

2011

The Allied Occupation of Madrid in 1710: A Turning Point in the War of the Spanish Succession

Carla R. Phillips

University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, phill002@umn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs>

Recommended Citation

Phillips, Carla R. (2011) "The Allied Occupation of Madrid in 1710: A Turning Point in the War of the Spanish Succession," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 35 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1007>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol35/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* by an authorized editor of Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. For more information, please contact jesus@udel.edu.

The Allied Occupation of Madrid in 1710: A Turning Point in the War of the Spanish Succession

CARLA RAHN PHILLIPS
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Introduction

Anniversaries provide the opportunity to take a fresh look at historical events and to ask if the standard interpretations of those events make sense. In Spanish history, 1710 is an interesting case in point. Three hundred years ago, the first Bourbon king of Spain, Felipe V (a.k.a. Philippe of Anjou, a grandson of Louis XIV of France), was fighting to retain his throne, offered to him in the will of the last Habsburg king, Carlos II. Most of the other states in Europe, including Portugal, supported the Habsburg pretender, Archduke Charles, largely through fear of Bourbon power.

It was hardly a secret that Louis XIV hoped to establish Bourbon hegemony in Europe and overseas, to supplant the declining Habsburg hegemony. The series of wars instigated by the French king between 1672 and 1697 made his ambitions clear and drove erstwhile enemies together to block those ambitions. Although Louis gained a number of small territories in the Spanish Netherlands from those wars, the costs far outweighed the gains. As the century drew to a close, Louis shifted tactics, seeing a larger prize in the offing. When it became likely that Carlos II of Spain would die without an heir, the French king entered into more-or-less-secret negotiations with other European states to divide up the Spanish empire in Europe and abroad.

At the Spanish court, factions swarmed around the moribund king, trying to influence his choice of an heir. Because the Spanish Habsburgs had intermarried with many other royal houses over the course of two centuries,

several potential candidates could claim dynastic legitimacy, and each candidate had supporters in Madrid. Despite Spain's long history of contention with France, in his last will Carlos named the teenaged Philippe of Anjou as his heir. This grandson of Louis XIV had impeccable dynastic credentials. The Spanish Habsburgs had intermarried with the French Bourbons (and the Valois before them) for generations, often as part of the settlement of diverse wars. Louis himself was a great-grandson of Felipe II of Spain, and his mother and his first wife were both Spanish Habsburgs. Nonetheless, Carlos's choice caused shock and consternation throughout Europe. France's enemies and rivals could foresee the whole of the Spanish empire becoming part of Bourbon hegemony, greater and more powerful than the preceding Habsburg constellation of power. Consequently, an anti-Bourbon coalition went to war in 1701 to oust Felipe V, backing the claims of the Archduke Charles Habsburg, an appealing figure with equally strong dynastic credentials.

In 1700, the Spanish ambassador to France, the Marquis of Castellidosrius, had assured Louis XIV that the Spanish people would gladly accept his grandson as their king. Castellidosrius was right about Castile, but ultimately wrong about his native Catalonia. The young Bourbon king was hardly a popular choice in Castile, but in general the power structure and the populace were willing to abide by the will of their dead king. The same held true at first in Catalonia in the eastern Crown of Aragon, which had enjoyed considerable autonomy as Habsburg power waned at the center. Nonetheless, early intimations of the imposition of centralized control by the young Bourbon king alarmed the Catalan political leadership. When the allies invaded Catalonia in 1705, the Catalans joined the Habsburg cause, providing the anti-Bourbon coalition with a major foothold in Spain.¹

As a result, a few years into the war, the anti-Bourbon forces combined English and Dutch sea power; the armies of the Habsburgs, England, and the Netherlands; plus Portugal and Catalonia in Iberia. As the struggle continued, King Felipe's position eroded, and the anti-Bourbon allies were able to occupy Madrid itself—if only briefly—in 1706. Louis XIV withdrew material support for his grandson in 1709, fearing that he would lose the war. By the spring of 1710, almost no one expected the young king to hold onto his throne, not even his grandfather. Louis XIV entered into negotiations to accept a Habsburg accession in Spain and to usher Felipe V into some other kingship.

