Henry Kamen – 'Spain 1469–1714 A Society in Conflict'

and the ships and galleys', and later from Lisbon (April 1582) 'how much pleasure I get from your letters and the news you give of Aranjuez, and what I most miss is the singing of the nightingales, which I have not heard this year, since this house is far from the countryside'.

His absence raised serious problems in Madrid, where Granvelle had been left in control since Philip's departure in March 1580 to join the army in Extremadura. Granvelle being a supporter of a vigorous war policy in the north of Europe, his emphasis on the affairs of the Netherlands caused disagreement with Castilians who were more worried about security in the Mediterranean. Shortly after Philip came back in 1583, the experienced diplomat Juan de Zúñiga y Requesens, younger brother of the late commander in the Netherlands, returned from Naples and became the focus of opposition to the cardinal; he was also made governor to prince Philip. Granvelle's star began to wane, and the king came to rely increasingly on Cristóbal de Moura for advice. When he died in September 1586, aged nearly 70, the cardinal felt isolated and disillusioned.

In the autumn of 1585 the king, overburdened by paperwork, agreed to allow some administrative matters to be discussed not in full council but in an informal committee that met in the evening, before dinner, and was consequently called the *Junta de Noche*. The committee consisted of Zúñiga (d. November 1586), Moura, Idiáquez, the count of Chinchón, and Mateo Vázquez as secretary. Idiáquez dealt with foreign policy, Chinchón with Aragon and Italy, Moura with finance and Portuguese affairs, Vázquez with Castilian affairs in general. Their deliberations were meant to speed up and not be a substitute for council government. The new grouping, which was active to the very end of the reign (Vázquez died in 1591 and was replaced by Idiáquez's cousin Martín de Idiáquez), has been called Philip's 'second ministry'. It did not consist of great nobles but of experienced administrators from the lower nobility, who were for the most part free of the clan alliances that split Éboli and the house of Alba; this made it possible for men like Moura and Idiáquez to work together. But there was another fundamental difference between the two generations. Granvelle and his aristocratic predecessors, notably Alba, had direct knowledge of European war and peace and related this to their own vision, one essentially inherited from Charles V, of Spain's role in the world. Philip's later ministers, although experienced and well trained (Idiáquez continued the traditions of Granvelle), were inclined to judge international policy from the fixed viewpoint of the peninsula; and the king, it seemed, shared their views. Serving soldiers were particularly vociferous critics of this, and blamed the Armada defeat, for example, on the civilian planners. 'Things

must go ill', a leading general and councillor of state – Hernando de Toledo, natural son of Alba – told the Venetian ambassador in 1589, 'when all decisions are made by those with no experience': he added that Moura had never been outside the peninsula, and Idiáquez had never been in battle.

The accumulating problems of government reached their apogee in 1596, the year of Philip's last big bankruptcy and the first ominous year of the plague that devastated Spain for some five years. After settling the problems of Aragon in 1591, Philip began to cut down his work commitments and ceased to travel any distance; he now suffered from recurrent poor health because of gout, and arthritis tended to confine him to his chair. From the end of 1595 state business, as well as the signing of papers, was assigned more and more to the infante Philip. One of the king's last major decisions was the granting of autonomy to the southern Netherlands, in a measure signed by the infante in May 1598. The Netherlands were to be ruled jointly by the infanta Isabella and by the king's nephew archduke Albert of Austria, who were married in Valencia in April 1599. In the summer of 1598 Philip managed to travel to the Escorial, where he died on 13 September at the age of 71, after a long and painful illness.

Foreign policy 1559–1598

In policy and outlook Philip was the direct heir of his father, though there were substantial differences between the two over detail and method. For both, the war against heresy and against the Turks was fundamental, 'peace with Christians and war against the infidel' being a principle repeated ritually since the days of the Catholic Monarchs. The priority given by Philip to religion, however, was never absolute. It would be an error to judge his policy solely by the statement he made in 1566 through his ambassador in Rome, informing the pope that 'I would prefer to lose all my dominions and a hundred lives if I had them, because I do not wish to be lord over heretics'. The declaration was made specifically to impress the pope, who at that time was criticising the king for doing nothing to control heresy among his subjects in the Netherlands.

