

The Spanish Armada

King.-In 1588 England was a small nation with a little navy and Spain was very important, we had the greatest power in the world .

Interviewer.- Did you want to conquer England?

King.- No, I was angry that Queen Elizabeth had not punished Sir Francis Drake and his sailors for plundering Spanish ships.

I wish to return England to the "true church", to restore Church lands and property stolen by Henry VIII, reopen the monasteries, and restore Catholic forms of worship; in order to do so I tried to put a Catholic on the English throne, this was Mary Stuart, "Queen of Scots".

I was also worried because the Queen of England was giving support to the Protestant Dutch.

Interviewer.- How did you plan to attack?

King.- I Ordered the construction of over 130 ships with 30,000 men. These were joined by the armies of the Duke of Parma from Netherlands. The possibilities of the Navy were great considering the great power of the Spanish empire which also had the financial and moral support of the Pope. The English economy was shrinking, but in 1586 not a single Spanish ship with gold and silver from Peru and Mexico reached the shores. This was the work of Sir Francis Drake, who was made vice admiral of the English fleet by the Queen of England .

Interviewer.- what was the problem?

King.- The plan was risky for the Spanish navy as they needed the element of surprise in order to be successful. In addition Philip was hoping that the English Catholics would rise up against Queen Elizabeth.

Then Drake got permission from the Queen Elizabeth to attack the Spanish on their soil with the intention of disrupting the navy's preparations. On 29th April Drake conducted a surprise raid on the Bay of Cadiz . It took 1 year for the fleet to be ready again.

Finally the fleet sailed from Lisbon but the large number of men involved was a great detriment to the Portuguese economy; this was the reason why the king ordered the fleet to leave as soon as possible. Four weeks later, the fleet suffered the first storm near the coast of A Coruña. The lack of drinking water and the poor condition of the food highlighted the difficulty of the attack, in addition, the men in the fleet were not qualified for the task they were required to perform.

The Spanish Armada suffered another storm in the Gulf of Vizaya, with the loss of some ships. These were discovered by one of Drake's men who rushed to warn him.

Interviewer.- Why didn't you stop the attack?

King.The Duke of Parma wanted to negotiate the peace with the English Queen but I was the king of the most powerful nation in the world and I believed in my chances. The problem was that Duke of Parma (annoyed at being under the command of Medina Sidonia) would not provide support to the Army and the Spanish Armada sailing up the Channel could seek shelter neither along the hostile south coast of England, nor in French ports. In the morning of July 31st, 1588 began the first clashes between both sides. The English fleet under **Admiral Lord Howard** totalled 197 ships, of which 34 were in the Navy, and the rest were armed merchant ships. The Western Squadron set sail from Plymouth and attacked the Amada. Admiral Howard sent for fireships - old

hulks stuffed with firewood, tar and loaded guns. This attack in the night made Spanish captains panicked - to avoid losses, they cut their cables - losing their anchors so they couldn't wait by the coast. On the following the English Navy attacked the Armada for the first time in the Gravelines.

Interviewer- Did the English navy win?

King.-No, after the initial contacts the ship San Salvador was lost as the result of an explosion of several barrels of gunpowder. Another huge vessel of 1150 tons was left behind and fell to Drake's troops. The Spanish Navy was still largely intact but without ammunition they could do very little. Something similar happened to the English as they too were low on ammunition and so they could not pursue the Spanish ships. To continue the campaign was difficult for both.

After the Battle of Gravelines the British fleet withdrew, but the Spanish navy suffered another storm. Then Medina Sidonia decided to return to Spain, The British blocked the Channel forcing the Spanish towards the Shetland Islands, Northern Scotland and then Ireland. It was during this period that more than forty ships were destroyed by a big storm. The Irish cruelly killed several Spanish. Meanwhile, more than 90 ships managed to reach Santander, in Spain.