¹ See José Manuel de Bernardo Ares, *Luis XIV Rey de España. De los imperios plurinacionales a los estados unitarios (1665-1714)* (Madrid: Iustel, 2008), which includes a large body of archival documents.

Events proved otherwise. In 1710, France reentered the war, which ended in 1714 with Felipe still on the throne. He would reign until his death in 1746, with a brief parenthesis in 1724, as well as fathering three subsequent kings of Spain and the first rulers of two new Bourbon dynasties in Italy. The question is: What turned the tide in his favor? In standard histories of the War of the Spanish Succession, particularly in English-language scholarship, Spain and Spanish America appear as the bones of contention, rather than as two of the dogs in the fight. In other words, many of the anti-Bourbon allies hoped to further their own colonial ambitions in the Americas if the Habsburg pretender won the throne of Spain with their support. Other allies hoped to increase their influence in Italy if Bourbon Spain was defeated and stripped of its European lands. Following that line of argument, historians see the turning point of the war in 1711, when the Habsburg pretender to the Spanish throne also became the likely choice for Holy Roman Emperor. Facing the specter of a revitalized Habsburg hegemony in Europe, the ardor of the anti-Bourbon allies cooled, and the war wound down. In that formulation, events in Spain and Spanish America were almost irrelevant to the outcome.

Against that standard interpretation, I would argue that the year 1710 marked the crucial turning point in the war, based on three developments in Spain: the ill-fated occupation of Madrid by allied armies in the fall of 1710; the inability of the Portuguese army to reinforce the occupying forces in Madrid; and the resounding Bourbon victories at Brihuega and Villaviciosa as the allied armies withdrew toward Aragon in December. Central to all of those developments were the actions and attitudes of the citizens of Castile, whose support for their young king and queen was crucial to the outcome.²

The young Bourbon king Felipe V, seventeen years old when he accepted the Spanish crown in 1700, married María Luisa Gabriela of Savoy in November of 1701, when she had just turned thirteen. Born in Turin, she was the daughter of Victor Amadeus, duke of Savoy, and both of her parents were part of the Bourbon dynasty. Moreover, María Luisa Gabriela's sister had married another grandson of Louis XIV, so the marriage of Felipe and María Luisa Gabriela added yet another

² I have dealt elsewhere with events in Spanish America during the war: *The Treasure of the San José. Death at Sea in the War of the Spanish Succession* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Spanish translation (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2010).

strand to the ties binding the Bourbons together. The marriage was consummated in Barcelona, but Felipe sailed from that port for Italy a few months later to defend his throne, leaving María Luisa Gabriela as regent. Louis XIV had designated several trusted figures to advise the teenaged monarchs, among them the Princess of Ursins as the queen's premier lady in waiting (*camarera mayor*).

The princess was born into a noble French family as Marie-Anne de la Trémoille in 1642. Her second marriage into the Orsini (Fr. Ursins) clan in Italy left her in a position to broker the marriage of María Luisa Gabriela of Savoy to Felipe V. It is common to portray the princess as the dominant figure at the Spanish court, working to ensure that the queen, and through her, the king, acted in the interests of France. That is true enough, but it is important to remember that the queen was extraordinarily young and had enormous responsibilities to bear, especially after her husband sailed for Italy. Ursins was sixty in 1702 and served as a surrogate grandmother for both Felipe and María Luisa Gabriela. Intrigues roiled the court in Madrid as leftover bureaucrats from the last Habsburg administration contended with the new Bourbon appointees for influence, and the Princess of Ursins was always in the thick of it, portrayed as a sinister figure by most historians.³ Nonetheless, there is no doubt that she was a staunch supporter of the young king and queen, as well as enjoying the confidence of Louis XIV and his second wife, Madame de Maintenon.⁴