The division of the German from the Mediterranean lands by Charles V created major problems of adjustment for Spain. The emperor had been able to draw on German credit, soldiers and princes to back up his continent-wide strategy. Philip, by contrast, was obliged to build Spain up into a world power almost from scratch; with what success we shall see presently. Fortunately, the monarchy as bequeathed by Charles –

essentially, the empire of the Catholic Monarchs together with the Burgundian inheritance and Milan – seemed to have ample resources, and the diplomatic service as developed under the emperor was the finest in Europe. Even so, after the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis Spain was far from being an aggressive power. The Venetian ambassador observed (1559) that Philip's aim was 'not to wage war so that he can add to his kingdoms, but to wage peace so that he can keep the lands he has'.

From 1559 to 1566 Spain's history was concerned almost exclusively with the Mediterranean. In the north the marriage with Elizabeth of Valois assured an understanding with France which Philip did his best to maintain. France, however, had problems. Rivalry between the Guise party and the Huguenot nobles, rapidly destabilised politics there and led in 1562 to the massacre at Vassy, which in turn precipitated a generation of civil war. Though they were leaders of the Catholic interest, Philip distrusted the Guises, who were led by the duke of Guise and the cardinal of Lorraine. The dynastic ambitions of the Guises centred on their kinswoman Mary Stuart, queen of Scots, queen of France in 1559 as wife of Francis II and Catholic claimant to the throne of England. A union of the three nations under Stuart and Guise rule could seriously threaten Spain's security. Philip therefore emerged as protector of the English queen, blocking attempts by Rome to excommunicate her in 1561 and 1563. By this date the Protestant nature of Elizabeth's admin-istration was becoming clear, and there was a further threat in a possible alliance between the English and the French Protestants. Spain objected to English intervention in the early stages of the French civil wars, and in a famous meeting at Bayonne in 1565 Elizabeth of Valois and Alba pressed on Catherine de' Medici the need to act more firmly against heresy in France.

These were years of Turkish military activity in the western Mediterranean. A Spanish expedition to recapture Tripoli, led by the duke of Medinaceli and admiral Gian Andrea Doria, was caught in 1560 on the island of Djerba: 28 galleys were sunk and 10,000 troops were forced to surrender. The disaster forced Philip into a complete overhaul of his forces, which enabled him to react positively to the next major Turkish onslaught, the siege of Malta in 1565. Heroically defended by the Knights of St John, two of the island's fortresses held out from May to September until relieved by a Spanish force. Hailed as a significant victory, the relief made it possible for Philip to turn his attention to the growing problems of the north.

During his visit to the Netherlands (1555–9) Philip had had first-hand experience of the independent spirit of the 17 provinces and the

ambitions of their nobility, led by William prince of Orange. Disputes in the government, which was directed by Philip's half-sister Margaret duchess of Parma, divided the nobles against the professional administrators headed by Granvelle. In 1564 the king agreed reluctantly to Granvelle's dismissal, but opposition then centred on the proposal to reform the episcopate of the Netherlands by creating more bishops and strengthening the heresy laws. Egmont returned from a visit to Madrid in 1565 with the impression that Philip had agreed to relax the persecution of heretics, but the king had never even entertained the possibility. Early in 1566 the higher aristocracy went on strike by resigning their offices, and a group of the lower nobility (many of them Calvinist in sympathy, whom an official denounced as 'beggars') demanded religious freedom and the suppression of the Netherlands Inquisition (established by the pope in 1522 at the request of Charles V). The baron de Montigny was sent to Madrid in the summer of 1566 to try and obtain concessions from Philip over toleration of dissent, and over the role of the chief nobles in the Brussels government. Though the king made a few concessions, they were overtaken by events. In August mobs of Calvinists ranged through the major cities of the Netherlands, desecrating churches and smashing images.

