Welcome back to this Xtra special series on Louis' arms and armies, history friends and Patrons all. So last time we set the scene and established why Louis' reign was so important for France, why he could justifiably be called the Sun King and what challenges his era faced. This time I want to examine the lifeblood of France for the entirety of Louis' reign – the armies of France. I hope you enjoy it, and remember to let me know what you thought through the usual channels, as well as track this script down at… if that's your thing. Alright, let's get into it, thanks again for supporting this podcast my lovely patrons, and I hope you enjoy this episode.

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One of the reasons why the movement of armies across the map of Europe and within France in particular during our narrative becomes so grand and seems to include such teeming masses of men, is because that at the roots of warfare in the 17th century, the soldier's relationship to his king and country profoundly changed. Though this change did not take place all at once, from the mid-1600s onwards, a gradual shift in where soldiers were sourced, and critically who paid and organised them, began to take root. The greater state involvement in raising armies, directing them, paying them, equipping them and of course, paying for the consequences when such resources were not forthcoming, had important results on how armies were constituted, as well as how the soldier saw himself by the time of the FDW of the 1670s. To put it in perspective, Louis XIV's father Louis XIII had once employed a peace time army of 10k men. By the end of the century, Louis' army during peace exceeded 150k. This massive increase in the number of able bodied men under arms and the trends which emerged from such a change are the topics of this episode, the first in our Xtra miniseries which looks at Louis XIV's arms and armies.

Thanks in part to the questionable loyalties of mercenary bands, or soldiers for hire which constituted most of the soldiery in the employ of France by 1630s, the countryside was largely at their mercy in the event that pay was not forthcoming, or they if they were left idle for too long. Keeping mercenaries motivated by any cause other than the quest for coin and plunder was difficult when these resources were hard to come by, and with the challenges to economics and the French economy in particular in the beginning of its foray into the TYW, Louis XIII took the bold step of refusing to hire the available mercenary bands from across the country in 1635, for fear of the damage they might inflict on towns far from their homes. Louis XIII's stand against the expected norms, which would have garnered him a large army in short time, was not resolute, as he did make exceptions. Those with a good memory will recall that Bernhard of Saxe Weimar was running around in the French employ for much of the early part of France's involvement in the TYW, while those French garrison commanders near or within enemy territory often took to independently hiring mercenaries to bolster their defences. Specialists in cannon, suppliers of food or smiths that could construct horse shoes rapidly were of special interest to those garrison commanders that made use of a contract army, but Louis' stand, however limited, meant that an old tradition of total reliance on mercenaries had been definitively abandoned, and perhaps most important for our story, is the fact that Louis XIII's son reinforced this tradition, and built steadily upon it.

By making this change permanent, Louis XIV was able to directly employ large portions of his army during the War of Devolution from the French people. The desperate conditions of the day for many meant that service in the army remained voluntary, but fraud and the more unsavoury impressment practices inevitably resulted once recruits were slow in coming. These French soldiers and any foreign auxiliaries which accompanied them were not merely grouped together and led by a supposedly reliable mercenary campaign with dubious loyalties. No, instead these soldiers were divided into their regiments, as recruits would apply to a regiment in a given town or village to enter into the French army, before being swept into the general machinery of the teeming force as a cog within that machine. The French soldier from his village would be given appropriate colour to wear, and we'll cover uniforms in time, and organised into his unit alongside those of his countrymen. He would be provided with a weapon, training and regular rations, and he would of course be informed of who he reported to as a superior.

Louis took this process of organising his armies yet further when in 1688 he transformed the royal militia service into one which could supplement the actual armed forces. This was done gradually, but it had the effect of providing the French with a steady base of conscripted militia alongside their professional soldiery. This had the effect of subsidising the militia and the soldiery, and made forming armies quickly a far easier task for Louis' administration, who needed to form a lot of armies. During the WSS the armies of France marched on a kind of 70/30 basis of soldiers to militia, but when times were tight the professionalism of the armies tended go decrease as the ratio of militia to soldier increased. It should be added that by granting the state the permission to commission the soldiers and militia to serve the country in war, it meant that these men were now responsible to that state's monarch, Louis XIV. Through this process, armies were no longer reliant on the mood of some noble or captain for either direction or pay, and Louis could now bring about better supervision of his troops.

