

The Low Countries, the Arms Trade and the British Civil Wars

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All sides in the British Civil Wars- Scottish covenanters, Irish Confederates, parliamentarians and English, Irish and Scottish royalists - relied on imported arms to a considerable extent. Indeed, if access to the continental arms market had not been available, the conflicts may not have begun when they did and certainly not in the form they took. (Participants, of course, might have insisted on fighting, if only with clubs and pitchforks!) An analysis of the pre-history of the conflicts might lead historians to think not that the contending parties were reluctant to fight but rather that they were busily arming themselves in preparation for war. Massive consignments from abroad found their way to the Scottish covenanters and to the Irish insurgents in spite of naval blockades, and at home parliamentary and royalist supporters were being similarly supplied. Arms came in from many sources, from Italy in the South to Sweden and Norway in the North. In this traffic, the Low Countries had a dominant role, both as a manufacturing area and as a distribution centre for arms made elsewhere.

I

This is not to say that there was not a native arms industry and under the pressure of war it did develop. It was concentrated in south-east England for easy access to its main customer, the Ordnance Office, and its magazine in the Tower of London.¹ The manufacture of

¹ R.W. Stewart, *The English Ordnance Office: A Case-Study in Bureaucracy*, Royal Historical Society, (The Boydell Press 1996), pp.6-7.

ordnance and munitions was located in the countryside; cannon founding was based in the Weald and gunpowder making in Surrey. In the 1630s, protected by royal patents to ensure their monopoly, the output of John Brown, the king's gunfounder, and Samuel Cordwell, the royal gunpowder maker, was considerable.² Production of weapons, on the other hand, was a more modest affair, organised in a typical handicraft way, and concentrated in the capital, often in the streets in and around the Tower.³ There were, of course, people, who could make arms, living in the provinces; many blacksmiths and cutlers, for instance, were capable of turning out serviceable, if unsophisticated, weapons, if called upon. Ironmasters could manufacture pike heads and cannonballs. Birmingham was an important centre for firearms and swords⁴ and Bristol was the home of an illicit gunpowder making industry.⁵ In addition, military bases and arsenals supported small knots of workers, who exploited local opportunities for manufacture and repair. In January 1639 Sir Jacob Astley recorded that there were four gunsmiths at Hull, one of whom made very good firelocks.⁶ Because of the nature and locale of the native arms industry, the Scottish and Irish insurgents had more restricted access to home-produced arms. In Scotland, scattered references reveal the existence of an arms industry there but, although comparatively widespread, its output was not particularly large. The most significant development was the establishment by Alexander Leslie of a foundry to make ordnance at Potter Row in Edinburgh, the guns produced there having a considerable bearing on the outcome of the Second Bishops' War.⁷ In

² M.Hewitt, *Victoria County History, Kent*, III, (London 1932), pp.386-7; L.F. Salzman, *Victoria County History, Sussex*, II (London 1907), pp.246-7; P. Edwards, 'Gunpowder and the English Civil War', *Jnl. Arms & Armour Society*, XV,ii, (1995), p.111.

³ P. Edwards, 'Logistics and Supply', in J.Kenyon & J.Ohlmeyer, (eds.), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England, Scotland and Ireland 1638-1660* (Oxford U.P. 1998), pp.245.

⁴ W.M. Stern, 'Gunmaking in Seventeenth-Century London', *Jnl. Arms & Armour Society*, I, v (1954), pp.55-6.

⁵ B.J. Buchanan, 'The Technology of Gunpowder Making in the Eighteenth Century: Evidence from the Bristol Region', *Trans. Newcomen Society*, 67, (1995-6), pp.128-136.

⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (C.S.P.D.)*, (1638-9), p.310.

⁷ J.Spalding, *The History of the Troubles ... in Scotland and England ... I* (Edinburgh 1828) p.88; M.C. Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars: Charles I's campaigns against Scotland 1638-1640*, (Cambridge U.P.,1994), p.58.

Ireland, arms production amounted to little more than casting some ordnance and bullets, as well as making small quantities of munitions and weapons.⁸

The native arms and armaments industries, however, were not in a particularly good shape on the eve of the conflict. The country had been at peace for a number of years and in a business acutely sensitive to the fluctuating demands of war and peace, production had languished. It was difficult suddenly to increase output. In December 1639, when the King was thinking about arming a force of 60,000 foot and 3,000 horse, (the bulk of the weapons for which still to be made) the armourers said they could do the job but not until late 1643.⁹ Moreover, many craftsmen and artisans, removed from the stimulus that war had brought to the industry on the continent, had not kept abreast with developments in weapons technology; in particular, there was a shortage of gunmakers who could fashion weapons with flintlock or wheellock mechanisms. Only in two areas did the native product enjoy a European wide reputation, namely in the casting of iron cannon and in the breeding and rearing of horses, both for the saddle and for the draught. With regard to cannon, in 1619 over half of John Browne's output was bought by the Dutch, by men like Elias Trip, who between 1612 and 1622 exported 200 to 300 cannon from England every year. During the course of the early seventeenth century, however, exports slumped in the face of the emerging Swedish industry, developed in the 1620s and 1630s with Dutch capital and expertise. By the time of the Irish insurrection England was a net importer of cannon and among those willing to supply the goods were the Trips.¹⁰

II

From the outset all sides found it necessary to buy arms abroad and

⁸ I am grateful to Dr. Pdraig Lenihan for providing me with this information.

⁹ Fissel, p.100.

¹⁰ P.W. Klein, 'The Trip Family in the 17th Century', *Acta Historiae Neerlandica*, I, (1966), pp.196-7; P. Edwards, 'The Supply of Horses to the Parliamentary and Royalist armies in the English Civil War', *Historical Research*, 68, (1995), pp.55-6.

on a massive scale. The Scottish covenanters began to prepare for war in the summer of 1638 and looked for foreign supplies. Links with Sweden and Denmark, notably among serving officers and the mercantile communities, were exploited to good effect and by the end of the year arms shipments had arrived at Leith.¹¹ Other consignments came from the United Provinces, especially from Middleburg and from Veere, the Scottish staple port, in Zeeland.¹² On 10 June 1639 the loyalist, Sir Patrick Drummond, Scottish Conservator at Veere, writing with a sense of frustration, noted the openness with which the supporters of the covenanters were shipping out *matériel*. "These are to show your Lordship that our people are as bussie as euer they were transporting armes & puder to Scotland, which is as well knowne to the generall estates, & those of their admirall Courts as to those who doe it."¹³ The Dutch imposed a ban on the trade the following year but the order was openly flouted.¹⁴ In the summer the King bitterly complained to Joachimi, the Dutch ambassador, about a consignment of twenty cannon that had been sent from Zeeland to Scotland.¹⁵ Thomas Cunningham of Veere, together with his associates, James Weir and James Eleis, were particularly active, buying large amounts of arms and armaments in the Netherlands and sending them to Leith. For one consignment in 1640 thirteen ships were needed.¹⁶ (Table 1)

The Irish insurgents initially fought with their own weapons, augmented by those seized from the strongholds they overran. It was not long, however, before arms shipments arrived from abroad,

¹¹ S. Murdoch, *Scotland, Denmark-Norway and the Bishops' Wars, 1638-1640*, unpublished paper, Scotland, Ireland and the 'Awkward Neighbour, 1603-1668, given at a conference at Aberdeen University, 6 September 1998, *passim*.

