

WARFARE IN MEDIEVAL BRABANT

Sergio Boffa

Warfare in History

**WARFARE IN MEDIEVAL BRABANT
1356–1406**

Warfare in History
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1356–1406

Sergio Boffa

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General Editor's Preface

An English-speaking audience might be considered well aware of military activities in the Low Countries in the fourteenth century. After all, this was the region where Edward III conducted most of his campaigns and where English political and economic concerns were paramount. Although the Duchy of Brabant lay further to the north and west than Flanders, so crucial to England's wool trade, it had other important connections with the kingdom, and military ones at that: Brabançon mercenaries had served Henry II, in the twelfth century, although their fame was comparatively short-lived, and in the fourteenth century this role was reciprocated by men-at-arms and archers drawn from England to serve the duchy's rulers and defend its towns.

Yet there has been no detailed study of the military organization of a territorial unit of this size before, in any language. It is therefore most fortunate that Serge Boffa has made Brabant his focus (as evidenced already by a series of articles on the subject) and now is able to draw his conclusions from a study of the duchy over half a century and more, extending the seminal work of H. J. Hewitt, and his co-linguists J. F. Verbruggen and Claude Gaier. He begins with an overview of military activity during the reigns of Wenceslas and Joan. What is particularly useful about this approach is that enables Boffa to examine many different levels of warfare, ranging from interstate conflict to much lower-level disputes including urban rebellions, ducal campaigns against recalcitrant vassals and internecine conflicts and feuds. This is followed by an overview of how war was conducted in the period, in respect of broader strategy (together with observations on *chevauchée*, the most common form of operations), fortress and siege warfare, guerrilla activities and pitched battles. It is set against the background of often low-level and transitory warfare characterised as *guerre guerroyante*, which entitled war to be represented as ever-present as death, plague and famine, in the popular image of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The latter parts of the book are concerned with structure. Part Two deals with the power and involvement in military affairs of the rulers: initially Wenceslas, but then Joan, with all the problems implied by leadership by an elderly woman. (Joan certainly impressed the chronicler Dynter, though, who accords her this accolade: 'As a woman of great courage, after the manner of a virtuous man, she knew her own mind'.) The section on the constraints placed upon ducal authority is particularly insightful and a welcome corrective to any lingering ideas of a 'feudal pyramid' in territorial principalities. This might create the requirement for the ruler to wage 'private' rather than 'common' war in pursuit of political aims or military necessities. Not that s/he was entirely on his or her own in the matter, as the study of ducal officials shows. The powerful nature of the Estates in an urbanised region led to further restrictions on ducal power, as well as providing important financial reserves.

Boffa's study of the nature and organization of the combatants is equally

rewarding. It serves above all to remind the reader of the variety and complexity of medieval military organization (a point often missed by military historians who confine their studies to the modern world). The role of what he calls the 'nobility and chivalry' of Brabant is set in the context of the contribution of the urban militias and the many specialists. Among this last group he describes the role of artillery, both ducal and urban, showing its increasing importance.

His concluding section deals first with mobilisation, logistics, pay and types of units; there is plenty of fresh material here to help make sense of military operations at a tactical level. Then Boffa explores the nature of traditional obligations and financial inducements which recruited men in to the forces of the duchy and sustained them. Finally, he looks at exemptions from military service (another timeless issue), and considers the size of forces available to the ruler. That the very modest number of 2,500 is considered enough to make a duke 'one of the great rulers of the time' tells us much about the constraints upon his power, most notably exercised by the Estates. Small numbers engaged in warfare do not need to imply limited impact upon wider society, even to the point of its breakdown, as a glance at failing states in the modern world evidences.

Boffa identifies a period of transition (from feudal society to state bureaucracy), and is clear that Brabant in 1400 had not achieved this yet. The nation state, with all its malign implications in the expansion of warfare, still lay in the future. Yet he is keen to point out that the fifteenth century was not an age of decadence, as the equally malign influence of Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages* still encourages people to believe. This thesis has been long refuted, but those outside the field of medieval studies are seldom aware of newer interpretations. Boffa's work makes a valuable contribution to ensuring that historians, and especially military historians, have no excuse to remain ill-informed.

Matthew Bennett
Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

Acknowledgements

Begun in Brussels, continued in Chiba and Rome, it was in Cambridge that my (preliminary) enquiry into the military history of the duchy of Brabant in the later Middle Ages was completed. A long enough trajectory for so small a work- but did not Ulysses spend longer simply in returning home?

I will never forget the moment when the late lamented Professor André Uyttebrouck suggested that I begin a doctoral thesis under his supervision. This was a key moment in my academic career and I regret profoundly that he cannot read this work and criticise it as he could do so well. After the premature loss of this eminent historian, fate placed me under the direction of Professor Claire Billen, and then under the supervision of Professor Peter Spufford, both of them historians of integrity and great competence. It is a remarkable experience to have three different supervisors in succession. The same subject can be analysed in various ways and radically different approaches are suggested. From a strictly methodological point of view, this favours an open mind. It is also a unique opportunity to establish a special relationship with several renowned researchers and to benefit from their knowledge and experience. I cannot thank them enough, especially as they have always supported me with the greatest vigour.

