

De sacra militia contra iconomachos

Civic Strategies to Counter Iconoclasm in the Low Countries (1566)¹

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Although the iconoclastic scare must have been enormous and the actual impact of the attacks of summer and autumn 1566 can hardly be exaggerated, the *Beeldenstorm* was not as comprehensive as it seemed to contemporaries and subsequent historians. Indeed, a considerable number of important cities in the Habsburg Netherlands actually managed to ward off destruction, but until now their role has hardly been studied. The aim of this article is twofold: first, it seeks to chart the cities in question. Second, it analyses the preventive measures that they took against the violence. In so doing, it nuances the idea of the *Beeldenstorm* as an all-destructive wave, and provides insights into the dynamics of the Iconoclastic Fury. More specifically, the cliché that the passivity of magistrates was the main reason for all losses seems in need of considerable revision.

De sacra militia contra iconomachos. Stedelijke maatregelen tegen de Beeldenstorm in de Lage Landen (1566)

Ondanks de reële iconoclastische dreiging en de enorme impact van de vernielingen in de zomer en herfst van 1566, was de *Beeldenstorm* niet zo grondig en alomvattend als ze door tijdgenoten en latere historici werd beschreven. Een aanzienlijk aantal belangrijke steden in verschillende gewesten van de Habsburgse Nederlanden wist inderdaad aan de vernielingen te ontsnappen, maar hun rol werd tot nu toe nauwelijks bestudeerd. Het doel van dit artikel is daarom tweeledig: enerzijds worden de steden in kwestie in kaart gebracht, anderzijds wordt onderzocht welke maatregelen zij namen ter preventie van het geweld. Naast het feit dat dit het idee van de *Beeldenstorm* als allesverwoestend sterk kan nuanceren, leidt het tot een aantal interessante inzichten in de precieze aard van de storm. Vooral het cliché van de niet-ingrijpende magistraat als belangrijkste reden voor de massale verliezen blijkt aanzienlijk herzien te moeten worden.

On Saturday 31 August 1566, in the midst of the iconoclastic upheaval that struck the Low Countries, Maximilien Morillon, the diligent informant of Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle in Leuven, apologised for not being able to provide as much information as usual on the precarious situation in the Netherlands. ‘Je ne puis [...] sortir ceste ville que l’on tient close’, he wrote, ‘qu’est cause que je n’ay moien de faire si ample advertence comme je polroie faire estant à Brucelles: mais le dangier y est trop grand’. At the same time, he expressed his gloomy prognosis for the future: ‘L’on tient icy assez bon ordre et grand guest: mais je craindz que, à la longue, les bourgeois se fascheront [...]’.² Almost two months later however, after several weeks of ostentatious destruction in churches, chapels and cloisters all over the Habsburg Netherlands, Governess Margaret of Parma wrote the city of Leuven about

[...] le contentement qu’elle (His Majesty, Philip II, R.S.) prend de veoir les bons offices et devoirs que ses bons et loyaux subiectz font pour eulx conserver et maintenir en leur ancienne devotion tant au regard de la religion que pour service de Sa Majesté.

This letter, also sent to twelve other towns on 25 October 1566, contained further encouragement for the cities’ magistrates to keep up the good work and to remain alert for the ever-active and dangerous heretics.³ Indeed, unlike many other towns in the Netherlands, the cities that received this circular letter were eventually able to ward off the iconoclastic attacks in late August and September 1566. In the historiography of the *Beeldenstorm* however, there is a markedly uniform monolithic depiction of the events. By focusing on particular iconoclastic events and how the iconoclasts went about inflicting damage, this has created a distorted image of an all-encompassing destructive wave of violence. As Morillon’s letter suggests, the iconoclastic scare must indeed have been enormous all over the Low Countries and the actual impact of the attacks themselves can hardly be exaggerated. All the same, there are many more towns than the thirteen addressed by the governess that managed,

1 The title refers to the heading of the 35th chapter in J. Molanus, *Les quatorze livres sur l’histoire de la ville de Louvain* (Brussels 1861) I, 442, narrating Leuven’s resistance. Research for this article was financed by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). I am very grateful to Susie Sutch for her wonderful help and to Hans Blomme for the cartography.

2 *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle, 1565-1586* I.E. Pouillet (ed.) (Brussels 1877) 438.

3 Brussels, State Archives of Belgium (hereafter ARA), I 425, Audience, inv. 244/2, Correspondence

September-December 1566, no. 126. It was sent to Leuven (Duchy of Brabant); Douai, Lille, Bruges, Aalst, Kortrijk and Dendermonde (County of Flanders); Gouda, Rotterdam and Dordrecht (County of Holland); Arras and Saint-Omer (County of Artois); and Mons (County of Hainaut). It is partially published in: *Correspondance française de Marguerite d’Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II, III*, H.A. Enno van Gelder (ed.) (Utrecht 1942) 62.

more or less, to maintain order in late 1566. Many of them were important economic, political or religious centres in the Low Countries.

So far, the attitudes of these cities during the Iconoclastic Fury have been scarcely studied by historians. At most, they have received an honourable mention in a survey, just stating that the magistrates acted firmly as a result of which there was no occurrence of damage.⁴ Notable and inspiring exceptions however, are Otto de Jong, who problematised the use of Antwerp as a textbook example for the 1566 events and pointed to the relative importance of untouched centres, and Robert DuPlessis, who called for attention to loyal cities and the issue of stability during the Dutch Revolt.⁵ By looking more closely at the strategies and measures of these cities, this contribution seeks to deepen our knowledge of the character and the precise nature of the Iconoclastic Fury of 1566 we now call the *Beeldenstorm*. Their qualification as cities is indeed important: all of the places studied possessed town privileges by 1566, including the right to construct ramparts. Thus, in contrast to villages, they were in a better position to protect themselves from attacks.⁶ While roughly mapping the cities that escaped the fury might nuance the idea of the *Beeldenstorm* as an all-destructive fury, looking at the measures they took in a comparative perspective yields interesting insights into the contemporary image and perception of the events. More importantly, such an approach can counter the cliché that the passive magistrates were the main reason for all the losses.

Good, bad and borderline cases

A quick sketch of the geographical distribution of ‘untouched cities’ and their various degrees in importance is illustrative of the situation (see page 20). In

- 4 Such is still the case in the most recent general survey on the subject: H. Kaptein, *De Beeldenstorm* (Hilversum 2002) 57.
- 5 O.J. de Jong, *Beeldenstormen in de Nederlanden* (Groningen 1964) 5; R. DuPlessis, *Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution, 1500-1582* (Cambridge 1991) especially 11-14, 313 and 320. See also A.C. Duke and D.H.A. Kolff, ‘The Time of Troubles in the County of Holland, 1566-1567’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 82:3 (1969) 323-324; P. Mack Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands, 1544-1569* (Cambridge 1978) 38; M. Hageman, *Het kwade exempel van Gelre. De stad Nijmegen, de Beeldenstorm en de Raad van Beroerten, 1566-1568* (Nijmegen 2005) especially 183-191; J. Pollmann,

Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520-1635 (Oxford 2011) especially 70-71.