¹² For Veere, see J. Courthope, ed. *The Journal of Thomas Cuninghame of Campvere 1640-1654*, *Scottish History Society Publications*, 3rd. series, XI (1927), *passim*; for Middleburg, I am grateful to Michiel de Jong who gave me data transcribed from documents in the Dutch National Archives (A.R.A., The Hague), Resolutions of the Zeeland Chamber of the Admiralty (Z.C.A.), inv. nrs. 2461, 2464.

¹³ Scottish Record Office, Hamilton Papers, GD406/1/1115.

¹⁴ S. Groenveld, *Verlopend Getij* (De Bataafsche Leeuw, Dieren 1984), pp.108, 142.

¹⁵ J. de Hullu, *De archieven der admiraliteitscolleges* (A.R.A., The Hague 1924), nr. 2586, 7 June 1640.

¹⁶ A.R.A., The Hague, Z.C.A., inv. nr.2461, 2464; Cuninghame pp.53-5,64-5.

especially from co-religionists in northern France, Spain and the Spanish Netherlands. In November 1641 the Irish Council heard that the Catholics were expecting arms and supplies from the Low Countries¹⁷ and over the winter of 1641-2 there were persistent reports of ships being prepared at Dunkirk to transport soldiers and arms to Ireland.¹⁸ The government suspected that the Spanish authorities were actively involved in gunrunning, a belief strengthened by a rumour that reached London in January 1642 that a ship, laden with arms, was ready to leave Dunkirk, accompanied by a Spanish convoy.¹⁹ Cargoes did get through and by the summer the insurgents were far better equipped than they

**TABLE 1: Thomas Cunningham of Campvere:
arms shipments to the scots**

1640: to Leith			1642: to Leith			1644: to Leith & Newcastle		
12	brass 18 & 24 pounders	cannon:						
49982 lbs		cannon- balls						
95620 lbs		gun-powder				7000 lbs		gun-powder
123098 lbs	match				130022 lbs		match	
15416 lbs	refined	saltpetre						
15673		muskets	6000		muskets	10000		muskets
18013		bandoliers	6000		bandoliers	10000		bandoliers
52 pair	horse- men's	pistols				500 pair		pistols & holsters
6965		swords	10000		swords	12000		swords
		10000	sword	belts	12000	sword	belts	
		4000		pikes	4000		pikes	
32 pun- schions		Flour						
Cost	R. 212,821 7 sts	Cost	£10,316 13s. 4d.			Cost	R. 260,885	

Source: Jnl. of Thomas Cuninghame of Campvere 1640-1654, Scottish Hist. Society, 3rd. series, XI, 1927, pp.54, 65,95

¹⁷ *C.S.P.D., Ireland, 1633-47*, p.346.

¹⁸ *C.S.P.D., 1641-3*, pp.240, 245, 251-2; W.H. Coates et al, eds. *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament*, 1, 3 January - 5 March 1642 (Yale U.P., New Haven 1982), pp.50, 55, 60, 122, 274, 403, 413, 428, 435.

¹⁹ Groenveld, p.145.

had been initially. Wexford was a major point of entry and, according to loyalist intelligence, rebels had distributed the arms and munitions received there to their supporters throughout the kingdom "in great quantities".²⁰

In the face of these threats Charles I was also forced to make bulk purchases abroad. Initially, he used John Quarles, a merchant adventurer, resident in Rotterdam, who spent over £38,000 (including freight and £2391 in Dutch customs) on arms between 22 March 1638 and 12 May 1639. On 11 March 1639 Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador in Denmark, was instructed to buy thousands of weapons at Hamburg.²¹ Both consignments were inspected before shipment but on arrival in England, many were found to be deficient. A proportion of them probably were, but the Ordnance Office staff and the English arms makers, who examined them, had a vested interest in keeping imports down in order to boost home sales.²² Native producers were patronised but further shopping trips abroad were needed. In January the following year Sir Job Harby was sent to Flanders with £17,000 to supplement home-produced arms. He had put together a consignment by 26 April, the day that an export licence was granted him by the *Audiëntie*.²³ (Table 2)

In 1642, as relations between King and Parliament deteriorated, both sides began to amass arms and armaments, including weapons from abroad. In July, for instance, the royalist, Captain Strachan, brought the *Providence* up the Humber, loaded with four siege cannon and a great quantity of gunpowder and other ammunition from the Low Countries.²⁴ Among the records of the Amsterdam Chamber of the Admiralty thirty-eight extant licences to export arms to England exist for the months January to August 1642.²⁵ From these shipments it can be seen that ninety-two tons of

²⁰ Bodleian Library, Carte MSS, 3/fo.475.

²¹ Fissel, p.98; P.R.O., E351/2711.

²² Fissel, pp.98-100.

²³ Fissel, pp.99-100; *C.S.P.D.*, 1639-40, p.587; P.R.O., SP16/445/26; Belgian National Archives (A.R.A., Brussels), *Audiëntie*, inv. nr. 1060, fo.38.

²⁴ J.R. Powell & E.K. Timings, eds. *Documents relating to the Civil War 1642-1648*, *Naval Records Society*, (1963), p.19.

²⁵ A.R.A., The Hague, Resolutions of the Amsterdam Chamber of the Admiralty (A.C.A.), inv. nr. 1388.

gunpowder, nearly 150 tons of match and forty-four tons of sulphur came into the country, as well as a number of cannon and large (but unknown) quantities of weapons, shot and saddlery. Obviously, a proportion of the *matériel* went to the government, then dealing with the Irish insurrection, but royalist and parliamentarian supporters acquired some of it.

Importing arms brought obvious benefits but reliance on foreign supplies also caused problems, adding an uncertain element to the proceedings. It made the protagonists dependent upon outsiders, whose political and commercial policies might differ from their own. Charles certainly expected support from other rulers in his fight against his

**TABLE 2: Consignments sent by Quarles & Harby
from the Low Countries 1638 & 1640**

John Quarles 1638			Sir Job Harby 1640		
14	brass	cannon			
		mortars			
		cannonballs			
	hand	grenades			
		firestones	30 tons		match
8221		muskets	5000		muskets
2200		carbines			
2057 pairs		pistols	2150 pairs		pistols
12323		swords			
2599		pikes	2500		pikes
107		partizans			
8161	musket	rests			
8600		bandoliers			
10850	sword	belts			
1655		girdles & hangers			
			650 suits	cuirassier	armour
2010 suits	horsemen's	armour	1500 suits	harquebusier	armour
2844		corslets	2500	Foot	corslets
2037		saddles	500		saddles & furniture
2117	bridle	bits			
2010 pairs		stirrops			
104		drums			

assorted rebels, especially from those like Louis XIII of France, Christian IV of Denmark and Frederick Henry, the stadholder in the United Provinces, to whom he was closely related. However, they had to think about practical politics and in particular the effect that their actions would have on foreign affairs, notably the conduct of the Thirty Years' War. Moreover, they had to take into account the growing power of the English Parliament. Foreign merchants were more likely to pursue commercial considerations, regardless of the political stance of their government. For them, the British Civil Wars provided new opportunities to sell arms, the market for which had already been stimulated by the Thirty Years' War. Of course, the merchants, themselves, might be torn between two contrary impulses. Commercially, they might wish to trade with the royalists as well as with the King's opponents but politically many of them sided with the latter. Having put to sea, the dangers were not over; the ships might have to slip past a blockade or elude privateers and then face the vagaries of wind and tide.

