

than subjected to exotic tortures. The most striking feature of Zembroth's account in this respect is the complete absence of mention of anyone from the village being physically harmed by soldiers, although he does record the murder of the mayor and two others in nearby Wölmatingen. He names the herdsman when cattle were driven off in 1643; he mentions the villagers forced to herd livestock for raiders in 1647 and he refers to others, including two named brothers, conscripted by opposite sides to work ships used to attack and defend Constance respectively in 1647, but he reports none of them as being killed or injured. In view of the other things, many of them relatively trivial, which he does remember and record it is hard to imagine that he has omitted many serious incidents of this nature which actually occurred, even if he chose to ignore minor or commonplace violence or may have been too discreet to refer to rape. Allensbach was of course better placed than most, with a ready refuge from danger across a few hundred yards of water; nevertheless the villagers had plenty of direct contact with troops but, like the citizens of Freiburg and the monks of Salem, they seem to have avoided the worst experiences.

5 Mortimer, G. Eyewitness Accounts of 30 yrs  
War  
 2002.  
 Siege and Storm - (Towns)

Besieging towns, sometimes unsuccessfully and sometimes culminating in taking them by surrender or by storm, was much more common and typical of the military activity in the Thirty Years War than the relatively infrequent pitched battles. Many of the eyewitnesses report their experiences of such events, and in a number of cases a siege and storm is the central feature of the account.

Juliana Ernst, a nun from the convent of St Ursula in the Black Forest city of Villingen, describes the events leading up to the attack on the city by Württemberg troops, then allies of the Swedes, in 1632-33. Her account is one of the few extant records of their war experiences by women, but the manuscript is now lost, and its editor (from 1878) tells us infuriatingly little about it. Ernst's starting point was a chronicle written by two of her predecessors, entitled: 'A little record book of all kinds of things, begun *anno* 1594 and ended *anno* 1622' (Er.129). This was evidently a somewhat arbitrary chronicle of convent business matters, together with notes of unusual bad weather or other interesting occurrences, which Ernst continued from 1622 until an abrupt break in January 1633, although the manuscript also contains shorter entries up to 1731. The editor indicates that at first Ernst followed the style of the earlier chronicle, but he notes that her latter section, which he prints, is a more specific account of an episode in the war. This departure appears to have been quite deliberate, in that she opens with a summary of the Swedish incursion into Germany, and into the south in particular, before giving a detailed description of the period from October 1632 to January 1633 as it affected Villingen. Her account incorporates much specific information and precise dates, but was written up later, as she states that moats flooded before the attack remained 'full of water for two years', and she also observes that 'we had to suffer cruel hardship ... from the year of 32 until now in the year of 38' (Er.133, 132). Her final account may well have been copied up from contemporaneous notes, as is indicated by the pleas she inserts at particularly dangerous moments which suggest doubt

about the outcome at the time of writing: 'O Mary, Queen of Heaven, help us, lest our enemies be gratified upon us' (Er.133).

Ernst opens by recording that in 'anno 1631 there was great distress from the war, as the king from Sweden came over to Germany and occupied and despoiled the whole of Franconia'. She notes his propaganda claim that 'what he had taken for himself was only what had been entrusted to him because of our guilt for our sins', adding as a testimony to its effectiveness that 'many took him for God and blessed their children in the name of the Swede as they laid them down to sleep'. She also has a clear view of the underlying politics. Referring to the alliance with Sweden made by the duke of Württemberg, 'whose monasteries were taken from him four years ago in the year of 28 [sic] by our emperor', she notes that he 'and other Lutheran princes' invited Gustavus Adolphus into Germany 'and appealed to him for help so that they could get the monasteries back again' (Er.130). She then reports Swedish moves against Offenburg, Überlingen and Meersburg in 1632 before beginning her specifically local account.

The first approaches were diplomatic: 'Item the 26th of May in the year of 32, the Württemberger gave a warning to our city, and to Rottweil, the first time with fine, smooth words, as though he wanted to be a good neighbour and our patron, and to help protect us from foreign princes and from attack.' The citizens were not deceived but opinion was divided: 'There was such anguish in the city. One faction were ready to defend themselves while the other said that they wanted to submit - what did it matter if we had to be Swedish for a while; it wouldn't last long.' On this occasion they were spared the necessity of choice: 'Through a special act of God's providence the king from Sweden summoned all his troops round and about urgently to Nuremberg and we were free of them again' (Er.131).

