

## The English Navy at the Time of the Duke of Buckingham (1618–1628)

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This article deals with the personality of the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Buckingham, especially his work as the head of the English Navy in 1618–1628. The introduction of the article outlines the situation in England and throughout Europe, especially in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Other parts of the paper are already dealing with George Villiers and the English Navy, with particular attention to the expeditions to Algiers, Cadiz and La Rochelle and the consequences thereof.

[England; James I; George Villiers, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Buckingham; High Lord Admiral; the English Navy]

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George Villiers, subsequently the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Buckingham, was not just the enamoured cavalier from the novels, theatre plays or more modern adaptations, made famous and even adored by the works of Alexandre Dumas Senior (*The Three Musketeers*) or his relationship with Queen Anne of Austria, but was also a politician, the personal friend of the King of England, and something of a diplomat as well. However, it is not very well known that he is also credited with developing the English navy, which he led as Lord High Admiral. Czech (Czechoslovak) historiography has only marginally reflected on this topic to date,<sup>1</sup> but, in relation to commemoration of some events of the Stuart period, there has recently been some discussion in the field of British historiography<sup>2</sup> regarding the

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1 M. KOVÁŘ – S. TUMIS, *Zrození velmoci – Anglie (Velká Británie) na cestě k postavení první světové mocnosti (1603–1746)*, Praha 2007; K. KUBIŠ, *Zahraniční politika Anglie za vlády Jakuba I*, in: *Historický obzor*, 1993/4, pp. 3–35; P. VODIČKA, *Anglický královský dvůr a jeho proměny v kontextu první poloviny 17. století (1603–1640)*, Praha 2014.

2 R. LOCKYER, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592–1628*, London, New York 2002; K. THOMSON, *The Life and Times*

importance of the figure of Buckingham and his influence on the internal and foreign policies of the early Stuart monarchy, and so I would like to contribute my article with an analysis of this particular issue.

Several monographs regarding the figure of the Duke of Buckingham can be named in relation to foreign historiography, particularly older works by Roger Lockyer (which are still in print, however), a book by William Shaw and a three-part monograph by Katherine Thomson. Newer monographs include a work by Michel Duchein, *The Duke of Buckingham*, which was published in 2004 and is the only book about the duke to be translated into Czech. Letters by the Duke and Duchess of Buckingham published by Thomas Stevenson are available for better understanding, along with a description of Buckingham's life and particularly his relationship to King James I. However, works, studies and older prints devoted to the English navy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century are of crucial importance for this article. Of these publications, I must mention summaries regarding the navy by Penn, Young and Oppenheim, and particularly a study by Alan Patrick McGowan (*The Royal Navy under the first Duke of Buckingham, Lord High Admiral 1618–1628*), which is devoted to the navy at the time of Buckingham's activities and was therefore also a very important source for this article.

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The early Stuart monarchy in England was partially able to smoothly follow onto the late Tudor period, despite it frequently having to contend with (re)established challenges, not only from the aspect of foreign policy, but also from the aspect of domestic matters, unlike previous periods.<sup>3</sup> Examples of this include the prolonged conflict with Spain, extending from the magnificent victory of the English over the Spanish Armada

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*of George Villiers Duke of Buckingham*, London 1860; W. H. SHAW, *George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham*, Oxford, London 1882; M. DUCHEIN, *Vévoda z Buckinghamu*, Praha 2004; T. G. STEVENSON (Ed.), *Letters of the Duke and Duchess of Buckingham Chiefly Addressed to King James I of England*, Edinburgh 1834; C. D. PENN, *The Navy under the Aarly Stuarts and Its Influence on English History*, London 1913; D. YOUNGE, *The History of British Navy from the Earliest Period to the Present Time, Vol I*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., London 1866; M. OPPENHEIM, *A History of the Administration of the Royal Navy and of Merchant Shipping in Relation to the Navy, Vol. I, 1509–1660*, London, New York 1896; A. P. MCGOWAN, *The Royal Navy under the First Duke of Buckingham, Lord High Admiral 1618–1628*, London 1967.

