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Roy L. McCullough. *Coercion, Conversion and Counterinsurgency in Louis XIV's France*. Leiden: Brill, 2007. Notes, bibliography and index. vii + 265 pp. \$128.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-90-04-15661-6.

Review by W. Gregory Monahan, Eastern Oregon University.

Old orthodoxies about absolutism long ago broke over the discovery that Louis XIV's monarchy was both weaker and more collaborative than his own propaganda had led those who read it to believe. Books and articles by William Beik, Albert Hamscher, Sharon Kettering, James Collins and others presented a new picture of that supposedly most absolute of monarchs, and historians confronted a king who coopted rather than conquered his enemies, who empowered and allied with provincial authorities rather than always riding roughshod over their privileges and positions, and who was far more concerned with polishing his reputation and adding territory to his realm than with micromanaging the sale of salt in Guyenne.[1] But he *was* interested in expanding his realm, and for that he needed a larger and better disciplined army than his predecessors had enjoyed. The growth and nature of that army have been the source of several recent works which have enriched our understanding of the monarchy of Louis XIV by analyzing this most impressive—or at the very least, most expansive—of royal institutions.[2]

Into this particular corner of Louis Quatorzian studies comes Roy McCullough, who asks a fairly simple but interesting question. What exactly did the king *do* with that army inside his realm? Given that it was largely designed for and directed to the many foreign wars that characterized the reign, what about the old saw that it was also intended to be the hammer of absolutism, the ultimate tool for establishing the king's authority anywhere in France he wished it established? To answer that question, McCullough has explored archives, mostly in Paris and particularly the rich army archives at Vincennes, to delve into the various riots and revolts that occasionally convulsed parts of the country during the long reign of the sun king and the tools of coercion Louis XIV brought to bear against those disturbances.

The author divides his book into roughly two parts—the earlier period up to 1675 when riot and rebellion largely concerned resistance to taxation, and the latter years when that resistance became primarily religious in opposition to the decision to revoke the Edict of Nantes. He wants to know if, how, and where the regular army was used, and what other coercive tools the monarchy employed. It will not surprise those familiar with the government of Louis XIV to read McCullough's accounts of the royal government's often improvised and slapdash solutions to deep-rooted problems like tax resistance and entrenched Protestantism. The author argues that the regular army was generally deployed only where it was easily available—in the border regions where it had been sent to fight innumerable foreign enemies—and that the crown relied instead on a variety of often ill-supplied and poorly-trained militias, haphazardly armed units of nobles, or the pure bluff of the threat of armed force by harried officials to quiet outbreaks of resistance.

In the first half of his book, McCullough studies in detail anti-tax movements in the Boulonnais (1662), the Audijos (1664-65), the Roure (1670), Brittany (1675) and Bordeaux (1675). In each case, he writes, "it proved difficult to find sufficient regular forces to serve in the province and when they were deployed to the province it was often only after a long delay and they rarely remained in the province for extended periods" (p. 67). Indeed, under the aegis of Colbert, it seems that regular troops were used

more as a means of extorting money from local authorities than effective tools for putting down riot and rebellion. Furthermore, McCullough confirms the traditional view that troops were as likely to cause trouble as they were to end it, and he even devotes an all-too-brief section of his book on their active role as salt-smugglers.

The run up to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes confronted the monarchy with a different brand of resistance, and McCullough devotes the last half of his book to the *dragonnades* and the Camisard War (1702-05), the latter the only case of a large-scale armed rebellion after the king assumed his majority. Here again, the author maintains a sharp focus on the nature and use of armed force, and his conclusions are not notably different from those for the earlier tax revolts. He argues that the death of Colbert in 1683 and Louvois's ascendancy did entail a greater readiness to use regular troops, but he shows the extent to which the threat of force was as useful as its reality to local authorities enforcing royal religious oppression of Protestants. That said, the end of the War of Reunions in 1684 meant that regular army soldiers were actually available for domestic use. Louvois did not hesitate to deploy them, nor did he waver in removing or replacing local officials like the *intendant* of Languedoc, Henri Daguesseau, who might hesitate to do so. As the author notes, however, this use of regular forces was both unusual and rare.