III

The arms trade between the United Provinces and Britain provides a good example of all these issues. While the republic was undoubtedly the most important source of foreign *matériel* for the various warring parties, it could not be assumed that supplies would be automatically released. Indeed, the question of licensing exports came to head at the same time as the phoney war between King and Parliament ended in August 1642. Frederick Henry was sympathetic to the plight of Charles, whose daughter, Mary, had married his son, William, in May 1641 and, according to Professor Geyl, was intent on pursuing his dynastic ambitions on the back of the Stuart match.²⁶ He certainly provided Charles with more weapons than any crowned head did. Moreover, he put his own credit on the line to enable the English queen, Henrietta Maria, then at The Hague and intent on purchasing arms, to obtain a loan and to pawn the crown jewels.²⁷ Nonetheless, Professor Groenveld questions Geyl's interpretation of the stadholder's motives, believing that Frederick Henry was not a

Stuart partisan, and minimises the conflict of interests between him and the States-General. He concludes that in his arms dealings he only did (surreptitiously) what he felt obliged to do as a result of the marriage alliance. Indeed, he may have given Henrietta Maria arms as a means of getting rid of her.²⁸

For their part, the republicanism and protestantism of many Dutch merchants made them more favourably disposed to Parliament. In the 'Kloosterkerk' in The Hague and elsewhere prayers were offered up in favour of both houses and for the destruction of the King's evil councillors.²⁹ They certainly had little inclination to help Henrietta Maria to purchase arms. To stiffen their resolve Parliament sent over an envoy, William Strickland, in September 1642.³⁰ Addressing a meeting of delegates from the various provinces, he complained about the number of ships leaving Dutch ports, laden with arms for the King.³¹ At this juncture, the States of Holland took the initiative and ordered that all ships that were being fitted out for England should be detained.³² By 14 September three ships had been arrested, two parliamentarian and one royalist, though Strickland grumbled that the authorities only made a show of stopping the Queen's ship. Investigations also found that there were four other ships, with consignments of arms for Parliament, ready to leave.³³ Finally, on 1 November the States-General declared a policy of strict neutrality.³⁴ By the end of the year responsibility for policing the system was put into the hands of the Admiralties.³⁵

The prohibition proved to be ineffective, however. In particular, the merchants at Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the most prominent ports in the trade, soon broke ranks. Fearing the loss of trading opportunities

²⁶ P. Geyl, *Orange and Stuart 1641-72*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1969), pp.5-19.

²⁷ Geyl, pp.14-5.

²⁸ Groenveld, p.108.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.294, footnote 141.

³⁰ Geyl, p.16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.16; Groenveld, p.104.

³² Geyl, pp.16-7.

³³ G. Groen van Prinsterer, *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison D'Orange-Nassau*, 2nd. series, IV, 1642-50, (Kemink & zn, Utrecht 1859), p.71.

³⁴ Geyl, p.17.

³⁵ Groenveld, p.106.

and, as Professor Klein suggests, the capture of their markets by less fastidious rivals, they re-interpreted the declaration to read the right to distribute arms evenly to both sides.³⁶ Licences were easy to obtain. David Behangel of Amsterdam, an exporter of sword blades, deposed in April 1643 that the officials of the Admiralty consented to every request to ship weapons to England, adding that he had been allowed to do so many times.³⁷ As Dr. Groenveld notes, "the two largest towns connived at all kind of export of war material for Charles I as well as for Parliament".³⁸

In 1643 300 ships were said to have sailed to England from Amsterdam alone, each one making four trips a year.³⁹ While surviving licences from the Amsterdam Court of Admiralty only exist for the final four months of 1643 and do not record all the ships that sailed in that period, they do provide an indication of the scale of the traffic to Britain.⁴⁰ (Table 3) Other consignments left from Rotterdam and the Zeeland ports. Cunningham was still active at Veere, while at Middleburg merchants such as Stephen Forster were busily shipping over supplies. In five recorded consignments between 1 August 1643 and 19 October 1645 Forster sent to London 2100 lances, 1100 muskets, 340 pairs of pistols, 90 pairs of pistol casings, 50 carbines, 200 firelocks, 2000-3000 locks for firelocks, 100 hackbuts, 4000 lbs. of gunpowder, 12000 lbs of match and 1500 - 2000 lbs. of sulphur.⁴¹

The actions of the authorities in the United Provinces not only had an impact on the supply of their own arms and armaments but also affected the export of war materials from the southern Netherlands. The government in the south operated its own licensing system but trafficking in arms (either legally or illegally) clearly did take place. Thus, the Dutch blockade of Flanders, designed to hinder their enemy's trade and to suppress privateering activity, did disrupt the flow of weapons to the contending parties in Britain. Initially, the English authorities were keen

³⁶ P.W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw. Een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt*, (Van Gorcum, Assen 1965), pp.203-4.

³⁷ Amsterdam Municipal Archives (A.M.A.), Notarial Record (N.A.), 1066, 233: 5 April 1643.

³⁸ Groenveld, p.237.

³⁹ Groenveld, p.238.

⁴⁰ A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., inv. nr. 1399.

⁴¹ Cunningham, pp.64-67, 95-7; A.R.A., The Hague, Z.C.A., inv. nrs. 2463, 2465.

to enlist Dutch help to prevent arms and men being dispatched to the Irish insurgents. When, early in 1642, several ships were being fitted out, Parliament sent a request to the States-General via the Dutch ambassador, Joachimi, to use Dutch warships to prevent the flotilla from sailing. It also asked if in future it would stop all ships of any nationality sailing from Flanders to rebel ports. The States-General agreed to do so.⁴² In July 1642 the States-General tried to call in the debt by asking Parliament to impose a complete ban on trade with the Spanish Netherlands, arguing that to be effective the blockade had to be total.⁴³

**TABLE 3: Recorded Amsterdam arms licences:
shipments to Britain, 8 August - 31 December 1643**

Item	Amount	Measure
Gunpowder	c.31.25	tons
Match	46	tons
Sulphur	13.2	tons
Muskets	9680	
Rests	1600	
Bandoliers	6660	
Carbines	1150	
Shoulder belts	400	
Pistols	6190	
Holsters	2600	
Musket/pistol barrels	1200	
Powder horns	700	
Cannonballs	600	
Hand grenades	200	
Swords	600	
Sword blades	3615	
Sword belts	600	
Pikes	2500	
Halberets	100	
Armour	4020	suits
Helmets	100	
Saddles	140	
Rigging	700	schippond

⁴² Groenveld, p. 143.