A military solution became inevitable. Alba left Spain in April 1567 and took the Spanish Road to the north, arriving in Brussels in August at the head of 10,000 troops. Counts Egmont and Hornes were arrested, and executed a year later; William of Orange fled the country. A special tribunal called the Council of Troubles (nicknamed the 'council of blood' by Netherlanders) judged those detained: well over one thousand people were executed over the next few months. In Spain Montigny was arrested and eventually garrotted in October 1570 in the castle of Simancas, after a secret trial. The king intended to visit the country to complete the pacification but this never materialised.

Spanish occupation of the Netherlands stirred the fears of both people and government in England, and in 1568 relations between England and Spain approached breaking point, first with a clash between Sir John Hawkins and Spanish vessels in the harbour of San Juan de Ulúa (Vera Cruz) in Mexico in September, and then with the provocative seizure in the Channel of the duke of Alba's pay-ships by Elizabeth in November. Philip II was also profoundly preoccupied with the Don Carlos problem and the Morisco uprising at the end of the year. The sudden turn for the worse of his relationship with all the major powers, including France, made 1568 one of the most critical years of his reign.

The death of Suleiman the Magnificent in September 1566 has been taken to mark the end of the great period of Ottoman expansion, but the military threat to the Christian west continued to be very real. Spain felt the menace most directly through the wars in Granada in 1569–70, which forced it into military conflict in the Mediterranean at the very time that new and potent quarrels were emerging in the north. Awareness of Spain's overstretched capacity made Alba refuse to exploit the situation in England, allowing the northern earls there to rise hopelessly against Elizabeth in 1569. Spanish attention was now almost wholly absorbed with the Turks, whose threat to Cyprus galvanised Venice and the pope (Pius V) into organising a Holy League, agreed upon in May 1571. Spain was given command of the planned expedition, appointed Don Juan of Austria as commander and paid a substantial proportion of the costs. On 7 October the two great fleets encountered each other in the gulf of Lepanto, off Greece; there were 208 Turkish galleys against 203 Christian. On the Turkish side the commander, Ali Pasha, was killed; nearly all the galleys were destroyed or captured; and there were 30,000 casualties and 3,000 prisoners. The Christians lost 15 galleys and 8,000 dead. It was a resounding victory whose glory echoed through Christian Europe but failed to check the Turks, who a year later put another similar fleet to sea.

Though there was a continuing commitment to the Mediterranean (Tunis was briefly re-occupied by Don Juan in 1573), for the next few years from 1572 to 1579 Spain was sucked relentlessly into the maelstrom of the Netherlands. Alba's proposal to impose a new tax, the 'tenth penny', aroused universal protest and fortified the opposition of those, both Catholic and Protestant, who wished to see their country free from foreign occupation. In April 1572 the 'Sea Beggars' were turned out from England, where they had taken refuge from Alba, and returned to seize the port of Brill, which became a base for patriotic resistance against Spain. The rapid success of the largely Calvinist Beggars in winning the northern provinces and electing William of Orange as their leader, opened the second and most decisive phase of the revolt of the Netherlands. In France the influential voice of admiral Coligny, the Huguenot leader who was now prominent in the royal council, called for French intervention in support of the rebels. The massacre of St Bartholomew in August 1572, engineered by Catherine de' Medici for domestic reasons, conveniently removed Coligny and the threat from France.

The failure of Alba to stem rebel successes in the Netherlands forced Philip to recall him in 1573 and appoint Luis de Requesens. A new policy of moderation was tried. Its failure, and Requesens's death in March 1576, was followed by the appointment of Don Juan of Austria as governor. But the Spanish government declared a bankruptcy in 1575 and was unable to pay its soldiers in northern Europe. As a result the troops mutinied and in November 1576 sacked the great commercial city of Antwerp at a cost of some 8,000 lives and a great amount of property. This 'Spanish Fury' confirmed the resolution of the 17 provinces, assembled at Ghent in the States General, to decide their own destiny. That same month they negotiated a general peace (the Pacification of Ghent), and demanded of Philip that he accept the current religious position and withdraw all Spanish troops as the precondition for a settlement. Don Juan was forced to accept and in February 1577 issued a Perpetual Edict and withdrew the army. The Calvinists, however, failed to respect the religious truce. In retaliation Don Juan recalled the army under Alexander Farnese, prince of Parma, and in 1578 at Gembloux defeated the army of a Netherlands now wholly united in revolt under William of Orange. Don Juan died in October and was replaced by Farnese: the affairs of the north were now in chaos.

