sea Beggars gained the small city of Brielle on the coast of the County of Holland. It was the beginning of a new violent phase of the Revolt. Both men must have quickly understood that a return to Spain was out of the question for the time being. We know Valdés was back in Utrecht in February 1572, and he must have been one of the main protagonists in the suppression of an attempt to mutiny:

74 Holthuis, Frontierstad, 27; Stein-Wilkeshuis, ‘Deventer’; Moonen, Korte chronyke, 110, 113; Van Reyd, Oorspronck (1633) 9; Spanish letter from Governor Vargas to the Mayors of Deventer, Deventer, 21 September 1572. Deventer City Archives, 202722, 898-70.
75 Valdés to Albornoz, Deventer, 12 August 1571, AA C/54, 19.
On 2 April, some Spaniards from the eight banners residing in Utrecht, started a conspiracy, and the other day, being White Thursday (while the Spaniards themselves would flag themselves in the evening, according to ancient custom) they would have violently killed all their officers, also killing all the burghers, both religious and worldly, small and important, and pillaging the city and burning it. When this information reached the colonel and the captains, they arrested that same evening many of the accomplices and immediately strangled one who would have been the most important author, and the other day his corpse was laid down on the square, with writing on his chest declaring him a traitor, as an example and mirror of such mean and murderous design and treason.77

Though information is scarce, we can place him during the following period in Rotterdam where he may have participated in the violence taking place in early April against its inhabitants under Fernando de Toledo, with the Count of Boussu as head of the army.78 However, we do not have detailed information on Valdés’s behaviour. In June he was invited by Alba to go to Brussels in order to prepare for a new attack, possibly directed against Enkhuizen. Alba’s letter from 19 December 1572 to the King, already quoted, describes how Valdés had been wounded at the siege of Mons in Hainaut. After recovering he must have been present at the siege of Haarlem in December 1572, but as a Sargento mayor he did not make it into the chronicles as a main protagonist.79 Until the middle of 1573 Valdés clearly was not one of the major commanders of

77 ‘Den 2 Aprilis hebben sommighe Spaengaerts van de 8 vendelen, binnen Utrecht leggende, zeker conspiratie gemaeckt, die des anderen daechs, wesende Witten Donredach, (terwylen die Spaengaerts haerselven in den avont naer oude gewoente geselen zouden) allen haer officiers vermoert ende doot gesmeten souden hebben, ende voirts allen den borgeren, soe gestelic als werlic, klein ende groot, vermoert, die stad geplondert ende in brant gesteken souden hebben. Twellic tot kennisse gecommen zijnde van den colonel ende den capitainen, zijn tenselven daghe des avonts veel van de complicen geapprehendeert ende een tersont mitter coorde geworricht, die die principaelste autheur soude hebben geweest, die oic des anderen daechs doot op die Plaetze geleyt woorden, hebbend een gerscylfe als een verrader op zijn borste gescreven, tot een exemple ende spigel van een alsulke lelicke mordadighe opset ende verraet’. ‘Utrechtsche kroniek’, 111-114. Struick dates the event on 1 April and explicitly mentions Valdés as the commander of the Spanish troops. Struick, Utrecht, 159.

78 Brouwer and Vellekoop, Spaans benauwd, 21-25.

79 Mendoza, ‘Comentarios’, 447; Albornoz to Valdés, Brussels, 17 April 1572, AA C/27, 40; EA III, 90; Alba to Philip II, Brussels, 24 June 1572 and 19 December 1572, EA III, 149 and 259; Sánchez Martín, ‘Valdés’, 916.
the Spanish troops in the Low Countries, but although he had not really
gained a name for himself in battle, Alba was aware of the capacities of
his ‘creature’ (hechura), as Valdés often signed his letters to the Duke. His
main ‘claim to fame’ was his treatise, and though this was not published
until 1578, manuscript copies must have circulated among the officers
of the army of Flanders.

From Sargento mayor to Maestre de campo

A few weeks after Haarlem finally surrendered on 12 July 1573, Captain
Lope de Acuña died.\textsuperscript{80} He had recently arrived from Italy with new
enforcements: twenty-five companies with five thousand men, some
eight thousand people in total with 140 carts of luggage, reaching the
Low Countries from Lombardy in forty-two days, arriving on 16 May.\textsuperscript{81}
These fresh troops were then divided into two separate tercios: ‘San Felipe
el destacado de Lombardía’ and ‘Santiago el de la Liga’. Valdés was to
be the new commander of these troops, albeit like Acuña without the
rank of Maestre de campo.

From just before this period, June 1573, some twelve letters of Valdés
have been preserved in the Alba archive.\textsuperscript{82} In these letters we read about
the difficulties in safeguarding the route between Utrecht and Amsterdam
during the final phase of the siege of Haarlem, the problems he had
with the water, the lack of provisions and money, and the difficult
communication lines with Fadrique de Toledo. He sometimes wrote
two letters a day to both the Duke and his secretary. In these letters he
usually described the enemy using neutral terminology, and only once
did he use the word rebels, and once the word villains (bellacos), also a
favourite word of the Duke himself, but these words refer only to the
small groups of rebels moving between the moats and marches (fosos
y pantanos). We can understand his situation better using a quotation
from a letter written by Valdés to the Duke of Alba at five o’clock in
the morning:

\textsuperscript{80} Lope (Valladolid 1529) died on 29 July 1573. Mazzocchi, ‘Lope de Acuña’, 223, puts his
death in August 1573. He was married to noblewoman Isabel de Lompré, of Tournai,
related to the Croy family, and he had a daughter Constanza, who married Diego Sar-
miento de Acuña, the first Count of Gondomar, and a famous Spanish ambassador in
\textsuperscript{81} Parker, Army (2004) 86, 88, 240.
\textsuperscript{82} AA, C/54, 20-32.
I have received two letters from Your Excellency of the 14th and 15th of this month, and if I have not written as often as Your Excellency has ordered me to do, the reason is that I have been working continuously, day and night, surveying all those canals, roads and throughways where the enemy can install himself to block the transport of provisions to the army camp.83

When the enemies conquered an important lock, Valdés tried to soften the defeat by a slightly funny description of the situation: “a thing of which we were all very sure, as we had the passages so well protected that it was impossible to get through without having wings”.84 But then he dedicated the rest of the letter to the causes and possible solutions: the German reinforcements had been too slow so the enemy had arrived before them, but with some more men and people to work on a new fortress it would be possible to maintain their position. Valdés was, however, not just somebody who did what he had been told without offering his own opinion. In the same letter he elaborated on the situation:

As Your Excellency knows well, many things do not prosper when many heads are governing, and when one is late in executing the decisions that have been made. I do not say this to blame anybody in particular, but as I have so much experience on these things and seeing that they do not listen to me, I am at risk of losing my reputation. But I would undergo this with patience, if it did not hurt the service of Your Majesty and Your Excellency.85

He also complained of the lack of money, ammunition and Spanish troops, as he could not attack with only Walloons under his command. Here we see that he was used more for his capacities as an organiser than

83 ‘Dos de vuestra excellencia he rreçebido juntas de 14 y 15 deste y si estos dias no he escrito tantas bezes como vuestra excellencia me tiene mandado la causa a sido que de noche ni de dia yo no he parado reconoçiendo todos estos canales, caminos y pasos adonde el enemigo se podia poner para ynpedir la vitualla al campo’. Valdés to Alba, Oudekerk, 18 June 1573, AA, C/54, 24.
84 ‘Cosa de que estabamos todos muy seguros por tener tan bien armado los pasos que hera ynposible pasar sinno con alas’. Valdés to Alba, Loenen, 18 June 1573, AA, C/54, 22.
85 ‘Bien sabe vuestra excellencia que muchas cosas no suzeden prosperamente por gobernar muchas cabezas y ser tardos en el esecutar de las rresuluçiones que se toman y no digo esto por ynculpar a ningun particular sino es a mi solo que tiniendo ya tanta experiencia destas cosas y biendo que no me creen me pongo riesgo de perder mi reputacion pero todo lo sufriere com paçiençia como no se herrase en el serbizio de su magestad y de vuestra excelencia’. Ibidem.
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to lead his own company of Spanish infantry. We find him collaborating with the Count of Boussu, with the Lords of Hierges and Noircarmes, and with officers such as Juan Bautista de Tassis and Rodrigo Zapata. He used his mixed army of Spanish, Walloon and German troops to occupy the small fortresses they built in order to protect the important roads and canals. Valdés showed he was ready to fight:

The goodness of God caused the fall of Babylonia, and by the love of God we should hurry in getting tight with those rebels as I have certain information from the prisoners that all these lands of Holland are unsteady.\(^{86}\)

While still only a Sargento mayor, we find him discussing with Alba the strategy to follow in Holland. Both men knew that most inhabitants were loyal and that they were fighting small groups of rebels. So Alba told him to urge the local population to kill as many rebels as possible and offer them his help to do so, and Alba wanted Valdés to inform him of the whereabouts of William of Orange, preferably from hour to hour. Alba, in a letter to Valdés, laid out his policy, “We need to follow the road of softness, if they do what they have to do, but if not, we do it the hard way”.\(^{87}\)

By the end of July Valdés was active in the region close to Alphen aan den Rijn, where we will also find him around the siege of Leiden. In a letter he described how – with Spanish infantry and two hundred Walloons – they attacked the enemy near Nieuwerbrug aan den Rijn: “though those from inside started defending themselves bravely, pike against pike and halberd against halberd, they threw them out of the fortress, but killing fewer men than I had wanted, but I think still more than forty”. By this time he already perfectly understood the importance of waterways, calling Alphen aan den Rijn “the passage way to the whole of Holland, both by water as on land”.\(^{88}\) In another letter he wrote

\(^{86}\) ‘Por la bondad de dios cayo la gran Babilonia por amor de dios que nos demos priesa apretar estos rebeldes que yo tengo çiertos abisos por bia de los prisioneros que todas estas tierras de Holanda andan banbaleando’. Valdés to Albornoz, Harmelen, 16 July 1573, AA, C/54, 31.

\(^{87}\) ‘Lo que conviene es llevarlos por el camino de la blandura, haciendo ellos lo que deben, y cuando no, por el de la fuerza’. Alba to Valdés, Utrecht, 20 July 1573, AA, C/65, 151-152.

\(^{88}\) ‘Aun que los de dentro se empezaron a defender gallardamente asta benir pica com pica y alabarda con alabarda los hecharon del fuerte matando no tantos como yo quisiera pero creo pasaron de quarenta’. Valdés to Alba, Alphen aan den Rijn, 29 July 1573, AA, C/54, 33.
about the strength of the enemy’s fortifications: “like most of the places in Holland, because of the great amount of water on all sides”.

From the letters of this period we clearly get the idea of an army on the attack, building fortifications and throwing the enemy out of theirs.

But in that same letter he reports about the unexpected mutiny of the Spanish troops in Haarlem, and he immediately understood the problems this might cause, though hoping it would soon pass: “I am hurt as much as I can say by the mutiny of the Spanish infantry at Haarlem, for the anger it has given Your Excellency and for making it impossible to proceed against those rebels”.

And the moment was critical, as they had information that the rebels were falling apart. With an army entering Holland it could all be over soon:

I have no information about the return of the Prince [Orange] to Dordrecht and everywhere they tell me that the heretics and the Catholics are murmuring every day amongst them. I think it certain that if they saw an army entering in these parts they would easily surrender much of the land. The reason is that everywhere you see the discord and the fact that the Prince has left Holland. As later I knew about these Spanish banners entering these lands, I hope by God that soon we shall see the decline of the very obstinate rebellion of these towns.