- 6 The only exception is The Hague, which however had every characteristic of a city. Duke and Kolff, ‘The Time’, 324, n. 63 also stressed the importance of the distinction between cities and the countryside. Examples of villages that claimed not to have suffered iconoclastic attacks are mentioned by G. Janssens, ‘Rapporten uit 1569 over herstellde schade aan kerken en kapellen in de Vlaamse westhoek. Een bron voor de geschiedenis van de eerste fase van de beeldenstorm van 1566’, in: J. De Zutter, L. Charles and A. Capiteyn (eds.), *Qui valet ingenio. Liber amicorum aangeboden aan Dr. Johan Decavele* (Ghent 1996) 281-282.

the south-western provinces, where reputedly the most violent riots started, important towns that escaped the attacks included Aalst, Bruges, Douai, Kortrijk, Lille and Veurne in the County of Flanders and Saint-Omer in the County of Artois. In the Duchy of Brabant, both Brussels and Leuven were spared, while in the County of Holland Dordrecht, Gouda and Haarlem managed to maintain order. Finally, in the Duchy of Guelders, cities such as Arnhem, Nijmegen and Zutphen should be mentioned. Thus, in all three regions that Jozef Scheerder distinguished in his study, there were cities left untouched.⁷ The three cities mentioned in Holland, for example, were three of the six so-called chief towns in the County.⁸ In terms of inhabitants, three of the ten largest cities in the Low Countries, Brussels, Bruges and Lille, did not endure a *Beeldenstorm* in 1566.⁹ Indeed, Phyllis Mack Crew has already remarked that ‘the iconoclasm was not as thorough as it seemed to contemporaries’.¹⁰

Because of the somewhat problematic distinction between ‘touched’ and ‘untouched’ cities, and because of our occasional ignorance of what actually happened in certain places, it is difficult to provide a complete catalogue.¹¹ All the same, the lists of cities that figure in the governess’s correspondence with the local authorities provide a helpful point of departure. While her letter of 25 October was sent to thirteen cities, three days later she sent a similar letter, this time addressed to seventeen cities. Interestingly, they were referred to in a caption as ‘les villes bonnes’.¹² ‘Bonne’ does not refer to a special civic title with accompanying privileges here, but is explicitly used to indicate the cities’ loyalty to the King and the Catholic religion during the recent turmoil.¹³ They are opposed to ‘les villes mauvaises’: a later circular letter, containing more news from King Philip II for the local authorities and dated to 3 July 1567, was sent to 29 *villes bonnes*, as

7 On the division into three regions, see J. Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm* (Bussum 1974) 18.

8 J.J. Woltjer, ‘De Staten van Holland in het jaar van hagepreek en beeldenstorm’, in: M. Bruggeman et al. (eds.), *Mensen van de nieuwe tijd. Een liber amicorum voor A.Th. van Deursen* (Amsterdam 1996) 50.

9 J. de Vries, *European Urbanization 1500-1800* (London 1984) 271-272, 280-281.

10 Mack Crew, *Calvinist Preaching*, 11, n. 27.

11 Duke and Kolff, ‘The Time’, 323.

12 Dated 28 October 1566, it was sent ‘aux villes bonnes, assavoir Bruxelles, Louvain, Bruges, Courtray, Arras, St Omer, Aire, Bethunes, Mons, Ath, Namur, Luxembourg, Lille, Douay,

Tenremonde, Dordrecht, Alost’. The original is in Brussels, ARA, I 425, Audience, inv. 241, Correspondence of Margaret of Parma, 5th March 1561-27 April 1567, ff. 141-142; published in *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les affaires des Pays-Bas (1558-1577)* II, L.P. Gachard (ed.) (Brussels 1851) 596-597.

13 Compare for instance the letter of 13 September 1566 from Margaret to Philip in *Correspondance française de Marguerite d’Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II*, I, H.A. Enno van Gelder (ed.) (Utrecht 1925) 159-160: ‘toute la commune de ceste ville (que est pour la plus part bonne et catholicque)’.

opposed to only 26 *villes mauvaises*.¹⁴ The latter had been infected with heresy, which might have included iconoclastic attacks, though not necessarily. The city of Nijmegen is a case in point: although it figures on the list as a *ville mauvaise*, strictly speaking it remained untouched by a real Iconoclastic Fury. Probably this negative categorisation was the consequence of the tolerant religious agreement the city announced on 1 September 1566.¹⁵ ‘Touched’ or ‘untouched’ is indeed an *a posteriori* classification and in any case too black-and-white a distinction that does not take into account certain borderline cases. It is revealing to recall the subtle, but apparently contemporary, difference between Iconoclastic Fury and iconoclasm Johannes Acquoy already pointed out in 1873. When interviewed by the commissioners of the Council of Troubles, several witnesses claimed that Zaltbommel was not hit by the Iconoclastic Fury (*beeldtstorminghe*), although they knew of one or two separate cases of iconoclasm (*eenighe beeldebrekinghe*).¹⁶ Similar isolated incidents are recorded in Nijmegen, but equally in Kortrijk and Dordrecht, two cities that both figured on the governess’s list of *villes bonnes* and other early lists of cities that ‘remained free of vandalism’.¹⁷

Consequently, some cities cannot be strictly categorised as either having been hit or not.¹⁸ The Hague is a case in point: as soon as the magistrates heard the news from Antwerp, they hired a number of workers to remove the images, in order to avoid pandemonium. Thus the iconoclasm probably took place in an orderly fashion, and as the magistracy demanded ‘in alderstillicheyt, sonder commocy’.¹⁹ More or less the same happened in Leeuwarden in the northern province of Friesland, while in Diksmuide in the southwest ‘strangers’ were said to have carried out the iconoclastic cleansing of the church, but under the supervision of the bailiff who made sure that the costly rood loft and sacrament

14 *Correspondance de Philippe II*, 634–636. Although I was unable to find the original, Gachard claims that the terminology is used explicitly in the captions. Another example of explicit use of the expression ‘*villes mauvaises*’ in connection with 22 local authorities is in Brussels, ARA, I 425, Audience, inv. 241, Correspondence of Margaret of Parma, f. 182.

