

TUDOR REFORM IN THE MILITARY

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PREVIEW

TUDOR REFORM IN THE MILITARY

by

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REPORT

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No realm, no nation, no state, nor
commonwealth throughout all Europa,
can yield more so manie profitable
laws, directions, rules, examples
and discourses, either in matters
of . . . civil government, or of
martiall affairs, then doo the
histories of this little Isle of
Britain or England.

John Hooker

Historically speaking, one of the most perplexing problems in a nation's affairs has been that of deciding what should be the relationship between the chief of state and those who serve him. How a nation resolves this problem says much of its statecraft, for in effecting its resolution, the state by necessity must delve into many areas of control. While one could contend that the problem of the modern state is not so much that of armed revolt as it is that of the relationship between the expert and the politician, the same is not true of other periods in history. Studies of the early history of nations emphasize this fact, especially so when referring to feudal states. This fact becomes quite evident when one recalls that the foundation of the feudal state was the

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armed support of its inhabitants. Hence, lack of this support or a state's failure to command it often meant political, economic, and social turmoil, and in many instances resulted in the state's destruction. Thus from a military stance, the efforts of a nation to solidify its base of power assume paramount importance, for in effecting control of the military, the nation gained control of all within its boundaries. There is perhaps but one time period that best illustrates this point, that period being the fifteenth century when feudal principalities expanded their perimeters and rose to become nation states. Their emergence as such marks a turning point in the history of nations for it is here that one sees the reaffirmation of strong monarchical dynasties.

One nation to so emerge was that of England. Under the tutelage of the great Tudor dynasty, one sees conflict resolution at its best, for in consolidating their base of power, the Tudors implemented widespread social, economic, cultural, and political changes, all of which in turn had a profound effect upon the military. It has been said that "history is a glass through which we behold the past, but the glass is coloured by the historian's mind, and we see through it sometimes darkly."¹ Such is the case regarding studies of the Tudor monarchy. Because the effects on the military occurred as a side result of Tudor reforms, little research has been done on this aspect of their rule. The historian's mind has been colored by the complexities of more prominent events and thus has failed to discern the development of the military from this perspective. Hence

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a possibly new field of study lies wanting of scholarly attention. It is for this reason I have chosen as my topic of research the Tudor contributions to the evolution of the British military system. Through the use of the Calendar State Papers, Royal Proclamations, and journals representative of the Tudor era, I intend to illustrate how the Tudor monarchs, having inherited a medieval form of governance, implemented plans for its reform, and, in doing so, had a direct impact on the precarious military system inherent to it. This impact had implications for the future as it provided eighteenth century militarists with the means of developing a strong and efficient military.² In discussing the Tudor contributions to this development, I shall also illustrate that this was not a conscious effort on their part, but rather occurred as a side result of their attempts to consolidate the power of the monarchy. In doing so, I hope to prepare the way for more studies of this aspect of English history.

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The Tudor monarchs in effecting a plan of action for the consolidation of their monarchical powers precipitated many changes in the military, changes which occurred as a direct result of royal efforts to thwart the power of the nobility. However, in order for one to understand the Tudors' need for such action, an understanding of the English form of government and system of military obligation must first be effected.

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