<sup>3</sup> W. CHURCHILL, *Dějiny anglicky mluvících národů díl 2 – Nový svět*, Praha 1998, p. 111; G. DAVIES, *The Early Stuarts 1603–1660*, Oxford 1992, p. 1.

in 1588,<sup>4</sup> differences of opinion between the Anglicans and the Puritans, and the people's and Parliament's dissatisfaction with the granting of monopolies,<sup>5</sup> whereby the Crown acquired funds that it lacked due to the prolonged wars.<sup>6</sup> The accession of James I Stuart (he reigned as James VI in Scotland) to the throne meant a transformation of the relationship between the Scots and the English because James I wished to use their collaboration to establish a future unitary link between both countries.<sup>7</sup> His reign is therefore considered one of the longest periods of peace in English history also thanks to the fact that the Stuart succession followed smoothly onto the Tudor era, which Robert Cecil, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Salisbury, who held high posts during James' reign and who the king himself considered his best servant, also evidently contributed substantially to.<sup>8</sup>

James was considered very intelligent by his contemporaries but was also criticised for succumbing to various so-called favourites, who he gifted with property, titles and posts. These favourites included the future Duke of Buckingham, or Robert Carr, the Earl of Somerset, for example.

The monarch managed to resolve the long-standing conflict with Spain by concluding a peace treaty in 1604,<sup>9</sup> which also led to a gradual renewal of diplomatic relations. The Spanish did not conclude a peace treaty with just England, but also entered a twelve-year cease-fire with the United Provinces.<sup>10</sup>

King James I was known for his unwillingness to submit to Parliament and for his frequent conflicts with its members, whether this was in regard to issue of royal privileges, the church or foreign policy, a situation that permeated the entire period of his rule.<sup>11</sup> Disagreements between the King and Parliament occurred during the first session and then in 1614 and 1621, for example, when the King had Parliament dissolved following disagreements particularly in relation to the issue of the assistance of

<sup>4</sup> CHURCHILL, p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> M. ASHLEY, *England in the Seventeenth Century*, London 1952, p. 44; CHURCHILL, pp. 105–106; J. POLIŠENSKÝ, *Dějiny Británie*, Praha 1982, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> CHURCHILL, p. 100; K. O. MORGAN, *Dějiny Británie*, Praha 1999, p. 271; T. MUNCK, *Evropa sedmnáctého století 1598–1700*, Praha 2002, pp. 94–95; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> G. PARKER, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, New Haven, London 2013, pp. 325–326.

<sup>8</sup> ASHLEY, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> CHURCHILL, p. 100; POLIŠENSKÝ, p. 90; ASHLEY, p. 43; KUBIŠ, p. 34; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 26; DAVIES, pp. 3, 49–50.

<sup>10</sup> POLIŠENSKÝ, p. 92; KUBIŠ, p. 34; DAVIES, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> MUNCK, p. 97; ASHLEY, pp. 42–43; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 24.

Frederick of the Palatinate. All the above reasons indicate that the king convened Parliament only if approval of the collection of taxes for war or funds for his own requirements was required. In relation to the issue of foreign policy, the ruler was inclined towards amicable relations with Spain from the time the peace treaty was concluded, which was also the result of the influence of Spanish Ambassador Gondomar (Diego Sarmiento de Acuna, Count of Gondomar), who chiefly financially supported the pro-Spanish party at the court of the English King.<sup>12</sup>

The effort to win the favour of Spain and reinforce relations with this country became even more important for the king after the Thirty Years' War broke out.<sup>13</sup> The culmination of good relations between England and Spain was to be the arrangement of a marriage between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta in 1623. However, the marriage never took place.<sup>14</sup>

Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham joined with the House of Commons after failed negotiations in Madrid and started to demand war with Spain.<sup>15</sup> They began discussing funds for the war and seeking a new ally, who was supposed to be France. The alliance was supposed to be supported once again by a marriage between Prince Charles and the sister of Louis XIII, Henrietta Maria.<sup>16</sup> The marriage contract was signed in December 1624 and King James I died several months later (in March 1625).<sup>17</sup>

In response to the failed negotiations regarding an English-Spanish marriage, the newly crowned King Charles was more inclined towards war, even at the price of convening Parliament, which would have to ap-

<sup>12</sup> ASHLEY, pp. 45, 51; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 32; BLACK, p. 130; DAVIES, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> In 1621 the emperor declared an Imperial Ban against Frederick of the Palatinate and his ancestral lands (the Palatinate) and a year later the ancestral territory of the Prince-electors and Princess Elizabeth was occupied by the Catholic League. For more details see POLIŠENSKÝ, p. 93; PARKER, p. 326; DAVIES, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Prince Charles and Buckingham journeyed to Madrid in 1623, where protracted negotiations took place, but thanks to the unwillingness to compromise on the part of King Felipe and Olivares, as well as the English, the marriage did not take place. POLIŠENSKÝ, pp. 93–94; ASHLEY, p. 54; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 32; PARKER, p. 327; DAVIES, pp. 58, 59.

<sup>15</sup> For more details about Prince Charles' participation and involvement in the parliamentary sessions of 1621 and 1624 see. CH. R. KYLE, Prince Charles in the Parliaments of 1621 and 1624, in: *The Historical Journal*, 41, 3, 1998, pp. 603–624.

<sup>16</sup> MUNCK, p. 43; ASHLEY, pp. 54, 57; PARKER, pp. 327–328; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 33; DAVIES, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> ASHLEY, p. 55; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 33.

prove the funds for war with Spain.<sup>18</sup> Although the English aided French Huguenots at La Rochelle in 1627 at the initiative of Buckingham,<sup>19</sup> even after the marriage took place there were many areas of conflict between England and France, both of a confessional nature and of the nature of disagreements between the newly married Charles and Maria. Major failure on the field of battle was also joined by the repeated shortage of funds, and the King was forced to take the option of so-called forced loans; however, this led to the execution of a complaint, the so-called Petition of Right.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent conflict between the King and Parliament, particularly in regard to the unqualified management of the war, which was a clear reference to Buckingham, led the King to dissolve Parliament.<sup>21</sup>

### The First Years and the Expedition to Algiers in 1620

The future Duke of Buckingham came from the old English House of Villiers, which came to England from Normandy and settled in the area of Brooksby. George was born on 20 August 1592 as the younger son of the second marriage between Sir George Villiers and Mary Beaumont. When he was seventeen, he was sent to France. There he was to receive an education in the areas of dance, duelling, French and etiquette, as was required of young nobles at the time.<sup>22</sup>

When he returned to England, he became a focus of interest for the anti-Spanish clique at the court of King James I, which included Philip Herbert, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Pembroke, and George Abbot, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Villiers probably met with the King in 1614 at Apethorpe Manor. The King was known for his weakness for young, educated and attractive men, who then became his favourites. He showered these favourites with wealth, noble titles and positions at court.<sup>23</sup> Robert Carr,

<sup>18</sup> P. KUBÍČEK, *Právo a státní zřízení Anglie a Škotska do roku 1707 v historických souvislostech*, Rigorous thesis, Brno 2012, p. 73; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> MUNCK, pp. 46, 72; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 38; BLACK, p. 130; DAVIES, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> POLIŠENSKÝ, p. 95; KOVÁŘ – TUMIS, p. 38; BLACK, p. 130; PARKER, p. 330; H. HULME, Opinion in the House of Commons on the Proposal for a Petition of Right, 6 May 1628, in: *The English Historical Review*, 50, 198, 1935, pp. 302–306.

<sup>21</sup> POLIŠENSKÝ, p. 94; DAVIES, p. 66.

<sup>22</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 11–12; SHAW, p. 6; THOMSON, Vol I, pp. 10–28; LOCKYER, pp. 3–11.