But it was exactly the army that was failing. There was a great need for money, troops, provisions and materiel in order to be able to continue the war effort. The letters are filled with complaints, and Valdés used all the rhetoric he was capable of: “the necessity of all those Spanish and Walloon troops is so great...they leave me twenty at a time... Half of

89 ‘Como lo son los mas lugares de Holanda a causa de la mucha agua que por todas partes tienen’. Valdés to Alba, Oude Wetering, 3 August 1573, AA, C/54, 36.
90 ‘De la alterazion que la ymfanteria Española a hecho en Harlem me pesa quanto sabre decir por el enojo que a vuestra excellencia an dado y por el ympedimento que sera a proixeder contra estos rebeldes’. Ibidem.
91 ‘Del Prinçipe no tengo abiso que se a tornado de Dordreq y en todas estas tierras me diçen ay cada dia rumores entre los erejes y catolicos por mui çierto tengo que si bieran entrar ejercito por esta parte que sin mucha dificultad se rindieran hartas tierras destas, argumento dello es el ber la discordia que en todas ellas ay y aun el aberse ydo de Holanda el prinçipe luego como supo entrar estas banderaes españolas en ella yo espero en dios que presto berna en declinaçion la mui obstinada rebellion destas billas’. Ibidem.
the Spaniards have fallen ill for eating cabbage and meat, and drinking water... If the remedy is delayed, I will probably find myself with only the banners". 92 The army was falling apart. Soldiers did not want to move without pay, some companies had more banners and officers than soldiers left, and he had not enough men to create a fighting force: the five companies of Spaniards he had amounted to only a mere four hundred men instead of the thousand he was supposed to have. 93 He also gives the example of Don Gabriel Niño’s company, “so licentious and ill-disciplined”, who had started directly after their arrival to kill the poor people’s cows. 94 He wanted permission to punish at least one of them to set an example.

The next move was to get the soldiers from Egmond in the north to the southern part of Holland. Valdés shows he knew his way around Holland, as we can deduce from his very detailed advice in which he described all the possible ways to travel through Sassenheim, Noordwijk, Katwijk aan den Rijn, Valkenburg, Voorschoten, Zoeterwoude, etc., and advised where to cross the canals. 95 Valdés himself would in the meantime fortify Leiderdorp and Alphen aan den Rijn. However, one week later we find him sending Albornoz a letter in his own hand from Beverwijk, up in the north, close to Egmond. While the first troops arrived at Leiderdorp from the north, Valdés was lying ill in bed, and had time to reflect on his life:

The many works of mind and body, accompanied by fifty-five years of age, have directed me to my bed with a serious illness and more fever than I can say, with large amounts of vomiting. For this reason I was forced to remain behind in the house of Captain Aurelio [Palermo] and I have sent a letter to Your Excellency with don Joan de Quíñones, also informing about the present state I am in. In the future I will be more compassionate with myself, finishing with my own ambitions that again have overtaken me.

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92 ‘Es tan grande la necesidad que toda esta gente padeze española y valona... Se me ban de veinte en veinte... Los españoles de comer berzas y carne y beber agua an caido la mitad malos... Si el remedio tarda yo creo me quedare con solas las banderas’. Valdés to Albornoz and Alba, Alphen aan den Rijn, 31 August 1573, AA, C/54, 41-42.

93 Valdés to Albornoz and Alba, Alphen aan den Rijn, 2 September 1573, AA, C/54, 43-44; Valdés to Albornoz, Alphen aan den Rijn, 3 September 1573, AA, C/54, 45.

94 ‘Tan licenciosa y maldeciplinada; matando las bacas de la pobre gente’. Valdés to Albornoz, Harmelen, 3 September 1573, AA, C/54, 46.

95 Valdés to Alba, Harmelen, 4 October 1573, AA, C54, 48.
Though I may say that in reality it is mostly out of my hands, because I so desire to obey and serve the Prince that it makes me refute my own being.\textsuperscript{96}

And, to make matters worse, Don Fadrique had left the army camp without clearly handing over command to Valdés. So he found himself with soldiers who did not want to obey him:

Don Fadrique did not utter a word, nor did he leave any orders for the captains and officers related to my government and there are already some who pretend and assume not to take orders from me. For this reason it is necessary that Your Excellency write to the three governors of this tercio of Italy and the same holds for the tercios of Lombardy and Naples, explaining them his wishes.\textsuperscript{97}

He must have been very worried about the situation, as it was quite unusual directly to criticise Don Fadrique in letters to his father’s secretary.\textsuperscript{98} That very same night, at eleven o’clock, there was even an attempted mutiny by soldiers from the tercio of Naples, as he described in a postscript to the letter: “and they shot four or five arquebuses saying ‘fuera vellacos’ (go away villains!), but then some officers came out and it was put to rest without them having their way”.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{96} ‘Los muchos trabajos de espíritu y cuerpo acompañados con cincuenta y cinco años de edad me an deribado en el lecho con un muy grande acidente y callentura mayor que saber dezir y vomito y camaras grandes y asi me fue fuerça quedarme aqui en casa del capitan Aurelio y enbiar esta mañana el despacho a su excelencia con don Joan de Quiñones haziendo asi mismo saber en el estado en que me hallo. Espero en la divina magestad que si mi mal passa adelante sera para comigo usar de mas misericordia terminando y poniendo fin a las ambiçiones en que de nueve me via engolfar aunque puedo dezir con verdad que son bien fuera de mi voluntad pero el obedeçer a prinçipe que tanto desseo servir me hazia negar mi propio querer y asi no he querido faltar a dar aviso dello a Vuestra Merced cuya illustissima persona y estado nuestro señor guarde y acreçiente como yo su servidor desseo de Bevervick a 11 de otubre 1573. Beso las manos a Vuestra Merced, su muy sierto servidor, Francisco de Valdés’. Valdés to Albornoz, Beverwijk, 11 October 1573, AA, C/54, 49.

\textsuperscript{97} ‘Don Fadrique no dixo palabra ni dexo orden alguna a estos capitanes ni oficiales en lo tocante a mi govierno i ya ay alguno o algunos que pretenden y procuran no tomar de mi la orden y asi sera menester que su excelencia escriva a los tres governadores deste terçio de Ytalia y asi mismo a los tercios de Lombardia y Napolés significandoles su voluntad’. Valdés to Albornoz, Beverwijk, 27 October 1573, AA, C/54, 51.

\textsuperscript{98} Criticism of Don Fadrique in a letter directly to Alba: Valdés to Alba, Katwijk, 29 October 1573, AA, C/54, 52.

\textsuperscript{99} ‘Y se dispararon quatro o çinco arcabuzazos diciendo fuera vellacos pero salieron algunos oficiales y luego se mitigo sin salirles su disigno’. Ibidem.
signed Valdés’ promotion to the rank of Maestre de campo general “of all troops of all nations residing between Haarlem and Utrecht” (“sobre las tropas de todas las naciones alojadas desde Haarlem hasta Utrecht”). This man of humble background very remarkably would even receive higher wages than the other Maestres de campo.\footnote{Sánchez Martín, ‘Francisco de Valdés’.} This must have irritated the commanders with more experience such as Julián Romero, as well as the commanders of high noble birth. It also shows Valdés was considered the most important specialist regarding the almost amphibious warfare in the County of Holland.\footnote{Van Nimwegen and Sicking, ‘Opstand’, 66.} The Duke of Alba and his son were preparing their long-awaited departure from the Low Countries, and Valdés was promoted in order to avoid the collapse of the army in the north. Alba had longed for this moment to come. In his final letter from the Low Countries he described himself as “a man fresh out of prison”, a sentiment many Spanish commanders in the Low Countries at the time may very well have shared.\footnote{Fagel, ‘Duke’, 284.}

**The first siege of Leiden**

On 31 October Valdés wrote his first letters from The Hague,\footnote{Valdés to Albornoz and Alba, The Hague, 31 October 1573, AA, C/54-55.} where he and his men had arrived a day earlier. For the period up to 1 December 1573 we have fourteen letters from The Hague. It is possible that this was his first longer visit to the town, and perhaps we have to place his first encounter with Magdelena Moons during this stay in The Hague. It was to be his headquarters during the first siege of Leiden. He clearly preferred the castle of the counts, the Binnenhof, to the village of Leiderdorp where the main fortification was to be found.\footnote{Wit, Riool and Van Doorn, *Rond de schans*, 15-16; Smit, *Den Haag*, 210.} In a long letter to Alba he told the story of his arrival, and first had to excuse himself to the Duke for going against his wishes:

> In the letter I wrote to Your Excellency yesterday, I did not explain the reason for occupying The Hague even though it went against the ideas of Your Excellency to take this place. However, I was motivated by seeing the army camp starving without any remedy of provision if I had to put them in the designated quarters, and so I felt myself forced to take them where they could eat. And for sure, I convince myself I was guided in everything by God.
Francisco de Valdés: the exemplary soldier

because in all these lands we have been received with the greatest happiness of the world and every hour villagers arrive from their places, asking with much emphasis to receive soldiers that can defend them from the insolences of the rebels.\(^\text{105}\)

He defended his disobedience to Alba by citing the great necessity of the troops, but also by emphasising the very positive welcome by the inhabitants of The Hague. Who could go against God’s guidance? The letter is full of positive descriptions: “I see the villagers so full of desire to liberate themselves from the yoke and tyranny of those rebels”.\(^\text{106}\) The enemies were divided, and Valdés tried to win them over by offering them Alba’s pardon, but also he let them go free so they could inform everybody about the “treatment the soldiers of this army give to the whole country”.\(^\text{107}\) He also describes how he had changed the government by appointing new mayors and aldermen, all Catholics. In this action Magdalena’s brother lost his position as Mayor. Valdés would also try to get Catholic inhabitants back to The Hague, and on 1 November Catholic mass was restored. The new town government even hired an interpreter who could understand and speak Spanish.\(^\text{108}\) The only negative remarks in the letter concerned the bad situation of the tercio of Italy which lacked clothing, and the need for ammunition. The positive welcome in The Hague can also be found in other texts, such as the chronicle of the Welsh soldier, Roger Williams: “found it a place sufficient to lodge double his troops, all in covert and most in beds. This Hague is counted the fairest village in Europe”.\(^\text{109}\)

Valdés informed Alba that the inhabitants of the region were even willing to “take up arms jointly with us, against the Beggars, the ‘Guses’”.\(^\text{110}\)

\(^{105}\) ‘En la que escrivi ayer a Vuestra Excelencia no di quente de la causa que me movió a ocupar La Haya y más sabiendo ser fuera de la opinión de vuestra excelencia el tomar este lugar pero a mi me movió el verme con el campo tan amado y tan sin remedio de le proveher si le ponía en los alojamientos destinados que me fue fuerza traerle a donde comiese, y cierto me persuadí que a sido guiado todo de Dios pues que en todo este pays nos an recibido con la mayor alegria del mundo y cada ora llegan villanos de los lugares pidiendo con grande instancia soldados que los defiendan de las ynsolencias de los rebeldes’. Valdés to Alba, The Hague, 31 October 1573, AA, C/54, 55.

\(^{106}\) ‘Veo los villanos desasesísimos de librarse del jugo y tiranía destos rebeldes’. Ibidem.

\(^{107}\) ‘Tratamiento que an entendido se haze de los soldados deste campo a todo el pays’. Ibidem.

\(^{108}\) Wouter Jacobszoon, Dagboek I, 332; Smit, Den Haag, 212, 215.

\(^{109}\) Williams, Actions, 98-101.

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It was the first time in all his letters that he used this word for the rebels. In another letter he even described the possibility of organising a small army with the local population:

As all this land is so favourable to us that I cannot explain it sufficiently, but it is proven by the fact that we receive news every hour of what they are doing in these lands and all the villagers are full of courage and good intentions to take up arms against these rebels. If I just had more men to be able to occupy the ‘plat pais’ (countryside) I imagine I could turn the villagers of these places into a ‘petit ejercito’ (a small army).111

Besides the optimism about the assistance from the local population of the region, it is also remarkable that he now for the first time started to use words from French, such as ‘Guses’, ‘plat pais’, and ‘petit ejercito’.

This seems to point to more direct contact with the local population. Taken together with the optimism in these letters, one is tempted to suggest that his positive outlook was caused by his blissful encounter with Magdalena.