Other people have also helped me, but they are too numerous to all be listed. Even if I do not give their names here, I will always remember their assistance. I should nonetheless mention David Guillardian, Dominique de Paepe and, last but not least, Stephen Wells, without whom I could never have completed this work. Their help was not only valuable, but indispensable. Nor do I forget my dear wife Naoko H., who stoically endured my long waking nights and my many whims and demands for the sake of the completion of my Magnum Opus. It remains for me to thank Professor Mark Blackburn who enabled me to survive in this strange country of “England”, as well as the Guinness brewery, Ensemble Studios for Age of Kings, and the Cambridge University Kendo Society (*Tsurugi-bashi*) who provided me with the leisure and diversions necessary to the completion of so strenuous a task.

My final thoughts are for my father, who, having maintained his strength for long enough to see this work in manuscript, did not live to see the book in print. He will, sadly, not be able to read this work, which I dedicate to his memory.

Sergio Boffa

July 2003, Brussels – Kawasaki – Cambridge

Pour mon Père,
et A. Uyttebrouck,
tous deux, disparus trop tôt . . .

Preface

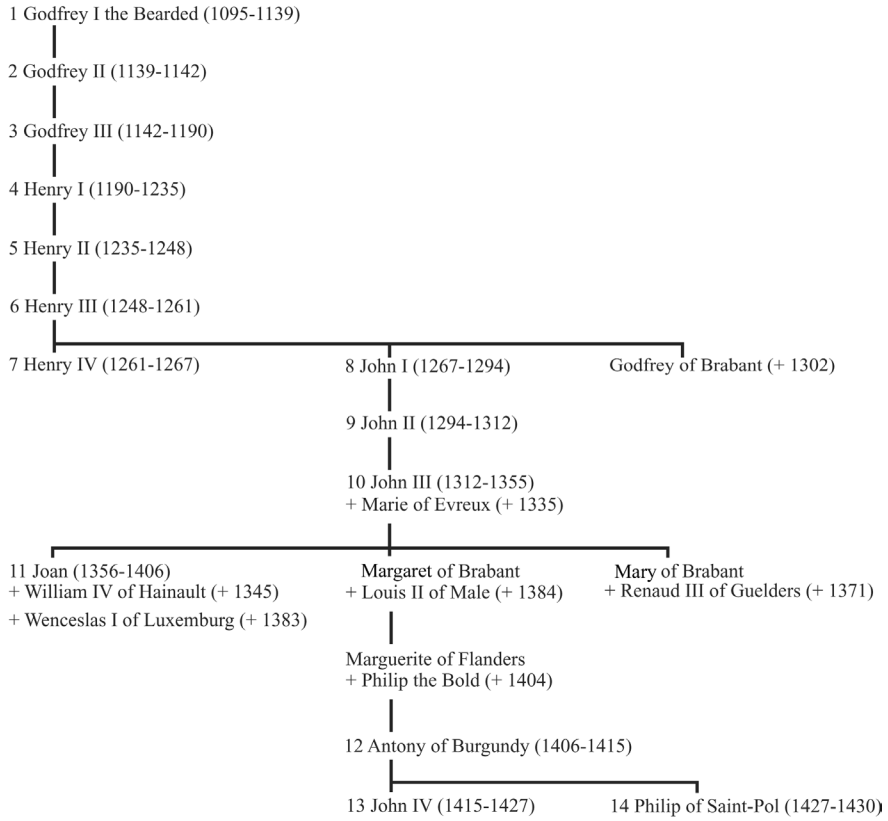
Military history is all too often confused with the traditional history of battles. This discipline therefore receives much less attention nowadays than religious, economic or social history. This is regrettable, as the phenomenon of warfare was part of the everyday life of medieval man. The principal consequence of this rejection is that there exists no detailed study or overview of the military history of the duchy of Brabant. There are only a few monographs, often rather dated, dealing with isolated events such as the battles of Steppes, Worringen and Baesweiler. The duchy of Brabant cuts a pitiful figure in comparison with the county of Flanders or the principality of Liège, which for some decades have benefited from the attention of two excellent historians, Verbruggen and Gaier. With this present work, I hope to fill a part of this void. The history of Brabant is so extensive that it is impossible for me to exhaust the subject in a single book. For this reason, I have restricted myself to the long reign of Joan (1356–1406). To begin with, this was a richly eventful period. The political life was particularly lively as we can observe the political triumph of the three Estates of Brabant and the emergence of the House of Burgundy in the Low Countries. Furthermore, the reign of Joan lies in the midst of the Hundred Years' War. In Brabant as in the neighbouring principalities, the forms of medieval warfare were changing rapidly and deserve a detailed analysis. Finally, fifty years is a period long enough for me to draw some general conclusions from it. I shall not scruple, however, to go beyond these chronological bounds when it seems necessary. It would be a shame not to cite certain remarkable documents anterior or posterior to the events which I am studying. Nonetheless, I shall not go beyond the year 1430, when the duchy was absorbed into the Burgundian domains and underwent major political and institutional reforms. I am fully conscious of not having addressed all the facets of my subject. The limits imposed on this work and the bulk of the records at my disposal oblige me to pass over certain matters, some of them important, concerning medieval warfare. Economic problems are therefore not considered. The sources on this subject are so abundant that another book would have to be devoted to them. Similarly, the complexities of fortifications, the mentality of the combatants and their armament, must all unfortunately be absent from my work. Even so, I believe that I have presented a coherent view of the military organisation of Brabant during the second half of the fourteenth century.