From 1579, with the change in ministry at Madrid, fortunes improved. Granvelle gave his full support to the programme of Farnese, who in May 1579 by the Union of Arras won over the southern Catholic provinces to a firm alliance with Spain and in June captured the rebel fortress of Maastricht. (The northern provinces formed the Union of Utrecht under the leadership of Orange; in 1581 they eventually renounced the sovereignty of Philip II and for a brief while elected the duke of Anjou as their ruler.) Successes in the Netherlands were complemented by the successful annexation of Portugal. Spain at the end of 1580 could feel it was at the height of its imperial power. The city of Manila in the Philippines was firmly settled, viceroy Toledo had overcome Inca resistance in Peru, expeditions were moving up from Mexico into what is now the southern United States, in the La Plata area the city of Buenos Aires was refounded (1581). From 1580, with his outpost on the Atlantic at Lisbon, Philip II turned Spain away from the Mediterranean at the same moment that the Turks turned away from western expansion. Conflict continued sporadically but total Christian–Muslim confrontation came to an end. The king now devoted all his resources to the wholly new aim of making Spain an Atlantic power, one that would be capable of protecting the bullion routes from America, restraining the ambitions of England and returning the Dutch rebels to obedience.

Diplomatic activity for the rest of the reign was centred on northern Europe. English involvement in Drake's piratical expeditions, in the

schemes of Antonio of Crato, and in Dutch affairs, made Philip more amenable to negotiating with Mary Queen of Scots, a virtual prisoner in England since 1568. In consequence, ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza was expelled from London in January 1584 for implication in the Throckmorton Plot. In July 1584 William of Orange was murdered (he had been outlawed by Philip in 1580), a month after the death by consumption of Anjou. The Dutch rebels were left without an internationally recognised leader. Meanwhile Farnese's army swept victoriously through the central Netherlands: in March 1585 he recovered Brussels and in August Antwerp; all the major cities were now back in Spanish control. To make sure that France would not intervene again, Philip at the end of 1584 had recognised the importance of the Guises and the Catholic League by coming to a secret agreement whereby they would support the Catholic cause in the Netherlands in return for Spanish subsidies. Then in May 1585 he warned off England by seizing all English ships in Spanish ports in retaliation for English piracies. The move angered English opinion and enabled Elizabeth to advance to a position of open war. In August 1585 by the treaty of Nonsuch she agreed to send some 6,000 men under the earl of Leicester to help the Dutch. A fleet of 25 warships was also entrusted to Drake, who began by attacking Vigo and then went off to the West Indies where he sacked Santo Domingo and Cartagena.

Philip now agreed with his advisers that a direct invasion of England was necessary. A key feature of the plan was to have been the proclamation of Mary of Scots as queen; but her negotiations with Spain were exposed in the Babington plot (1586), which led inexorably to her execution in 1587. The preparations for the 'enterprise of England' went ahead despite continual setbacks. In February 1588 the appointed admiral, Santa Cruz, died and was replaced by the duke of Medina-Sidonia. Quite apart from battle logistics the success of the great Armada depended on two things: the ability of Farnese in the Netherlands to provide a deep-water port where the galleons might take on the army of Flanders and supplies; and the immobilisation of France so that it could not interfere in the Netherlands while Farnese's men were in England. The second condition was soon met. Backed by Spain, the Guises took over Paris in the Day of Barricades (May 1588) and made Henry III in effect a prisoner of the Catholic League. 'The French king will be unable to assist the English in any way', Bernardino de Mendoza wrote with satisfaction to Philip II. The first requirement proved disastrous. The juncture between Medina-Sidonia's galleons, when they sailed up the Channel in July, and the troops of Farnese never took place. English and Dutch vessels patrolled the