On 12 October the Württemberg army was back at Rottweil, which quickly surrendered: 'On the Thursday immediately following, at nine o'clock in the morning, a Württemberg dispatch rider arrived outside our city' (Er.131). Ernst was evidently well-informed, as she follows this precise information with an account of the demands and promises brought by the herald, and of the prevaricating reply of the mayor and council that they would first have to consult the city's overlord, the Austrian Archduke Leopold. An army quickly appeared outside Villingen: 'Ach! What great fear and distress we were in; we packed up our few possessions and hid them where we could.' The Mother Superior instructed each nun to put together 'a bundle with bonnet, stick and personal necessities so that if the need arose we would have something to hand', while their confessor priest advised them to 'look around for worldly clothing so that we would not be recognised as nuns, as they have peculiarly and shamefully ill-treated the clergy wherever they have found or happened upon them'. Again, however, they escaped attack. Three days later, after plundering the outlying villages, the army moved on elsewhere, leaving a small force to watch the city: 'The whole citizenry and

all of us were heartily well pleased.' The convent nevertheless suffered economically, securing only a small fraction of the tithes due from their lands: 'The steward at Biessingen also made everything of ours known, threshed it, stole it and carried it away to the enemy', Ernst comments bitterly, adding that 'he was a Lutheran steward' (Er.132).

On 7 November an Imperialist garrison of 520 men arrived, led by Colonel Escher, 'a well-practised and experienced cavalier', who promptly set about fortifying the city (Er.132). Ernst describes the process in surprisingly knowledgeable detail:

Colonel Escher organised everything, appointing watches and instituting good military order. He had the loft doors in the roofs taken off, and he had big gabions woven, assembled and arranged on these doors in various places. He had them filled with earth and stones and had fortifications and batteries set up and built at intervals in the city, with the cannon and guns emplaced on them. He had a powder mill built in the city and gathered large supplies of powder, lead, iron, stones and lead bullets. ... He had the gates bastioned, leaving only the upper and lower gates open, and had the bridges raised elsewhere, as well as letting water into the inner moat. He made ordinances and instructed numbers of farmers as to what they should do. He turned citizens, young and old, into dragoons, organising them into troops and detailing them to their posts. Everyone knew what was required of him, day and night. (Er.133)

During this period the nuns busied themselves trying to hide their valuables, 'our farm lease documents, our sacred vessels and our silver plate, of which we had little left, as it had of necessity been used to provide bodily nourishment, ... and whatever was dear to each Mother or Sister and which they would not willingly lose' (Er.133). Unfortunately they concealed them in the cellar, and when the city moats were flooded so was their hiding-place:

There was water in all the passages, and although the serving men waded in wearing boots there was so much water, and so deep, that the boots did not help them at all. So they waded in up to their armpits and brought us out what they could recover of the habits, furs and other stuff. (Er.133)

After reporting a number of skirmishes outside the city and the twice threatened recall of their garrison Ernst describes the deteriorating strategic situation. Breisach and Freiburg were besieged and the latter fell, leaving Villingen 'with few soldiers, surrounded on all sides and besieged by the enemy. God in his mercy help us; we are in great fear and danger. They say that they treat people so wantonly and shamefully, especially those in holy

orders.' This fear increased on 29 November, 'when our city was called upon to capitulate by two trumpeters [threatening] fire, brimstone and great misery', this being the traditional summons to surrender before an attack. Ernst reports the nuns' state of mind: 'We were in great fright and fear, and we slept and ate little, all lying in the convent dormitory although no-one dared to sleep peacefully' (Er.134). Keeping up a war of nerves, the enemy offered Escher an accord, which he in turn put to a meeting of the citizenry: 'Every man is in great alarm and fear, while the authorities vacillate, waiting to see what the colonel will propose.' While Escher played for time, awaiting higher orders, the enemy sent two more trumpeters, an embassy and a letter mixing threats with promises of good treatment after a surrender. The town hesitated: 'Here we sit, caught between Scylla and Charybdis, with everyone anxious and distressed. Some people want us to defend ourselves and others are ready to surrender, while we pray, sing and call upon God.' As if the convent were not frightened enough already 'many of the soldiers talk of how they will treat the nuns'. Escher, however, 'did not let himself be panicked, nor was he afraid'. Reassuring the citizens, he rebuffed the offered accord, saying that if no other help was at hand 'he would hope and trust in God's mercy and in the Mother of God'. But yet again the threat was lifted: 'Truly God sent his instrument, and the army was ordered away into Swabia to defend it against Aldringer' (Er.135).