Abbreviations

ADN	Archives départementales du Nord (Lille)
AGN	<i>Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden</i>
AGR	Archives générales du royaume (Brussels)
ASAN	<i>Annales de la Société archéologique de Namur</i>
ASRAB	<i>Annales de la Société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles</i>
AVB	Archives de la ville de Bruxelles
AVL	Archives de la ville de Louvain
BCRALOB	<i>Bulletin de la Commission royale des anciennes lois et ordonnances de Belgique</i>
BCRH	<i>Bulletin de la Commission royale d'histoire</i>
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BM	<i>Belgisch museum voor de nededuitsche tael- en letterkunde en de geschiedenis des vaderlands</i>
BN	<i>Biographie nationale</i>
BR	Bibliothèque royale (Brussels)
BTG	<i>Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis</i>
BY	De Klerk and An., <i>De Brabantsche</i>
CB	Chartes de Brabant
CBrux	<i>Cahiers Bruxellois</i>
CC	Chambre des comptes
CF	Cour féodale de Brabant
CLux	Chartes de Luxembourg
col.	column
CR	Comptes en rouleau
DD	De Dynter, <i>Chronicon</i>
ESB	<i>Eigen schoon en de Brabander</i>
f.	folio
KUL	Katholiek Universiteit Leuven
MA	<i>Le Moyen Age</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica</i>
Mss div.	Manuscripts divers
n.	note
NBW	<i>Nationaal biografisch woordenboek</i>
no	numero
n. st.	new style
PCEEB	<i>Publication du Centre européen d'études bourguignonne (XIV^e–XVI^e s.)</i>
r.	recto
RAG.	Rijksarchief van Gelderland (Arnhem)
RBHM	<i>Revue belge d'histoire militaire</i>
RBN	<i>Revue belge de numismatique</i>
RBPH	<i>Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire</i>
RIHM	<i>Revue internationale d'histoire militaire</i>
RN	<i>Revue du Nord</i>

<i>RUB</i>	<i>Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles</i>
RUG	Rijks Universiteit Gent
s.d.	<i>sine datum</i>
s.l.	<i>sine loco</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Scriptorum</i>
UCL	Université Catholique de Louvain
ULB	Université Libre de Bruxelles
ULg	Université de Liège
v.	verso
VH	Van Heelu, <i>Rymkronyk</i>
vol.	volume

Short genealogy of the house of Leuven/Brabant





Map 1. The Low Countries around 1300



Map 2. The duchy of Brabant in the fourteenth century

Part One

THE EVENTS

1

Military History of the Duchy during the Reigns of Wenceslas of Luxemburg and of Joan (1356–1383)

The war of the succession of Brabant (15 June 1356–4 June 1357)

The succession to John III (December 1355) was a key moment in the history of the duchy, conditioning its course throughout the second half of the fourteenth century.¹ In 1347, the eldest daughter of John III, Joan of Brabant, was promised in marriage to Wenceslas, count of Luxemburg. Their marriage was celebrated a few years later.² At that time, nobody expected Joan to succeed her father. Two of the three sons of John III were still alive at the time of the betrothal, and one at the time of the marriage. Their deaths, first of Henry (d.1349) and then of Godfrey (d.1352), completely altered the situation. For the first time since the twelfth century, the duke of Brabant had no male heir. Of his three daughters, he selected Joan and designated her as his sole heir. He intended thereby to forestall the troubles that might spring from the claims of the husbands of his two younger daughters: Louis of Male, count of Flanders, husband of Margaret of Brabant, and Renaud III, count of Guelders, husband of Mary of Brabant. The duke wished to be sure that his decision would be respected. On 8 March 1355 (n. st.), he assembled the representatives of the principal towns and freeholds, who undertook to remain united and to recognise, after his death, one person alone as sovereign of all his estates.³ On 17 May, the principal feudatories made the same undertaking.⁴ On the death of John III (5 December 1355), Joan and Wenceslas succeeded him; but on 3 January 1356, they were obliged to concede the charter of the *Joyeuse Entrée* in exchange for the support of the duchy.⁵

Louis of Male contested the arrangements made by the late duke and demanded a division of his territories. The new sovereigns of Brabant could not accept this, by virtue of the first article of the *Joyeuse Entrée*; nor could the members of the Estates, owing to their oaths in 1355.⁶ The count remained intransigent and tried underhandedly to seize the seigniory of Malines, which

¹ De Smet, *Mémoire sur les guerres*; Lindemans, 'De oorlogen tusschen Brabant en Vlaanderen'; Laurent and Quicke, 'La guerre de la succession du Brabant'; Blockmans, 'De erfstrijd tussen Vlaanderen en Brabant'.