shallow waters through which Farnese had hoped to get his men out on barges; his army was pinned down. At sea the galleons were rapidly outnumbered and then out-gunned by the English who, with the help of fire ships and the wind, forced the Armada to flee into the North Sea and return to Spain around the coasts of Scotland and Ireland. About 40 out of 68 vessels were destroyed, perhaps 15,000 men perished. A Spanish contemporary considered it to be a disaster that: 'lost us respect and the good *reputación* among warlike people which we used to have'. It was not the end of Philip's resources. He sent a fleet against the port of Brest in 1596, and another armada against England in 1597; but both were scattered by the weather. The Armada defeat encouraged Henry III in France to act against the duke and cardinal of Guise, who were assassinated on his orders; though he himself was murdered in August 1589 by a mad monk. This left Henry, king of Navarre, a Protestant, as heir to the throne.

'The affairs of France', Philip wrote to Farnese in 1589, 'are at this moment the principal thing'. The dominant view in Madrid was that a Protestant king of France would inevitably help the Dutch rebels, and that the best way to preserve the Netherlands was to help the Catholic League by invading France. There was bitter opposition to this strategy by Farnese and other advisers both in Brussels and Madrid. As time proved, they were right, for military intervention in France seriously prejudiced any chances of success in the Netherlands. In 1590 Farnese crossed into France with the army of Flanders and relieved Paris, then being besieged by Henry of Navarre; other Spanish troops marched into Brittany and Languedoc. But by 1591 the situation, far from improving, began to worsen. Expenditure on war had reached an all-time peak. A revolt broke out in Aragon, fomented by Antonio Pérez, and Philip had to raise an army in Castile to deal with it. Then in Holland the Dutch found a new and able commander, Orange's son Maurice of Nassau, who during the absence of the Flanders army in France launched a vigorous campaign in 1591 and captured several major towns.

Farnese died in December 1592, the last of Philip's great generals. In 1593 Henry of Navarre abjured his heresy and became a Catholic. The conversion won him the support of many Catholic nobles and of the pope; it also swung French Catholic opinion in favour of a national rather than a Spanish king. With most of France behind him, Henry IV in 1595 declared war against Spain and in 1596 brought England and the Dutch into alliance with him. Philip II had the most powerful war machine in the world, but it was unable to stem the tide moving against Spain. A small incident is illustrative: in June 1596 the earl of Essex,

Antonio Pérez's patron in England, led a daring surprise attack on the port and city of Cadiz, which was sacked and held effortlessly by the English for 17 days.

By now the campaign in the Netherlands, where the governor from February 1596 was Philip's nephew the cardinal-archduke Albert of Austria (formerly viceroy of Portugal), had ground to a halt. The failure of the 1596 armada to Ireland helped to bring Philip's financial system crumbling down: in November he declared a bankruptcy. Peace was essential. In May 1598 the treaty of Vervins ended the war between France and Spain. In the same month the plan to make the Netherlands autonomous under Albert, whose vows as cardinal were to be waived so that he could marry Philip's daughter Isabella, was put into effect.

It is plausible to maintain that Philip II's entire foreign policy was defensive. In 1586 he himself argued to the pope that 'I have no reason to allow myself to be ambitious for more kingdoms and estates'. But the requirements of defence meant that first in 1560 and then in 1580, in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic, he was obliged to elevate Spain into a superpower, as the only way to maintain worldwide security. Once the Spanish system had been created, force and therefore aggression became an integral part of it, though there is no acceptable evidence or plausible reason to suggest that the king had expansionist dreams. Religious and dynastic considerations always remained fundamental, with the qualification that the king had his own view of what 'religion' entailed. When Philip disagreed with the papacy and France it was precisely because he felt their policies would not best serve the universal Church. At no point is the importance of the religious element clearer than in the Netherlands revolt, where all efforts at compromise with the Dutch ran into trouble because the Spaniards insisted on preserving the exclusive position of Catholicism.

