
THE SPANISH TERCIOS AND QUERALT'S *TERCIO* (1587)

The troublesome wars fought in the distant Italy during the early sixteenth century made it clear to the kings of the Habsburg dynasty that the military had to be professional instead of temporary and hastily mustered. Thus, the *Tercios* came into being; and with them, ultimately, the Spanish Army, which is deemed the first permanent army in Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire.

By joining up voluntarily, those soldiers- coming from Castile, Navarre, Aragon, Sardinia or Portugal- were seeking social promotion, honor and fortune; and to attain them they had to show bravery and gain experience. Their contracts had a private character, a personal commitment which bound them directly to the figure of their king.

Always under arms, with a high discipline standard, renowned and expert in an ever more exacting art, the *Tercios* were crucial for the Hispanic Monarchy. Such army model was not only instrumental in maintaining the integrity of a vast empire composed of scattered territories obtained by conquest or inheritance, but also a factor in the consolidation of the modern European state.

It was in the course of the preparations for the invasion of England that Philip II marshaled the highest number of Catalan companies to fight in Flanders, placing them under the command of Luis de Requesens. Ten of those companies coming from Catalonia arrived in Flanders on December 7, 1587, after a two months' march along the Spanish Road. Their commander was Luis de Queralt.

Queralt's *Tercio* was called by the locals of the Low Countries- unfamiliar with the speech of the newcomers- the *Tercio of Spain's Walloons*; whereas the Castilian-speaker Spaniards came to label it as the *Parrot Tercio* because of their strong Catalan accent.