In the past, there was a tendency for generals and commanders to feud with their betters in spite of this change. We have seen Vauban do this when instructed to operate a siege in a certain way by Louis in the early years of his career, but the late Turenne also engaged in some disobedience when it suited him, famously viewing his superior in Louvois, the secretary for war, as a pencil pusher not worthy or knowledgeable enough to begin giving him orders.[1] Yet the increase in size of the armies, and their newfound loyalty on paper to the state did not necessarily mean that these men were imbued with anything close to a sense of patriotism, nor did it mean that the rapacious practices of unpaid soldiers or rampaging deserters came to an end. It did mean that such devastations visited on the civilians were less, and that in general Louis could rely that the men in his employ would follow his orders as they awaited his coin, and at least this meant that the men whom Louis did rely on had one boss, rather than a chain of command which the French king could not penetrate. I don't want to make the soldier sound like a ruffian; of course he cared for his comrades and at times his commander when it came time to put his life on the line, and the rare appearance of the king could instil a deep sense of rapture within him which came close to nothing else, but he was not a loyal state soldier, nationalistically loyal to France to a fault at the same time.

What balanced the iffy passions of the soldiery out was the passion that their commanding officers, so often the nobility, did have for combat in service to the state. This of course is well known to us, as we appreciate the importance of military distinction to the so-called 'sword' nobles in France's employ. These officers imbued their charges with a sense of duty even if they wished to escape simply with their lives intact; on the best of days, they could inspire devotion and affection amongst their charges as well. This involved enduring together the drudgery of repeated campaigns, which of course was easier said than done. Unfortunately, as many nobles saw military service as their best opportunity to acquire fame and glory for their family name, concern for the common soldier was often secondary to grand displays of bravery or sacrifice.

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[1] John A Lynn has written a whole host of studies on the subjects of arms and armies and how they changed over this period in time. Of particular use to me for this episode has been Lynn, 'The Evolution of Army Styles in the Modern West, 800-2000', *International History Review* vol.18, no. 3 (August, 1996), pp. 505-545. Of course Lynn's seminal work on the *Wars of Louis XIV* (NY, 1999) has also been profoundly useful for unwrapping the military situation of era, see pp. 47-56. Where possible during this episode I have made a note of where I sourced my information from, but for the most I used data within these pages.

These instances were in contrast to the other segment of the nobility, the 'robe' nobles, who acquired their name and glory through more peaceful activities like judicial and administrative excellence. The truly fraught scenes were encountered when one noble from each side engaged in a slugging match with the other, either because the sword noble who bought a commission didn't believe that the robe noble who wrote important letters all day was worthy of his station, and questioned his integrity. If this occurred on a public stage, predictably there was then need for redress. Duelling was about as common amongst the nobility as unhappy marriages, and the image of the noble in France as elsewhere was of one who would defend his name and rank if challenged. Bravery had to be displayed, so that even if one was not victorious in a given duel, it was still known that one did not flinch when called into question. 'If one forbids duels', asked a young Louis XIV, 'how is it that the nobility can give evidence of their courage', to which his aid replied 'in your armies, sire.'[2]

Indeed we have touched many times on the question of the duel and the nobility's views of themselves amongst their warrior caste, as well as how such views eventually became transmitted from the person to the state, so rather than dwell to long on such issues, I think it'd serve us better to examine precisely how, after imagining this larger army into existence, with its paid conscripted militia from the late 1680s and numerous layers of administrative and bureaucratic organisation, France was able to handle the distribution of these men. In other words, I want to unwrap the logistics of armies, whether France could afford to pay and feed them, if French forces depended on alternative sources of help when in foreign lands, and what these helpers looked like. We have already seen the extent to which the French relied on supplying themselves independent of the land; how Louvois repeatedly distinguished himself by filling surrounding fortresses and stores with much needed stocks of bread, or fodder for horses etc. This policy was not necessarily the trademark of Louvois, rather it had become a necessity by the time the FDW was nearing its end, mostly because there was simply too many men in play to actually provide for them all, so contractors, or 'mercenary suppliers', as I like to call them, were employed to make up the difference.

They did of course have more technical names, the *munitionnaires* and *intendents*, and these were the two major types of supply auxiliary or civil servant that the French made use of when wielding their mind-bendingly large armies. How did the system work? Well munitionnaires handled the more mundane tasks; such as supplying the bread and oats or establishing the storage facilities which the French could rely on. Intendents were essentially the right hand men of the secretary of state for war, in this case Louvois. They answered directly to him, and provided him with a native bureaucracy in each region that the French operated within. Most regions of France had these men, who were governors in some sense, but had far more responsibilities, and mostly of a military bent. They possessed a large staff of their own, and were of as much importance as a general, should the latter venture into their domains. This is because, as we've established, the importance of logistics was really being grasped by this era, and Louvois' efforts ensured that such concerns became state policy, which meant of course that these policies had to be regulated by the intendents should an army come into their region of governance.

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[2] Cited in Lynn, p. 52.