The debate on the Netherlands

Perhaps the most disputed public issue of the Habsburg era in Spain was policy towards the Netherlands. The debate was far from being restricted only to the king's advisers or to factions in his councils. It was in reality a broad public discussion, conducted in part through the Cortes which voted the money for Philip's policy, in part through the soldiers and officials with direct knowledge of the Netherlands, in part through writers who reflected sectors of opinion. It reveals much of the king's methods of government that he himself encouraged the debate. Anxious to clarify the options available to him, Philip relied on various, and sometimes contradictory, sources of advice.

It has been traditional to suppose that policy for the Netherlands was dictated by the preferences of the Alba and Éboli factions in Madrid, the one for 'war', the other for 'peace'. Available documents in reality provide no evidence that either party had a consistent policy on the Netherlands, or that the differences between them could be reduced to simple formulations. Certainly Alba's was not simply a war party. Like all professional soldiers the duke wanted a quick, clean military solution. He thought that this was possible in Flanders, just as he later thought it was not possible in England and so opposed the 'war' policy of Granvelle and those who counselled an invasion. In any case, Philip II never delivered himself wholly into the hands of any of his advisers. Even while giving Alba an apparently free hand, he accepted offers of alternative policies from correspondents in Italy, Spain and the Netherlands itself. Granvelle, while viceroy of Naples (1571–5), was one of those who insisted that the real solution lay in the king: 'if Your Majesty had decided to follow the duke to the Low Countries *without an army*, in order to issue a general pardon, those parts would have experienced neither repression nor war'.

To monitor the progress of Alba's programme, Philip employed as his correspondent in Flanders the distinguished humanist Benito Arias Montano, who was in Antwerp to discuss the production of a new Polyglot Bible with the printer Christophe Plantin. Montano supported Alba's military measures, and pointed out to Philip that Spain must remain in the Netherlands for three main reasons: to protect religion, to participate in trade and for strategic purposes – 'from these states one can keep Germany at bay, constrain France and bind England'. It was Alba's failure to find an acceptable pacification policy that eventually disillusioned Montano, split Spanish opinion and provoked the second stage of the revolt in 1572. In February 1573 Montano wrote prophetically to Gabriel de Zayas that if Spain's policy were not altered, 'I see clearly an unending problem, unbearable expense and the loss of innumerable lives, both theirs and ours'.

In June Montano sent to Philip detailed proposals for an alternative policy. There must be clemency and a general pardon, and Netherlanders must govern equally with Spaniards. 'The arrogance of our Spanish nation here is insupportable', he wrote; many Spaniards 'have begun to call this sort of behaviour "reputación" '. It was an indictment by a Spaniard of the developing hubris in Spain's imperial role, the fear to compromise lest it be seen as loss of face, loss of reputación. In October, Philip sent Montano's

proposals to Luis de Requesens, the serving governor of Milan whom the king now appointed to replace Alba. At the same time Philip wrote to Montano that his proposals were 'valuable'. He also informed Requesens that 'the problems of the Netherlands have been complicated by the differing reports I have been sent. As I do not know the truth of the matter I cannot suggest a remedy'. As soon as Requesens arrived in Brussels he had several long meetings with Montano. The new policy was to be based on a general pardon, mutual discussion and the integrity of Netherlands institutions.

At precisely the same time Requesens was in touch with another Spaniard, who was also a correspondent for Philip II. This was the Valencian humanist Fadrique Furió Ceriol, who had left Spain in 1549 and in 1559 published at Antwerp his *Council and Counsellors of the Prince*, dedicated to Philip. In 1575 Furió produced a group of proposals, called *Remedies*, which he presented both to William of Orange and to the king. Going much farther than Montano, he suggested that Spanish troops should be withdrawn completely, though with certain guarantees; that all religious persecution should cease; and that the laws of the Netherlands be confirmed. In substance, these were the principles of the 1576 Pacification of Ghent, accepted reluctantly in 1577 by Spain.