15 Hageman, *Kwade exempel*, 181–214.

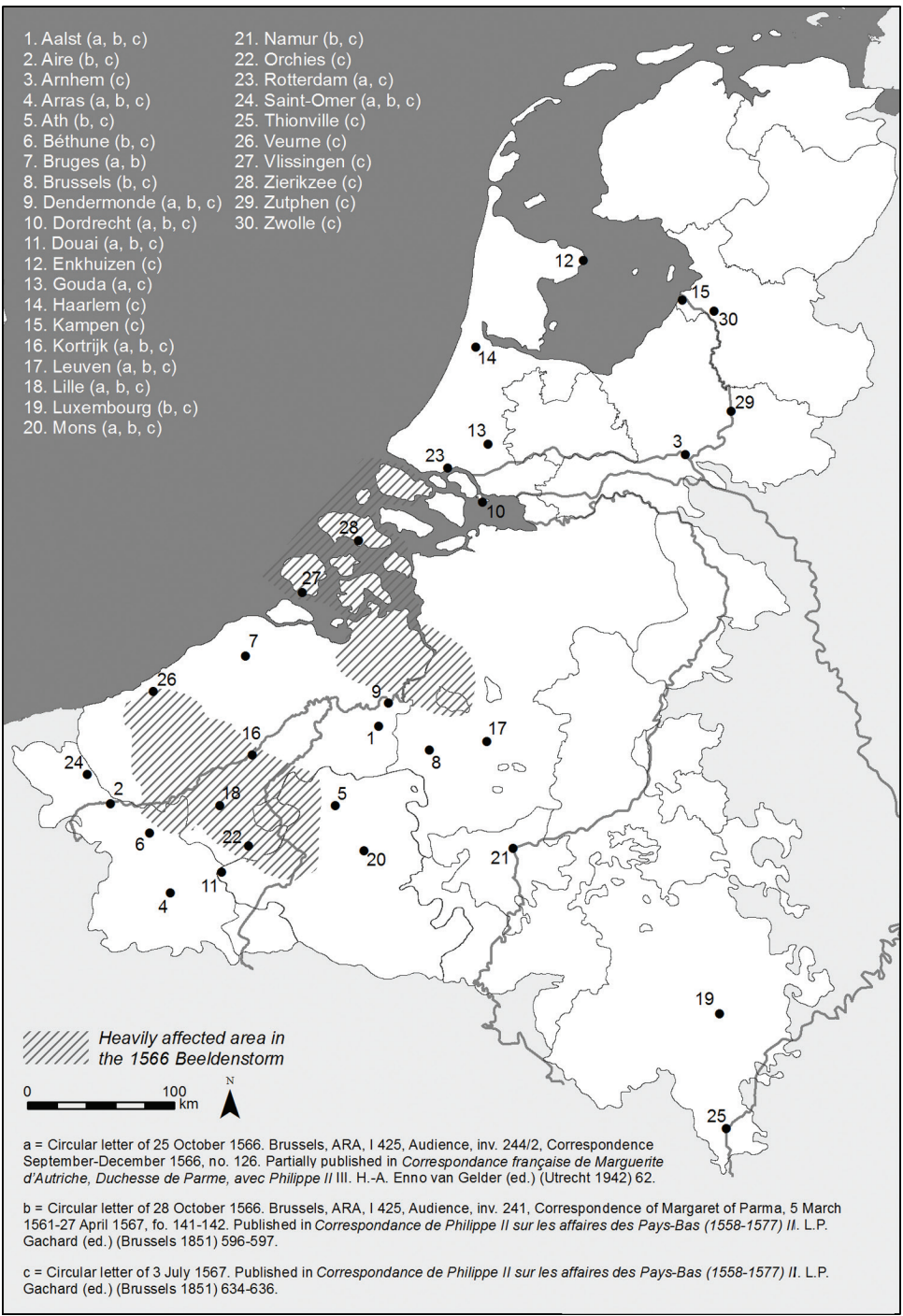
16 J.G.R. Acquoy, *Jan van Venray (Johannes Ceperinus) en de wording en vestiging der hervormde gemeente te Zalt-Bommel* (’s-Hertogenbosch 1873) 47, n. 4. Zaltbommel was categorised as *ville mauvaise*: *Correspondance de Philippe II*, 634.

17 For instance A. Wauters (ed.), *Mémoires de Viglius et d’Hopperus sur le commencement des troubles des*

Pays-Bas (Brussels 1858) 346; A.L.E. Verheyden, ‘Chronique de Pierre Gaiffier (1566–1568)’, *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d’Histoire* 119 (1954) 25 and 34. On Nijmegen, see Hageman, *Kwade exempel*, 210–213. On 31 October 1567 someone is sentenced in Dordrecht for having vandalised statues, books and ornaments in the Grote Kerk. A similar judgment was pronounced on someone in Kortrijk in 1571. J. van Herwaarden et al., *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (Hilversum 1996) I, 359; J. Decavele, ‘Ketters en papisten in het Kortrijkse stadsbestuur (1561–1580)’, *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent* 49 (1995) 230, n. 32.

18 Duke and Kolff, ‘The Time’, 323.

19 Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm*, 76.



house were spared.²⁰ Furthermore, the abundance of local studies illustrates that the *Beeldenstorm* was not a homogenous movement that struck identically everywhere; instead it was highly heterogeneous and characterised by pluralism and particularism.²¹ Indeed, as Peter Arnade's recent study aptly demonstrated for Antwerp, Ghent and Ypres, the motivations for and precise developments of the iconoclastic acts significantly differed locally.²² We may conclude that the reasons why certain cities resisted also differ and depend on various factors, and that consequently it is impossible to deduce one general principle that can explain why a number of towns were left untouched. Nevertheless, as the iconoclastic scare seems to have been omnipresent, they all felt threatened and consequently took measures. Interestingly, we can observe some recurring principles in their policies and the measures taken, which I will analyse in the remainder of this article. The point of departure for the survey is the lists of *villes bonnes* in the governess's letters, for which I collected information from various source types, including municipal decree books and regional documents in the archives of the Council of Troubles, mostly the cities' defences known as *Mémoires justificatifs*. I then cross-checked these official sources with a range of narrative sources, such as correspondence, chronicles and memoirs, which provide more details about the actual implementation of these measures.²³

Civic jurisdiction

Contemporary Netherlandish sources are rather pessimistic about the resistance and remain silent about the measures taken. By contrast, these

20 For Leeuwarden, see J.J. Woltjer, *Friesland in Hervormingstijd* (Leiden 1962) 151-152; for Diksmuide, see the testimonies in the *Mémoire justificatif* (Brussels, ARA, Council of Troubles (hereafter CT), inv. 55, especially ff. 59-62).

21 Duke and Kolff, 'The Time', 322-323. See also the remarks in J. Roelink, 'De Nederlandse Opstand een klassenstrijd?', in: G.J.D. Aalders et al. (eds.), *Kritisch kwintet. Historische opstellen* (Amsterdam 1964) 53 and 70; Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm*, 18 and 114.

22 P. Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY 2008) 125-165.

23 Investigations were limited to the three regions Scheerder treated, leaving out most of the provinces of Artois, Hainaut, Namur and Luxembourg. The situation in these areas is less studied, but in general they seem to have been less affected, as suggested by early narrative sources, such as *Mémoires de Pontus Payen* I, A. Henne (ed.) (Brussels 1860) 185-186; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 457-458; *Mémoires de Viglius et d'Hopperus*, 345-346.



'Villes bonnes' in the circular letters of Margaret of Parma, 1566-1567. Ruben Suykerbuyk and Hans Blomme, based on the map in Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY 1977).

issues surprisingly received much more attention in Italian writings.²⁴ Giovanni Battista Guicciardini, sometime merchant in Brussels and informant for the Medici court, is one of the few authors who offered a succinct analysis of the resistance. He mentions three main reasons for the success of cities that remained *intatto*, such as Brussels and Leuven: the closing of the city gates, the organisation of a guard that patrolled day and night, and the providing of churches with armed watchmen.²⁵ These are indeed the measures that also turn up in other sources. As for the first two, since the submission of the petition known as the Compromise of Nobles to Margaret of Parma on 5 April 1566, tensions were already running high. As a result, cities such as Antwerp and Brussels for instance, had a permanent watch installed.²⁶ In the summer months too, many cities closed a considerable number of their gates, which they equipped with extra sentinels. This was done for two complementary reasons.

First, by ‘sealing’ the city, the magistrates sought to prevent citizens from attending the sermons of hedge-preachers outside the city walls. On 1 August inhabitants of Bruges who wanted to leave had to declare why, and from 9 August onwards the gates were not only monitored by guards, but also by members of the town council who advised against going to the open-air sermons and registered the names of those who went anyway.²⁷ The city of Brussels too, decided to register names on 2 September, but on the 8th all the gates were closed so that no one could leave. A few days later, on the 14th, two gates were opened again, but attending the sermons was still prohibited.²⁸ The cities of Hoorn and Nijmegen are known to have reacted similarly.²⁹

24 N. Lamal, ‘Nieuws en informatienetwerken. De Medici en het begin van de Opstand in de Nederlanden (1566)’, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 66 (2013) 75-76.