⁴³ Groenveld, pp.147-9.

The Dutch blockade did have some success but it was not watertight. In practice, the Dutch could rarely bottle up the ports completely because of the cost involved, as well as the need for ships for convoy duties and for offensive action against the Spanish.⁴⁴ Flemish and Irish Catholic merchants continued to ply their trade. On 29 October 1644 Nicholas Everard and his associate, Jean de la Villette, listed as Dunkirk merchants but also operating out of Waterford, were given permission to export through Flemish ports 4000 muskets, 1000 pairs of pistols, 1000 carbines, 20000 lbs. of match and 600 barrels of gunpowder.⁴⁵ Royalists and parliamentarians also sought stocks of arms in the South and both sides asked the Dutch to allow cargoes to pass through the blockade. By May 1643 the constant stream of requests was beginning to have an effect for in that month the States-General again debated the merits of adopting an even-handed approach.⁴⁶ No firm decision was made, however, and captains and merchants still had to take their chance. Some ships did get through. In August 1643, for instance, a Dunkirk frigate, *The Lady of Assistance*, chartered by Daniel van Hecke, put in at Bristol with a consignment of small arms and other supplies.⁴⁷ Others experienced greater difficulty. In spring 1643 two London registered merchantmen, laden with arms and belonging to William Pennoyer and Richard Hill, merchants, were seized by Admiral Tromp as they left Dunkirk. The royalists insinuated that the cargo was bound for Spain and therefore contraband.⁴⁸ Parliament instructed the earl of Warwick to negotiate its release but "in such a way as no amity may be broken between the English and the Dutch nations".⁴⁹ In spite of further high-level negotiations, the ships remained impounded for another year.⁵⁰ The situation only

⁴⁴ J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World 1606-1661*, (Oxford U.P. 1986), pp.191-2, 267-271.

⁴⁵ A.R.A., Brussels, Audiëntie, inv. nr.1063, fo.211.

⁴⁶ Groenveld, pp.160-1.

⁴⁷ I. Roy, *The Royalist Ordnance Papers 1642-1646*, part 2, *Oxfords. Record Society*, XLIX (1971-3), pp.365, 507 fn.14.

⁴⁸ Groenveld, p.165, f.n. 222.

⁴⁹ B.L.Thomason Tracts, TT. E67 (22) Certain Informations 11-8 Sep. 1643, p.274; R.H. Lounsbury, *Pennoyer Brothers: Colontzation, Commerce, Charity in the Seventeenth Century*, (Dorrance & Co., Philadelphia 1971), pp.111-2.

⁵⁰ Pennoyer, pp.111-2; *C.S.P.D.*, 1644, p.334; *Commons Journals*, 3, pp.620-2.

really improved in the aftermath of a judgement made in the case of the ship, the *St. Michiel*. The ship, carrying arms collected by William Sandys, the King's factor in Flanders, sailed out of Dunkirk on 9 February 1644 and was promptly stopped by a Zeeland warship.⁵¹ In his defence the captain, Christiaen Robijn, claimed that as he was a resident of England and his ship was based at Weymouth, they were both neutral. Others said that he lived in Nieuwport in Flanders. Eventually, after several months it was decided that the key issue was the nationality of the ship. This meant that no English registered ship could be confiscated for carrying prohibited goods, though in practice they continued to be stopped to have their credentials checked.⁵²

The Dutch also had to deal with the threat to their trade posed by privateers operating out of ports in the Spanish Netherlands. Dunkirk was the main base and the headquarters for the operation. Government sponsored, the actions of the privateers formed part of a new design to defeat the rebels when war was renewed in 1621. Instead of the conventional strategy of using the army to recover lost ground, the Spanish government sought to destroy the basis of Dutch prosperity by attacking her mercantile and fishing fleets at sea.⁵³ There is some debate about the impact made by the 'Dunkirkers' but they certainly did cause damage to Dutch commercial interests and were especially disruptive of the North Sea herring industry.⁵⁴ But did they prevent arms shipments from the republic reaching the British Isles? As the bulk of the prizes taken were Dutch, some arms must have been lost.

The conflict between the Crown and Parliament complicated matters. In particular, it led to the seizure by one side or the other of Dutch ships thought to be trading with the enemy. In the peak year, 1644, twenty-nine Dutch ships or ships with Dutch-owned cargoes, were arrested by Parliament.⁵⁵ Those going to royalist ports were more vulnerable because of the greater distances involved and the necessity of passing through

⁵¹ *C.S.P.D.*, 1644, p.157; Groenveld, p.164.

⁵² Groenveld, pp.164-5.

⁵³ R.A. Stradling, *The Spanish Dunkirkers, 1641-48: a record of plunder and destruction*, *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis*, 93, (1980), pp.542-3

⁵⁴ Stradling, pp.544-556; Israel, pp.134-154, 190-6, 263-271.

⁵⁵ Groenveld, p193.

hostile waters. The royalists, on the other hand, gained some benefit from looser restrictions placed on them in the ports of the Spanish Netherlands. Some royalist privateers, for instance, were based in southern ports and sought out Parliamentary shipping or ships carrying goods to Parliament. On 14 March 1645 the Committee of the Both Kingdoms in London protested to the governor of Flanders about the activities of Captain Allein and his 'accomplices'. These rogues, they complained, were allowed "to issue in and out at their pleasure, and to make incursions and depredations upon our peaceful merchants and their friends ... bringing their booties into Ostend, and there disposing of the same without control".⁵⁶

IV

Why were the Low Countries so important in the arms trade? Firstly, there was the long tradition of arms production, especially in the South.⁵⁷ Liège was a noted centre, its development facilitated by local supplies of raw materials, a skilled workforce to process them, good communications with the outside world and an independent political stance.⁵⁸ In the mid-seventeenth century all kinds of war material were being made in the city but it was particularly renowned for the manufacture of firearms, edged weapons and armour.⁵⁹ Up to 200,000 firearms a year were made there. Arms of one sort or another were manufactured in other towns, notably at Antwerp, Brussels, Malines and Namur.⁶⁰ In the North arms production developed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, stimulated by the struggle for independence from Spain. The organisation of the business mirrored that of the south, with Amsterdam as the leading centre, followed by a clutch of other towns with narrower specialisations and lower levels of output. These included Utrecht for armour and grenades, Delft and

⁵⁶ *C.S.P.D.*, 1644-5, p.346.

⁵⁷ J.J. Murray, *Vlaanderen en Engeland*, (Antwerp, 1985), p.213.