There were also military encounters during this period as the rebels tried to fortify the strategically important Maassluis. After the great difficulty of getting enough men together, the attack was successful. On 4 November the rebel garrison surrendered. Marnix of Sint-Aldegonde, Orange’s commander in the region and his close associate, was taken prisoner and some six hundred rebels were killed. Chronicler Trillo may be referring to Maassluis (and Vlaardingen) when simply writing that “From The Hague, Maestre de campo Valdés had taken two fortresses from the enemies”.112 Roger Williams, however, gives all the credit to his colleague, Julián Romero, with whom Valdés had co-organised the attack.113 Again we see that Valdés does not possess great fame related to battles and actual fighting. Captain Julián was much more of a warrior. We might consider Valdés to be more of an organiser, a military manager.

111 ‘Pues todo este pais nos estan propiçio quanto no sabre significar y harto argumento dello es el tener cada ora abisos de quanto se haze en estas tierras y tomar todo el villanage con grandísimo animo y boluntad las armas contra estos rebeldes. Si me hallara con mas gente para poder ocupar el plat pais me persuado que pudiere hazer de los billanos destos lugares un petit ejercito’. Valdés to Albornoz, The Hague, 8 November 1573, AA, C/54, 58.
112 Trillo, Historia, 220.
113 Williams, Actions, 102.
For the remainder of the month of November, Valdés was busy organising fortifications, travelling around between the Maas region and the surroundings of Leiden, asking for money to finish his own fortifications, building a canal, breaking some dykes, asking for iron cannons to put on his ships, and pleading for two armed ships to be sent to control the river Maas. It shows how Valdés was involved in the warfare in these wet parts of the country. But as winter came another problem arose. Valdés warned Alba in a letter about “the time of the frost” (“el tiempo de los yelos”). He had received information that the people of Leiden were making a large number of sledges (esleides o trineos). A day later he wrote to Albornoz asking for money to make sledges and a great number of crampons (ramplones) that would make it possible for the soldiers to walk on the ice.

The coming of winter also caused problems regarding the soldiers. In a letter to paymaster Alameda, Valdés explained that the banners were losing men, and that everybody was cheating: “I have tried to inform myself in particular about the people at present in the Spanish banners and it is a shame to see how much is being stolen”. If these banners were visited, a lot of money could be saved. Most probably, Valdés is referring to the well-known tactic of not reporting dead and deserted soldiers in order for officers to enrich themselves with their pay. A visit by the paymasters, and a mustering, could solve this problem. Also the cavalry was responsible for “grandes desordenes”. The soldiers of the tercio of Italy desperately needed clothing, colourfully described by Valdés as “they look like spirits coming out of purgatory” (“parezen animas que salen del purgatorio”).

And there was more to complain about. He even became personal for a moment: “I find myself with more work of body and mind than I can say, because I have many who work against me and nobody who helps me carry this burden”. He lacked ammunition, carts, bread, diggers, cannons, armed ships, and nobody helped him out. The Lord

114 Valdés to Alba and paymaster Alameda, Leiderdorp, and The Hague, 13 November 1573 to 19 November 1573, AA, C/54, 60-63.
115 Valdés to Alba, The Hague, 19 November 1573, AA, C/54, 63.
116 Valdés to Albornoz, The Hague, 20 November 1573, AA, C/54, 64.
117 ‘Yo e procurado ynformarme muy particularmente de la gente que ay en las banderas españosas y es berguença de ber lo mucho que se hurta’. Valdés to Alameda, The Hague, 16 November 1573, AA, C/54, 62.
118 Valdés to Alba, The Hague, 20 November 1573, AA, C/54, 64.
119 ‘Yo me hallo con mas trabaxos de espiritú y cuerpo de lo que sabe decir porque tengo muchos que me desayuden y ninguno que me ayude a llebar esta carga’. Ibidem.
of Noircarmes, the new stadtholder of Holland, did not even reply to his letters, and let his couriers wait a day before letting them enter the city of Utrecht.\textsuperscript{120} Other letters took six days to receive an answer: “this is the state I am in at this moment”.\textsuperscript{121} You can feel his anger and his desperation:

\begin{quote}
And I also don’t want to be silent about the fact that there are very few captains that are actually governing their regiments, as some of them are wounded and sick and others have gone to places where they prefer not to look too much for their honour. But in this army camp there is no auditor, nor a captain or an official to perform justice. But not even for this I am giving up my spirit: quia dominus michi ad jutor.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

The Lord is my helper! Does it show the Latinity of the commander, or is he merely copying Philip II’s motto, also to be found on coins from the royal mint?\textsuperscript{123} Nobody helped him, and he literally had to do the work himself, “using the strength of my own arms (I may say) I have brought 350 \textit{botas} of flour to The Hague”.\textsuperscript{124} We can imagine the commander carrying the heavy loads on his own shoulders, a perfect reflection of his everyday reality. He lacked time, “even to read the letters that arrive I have no time, moving as I do from one fortress to another”.\textsuperscript{125} He also had to use his own money to pay for the army: “until now, looking after my honour has cost me many ducats, as I [have to act] by the strength of my arms and spending my own possessions”.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Philip of Sainte-Aldegonde, Lord of Noircarmes, died in Utrecht on 4 March, 1574. Soen, ‘Collaborators’.
\item \textsuperscript{121} ‘Esto es el estado en que al presente me hallo’. Valdés to Alba, The Hague, 20 November 1573, AA, C/54, 64.
\item \textsuperscript{122} ‘Tampoco quiero callar que no solamente amuy pocos capitanes que gobiernen parte por estar heridos y enfermos y parte por yrse adonde les da gusto mirar poco por su onrra, pero en este campo no a quedado auditor ni capitan de campa\~{n}a ni ministro con que se pueda executar la justicia, pero ni por eso me tengo de perder de animo, quia dominus michi ad jutor’. Ibidem.
\item \textsuperscript{123} De Groot, \textit{Seventh window}, 116.
\item \textsuperscript{124} ‘A fuerza de mis propios brazos (puedo dezir) tengo traidas a La Haya 350 botas de harina’. Valdés to Alba, ‘The Hague, 20 November 1573, AA, C/54, 64.
\item \textsuperscript{125} ‘Aun para leer las lettras que me bienen me falta tiempo andando como ando de un fuerte al otro’. Ibidem.
\item \textsuperscript{126} ‘Hasta aora me cuesta muchos ducados el mirar por mi honrra pues a fuerza de brazos y gastando mi ha\c{c}ienda’. Valdés to Albornoz, ‘The Hague, 26 November 1573, AA, C/54, 65.
\end{itemize}

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His letters full of self-pity can, however, be contrasted in this case with a ‘cartel’ from some Spanish mutineers asking for payment: “pagas, pagas, pagas”. They blamed their commander for not taking care of housing and food, while they stated that food did not fail in his own household. They also accused Valdés of informing Alba that his troops did not need much payment, and then they added a still unclear accusation: “and because you understand we know of the function you had in Milan, we inform you that we cannot live the way we do now in the villages without orders for our payment. We shall ruin the country and you will be to blame.”

It is in this complicated situation that he reminded Alba in his letter of his loyalty: “as I am your servant (criado) and creature (hechura) and only the fervour in serving you forces me to remain engaged over here, where I hope God will make that I can serve you despite rivals and envious people”. However, even his patron and Albornoz seemed to have forgotten him as he had not received any letters for a long time, waiting every hour for the postman to arrive. As he knew his place within their relationship, he modestly wrote that the absence of their letters was surely the result of the unsafety of the roads. And Alba did deliver as a patron, as Valdés wrote he was very happy to receive the news of Alba’s favour, brought to him personally by the Lord of La Motte:

As much as from the greatness of the Duke my lord was to be expected and from the favour and grace that is given to me… I find myself very inferior and incapable of returning the satisfaction on equal terms. I shall do everything I can and that is a pure and very complete desire to sacrifice myself in your service until I die.

127 Copy of the ‘cartel’ of the Spanish infantry to Valdés, Holland, 19 November 1573, AGS, E. 554, f. 155. See also: Sherer, Warriors, 112.
128 ‘Y porque entendáis que sabemos el cargo que teníades en Milan os avisamos que no podemos vivir de la manera que estamos en los casares sin orden de pagarnos. Porque arryunaremos el país y será vuestra culpa’. Spanish soldiers to Valdés, 19 November 1573. AGS, E. 554, f. 155.
129 ‘Pues soy su criado y echura y solo el zelo de su servicio me obligo a quedar aquí empeñado a donde spero en Dios de azertarle a servir a pesar de emulos y embidiosos’. Valdés to Albornoz, The Hague, 26 November 1573, AA, C/54, 65.
130 ‘Tan amplio como de la grandeza del duque mi señor se podia esperar y del fabor y merced que se me de… Me hallo muy ynfirio y ymposibilitado a poder equibalentemente sastifazer ofrecere todo lo que tengo que es una pura y muy entera boluntad sacrificada hasta que muera en su servicio’. Ibidem. Valentin Pardieu, heer van La Motte (1530-1595). Diegerick, ed., Correspondance; Soen, Vredehandel, 335.
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Does this refer to the official documents of his appointment as Maestre de campo general, or is it about financial compensation for his work? Valdés, notwithstanding his positive image in Leiden nowadays, was clearly an Albista, a client of the Duke of Alba. We see his negative side when he talked in a letter to Albornoz about Philip Marnix of Sainte-Aldegonde:

The few times I have spoken to him I have been amazed and even scandalised by him, seeing what a terrible heretic he is, and even as a prisoner he pretends that His Majesty will give freedom of conscience to these states. He certainly is of a very sound mind and a great learned man, dominating all the languages Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, but he uses all these abilities for bad purposes. Orange is very sad about his loss because, as they say, he is the one who knows everything about his council and government.131

On 1 December Valdés wrote a last letter from The Hague. He was examining two prisoners taken between Leiden and Delft with letters addressed to William of Orange and the Estates.132 The letters were written by captains from Leiden urging Orange to get his soldiers out of the city, “because they can no longer suffer the dissensions they have with those from the country, and the bad will and hate they show to them as every day they tell them that they should leave and that they themselves would guard their city”.133 The conflict in Leiden could even be heard outside the city, as we can understand from Valdés’ description:

Last night alarm was given in Leiden with drums and bells, and many arquebus shots were heard for one hour. Until now I

131 ‘Las pocas vezes que le e ablado me tiene marabillado y aun scandalizado biendo quan maldito ereje es, y que aunque se be preso pretende que su magestad de libertad de conçiençia en estos estados y çierto es hombre de muy bibo juizio y gran letrado docto en todas lenguas Latina, Griega y Ebreà, sino que toda esta abilidad la emplea en mal. El de Orange a sentido mucho su perdida porque hera segun dizen los que le conoçen todo su consejo y gobierno’. Valdés to Albornoz, ‘The Hague, 28 November 1573, AA, C/54, 66. See also Valdés to Alba, Maassluis, 4 December 1573, AGS, E. 554, f. 158.