There is also no doubt that Queen María Luisa Gabriela had a mind of her own and an acute political sense. She wrote regularly to Louis XIV in her own hand, treating him with the utmost respect but also with a familiarity born of the multiple connections between the House of Savoy and the French royal family. Her own father, Victor Amadeus, had joined the anti-Bourbon coalition in 1702, so it is no wonder that she thought of Louis XIV as the best hope for her husband's cause. In the first few years of the war, with Felipe absent most of the time with the army, she presided over endless sessions of the governing council in Madrid and appeared almost daily on a balcony of the royal palace, often reading letters to the crowds from her husband. She endeared herself to the citizens of Madrid, who nicknamed her "La Saboyana" and viewed her more as the loyal young wife of a soldier fighting for the integrity of Spain than as the queen. Moreover, she worked hard to rally support and funds for the Bourbon cause in Castile as a whole and helped to win the enthusiastic loyalty of many aristocratic

³ See, for example, José-Antonio Vidal Sales, *Felipe V* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1997), *passim*.

⁴ For a favorable biography of the princess, see Mme. Saint-René Taillandier, *La Princesse des Ursins. Une Grande Dame Française à la Cour d'Espagne sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1926).

families that were lukewarm at the start of her husband's reign. In fact, it is fair to say that she was more effective than Felipe V in winning that loyalty.

Even with French support, Felipe's armies could not prevent the first allied occupation of Madrid in 1706, after the court fled the capital and the dowager queen María Ana of Neuburg took it upon herself to send a capitulation from Toledo to the allied armies, in effect authorizing them to occupy Madrid. Faced with the hostility of the citizenry, the allies soon abandoned the capital, and king Felipe re-entered the city in triumph, but he took revenge against any nobles who had supported the Habsburg pretender and against Catalans in general, regardless of their individual actions. As a result, the Habsburg pretender solidified his support in Catalonia and elsewhere in the Crown of Aragon, while the citizens of Castile and nearly all of the Castilian nobility held firm for King Felipe and his queen.⁵ The birth of an heir in August of 1707, named Luis in honor of Louis XIV, secured the Bourbon succession in Spain, but only if Felipe could win the war.

With treasure fleets arriving from New Spain in 1708, the king could afford to pay his grandfather for continued French aid. In 1709, however, a shortage of funds, an economic crisis brought on by bad weather and poor harvests, and gains by the anti-Bourbon coalition, persuaded Louis XIV to withdraw material support for his grandson, much to the dismay of the king and queen, as well as the Princess of Ursins. Even worse, the Spanish high nobility was in a state of near revolt over Felipe's harsh reprisals against some of their number.⁶

By the spring of 1710, the situation was desperate. In mid-June, the Bourbon army lost a series of bloody skirmishes at Almenara in Aragon. On August 20th at the Battle of Zaragoza, an allied army of 30,000 shattered a Bourbon army of about 19,000, leaving the capital open to occupation once again.⁷ King Felipe retreated to Madrid. On September 7th he decided that the royal family and the whole administrative apparatus of his monarchy should move to Valladolid, though he permitted anyone who wished to do so to remain in

⁵ A contrary view argues that only the Catalans showed real commitment to their cause, whereas the support for Felipe V was lukewarm at best. *Crónica de España*, 2 vols., (Madrid: Plaza & Janés, 1994), 1: 505.

⁶ Catherine Désos, *Les français de Philippe V. Un modèle nouveau pour gouverner l'Espagne (1700-1724)* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2009), 299.

⁷ Carlos Martínez de Campos y Serrano, Duque de la Torre, *España bélica. El Siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1965), 85.

Madrid.⁸ The exodus took place on September 9th —involving some 30,000 people in all. Although that number seems astonishing, it comes from an official count taken in Valladolid to gauge the proportions of the influx and its effect on local resources at a time of economic distress.

A week later, the allied armies approached Madrid with the Archduke Charles Habsburg, styling himself King Carlos III. Count Guido von Stahremberg led the Habsburg army, and James Stanhope led the British army, joined by Portuguese, Dutch, and Catalan contingents. Most general histories note only that Charles and the allied forces left Madrid for Barcelona scarcely two months later, after his unpopular decrees provoked popular resistance.⁹ There is actually much more to the story than that.