² Between 16 November 1351 and 20 April 1352 (Wurth-Paquet, 'Table . . . Wenceslas', p. 1; Uyttebrouck, *Le gouvernement*, I, p. 27; Avonds, *Brabant . . . De grote*, pp. 185–7).

³ BY, II, p. 473.

⁴ BY, II, p. 475.

⁵ Van Bragt, *De Blijde*, pp. 20 et seq.

⁶ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, pp. 228–9. On the *Joyeuse Entrée* see Chapter 7.

had been under Brabançon control since the treaties of Saint-Quentin (June 1347).⁷ This enclave within Brabant played an important economic role, as it permitted control of the basin of Rupel and assured commercial relations between Antwerp and the other towns of Brabant. From January 1356, the count entered secretly into negotiations with the Magistracy of the town,⁸ and on 13 April, he had his possession of the seigniorship recognised by the bishop of Liège and the chapter of Saint-Lambert.⁹ This seizure of power was a direct attack on the sovereignty of the duke of Brabant, and relations between the two principalities rapidly declined towards a state of war. The count of Flanders justified this aggression on different grounds entirely: he had not yet received the dowry promised by John III to his wife at the time of their marriage, and for this, he demanded reparations.¹⁰

At the end of the month of May, Wenceslas prepared for the worst, recruiting men-at-arms and reinforcing the fortresses of the duchy.¹¹ On 5 June, Joan and Wenceslas gave up some of their jewels as security against the sum of 15,000 *vieux écus*.¹² The day after, the Estates granted them an extraordinary aid of 450,000 *vieux écus*, to provide means to organise the defence.¹³ On 15 June 1356, Louis of Male declared war,¹⁴ and three days later ordered his troops to invade Brabant, making for the abbey of Affligem.¹⁵ This monastery had been reinforced by a considerable garrison and was an important Brabançon outpost.¹⁶ Rather than lay siege to it and lose the advantage of surprise, the Flemish pushed on into the duchy without delay.¹⁷ Wenceslas and his men advanced rapidly to meet them and the two armies met near the village of Asse on 19 June.¹⁸ As neither the count of Flanders nor the duke of Brabant wished to risk a pitched battle,¹⁹ negotiations were undertaken on the initiative of Wenceslas. It was agreed that to Margaret should be assigned the seigniorship of Malines or some equivalent possessions within Brabant. The count even received secret assurances from the Brabançon negotiators that he would gain possession of the coveted seigniorship.²⁰ Satisfied, Louis of Male retired to his own domains and demobilised his army.²¹

⁷ Laurent, 'Les conventions de Saint-Quentin'; Lucas, 'John III, Duke of Brabant'.

⁸ De Limburg-Stirum, *Cartulaire*, I, pp. 501–2; II, p. 143.

⁹ Bormans and Schoolmeesters, *Cartulaire*, IV, pp. 226–6.

¹⁰ BY, II, p. 545; *Chronicon comitum Flandrensium*, p. 229; *Rymkronyk van Vlaenderen*, p. 848.

¹¹ The first act mentioning the recruitment of men-at-arms dates from 28 May 1356 (AGR, CB, 914).

¹² AGR, Mss div., 383, f. 115–17.

¹³ *Den luyster*, I, p. 137.

¹⁴ BY, II, p. 476.

¹⁵ Van Werveke, *Gentse stads*, pp. 184, 223.

¹⁶ The abbey is even called 'tcaesteel tAffelghem' by Despars, *Cronycke*, II, p. 440.

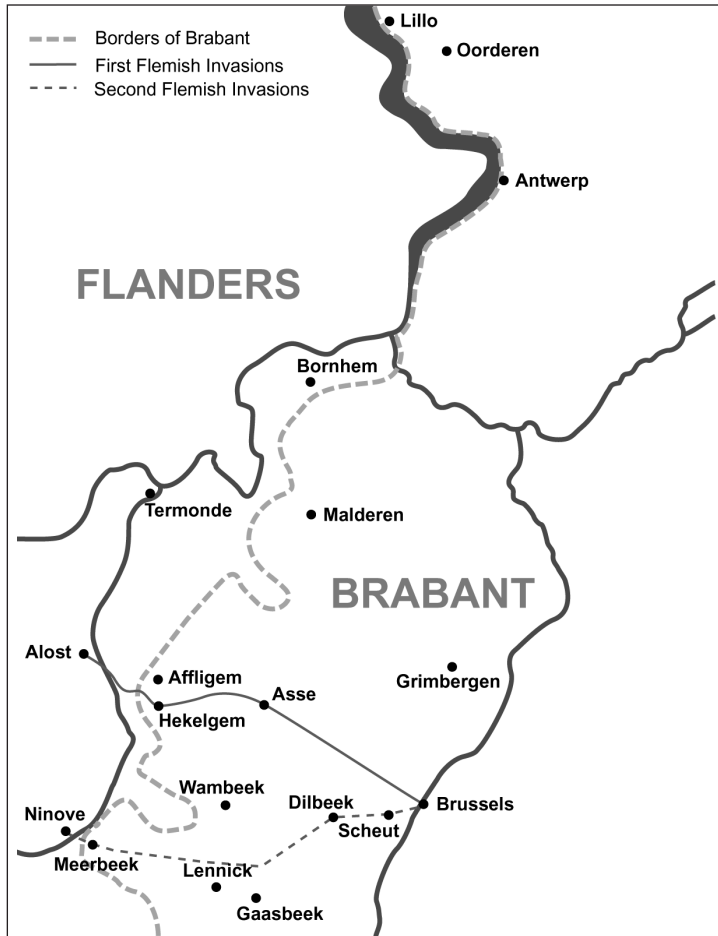
¹⁷ *Breve chronicon*, p. 27.