⁵⁸ J.Yernaux, *La Métallurgie liégeoise*, (Mercatorfonds, Liège 1939), pp.17-20; C.Gaier, *Quatre siècles d'armurerie liégeoise*, (Walile, Liège 1977), p.31.

⁵⁹ Gaier, pp.35-8.

⁶⁰ Gaier, pp.18-21, 42.

Dordrecht for small arms, armour and gunpowder, The Hague for bronze guns and small arms and Gouda for match. Weapons were also made at Groningen, Maastricht, Nijmegen and Rotterdam.⁶¹

The Dutch, without the same natural resources as their southern neighbours enjoyed, had to rely to a greater extent on the import of raw materials. The ordnance and munitions manufacturers there were supplied with copper and iron from Sweden, saltpetre from Russia, Poland and Asia and sulphur from Sicily and Elba.⁶² Craftsmen, working in the small arms and armour industries, often assembled their ware from components brought in from outside: pieces of armour and parts for firearms from Liège and sword blades and pikeheads from Solingen.⁶³ Sometimes, a personal connection can be seen. David Behangel exported to England thousands of Solingen blades, no doubt an extension of an established business importing the ware into the United Provinces. He and his father had come to Amsterdam from Frankendaal, his birthplace in Germany, in 1624. In 1658 he attested that he had lived in Amsterdam ever since, except for a few trips to Germany, presumably to buy blades.⁶⁴

As in England, the arms industry did not have a single monolithic structure; whereas the ordnance and munitions branches tended to be organised on a large scale, weapons making with its small masters and workshops had the character of a handicraft industry. In the Spanish Netherlands gunpowder making was tightly controlled by the government and the monopoly of production given to certain individuals, notably members of the Curtius and Le Roy families. By law local officials in the early seventeenth century had to assist the patentees' saltpetre men and stop illegal transport of munitions. Illicit gunpowder works were to be pulled down.⁶⁵ By 1640 the Crown

⁶¹ H.P. Vogel, 'De Republiek als wapenexporteur 1600-1650', in J.P. Puype, ed. *Het arsenaal van de wereld*, (De Bataafsche Leeuw, Amsterdam 1993) p.13.

⁶² Klein, Trip Family, pp.202-7; M.Bogucka, 'Saltpeter Production and Saltpeter Trade between Gdansk and Amsterdam in the first half of the seventeenth century', in W.G.Heeres et al, (eds.), *From Dunkirk to Danzig*, (Verloren, Hilversum 1988), pp.167-170; Vogel, p.13.

⁶³ Vogel, p.13.

⁶⁴ A.M.A., N.A., 2119, fo.21v.

⁶⁵ V. Brants, *Recueil des ordonnances des Pays-Bas. Règne d'Albert et Isabelle 1597-1621*, I, 1597-1609, (Goemaere, Brussels 1909), pp 140, 184, 197, 235-6.

seems to have been directly producing gunpowder, employing Guillaume Gallé as its agent.⁶⁶ The manufacture of weapons, on the other hand, was dispersed in a number of small units; at Liège work was split up among numerous craftsmen and artisans, working in the so-called thirty-two corporations.⁶⁷ In the North there was the same basic divide. Wholesale merchants were particularly active in the production of ordnance and munitions, controlling every step of the process from the importation of raw materials to the sale of the final product. Because of the involvement of prominent merchants like the Trips it was heavily capitalised.⁶⁸ Weapons manufacture, however, remained craft based.⁶⁹

Home production was accompanied by a huge expansion in arms imports, many of which re-exported. By c.1620 Amsterdam, had joined Lübeck, Bremen and Hamburg as a staple market in arms and armaments.⁷⁰ The war against Spain provided the initial impetus because the immature native industries could not meet demand. The blockading of Antwerp helped too, diverting Liège goods along the River Meuse to Dutch ports. In the early seventeenth century Amsterdam became the most important outlet for the city's arms industries.⁷¹ The trade in arms also grew as part of the country's general commercial expansion in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Dutch provided an efficient service, offering a wide range of war materials at competitive rates. This naturally attracted foreign customers, further stimulating the trade.⁷² The development of the Swedish arms industries by Dutch entrepreneurs in the 1620s and 1630s gave the republic's arms trade an enormous boost. Louis De Geer is the key figure; by 1620 he was leasing ironworks, mines and factories and recruiting skilled workmen from the Low Countries,

⁶⁶ A.R.A., Brussels, N.A., Notary Ambrosius Seville, inv. nr. 3005, fos.259-259v.

⁶⁷ J. Yernaux, *La Métallurgie liègeoise et son expansion au XVIIe siècle*, (Thone, Liège 1939), p.80; Gaier, p.27.

⁶⁸ Klein, *Trips Family*, pp.196-202.

⁶⁹ Vogel, p.13.

⁷⁰ Klein, p.196.

⁷¹ Gaier, p.57.

⁷² Vogel, p.14.

especially from the Liège area, to increase production.⁷³ In the 1620s he formed partnerships with his in-laws, the Trips, who put up a good deal of the credit used to finance Louis's schemes. In return, they acquired large numbers of iron cannon, which they sold at Amsterdam.⁷⁴ Responding to demand Louis De Geer moved into the manufacture of armour in 1623 and firearms four years later and these products were marketed through Amsterdam too.⁷⁵ De Geer also dealt in Swedish copper, the commodity with which the Swedish government paid its debts, though Elias and Pieter Trip, either working alone or in partnership with Louis, were more important brokers. The latter exported copper to the Netherlands and established links with native gun founders. In Amsterdam they employed a gun founder almost permanently.⁷⁶

V

The people who furnished the arms and armaments to the rival forces were a mixed bunch. Some were British merchants operating out of home waters. For Parliament they included Londoners like the partners, William Pennoyer and Richard Hill, who, as noted above, exported arms from Dunkirk.⁷⁷ Another parliamentarian supporter, John Freeman, was a major supplier of match, some of which he made himself and some he obtained abroad. In April 1644 he shipped out of Amsterdam an unknown quantity of match. He also exported a range of weaponry; licences dated 23 February 1643 and 16 June 1644 refer to 2000 pairs of pistols, 600 muskets, 3200 pikes, 100 halberts and 1000 pieces of armour.⁷⁸ Among the royalists

⁷³ J.T. Lindblad, Louis de Geer (1587-1652): 'Dutch Entrepreneur and the Father of Swedish Industry', in C. Lesger & L. Noordegraaf, eds. *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market*, (Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, The Hague 1995), pp.79; V. Barbour, *Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century*, (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1950), pp.36-7.

⁷⁴ Klein, *Trip Family*, p.197.

⁷⁵ Lindblad, p.79.

⁷⁶ Klein, *Trip Family*, pp.200-4; Barbour, p.37.