A well-known commentary on the early decades of Felipe's reign was written by Vicente Bacallar y Sanna (1669-1726), a Sardinian nobleman, soldier, diplomat, and later official chronicler for Felipe V, who designated him as the Marquis of San Felipe in 1709. Bacallar includes a lengthy description of the 1710 occupation of Madrid in his *Comentarios*,¹⁰ written years after the fact in his official history, but nonetheless vivid and based on seemingly reliable sources. Less known is an unsigned manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional, copied for the Duke of Osuna, which provides an eyewitness's diary of the occupation of Madrid in 1710.¹¹ As far as I can tell, none of the standard histories of the war included this diary in their research.¹²

Both accounts make clear that the Castilian population was hostile to the Habsburg pretender from the moment he left Aragon. According to Bacallar, the citizenry “abandoned their towns, drained the water supplies, and burned forage and provisions, even those they needed for their own sustenance,” just as they had done in 1706.¹³ That they would do so again in 1710, after nearly a decade of warfare and at a time of poor harvests, provides ample evidence of their hostility toward the allied invaders, and presumably of their support for Felipe V.

⁸ Vicente Bacallar y Sanna, Marqués de San Felipe, *Comentarios de la guerra de España e historia de su rey Felipe V, el Animoso* [Texto impreso], Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 99 (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1957), 204.

⁹ *Crónica de España*, 1: 506.

¹⁰ Bacallar, *Comentarios*, 198-213.

¹¹ “Relación diaria de todo lo sucedido en Madrid, desde el día 20 de Agosto, hasta el día 3 de diciembre de este año de 1710. en que S.M. entró en su Corte,” in a manuscript volume titled *Papeles curiosos en prosa y verso de los años de 1710 y 1711* (BN, Ms. 10.907), fols. 15-29.

¹² For example, no mention of the manuscript appears in Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain, 1700-15* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1969), in which the author lists all of the archival sources he consulted.

¹³ Bacallar, *Comentarios*, 205.

In Valladolid with the king, virtually every member of the high-ranking Spanish nobility (*grandes*) signed a letter to Louis XIV, assuring him of their steadfast loyalty to Felipe V and their affection toward Louis himself, and urging the French king to continue supporting his grandson.¹⁴ The *grandes* sent their letter to the Duke of Alba, Spain's ambassador to the French court, along with a cover note emphasizing the dire circumstances the Bourbon cause faced in Spain. Louis responded warmly to the *grandes* a few days after Alba transmitted their letter, but he made no promises, since most of the reports he was receiving held out almost no hope for his grandson.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Louis soon dispatched the Duke of Vendôme to Spain to gauge the situation.

In Madrid, the remaining population might have welcomed Archduke Charles, or at least pretended to do so, but they did not. General Stahremberg entered the capital a week before the archduke, in order to prepare for a joyous formal entry. He and his army encamped at Canillejas, on the northeast outskirts of the city. General Stanhope and his forces encamped at La Florida, on the banks of the Manzanares River at the western edge of the city. On September 28th, the formal entry took place. Charles and his entourage followed tradition by approaching from the southeast, paying their respects at the roadside shrine (*humilladero*) of Nuestra Señora de Atocha. The gesture was tinged with irony, however; a few days earlier, an English horse regiment had looted all the previous royal banners from the Virgin's shrine, and news of the outrage had quickly spread throughout the capital.¹⁶

From the *humilladero*, Charles and his entourage proceeded northwest up the Calle de Atocha toward the royal palace. But instead of cheering throngs and balconies decorated with banners and tapestries, they faced virtually empty streets, with shops closed and buildings turning a blind eye to the street, bolted and shuttered. The capital was not totally deserted, but it might as well have been. With only a remnant of its population, and very little in the way of government structure, the citizens of Madrid nonetheless resisted the second occupation of the capital, just as they had resisted the first. Charles, disheartened by what he termed "a court without people," turned east onto the Calle Mayor at the Puerta de Guadalajara, instead of continuing to the royal palace, and headed back out of town along the Calle de Alcalá.

The situation only worsened thereafter. Archduke Charles had no illusions about his tenuous situation. A "kissing of hands" arranged on October 1 for his

¹⁴ A copy of the letter from the *grandes* appears in *Papeles curiosos*, fol. 1v.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. 4r-6v.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. 17v-18r.