<sup>23</sup> More about the issue of the favourites at the English court and the possibility of Buckingham's inspiration by a book *The Emperor's Favourite*. S. KEENAN, Representing the Duke of Buckingham: Libel, Counter – Libel and the Example of The Emperor Favourite, in: *Literature Compass*, 9, 4, 2012, pp. 292–305.

Earl of Somerset, who was related through patronage to the Howard family, which was inclined to support pro-Spanish interests and amicable relations with that country at the English court, was the King's favourite at the time. However, it must be noted that the King himself inclined towards this direction.<sup>24</sup> In April 1615 Villiers was made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber and was subsequently knighted.<sup>25</sup> The relationship between Somerset and the King began to deteriorate, particularly after he married Francis Howard and links between Carr and his wife and the death of Thomas Overbury came to light in September 1615.<sup>26</sup>

Villiers' position at the court was reinforced in January 1616, when he was given the new post of Master of the Horse. In the same year Villiers was elevated to Baron Whaddon and Viscount Villiers, as a result of which he became a member of the House of Lords.<sup>27</sup> Villiers' advancement continued with considerable speed in the following year of 1617, when the King appointed him to the office of Lord Privy Seal and elevated him to Earl of Buckingham.<sup>28</sup> Buckingham endeavoured to maintain good relations not only with the King, but also with the Queen and the prince, who did not however express great enthusiasm over his father's lifestyle and nor, therefore, towards his open expressions of favour towards Buckingham. The relationship with Prince Charles developed over time and, at the beginning of the 1620s, we can consider it a friendship, whereas Buckingham was practically considered a member of the family. It was thanks to good relations with Prince Charles while James was alive that Buckingham retained power after the prince came to the throne as Charles I in 1625. His elevation to Marquis

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<sup>24</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 15–18; THOMSON, Vol I, pp. 42–43; LOCKYER, pp. 14–15.

<sup>25</sup> Scots were usually appointed to positions in the Bedchamber. These posts were not very lucrative but provided the opportunity to become close to the King. The King trusted most of the Gentlemen of his Bedchamber and so a new position among these posts became vacant only very occasionally, because the King did not like replacing the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber. The Queen herself was able to influence the appointment of Gentlemen of the Bedchamber. Robert Carr was also a Gentleman of the Bedchamber and was also subsequently knighted. For more details see VODIČKA, pp. 62, 65–66, 68, 94, 101; LOCKYER, pp. 12–14 DUCHEIN, pp. 19–20.

<sup>26</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 26–32; SHAW, pp. 7–8; THOMSON, Vol I, pp. 88–96; VODIČKA, pp. 97–98, 104–105.

<sup>27</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 33–39; SHAW, pp. 8–9, 21–22; VODIČKA, pp. 31, 46–49, 108, 111; LOCKYER, pp. 38–47, 89–92.

<sup>28</sup> He was able to gain this title thanks to the vacant Buckingham dukedom, which had been last held by Edward Stafford during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. DUCHEIN, pp. 38–40.

in January 1618 can be considered another promotion for Buckingham.<sup>29</sup>

Buckingham's influence over the King was also apparent in staff changes at various offices, when the duke's friends or clients were appointed to specific posts.<sup>30</sup> Buckingham also used marriage policy to increase his kinship to some of the wealthy or influential families of his clients. His numerous relatives offered the opportunity to marry distant cousins to suitable candidates for an alliance with the Villiers family. Buckingham used this method to entice Lionel Cranfield and others closer to him, for example.<sup>31</sup> Thanks to the initiative of his mother, Lady Mary Villiers Compton, the duke himself was married to Katherine Manners, the daughter of Francis Manners, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Rutland, on 16 May 1620. An important milestone in Buckingham's life occurred in January 1619, when the monarch appointed him Lord High Admiral, without Buckingham having had any prior naval experience.<sup>32</sup>

