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Spanish Armada - III

Lead: Clearly provoked by English policy, in 1588 Philip II of Spain sent a large fleet to support an invasion of southern England. It turned out not to be much of an Armada and was certainly not invincible.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: By 1585 Philip was convinced that in order to break English economic, diplomatic and military power and to restore Catholicism to England, he would need to mount an invasion. As it

evolved, here was the plan. The Spanish would assemble a fleet of warships filled with supplies and troops, sail to Flanders in what is modern day Belgium, secure the Straits of Dover from English naval interference, screen the transport across the English Channel of 30,000 troops under the command of the Duke of Parma, vice-regent of the Spanish Netherlands, and support the invasion. From the beginning, almost everything went wrong.

The original commander of the Armada, Don Alvaro de Bazan (ba than), Spain's only experienced naval leader died just before the invasion and he was replaced by the reluctant and incompetent Duke of Medina

Sidona. A raid on the half finished fleet in Cadiz harbor by English buccaneer Sir Frances Drake in 1587 did enormous damage and set back preparations by many months. Finally, on 20th of May 1588, the fleet creaked out of Lisbon harbor and arrived a month later in the Channel.

As it turned out only half the Spanish ships were warships, the rest being troop and supply transports, and the English ships commanded by experienced captains, were lighter, faster and more heavily armored. The English got behind the Armada, and with the wind at their backs harried the Spanish in five major engagements, preventing the linkup with the Spanish invasion units and

wounding the fleet to such a degree that the Iberians were forced to sail north around Scotland and Ireland before reaching home in September 1588 having lost half their ships and three quarters of their men.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada confirmed England's long-established superiority at sea, firmly recognized England as a major player in international affairs, and while Spain's greatest period of ascendancy was still ahead in the next 50 years, the incident demonstrated the profound weaknesses in Spanish society and government, economic and military power which predicted its ultimate decline as a major power over the next three hundred years.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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