25 *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini a Cosimo e Francesco de’ Medici, scritto dal Belgio dal 1559 al 1577*, M. Battistini (ed.) (Brussels, Rome 1949) 267. The date of 2nd August 1566, suggested by Battistini, is evidently wrong, since the letter mentions the destruction suffered in Antwerp, which only started on 20 August.

26 *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 201-202; Lamal, ‘Nieuws’, 73.

27 See the *Mémoire justificatif* of the city of Bruges: Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 64, ff. 206-207v; published in full by A.C. De Schrevel, ‘Troubles religieux du xvime siècle au quartier du Bruges 1566-1568’,

Annales de la Société d’émulation pour l’étude de l’histoire et des antiquités de la Flandre 5:5 (1894). Compare with *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 424.

28 Brussels, Archives of the City of Brussels (hereafter SAB), inv. 1724, Resolutieboek 1551-1580, f. 101v-102. See also *Verclaringhe opt beleth vanden nieuwen predicatien binnen ende omtrint der Stadt van Bruessele* (Brussels, 18 September 1566; copy in Ghent, University Library). Compare with *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, 274; Verheyden, ‘Chronique’, 34; *Mémoires de Pontus Payen*, 230-232; *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre, 1549-1620*, B. de St. Genois (ed.) (Ghent 1861) 22.

29 For Hoorn, see two testimonies in Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 109, f. 351-352 and 355v; for Nijmegen, see Hageman, *Kwade exempelen*, 181-183.

Second however, closing gates and mounting guards was done in order to keep a close watch on people coming in. As a reaction to public preaching being organised in the vicinity, on 5 July the city of Bruges decided to close all but two gates at night and to increase control so no strangers could intrude. On 27 July four of the seven gates were still shut, even during the daytime, and the very next day the number of guards was augmented. From 9 August onwards, the day before the riots started in Steenvoorde, no strangers, or armed people or crowds were allowed entry, and on the 17th artillery was installed at the city gates.³⁰ By closing all but four gates Brussels adopted a similar policy on the 19th and on 3 September it was decided to increase the guards and allow only market-goers to enter.³¹ The city of Leuven, which sent its burgomaster and pensionary to Brussels on 21 September where they heard the *quade tijdingen* of Antwerp, likewise was advised by Viglius and Margaret of Parma to keep the city shut and deny entry to strangers. On 29 August all but two gates were closed.³² Documented examples of similar measures are legion for other cities.³³

In complicating the entrance to their jurisdiction, magistrates evidently focused on strangers and non-inhabitants. Indeed, they were often seen as the source of the troubles. For instance, Kortrijk's annual August fair was cancelled, precisely because it would attract too many outsiders.³⁴ Similarly, William of Orange feared *quelque trouble* during the Antwerp *Ommegang* on 18 August, because 'il y entreront beaucoup d'étrangers'.³⁵ Thus, in many towns, the measures taken went further than only supervising the city gates and trying to deny them entrance. The city of Bruges decided to expel all newcomers of the last three months on 5 July, and while from 27 July onwards beggars and vagabonds were denied entrance, non-inhabitants were asked where they came from and where they would be staying. Later in August, on the 20th, members of the city council went around the city inns to track down suspicious characters and the following day innkeepers were charged with the duty to report those who were lodging with them,

30 Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 64, ff. 202v-209, *passim*. The *hallegebod* of 27 July is published in De Schrevel, 'Troubles', 35-36, n. 1.

31 Brussels, SAB, inv. 1724, Resolutieboek, ff. 99v and 100v.

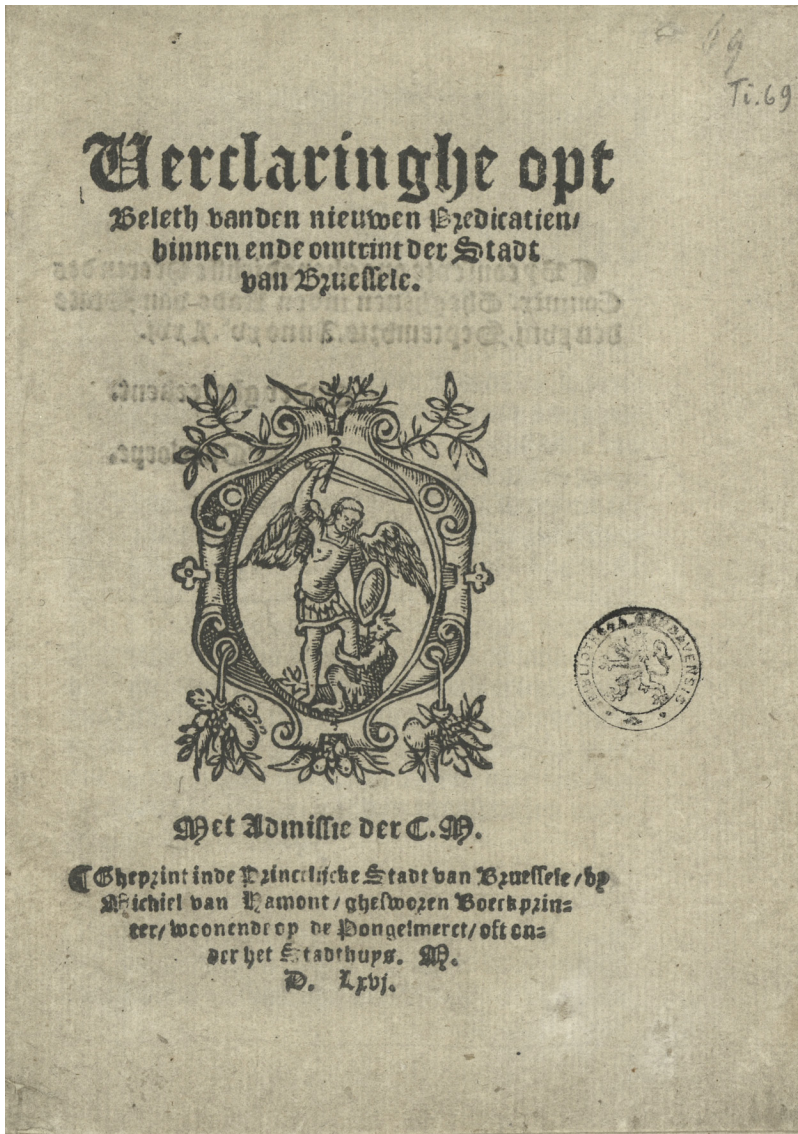
32 Leuven, City Archives (hereafter SAL), inv. 299, Resoluties van de magistraat, ff. 250-256, *passim*.

33 For instance, Gouda, Kortrijk and Lille: C.C. Hibben, *Gouda in Revolt: Particularism and Pacifism in the Revolt of the Netherlands 1572-1588* (Utrecht 1983) 32; M. Backhouse, 'Korte schets van de socio-ekonomische en religieuze situatie

in Kortrijk tijdens de xvie eeuw (1500-1580)', *De Leiegouw* 18:4 (1976) 431; DuPlessis, Lille, 216.

34 Backhouse, 'Korte schets', 431.

35 Letter of 14 August 1566 to Margaret of Parma. *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, Prince d'Orange II*, L.P. Gachard (ed.) (Brussels 1850) 184-185. See also *Antwerpsch Archievenblad*, X.P. Génard (ed.) (Antwerpen 1879) 343: '[...] want, zoe sy verstaen hadden, dieselve predicatien begonst waeren by vrempde ende vuytlandige [...]'].