James I, who considered himself the peace arbiter of Europe rather than a warrior, concluded a peace treaty with Spain at the beginning of his reign; it was therefore no longer necessary to maintain a large flotilla, and the King was able to reduce expenses for the navy. It must be noted that he substantially reduced the number of ships capable of sailing compared to the Tudor period, practically immediately, by more than half. The King had 37 ships available. Most of them required minor or major repairs, but there was not much interest in carrying these out given the lack of funds, and so the ships mostly remained in dock or anchored in harbours. The issue of the naval fleet's inactivity also led to a reduction in the number of sailors who had to make a living elsewhere, which is why many of them became pirates.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–42, 54–56, 72–73; VODIČKA, pp. 27–28, 117.

<sup>30</sup> The official reason for dismissal was usually corruption, acceptance of bribes or the effort to force specific men to leave on their own initiative. However, we must mention that the departing Lord High Admiral, or another lord in a similar position, received payment from his successor to the office. At the beginning of the 1620s, Buckingham formed a group of his supporters at court and in parliament, for example Williams, who replaced another former client of Buckingham, Bacon, in the office of Lord Privy Seal. Lionel Cranfield became Lord of the Treasury. Cranfield married Anne Brett, a relative of Buckingham, which reinforced the alliance with the duke. For more details see. DUCHEIN, pp. 60–61, 64–65, 119–123; VODIČKA, p. 141.

<sup>31</sup> See the example of Dudley Carelton and his links to Buckingham for more details on the issue of patronage. R. HILL – R. LOCKYER, 'Carleton and Buckingham: The Quest for Office' Revisited, in: *History*, 88, 2003, pp. 17–31.

<sup>32</sup> SHAW, p. 12; VODIČKA, pp. 113, 127–128; LOCKYER, pp. 58–60; DUCHEIN, p. 64.

<sup>33</sup> PENN, pp. 1–2, 8, 4, 11, 85; YOUNGE, Vol I, p. 50; OPPENHEIM, Vol I, pp. 184–206.

Apart from the lack of funds, another naval issue was the corruption of officials, including those in the highest posts, such as Lord High Admiral Nottingham. As a supporter of the Spanish clique at the English court, he ensured that the flotilla of the English King remained as incapable of service as possible and that it did not intervene against Spanish interests in any way. During the first years of James' reign, the shipyards were used for various types of corruption, which is why the Commission focused its attention on them later on in 1618.<sup>34</sup>

In 1618 James I asked the City for a loan to save the failing navy. Examination of its condition and a proposal of the necessary steps toward changes in management were entrusted into the hands of the Commission. The name of the Duke of Buckingham is subsequently usually linked to the English navy from 1618, when he began serving in the aforementioned Commission. James I offered the post of Lord High Admiral to the duke at the beginning of 1618, but Buckingham refused the post, probably due to lack of experience for this position. However, his interest increased after the King's decision to establish the Commission. It was evident that the incompetence and corruption of the current Lord High Admiral Nottingham would come to light, and he would have to be replaced in office. Before he assumed the office of Lord High Admiral, Buckingham had to pay compensation to his predecessor, as was the custom. Nottingham then officially resigned in January 1619, but in 1618 the navy was already completely under the competence of the Commission and Buckingham. Buckingham supported the investigations of the Commission, which benefited both the duke himself and the commissioners. The duke was interested in improving the state of the navy and particularly, as the new Lord High Admiral, in the increased prestige and authority of the post he held. The commissioners then used Buckingham's influence with the King to achieve their goals, i.e. restoration of the navy.<sup>35</sup>

The Commission, which was declared on 24 June 1618, consisted of twelve members, led by a capable treasurer and close friend of Buckingham, Lionel Cranfield,<sup>36</sup> who had previously demonstrated his abilities and economic intelligence in the services of the King. By summoning naval officers and clerks and by examining the accounting ledgers, the

<sup>34</sup> PENN, p. 11; McGOWAN, p. 195; OPPENHEIM, pp. 207–215.