A dual command system of sorts was affected by the French, who used the general for his military prowess and tact, and the resident intendent for his experience in organising the army's supply, often by liaising with the aforementioned munitionnaires if French armies marched into foreign lands where intendents weren't normally posted. Intendents also had the responsibility of passing the pay from the crown to the troops, which meant he could be either very popular or despised depending on how the crown was doing financially at the time. Intendents were also charged with bringing the French brand of justice to deserters if they were caught, as well as those that raped, murdered or pillaged. This normally involved hanging, and mercy for such offences was generally rare, with the result that many soldiers who offended opted to become bandits rather than turn themselves in. If you're still a bit confused as to how the whole system worked, the simple way to look at is that within France, intendents handled pretty much everything, but that along the newer borders and in foreign territory, organising the important logistical aspects of an army was still the task of the intendent, though this time he had the help on the ground of sometimes several munitionnaires, who tracked down the resources he needed for a price which was agreed upon.

Chaos tended to reign when intendents were absent in newly conquered regions, and generals had to rely on munitionnaires remaining honest in hard times. Again, if the intendent was responsible for a large territory, he would often periodically call upon munitionnaires to give him some added help. On top of this, seasonal changes and the availability or lack thereof of available forage etc. leant itself to relying on local munitionnaires for such items, especially when in enemy territory the locals could not be expected to help out. These seasonal munitionnaires were thus often well-paid locals, and if the deal went well they could be called upon on an annual basis, turning a temporary agreement into a kind of contract. What the munitionnaires' pals thought of him helping out the French is another issue, though if said munitionnaires were paid well enough, and if he lived in a region, like Alsace for instance, where French soldiers in need of items was a common and lucrative scene for the would-be munitionnaires, then it is unlikely he cared all that much.

If the system still sounds complicated, it made more sense when put into context, and only by going over like thus can we come to terms with how important logistics was for the armies of the 17th century. For example Lynn describes how bread would be brought to the frontiers to the needy French soldiers by the provision of flour and grain, supplied by and controlled into ovens by the munitionnaires, who themselves would be essentially policed by the intendents.[3] Because armies couldn't survive off the land for long, an organised system such as that which the French had come to adopt was essential. It meant that armies could be larger, which was good, but it also meant that these armies needed to remain nearby their sources of food or else they'd starve. You are led to remember how generals Turenne and Montecuccoli marched around one another along the Rhine, only for both to suffer and withdraw from lack of forage. Such complications made mobile warfare difficult, and it meant that the invasion of the DR for example was necessarily based upon previously laid plans of supply, which would have addressed questions as simple as where to put the ovens once the soldiers make camp. The age old cliché of amateurs think tactics, generals think logistics, or something to that effect, is thus vindicated.

This cliché was especially true in the case of forage for men most obviously, but more often than not the horses were of just as much if not more concern. It's worth remembering that grass needed for horses couldn't be crafted out of thin air, or even created in an oven. Horses needed grass from the countryside, and this fodder had to be collected by men travelling in groups of sometimes thousands at a time, depending on the size of the force at hand. How much grass could a horse really eat though? Well, it wasn't so much what each individual horse ate, as to what, say, 40k horses could eat. If a horse could eat about 20 lbs of dried fodder like oats for example, or 50 lbs of fresh grass, then multiply that by 40k and the numbers become so startling, it's a wonder anyone mobilised any armies at all. And this is neglecting to mention that such weighty fodder, in the cases of the horses weighing about 1k lbs to feed all the animals for the day, could not be carried. The army would thus have to rely upon the intendent/munitionnaires method we encountered, which was not always possible if the front moved rapidly or if such organisation was hard to come by. Or, as was the case with much of Louvois' organisational arrangements when supplying troops in the SN, these resources would be stored within nearby friendly fortresses and storehouses, which themselves, of course, would have to be protected.

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[3] Lynn describes the intendent/munitionnaires relationship well see *Wars of Louis XIV*, pp. 53-54.

Think back to what we said about seasonal campaigning and the need to hire some foreign or conveniently placed munitionnaires when out and about in the winter months, if you were daring enough to campaign then. There was a reason why troops were noted as being put in for their winter quarters; it wasn't simply because of the cold! Think that the grass or dried fodder was harder to come by, or that the grain would have been cut from the fields leaving little options to live off the land. In other words, an army either marched with a profoundly well thought out plan of supply and consumption during winter or it did not march out at all. So often were the efforts involved in such logistics not viewed worth it, that armies rarely moved at all between the months of November and March, sometimes postponing campaigns altogether when the grass or grain simply refused to grow. Now imagine what could happen if famine struck your lands, which frequently did happen, and occurred most infamously in the first decade of the 1700s, when the winters became so harsh that the crops froze and died in the ground. Without any food and plan of forage, if wars stretched on for long enough there were less opportunities to plan on the go, and this meant by necessity the army would have to live off the land, leaving the soldier at the mercy of mother nature.