¹⁸ The presence of the duke at Asse is confirmed by a document dated from that place (AGR, CB, 983).

¹⁹ Butkens, *Les trophées*, I, p. 469.

²⁰ BY, II, pp. 477–80; De Limburg-Stirum, *Cartulaire*, II, p. 155.

²¹ *Breve chronicon*, p. 27; Van Werveke, *Gentse stads*, p. 223; BY, II, p. 481; De Limburg-Stirum, *Cartulaire*, II, p. 147.



Map 3. The war of succession of Brabant (1356–1357) (1)

The peace was short-lived. The duchess and the Magistracies of Brussels and Leuven did not accept the conditions proposed by the count and too easily accepted by Wenceslas. The Brabançon negotiators were arrested and the duke was excluded from the negotiations.²² As Laurent and Quicke remark, this was a ‘véritable coup d’état’.²³ By about 15 July the peace was broken.²⁴ The count of Flanders gathered a new army between Grammont and Ninove.²⁵ In Brabant, the situation was poor. The duke was in conflict with the towns when he needed the support of their militias. To ensure the neutrality of Joan’s other sister during the coming conflict, Joan and Wenceslas offered to Mary of Brabant, on 25 July, the

²² BY, II, p. 416; Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, p. 90.

²³ Laurent and Quicke, ‘La guerre’, pp. 92–3.

²⁴ *Breve chronicon*, p. 27.

²⁵ *Breve chronicon*, p. 28.

freehold of Turnhout and eight other villages and an annual rent of 7,000 *florins*. In exchange, she and her husband were to renounce any claim to the estates of Joan.²⁶

The first skirmishes began at the start of the next month.²⁷ On 7 August, a small Flemish fleet moored before Antwerp and blockaded the Scheldt. About a thousand men-at-arms disembarked and laid siege to the town.²⁸ For three weeks, another flotilla operated before Lillo, destroying the villages of Lillo, Oorderen and Coustelle.²⁹ The second invasion began on 9 August 1356.³⁰ This time, the Flemish pushed further south so as to avoid the abbey of Affligem and attack the capital of the duchy directly. From Ninove they advanced on Brussels, ravaging the seigniorship of Gaasbeek and many small villages.³¹ A Brabançon force under the orders of Gerard, count of Berg, attempted to stop them at Lombeek-Notre-Dame, but had to fall back on Brussels as the enemy were too numerous.³² On 12 August, the Flemish arrived in sight of the capital and took position between Molenbeek-Saint-Jean and Anderlecht,³³ while the Brabançons took position on the plain of Scheut. Should they hazard a pitched battle, or fortify themselves in the city and wait for reinforcements? After a council of war, it was decided to give battle at Scheut on 17 August.³⁴ The day was lost and would be known by the name of *quade woensdag*.³⁵ The Brabançons retreated towards Brussels. The knights, being on horseback while the Flemish army was composed principally of infantry, were largely able to escape from death or capture. An unpleasant surprise was waiting for the refugees. The Bruxellois, wishing to prevent the Flemish entering the city on the tails of the routers, kept the gates of the capital closed. The fugitives therefore headed further south so as to put themselves beyond the enemy's reach. On the next day (18 August), the Magistracy of Brussels decided to surrender. The count of Flanders was recognised as the legitimate lord of the town.³⁶ On 20 August, he made a triumphal entry into Malines,³⁷ and by the end of the month, the most important towns of Brabant had submitted: Leuven³⁸ and Vilvorde³⁹ on the 22nd, Antwerp⁴⁰ and the land of Grimbergen⁴¹ on the 23rd, and Tirlemont,⁴²

²⁶ AGR, Mss div., 1.770, f. 3–5; CB, 926; BY, II, pp. 482–5.

²⁷ *Breve chronicon*, pp. 27–8.

²⁸ Goovaerts, 'La flotte de Louis de Male'; Prims, *Geschiedenis*, III, pp. 15–19, 25–8.

²⁹ *Breve chronicon*, p. 28; Goovaerts, 'La flotte', pp. 45, 48, 56, 57, 58.

³⁰ Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, p. 90; Villani, *Cronica*, III, 6, p. 206; Van Werveke, *Gentse stads*, p. 237.

³¹ *Breve chronicon*, p. 28; Despars, *Cronycke*, II, p. 440.

³² *Breve chronicon*, pp. 28–9.