Immediately after the main iconoclastic tensions a printed account of the Brussels' magistracy's policy on the permission of preaching was issued, which emphasised that no such public gatherings had occurred within the city. *Verclaringhe opt Beleth vanden nieuwen Predicatiens binnen ende omtrint der Stadt van Bruessele*, Brussels (Michiel van Hamont) 18 September 1566.

University Library, Ghent University.

while suspected Walloon drapers were put under house arrest.³⁶ Although no similar duty to report is documented for Brussels, the Council of Troubles later on prosecuted two innkeepers who, around mid-August 1566, allegedly gave lodging to some preachers and people who had come from Flanders to urge the Brussels citizens to smash their statues. Strangers were also banished from the city on 5 September.³⁷ Again, comparable examples can be found in several other cities.³⁸

The fact that these cities almost immediately focused on foreigners seems to indicate that according to contemporary perceptions the danger was mainly coming from outside. This ties in well with recurring observations that in many of the cities that underwent attacks, foreigners played an important role, in addition to the sometimes hired and paid iconoclasts.³⁹ In their later *Mémoires justificatifs* for the Council of Troubles, cities were often quick to emphasise that none of their inhabitants were actually involved in any of the troubles.⁴⁰ But of course this source type needs to be read cautiously and, generally, the actual events indeed seem to have been the result of an interplay between internal and external factors. The case of Haarlem exemplifies this very well. When news from Antwerp reached the city on 23 August, the authorities feared similar attacks and immediately convened the militia for a general meeting. On that day the latter declared themselves to be willing to co-operate, although not unanimously, and the firm conviction was expressed that the danger was indeed coming from the outside.⁴¹ The very next day, however, the militia changed their minds: though they were willing to keep out foreigners, they declared themselves hesitant to actually stop any possible iconoclastic acts, since they feared bloodshed between citizens and family.⁴²

Civic militia

If uprisings of local citizens were indeed to be feared, hermetically sealing the city would not have been very helpful. A measure that seems to have been taken to counter the danger from the inside is the guarding of the

36 Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 64, ff. 203, 210v; De Schrevel, 'Troubles', 35-36, n. 1 and 45-46, n. 1.

37 Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 38, ff. 67v and 71v; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 451.

38 Including Lille (March 1566), Haarlem (23 August) and Nijmegen (26 August). DuPlessis, *Lille*, 216; W.P.J. Overmeer, *De hervorming te Haarlem* (Haarlem 1904) 25; Hageman, *Kwade exempel*, 191.

39 Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm, passim*; M. Backhouse, 'Beeldenstorm en Bosgeuzen in het Westkwartier (1566-1568)', *Handelingen Koninklijke Geschied- en*

Oudheidkundige Kring van Kortrijk 38 (1971) 92-93; S. Deyon and A. Lottin, *Les casseurs de l'été 1566:*

L'iconoclasme dans le Nord (Paris 1981) 172-178; DuPlessis, *Lille*, 209-210.

40 Such as Bruges, Diksmuide and Hoorn. Brussels, ARA, CT, respectively inv. 64, f. 205; inv. 55, f. 53; inv. 109, f. 362v.

41 Overmeer, *Hervorming*, 155.

42 J.J. Temminck, 'Haarlem in 1566 en 1567', *Jaarboek Haarlem 1971* (Haarlem 1972) 76.

churches and chapels in town. Although in Gouda Catholic rites were not abandoned, in September the Janskerk was provided with guards both inside and out, and the building was closed after the liturgical services.⁴³ In other cities, including Haarlem and Hoorn, the main churches were completely closed for a certain time, as a result of which there were no services at all.⁴⁴ A well-documented example is the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula in Brussels. On 21 August, again as a reaction to the news of the destruction in Antwerp the day before, the Brussels magistracy decided to put watchmen in the church towers and all churchwardens were advised to stand guard in their churches themselves.⁴⁵ Tensions were indeed running high, and a few days later, on 24 August, it was rumoured that a Calvinist preaching and the despoiling of the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula were being planned. According to Morillon, the destruction would have actually taken place that day if Nicolas tsHagen, lieutenant to the Brussels *amman*, had not intervened: the divine office was suspended, the building was closed and guards were stationed in and around the church.⁴⁶ A week later, on Sunday 1 September, the church was opened again for a limited number of services and under heavy protection, and the very next day the governess had a Te Deum sung to celebrate the birth of Infanta Isabella. This event was an occasion for the chronicler Pierre Gaiffier to express his amazement about the strict surveillance:

Et estant fort étrange de veoir en ladite église harquebusiers à crocq et grand nombre de sauldars armez, tellement que à grande peine et difficulté pouvoit-on avoir accèz en ladite église, sinon par estroict passage et l'ung après l'autre [...].⁴⁷

During the following days services still seem to have been held irregularly and the guards remained in place, and it was only on 15 October that the magistrates decided to officially reopen the church, however still with limited opening hours.⁴⁸

Although military organisation appears crucial for implementing all these measures, there was a dire need for soldiers, most of whose payment

43 Hibben, *Gouda*, 32. Compare with Lille and Nijmegen: DuPlessis, *Lille*, 216; Hageman, *Kwade exempel*, 210-211.

44 Temminck, 'Haarlem', 77 and 82; Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 109, f. 362v. Compare also with Bruges: Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 64, f. 212.

45 Brussels, SAB, inv. 1724, Resolutieboek, f. 99v.

46 Leuven, SAL, inv. 299, Resoluties, f. 254; *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, 272-273; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 432 and 440.

47 Verheyden, 'Chronique', 31-32. On the re-opening of the church, see *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 22; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 448 and 451.

48 Brussels, SAB, inv. 1724, Resolutieboek, f. 106. Confirmed by letters of Viglius (7 September) and Morillon (15 September): C.P. Hoyneck van Papendrecht (ed.), *Vita Viglii ab aytta Zuichemi ab ipso Viglio scripta [...]* (The Hague 1743) II, 377; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 462.

was far in arrears. Several cities urgently begged for troops, but the central government in Brussels was often unable to send any at all, or at best only a very few. This awkward situation is well-known for the city of Lille, for which the Governor Maximilian Vilain, Baron of Rassenghien, frequently sent letters to Margaret of Parma. Lying between Armentières and Tournai, Lille was located in the centre of a Protestant hotspot and as a consequence was suffering severe threats almost constantly, which made Rassenghien fear the worst. However few in number, Margaret sent as many troops as she could, and eventually Lille was able to ward off all violent threats.⁴⁹ However this was not due only to the troops the governess sent. As a result of the precarious situation, which she doubtlessly realised, on 18 August Margaret of Parma suggested that Rassenghien recruit his own troops from the city's inhabitants.⁵⁰ Moreover, there is evidence for the sudden organisation of such temporary civic armies in various other towns as well. Yet, it is important to emphasise that this was certainly not an obvious solution, since Charles V had explicitly prohibited cities to raise armies of their own without governmental consent.⁵¹ Thus, in principle, these civic armies raised to counter iconoclastic threats all needed Margaret's approval. Furthermore, cities needed to organise the funding of these temporary troops themselves. In Lille an army of 200 men was set up, half of which was subsidised by the chapter of St. Pierre, while the other half was paid by the magistracy, which levied taxes on wine in order to come up with the necessary funds.⁵² Similar temporary civic armies are well-documented in Bruges, Brussels, Kortrijk, and Leuven and it is interesting to compare their formation and funding.⁵³

In Bruges, preparations had already begun at the end of July. On the 27th members of the magistracy went around the city to locate every possible candidate between 16 and 60 years old, among whom they subsequently chose 300 competent soldiers. The collection of funds caused some debate, but it was agreed that the city of Bruges, the Spanish nation as well as the Bruges clergy would contribute.⁵⁴ By 19 August, this army of 300 *souldartz* was operational, but Egmont advised enlisting 200 more. The soldiers'

49 DuPlessis, *Lille*, 216-220.

50 *Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche, Duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II*, II, H.A. Enno van Gelder (ed.) (Utrecht 1941) 341.