133 ‘Porque ya no pueden sufrir las disensiones que con los de la tierra tienen y la mala boluntad y odio que les muestran pues cada día les dizien que se salgan fuera que ellos guardaran su villa’. Ibidem.
have not been able to verify what it was, but it is said by these prisoners that there is a conflict between those from the city and the soldiers and they think it certain that a revolt has taken place amongst them.\textsuperscript{134}

It is in this same letter he first used the expression “la guerra de Holanda” (“the war of Holland”), which seems to imply that in his eyes it had become more than just a struggle against a group of rebels. However, he wrote in a letter some days later that this division could be used to win the war, if only they were given the means to act.\textsuperscript{135}

Two last letters from this period date from Warmond, near Leiden, and describe the taking of two castles.\textsuperscript{136} It is interesting to note that Valdés used neutral words to describe these castles in his letter to Alba, but in his short letter to Albornoz he called them “ladroneras” (“dens of thieves”), demonstrating the perfect use of different speech registers. The defenders of the castle of Warmond escaped through the back door, and instead of criticising their cowardly behaviour he was full of praise for their abilities:

And though they were closely watched, those of this country are so skillful and quick in walking on the ice with their skates that it is impossible to catch them, even with horses. It is pleasant to see all the villagers and the soldiers of this land going about in the said manner, not with the intention of offending our soldiers that are now without the crampons that are necessary to walk on the ice, of which many days ago I had informed monsieur de Noircarmes, but until now he has not provisioned any of these.\textsuperscript{137}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134} ‘Antenoche se toco arma en Leiden con cajas y campanas y se oyeron muchos arcabucazos por espacio de un ora, no e podido saber hasta aora que sea pero dizen estos presos que segun andan a malas los de la villa con los soldados que creen cierto que abra sido rebuelta entre ellos’. Ibidem.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Valdés to Alba and Albornoz, Warmond, 7 December 1573, AA, C/54, 68-69.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibidem.
\item \textsuperscript{137} ‘Y aun que estava con vigilançia son tan diestros y prestos los deste pays a caminar por el hielo con sus patines que no es posible alcançarlos ni aun con cavallos. Ya si es cosa graciosa ver la moltitud de villanaje y soldados deste pays que caminan de la manera que digo sin que sean parte nuestros soldados a los ofender mayormente hallandose aora sin los ramplones que son neçesarios para caminar por el yelo de lo qual muchos dia a que e dado aviso a monsiur de Norcarme [Noircarmes] pero hasta aora no a hecho provision ninguna dellos’. Ibidem.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
These letters also mark the end of an epoch, as Valdés thanked Albornoz for all that he had done for him, and he sent a Spanish nobleman to court to wish Alba a good journey home and to welcome the new Governor-general, Luis de Requesens. Alba was finally leaving the Low Countries, after spending more than six continuous years as its Governor and Captain-general. His departure also created a kind of radio silence in Valdés’ correspondence, as his letters to Requesens are much more difficult to trace. Until 15 April 1574, we do not have letters from the commander.\textsuperscript{138} Within this period we find the lifting of the first siege of Leiden on 21 March 1574 in order for Valdés to travel east with his army to stop another invasion from Germany by William of Orange’s brothers.

He must also have participated in the large-scale attack in December in the direction of the river Maas. Only Delft, Schiedam and Rotterdam now remained in the hands of the rebels. The Hague was probably his central residence during this period, but we have only some proclamations as evidence of his presence there, besides some letters mentioning him as residing in The Hague.\textsuperscript{139} He ordered that civilians were not allowed to buy goods from the soldiers and indicated the number of beds and other services the inhabitants had to offer to the quartered soldiers.\textsuperscript{140}

On 14 April Sancho Dávila became the glorious hero of the Battle of the Mookerheide, close to the eastern borders of the Low Countries. Valdés and his men came just too late to participate, but it had made them leave their positions around Leiden. The orders to travel east with his troops had already been received at least a month before, but at the time Valdés had been ill.\textsuperscript{141} Again, Valdés did not gain honour and prestige participating in an important battle.

Valdés’s arrival was also delayed because his troops had started some kind of a mutiny on their passing of Utrecht. If we believe priest refugee Wouter Jacobszoon, who was living in Amsterdam at the time:

They were calling for money, tearing five or six banners completely into rags. And they were very bitter with their captain, named Baldeus, whom they tried to destroy, shooting heavily at him.

\textsuperscript{138} Instruction Requesens to Bracamonte, Antwerp, 20 February 1574, NCD I, 218-222. Letters from Requesens to Valdés from 20 February, 11 March, and 4 April 1574, NCD I, 228-229; 347 and idem, II, 88. In these letters Requesens refers to letters from Valdés from 26, 29, and 30 January, 23 and 26 February, and 1, 4, 6, 23, and 28 March.

\textsuperscript{139} Instruction from Requesens to Bracamonte, Antwerp, 20 February 1574, NCD I, 218-222.

\textsuperscript{140} Brouwer and Vellekoop, Spaans benauwd, 46; Smit, \textit{Den Haag}, 216.

\textsuperscript{141} Requesens to Valdés, 11 March 1574, NCD I, 347.
so as to shock everybody, fearful of what was to become of this, and with great fear of further devastation of the whole country.  

The message can be found between news from 1 and 3 April, and is repeated again on 7 April. In his memoirs Jacobszoon also mentions on 19 April that he was busy making an inventory of the books the Spanish Franciscans wanted to send to Spain, given to them by ‘Baldeus’, who had stolen them from the house of nobleman Van Swieten. In his turn, Adriaan van Swieten had stolen them from the Franciscans of Gouda when he had pillaged that city. Though the Spaniards thought they were within their right to take them as spoils of war, the King did not want church goods to be taken as prizes. Three days later, Jacobszoon heard of the royal victory against the ‘Beggars’ on the battlefield.

The day after the Battle of the Mookerheide Valdés wrote a letter to Alba to inform him about the events. We have to realise that this letter was no longer directed to his Captain-general in the Low Countries, but to his noble patron in Spain. Sending information on current events was one of the things a client could offer to his patron in order to maintain their relationship from a distance. He had already sent him another letter three days earlier, but this letter has not been preserved.

On the way back from the east, on 30 April, Valdés and his troops again arrived in Utrecht, resulting in the events we discussed earlier, leading up to a confrontation between Valdés and Fernando de Lannoy. Jacobszoon mentions these problems in his memoirs. Two weeks later Valdés had to hide from the mutineers while in Antwerp, in order to save his own life. Like Romero and Mondragón, Valdés was not always loved by his soldiers.

The second siege of Leiden (1574)

Another two weeks later, the second siege of Leiden had started. It is perhaps Valdés's biggest accomplishment of his career that he succeeded so quickly in converting a large band of mutineers into an organised army that was able to return to the attack. It demonstrates again his skills

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142 Jacobszoon, Memoriën, I, 389.
143 Ibidem, 391.
144 Adriaan van Swieten (1532-1584), a nobleman and follower of William of Orange.
145 Ibidem, 395-396.
146 Valdés to Alba, Nijmegen, 15 April 1574, AA, C/54, 70.
147 Jacobszoon, Memoriën, 400.
148 Fagel, Leids beleg.
as an organiser. On 28 May he was back in The Hague, now writing to his new Captain-general, Luis de Requesens.\textsuperscript{149} After leaving Utrecht on May 24, they had first reached Alphen aan den Rijn, the strategic crossroads he knew so well, and where he had been fighting in July 1573. Again it turned into a violent confrontation with the enemy, and again it was one of the few moments we find actual fighting described in his correspondence, calling it “a very good and very bloody skirmish” ("una muy buena scaramuça y bien sangrienta"). The enemy resisted for more than an hour, but when Valdés’s men finally entered the fortification they killed many of them, and afterwards chased the enemy for one and a half miles, killing as many as possible, while others drowned. Valdés speaks of some three hundred dead on the side of the rebels against five or six Spaniards and an equal number of Walloons. His final judgement of the fighting was very positive:

\begin{quote}
I am more delighted than I can say to have seen the spirit and valour of this infantry when attacking the fortress. I promise Your Excellency that during all the time of the fighting, and that was more than one hour, I have never in my career as a soldier seen anything more persistent or done with more endeavour.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

Four regiments of English troops fighting with the rebels quickly surrendered to the Lord of Licques, who immediately sent them off to prison in Haarlem.\textsuperscript{151} Valdés was not amused as it was his district, and it had been his decision to make. However, “I did not want to irritate any more those Burgundians in hating the Spanish nation”.\textsuperscript{152} Again, the distrust between Spanish commanders and Netherlandish nobles divided the royal army, and clearly this must be considered an important factor in explaining its failure to defeat the rebels.

Valdés knew that both Delft and Leiden lacked garrisons, and so he tried to convince them to open their gates, using Hollanders to speak

\textsuperscript{149} These first letters are preserved only as copies: Valdés to Requesens, The Hague, 28 May 1574, AGS, E. 558, f.36-37. See also CD LXXV, 258-262, where the first letter is incorrectly dated 18 May 1574. Valdés left Utrecht on 25 May. ‘Utrechtsche kroniek’, 141.

\textsuperscript{150} ‘He holgado mas que sabre dezir de aver visto quan animosamente y con quanto valor acometio el fuerte esta infanteria que prometo a vuestra excelencia que despues que soy soldado del tiempo que duro el combatir que como he dicho, fue mas de un ora, no he visto cosa mas bien porfiada ni con mas esfuerço hecha’. Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{151} Philip of Récourt, Lord of Licques (1534-1588), a captain of Walloon troops.

\textsuperscript{152} ‘No quisse yrritar mas estos Borgoñones a odio contra la nacion Española’. Ibidem.
to their fellow ‘landsmen’, but without any success.\footnote{There is mention of Johan van Matenesse and Jan de Huyter. Koppenol, \emph{Leids Onzet.} 17.} In July, Valdés remained hopeful that Leiden would surrender, and Requesens informed the King of that very same hope.\footnote{Requesens to Philip II, Brussels, 25 July 1574, AGS, E. 560; CP III, n. 1371; Idem, NCD IV, 105-110; Requesens to Lannoy, 20 July 1574, NCD IV, 50-52.}

Regarding his attempts to gain the city of Delft we know much less, though we are informed through another letter of 19 August from Requesens to the King that Valdés had tried to get into this city with the help of some Frenchmen from within. However, the secret signals went amiss, and they arrived at the gates too early.\footnote{Requesens to Philip II, Antwerp, 19 August 1574, CP III, n. 1382; NCD V, 62-81. See also Mendoza, ‘Comentarios’, 519; Requesens to Valdés, 14 August 1574, NCD IV, 343-345.} In his own letters from 14 August, Valdéz wrote about going on a campaign with one thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry, to position themselves between Leiden and Delft.\footnote{At the same time he sent Requesens a plan of how Waterland, in the north of Holland, could be controlled by nine strongholds, four hundred men, and three hundred horse. Requesens to Lannoy, 14 August 1574, NCD IV, 339-342.} These unsuccessful attempts to take over Delft have not been studied in depth. However, especially within English literature we find references to what some authors call ‘the Battle of Delft’.\footnote{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Delft_(1573), accessed 30 January 2019. The Dutch Wikipedia page seems to be an abbreviation of the English page without the annotation, showing the lack of interest in the Netherlands for this subject: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slag_bij_Delft. Van Nierop, \emph{Verraad}, 114.} Though, as we saw above, at least some of the events relate to 1574, the whole story is generally situated in October 1573. This mix-up may find its origin in the main source, the chronicle of Roger Williams, who was a member of the English forces involved in fighting around Delft in support of the rebels:

Valdéz practised all he could with Leiden and Delft, once by treachery of some who kept the town port toward Utrecht, Valdéz prepared sundry turf boats in which he lodged good troops of soldiers. Once being entered the ports, with the resolution of the garrison and the good conduct of Poyet, they were repulsed, where Valdéz lost many of his men. Another time he had intelligence with some in Delft, but being discovered to the townsmen and garrison, divers of our bands which lodged hard by entered in the night, but either some of the townsmen or Valdéz’ guards
discovered our arming, so as he gave over his enterprise, when he was ready to attempt, in the like order as he did at Leiden.\footnote{Williams, Actions, 100.}

The ‘Battle of Delft’ is essentially a heroic English story in which Valdés is supposed to have lost some seven hundred men, and in which the Spaniards had in vain attempted to gain Delft by tricks and treason. The Spanish trick of using peat boats with hidden troops in order secretly to enter a city will much later be repeated by the rebels. The story of their successful capture of Breda in 1590, using this very same method of a peat boat (turfschip), is one of the most famous events within Dutch historiography on the Revolt, as the Dutch version of the Trojan horse. Valdés apparently showed them the way.