³³ Villani, *Cronica*, III, 6, p. 206; Despars, *Cronycke*, II, p. 440.

³⁴ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 230; Butkens, *Les trophées*, I, pp. 469–70.

³⁵ Schayes, 'Chronique . . . Rouge-Cloître', p. 87.

³⁶ BY, II, pp. 490–3, 497; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, pp. 231–2.

³⁷ Van Doren and Hermans, *Inventaire*, I, pp. 53–5; II, p. 18; BY, II, pp. 493–5.

³⁸ BY, II, p. 505; DD, III, p. 27; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 232; Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, p. 91.

³⁹ BY, II, pp. 498–9.

⁴⁰ BY, II, pp. 499, 503; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 232; Verachter, *Inventaire*, pp. 48–49; Goovaerts, 'La flotte', pp. 37, 48, 57–8.

⁴¹ BY, II, pp. 501, 505.

⁴² BY, II, p. 502; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 232.

Lierre,⁴³ Halen⁴⁴ and Léau⁴⁵ on the 24th. Only Maastricht, 's Hertogenbosch and Nivelles remained loyal to Wenceslas, and that last was shortly to fall into enemy hands.⁴⁶ The remote position of the other two places explains why they were not disquieted.⁴⁷ The count of Flanders also demanded the principal Brabançon lords should pay him homage, and many obeyed him, although significant numbers did remain faithful to Joan and Wenceslas.⁴⁸

The Flemish military offensive was partnered with a diplomatic offensive. On 17 August, an alliance was concluded between Louis of Male and Engelbert of La Mark, bishop of Liège.⁴⁹ Some days later, he defied Joan and Wenceslas⁵⁰ and on 21 August, the first Liégeois troops attacked Brabant.⁵¹ William I, count of Namur and rival to Wenceslas for the possession of the domains of Mirwart, Orchimont, Lomppez, Villance, etc.,⁵² seized the opportunity. On 18 August, he struck the south of Brabant.⁵³ Shortly afterwards, however, on 24 August, Louis of Male asked them to cease the warlike preparations as he now had the control of the duchy.⁵⁴ This control rapidly proved illusory, since as the Flemish militias wished to return home, Louis of Male could place only small garrisons in the conquered areas and had no real occupying force.⁵⁵ The count of Flanders lacked leverage over the Brabançon towns, which began to regret Joan and Wenceslas.⁵⁶

After Scheut, the remnants of the Brabançon army regrouped at Leuven. The duke could not remain there as the townspeople reproached him for the defeat and announced that they intended to surrender.⁵⁷ Wenceslas departed to rejoin his brother, the king of the Romans, while a large number of knights returned to the duchy of Limburg or to the lands of Outre-Meuse.⁵⁸ Joan did not accompany her husband. She took shelter in her dower lands of Binche, where she remained for one month.⁵⁹ Then, at the end of September, she arrived at 's Hertogenbosch,

⁴³ BY, II, p. 500.

⁴⁴ BY, II, p. 502.

⁴⁵ BY, II, p. 501.

⁴⁶ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 232; De Rivo, *Gesta*, p. 7; D'Outremeuse, *Chronique*, p. 186.

⁴⁷ This is also the case for Diest, Heusden, Grave, Limburg, Dalhem, Wassenberg, Rolduc, Sprimont and Kerpen, which the count of Flanders summoned to pay him homage (BY, II, pp. 514–15).

⁴⁸ BY, II, pp. 506–14, 515–16; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 233.

⁴⁹ BY, II, pp. 487–90; Schoonbroodt, *Inventaire*, p. 215; De Limburg-Stirum, *Cartulaire*, II, pp. 480–2; Bormans and Schoolmeesters, *Cartulaire*, IV, pp. 243–6.

⁵⁰ D'Outremeuse, *Chronique*, p. 185.

⁵¹ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 235; De Rivo, *Gesta*, p. 7; D'Outremeuse, *Chronique*, pp. 186–7; Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, p. 91; *Annales Floreffenses*, p. 629.

⁵² Bertholet, *Histoire*, preuves, p. XXXIX; Balon, 'L'organisation', pp. 62–3.

⁵³ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 235; Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, p. 91; *Annales Floreffenses*, p. 629.

⁵⁴ Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, pp. 91–2.

⁵⁵ Van Werveke, *Gentse stads*, p. 237; *Breve chronicon*, p. 30.

⁵⁶ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, pp. 232–3.

⁵⁷ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 232; D'Outremeuse, *Chronique*, p. 185.

⁵⁸ Huber, *Die Regesten*, p. 202.

⁵⁹ D'Outremeuse, *Chronique*, p. 185; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 231.



Map 4. The war of succession of Brabant (1356–1357) (2)

which was still faithful to the Brabançon cause.⁶⁰ There she represented the legitimate government of ‘free’ Brabant. On 6 October, she informed Leuven and Brussels that the king of the Romans supported Wenceslas and that an army was coming to liberate Brabant.⁶¹ Hope revived little by little and many lords openly declared themselves on the duchess’ side.⁶² On 24 October, Everard t’Serclaes, a patrician of Brussels, and a few companions in arms entered the capital by night, hauled down the enemy flag and set the Brabançon standard flying over Brussels once again. This daring action impressed the populace, who rose in revolt and put the Flemish garrison to flight. It took only five days for the

⁶⁰ AGR, CB, 932 bis; Piot, ‘Renseignement’, p. 190.

