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ONE MORE TIME ABOUT TACTICS AND WEAPONRY*

The question «Do new weapons revolutionize war?», especially in the pre-industrial period, is one of the central issues in a debate that has been going on for half a century, on the so-called military revolution in early modern Europe¹. In fact, this concept has been criticized almost since the very beginning for being too influenced by technological determinism², but this does not exempt researchers from a thorough and critical analysis of if and how technical innovations changed the ways in which warfare was conducted and the army or its supply system were organized. The study by Mark W. Shearwood³ on the use of plug bayonets in the English army in the second half of the 17th and early 18th centuries was intended to be such a work.

The appropriate use of firearms and cold weapons on the battlefield, in such a way as to benefit, as efficiently as possible, from the advantages of both types of weaponry, and at the same time to offset their disadvantages, was undoubtedly the most important tactical dilemma in early modern Europe. The introduction of bayonets for use by infantry and dragoons in the second half of the 17th century was to lead to the withdrawal of pikes from the equipment of infantry regiments at the beginning of the next century, and as a consequence, to the unification of infantry armaments and the domination of the so-called linear tactics on the battlefields of the 18th century Europe. Verification of such a vision of changes in the European military is one of the main tasks that the author of «The Perfection of Military Discipline» set for himself. The main focus of his interest is the use of a plug bayonet — a weapon supplanted at the

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¹ Jacob F., Visoni-Alonzo G. The Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe: A Revision. London, 2016. P. 5.

² Rogers C. J. The Military Revolution in History and Historiography // The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe. Boulder, 1990. P. 9.

³ Shearwood Mark W. The Perfection of Military Discipline: The Plug Bayonet and the English Army 1660–1705. Warwick: Helion & Company, 2020. (Century of the Soldier 1618–1721. No. 53). 167 p., ill. ISBN 978-1-913118-87-7.

beginning of the 18th century by a socket bayonet. The latter, unlike its predecessor, made it possible to shoot with the weapon on which it was fixed.

In his work, the author mainly used two types of written sources. On the one hand, these are handwritten sources produced by the Board of Ordnance — an English government body responsible for the supply of munitions and equipment to the English army — and therefore, above all, various types of orders to buy arms, as well as registers of arms collected in English arsenals or issued to individual regiments. On the other hand, the work uses printed drill manuals published in England in the second half of the 17th century. Additionally, the author researched numerous specimens of plug bayonets, matchlock muskets, and flintlock muskets preserved in the English collections. The author is aware of the limitations of choosing such a source base. He points out that purchase orders were not always processed, drill manuals were primarily of a training and educational nature, hence the commands and evolutions described there were not always used on the battlefield, and the preserved copies of bayonets and muskets are not necessarily representative of all weapons of this kind used in Europe or even in the British Isles at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The work is divided into seven chapters; chapter 1 is an introduction and chapter 7 is a summary. Chapter 2 is devoted to the construction of plug bayonets, as well as their purchase by the Board of Ordnance; it also includes information on the amount of such armaments stored in English arsenals. Chapter 3 concerns in general the armaments of the English army in the late 17th century. Chapter 4 discusses the information available in drill manuals on the use of plug bayonets. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the European infantry tactics in the period in question, and Chapter 6 to the organization of the English army in that period; most of this chapter comprises lists of units that were part of the English army (as well as foreign units in the English service).

As can already be seen from this cursory glance, the use of plug bayonets is directly dealt with only in chapters 2 and 4, and partly in chapter 5. The main issue discussed in chapter 3 is the question of equipping the English army with flintlock weapons, which, as the author demonstrated, only indirectly concerns the use of bayonets. On the other hand, the lists of regiments and companies in the English service and their locations in chapter 6, drawn up on the basis of archival materials, are hardly related to the main topic of the work, although they are very useful to military historians investigating the discussed era.

The work, by analogy to other publications in the series «Century of Soldier 1618–1721», contains numerous illustrations. Unfortunately, there are also editorial errors, e. g. repetitions⁴ or typos⁵.

The author has shown that the plug bayonet was a more universal weapon than the socket bayonet: the vast majority of plug bayonets could be mounted in the barrels of the majority of muskets and flintlocks used in the late 17th century. The situation was different for the socket bayonets⁶. Perhaps this was the reason why the latter replaced plug bayonets as late as in the early 18th century. It is a pity that the author did not expand this theme a little more. The author rightly emphasizes in the conclusions of his work that when studying the history of military weaponry, especially in the pre-industrial period, specific dates for weaponry

⁴ Shearwood M. W. The Perfection of Military Discipline: The Plug Bayonet and the English Army 1660–1705. Warwick, 2020. P. 52, 55.

⁵ Shearwood M. W. The Perfection of Military Discipline... P. 71.