⁷⁷ A.R.A., Brussels, Chambres des Comptes. Affaires domaniales et financières...Licentes 1640-96, inv. nr. 262.

were men like Sir Nicholas Crispe, an erstwhile customs farmer. Expelled from the House of Commons as a monopolist in 1641, he put his fortune at the disposal of the King, raising troops, equipping ships and buying arms abroad.⁷⁹ Provincial merchants were not unimportant either. The Eastern Association, for instance, obtained large quantities of arms from merchants like Thomas Toll of Boston and Bartholomew Wormall of King's Lynn. In the spring of 1644 Wormall received £8000 for arms and munitions he had imported from the Netherlands. Another East Coast merchant, William Sykes of Hull, supplied Hull, the Northern army and the Lincolnshire militia with arms valued at almost £10,000 between 23 November 1642 and 1 July 1643. He also gave on the Propositions nearly £2,500 in cash and £1,000 worth of arms.⁸⁰

Others were members of the expatriate community. In the war against Parliament Charles I received valuable support from partisans among the Merchant Adventurers of Rotterdam. John Webster, the most active of them all, resided at Amsterdam. He did business with foreign arms dealers, including Pieter Trip, and sent shiploads of arms to the King for fighting the Scottish covenanters and Parliament. He also ventured his own money and was instrumental in getting the King credit abroad. In particular, he was involved in the pawning of the crown jewels. Not surprisingly, he incurred the wrath of Parliament and on 6 June 1644 was one of the five members of his company outlawed as "incendiaries and enemies to the state".⁸¹ For Parliament, the licences issued by the Amsterdam Admiralty reveal the existence of a number of adherents. Henry Shuttleworth, an Amsterdam merchant, for example, dispatched regular shipments to England.⁸² The Scottish covenanters, as already noted, could rely on merchants like Thomas Cunningham of Veere and his partners, James Weir and James Elies, who provisioned the army in the Bishops' Wars, in Ulster and in England.

⁷⁸ A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., inv. nr. 1399-1400.

⁷⁹ Roy, Royalist Ordnance Papers, part 2, p.468.

⁸⁰ P.R.O., SP28/25,iv,fo.522; SP28/26,iv, fo.439; SP28/250, ii.

⁸¹ House of Lords Jnl (L.J.), 6, 1643-4, pp.619-21; Roy, Royalist Ordnance Papers, II, 517, fn 93; SP84/158; C.S.P.D. 1644, p.260, 273; C.S.P.D., 1644-5, p.502; *C.S.P.D., 1650*, p.320; *Cal. Clarendon State Papers*, I, p.432; Hamilton Papers, GD406/1/2501; A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., 1400; A.M.A., N.A. 701/551, 1480/85v.

⁸² A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., inv. nr. 1388, 1399- 1401.

Their links with the local community and with native manufacturers and merchants made these expatriates particularly valuable. In July 1644 Strickland had to admit the worth to the royalists of a man like John Webster, "who hath and doth furnish most of the Arms that go to those in Rebellion; whose credit is such as makes him very fit for his Employment in that Town, being allied to many in it of Note; but his Credit is likewise much in London, by whose Employments he gains well, whilst they suffer as much by his..."⁸³ Merchants such as Thomas Cunningham and John Webster were well integrated into their communities. Cunningham had been born abroad in 1604, presumably at Veere, where his father had settled and had become a factor at the Scottish staple port. The family played a leading role in the town and married local inhabitants. In 1625 Thomas married a Dutch girl, Apollonia de Mysters, by whom he had a large family. Most of his children similarly married into Dutch families and settled in and around Veere.⁸⁴ Cunningham was able to use his contacts to acquire arms and to gain financial support. The Lampsin brothers, merchants of Middleburg and Flushing, for instance, provided him with a good deal of money, if surreptitiously, because of the States-General's official policy of neutrality.⁸⁵ John Webster first appears in the Amsterdam notarial records in 1615. Two years later he married Jannetje Lucas at the New Church in Amsterdam. Although he dealt in a range of goods, he initially specialised in shipping salt from Setubal in Portugal, mainly to Yarmouth but also through the Sound. When hostilities recommenced in 1621 he moved into tin, becoming the agent of the English contractors at Amsterdam. In the 1630s he appears as a land holder as well as a merchant and eventually became lord of Wulverhorst, Kattenbroek and Schagen.⁸⁶

Each side also employed agents abroad, who worked among the

⁸³ *LJ.*, 6, 1643-4, pp.619-21.

⁸⁴ Cunningham, pp.xii-xiii.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.93-7, 152.

⁸⁶ For Webster's marriage: A.M.A. Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, registers, nr. 421/fo.210. For his career: A.M.A., N.A. 142/26v-28, 129v, 109, 93; 144/1, 212; 145/79, 85v, 142; 146/84-84v; 147/128; 151/17, 65v; 218v; 152/8v, 17v; 201/39-40, 120v; 351/157v; 662/2/44; 694B/60, 64; 669/2/24v; 739/3; 1113/330; 1132/37.

⁸⁷ A.R.A., Brussels, Chambres des Comptes, inv. nr. 1262.

mercantile and manufacturing communities in ports and industrial centres. They, too, might be British. At Dunkirk, William Sandys, was one of the King's energetic representatives. He negotiated with merchants for arms, receiving them himself or getting them to deliver the goods directly. From Dunkirk, he organised a number of shipments to royalist ports in north-eastern and south-western England. Often, local merchants were employed. William Pennoyer and Richard Hill, for instance, made use of Philippe de Pape, a merchant from Dunkirk. On the occasion when a consignment of theirs had been detained, the arms were stored in de Pape's house.⁸⁷

The bulk of the arms imports from the Low Countries, however, was foreign owned and shipped in foreign bottoms. Netherlands' merchants did business with all parties and travelled to all parts of the British Isles. According to Dr. Ohlmeyer, Ireland was a magnet for wartime profiteers.⁸⁸ Most of the licensed traffic leaving Amsterdam was in Dutch hands. The shippers fell into three categories. Firstly, there were the manufacturers, sending their own ware. These include local gunpowder makers like the Chardinels and Pieters Croock & Co. In the years 1640-2 the latter shipped nearly 180 tons of sulphur to England, France and other neutral countries and 2,130 barrels of gunpowder. Secondly, there were known arms dealers. Between February 1639 and January 1644 surviving licences record that Pieter and Jacob Trip and Laurens, Louis and Mathias De Geer exported nearly 250 cannon, together with large numbers of cannonballs and grenades, 10½ tons of match, 162 tons of gunpowder and 2¼ tons of lead, over 30,000 firearms, many with their accoutrements, 5,000 pikes, 5,300 swords and over 6,200 suits of armour. Finally, as can be discerned from other sources, there were general merchants, dealing in profitable and much sought after goods.⁸⁹

Merchants were primarily motivated by the lure of profit: Dutch merchants even traded with the enemy. It was said of gunrunning to Ireland that, although hazardous, it was worth the risk, since it was "as profitable a voyage ... as unto the East or West Indies". One who did

⁸⁷ J. Ohlmeyer, 'The Wars of Religion, 1603-1660', in K. Jeffrey & T. Bartlett, (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland*, (Cambridge U.P. 1995), p.184.