Remarking on the French preparedness and Louvois' critical logistical improvements, Lynn noted that:

> By storing food and dried fodder in magazines established in towns and fortresses along the frontier, the French gained considerable advantages over their enemies, particularly in the SN. Louvois gets the credit for having set up an extensive and permanent system of magazines that allowed the French to supply their armies better with food and fodder and take to the field earlier than could their foes.[4]

Lynn wasn't the only one to notice this improvement though. Reflecting the importance of logistics and how well-prepared their enemy consistently was, a deflated Dutch war council noted that:

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[4] Lynn, *Wars*, p. 55.

> The French habitually made considerable progress in the SN in the winter and early spring, before we could subsist on the open field. This advantage is not just a question of superior forces, but proceeds from the practice of making magazines on the borders. On our side, in that season, we lack the fodder.[5]

As the means through which the state could provide supplies to its forces were improved, so too did Louis' reign see an improvement or consolidation of the provision of uniforms to its troops. In the past, soldiers, mercenaries and whoever else could be pressed into service wore the clothes on their backs; failing that they had to purchase insignia or clothing from servicemen individually before they lined up. In short, there was little in the way of a dress code, and confusion would have reigned not so much among the more distinctive units, but among the more common soldier who had neither the money nor interest in purchasing extensive uniforms that distinguished him from other allied units or, crucially, those of the enemy. The grey mass of men seen in the middle ages had largely subsided by the 16th century, as men were able to pick out distinctive or renowned colours and symbols amongst the more famous units, such as those led or owned by famous captains or nobles. However, as a system it was still very inconsistent, and for someone like Louis XIV who seemed to have liked to have things uniform to a degree, it represented another area of the army which he wanted to improve upon.

This process of uniform wear was only implemented gradually from the onset of Louis' reign, so by the outbreak of the FDW in other words, you wouldn't see a load of easily identifiable Frenchmen running around in the same colours. Many still wore the clothes on their backs amidst their poverty or lack of enthusiasm for additional expenses, though they were often easier to identify as friend or foe thanks to the use of flags and the vibrant insignias worn by their officers. In the case of Marshal Turenne, we know that these vibrant colours cost that distinguished soldier his life, as a cannon was able to zero in on him because of a nearby artillery commander's propensity for wearing a brightly coloured cloak. This cloak represented that man's station and the fact that he led his unit, which meant the men under his control knew who he was and where to find him. Of course, owing to his distinctive markings, so did the enemy.

By the outbreak of the War of the Grand Alliance in the late 1680s, uniforms were both mandatory and universal on the French soldiery, and he didn't mind so much because this, along with so many others, had become a responsibility of the state. Aside from the occasional confusion and the fact that it looked nice, you may wonder what the point in kitting out his hundreds of thousands of men in uniform was. What it boils down to is the pride of being part of an easily identifiable regiment, the colour coding making decisions and actions reportedly easier in the heat of battle as one didn't have to search the field for a specific person or regiment's colours, he merely needed to find their insignia. Such marks of identity were normally plastered on the flags which soldiers still marched with, and the idea that they would take pride in their colours, and that this would instil greater professionalism within them, was a further incentive to kit them out and add to the drain on the king's coffers during wartime. They also simply looked better, and the psychological impact of well-dressed, well-prepared forces in comparison to an apparently ragtag bunch of unclean and unremarkable men cannot be understated.

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[5] Cited in Christopher Duffy, *The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great 1660-1789, Siege Warfare,* vol. ii (London, 1985), p. 11.

We should remember that during times of siege, which were many during the age of Louis XIV, the insignias of the different regiments became something akin to badges of honour, and when a surrender was given if the victorious enemy opted to seize that force's flags, then he could expect a tough fight for nothing more, we may believe, than pieces of dyed fabric. Yet to the common soldier, as Louis and his officials had hoped would be the case, the creation of symbols and flags like these gave these men something to fight for as much as it gave them something to believe in, and it wasn't a particularly new idea either. In these flags were said to be the honour of the country, and within the insignia itself was represented your town, your family and your comrades. In a sense they thus represented the king as much as they represented the country, and it was an important way of imbuing within the soldiery a sense of their purpose and importance. Through holding these flags, it demonstrated that the common soldier up to the noble did not merely fight for his town, his country or his king, he also *represented* the things as well, and he thus had to, by virtue of this representation, be seen to give a good account of himself.

In the next Xtra episode of 'Louis' Arms & Armies', we will investigate what happens when such concerns are thrown to the wind, so to speak, and the soldiery is forced to live off the land, while we'll also examine how muskets, cavalry and artillery distinguished the 17th century soldier from his predecessors, and what his successors learned from his example. I hope you'll join me for that Xtra episode, and I hope you enjoyed this examination of some important founding tenants of warfare here. Thanks for listening my lovely Patrons, and I'll be seeing you all soon.