⁶ Shearwood M. W. The Perfection of Military Discipline... P. 42–43.

changes in particular armies and units cannot be provided. This was due, among other things, to the fact that none of the European countries of the 17th century developed a fully centralized system of purchasing arms. Even if there were bodies such as the English Board of Ordnance, the duty to equip the regiment properly continued to fall squarely on the officers' shoulders. The conclusion is right that the plug bayonet was not supposed to replace pikes completely as was originally assumed by the then commanders; initially, the bayonets were used to equip troops of dragoons and grenadiers, i. e. the soldiers that did not have pikes on their equipment before. It is worth noting that a similar situation occurred not only in the English army, but also in the Polish-Lithuanian army. The oldest testimonials on the use of bayonets by the Polish-Lithuanian infantry come from 1695 and refer to the subunit of grenadiers from the Regiment of Royal Foot Guard⁷.

It seems that on the basis of the preserved source base it is not possible to jump to any conclusions concerning the use of the plug bayonet beyond those presented by the author. Probably the scarcity of mentions about this weapon in the sources led the author to decide to supplement the content of his monograph with other information concerning the organization, armaments, and tactics of the English army at the end of the 17th century, which he identified during the archival search and research in the collections of historical armaments. Unfortunately, this results in the work seeming rather chaotic at times. Perhaps the scope of the monograph should have been extended and its subject should have covered the general changes in the armaments and tactics of the English army at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. Alternatively, the results of the author's research on the use of the plug bayonet in England could have been published in the form of an article.

At the same time, it should be noted that the direction of research on the transformation of the European military in the period in question, as indicated by the author, seems to be fundamentally correct. An analysis of the influence of changes in armaments on the way of waging wars should be carried out taking into account the specificity of a given period, organizational cultures of particular armies, command systems, etc. This is the only way to avoid the trap of technological determinism. It is worth noting that the research on the re-armament of individual armies may also be a very attractive subject of interest for historians dealing with Central and Eastern Europe, especially since it is connected with the important issue of the broadly understood occidentalization of the Central and Eastern European military at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries⁸.

Информация о статье

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⁷ Wagner M. Logistyka w regimentach piechoty koronnej w latach 1683–1696 // Wagner M. W cieniu szukamy jasności chwały: Studia z dziejów panowania Jana III Sobieskiego (1684–1696). Siedlce, 2002. S. 37.

⁸ Examples of such work: Wagner M. Zmiany w uzbrojeniu wojsk polskich na początku XVIII wieku // Technika a wojna X–XX w. Siedlce, 2000. P. 123–155; Aksan V. H. Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged. Abingdon; New York, 2007; Megorsky B. The Russian Army in the Great Northern War 1700–21: Organisation, Matériel, Training and Combat Experience, Uniforms. Warwick, 2018.

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Заголовок: One more time about tactics and weaponry [Еще раз о тактике и вооружении]

Резюме: Исследование Марка Ширвуда посвящено использованию штыков-пробок в английской армии во второй половине XVII – начале XVIII веков. Автор показал, что втульчатый штык был более универсальным оружием, чем штык-пробка. В выводах своей работы он справедливо подчеркивает, что при изучении истории военного оружия, особенно в доиндустриальный период, нельзя указать конкретные даты изменения вооружения в конкретных армиях и частях. Соответственно, штык-пробка не мог сразу полностью заменил пики. Первоначально штыки использовались для вооружения отрядов драгунов и гренадеров, то есть солдат, которые не имели на вооружении пики. Исследование М. Ширвуда о перевооружении армии представляет интерес и для историков, изучающих Центральную и Восточную Европу XVII–XVIII веков, так как связано с важным вопросом о преемственности в области вооружения между странами Западной, Центральной и Восточной Европы. Представляется, что на основании сохранившейся источниковской базы нельзя делать поспешных выводов относительно использования штыка-пробки.

Ключевые слова: английская армия, оружие, пехота, пика, военная революция, военная тактика, вооружение, тактика военного боя, историография

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Title: One more time about tactics and weaponry

Summary: Mark W. Shearwood's study is devoted to the use of plug bayonets in the English army in the second half of the 17th and early 18th centuries. The author has shown that the plug bayonet was a more universal weapon than the socket bayonet. He rightly emphasizes in the conclusions of his work that when studying the history of military weaponry, especially in the pre-industrial period, specific dates for weaponry changes in particular armies and units cannot be provided. The conclusion is right that the plug bayonet was not supposed to replace pikes completely as was originally assumed by the then commanders; initially, the bayonets were used to equip troops of dragoons and grenadiers, i. e. the soldiers that did not have pikes on their equipment before. This study on the rearmament of individual armies is of interest to historians dealing with Central and Eastern Europe. It is connected with the important question of the continuity in the field of weapons between the West and Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. It seems that on the basis of the preserved source base it is not possible to jump at any conclusions concerning the use of the plug bayonet going further than those presented by the author.

Keywords: English army, plug bayonet, socket bayonet, infantry, pike, military revolution, military tactics, armaments, historiography

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