25th birthday turned into an embarrassing demonstration of how little support he enjoyed in Madrid.¹⁷ A loyalist cavalry contingent led by Don José Vallejo intercepted a letter from the archduke to his wife in Barcelona, complaining that the citizens of Madrid did not support him and that only three men of distinction had joined his side, and they had neither money nor authority.¹⁸ Among the opposition, the aged and revered Marquis of Mancera, who had chastised King Felipe for his rigid policies, nonetheless responded coldly to entreaties to join the Habsburg cause. According to Bacallar, he told an emissary from the archduke, “that he had no more than one faith and one king, and since the latter was living he could not pledge his loyalty to another; moreover, as he was now close to the grave, having surpassed the age of 100 years, he did not wish to put this black mark against his name.”¹⁹

The noblewomen in the capital responded to the occupation in a variety of unpredictable ways. Some paid their respects to Charles, especially those whose husbands were fighting with the archduke’s armies, though they and their families continued to reside in Madrid. Others stayed at home to passively demonstrate their hostility to the pretender. Many noblewomen corresponded with relatives near and far to aid one side or the other, or to keep a foot in both camps. In fact, Spanish noblewomen were involved in all the political machinations of the day, for a complex range of motivations that defies simple analysis. As Jean Amelot, one of Louis XIV's emissaries in the Spanish court, had written to the French king in August of 1707, “...the women [...] are much worse and more dangerous than their husbands.”²⁰

Stahremberg and Stanhope evidently agreed. On October 12, Stahremberg ordered all the noblewomen in Madrid to pack up within four days and leave for Toledo, which was garrisoned with allied troops, most of them British. The majority of the noblewomen obeyed the order, moving into monasteries in Toledo; others stayed in Madrid, defying the order behind closed doors. Their male relatives, attending King Felipe, were outraged when they learned of the forced relocation and virtual house arrest of their wives and other family members.

¹⁷ “Relación diaria,” in *Papeles curiosos*, fols. 19v-20r.

¹⁸ Bacallar, *Comentarios*, 207.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁰ Désos, *op. cit.*, 296, citing AECP, Esp., 169, fol. 205, Amelot to Louis XIV, 29 Aug 1707.

In mid-October, the occupying forces expelled all remaining partisans of King Felipe from Madrid, along with French citizens and others of dubious loyalty. The remaining residents received orders to hand over all weapons and horses to the occupying forces or face execution.²¹ The citizens did their best to ignore most of the orders, but they could not easily hide their horses. The few noblemen who remained in Madrid, mostly the aged and infirm, were supposed to pay their respects to Archduke Charles by the end of October, but almost none did so. Those who complied were held in contempt, not only by Spaniards loyal to Felipe, but also by Stanhope and Stahremberg, who considered them to be opportunistic cowards and sycophants.²²

It was clear to Archduke Charles that he could not hold his position without the occupying armies. Don José Vallejo and his cavalry intercepted another letter, this time from Charles's wife in Barcelona, with the bad news that an attempt to conquer the city of Valencia in his name had failed. According to Bacallar, "Don Jerónimo de Solís brought these letters to King Felipe in Valladolid, who ordered them read in public, along with his expressions of gratitude to the Castilian people."²³

By then, France was back in the war, and the Duke of Vendôme had taken over as Captain General of the Bourbon armies in Spain. Reportedly, Louis XIV had offered him 50,000 *escudos* for his personal expenses, but Vendôme replied that he had sufficient funds of his own for the campaign and hoped not to have to trouble the Spaniards to contribute to his upkeep—an attitude sure to please the hard-pressed citizenry.²⁴ In less than two months, Spanish commanders had regrouped much of the army shattered at the Battle of Zaragoza, as well as adding new recruits. By October, the reconstituted army may have numbered some 22,000 men.²⁵ With other Spanish forces on the Portuguese border, and 15,000 seasoned French troops arriving in Navarre under the Duke of Noailles, Vendôme could plan his strategy.

