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[Michael Roberts, The Military Revolution, 1560-1660, p. 20-21]

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constantly at call, economy of administration—these were some of the factors that produced the permanent navies; and it was a constitutional accident that the two first attempts at creating a permanent navy—the ‘Compagnie van Assurantie’ of Frederick Henry, and the Shipmoney fleets of Charles I—should have both acquired a sinister significance in the minds of their opponents.¹

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the military changes of the seventeenth century had important consequences in the political and constitutional fields. The stricter discipline, the elaborately mechanical drilling, required by the new linear tactics, matched the tendency of the age towards absolute government, and may well have reinforced it: if discipline proved so successful in obtaining results in the military sphere, it might well be worth while trying the experiment of applying it to civilian life. The ruler was increasingly identified with the commander-in-chief; and from the new discipline and drill would be born not merely the autocrat, but that particular type of autocrat which delighted in the name of *Kriegsherr*. It was perhaps not the least of England’s good luck, that for the whole of the critical century from 1547 to 1649 she was ruled by monarchs with neither interest nor capacity for military matters. It was certainly no accident that Louis XIII should have been “passionately fond” of drill;² nor was it a mere personal quirk that led Louis XIV to cause a medal to be struck, of which the reverse displays him in the act of taking a parade, and correcting, with a sharp poke of his cane, the imperfect dressing of a feckless private in the rear rank.³ The newly-acquired symmetry and order of the parade-ground provided, for Louis XIV and his contemporaries, the model to which life and art must alike conform; and the *pas cadencé* of Martinet’s regiments echoed again in the majestic monotony of interminable alexandrines.⁴

The military character of monarchy was further emphasized by the adoption of uniforms: the soldier became the king’s man, for he wore the king’s coat. And it was the king’s coat indeed; for by the close of the century there was already a tendency in monarchs of an absolutist cast to consider military uniform as their normal attire—as Charles XII did, for instance, and Frederick William I.

1. J. E. Elias, *Het Voorspel van den eersten Engelschen Oorlog*, (’s Gravenhage, 1920), I. 150-1, for a suggestive comparison of the two cases.

2. Colin and Reboul, p. 368.

3. Weygand, *Histoire de l’Armée française*, p. 144, reproduces this medal.

4. The *pas cadencé* was the invention of Martinet; whose name, indeed, is itself a programme. For a discussion of related problems, see James E. King, *Science and Rationalism in the Government of Louis XIV*, (Baltimore, 1949).

It was not a fashion that would have commended itself to Henry VIII, or Gustav Vasa, or Philip II.

Moreover, the new style of warfare made demands upon the administration which could be met only by new methods, new standards, and new officers; and it soon became clear that this implied an increasing measure of centralization, and hence of royal control. Secretaries of State for War are born; War Offices proliferate; Gustavus Adolphus creates something like the first General Staff. Military needs were forcing the monarchs into ever-increasing interference in the lives of their subjects: even in peaceful England, under the unwarlike Stuarts, the activities of the saltpetre-man were no less a matter of popular complaint than in contemporary Sweden. New fortresses for the *pré carré* meant heavier *corvées*, the subversion of municipal liberties, and the increased power of the sovereign: “fortresses”, says Montecuccoli, “are the buttresses of the crown”, and the fact that “licentious” nations such as the English disliked them merely proved their utility.¹ The urgent need for the standardization of weapons, calibres, and powder drove the rulers to armaments-monopolies or state supervision of supply. It was a policy dictated by obvious military necessity; but it had constitutional repercussions too, for “self-equipment is conducive to the relaxation of discipline—that is, to the flattening of the pyramid of subordination”.² Above all, the ever-increasing cost of war—the result of larger armies and navies, in an age when prices were still rising—embarrassed the finances of every monarchy in Europe. Everywhere kings found that though they might still—with care—live of their own in peacetime, they plunged into debt in wartime. And in this period it was almost always wartime. The monarchs fell back on *ad hoc* financial devices—on currency debasement, sale of monopolies, sale of crown lands, sale of offices (which first becomes a general European phenomenon in this century)³—but sooner or later they found themselves forced to parley with their Estates, or to violate the ancient constitutional liberties. Behind all the great insurrectionary movements of the age—the Thirty Years’ War, the English rebellion, the Fronde, the revolts in the Spanish realms—there lay, as one major element in the situation (though of course

1. Montecuccoli, pp. 110-1.

2. Stanisław Andrzejewski, *Military Organisation and Society*, (1954), p. 99. But I cannot agree with his view that arms monopolies were “the expression of [the rulers’] desire to assert their control, and not dictated by technical necessities”: *ibid.*, p. 88.

3. K. R. Swart, *The Sale of Offices in the Seventeenth Century*, (The Hague, 1949), *passim*.

