CHAPTER ONE

THE JESUIT INTEREST IN THE ART OF WAR

Summary

The Jesuit interest in the art of war seems to have originated in the violence and bloodshed that marked the early life of Ignatius of Loyola, who in 1552 used his still active military mind to draw up a grand plan for the defence of Catholic Europe against Ottoman aggression. After Ignatius’ death, the militant nature of the Jesuit Order that he founded was expressed in the preaching and confessional skills of many leading Jesuits. Their efforts were now aimed at convincing the Catholic leaders of the time to unite and launch a new crusade against the Protestant threat, culminating in the so-called Thirty Years War (1618–1648). More directly, Jesuit militancy in the Baroque age was expressed in the teaching of the mathematical disciplines when it became customary for the mathematicus to teach military architecture in the many colleges and seminaries for nobles run by the Jesuit Order. The Jesuit interest in the art of war was often evoked in the writings of scholars of the ilk of Antonio Possevino who used their rhetoric and their formidable pen to justify the inevitable involvement of the more belligerent members of the Jesuit Order in war-related activities targeted against ‘heretics’ and ‘infidels’.

The ‘Military Mind’ of Ignatius of Loyola

Don Inigo López de Oñaz y Loyola (1491–1556), better known to posterity as Ignatius of Loyola, is described by Bangert, the author of one of the most authoritative histories of the Jesuit Order, as a “courtier and gentleman, soldier and campaigner, student and teacher, ascetic and mystic”. ¹ This description of Don Inigo, generally shared by most authors of Jesuit historiography²—irrespective of whether they revered or reviled the Society of Jesus as an assembly of angels or devils—is well supported by both contemporary and later sources, clearly underlining the formative qualities of this Spanish nobleman who on 27 September 1540 managed to convince Pope Paul III Farnese (1534–1549) to formally announce the creation of a new militant Order of the Catholic Church—that of the

¹ Bangert, Society of Jesus, 3.
² O’Malley et al., The Jesuits, 3–37 (Chapter 1 on ‘The Historiography of the Society of Jesus: Where does it stand today?’ by John W. O’Malley).
Jesuits—by means of a Papal Bull entitled *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*. This document was confirmed 10 years later by Pope Julius III Ciocchi del Monte (1550–1555) who on 21 July 1550 issued a second Bull entitled *Exposit Debitum* to consolidate the status of Don Íñigo’s invention.3 These Bulls were essentially the end result of a remarkable series of events following the soldier Don Íñigo’s spiritual enlightenment soon after his heroic defence of the fortress of Pamplona against invading French forces (1521) in a scene of extreme violence that has been vividly described by Tylenda:

Since the city (of Pamplona) had decided to greet the French with open arms, Miguel de Herrera, (the) commander of the fortress, felt that any defence on his part would be futile. The fortress would be attacked on all four sides and since his men were few in number to withstand a prolonged siege, he too spoke of surrender. Ignatius (Íñigo), however, was of another opinion and he offered reasons why they should stand their ground and fight. These reasons have not been preserved, but undoubtedly one must have been that it would be shameful to surrender even before battle begun. On May 19 Pamplona sent word to Andrè de Foix (the French commander) that the city was his; he entered on the 20th and his men immediately set up their cannons and directed them against the fortress. These preparations were observed by Ignatius and the garrison and they thus expected the assault to begin that day. Since Ignatius intended to fight to his last breath, and because there was no chaplain among them, he asked one of his comrades to hear his confession of sin. He was now prepared to meet death in the service of his king. The bombardment began that day and after six continuous hours of heavy shelling, a portion of the wall crumbled and a cannonball entered the fortress and shattered Ignatius’ right leg.4

After Pamplona, Don Íñigo’s progress towards Rome had been marked by a period of surgical interventions and recovery (1521–1522),5 a night’s vigil at the Benedictine abbey of Montserrat where he had exchanged his armour for a pilgrim’s habit before the altar of the Virgin Mary, evoking a military ritual of great antiquity (1522),6 a time of reflection leading to the compilation of his Spiritual Exercises at Manresa (1522–1523),7 a journey to the Holy Land through Venice (1523–1524),8 a period of academic for-

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5 Ibid., 7–19 and 140.
6 Ibid., 20–27 and 141.