51 J. De Bloys, G. Stalins and B. Van Zoomeren (eds.), *Tweeden druck vanden eersten bouck der ordonnancien, statuten, edicten ende placcaerten [...]* van Vlaendren (Ghent 1639) 728-729.

52 Deyon and Lottin, *Casseurs*, 167; DuPlessis, *Lille*, 223.

53 Mention is also made of 'gens de guerre' or 'mannen van wapenen' in Veurne, see Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 55, ff. 108 and 111v.

54 L. Vandamme, 'Het Calvinisme te Brugge in beweging (1560-1566)', in: D. Van der Bauwhede et al. (eds.), *Brugge in de Geuzentijd. Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van de Hervorming te Brugge en in het Brugse Vrije tijdens de 16de eeuw* (Bruges 1982) 109-111.

monthly payment would amount to 6 guilders, and in their later *Mémoire justificatif* the magistrates stressed that in total it cost the city more than 3,600 guilders a month.⁵⁵ While Bruges had the approval of their governor, the city of Kortrijk was advised to put up an army of 30 to 40 *hommes de guerre* by Margaret herself. By 24 August 40 soldiers were indeed selected and they were each paid a similar sum of approximately six guilders.⁵⁶ In Brussels, the recruitment of the civic army was organised after the governess attempted an escape from the royal residence to Mons. In the night of 22 to 23 August, she tried to get away, but not only was she advised against doing so by Viglius and the Knights of the Golden Fleece present at the court, she was also actually hindered by the Brussels magistracy. Though enraged, she conceded, but made Count Peter Ernst I von Mansfeld-Vorderort captain of the city and demanded that an army be recruited.⁵⁷ The actual organisation of this impressive force only started in September, however. While Margaret herself would contribute 500 *harquebusiers*, it was decided that 1000 soldiers were to be enlisted and paid by the city. The governess's troops entered the city on 7 September and by the 11th the recruitment of the other 1,000 soldiers was completed. However, their payment created some difficulties. Several times in October, the magistrates requested the governess advance the troops' payments for two months, or otherwise allow them to levy taxes on wine, which unsurprisingly encountered some resistance. At the end of December a voluntary collection was still made for the funding, and only by the end of May 1567 were the troops gradually dismissed.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, neither of the sources mentions their pay, but circumstantial evidence suggests that it

55 De Schrevel, 'Troubles', 138-139; Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 64, ff. 211r-v. Compare with *Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche* I, 150 and 160; *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 429.

56 *Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche* I, 160 and II, 339, 405-406. In his letter of 1 September, the High Bailiff of Kortrijk claimed that in total the 40 soldiers, of whom 4 were paid double, cost 280 pounds of 40 groats. Since a pound of 40 groats equaled a guilder, that would amount to a payment of 6.36 guilders per soldier. In a civic account of 1565-1566 mention is made of the huge sum of 6831 Lb. 12 s. 6 d.p. for maintaining soldiers. See F. De Potter, *Geschiedenis der stad Kortrijk* (Ghent 1873-1876) IV, 106, n. 1.

57 Various narrations of the story: Leuven, SAL, inv. 299, Resoluties, f. 252r-v; *Procès criminels des Comtes d'Egmont, du Prince de Horne et autres*

seigneurs flamands [...] (Amsterdam 1753) II, 477-479; F.A.F.Th. Reiffenberch (ed.), *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, duchesse de Parme, avec Philippe II* (Brussels 1842) 188-189 and 196-197; *Mémoires de Viglius et d'Hopperus*, 187-188; Verheyden, 'Chronique de Pierre Gaiffier', 28.

58 Brussels, SAB, inv. 1724, Resolutieboek, ff. 99v-101v, 105 and 106v; Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 38, f. 68r-v; *Dagboek van Jan de Pottre*, 24-25; A. Wauters, 'Episodes de l'histoire de Bruxelles: Commencements des troubles de religion, sous Marguerite de Parme', *Trésor National* 4 (1842) 62-63. Compare with *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 448 and 451; *Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche* I, 159-169. Both Guicciardini and Gaiffier give other details that are not confirmed by other sources. See *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, 274-275; Verheyden, 'Chronique', 31.

might have approximated Bruges' and Kortrijk's six guilders.⁵⁹ In Leuven finally, the recruitment of 200 *knechten* also took off in early September, again with the consent of the governess.⁶⁰ Here, however, the financial organisation does not seem to have created problems: from the outset it was agreed that both the city and the university would contribute an equal share. The necessary funds were brought together, supported by donations from 'good citizens', among others, and on 10 September the men accepted were advanced one *Philipsdaalder*, while they were promised a monthly pay of five guilders.⁶¹

On the effectiveness of the measures taken

Perhaps somewhat too straightforwardly, Guicciardini states that the soldiers in Brussels and Leuven were paid so that they could not be corrupted by the Beggars, but it is very reasonable to assume that the pay indeed mattered.⁶² On a monthly basis, the soldier's average salary of six guilders approximated the wages of carpenters or mason's labourers in Lier and Brussels for the same year.⁶³ In a period with reputedly high unemployment rates, such wages must have had a considerable appeal. Yet, as the examples of Bruges and Brussels suggest, the financial organisation of these armies was not easy and some cities probably were not able to establish them at all, forcing these towns to set up an unpaid citizens' guard. Furthermore, in several places the Catholic population took matters into their own hands in order to offer stubborn resistance to iconoclasts, whether on the instigation of the local authorities or not. A telling example is the town of Veurne. Although it closed its gates, a number of iconoclasts succeeded in entering and started to cause devastation, but the inhabitants quickly managed to drive them out.⁶⁴ Less glorious, but apparently equally effective, was to chase the attacking iconoclasts away with

59 On 7 September, the city planned to collect 2,000 guilders to pay the soldiers half their salary straight away, which suggests a monthly pay of four guilders. However, on 30 October the city requested the governess finance one month's pay, amounting to 7,500 guilders, suggesting a higher pay of 7.5 guilders. Brussels, SAB, inv. 1724, Resolutieboek, ff. 101 and 106v.

60 *Correspondance française de Marguerite d'Autriche* 1, 159.

61 One *Philipsdaalder* equalled 2.5 guilders, so for a short period the monthly pay approximated six guilders. Leuven, SAL, inv. 299, Resoluties, ff. 258v-262 and 264. Compare with *Lettere di Giovan*

Battista Guicciardini, 274; Molanus, *Quatorze livres* 1, 442 and 11, 885.

62 *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, 275.

63 Respectively 7.35 and 4.725 guilders. Calculations based on figures in the database of the Global Price and Income History Group (Davis, University of California), taking 21 working days a month. D. Jacks and L. Arroyo Abad, 'Belgium Wages 1366-1603' (2005), <http://gpih.ucdavis.edu/> (2 October 2015).