The respite was short, and the besiegers returned on 11 January 1633. The following morning one of the nuns died and was hastily buried, a reminder to all 'that tomorrow the grave could hold us'. By evening the outlying buildings were on fire: 'It is a misery above all miseries. They have set light to the Outer Mill by our garden, and to the Hospital Mill and the nice inn. There was such a conflagration in front of our gate that they could see where and how we were in the convent.' At two in the morning of 13 January the enemy began to bombard the walls, soon making a breach. The convent came under heavy fire and Ernst reports several nuns having narrow escapes as they tried to shelter or to rescue cherished possessions. At seven in the morning their confessor came, 'wanting to hear our last confessions before death. Each one found a corner where she thought that no cannon ball would reach her and made her confession' (Er.136). Ernst had just been summoned from her shelter in a neighbouring building to make her own confession when her account abruptly breaks off.

The way in which Ernst presents her account is as striking as its content, and it is worth noting how she has turned her experiences during the attack on Villingen into a well-constructed and self-contained story. Using a pre-existing and rather random chronicle as her medium, she has completely changed its style to give a developed narrative account of a particular series of events. A significant feature of this is the way her narrative focus progressively sharpens as the situation develops. Thus she begins with the general background of the war approaching the south-west – the story so far, as

it were – before describing the moves of the invaders against other cities in the region. After this introduction the focus shifts to Villingen itself but remains at a political level, setting out the diplomatic approaches of the enemy and the divided opinion among the citizens collectively. On the occasion of the second approach, after the surrender of Rottweil, Ernst adopts a similar mode but intensifies the account of the negotiations with more detail of the demands of the enemy and the responses of the mayor. When troops actually appear outside the walls she sharpens her focus further, bringing in the reactions and feelings of the nuns as a body. The arrival of the Imperialist garrison provides a change of pace as Ernst relieves the tension of the main action with a description of the defensive measures put in hand by Colonel Escher and of the nuns' own efforts to hide their valuables. The return to the main story is heralded by a further summary of the deteriorating wider situation as Freiburg falls to the Swedes, leading up to a fresh call on Villingen to surrender. Yet again Ernst intensifies the focus, providing more detail of the negotiations, much of it in approximate reported speech, and she first describes Escher's tactics and then his robust eventual response, in contrast to the indecisiveness of the city fathers. At the same time she emphasises the growing fears of the nuns as she builds up to the climax of the eventual assault. In this last phase she personalises her text, recounting the experiences of individual nuns as they have narrow escapes during the bombardment. This leads up to the final episode, the last confession before the expected storming of the city, where she introduces herself specifically into the story for the first time – at which point the surviving text dramatically breaks off.

This is not to say that Ernst deliberately or consciously structured her account into a developed narrative in this way. Her contemporaneous notes may well have become progressively fuller and more focused as the tension of the situation increased, and thereafter it may simply be a case of natural storytelling. Her writing itself is stylistically simple, unornamented, and unlike that of many of the priests, pastors and monks it contains no interpolated Latin phrases. Otherwise there is little in her text to mark it out as the work of a woman; indeed, apart from the added implicit fear of rape her account of the experiences and reactions of the nuns has clear parallels to Bürster's response to the capture of his monastery by Swedish troops. Ernst presumably completed her description of the attack on Villingen, as she wrote or copied it up some years later, but how the remainder of her manuscript was lost is not known, the editor adding only that she later became abbess of another convent.

Another account dealing with the capture of a town, also from a female perspective, is given by Anna Wolff, a miller's daughter from Schwabach, near Nuremberg, who ran what she describes as 'my mill' with her brother after the death of her parents. More than 30 years after the event she wrote an account of her experiences when the town was attacked and occupied by

Imperialist troops in the summer of 1632, noting that 'I and my sister-in-law Kratzerbettery are living yet, up to this year of 63' (Wo.108, 109). A section of the introduction appears to be missing, the first surviving paragraphs describing astronomical phenomena taken as omens, but the short text seems to be otherwise complete, suggesting that Wolff recorded only this one traumatic episode from her life and experiences of the war. She included this in her household book, which the editor says otherwise contained mostly notes of family events, devotional songs and Bible texts, together with a brief account of her own background: 'I, Anna Wolff, was born *anno* 1602, on St Catherine's day. My father was Ulrich Wolff, under-miller here at the Segmill, my mother's name was Barbara, and I was brought up by my parents, at school and at church, until the year of 23' (Wo.100).