In August, Valdés again wrote letters to the Duke of Alba and Albornoz, telling the Duke about his successful second entry into Holland, even when he now did not have any regiment of old Spanish tercios (Spañoles de los biejos) at his disposal, but only the fresh and inexperienced Spanish troops from the tercio of Italy, and furthermore only German and Walloon soldiers. We get a detailed account of the companies involved. He offered his judgement on the actual state of affairs:

I have Leiden caught in extreme necessity and their obstinacy is such that even without having soldiers in the city and with the people dying of hunger, they still do not want to surrender. Already for many days they receive a portion of half a pound of bread, and this only for the rich, as the major part of the population lives off eating carrots and other vegetables and fruit. And so many people die of hunger and plague. I have constructed fortresses on all sides at the distance of an arquebus shot, to make sure that they cannot take their cows to pasture and to prevent them from harvesting the vegetables. I think it cannot take long before they surrender.\footnote{Tengo a Leiden en estrema necesidad y es tanta su obstinación que con no tener gente de guerra dentro moriendo de hambre no se quieren rindir pues ha muchos días que se les de media libra de pan de ración y esto a los ricos porque la mayor parte del pueblo biven de comer ¡canahorias y otras ortalizas y frutas y así muere mucha gente de hambre y peste. He le hecho por todas partes fuertes a tiro de arcabuz para quitarles que no se saquen a pagar las vacas y ympedirles el coger de la ortaliza, creo no podia durar muchos días que no se rinda’. Valdés to Alba, The Hague, 9 August 1574, AA, C/54, 72; Mendoza, Comentarios, 519. The obstinacy of the Leideners can also be found in newsletters; Lamal, ‘Orecchie’; Lamal, News; Lamal, ‘Internationale berichtgeving’.
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He wrote to Alba that he still had not received any letters from him, and he even did not know whether the Duke had received his letters. Of course, he remained very polite in his expression, as a loyal servant ought to be. Correspondence between client and patron had a tendency to be unequal, not only in content, but also in quantity, as the patron often did not respond to the letters.

In his letter to secretary Albornoz his tone was different: “I do not know the reason for His Excellency having erased me from his memory”. 160 He for his part would remain their loyal servant until death. But there was another side to the relationship between a client and a patron. He was in great need of favours from the Duke, and through Sancho Dávila he knew the Duke had arrived at court. As his client, he had always remained in the Low Countries, “in this banishment” (“en este destierro”), as he repeats the expression he had used back in 1571, but this had been bad for his honour. The situation in the Low Countries was terrible:

I (praise the Lord) am healthy, but with more work than ever, of both body and mind, because the necessities are without any comparison larger than when Your Grace was over here, because in more than two months there still has not been sent one complete payment to this infantry, and winter is coming, with the rains having started already with great fury. 161

After the reformation of the Spanish tercios, the old infantry had been divided between Fernando de Toledo and Julián Romero, while Valdés had become the commander of the tercio of Italy. But he clearly had enough of the war and uttered a heartfelt wish: “that they let me go to Spain and lay the pike aside”. 162 When we think of the most quoted phrase from his treatise: “El día que uno toma la pica para ser soldado, ese día, renuncia a ser cristiano” (“The day a man picks up his pike to become a soldier is the day he ceases to be a Christian”), we might conclude he wanted to become Christian again. 163

160 ‘No se qual sea la causa de que su excelencia [Alba] me aya borrado de su memoria’. Valdés to Albornoz, The Hague, 9 August 1574, AA, C/54, 73.
161 ‘Yo (loado Dios) quedo con salud, pero mas cargado de travajos que nunca, asi de cuerpo como de spiritu, porque las neçesidades son sin comparacion mayores que cuando vuestra merced aca stava, pues en dos meses y dias mas aun no se ha embiado a esta ynfanteria un socorro entero y el ynbierno viene abiendo ya aqui empeçado las aguas a gran furia’. Ibidem.
162 ‘A que dexe de yrme en España y arrimar la pica’. Ibidem.
These letters demonstrate that Valdés needed favours, but the type of rewards was left open. Already five days later, Valdés wrote another set of letters to Albornoz and Alba, in which he did make clear what he expected from the Duke:

> My daughter writes to me about an affair of honour and convenience of hers and mine, for which she needs to have some letters from His Majesty, that she pretends to have through the favour of Your Excellency. I humbly request that Your Excellency can favour this affair of such a servant and creation of yours.\(^{164}\)

The letter to Albornoz again was more direct, reflecting correspondents writing on a more equal level. He was very happy that he had just received a letter from Albornoz written on 3 August, but he still wondered why they had not received his other letters as he had always sent them with Requesens’ official post. He was also grateful for the fact that Albornoz had visited his daughter. By way of thanking the secretary he filled the letter with news of the war. Within this letter there was another one in which he discussed the matter of his daughter. For her ‘affair’ she needed a thousand ducats, and it was necessary that Albornoz give her the money, and then Valdés would pay him back through merchant Juan de Cuéllar. That he speaks about ‘dressing her’ (‘vestirla’) is the only reference to the character of this ‘affair’. In the middle of the siege of Leiden, Valdés was busy with family matters in Madrid. Besides being a (good) lover, he was clearly trying to be a good (though very absent) father.

It may also have been a good diversion from his professional activities, as things were not going well around Leiden for the besiegers. We have already seen the conflict between Fernando de Lannoy and Valdés, as a result of which Valdés was in the end kept out of the negotiations with the city government. There may also have been a conflict between Valdés and Julián Romero when this last commander came to help Valdés out with his siege. Both Trillo and Mendoza criticise Valdés for not listening to Romero, and Trillo, in particular, shows him as somebody who “wanted to be alone and not to share the honour and effort with anybody else”.\(^{165}\)

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\(^{164}\) ‘Escriveme mi hija que para un negocio de honra y comodo suyo y mio tiene necesidad de algunas letras de su magestad las quales pretende haver mediante el favor de vuestra excelencia. Suplico humilmente quanto puedo a vuestra excelencia favorezca este particular como negocio de un tan su criado y hechura’. Valdés to Alba and Albornoz, Wilsveen, 14 August 1574, AA, 4, 74-75.

However, he had sent messages to the city government, trying to convince the city to surrender. These letters even play a prominent role in the discourse on the siege of Leiden, and can also be found in the theatre plays. As the story goes, the city government around the end of May responded in a letter to Valdés with only the following words: “Fistula dulce canit volucrem dum decipit auceps”. Leiden city historian Orlers tells the story that went with it:

In our language this is rendered as: “if the bird catcher sees the little bird flying freely, he whistles very sweetly to fool the little bird”. The letter that had been sent to commander Baldeo was elegantly closed and sealed with the city seal, in the inside, there was a subtle circle drawn in the middle, in which the foresaid sentence had been written. When Baldeus opened the foresaid letter, he thought it was not written at all, and out of anger he threw it from him with several swear words: but when he looked closer, he saw the said answer, saying that he would make the writers pay.

This story seems to imply he did read Latin. In Orlers’s work we can also find another letter of 30 July from Valdés to the city, politely opening with “honourable good friends, again I hope that you have always remained in favour of the Royal Majesty, your natural hereditary lord, and that you do not desire to ruin your fatherland…”, and ending with “Your good friend”.

His letter of 4 September was written in Spanish, and the tone had changed completely, though negotiations and surrender still remained his main intention. He starting by calling them “obstinate Leideners against God, and against your King and Lord”, but then returns to invite them to come and negotiate with him, offering them safe-conducts. At the end of the letter the tone gets stricter again: “that you do not fool yourselves with vain hopes of relief… If you accept my offer, you will find a good friend in me, but if you hold on to you ruinous plans, believe me, you will experience the sword of justice”.

166 Valdés to Leiden, 17 June 1574 and 4 September 1574, UBL, Vulcanius 53.
167 Orlers, Beschrijvinge, 459.
168 Orlers, Beschrijvinge, 482-483.
169 Orlers, Beschrijvinge, 497-498.
170 The complete text of this letter: ‘Para el magistrado y pueblo de Leyden, Obstinados Leidenses contra Dios, y contra vuestro Rey y Sennor. Aunqui no es digna de misericordia buestro grande obstinacion, pero siendo la voluntad de Su Magestad clementissima de
Again four days later, Valdés wrote another letter in Spanish to the city leaders of Leiden about the delegates and a few days later the passports followed. They could also bring open letters for Fernando de Lannoy and for Leideners living at present in Haarlem or Utrecht.\textsuperscript{171}

In a letter from Requesens to the King dated 1 September we find news that the rebels had broken several dykes and were on their way with three hundred small boats. Valdés still thought he could stop them.\textsuperscript{172} History would prove him wrong. King Philip II received one document with the
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most important points of Valdés’s letters from 15, 17, and 18 September. His letters from 21 and 23 September would reach the King by way of complete copies. It shows the importance of the siege of Leiden, but it also indicates how well the Spanish bureaucracy functioned. The King could follow the events at his desk through the letters of the commander leading the siege. These documents also give us the opportunity to feel what it must have been like for Valdés, when the water slowly flowed in the direction of Leiden.

As the salty water from the sea could reach Leiden only if all the dykes between the river Maas and Leiden were broken, it was up to Valdés to defend the dykes. If the boats could pass over the fields, Leiden would be lost. Standing on the dykes near Zoetermeer, Valdés was very surprised at this new situation in which he had to defend them with his troops: “as it had never been seen in Holland that dykes were broken to flood the land, instead of making them stronger to defend themselves from the water”. He did what he could, but “if the heavens are against me, I will have to be defeated by the flood, as you can call it, but not by the enemy”. In a letter written by William of Orange he had intercepted in 1573, he had read that breaking the locks would flood the lands, never to be recovered. If that is what the rebels wanted, the Spanish commander stated, he was ready to do it himself:

It has seemed to me [important] to inform Your Excellency so he understands that if at any given time he would be served by flooding this country, it is in his hands, because they have started with it, and if they persist in their obstinate rebellion they deserve to be drowned.

173 ‘Pues jamas en Holanda se ha visto romper los diques para anegarla, sino crecerlos siempre para defenderse del agua’. Letters from Requesens to Valdés, 15, 17 and 18 September 1574, Zoeterwoude, 21 and 23 September 1574, Zoeterwoude and Leiden, copies, AGS, E. 560, 68, 91-94. The letters from Zoeterwoude also in IVDJ; CP III, n. 1394, 1399, 1400.

174 ‘Si el cielo me fuere contrario vencerme ha el diluvio que tal se puede llamar, pero no el enemigo’. Ibidem.

175 ‘Hame parescido dar dello aviso a vuestra excelencia para que entienda que siempre que fuere servido de anegar este pays esta en su mano y pues ellos han dado principio a lo hazer si perseveran en su obstinada rebelion bien merecen ser anegados’. Idem, 17 September 1574.
It is one of the quotations from the beginning of this chapter. It was a very aggressive proposition, but born out of anger for the new self-destructive policy of the rebels, who wanted to destroy their own country. Before reaching this point he had gone through a whole series of views on the conflict, starting from a distant professional military view, to even a positive belief in the good inhabitants of the Low Countries fighting against the rebels. His disappointment cannot be separated from his earlier optimism. It was not caused by some kind of natural Spanish cruelty, as the Black Legend would like to make us believe.

On 21 September Valdés had to leave the dykes because of the water; ships were already sailing over the fields: “with more reason you can now better call it an ocean”. Also because of the high winds he feared that soon the ships could sail everywhere. Most of the houses in Delft, Rotterdam and Gouda had already been flooded, and he did not understand why the rebels flooded three cities in order to save one. He called this the work of the “diabolical obstinacy of wicked rebels” (“diabolica ostinacion de malvados rebeldes”). And again, he offered to Requesens that he would open the dykes himself: “if it is relieved and Your Excellency gives me a licence to open the sluices of Maassluis I will drown these bad people, because they do not deserve less punishment than this”. 177

By this time Valdés was completely left out of the negotiations between Lannoy and the Leiden Mayors. He realised that now that the rescue fleet was on its way the inhabitants of Leiden would certainly not surrender. Meanwhile his Spanish soldiers were standing up to their knees in water and becoming ill, his Germans refused to move unless they were paid, and the Walloons had started plundering. However, in his letters he kept faith with the situation, or perhaps we should say that he did his best to give that impression to Requesens: “the difficulties at any given time are so many and so enormous, but they do not make me lose my spirit”. 178

This is the last we hear from Valdés before the end of the siege some ten days later. There are still two more letters from Requesens to Philip II. 179 In one of them the Governor-general expressed his doubts about a pardon for the inhabitants of Leiden. As there were no soldiers in the

176 ‘Con mas razon se puede agora llamar mar oceano’. Ibidem, 21 September 1574.
177 ‘si se socorren y vuestra excelencia me da licencia abrire las esclussas de Meslanchus [Maassluis] y acabare de anegar tan mala gente pues no merecen menos castigo que este’. AGS, E. 560, 91-94.
178 ‘Las dificultades tantas que a un tiempo se ofrecen, son muchas y muy grandes, las cuales no me han de hacer perder de animo’. Ibidem, 23 September 1574.
179 Requesens to Philip II, Antwerp, 25 and 27 September 1574, AGS, E. 560, f. 41, 73; CP III, n. 1406, 1408.
city, the burghers had made the decision to resist. Maybe it would be better to kill them all as a lesson to the other cities, demonstrating that they could not continue to resist and hope they could still be pardoned. These words are not from the feared Duke of Alba, but from Requesens, who had started his government following a reconciliation policy. It shows again how opinions could change dramatically over time as a result of events. Requesens also feared that even if there was a treaty, he probably could not stop his men from sacking the city, as they had held on for so long only in the hope of pillage. On 27 September Requesens advised the King to start fighting the rebels with water and fire.