The allied forces occupying Madrid were waiting for a Portuguese army to join them before trying to conquer the rest of Castile. It was Vendôme's task to prevent that from happening. Old, fat, slovenly, and indolent, he could nonetheless rise to greatness when the occasion demanded. Rather than trying to dislodge the occupying armies from Madrid, Vendôme and the king left

²¹ Ibid., fols. 20v-21.

²² Bacallar, *Comentarios*, 207.

²³ Ibid., 207.

²⁴ Martínez de Campos, *España bélica*, 87, citing Bellerive, *Campagnes de Mr. le Duc de Vendôme*, 8.

²⁵ Ibid., 209.

Valladolid on October 3, leading a forced march to the west, in order to block the bridges that the Portuguese would need to cross the Tagus River.²⁶ At the same time, the queen and the infant Prince of Asturias, along with most of the court nobility and the government tribunals, traveled from Valladolid to Vitoria in Navarre in the far north.

The bridge over the Tagus at Almaraz, near the Portuguese frontier, had been built in 1537, and there was no way to march a large army and its equipment into Castile without it. The huge Bourbon force and King Felipe settled in to defend the bridge, supplied with food by local townspeople and villagers, despite their own privation. Smaller contingents guarded the bridges at Alcántara and Puente del Arzobispo. As a result, the Portuguese army was stymied.

In Madrid, Stahremberg and Stanhope waited in vain for the Portuguese, at first unable to find out what was causing the delay and facing ever shorter rations for their men as time wore on. A key element in their predicament was the harassment by two loyalist cavalry contingents operating near Madrid, one led by Don José Vallejo and the other by Don Feliciano de Bracamonte. Bacallar calls them “men of the utmost valor, expertise, and fidelity to Felipe V,” noting that, against the occupying armies, they could count on “as many spies as there were residents in the towns and villages in the vicinity.”²⁷ The loyalist cavalry blocked the northern mountain passes into the capital, attacked enemy soldiers who ventured away from their camps, captured convoys of food requisitioned from the countryside, and intercepted communications to and from Madrid. Aided in all of these endeavors by the local citizenry, they effectively isolated the armies occupying Madrid.

On October 29th, the Duke of Vendôme sent a letter to General Stahremberg, as one military commander to another, protesting the exile from Madrid of the Spanish noblewomen and their house arrest in Toledo.²⁸ Stahremberg responded curtly that those actions were designed to protect the ladies in question, and that he would release them ‘when their husbands were freed’—implying that the nobles supporting King Felipe were equally constrained.²⁹

Meanwhile, the occupying armies in Madrid had fallen into bad habits, with tacit encouragement from their leaders. Both Bacallar, at second hand, and

²⁶ Ibid., 88.

²⁷ Bacallar, *Comentarios*, 207.

²⁸ A copy of the letter from Vendôme appears in *Papeles curiosos*, fols. 9v-11r.

²⁹ Bacallar, *Comentarios*, 207.

the anonymous diarist, at first hand, chronicle their debauchery; looting; drunkenness; and desecration of buildings, holy images, and sacramental objects revered by the local Catholic population. Both authors blame German, English, and Dutch ‘heretics’ for most of the damage, and Bacallar takes pains to say that the Archduke Charles would never condone such insults to the religion that he shared with Spaniards. Nonetheless, soldiers from all the occupying forces participated in the looting and vandalism.³⁰ The result was to drive the local population ever deeper into opposition to the Habsburg pretender. Citizens balked as much as they dared at providing food, fuel, and other supplies demanded from them; time was on their side.

Once Stahremberg and Stanhope, the commanders of the allied armies occupying Madrid, learned why the Portuguese had not arrived, and with winter approaching, they called a council of war to decide what to do. Clearly, their armies could not stay in Madrid. By the first week of November, they had used up all the grain confiscated from the city’s storehouses, monasteries, mills, and private homes; every day brought fresh outrages as the soldiers foraged for food.³¹ The leaders of the occupation decided to decamp for Toledo, on the pretext of moving Charles’s government there, but actually as a prelude to retreating into Aragon. On November 9th, they ordered all the new officials appointed to government posts by Charles to leave for Toledo, as the troops would not remain in Madrid to protect them, and they would be “exposed to the insults of children.”³² On November 11th, Charles rescinded the decree that had exiled the noblewomen to Toledo—reiterating that the measure had been intended for their protection—and freed them to return to Madrid or to go wherever they chose.³³

The allied armies did not stay long in Toledo, though Stahremberg made a show of having trenches dug, as if preparing for a long defense of the city. When his forces left Toledo on November 23rd, the citizens immediately closed the gates and proclaimed for Felipe V from the ramparts. The departing troops could hear the taunts, but they just kept going.