64 Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 55, ff. 110-111; J. Scheerder, 'Le mouvement iconoclaste en 1566 fut-il spontané ou prémédité?', *Miscellanea Tornacensia: Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 1 (1951) 300; Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm*, 82-83 and 100.

dung, which the inhabitants of Hoorn used successfully.⁶⁵ These examples illustrate the importance of the local dominance of the reform-minded for the Iconoclastic Fury to be effective: where they were not, they often had difficulties carrying out their plans. Quite logically, a correlation between the degree of success of rising Protestantism and iconoclasm has already been advanced by several scholars.⁶⁶

However, this does not work both ways, and the reality was much less straightforward than that. In several of the *villes bonnes* reformed communities actually existed and the iconoclastic scare evoked in the many letters by Morillon and the governess, among others, were doubtlessly fed by real threats. The Calvinist congregation in Bruges for instance, massively and openly showed itself in public in spring 1566 and in Brussels too, the Calvinists were well organised by this 'Wonder Year'. The example of the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula mentioned above is illustrative, but the report by Councillor Josse de Bracle made for the Council of Troubles gives plenty of other examples of threats expressed.⁶⁷ As a result of many contacts with Protestant centres, the university town of Leuven also saw considerable support for reformed ideas. An important trial in 1543 counted 42 persons accused of Protestantism, and military security measures had to be taken during both the legal proceedings and executions.⁶⁸ Finally, though slightly destabilised by 1566, the Calvinist community in Lille, was one of the first in the Netherlands, making it an important reformed centre.⁶⁹ Furthermore, although varying locally, iconoclasm really could come completely from out of town. The example of Diksmuide already cited is a case in point. When the notorious minister Sebastiaan Matte sent a small army to the city, demanding that they be let in, the magistracy stubbornly refused: and although the population appears to have been predominantly Catholic, they feared bloody reprisals and put pressure on the magistrates to let them do their job. This

65 Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 109, ff. 363-365. Other examples in Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm*, 20-21, 35 and 51; Verheyden, 'Chronique', 5 and 24; DuPlessis, *Lille*, 210; J. Pollmann, 'Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: Clerical Leadership and Catholic Violence 1560-1585', *Past & Present* 190 (2006) 95.

66 Duke and Kolff, 'The Time', 324; Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm*, 58-59, 109-110.

67 On Bruges, see especially A. Dewitte, 'Chronologie van de reformatie te Brugge en in het Brugse Vrije (1485-1593)', in: D. Van der Bauwhede et al. (eds.), *Brugge in de Geuzentijd. Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Hervorming te Brugge en in het Brugse Vrije tijdens de 16de eeuw*

(Bruges 1982) 39; Vandamme, 'Het Calvinisme', 107. De Bracle's report is in Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 38, see especially ff. 14, 15, 16, 17v, 42, 73v, 85v. See also G. Marnef, 'Het protestantisme te Brussel, ca. 1567-1585', *Tijdschrift voor Brusselse Geschiedenis* 1:1-2 (1984) 57-61.

68 R. Van Uytven, 'Bijdrage tot de sociale geschiedenis van de Protestanten te Leuven in de eerste helft der xvie eeuw', *Mededelingen van de geschied- en oudheidkundige kring van Leuven en omgeving* 3:1 (1963).

69 M.-P. Willems-Closset, 'Le protestantisme à Lille jusqu'à la veille de la révolution des Pays-Bas (1521-1565)', *Revue du Nord* 52:205 (1970); Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm*, 64.

indeed seems to have happened, but later on the magistrates explicitly declared that there had been no citizens involved.⁷⁰

All this is indicative of the complex and heterogeneous character of the events in August and September 1566. Although a general survey of the steps taken by the cities that did suffer attacks is lacking, at first glance it is surprising to observe that quite a number of these cities nevertheless took similar measures as the ones described above. In Amsterdam for instance, the magistrates decided to close the city gates at several times in early August to prevent inhabitants from attending the hedge-sermons, and though in Antwerp and Ghent the gates were not closed, aldermen and dignitaries stationed themselves there to persuade the population not to go.⁷¹ In Ypres the magistracy ordered the gates be closed, but in fact this was not done hermetically so iconoclastic acts could be carried out.⁷² Besides, in their later *Mémoires justificatifs* various cities cited the poor condition of city walls, including Diksmuide, Ronse and Ghent, the latter's ramparts having been gravely diminished by Charles V as stipulated in the *Concessio Carolina*.⁷³

An intensified surveillance over strangers was also instituted in cities such as Breda, Antwerp and Oudenaarde, and in the latter two innkeepers were obliged to report the presence of strangers.⁷⁴ On top of these measures, a number of towns actually tried to organise a system of defensive citizens' guards. As a reaction to rumours that public preaching would be organised in town, Amsterdam worked out an emergency plan, but the militia did not agree, with the result that the government was powerless and iconoclastic attacks took place anyway. Interestingly, the very next day the burgomasters agreed to recruit 40 or 50 citizens who would be paid a 'reasonable salary'.⁷⁵ Something

70 Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 55, see particularly ff. 49v-52v, 58-62. See also Scheerder, 'Le mouvement', 299-300; idem, *Beeldenstorm*, 27; Backhouse, *Beeldenstorm*, 99-100.

71 P. Scheltema, 'Resolutiën der Amsterdamsche vroedschap, bij den aanvang van de openbare prediking der hervormden te Amsterdam', *Berigten van het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht* 4:2 (1851) 60-64; *Antwerpsch Archievenblad*, X.P. Génard (ed.) (Antwerpen 1879) 341-344; M. Delmotte, 'Het Calvinisme in de verschillende bevolkingslagen te Gent (1566-1567)', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 76 (1963) 147.

72 Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm*, 29-30; Arnade, *Beggars*, 129-130.

73 For Diksmuide, see Brussels, ARA, CT, inv. 55, f. 49. For Ronse, see *Mémoire justificatif du magistrat de Renaix*, H. Raepsaet (ed.) (Ghent 1853) 24 and 27.

For Ghent, see *Verslag van 't Magistraet van Gent, nopens de godsdienstige beroerten aldaer [...]*, K. De Volckaersbeke (ed.) (Ghent 1850) 5, 12, 19 and 25. On the relation between the *Concessio Carolina* and iconoclasm in Ghent, see also Arnade, *Beggars*, 151-152.

74 For Breda, see A.J.M. Beenakker, *Breda in de eerste storm van de opstand. Van ketterij tot beeldenstorm* (Tilburg 1971) 67-73. For Oudenaarde, see *Mémoire justificatif du magistrat d'Audenarde*, D.-J. Vander Meersch (ed.) (Ghent 1842) 19. For Antwerp, see Antwerp, City Archives (hereafter SAA), 1563 (Troebelen 1565-1567). Ordonnantie vanden wake, 13 August 1566; *Antwerpsch Archievenblad*, X.P. Génard (ed.) (Antwerpen 1879) 341-345.