The first letter on the lifting of the siege on 3 October was written by paymaster Alameda in Utrecht, who had heard the bad news from a Spanish captain. Requesens heard about the lifting on 7 October through a courier of Lannoy’s. A day before he had still written a long letter to the King about the siege, not knowing that it had already been ended. He waited until 10 October to send a letter to the King with the bad news. By then, still no direct letter from Valdés had arrived. His first letter to Requesens was written on 17 October, but it was all about actual problems, without any comments on the events in Leiden. In this case the rhetoric of silence was well used by Valdés.

King Philip wrote a letter from Madrid on 22 October, answering Requesens on the change of policy in the Low Countries. It is a beautifully elaborated policy letter that shows how the royal government was weighing the different possibilities. There should be severe punishment, but at the same time the King wanted to treat his subjects as mildly as possible. Flooding everything would also damage other regions, so burning the villages would be better, to leave the rebels without food in order to force them to leave. The end of the letter is remarkable: after discussing all possibilities, the King left the decision to Requesens to do as the situation called for. Though Philip II has often been seen as incapable of delegating, at this crucial point he left the decision to his representative in the Low Countries.

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180 Alameda to Requesens, Utrecht, 5 October 1574, AGS E. 560; Requesens to Philip II, Antwerp, 10 October 1574, Idem, CP III, n. 1410 and 1414; Valdés to Requesens, The Hague, 17 October 1574; Idem, Haarlem, 22 October 1574, AGS, E. 560, f. 2-3; Requesens to Philip II, 6 October 1574, NCD V, 361-368.
181 Philip II to Requesens, Madrid, 22 October 1574, AGS E. 561; CP III, n. 1415.
182 Parker, *Felipe II*, 582-589.
When writing the letter the King still did not know that the siege of Leiden had already been lifted. On 6 November Requesens would inform the King that he had given orders to Valdés and the stadtholder of Holland to break several dykes in Holland, but without damaging Haarlem and Amsterdam. However, Hierges had informed Requesens that this would not get all the cities of Holland and Zeeland out of rebel hands, and that from Zeeland the enemy could also flood parts of Flanders causing much damage to the surroundings of Antwerp. And first the royal troops had to leave Holland. The implementation of the new policy had to be postponed.

Leonor Álvarez Francés has extensively studied the portrayal of Valdés in chronicles and histories from Spain and the Low Countries, concluding that authors created their own Valdés depending on the purpose of their text: “a fabricated character with a rhetorical function”. If a text wanted to highlight the unity and other positive qualities of the defenders, then the image of Valdés became more negative, while more neutral texts also offered a more neutral description of the Spanish commander. In the first text printed during the siege, *Een waerachtig verhael*, Valdés was even completely missing. Jan Fruytiers’s *Corte beschrijvinghe*, published shortly after the lifting of the siege, used Valdés as protagonist in a comparison between the siege of Leiden and the sieges of Jerusalem, Samaria and Bethulia in the Bible. The Spaniards in 1574 played the part of the Assyrians; Valdés is portrayed as the rabshakeh, the commander of the Assyrian army, who in vain tried to convince the King of Judah to surrender with his ‘beautiful promises’.

**Mutiny**

Several months later, Valdés wrote a long letter to the Duke of Alba in Spain, in which he said he had already sent him a report on “the strange manner of how Leiden was relieved” (“*la estraña manera como se socorrió Leiden*”), unfortunately lost. However he did summarise the events again:

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183 On 26 October, the King received a letter from Requesens dated 6 October in which the news of the lifting of the siege was not yet included, NCD V, 361.
184 Gilles of Berlaymont, Baron of Hierges, died 18 June 1579.
185 Requesens to Philip II, Brussels, 6 November 1574, AGS E. 560, CP III, n. 1421.
187 Valdés to Alba, Amersfoort, 28 December 1574, AA, C/54, 76.
Breaking the dykes in twenty-five places and turning the land into an ocean, and travelling over the fields as if it were the sea, with eighty rowing ships, smaller ships and more than three hundred boats. But what they did in order to save one city meant a knife for all the villages of the countryside (plat pais) that were completely drowned.\textsuperscript{188}

In the letter he explained to the Duke that even after the lifting of the siege on 3 October he had still been in control of the situation. He had let in a large quantity of salty water that would force the cities “to return to the obedience of His Majesty or leave the lands”.\textsuperscript{189} According to the commander, the real origin of the defeat in Holland was the mutiny:

Being in such a state, they were favoured by the devil, as God permitted it because of our sins, because the Spaniards of my tercio mutinied and not satisfied with their payments they did such an infamous thing as to leave Holland and taking me with them as their prisoner, and because of their example the Germans and Walloons also left.\textsuperscript{190}

Is Valdés speaking the truth to his patron, or was he trying to clear himself of any culpability for the loss of control in Holland? The chronicler from Utrecht on the contrary blames the whole mutiny on Valdés himself. The soldiers wanted payment out of the “large robbery he had received in Holland from ransomming (brandschatten), compositions, passports, licences and other means of extraction”.\textsuperscript{191}

The correspondence between the commander and the mutineers shows that Valdés did everything possible to continue the struggle against the rebels, and he tried to control the dykes and fortresses in the region, though the mutiny made it almost impossible to function properly.\textsuperscript{192} This very

\textsuperscript{188} ‘Abriendo en veinte y cinco partes los diques y haciendo de la tierra mar oceano y caminando con ochenta navios de remo y muchas charruas y mas de trezientas barcas otras por los prados como pudiera por la mar. Pero lo que hizieron para remedio de una villa fue cuchillo para todas las villas del plat pais porque quedaron anegadas totalmente’. Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{189} ‘Reduzirse a la obedientia de Su Magestad o dexar las tierras’. Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{190} ‘Estando en este estado les favorecio el diablo permitiendolo Dios por nuestros pecados porque se amotinaron los españoles de mi tercio y no contentos con pedir sus pagas hizieron una cosa tan ynfame como fue salirse de Holanda llevandome preso y al exemplo suyo se salieron los Alemanes y Balones’. Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{191} ‘Utrechtsche kroniek’, 162.

\textsuperscript{192} The study of these letters is also part of Beatriz Santiago Belmonte’s research.
special correspondence between a commander and his mutineers consists of some thirty letters dated between 6 November 1574 and 18 February 1575. Until 27 November he was still in The Hague, but afterwards we find him in Beverwijk, Muiden, Utrecht, Amersfoort and Maastricht. At first he was held in detention at his home, but in the end he successfully escaped. The letters show how Valdés was caught between the service of his King, the protection of the population of the Low Countries, and the interests of his troops. There was no easy solution for the Spanish commander.

Already in the first letter we find a typical aspect of Spanish military correspondence between a commander and his mutineers. As the mutiny had frozen the hierarchical relationship between the officer and his soldiers, Valdés addressed the letter at the top of the paper to the ‘muy magníficos señores’.193 This does not imply that he was not critical of their behaviour: “I am not surprised that the other nations do it [not listening] but we give them the example of disobedience”.194 We witness how the mutineers crossed the usual boundaries between soldiers and officers, and how Valdés tried to maintain his position: “when they want to ask me something, the letter has to be signed, as it is not reasonable that I answer to something that may have been written by whatever soldier that has its mind to it”.195 In another letter he also stated that “it was never done, nor was it normal, that the ministers of His Majesty that govern these soldiers should respond to what is asked of them by way of placards, because often such placards are posted by people with bad intentions, even villainous ones”.196 He only wanted to talk to the official representatives of the mutineers and react only to their letters. In another letter he stated that they had to respect him as he was still their Maestre de campo and otherwise it would damage his reputation.197 In

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193 Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 6 November 1574, BZ 106D2. Comparable to the ‘muy nobles señores’ used during Spanish mutinies in Italy under Charles V. Sherer, ‘All of us’, 911.

194 ‘Yo no me maravillo que las demas naciones lo hagan [not listening] pues nosotros les damos exemplo de poca obidientia’. Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 6 November 1574, BZ 106D2.

195 ‘Quando me pidieren alguna cosa venga firmada la letra, que no es razon que responda yo a lo que podria escrivir qualquier soldado que se le antojase’. Ibidem.

196 ‘Nunca fue ni es costumbre que los ministros de Su Magestad que goviernan gente de guerra respondan a lo que por via de carteles se les pide, pues muchas vezes los tales son puestos por personas mal yntencionadas y aun facinorosas’. Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 18 November 1574, BZ 106D6.

197 Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 19 November 1574, BZ 106D7.
a letter to Requesens his tone was both negative and comprehensive: “It hurts my soul to see all those people so in need and unhappy… the ruin actions of these mutineers”.  

As the mutineers threatened to leave the County of Holland, he put his main arguments to the fore: “I convince myself that such honourable and valiant soldiers will not do such an ugly thing against their honour as to leave the fortresses without orders from Your Excellency”. Honour became the key argument at a time when the normal hierarchical structure had stopped functioning. The mutineers now also had to take him at his word. As from 18 November he was confined to his room by electo Marcos Naranjo, who put double guards in front of his door and ordered them to let nobody through, not even the representatives of the other nations.

He tried to remain reasonable: “If I am not mistaken there are two main reasons that have caused this mutiny”, referring to the payments and the housing for the coming winter. He tried to convince them that money was on its way, and he suggested besides Haarlem and The Hague several rich villages in Holland for their winter quarters. If necessary, also the village of Wassenaar, which until then had been housing a cavalry unit, might be used.

In this situation of crisis Valdés maintained his vengeful tone about the punishment of the inhabitants: “if I could throw a pike height of water on Holland, I would do so voluntarily”. As a pike could easily measure more than five metres, this was a very harsh way of expressing himself, but it is difficult to know whether he was maybe thinking this...

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198 ‘En el alma siento el ver toda esta gente tan necesitada y descontenta… el ruyn proceder destos alterados’. Valdés and Pedro de Paz to Requesens (copy), The Hague, 10 to 22 November 1574, AGS, E. 560, f. 39.
199 ‘Me persuado que soldados tan honrrados y valerosos no haran cosa tan fea a sus honrras como seria abandonar los fuertes sin orden de su excelencia’. Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 18 November 1574, BZ 106D6.
200 Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 19 November 1574, BZ 106D7.
201 ‘Si no me engaño dos causas principales han sido las que han causado este alteracion’. Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 23 November 1574, BZ 106D8.
202 ‘Si pudiese echar una pica de agua en alto en Hollanda que lo haria de voluntad’. Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, The Hague, 24 November 1574, BZ 106D9. A whole set of document copies from 24-26 November 1574, including letters from Valdés to Requesens and from the mutineers and their electo to Valdés, can be found in AGS, E. 560, f. 40-42. The mentioned electo in these letters was still Diego Sánchez de Bahamonde, who was followed as electo by Marcos Naranjo.
phrase would be positively received by the mutineers. In the same letter he showed his desperation: “I do not see the hour we can leave this purgatory” (“no veo la ora que salir deste purgatorio”).