By then, relations between the two principal allied commanders were so strained that the various contingents marched far apart from one another. As Bacallar describes the withdrawal, the Portuguese and Palatines marched in the vanguard, the Germans and Dutch in the center, and the English in the rear, with the Catalan cavalry guarding the flanks of the center. Stahremberg was the only

³⁰ “Relación diaria,” in *Papeles curiosos*, fol. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, fols. 25v-26r.

³² *Ibid.*, fols. 26v-27r.

³³ *Ibid.*, fols. 28r-28v.

officer that they would all obey, but the various contingents were strung out at a great distance from one another. According to Bacallar, some of the soldiers went off on their own to rob nearby villages or steal cattle. “Many did not return and remained as victims of the hatred of the peasants.”³⁴ None of the allied commanders expected the Bourbon army to pursue them. That was a fatal mistake.

Immediately upon hearing that the occupying armies had left Madrid for Toledo, King Felipe and Vendôme marched the army eastward from Almaraz. Instead of following them, their Portuguese adversaries simply went into winter quarters, ending the threat from the west. The Bourbon army, supposedly numbering some 25,000 men by then, was near Toledo when Vendôme and the king learned that Stahremberg was withdrawing toward Aragon. With fresh troops eager to avenge the defeat at Zaragoza, they marched quickly in pursuit. After cavalry contingents made sure that Madrid was secure, King Felipe and Vendôme entered the capital on December 3, stopping first at the *humilladero* of the Virgen of Atocha, and then proceeding by coach toward the royal palace. As Bacallar describes the scene,

the multitude of the people who had come out to see him, bless him, and acclaim him [was so great] that the coach could scarcely make any headway along the road; although the distance was not more than half a league, it took many hours for them to arrive at the palace. The streets and fountains were adorned with the most exquisite decorations, and that night fireworks and illuminations followed, and [the people displayed] such universal joy, presaging the most favorable events.³⁵

In the meantime, the Bourbon army marched to overtake the retreating allies, and the cavalry units of Bracamonte and Vallejo harassed Stanhope’s rear guard. Vendôme rejoined his troops on December 6th. That evening, Stanhope took his army into the town of Brihuega, preparing to cross the river Tajuña by daylight. To cut Stanhope off from Stahremberg and defend the river, Vendôme sent part of his army beyond Brihuega during the night. After a brief skirmish on the morning of the 7th, Stanhope realized that he was trapped. He sent word to Stahremberg, by then far ahead, and then supervised a heroic effort to trench, mine, and otherwise fortify Brihuega against the approaching Bourbon armies.

³⁴ Bacallar, *Comentarios*, p. 212.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 212-13.

King Felipe and his army left Madrid at dawn on the 7th; the vanguard arrived at Brihuega midday on the 8th and thereafter bombarded the town walls with heavy artillery, but they failed to open a breach sufficient for a full assault. The rest of the king's army reached Brihuega on the morning of the 9th. He and Vendôme knew they had to attack before Stahremberg arrived. Despite Stanhope's best efforts, the Battle of Brihuega on December 8-9 was a crushing defeat for the British. Bacallar notes that Stanhope's troops had committed many thefts and acts of sacrilege in Toledo, whose patron saint was St. Leocadia. They were defeated at Brihuega on Dec. 9th, her saint's day. "Though heretics will laugh at that," Bacallar added, "the fact is certain: Providence does not include coincidence, nor does divine justice forget."³⁶ Stanhope finally surrendered after dark on the 9th of December, along with a reported 4,800 British soldiers and two other generals. Armed guards escorted the prisoners in various directions into the interior of Castile, with orders to keep marching all night and the next day without stopping. Stanhope himself would remain in Spain for two years as a prisoner of war.