The policy put into effect in the Netherlands between 1573 and 1577 was no preserve of the Éboli faction. In the government committee that met at Aranjuez in 1574 to discuss the problem, it was agreed by all that 'the Flemings in their liberties are like the Aragonese, and to take away their liberties and impose on them a tribunal of blood, is hard to bear and difficult to justify'. One of the most influential proponents of compromise in Madrid was the representative in Spain of the States General, Joachim Hopperus. Don Juan of Austria supported the initiative, and wrote to Philip in 1577: 'Your Majesty should be firmly convinced of one thing that is deeply rooted in the minds of both the good and the bad: both desire freedom of conscience'.

Both Arias Montano and Furió were born (in the same year, 1527) and died in Spain. Though profoundly Spanish, both drew deeply from their experience of the Netherlands, where Montano spent eight years, Furió somewhat more. Their unprecedented influence on the policy of the world's most powerful state was a high point for post-Erasmian political humanism in Europe. Furió from 1556 was a friend and disciple of the Basel humanist Castellio, and became a convinced supporter of freedom for all faiths. Montano, while remaining externally a Catholic, experienced an interior conversion towards a more spiritual religion, based on his contacts with the Family of Love sect in the Netherlands; there is no proof that he became a Familist, but he subsequently communicated many of his spiritual ideas to his disciple fray José de Sigüenza, librarian of the Escorial.

The solution they attempted through Requesens was wrecked by rebel distrust, by government bankruptcy, by Requesens' own death in March 1576 and by five consecutive mutinies in the Spanish army of Flanders leading to the sack of Antwerp, the 'Spanish Fury', in November 1576. The appointment of Don Juan promised to continue the initiative, and the Perpetual Edict of February 1577 put into effect the substance of Furió's proposals; but again circumstances forced Spain back into a military solution. Furió returned to Spain that year; Montano had gone back in 1575.

Official policy after 1577 tended to lay more emphasis on the war against Calvinist heretics, and less on the legitimate grievances of the Netherlanders. This was in clear contrast to much of the advice Philip had received in the previous decade. In 1573, for instance, he had informed Requesens that some of his advisers 'say that religion is of little importance: the real causes are the bad treatment the natives have suffered'. The division of opinion, whether to castigate the Netherlanders as rebels or as heretics, continued to be an active one. In 1578 the king was advised from Italy not to impede a solution by presenting them as heretics: 'in all the public statements so far made by the Flemings, they have always shown themselves as Catholics'. Behind this type of opinion lay an unease that seems to have been felt also in the peninsula. Many Spaniards (Requesens in Flanders in 1573 had claimed '*most* Spaniards here') – and no doubt the Portuguese too after 1580 – considered the constitutional demands of the Netherlanders to be just, and saw Alba's presentation of them as heretics as an attempt to mask the real issues. What Montano had seen as 'arrogance' in Flanders could be experienced also in the peninsula. It was ominous that a French diplomat priest, touring the peninsula in 1582, met many people who 'felt that the cause of the States of the Netherlands could be justified had heresy not become mixed up in it'. Philip's apparent disregard for the nobility of Flanders struck a jarring note among the local nobility of the non-Castilian provinces, excluded from what they deemed a proper share in the government of their own country. In 1587 the Diputados of Aragon complained to Philip that whereas the Aragonese had once enjoyed government office, 'now we are deprived of all these goods and favours'. When the events of 1591 occurred in Saragossa, the Aragonese count of Morata warned: 'if Your Majesty does not provide a remedy at once, we will have another Netherlands'.