75 Scheltema, 'Resolutiën', 64-67; H. van Nierop, *Beeldenstorm en burgerlijk verzet in Amsterdam 1566-1567* (Nijmegen 1978) 29.

similar happened in Ghent. On 21 July, Margaret of Parma suggested that Ghent reorganise its inhabitants ‘par compagnies et quartiers comme vous avez de costume pour vostre garde et assurance en temps dangereulx’.⁷⁶ The magistrates started their organisation, but soon met with resistance from numerous social groups. In vain they tried to establish guard patrols of citizens, but this met with little enthusiasm, not only because of reformed convictions, but also because of confessional neutrality or self-interest of the inhabitants. The day before the iconoclastic attacks started, the magistrates decided to recruit 600 soldiers, but they were only operative from the 25th, three days too late. Similar temporary militia were planned in Ypres, but finally they proved impossible to organise.⁷⁷ Lastly, both Antwerp and Breda decreed an *ordonnantie vanden wake* by order of William of Orange. In Antwerp, this was based on the civic duty of the inhabitants, merchants included. The ordinance stipulated who and how many men must guard what and where they must gather, but unfortunately it is not clear to what extent this all was put into practice.⁷⁸

In all probability, it was not clear to the civic governments what precisely would happen and how, and consequently it was difficult to predict which measures would be effective. The locally differing character of the *Beeldenstorm* further confirms this assessment. All these observations help to problematise the clichéd idea that in cities where the magistrates acted there was no iconoclasm. Of course, cities with a nearly complete Calvinist government, such as Valenciennes or Tournai, soon went over to iconoclasm: but this was not the case everywhere by any means, and although the magistracies played an important role and further research into their respective cohesion, religious convictions and functioning might shed additional light on why and whether they acted or not, their decisions were not always accepted with no problems, as is clearly illustrated in the case of Diksmuide for instance. Due to the absence of a strong central authority in the Low Countries, they all had to work out their own stance and policy themselves.⁷⁹ Guicciardini repeatedly asserts that due to *Madama* the situation was under control in several places, but that was clearly too laudatory a judgment.⁸⁰ Various cities asked the central government for help or advice, but what they got was generally some evasive answers or vague suggestions, in any case no particular orders. Telling is the example of Ghent. On 17 August,

76 *Verslag van 't Magistraet van Gent*, 95-97; Delmotte, ‘Het Calvinisme’, 146-147.

77 Extensively discussed in Delmotte, ‘Het Calvinisme’, respectively 148-153, 173, n. 5 and 155. Compare also with the letter of 21 August of the Ghent magistrates to their pensionary in Brussels: *Verslag van 't Magistraet van Gent*, 134.

78 Beenakker, *Breda*, 67-73; Antwerp, SAA, 1563, Troebelen (unnumbered; 7, 9 and 13 August 1566).

Compare with *Correspondance du Cardinal de Granvelle*, 422.

79 Deyon and Lottin, *Casseurs*, 165-172; G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY 1977) 79; Woltjer, ‘De Staten’, 54.

80 *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini*, 267, 274 and 277-278.

the day after the churches in Ypres had been attacked, the magistracy sent its pensionary Joos Borluut to Brussels to request assistance from both Margaret and Egmont. The letters Borluut sent to Ghent on the two subsequent days however, clearly state that neither of them had a remedy ‘om in eene zaeke zo subitelyck upcommende zo haestelick te voorsiene’.⁸¹

Conclusion

In their *Mémoires justificatifs* the magistrates of cities that underwent iconoclastic attacks later presented themselves as vulnerable and powerless, and although these self-justifying sources should be regarded with the necessary caution, there certainly is some truth to it. Peter Arnade quite aptly characterised them as ‘middle-of-the-road men in a sea of evangelical furor’.⁸² For Antwerp, it has been argued that by 1565-1566 Calvinism had grown so popular that it became impossible for the magistracy to intervene without potentially provoking social unrest in the city.⁸³ The magistrates indeed depended on various social groups in their towns and on the willingness of the local population to cooperate. The example of Ghent has already been mentioned, but in Antwerp too, William of Orange noted the lack of respect of the citizens for the magistracy around mid-August.⁸⁴ More precisely, since it was virtually impossible to receive military support from Brussels, the magistrates were almost completely dependent on the willingness of the civic militia. If they were willing to cooperate, it was possible to ward off attacks, but if they refused the magistracy quickly found itself in a very awkward position.⁸⁵ For example, in Amsterdam, ’s-Hertogenbosch, as well as in Hulst, the city government wanted to act in response to the news of the fury that had reached neighbouring towns, but due to the unwillingness of the militia they were completely impotent, with the result that these cities were eventually all hit.⁸⁶ While in Ghent the stance of the guilds was dubious and unreliable, in Antwerp and Ypres they straightforwardly refused to hinder the open-air preaching.⁸⁷

Although the crisis of authority certainly was one of the causes of the precarious situation, and whether iconoclasm took place or not depended greatly on the reactions of local citizens, this article sheds light on the steps taken by the urban governments. In Bruges the militia were found willing to help, but nevertheless the city felt compelled to put up an extraordinary

81 *Verslag van 't Magistraet van Gent*, 119-129, quote on 122.

82 Arnade, *Beggars*, 132.

83 G. Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de Reformatie. Ondergronds protestantisme in een handelsmetropool, 1550-1577* (Amsterdam, Antwerp 1996) 119-124.

84 *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne*, 195-196.

85 Duke and Kolff, ‘The Time’, 329 and 332; Parker, *Dutch Revolt*, 79.

86 Scheerder, *Beeldenstorm*, 65 and 69.

87 Delmotte, ‘Het Calvinisme’, 148-150 and 155-156.

temporary civic army of 500 men, close a significant number of the city gates and keep a close eye on foreigners, indicating that the magistracy was not at ease at all.⁸⁸ The same goes for Brussels and Leuven that, in spite of the presence of respectively the court and the Catholic university that in part might perhaps account for their escape, took action in order to leave nothing to chance. Indeed, the fact that all these measures were taken in the cities discussed in this article makes clear that the iconoclastic scare was real, and that they all, to a greater or lesser extent, suffered genuine threats. Looking back, it seems that they took the right decisions at the right time, which in the end awarded them congratulatory letters from the distant king. Yet some of the measures they took were also taken in other towns that did suffer attacks. These cities were dubbed *mauvaise* and some of them we still consider as having been struck by the *Beeldenstorm*, while in some cases the destruction or removals went on in a rather orderly manner and sometimes even under the watchful eye of the magistracy. Therefore it seems desirable to adopt a more flexible framework when we assess the 1566 *Beeldenstorm*, which certainly was no all-destructive wave, since important towns spread over the various Habsburg Netherlands did not proceed to iconoclasm. What happened where can better be understood if each case is scrutinised individually, rather than applying all-inclusive and *a posteriori* categories. A pluralist view with attention to particular tendencies in different localities allows us to get rid of these and shed light on the essential nuances between iconoclasm and Iconoclastic Fury, between touched and untouched. Thus it is possible to get a better understanding of what was at stake.

In conclusion therefore, it should be emphasised that it is impossible to pinpoint one explanation for why the *villes bonnes* discussed in this article were able to escape the *Beeldenstorm*. Yet studying them by means of various source types has made two things clear. First, partially because of a perceived link between hedge-preaching and iconoclastic threats, there was a striking overall focus on strangers and unknown intruders. Through various measures, civic governments wanted to keep them out, which suggests that to some extent it was believed that they were the source of the troubles, and that consequently the *Beeldenstorm* came from out of town. Second, it is notable that some of the measures taken in the untouched cities to some extent were also put in practice in towns severely hit, which helps to nuance the assertion that if the magistrates acted nothing happened. In fact, they found themselves in very awkward positions between a moody population and an absent and indecisive central government that provided no specific orders or support. In the end, some cities proved to have taken the right decisions to ward off the threats, but in the final analysis even in the *villes bonnes* these brave attempts eventually appeared to have been in vain, when in later years many of the churches that were once saved were now purged for Protestant services.

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