⁸⁸ A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., inv. nrs.1385-8, 1399-1400.

well there was the Flemish trader and money lender, Antonio Nicholas Vanderkipp, who supplied arms, munitions and victuals to the highest bidder and hired out transport vessels at extortionate rates to the Irish confederates, the royalists and the foreign powers operating in the country.⁹⁰ Sandys emphasised the need to entice the merchants. In a letter to Captain Strachan at Weymouth in January 1644 he wrote, "It is the price & Good payment and free permission to export all Commodities without Restraynt will make that port thriue and the kinge well supplied with Armes". He also emphasised the importance of furnishing the merchants with a return cargo. In May 1644 he suggested to Sir Hugh Cholmondeley, the governor of Scarborough, that in return for arms he might provide lead, wool and the finest northern cloths.⁹¹ Ready money was an inducement too. One of the reasons why some foreign merchants were reluctant to trade with the royalists was the experience gained from dealing with their officials. The latter, it was claimed, only accepted consignments when it suited them and paid for them at their leisure. Significantly, when the Queen sent 400 barrels of gunpowder to Exeter in May 1645, she had to pledge her own credit because the merchants were concerned that they would not be paid on arrival.⁹² Parliament, with its more secure financial resources, could more easily raise loans and make readier payment to suppliers at home and abroad.

VI

How vital were these imports to the various parties involved in the Civil Wars? They all relied upon them to sustain their war effort at a certain level but, undoubtedly, the degree to which they depended upon them did vary and might change over time. The Scottish covenanters, with a comparatively small manufacturing base at home, could not have waged war very effectively without the huge quantities

⁹⁰ Ohlmeyer, p.184.

⁹¹ *C.S.P.D.*, 1644, p.157; I Roy, *The Royalist Ordnance Papers 1642-1646*, part 1, *Oxfords Record Society*, XLIII (1963-4)p.38.

⁹² *C.S.P.D.*, 1644-5, p.469.

of weapons they acquired from abroad. When they intervened in the Civil War south of the border on the side of Parliament, they could also draw upon English material, a proportion of which was itself of foreign origin. The subsequent shift of alliance to the royalists forced them back onto their own resources and increased their reliance on imports. The Irish, using the element of surprise, initially obtained weapons from their enemy but failed to capture the all-important arsenal at Dublin Castle. In spite of controlling a large portion of the country they could not have carried on for very long if they had not received so many arms from abroad, especially from France and the Spanish Netherlands. The authorities in Ireland saw the danger and pleaded with the government to mount an effective blockade and to give them the necessary, money, men and arms to defeat the rebels before they acquired sufficient weapons.⁹³

To deal with both sets of insurgents the King had to obtain arms and armaments from abroad too. Gunpowder was particularly needed because of a fall in home production, partly caused by Charles I's manipulation of the monopoly for fiscal reasons. By the time that the Irish rebelled, virtually no gunpowder was being sent to the Tower.⁹⁴ There was also a shortage of home-produced match. Though George Fletcher, the contractor, signed an agreement in November 1639 to supply 100 tons of English match, he could only promise to begin delivery the following March. In January 1640 the Council of War, impatient with the delay, resolved to ask him to provide fifty tons of foreign match and to get him to make as much match as he could.⁹⁵ Surviving licences from the Amsterdam Admiralty for the period 23 February 1639 to 15 August 1642 record the transportation of about 160 tons of gunpowder, nearly 200 tons of match and some eighty tons of sulphur.⁹⁶ Moreover, in spite of the country's tradition in gunfounding, as many foreign cannon were brought into service in this period as home-produced ones. Indeed, some

⁹³ *Historical Manuscripts Commission (H.M.C.)*, Marquis of Ormond MSS at Kilkenny, N.S., II, (H.M.S.O. 1903) p.99.

⁹⁴ *L.J.*, 4, 316; *C.S.P.D.*, 1640-1, pp2, 280.

⁹⁵ *C.S.P.D.*, 1639-40, pp.135, 399.

⁹⁶ A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., inv. nrs. 1385-8.

350 bronze and cast iron cannon of various bores were shipped through Amsterdam alone.⁹⁷ Initially, the bulk of the hand arms were obtained from abroad, partly because home manufacturers were incapable of providing sufficient weapons in the time available and partly because the King did not wish to reveal his intentions by placing large orders on the London arms market.⁹⁸ However, as many of the weapons sent over by Quarles and Sir Thomas Roe were apparently unsatisfactory, the government sought supplies from native manufacturers, who had begun to respond to the increased demand for their products. Sir John Harby's shopping trip in Flanders in 1640 was designed merely to top up stock. According to a contemporary estimate (a somewhat optimistic one) over half of the arms were either in store or being made in England.⁹⁹

The loss of London to the parliamentarians during the course of 1642 made it difficult for the royalists to secure enough arms and armaments at home to fight a war. To supplement the weapons found in the armouries of supporters and in the magazines in places under their control, they therefore had to import arms on a massive scale. Even so, some of the soldiers who left Shrewsbury on 12 October were armed with cudgels and pitchforks.¹⁰⁰ Arms production was developed at Oxford and at other centres, notably at Bristol after its capture in July 1643. Although the evidence is patchy and often merely anecdotal, it seems as if the royalists, who had to start afresh, did reasonably well. In particular, they turned out large quantities of iron ware – cannon, cannonballs and pikeheads – using their ironworks in the West Midlands, the North-east, South Wales and the Forest of Dean. Moreover, by January 1644 Bristol artificers were producing 200 muskets with bandoliers and thirty pairs of pistols weekly.¹⁰¹ In addition, in one or two months in 1643–4 gunpowder production might have approached 100 barrels a month.¹⁰² Such figures were not sustainable, however, and output was much lower than that achieved by Parliament, even when allowance is made for the poor quality of the evidence. Munitions, for instance, always

⁹⁷ A.R.A., The Hague, A.C.A., inv. nrs. 1385-8, 1399-1400.

⁹⁸ Fissell, p.98.

⁹⁹ P.R.O., SP16/445/26.

¹⁰⁰ G. Parker, *The Military Revolution*, (Cambridge U.P. 1989), p.68.

¹⁰¹ British Library, Add MS 18980, fo.115; Roy, p.391.

¹⁰² Roy, *Royalist Ordnance Papers*, parts 1 & 2, *passim*.

seemed to be in short supply and, as a result, were prominent in the cargoes that came in from abroad. The shiploads of arms and armaments unloaded at north-eastern and south-western harbours, therefore, were vital to the prosecution of the war and without them the ability of the royalists to carry on the conflict would have been seriously impaired. The loss of these ports in 1644 and 1645 proved fatal to the King's cause.