One day later, Valdés wrote a letter to Requesens in which he described the dire circumstances:

This morning at dawn their Sergeant-major came with a lantern and followed by musketeers. They entered my room shooting as they usually do, putting their arquebuses to my breast and demanding the letter I had from Your Excellency.”

The devilish (endemoniados) mutineers threatened to go to serve the Prince of Orange, or to go to Ghent until they were paid and then leave for France. The threat to join the rebels must have been meant to frighten the commander, but it did happen that Spanish mutineers joined the rebel army. The origin of the mutiny could be found in the behaviour of many officials who had at first supported the mutiny. They behaved in a terrible manner: “their insolences and shameless deeds are so numerous that it is impossible to describe them successfully”.

As he could not stand the situation any longer, he decided to escape: “the shameless Naranjo has forced me to separate myself from this tercio, as he has so much power and evilness, as a very low person, telling me in my presence that he is going to hang me”. However, at the same time, Valdés introduced a new way of connecting to the mutineers: “I advise them as a father” (“yo les aconsejo como padre”). In the next letter the addressees were even described as “very magnificent lords and children of mine” (“muy magníficos señores y hijos míos”) and the letter is signed “your father who loves and serves you” (“su padre que los ama y

203 ‘Esta mañana al amanecer vino su sargento mayor con la laterna que tras de moxqueteros y entraron en mi camara dando bozes como suelen poniendose los arcabuzes a los pechos que les diese la letra que tenia de vuestra excelencia’. Valdés to Requesens, The Hague, 25 November 1574, BZ 96D27.
204 Fagel, ‘Orange’s Spanish mulatto’, 107.
205 ‘Son tantas sus ynsolencias y desverguenças que no es posible acertarlas a escivir’. Valdés to Requesens, 25 November 1575, BZ 96D27.
206 ‘La desverguença de Naranjo me ha obligado a que me aparte deste tercio, pues tanto poder tiene avra la maldad que ose y un tal omo vil como ese a dezirme en mi presencia que me ahorcara “la desverguença de Naranjo me ha obligado a que me aparte deste tercio, pues tanto poder tiene avra la maldad que ose y un tal omo vil como ese a dezirme en mi presencia que me ahorcara”. Valdés to the Electo and the soldiers of the tercio of Italy, Beverwijk, 1 December 1574, BZ 106D10.
Francisco de Valdés: the exemplary soldier

All through the rest of the mutiny, this wording of a loving father and his children would be continued. It clearly does not imply an improvement of their mutual relationship, but it is a way of maintaining some kind of power over the mutineers. During the Spanish mutinies in Italy under Charles V the mutineers were addressed in a comparable way as “brothers” (“hermanos”).

Around Muiden and Weesp some of the mutineers were clearly harassing the population: putting bounties on the local population and in Weesp it even led to the death of many inhabitants.

By such evil deeds we make ourselves hated by God and the whole world, and we cause the revolt of the whole country against us. For the love of God, this has to be remedied, and those who do such things must be punished severely, as to prove that this mutiny is not done in order to perpetrate and perform villainous acts, but to request what is rightly owed to them.

He refers to the honour of the tercio and their reputation, calling the violent acts very ugly: “your graces have to promise me that there will be no disorders in this tercio, but that they [the soldiers] live with modesty and look for the service of God and King”. During these moments of crisis the author of the Espejo y disciplina militar was putting sentences on paper that could easily have been taken from his own treatise. In another part of the letter he also used his personal history with the soldiers as an argument for them to listen to him:

By the love of God, you have the whole country revolted, and close to taking up arms against us. I beg you not to let yourself be guided by your desires, because in this tercio there are valient soldiers who have the discretion and the prudence to govern

207 Valdés to the Señores mis hijos electo y soldados de mi tercio, Muiden, 8 December 1574, BZ 106D12.
208 Sherer, ‘All of us’, 911; Sherer, Warriors, 124-125.
209 Valdés to the Señores mis hijos electo y soldados de mi tercio, Muiden, 10 December 1574, BZ 106D13; Idem, ‘de casa’, 16 December 1574, BZ 106D15A.
210 ‘Con semejantes maldades nos hazemos a Dios y al mundo odiosos, y damos causa a que todo el pais se levante contra nosotros, por amor de Dios que se ponga en ello remedio, y que se castiguuen con rigor los que tales cosas hazen y no parezca que esta alteracion sea hecho para perpetrar y hazer vellaquerias y no para pedir lo que justamente se les debe’. Ibidem.
211 ‘Prometerme vuestras mercedes por ella que no se haria desorden en ese tercio sino que se viviria con mucho recato mirando por el servicio de Dios y del Rey’. Ibidem.
armies. Please return to your senses and I promise as Christian and hidalgo to be a very good intermediary with Your Excellency, and a true father who will satisfy you completely, in paying all that is owed and that you are lodged to your satisfaction. I ask you to trust me, as your graces know that I have never fooled you, and less concerning fraud. For this reason and other motivations, it would be better to speak in person than communicate in writing. I would be very served if you would receive me and listen to me.\textsuperscript{212}

The violent killing of the population by the mutineers was “in disservice of God and King, and so damaging the honour of the whole Spanish nation, and it is true that this was an enormous (\textit{bastantissima}) reason for all the states rising against us”\textsuperscript{213} He had already used the pronoun ‘we’ (\textit{nosotros}) in the meaning of all Spaniards, but now he clearly referred to the Spanish nation as an entity.

However, at this point he saw new possibilities for overcoming the mutiny. He connected the last quotation with a call to forget about the past and think about the future:

I think your graces remember how many times in meetings with me and in letters I have written to you, I have foreseen the evil deeds that have occurred. However, we cannot remedy these solely by recalling them, and it is better that we forget about them to prevent them from hindering us in the things we have to remedy in the future.\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{212} ‘Por amor de Dios que tienen ya todo el pais alterado, y muy cerca de tomar todos las armas contra nosotros, no se dexen, les suplico, guiar de sus apetitos pues ay en ese tercıo tan valerosos soldados y que tienen discretion y prudencia para governar exercitos, alleguense a la razon que yo les prometo como christiano y hijo dalgo de serles muy buen yntercesor con su excelencia, y verdadero padre para que se les de todo contentamiento assi en pagarles todo lo que se les deve como en que sean alojados a su contento, fien les suplico esto de mi, pues saben vuestras mercedes que nunca les engañe, ni menos en cosa alguna de lo que les a tocado de fraude, y por que estos y otros particulares se tratan mejor a boca que no por escrito recibire mucha merced en que me quieran oyr y dar audiencia’. Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{213} ‘En deservicio de Dios y del Rey, y tan en perjuzyio de la honrra de toda la nacion Española y es cierto que fuera bastantissima causa para que todos los estados se levantaran contra nosotros’. Valdés to the ‘Señores mis hijos electo y soldados de mi tercio’, Utrecht, 18 December 1574, BZ 106D14.

\textsuperscript{214} ‘Bien creo se acordaron vuestras mercedes quantas vezes en parlamentos que les he hecho y en cartas que les he escrito, he ante visto estos males que an sucedido los quales pues no se pueden remediar por traerlos a la memoria, mejor es que los olvidemos para que mas no nos lastimen y que en lo por venir se ponga remedio’. Ibidem.
He praised all the good men in the tercio, “people with a clear mind and full of discretion” (“personas de tan claro juyzio y de tanta discretion”), but they had been led by “ignorant men, ruinous and with bad intentions” (“hombres ignorantes, precipitosos y de malas yntenciones”). Valdés suggested that every company name two deputies to work together with the electo and his council.

By this time the mutineers had arrived around Utrecht, the city where they had been badly treated after returning from the east in April. In a letter to the Duke of Alba Valdés tells the story of what happened in Utrecht:

They arrived at the quarter of Utrecht situated outside the Amsterdam gate, that has walls and a moat, and guarded by three companies of Germans. They attacked it and six of them were killed, with ten more wounded. Their foolishness grew even greater and four days later, on the seventeenth of this month, they attacked the city through a gate next to the citadel [Vredenburg] and they put up their ladders and climbed the wall. Ten men entered with their Sergeant-major and they made the burghers that were guarding this part of the wall flee. And certainly, they would have succeeded with their plan had not a piece of artillery broken six supports of the ladder, breaking their connection. The soldiers from the citadel fought against them as if they were enemies and they killed up to forty, and wounded an equal number. They retreated from the outside quarters of the city and that night they went to some hamlets on the road to Rhenen with the intention of continuing in the direction of Brabant. But as they did not find boats on the riverside, they changed direction and went to two hamlets in the Duchy of Guelders.215

215 ‘Vinieron al burgo de Utrecht que sta a la puerta de Amsterdam que tiene muro y foso y estavan a la guardia del tres compañias de Alemanes y le assaltaron a do murieron seis dellos y fueron heridos hasta diez. Paso adelante su desatino y quatro dias despues a dezisiete deste dieron el asalto a la tierra por una puerta que sta junto al castillo y arrimaron sus escalas y subieron en el muro y entraron dentro diez con su sargento mayor y hiizieron huyr los burgeses que stavan a la guardia de aquella parte del muro y cierto ellos salieron con su yntento si una pieça de artilleria no les derrribara seis escalas por donde se les rompio el hilo y los soldados del castillo pelearon contra ellos como contra enemigos y assi les mataron hasta quarenta y fueron heridos otros tantos. Reitiraronse luego de los burgos y fueronse aquella noche a unos casares de buelta de Renen [Rhenen] con determinacion de pasar en Brabant, pero como no hallaron barcas en toda la ribera torzieron el camino y vinieron a dos casares del ducado de Gueldres’. Valdés to Alba, Amersfoort, 28 December 1574, AA, C/54, 76, 80.
We can find an extensive description of the events in an Utrecht chronicle, but there Valdés does not play a specific role. We find, however, the story of the good Spaniard, Francisco Fernández Dávila, the governor of the castle who chose the side of the inhabitants of the city against his fellow Spaniards, using his sword to force his soldiers to fire their guns and even threatening to use the cannons of the citadel against the mutineers.216

In a letter from 19 December to Requesens he informed his Captain-general that the mutineers seemed to be pacified, most probably because of the fatal events in Utrecht: “begging me for pardon and promising that they would follow orders”.217 However, they still did not listen to Valdés’s orders so he kept fearing the worst:

But the whole country has revolted against the Spanish name, and it was not considered good that these mutineers travelled across these states. If the mutineers persevere in their evil plans, they will become the cause of great scandals and revolts in all these estates. Because though we have defended the entrance to the city [of Utrecht] with so many deaths of men from our nation, they criticise us and say that we do not kill these Spaniards. The villagers walk around hunting to find them [the Spanish mutineers] on the roads, and with good reason, as these devilish men act in such a manner’.218

By the end of December Valdés had arrived in Maastricht and the whole episode was finally coming to a close.219 By that time, the tone was back to normal again, leaving out the references to fathers and children, and Valdés ended his last letter from this period with a formal “in the service of your graces” (“al servicio de vuestras mercedes”).220 The unsuccessful siege of Leiden was dominated by two successive mutinies in the Spanish army.

216 ‘Utrechtsche kroniek’, 164-185.
217 ‘Pidiéndome perdón y prometiendo que harian lo que les mandasse’. Valdés to Requesens, 19 December 1574, AGS, E. 559, f. 116.
218 ‘Pero esta todo este país tan alterado contra el nombre español que no le parescio era bien atravessassen estados hasta ver ado para esta gente amotinada, la qual si persevera en su malvado propósito temo sea causa de grandes escándalos y alteraciones en todos los estados pues con aver nosotros defendido la entrada de la tierra con muerte de tantos de nuestra nación nos escape las casas y dizen que hazemos que no matamos a estos españoles y el villanaje anda a caza de los que topa por los caminos y a todos les sobra razón pues estos endemoniados proceden de tal manera’. Ibidem.
219 Valdés to Albornoz, Maastricht, 16 January 1575, AA, C/54, 78.
220 Valdés to the ‘muy magníficos señores, electo y soldados del tercio de Ytalia’, Maastricht, 18 February 1575, BZ 106D19.
that – as Valdés explains – were a main cause of the revolt of the people against the Spaniards. The mutiny had not only made it impossible to beat the rebels, but it also turned the whole country against the Spanish soldiers. Though Valdés had tried to minimise the violence of the mutineers against the population, a subsequent mutiny in 1576 would definitively turn the Spanish soldiers into hated men in the eyes of a large part of the population of the Low Countries.