Wolff's account is one of the first published by posterity, in 1791, and is interesting not only in itself but also as one of the few written by a woman, and even more strikingly by a woman who was neither a nun nor from the higher levels of society. She could write surprisingly competently, given the prevailing limited levels of education even among men in artisan families, and she makes a good story of the dramatic events she reports. She describes – possibly with some exaggeration – the relaxed view of the war in Schwabach before it touched the town directly for the first time: 'We had indeed heard tell of the war, but we had not thought that it would reach us in Schwabach in the year of 1632. On holy St John's day people were still living it up and leading the high life, just like Sodom and Gomorrah.' Some of the leading citizenry and clergy were not so naive, and 'our Reverend Dean and another pastor, Reverend Wollfart, and quite a number of other gentlemen fled to Nuremberg. They drove out with many wagons three hours before dawn, so that people didn't know, for they had received information that the soldiers were being sent here' (Wo.100, 101). The unexpected arrival of the attacking force, put by Wolff with the common exaggeration of the time at '80 000 men, ... cavalry and foot-soldiers', brings this part of her narrative to a climax: 'Hear, dear Christian; early on the Sunday after holy St Peter's day, in the middle of the sermon the horns began to blow furiously, so that everyone in the church ran out. When we looked outside we could see nothing but soldiers all round Schwabach' (Wo.103, 102–3). Wolff quotes a relevant biblical text: 'Thus it was as the kingly prophet David says in the 3rd Psalm: "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me."' She likewise expresses her personal feelings in religious terms as the attack commenced: 'As in the 25th Psalm, "the troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses"' (Wo.103, 104).

The town defended itself well initially: 'The citizens put up a fight, shooting out and hitting many officers and colonels without suffering much injury themselves. This went on for seven hours' (Wo.104). Initial hopes of help from Gustavus Adolphus (then pinned down outside Nuremberg by

Wallenstein) soon faded, and under pressure of sustained artillery fire and attacks on the walls the citizenry began to despair:

People were running hither and thither, not knowing where they should take refuge, so that again the cry was 'look upon mine affliction and my pain and forgive all my sins'. Hear, good soul; crowds of people fell on their knees in the streets and in the houses, raised up their hands and prayed. (Wo.104–5)

Recognising the inevitable, Schwabach sought to surrender on accord, but too late under the accepted rules of war at the time. Wolff reports the response of the besiegers: 'They were going to massacre us one and all, and they wouldn't spare even a child still in its mother's womb, because so many colonels and officers had lost their lives.' Eventually slightly better terms were obtained: 'They would simply plunder us and take what we had' (Wo.105, 106).

As the town prepared to surrender people looked for places to hide during the initial onslaught of the troops. Wolff and four other women found a refuge, where they stayed for five days:

Hear, good soul; when the gate was to be opened the people were so afraid that they didn't know where to go. The majority fled into the two churches and locked themselves in; few stayed in the houses. I hid myself in a concealed dovecote in my mill, where the five of us could not stand up for five days, and while the bullets whistled back and forth truly God protected us. (Wo.106)

Possibly because of the conditions in this cramped shelter one of the women died eight days afterwards, and two more soon followed, leaving only Wolff and her sister-in-law as long-term survivors. Her account of the plundering is brief and not strictly eyewitness – she was in her hideout – but she records what she no doubt later learned, a common account of 'everything' being taken. She also gives a typical hearsay account of violence, in which she mentions no specific individuals: 'They persecuted the people. They tortured, whipped and beat the men, dragging them out into the camp and calling them rebels.... They dishonoured, tormented, pulled about and vilely mishandled the women they found.' Her mill was plundered, leaving 'not a grain of wheat, not a speck of flour. They cleaned out all the hoppers and silos, and took everything away' (Wo.107, 108). The soldiers did miss something, however, and Wolff attributes their lack of thoroughness to God's help: 'A chest full of flour was still left, right by the door. Many hundreds had gone past it, but not one had opened it. Thus one can see what God wished to save.' Officers and soldiers were billeted in the town, and after five days the mill was given a military guard so that it could be put to work to supply flour for the troops. Wolff could emerge: 'Then I also came

down from my dovecote with my companions, after great hardship, but the Good Lord had preserved our honour' (Wo.108, 109).