Louvois was long dead by the time the peasants of the Cévennes rose up in rebellion in 1702, and with France embroiled in the War of the Spanish Succession regular troops were hard to come by. McCullough details the endless, exhaustive efforts of the powerful *intendant* of Languedoc, Lamoignon de Basville, to raise, train, attract, draft, buy, and beg the forces necessary to respond to the Camisard rebellion. The author analyzes the poor condition of the forces available to the various military commanders sent to put down the rebellion and concludes that those forces were seldom sufficient in number or quality. In addition, the secretary of state for war, Michel Chamillart, carried on an active correspondence with every officer of substantial rank fighting in the south, and McCullough argues that the fear of being accused of error as well as the lack of troops caused the first two commanders, the comte de Broglie and the maréchal de Montrevel, to pursue a more timid (and therefore unsuccessful) defensive strategy. His points about the number and quality of troops are certainly well taken, but I think he may be overestimating Chamillart's activism and underestimating somewhat the unpopularity of Broglie (who was, though he does not mention it, the *intendant's* brother-in-law) as well as the mind-boggling incompetence of Montrevel, who preferred spending time in the arms of his mistress at Alès to taking the field against a collection of peasant rebels.

This is on the whole a strong book. The author maintains his focus throughout, qualifies his arguments where necessary, and supports them with plentiful evidence in good notes and a fine bibliography. The book occasionally reads too much like the dissertation from which it is drawn, and the author has the curious habit of equating the person of Louis XIV with his government, but his arguments are always clear. There are only a few areas where he could have broadened his approach slightly or defined his terms more carefully. One of the latter is in the definition of what constituted a "revolt." McCullough is sometimes too ready to use that term where the less impressive but more accurate "riot" would work better. For example, it is difficult to see how the riots in Rennes in 1675 actually constituted much of a revolt, and the unrest that followed in the Breton countryside was neither widespread nor long lived. Other historians, most recently William Beik, have devoted considerable attention to this question, and it would have enriched the author's treatment of the royal response to such episodes if he applied a subtler hand to this question. [3] Likewise, I can find only one paragraph devoted to the diffidence that army officers themselves felt at being deployed to put down rebellions (p. 39). Their own reticence, which I have found to be the case in my own study of the Camisard War, certainly had to play some role in decisions about whether to use regular forces for domestic coercion.

Finally, the author could have paid more attention to the area of patronage and clientage, which affected the army as much as it did the positions and decision-making of local officials. He cites Kettering's

valuable work in his bibliography, but he nowhere notes, for example, that the royal governor of Brittany in 1675, the duc de Chaulnes, was a Colbert ally, and effectively an *intendant* in all but title. That Colbert supported Chaulnes's desire to use military force in the riots of 1675 against the wishes of the Parlement of Rennes may have had as much to do with family ties as it did with the controller general's endless search for revenue or general royal opposition to the *parlements*. Likewise the switch in Languedoc from Daguesseau, a Colbert client, to Basville, whose family had allied itself with Louvois, and Basville's distance from Montrevel, who replaced the *intendant's* brother-in-law and ally Broglie as commander of royal forces in the Camisard War, all owed a great deal to shifts in patronage. Such issues deserve more attention than they get, since they must have played a considerable role in the military response to various forms of resistance.

In his conclusion, McCullough appears ready to qualify the conclusions of Beik and others that the monarchy coopted, allied, or depended upon local authorities, citing "examples where the provincial elites did not perform their duty with regard to the maintenance of public order[.]" (p. 248). Wisely, however, he does not push too hard in this direction, since the arguments and evidence in his book do not support it. He concludes that "the sheer variety of the instruments of coercion outlined in this study suggests that coercive power within the French state remained decentralized to a surprising degree." These sources, he continues, "formed a paramilitary reservoir of coercion that the Crown relied upon to assist with various tasks required for the successful management of the French state.... [T]he Crown maintained a monopoly on the right to use coercive force, but had little compunction about farming this right out to a variety of coercive institutions when necessary..." (p. 250).

In the end, it is remarkable how much this book supports what we might call the "new orthodoxy" about the reign of Louis XIV. The provincial officials portrayed in this book, as in so many other recent works on the reign, were often left on their own to deal with incidents of riot and rebellion. The instruments of coercion upon which they could rely were often inadequate, unavailable, improvised, or too late in arriving. The regular army was at best diffident about the task of keeping order inside the realm, and the king was loath to divert it from those ends that best served his dynastic interests. Roy McCullough has taken important work on the structure and practice of the king's army and given us a valuable, thoughtful, and focused monograph on its use—or lack thereof—in the reign of Louis XIV.

## NOTES

[1] William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Albert Hamscher, *The Parlement of Paris after the Fronde, 1653-1673* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973); Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); James Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Beik reviewed much of this literature in "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past and Present*, no. 188 (2005): 195-224.

[2] John Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle: The French Army, 1610-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661-1701* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[3] William Beik, *Urban Protest in Seventeenth-Century France: The Culture of Retribution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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