⁶¹ BY, II, p. 516; AGR, CB, 936, 937, etc. Jean le Bel estimates their strength at ‘bien mille ou XII^c armeures de fer’ (Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 235).

⁶² BY, II, pp. 510–13.

other towns of the duchy to follow suit. At the end of October, the duke of Brabant was able to write to his brother that the whole duchy had been liberated except for the seigniorship of Malines.⁶³ Winter approached and the weather worsened. Both sides took to skirmish warfare as it was no longer possible to undertake large-scale military operations at this time of year.⁶⁴ The Brabançons successfully harassed the county of Namur⁶⁵ and, on 26 November 1356, a truce of one month was agreed.⁶⁶ On 6 February 1357, the count of Namur undertook no longer to wage war on Brabant except as a vassal of the count of Flanders, whom he would serve with only a restricted number of men-at-arms.⁶⁷ Abandoned by his allies, the count of Flanders did not admit defeat. The war continued, but in an episodic manner, without the raising of large troops, without major *chevauchées* and without any important battles. This state of affairs could have persisted indefinitely, but the Brabançons wished to find a solution rapidly.

Joan and Wenceslas appealed to William of Bavaria, count of Hainault and of Holland. On 29 March 1357 (n. st.), he declared himself on the side of Brabant in exchange for being enfeoffed with the seigniorship of Heusden. This alliance was strengthened on 12 April by the promise of mutual aid to the extent of 1,000 knights and 8,000 foot soldiers.⁶⁸ The duke appeared ready to mount an offensive when, on 5 May, William of Bavaria suddenly changed sides. He offered to support Louis of Male and even to fight alongside him if a peaceful solution could not be found.⁶⁹ Trapped, Joan and Wenceslas accepted the idea of arbitration by the count of Hainault, and on 1 June, they swore to carry out his judgement.⁷⁰ On 4 June, peace was concluded and the war of the succession of Brabant was over.⁷¹ The peace was entirely favourable to the count of Flanders. The seigniorship of Malines was ceded to him and became an independent enclave within Brabançon territory. As he had not yet received his wife's dowry, Margaret was granted the fief of the town of Antwerp and its dependencies. This was a severe blow for Brabant as, although the territories were held in fief from the duke, they nonetheless disappeared totally from the life of the duchy between 1357 and 1406.⁷² In exchange, Louis of Male recognised Joan's legitimate right to the duchy. However, as the towns of Brussels, Leuven, Nivelles and Tirlemont, as well as a certain number of nobles, had recognised him as duke of

⁶³ DD, III, p. 29; De Rivo, *Gesta*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 237.

⁶⁵ Von Northof, *Die Chronik*, p. 92; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, pp. 237–8; DD, III, p. 29; D'Outremeuse, *Chronique*, p. 186.

⁶⁶ Wurth-Paquet, 'Table . . . Wenceslas', p. 42.

⁶⁷ Bertholet, *Histoire*, VII, preuves, pp. 20–1; Le Bel, *Vraies*, I, p. 240. Balon is mistaken in presenting a list of about forty foreign vassals who had to serve the count on this occasion. I find therein several Brabançons including John of Leefdaal and Gerard of Rotselaar, lord of Vorselaar and marshal of the duke of Brabant. It is not likely that these would have fought against Joan and Wenceslas (Balon, 'L'organisation', pp. 35–6).

⁶⁸ BY, II, p. 535; Van Mieris, *Groot*, II, p. 867.

⁶⁹ Van Mieris, *Groot*, III, p. 21; BY, II, pp. 536–41; Devillers, *Cartulaire*, I, p. 499.

⁷⁰ BY, II, pp. 542–3; Van Mieris, *Groot*, III, p. 23.

⁷¹ BY, II, pp. 543–8.

⁷² Uyttebrouck, *Le gouvernement*, I, pp. 47–8.

Brabant and he had taken this title only at their request, he continued to bear the title throughout his lifetime. Apart from the territories gained by Flanders, let us recall that the freehold of Turnhout was held in fief by Mary of Brabant and her husband and that the castle, town and lands of Heusden had been ceded in fief to William of Bavaria. Brabant thus emerged much reduced from this conflict.

**Peter Coutereel and the popular uprisings
in the town of Leuven (1360–64, 1378–83 and 1387)**

In the fourteenth century, Brabant was much less troubled by democratic or popular movements than were its neighbours, Flanders and Liège.⁷³ We can identify a few attempts at insurrection but these crises were only momentary. Only the town of Brussels in 1303–1306 underwent any great disturbance.⁷⁴ This is easily explained. Traditionally, the dukes of Brabant had always supported the patricians, but at the death of John III, the situation changed radically. Wenceslas declared himself the adversary of this privileged class, which tried to govern the city without regard for the wishes of the prince. He was not at all accustomed to such an attitude as the duchy of Luxemburg had no such powerful and semi-autonomous towns. Furthermore, the towns had imposed the *Joyeuse Entrée* on him, and their behaviour during the war of the succession of Brabant had been worse than dubious: they refused a peace treaty agreed by Wenceslas; after the defeat at Scheut, Brussels closed its doors to him; Leuven insisted he leave the city; the principal towns of the duchy offered scant resistance to the enemy, and so on. Wenceslas thus had good reason to be angry with them. Wisely, the duke did not attack their power directly, but rather remained a spectator to the internecine discord that weakened them.