There was, moreover, disagreement among Spaniards with the foreign policy implications of the war in Flanders. Throughout the Habsburg regime in Spain, from 1517 to 1700, a small but growing body of Castilian and indeed Spanish opinion opposed the commitment to the Netherlands as a deviation from Spain's proper sphere of interest, which was deemed to be what it had been in the time of the Catholic Monarchs – the Mediterranean. Added to this opposition, the heavy cost to Spaniards in money and blood, foretold by Montano, helped create a profound crisis of conscience. 'Why', protested a procurador in the Cortes at Madrid in 1588, 'should we pay a tax on flour here in order to stop heresy there? The Catholic faith and its defence belong to all Christendom: if that is what these wars are for, Castile should not have to bear all the burden while other realms, princes and states just look on'. The protest was more marked in the Cortes of 1593, when one procurador called for an end to the war against the Dutch heretics: 'if they want to be damned, let them!' By the end of the century the debate over the Netherlands had reached the sombre stage where official policy was almost entirely at variance with informed opinion.

Philip was aware of the cost in money. The war, he admitted in 1578, 'has consumed the money and substance which has come from the Indies', since Flanders regularly required more bullion than the plate fleets brought. Between 1566 and 1654 the crown sent at least 218 million ducats to the Netherlands for expenses, but received only about 121 million from America. The cost in men was certainly high, though not as high as Francisco de Quevedo suggested in the 1630s: 'we have sacrificed more than two million men, for the campaigns and sieges of the Netherlands have become the universal graveyard of Europe'. Not surprisingly, writers in the seventeenth century were overwhelmingly hostile to the war effort. In 1624 an official of the council of the Indies wrote: 'if the Dutch wish to remain in unbelief, why should we have to pursue such a harmful and ruinous war that has lasted for sixty-six years? Christ never ordered conversions by force of gun, pike or musket'. 'Nobody doubts', summed up the distinguished bishop Juan de Palafox in 1650, 'that the wars in Flanders have been the ruin of this monarchy'.

Philip II and the crown of Aragon

The biggest constitutional crisis of the reign was the revolt in Aragon in 1591. Since the union of the crowns the kingdom of Aragon had preserved its fueros intact, and developed its own separate institutions. An

overwhelmingly rural society of noble landlords and sheep-owners on one side, and a depressed peasantry made up partly of Moriscos on the other, it had little active political life. Though the king had considerable powers – only he could summon the Cortes, wage war and nominate all higher officials – custom and feudal survivals, exemplified in the legendary 'If not, not' oath (*see* p. 15), limited his power to interfere in domestic affairs. Of particular importance also was the office of the judge known as the justiciar, whose court could not be overruled even by the king. In common with Catalonia and Valencia, the two other peninsular realms of the crown of Aragon, the kingdom of Aragon posed two distinct types of problem to the king. In the first place the inflexible concern of the realm for its laws or fueros, which protected the privileges of the ruling elite, tended to impede all political change and at the same time restricted the ability of the crown to raise money or troops. Royal absolutism could therefore make no advance. By the same token, feudal authority survived: Aragon was the only realm in the peninsula (other than Catalonia before 1486 when the Sentence of Guadalupe under Ferdinand the Catholic had liberated the peasants) where the lords were recognised to have an 'absolute' power over their vassals, in the sense that they could punish or kill them without any recourse to the law. In the second place, the extreme independence of localities, towns and noble territories; the rivalry between families and clans for local office and influence; the growing social problems and poverty of the period; all combined to create levels of conflict that surfaced most commonly in banditry. Without any strong royal authority capable of intervening, banditry became in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the predominant form of lawlessness throughout the crown of Aragon.

Philip was confronted by the fueros at the very start of his reign, in 1556 when the viceroy of Aragon was accused in Saragossa of a contrafuero and the Cortes met in emergency session without royal summons. The crown compromised and the crisis passed. Though it was once mistakenly believed that Philip neglected his realms in the crown of Aragon and seldom visited them, the truth is that he went there for several extended stays, and the months that he spent there added up to a total of more than three years. His first important trip as king was in 1563, when he opened the general Cortes at Monzón (during his reign only one regional Cortes, that of Aragon in 1592, took place). During this visit he swore to the fueros in Saragossa and then did the same in Barcelona and Valencia in 1564. This was followed by a long absence. He did not return until 1585, when again he opened a general Cortes at Monzón and attended the wedding in Saragossa of his daughter Catalina to Carlo Emanuele duke