Parliament should have been better placed to wage war. In the long term its control of the South-east and its arms industries proved an important asset, but at the opening of hostilities it had problems. Most of the leading officials of the Ordnance Office had joined the King at Oxford and in London the administration was in disarray.¹⁰³ Moreover, it had little gunpowder and none could be produced. When the King advanced on London in the autumn of 1642, the mills run by Samuel Cordwell, the ex-monopolist, at Chilworth were slighted by the parliamentarian, Sir Richard Onslow, and then destroyed again when the royalists retreated. Cordwell did not deliver his first consignment to Parliament until 25 April 1643, though John Beresford, a London grocer, was producing gunpowder at a site along the Lea Valley in January 1643.¹⁰⁴

**TABLE 4: Parliamentary gunpowder receipts Oct. 1642 - July 1643:
home production & imports (in barrels)**

Date	Home	Imports
1642: October		18
November		
December		44
1643: January		739
February	144	168.7
March	160	273.52
April	1078	380.5
May	99.83	197.24
June	160	12.25
July	480	

¹⁰³ Roy, *Royalist Ordnance Papers*, I, pp.11, 13-4; H.C. Tomlinson, *Guns and Government: The Ordnance Office under the later Stuarts*, Royal Historical Society, Studies in History, 15,(1979), p.8.

¹⁰⁴ *C.S.P.D.*, 1640, p.535; *C.S.P.D.*, 1640-1, pp.2, 280; *L.J.*, 4, p.316; *House of Commons Jnl. (C.J.)*, 2, pp.880, 960.

Imports from abroad, mostly from the Low Countries, helped bridge the gap. (Table 4) Even greater reliance had to be made on foreign match. Similarly, pressing need meant that most of the hand arms had to come in from abroad. Soon after the war began, two London merchants, Thomas Andrews and Stephen Eastwick, sent instructions to their factors in France and Holland to purchase 12,000 muskets and rests, 1200 carbines, 6000 pikes, 6000 corslets, 1500 pairs of pistols and 600 harquebuses.¹⁰⁵ As late as June 1643 merchants were still providing the bulk of the weapons used by Parliament. (Table 5)

Item	Home Production		Imports	
gunpowder	2121.83	barrels	1833.21	barrels
match	6	tons	78	tons
lead shot			6	tons
harquebuses			852	
muskets	600		5663	
rests	600		3934	
bandoliers			7714	
carbines	92		5825	
swivels	87		206	
belts			143	
pistols	478		6058	
holsters	612		1593	
cases	91		538	
spanners	117		722	
firearms			1900	
firestones			7000	
swords	1200			
piques			8428	
halberts	127			
halbert heads			40	
partizans	80			
armour	275	suits	3788	suits
corslets			6054	
other arms (value only)				£3307.18

¹⁰⁵ P.R.O., SP28/261,i,fo.284.

The situation gradually improved and by the end of 1643 home producers had begun to make a real contribution. By early 1645 native manufacturers were responsible for providing well over half of the arms and armaments that Parliament needed. Imports were still required, of course, especially items such as gunpowder, match and self-igniting firearms for which raw materials or the necessary skills were lacking at home. On 18 June 1644 Lord Fairfax, then at the siege of York, wrote to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, asking for "a speedy supply of gunpowder, match and bullet for my own and the Scotch armies in very great proportions ... for my own particular I must intreat a supply of muskets, pistols and carbines, concerning which I have often written".¹⁰⁶ Although over half of the gunpowder was made in the country, most of the saltpetre (and all of the sulphur) had to be imported. In addition, many of the swords had foreign blades. The equipping of the New Model Army marks a significant change for most of the business was put out to a comparatively small group of native contractors. As the Parliamentary armies rolled back the royalists, they could draw on the resources of the country to an ever-increasing extent, while at the same time denying them to the enemy. For the Irish and Scottish campaigns of the years 1649 - 53 they were able to procure the bulk of their supplies at home.

Imported arms were mainly valued because they were readily available. Indeed, because of large-scale troop reductions in the United Provinces in the late 1630s and early 1640s, there was probably surplus capacity in the country's arms industries, making manufacturers and merchants there more anxious to develop new markets.¹⁰⁷ Arms from the Low Countries, however, were not necessarily of better quality nor were they always cheaper. Strachan reckoned that an allowance of twenty per cent had to be made for transport costs, customs duties and profit. In a consignment of gunpowder and match delivered to King's Lynn and paid for in May 1644 the proportion paid out in customs, transporting and handling charges amounted to one-sixth. Out of a total cost of £283 8s. 5d., £23 16s. 8d. was paid for a shipping licence (7s.7d.), customs dues

¹⁰⁶ D.E. Lewis, *The Office of Ordnance and the Parliamentary land forces 1642-1648*, unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Loughborough University, 1976, p.232.

¹⁰⁷ Israel, pp.256, 262-3.

(£17 4s.), the factor's fee at one per cent (£2 15s.6d.), passport and portage aboard (9s.7d.) and for freight to King's Lynn (£3)¹⁰⁸ Without such extras home prices should have been cheaper. Richard March at Bristol believed he could undercut overseas manufacturers and quoted a price of 18s. for his muskets. Some foreign muskets certainly cost more but were they of a better quality and were accoutrements included? Foreign prices may have been higher. In August 1643 Lord Percy, the King's General of the Ordnance, stated that the normal rate for a hundredweight of match was 30s. whereas three months later William Sandys agreed to a price of 37s. with William Shaw, an English merchant in Antwerp.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, some prices were cheaper, due, no doubt, to the economies of scale and greater efficiency. Thus, in mid 1645 some consignments of Dutch and Flemish match supplied to the New Model Army were cheaper than home-produced ware.¹¹⁰

VII

Arms imports played a vital part in the British Civil Wars and all sides could not have sustained their effort for very long without them. Even Parliament, which, with its control of the South-east, had access to the native arms and armaments industries, depended upon shipments from abroad. The Scottish covenanters, the Irish confederates, the royalists in both countries, as well as the English royalists, had to start virtually from scratch and their reliance on imports was that much greater. Imports were needed throughout the wars. At first, they helped bridge the gap until home industries geared themselves up to wartime levels of production. Thereafter, because increased output still did not match demand, especially as the war took its toll of arms and equipment, foreign supplies continued to be required. The Low Countries were at the centre of this trade. In spite of difficulties- blockades, the actions of privateers and the occasional scruple- arms, munitions and ordnance of all kinds found

¹⁰⁸ P.R.O., SP28/22, fo.221.

¹⁰⁹ Roy, *Royalist Ordnance Papers*, part 2, p.373; *C.S.P.D.*, 1641-3, p.479.

¹¹⁰ For example, P.R.O., SP28/30, vi, fo.637

their way to the combatants. Of course, there were preferences and a person like Thomas Cunningham found it hard to supply royalists with arms, even when they were supported by a Scottish covenanting army. Nonetheless, the suppliers were remarkably even-handed: Parliament obtained arms from the Spanish Netherlands and the King received them from Dutch republican merchants. It is true that if they had remained aloof, much bloodshed might have been spared. The war between King and Parliament may indeed have been over by Christmas and the Scottish and Irish insurrections may have been squashed quickly. But this is not the issue. All sides for one reason or another came to accept the prospect of war and the merchants and manufacturers of the Low Countries made sure that they were able to have a proper one.

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