**Final years**

In June 1575 Valdés was successfully besieging the castle of Buren, originally a possession of William of Orange. In a letter he complained about “being again very tired by the pains in my stomach. Too much exercise of the campaign and too much calmness in the trenches, have broken me again and put me in great danger”. His health clearly was a problem now; at around fifty-seven years of age, he was an old and tired officer, already having lived continuously in the Low Countries for almost eight years. In 1575 he also participated with his tercio in the siege of the small Holland town of Oudewater, ending with the terrible sack of that town on 7 August. He was however not the chief commander of the royal army that fought under command of the Lord of Hierges. Again, Valdés did not receive the honour of a victory. At the same time, his personal image was also not stained by the consequent brutal sack, though the Spanish soldiers involved in it were most certainly men from his own tercio.

For these last years of his life we have only a few letters from Valdés to Alba and his secretary, demonstrating a very irregular correspondence between the Duke and his client. On 2 July 1575 he was answering a letter from Albornoz dated 12 March and, as before, the letter is about the situation of his daughter, Francisca, and about payments. The marriage between his daughter and the Portuguese Antonio Brito was still not resolved, and a payment by the Duke to Valdés of 1,500 ducats lacked the official paperwork, and “it is a matter of honour that they cannot charge me with having taken anything without the order of the

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221 Parker, *Felipe II*, 586-587.
222 ‘Estar otra vez muy fatigado de mis dolores destomago que con el demasiado exercitio de la campaña y el sereno de la trinchea me a deribado otra vez y puesto en harto peligro’. Valdés and the captains Pedro de Paz and Diego de Felices to Requesens (copies), Buren, 26 and 27 June 1575, AGS, E. 562, f. 138.
223 Boon, *Oudewater*; Kuijpers, ‘Creation’; Pollmann and Kuijpers, ‘Why remember terror?’. 
Captain-general”. The marriage affair was still playing out in 1578. It seems that De Brito was disinherited by his father, and both the Spanish ambassador and the chaplain of the Portuguese queen became involved in the affair, “one of the strangest you have ever seen”.

When Captain Diego de Felices went to Spain in April 1576, Valdés gave him a letter for the Duke about the situation in the Low Countries, as well as a letter directed to Philip II. In the short note to the King he informed him that he was now staying in Brussels “where I went from Holland because of my bad health” (“ado por mi poca salud vine de Hollanda”), again showing that he suffered from health problems. The letter to Alba was more informative:

The dangerous state in which the things from here are is caused by the length of time it is already in ruins (because of the great necessities that they suffer), and also because of the unexpected death of the Comendador Mayor [Requesens], leaving everything abandoned.

Valdés also realised the importance of the pamphlet campaigns by the rebels and the fact that he used the word ‘yoke’ (jugo) in his letter shows he was perfectly aware of the language of rebellion that could be found in the pamphlets:

This caused the declaration of ruinous intentions and evil desires by some particulars, and especially by the people (populo), not only for the great number of publications (beletines) they have produced, in which they threaten that if they do not sign the

224 ‘Es caso de honrra de que no me puedan ymputar que yo tome cosa alguna sin orden del Capitan-general’. Valdés to Albornoz, Culemborg, 2 July 1575, AA, C/54, 79.

225 ‘Que es de los mas estraños que has visto’, Francisco Cano to Secretary Zayas, Xabregas, 8 August 1578, AGS, E. 395, 136; Juan de Silva to Zayas, Lisbo, 9 May 1578, CD XL (1862) 5-6. I thank Adalid Nievas Rojas (Universidad de Girona) for the reference to Cano’s letter and for providing me with a copy. Antonio’s father, Ambrosio de Brito, came from Madeira, and he is probably the same person as Ambrosio de Brito Pestana who married Ines de Bettencourt. His sister Maria was a lady to Queen Mary of Portugal and married Aleixo de Abreu. In earlier publications I have assumed that the letter from Juan de Silva concerned the commander’s marriage to Magdalena Moons, but it most certainly refers to the marriage affairs of his daughter.

226 ‘Del peligroso estado en que se hallan las cosas de aqui asi por estar ellas mucho ha (a causa de las grandes neçesidades que se padezen) en ruini termino como por que la ynpensada muerte del comendador mayor, dexando todo esto desamparado’. Valdés to Alba, Brussels, 14 April 1576, AA, C/54, 81.
peace there will soon be large movements to be seen, and that they will not give more money, but in their discussions they speak with more and more freedom… It all breathes towards throwing us out of here and getting rid of the yoke, and this design, I do not know to whom of the natives of these states this looks bad. I, my lord, see everything much in need of the appointment of a new governor by His Majesty, because otherwise, I am afraid this building will not fall down in one blow.  

Just as Valdés was writing this letter, news arrived from Spain stating that the Council of State was to govern until the arrival of the new Governor-general:

This has given great satisfaction to the whole country. By God I hope that the spirits of the people will quiet down, although (as Your Excellency knows very well) there is little to trust from a people that so easily changes its opinions (moverse).

His undersigning as the Duke’s servant and creature indicates that Valdés was still thinking in terms of patronage. The same tone can be found in a letter to the Duke from 17 August 1576 from Antwerp, largely written in cipher. He had already written some ten days earlier, but though some people thought things were going better now, he remained very worried: “the people are as armed and agitated as the first day, and the universal voice of the whole country says the Spaniards have to leave”.

The Duke of Aarschot in particular was described as the enemy, exchanging letters with William of Orange. The Duke had used scandalous words, stating for example that “if he [the new Governor-general] came armed,

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227 ‘A dado lugar para que las ruines yntenciónes y malos deseos de algunos particulares se declaren, y principalmente del populo, que no solo por muchos beletines que an hechado, por los quales amenazan que sino hazen las pazes que anhacen los que veran presto grandes movimientos y que no haran mas servicio de dinero, pero en sus platicas dizen cada dia grandes libertades… todo aspira a hecharnos de aqui y a quitarse el jugo y este disigno, no se quien aya en estos estados de los naturales dellos que les parezca mal, yo señor veo esto muy necesitado de que su magestad proveha con toda brebedad de governador, porque de otra manera, temo no caya de golpe este edificio’. Ibidem.

228 ‘Lo qual ha dado gran contentamiento a todo el pais, spero en Dios que se aquietaran mucho los animos del pueblo aunque (como vuestra excelencia mejor sabe) ay poco que fiar del populo que tan facil es ense mover’. Ibidem.

229 Valdés to Alba, Antwerp, 17 August 1576, AGS E. 567, f. 69.

230 ‘Esta el pueblo tan armado y alborotado como el primer dia y la boz universal de todo el pays es que salgan los españoles’. Ibidem.
they would not let him enter because they did not want to suffer any longer what they have suffered until now and they would rather die.”

Aarschot had also affirmed that though the German colonels supported the Spanish, he knew that paying the soldiers would bring them to their side. Closing his letter, after affirming that he had just received one from Alba of 31 July, he still hoped he would get his rewards in the end “if these things quiet down” (“si estas cosas se aquietan”), he being a servant of the Duke of Alba. The hopeful parenthetical expression demonstrates that he had not yet given up all dreams of a peaceful ending of the revolt.

Valdés finally left the Low Countries in 1577, to return quickly when Juan de Austria asked for the support of Spanish soldiers. He would serve as Maestre de campo of the tercio of Sicily under Alexander Farnese, and as such he was involved in the siege and victory of Maastricht in 1579. His career did end with a victory, although not as commander in charge as in Leiden. Lope de Vega’s El asalto de Mastrique por el Príncipe de Parma mentions Valdés several times as an experienced commander: “Francisco de Valdés, anima, enseña, aconseja” (“Francisco de Valdés gives spirit, teaches and gives council”). The old commander, ruined by the war, clearly was in no conditions to fight any more. According to chronicler Alonso Vázquez, during the siege of Maastricht the Duke of Parma got angry with Valdés for leaving his post to have his meal. Valdés replied, “when the King, our lord, sent him to serve under his hand, he perfectly well knew that he could not fight, as he saw him with both arms ruined”. In 1580, he returned to Italy with his tercio, where he died that very same year.

**An exemplary soldier**

The character of this chapter is different from that of the three others, as Francisco de Valdés was not as famous in his own day as Julián, Sancho or Cristóbal, perhaps with the sole exception of the period of the siege of Leiden. Valdés also did not have descendants who would occupy themselves with the preservation of the memory of their family hero, except for a nephew who tried to increase his pay by referring to his

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231 ‘Que si venia armado [the new Governor-general] que no la dexarian entrar porque ya no querian sufrir lo que hasta alli avian sufrido sino morir todos antes’. Ibidem.

232 A short letter from Valdés to Juan de Austria, Antwerp, 13 December 1576, AGS, E. 569, f. 191.

Francisco de Valdés: the exemplary soldier

famous uncle. This means that there are fewer comments on Valdés to be found in the chronicles of the time, and also that much less is known about his life. Fortunately we do have information on Valdés as the author of a military treatise, and the important memory culture of the siege of Leiden has offered the opportunity to describe the fame of this commander in his own time. As Leonor Álvarez Francés has shown, the rather meagre image of the commander could be filled in by different authors depending on the purpose of their own story.

For this reason, the emphasis has been put on Valdés’ experience as reflected through his own letters, and contrasting this image with those that have survived of this commander: on one side, very positive as the husband of Magdalena Moons and the author of the treatise, but we also have the negative portrait of someone who was hated by the nobility of the Low Countries and who wrote that Holland should be flooded.

The first letters that are preserved show a rather ordinary military commander who was fulfilling his job in the Low Countries, seemingly rather bored and describing his long residence in these territories as a banishment. The enemy at first was a military one, a group of rebels that had to be defeated. He made a clear distinction between these rebels and the general population of the Low Countries. After he became involved in the conflict, we can see him even creating a positive image of the good Netherlands, who also wanted to free themselves of the rebels. It will never be clarified whether his amorous relationship with Magdalena Moons had any influence in this respect, but it is, of course, tempting to draw this conclusion, or at least hint at the possibility. Anyway, he seems to have got closer to the local population because of his direct involvement with them as a Spanish commander on the ground who greatly depended on local support.

When it became evident that the siege of Leiden would not produce the success he must have craved, his positive image of the population diametrically reversed, and he became very negative about the Dutch population. The aggressive tone of this later period was not caused by a natural hatred of the Dutch and/or of Protestants, which is generally used as an explanation for the Spanish policy in the Low Countries. In this sense, Valdés is very different from Sancho Dávila, who did have a negative image of Protestants from the very beginning of the rebellion. Francisco de Valdés had tried to behave as a good Christian soldier, and again during the mutiny of his men he tried to reconcile the mutineers and limit their use of violence against the population. It is in this sense that the chapter is headed ‘the exemplary soldier’, as through his treatise
he tried to show how a good soldier should behave, and during his lifetime he actually tried to live up to his standards.

However, this lived experience has little to do with the image of Valdés that was created in Leiden, especially beginning in the eighteenth century. Valdés was then turned into an extra, a walk-on, quietly standing next to Magdalena Moons as the real protagonist of the story. There he loses all colour and becomes the stereotype of a good person. However, this is not at all comparable to the positive image of Cristóbal de Mondragón, who was already seen as remarkably good during his own lifetime, both by other Spaniards and by Netherlanders.

Valdés’ life and letters bring us closer to the lives of many of the other Spanish soldiers in the Low Countries, who were not great and famous commanders like Julián, Sancho and Mondragón, but who mostly did their job as well as possible, but were caught up in a difficult conflict with no easy solution. They continued because they needed to be rewarded, but they kept on begging for a return to Spain. Also in this sense we may call Valdés ‘an exemplary soldier’.