The situation did not improve for the allies. Once Stahremberg received news of the fighting in Brihuega, he turned back with 17,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry to aid Stanhope. They kept marching until December 10th, unaware of Stanhope's definitive defeat. Vendôme prepared to receive Stahremberg's army on an exposed hill near Villaviciosa de Tajuña, with 10,000 infantry, many of them new recruits, and 9,000 cavalry, including the units of Bracamonte and Vallejo. Stahremberg bombarded the Spanish position with heavy artillery but did not attack. Vendôme guessed that Stahremberg planned to keep his distance and then withdraw the next day to Aragon, so he ordered an immediate attack on the afternoon of the 10th.

The subsequent Battle of Villaviciosa was very costly in terms of human life, and military analysts call it indecisive. Many of the untried Spanish infantry units fled as the fighting intensified, but the furious assaults of the Spanish cavalry, and the persistence of a few key infantry units, kept Stahremberg's army at bay. At nightfall, he withdrew to the woods, where the Spanish cavalry could not pursue him, and held a council of war. According to Bacallar, many of Stahremberg's officers wanted to surrender, but Stahremberg decided to see what the morning would bring. King Felipe spent the night on the battlefield, surrounded by the dead and wounded, with captured battle standards piled around his carriage.

³⁶ Ibid., 215.

On the morning of the 11th, though Stahremberg could see only the Spanish cavalry units, he decided to withdraw his remaining troops toward Aragon, traveling through wooded areas wherever possible. Though the Spanish cavalry officers wanted to block the route into Aragon and resume the battle, Vendôme judged that too risky. Instead, José Vallejo's cavalry unit continued their harassing tactics and captured the artillery and baggage trains of the entire retreating Habsburg army. According to Bacallar, no more than 6,000 men remained with Stahremberg after the Battle of Villaviciosa. Though Stahremberg would claim victory once he reached Barcelona and blame Stanhope for his losses, it is clear that the battles of Brihuega and Villaviciosa were disastrous for the anti-Bourbon allies.³⁷

News of the events quickly traveled to Britain and France. Britain's Queen Anne and her advisers had limited objectives in the war. All along, they had made clear that they would contribute men and funds only to seat Archduke Charles on the throne of Spain; it was up to his other supporters to keep him there. That is why British commanders had insisted on occupying Madrid in 1706 and in 1710, against the advice of other allied commanders. After the disasters connected with the occupation of Madrid in 1710, neither the British nor the Dutch would commit more troops to support the Habsburg pretender's claims. They would lose interest in those claims altogether when Charles became the top candidate for the imperial crown in 1711. Nonetheless, I would argue that 1710, not 1711, marked the turning point in the war. By then, the astute political sense of Queen María Luisa Gabriela—matched sporadically by that of her husband—and the latter's personal bravery, had won the loyalty of Castile, something that could not have been predicted in 1701 when the anti-Bourbon allies initiated the war. Without Castile, the allies could not conquer Spain.

Historians usually credit General Vendôme's leadership for the military successes of 1710, and that was undoubtedly very important. However, the element that ensured those successes was the unwavering support of the Castilian population for their young king and queen. Vendôme witnessed and trusted that support, or he would not have urged Louis XIV to re-enter the war. Even when the monarchs and the government fled Madrid in 1710, the capital held firm. Long before the occupying armies entered the capital, they had already lost the battle to win the loyalty of the Castilian population. Once they settled into the city, their own bad behavior, the harassment of loyalist cavalry units, and the actions and attitudes of ordinary citizens made it impossible for them to remain.

³⁷ Ibid., 215-218.

The inability of the Portuguese army to cross into Castile to join the occupying forces, and the Bourbon victories at Brihuega and Villaviciosa were also influenced by the actions and attitudes of local populations in support of the Bourbon armies. In sum, events in 1710 remind us that Spain was central to the War of the Spanish Succession; it was not merely a prize in the broader global conflict.