I shall not give an account here of the troubles that disturbed the government of the town of Leuven between 1360 and 1387. Although their significance for the social and institutional history of Brabant is great, from the military point of view we find nothing but a few shows of force by Wenceslas. The duke camped his army under the walls of Leuven in October 1361, February 1363, January 1380 and December to January 1382. What is more, the most interesting period – the government of Peter Coutereel – has been the subject of several excellent works. Let us simply note that Wenceslas profited greatly from the internecine discord of the people and lineages of Leuven. The patricians were humiliated before the duke and he extracted enormous sums of money, destined to help defray the costs of the war of the succession of Brabant. It was commonly said in Brabant in the fourteenth century that in less than one year the duke had obtained more money from the city of Leuven than if he had sold the city and its lands outright.⁷⁵

⁷³ Pouillet, *Mémoire sur Pierre Coutereel*; Sermon, *Geschiedenis van Peeter Coutherele*; Van Uytven, 'Peter Couthereel en de troebelen'; Van Uytven, 'Plutokratie in de 'oude democratieën' '.

⁷⁴ Bonenfant, 'Le premier gouvernement démocratique'.

⁷⁵ DD, III, p. 54; BY, II, p. 175.

The revolt of the trades of Brussels (22 July 1360)

The revolt of the artisans in Brussels in July 1360 is explicable in terms of a number of factors.⁷⁶ To begin with, the economic situation in the city of Brussels was disastrous. In the course of the fourteenth century the town had extended large subsidies to the dukes of Brabant for war expenses. This expenditure weighed heavily on the treasury of Brussels and the Bruxellois were loaded down with taxes.⁷⁷ This situation influenced the plebs, naturally hostile to the patricians from among whom the members of the Magistracy were recruited. Secondly, the Flemish occupation of 1356 caused internal conflicts between the lineages of Brussels. The friends of the count were opposed to the friends of the duke and the patrician class was clearly divided.⁷⁸ By contrast, the commoners had remained distrustful of the Flemish. To reward their loyalty, Wenceslas granted them a part in the government of the town. It was at the end of 1356 or in the first days of 1357 that the plebeians took a place in the government.⁷⁹ This gain was only temporary and from 1359 the patricians once more governed the city alone.⁸⁰ The commoners must have dreamed of regaining the power they had recently lost, and the action of Peter Coutereel in Leuven was surely an example for the Bruxellois. Financial distress, division among the patricians, humiliation of the commons and the appearance of a charismatic leader; everything was in place for disaster.

If none of our sources indicate that Peter Coutereel played a role in the preparations for the uprising in Brussels, the facts speak for themselves. In Leuven, the commoners seized power on the evening of 21 July. The uprising in Brussels took place the next day. The common accord among the artisans should not surprise us. Also in 1360, popular uprisings broke out in Antwerp.⁸¹

Initially, the artisans of Brussels were to take up arms on 23 July. However, the patricians learned of their belligerent intentions, and in the middle of the night they gathered in arms before the town hall. Gerard of Rotselaar, lord of Vorselaar, who had been at Leuven the previous day where he had perhaps learned of the existence of a conspiracy in the capital, had hastened to inform the Magistracy of Brussels. After taking counsel, it was agreed to search out the leaders of the insurrection and to call the powerful corporation of the butchers before the *échevins*. Menacingly, the butchers refused to obey and replied that they would come when they had time. The uprising was not general but limited to the butchers, fullers and weavers. The latter joined the fight by attacking the *Steenporte*, a part of the first city wall.⁸² On hearing this news, the patricians

⁷⁶ Boffa, 'Réflexions sur la révolte des métiers bruxellois'; Henne and Wauters, *Histoire*, I, pp. 125–8; Favresse, *L'avènement*, pp. 107–19.

⁷⁷ Favresse, 'Documents', pp. 111–12; Dickstein-Bernard, *La gestion*, pp. 112–15.

⁷⁸ BY, II, pp. 508–10; Smolar-Meynart, 'Ducs de Brabant et lignages bruxellois'.

⁷⁹ BY, II, pp. 524–33.

⁸⁰ DD, III, pp. 52–3; BY, II, p. 166; *Die alder excellenste*, f. 153 r.; *Anonymi, sed veteris*, p. 94; Favresse, 'Documents', pp. 132–9.

⁸¹ Van Acker, *Antwerpen*, p. 101.

⁸² Wauters, Demeter and Wasseige, *La première enceinte de Bruxelles*; Debonne, Gautier, Olivier and Purcar, *Bruxelles, la première enceinte*.