Wolff's description of the two-month occupation which followed centres on the prevalent hunger among the citizenry as the troops ate all the available food: 'Hear, good Christian soul; what misery and distress there was, what hunger and grief, what fear and need. Many, many hundreds died of starvation, emaciated and not getting another bite of bread before their end.' Oddly, she indicates that the troops did not take all the meat: 'we had enough meat, a pound for a kreuzer, but no salt, no fat, no bread' (Wo.111). Later an epidemic affected citizens and soldiers alike, many dying of the plague, despite which military operations and skirmishing around the town continued. The troops created further panic among the inhabitants by threatening that 'when they broke camp and marched off, then they would scorch and burn everything', but in the event they did not do so, moving on once they had exhausted the town's capacity to supply them (Wo.117).

Wolff is careful to stress her own good works during the occupation, and although she draws no direct comparison her description of others escaping is nevertheless pointed: 'We still had four pastors, but one of those also deserted his flock. He dressed himself in mill-hand's clothes and got out with the soldiers.' She refers back to the flour the soldiers overlooked in the first round of plundering: 'We divided the chest of flour that was left to us among the poor people, who hadn't had a bite of bread in eight days. I went into the mill myself to beg flour to make gruel for the small children, just boiled in water.' Despite the supposed watch on it she also raided a large barrel of beer in the mill cellar: 'I dared to go there every day and draw a jugful, which I distributed among the sick and those in childbed, so that they thanked me profusely and prayed that God would preserve me' (Wo.110, 112, 112-13).

Wolff also gives an account of her part in rescuing the mayor, who the Imperialists held responsible for organising and prolonging the defence of the town, and hence for the deaths of many of the attackers: 'Afterwards they threatened that if they caught him they would cut him in four and hang him out over the walls because so many officers had been shot' (Wo.113). Wolff hid him: 'So we kept him, Herr Triller, with his wife, in a closet in the mill for 11 weeks. No-one knew about it except me, my brother and my maid, and no-one visited him except me, which I did twice every day.' She emphasises the risk she took: 'Later they beat it around the town, making announcements with three rolls on the drums that they were going to search from house to house, and wherever they found him and whoever was protecting him, they would be hanged one with the other.' Wolff also took steps to put the Imperialists off the scent: 'Then he (Mayor Triller) advised me to say to people that the farmers bringing supplies for the army had taken him to Regensburg in a barrel and that he had been seen there. Word of this went round the whole town so that nobody enquired further about him' (Wo.114).

After the troops left Wolff reports better times, at least for a while, although her comment has a somewhat ironic ring: 'Afterwards our Good Lord granted us a cheap year, as we could reap even though we hadn't sown. There was so much grass and grain growing in the streets that one could scarcely see the cobbles.' The town even had the opportunity to make good some of its losses by buying at bargain prices from other soldiers: 'When troops marched by they brought their booty here, and one could buy a cow for a taler or even for a gulden, a sheep for a kopfstück, and a bushel of corn for three gulden. Then people thought that everything was all right again, and they took to marrying: men, women and young folk – every week there were three or four weddings.' Wolff was among those who married, although it would appear from her oblique reference that her husband became a casualty of the war: soon afterwards: 'I myself married that same summer, on St Sebald's day, but we lived together for only four weeks before a great army of soldiers arrived. Then it was soon a case of "the wedded state is a woeful state".' She is equally brief about the troubles which followed: 'And so it continued from this time on, from 1632 until the year of 48. The cry was always "give peace in our time, O Lord, for great affliction is upon us"' (Wo.120).

The most notorious event of the war was the storming of Magdeburg by Tilly's army in May 1631, and the disastrous fire which followed, causing the destruction of the city and the death of most of its population. A number of eyewitnesses report their experiences. Jürgen Ackermann, a captain in Pappenheim's regiment, notes that as they prepared for the final assault 'the general had good Rhenish wine issued to all the soldiers and officers, which gave them great courage' (A.11). He gives a brief but graphic description of the attack:

There was such a thunder and crack of muskets, incendiary mortars and great cannon that no-one could either see or hear, and many supporting troops followed us, so that the whole rampart was filled, covered and black with soldiers and storm ladders. Eventually, after several hundred men had fallen, we broke in over the defences, putting the remainder to flight to the precinct gate and into Lackermacher Street. In assaults of this kind our soldiers brought some four hundred storm ladders over the earthworks and up to the walls. (A.14)

No sooner were the attackers inside the city than they fell to looting, putting aside their cumbersome pikes, 'all the better to scout through the houses'. Too soon, as the defenders were far from giving up, 'but fought desperately and unceasingly in all parts of the city, together with their cavalry, so that we lost our strength' (A.14, 15). Meanwhile following troops had made a breach in the walls, bringing relief just in time.

The fighting in the streets, some of which were obstructed with chains, had so exhausted our nine attacks, each by 3000 men, that we could