

# PLANNING OPERATIONS AT BARCELONA

## Lord Peterborough to Admiral Sir J. Leake

Valencia, 7 April 1706 (NS)

The King, contrary to all the advices could be offered to him, having delayed his going out of Barcelona till it's hardly possible for him to get out of that place, at least without the utmost hazard to his person; it is certainly of the highest consequence that we all endeavour what humanly is possible for the relief of that place, or particularly for the safety of His Majesty. It has been my misfortune, and I doubt, his ill fate, that His Majesty has in nothing ever attended to the advices of the Queen's ministers, or mine, or seldom consulted, or never approved of those counsels or advices offered him by the Portugal Ambassador, a man of great ability and very faithful to the public interest. His Majesty has been pleased to send positive orders to contradict those that I had given to the troops under my command, the fatal consequences of which measures are now apparent to all mankind, and the motives upon which I gave my orders justified by all mankind and by events. Those fatal ministers he has about him having sent such orders in the King's name, which, though with the utmost positiveness having been always rejected by the unanimous consent of all the officers present, his own Spaniards, Germans, Italians, English, and Dutch.

But these fatal orders have prevented all that I have been able to do for him with successes almost miraculous, and a sure game made almost desperate by a repetition of such unheard of follies as no history ever produced.

The King is persuaded by the same advices to send positive orders, or what is very like them, to yourself and Admiral Wassenaer; I send you a copy of my commission, which some circumstances make me conceive necessary you should look over. The contents of one order they were pleased to communicate to me, but this last is a secret. The first being an order to bring immediately to Barcelona the fleet, the troops, the money designed for the use of the King of Spain; I presume this last may be a repetition of the same with more circumstances.

Having secured to the interest of the King this capital of Valencia, and the whole kingdom being in subjection to His Majesty, being in person here with a good body of horse, besides three regiments of foot, and possessed of all those places by the sea side, from Denia to Valencia, by which the junction of the succours might be made safely without any opposition, having all magazines, provisions, ammunition, and artillery here which are provided nowhere else; by the unanimous opinion of three or four councils of war, the Viceroy of Valencia joining with the whole representatives of the kingdom in the same opinion, and all his Catholic Majesty's officers agreeing to a man in those councils of war, I sent several orders by boats and ships to signify my desires that the troops, money, artillery, and stores, and all relating to land service, might be landed at Altea or Denia, or if safe, the weather settled and fair, at the Gran near Valencia, small ships only coming near the shore, with transports that at a great distance would be met with numbers of boats and barks for the speedy descent, the men of war not being detained from the speedy succouring of Barcelona by sea, if in a condition to dispute with the enemy. I had sent likewise orders to Lieutenant-General Windham to land the troops with the utmost dispatch, intending upon the first notice to come aboard to give the best directions advice and intelligence in my power. These orders were previous in time to those perhaps you may receive from His Majesty, which, I fear, are the produce of land admirals.

I shall now only give the reasons why I gave the orders for the disembarking the troops at Altea or Denia, as of absolute necessity, in my opinion, for the safe and speedy operations of the fleet, as well as for the land service.

How unsafe it is for a fleet to come before an enemy with the encumbrance of transport ships is obvious, especially when it may be doubtful they may be superior in number; without such an encumbrance an unequal force might be avoided without the necessity of a battle. If the forces are landed at a distance from the enemy, the transport ships might be left with a very small convoy, and the main fleet proceed without delay or danger towards the enemy.

The number of ships of the enemy's are now about seven and twenty sail, and the common report and the intelligence from the Court confirms that the Count de Toulouse was putting to sea with the great ship and gallies. This is what I think fit to lay before you, not knowing what to say as to the contents of this packet from the King of Spain, it not being communicated to me.