<sup>35</sup> McGOWAN, pp. 9–11; PENN, pp. 49–51; SHAW, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Other members of the Commission included John Coke, William Burrell, Richard Sutton, Richard Weston, Thomas Smythe, Nicolas Fortescue, John Osborne, William Pitt. For more details. McGOWAN, p. 12; PENN, p. 50.



Commission was expected to find the cause of the navy's deterioration and submit the results of its investigation to the Privy Council and the King. The administration of previous years was revealed to have had many deficiencies in the fields of account-keeping and inspections. The navy's expenses from the time the Stuarts ascended to the English throne were examined. It was possible to see an increase in expenses in some years, usually connected to construction of new ships, repairs to new ships (1609 – *HMS Victoria*, 1610 – *HMS Bonaventura*, *HMS Prince Royal*, etc.), and also the preparation of expeditions (Algiers, Cadiz, La Rochelle). The royal shipyards were not capable of preparing flotillas for important expeditions fast enough, so it was necessary to use privately owned ships (usually owned by merchants). The commissioners also examined the work of officers and clerks, as well as the condition of the shipyards, the ships, the ships' equipment, stores, and the costs for construction of ships. A great quantity of unnecessarily high expenses in relation to the purchase of materials for ships for higher than market prices, transport costs, anchoring fees, the high salaries of sailors, officers and clerks, and many other deficiencies were discovered.<sup>37</sup>

The Commission submitted its report to the King in September 1619 based on an investigation of the English navy. Some changes intended to help reduce naval costs to nearly half, without reducing effectiveness, were proposed to the King along with submission of the report.<sup>38</sup> The Commission decided to propose a reduction in the number of ships in harbours and thereby reduce the number of sailors taking care of them. Anchoring fees at English ports such as Chatham and Deptford would also be reduced within the terms of cost-cutting. Better administration would prevent corruption and provide more knowledge of the state of the navy. Similarly, to repairs of old ships, construction of new ships would be recorded in detail in ledgers, which would subsequently be kept in the Admiralty Library. Ships would be inspected at intervals as short as possible and summoned to Chatham or another nearby English harbour for repairs and inspections. Major repairs would be planned by the Commission. The commissioners or the admiral would be informed

<sup>37</sup> McGOWAN, pp. 12–15, 30–38, 81, 232.

<sup>38</sup> The treasurer controlled by the commissioners was supposed to manage the navy's finances, and another two commissioners were entrusted with supervision over the construction of new ships (William Burrell and Thomas Norreys). However, all decisions were to be subject to the Lord High Admiral. For more details see *ibid.*, pp. 64, 78.

of extraordinary repairs by the ships' captains. The commissioners also recommended that advice from experts from various fields related to the navy should be used to improve the state of the navy. The state of the shipyards and ships would be a crucial point in the commissioners' report for the Privy Council. The poor state of the ships (14 of the 43 ships were in very poor condition and 3 were practically irreparable) led the Commission to recommend to the King that construction of new ships, repairs to old ships and construction of new docks in Chatham should begin in the following years. The serviceability of other English harbours (Portsmouth and Hartwich) was also examined. Not all of these harbours were suitable for anchoring ships with greater displacement, like *HMS Prince Royal*, *HMS White Bear*, *HMS Meanhonor* and *HMS Anne Royal*. Not all ships of this type were fit for sailing at this time. *HMS Triumph*, *HMS Mary Rose* and *HMS Bonaventura*, among others, required minor or major repairs.<sup>39</sup>

The activities of the Commission were originally planned to be temporary for investigative purposes, but in 1619 the King decided that it would become a permanent system of naval administration until such time as the navy's situation was improved and stabilised. The decision to nominate high-ranking officers was in the hands of the Lord High Admiral. At the time of his absence, the Privy Council and secretaries, in collaboration with the commissioners, made decisions regarding issues of the navy's management. The Commission, headed by Buckingham, managed the navy until 21 April 1627, when it was dissolved. The condition of the royal navy began to improve gradually, which can be demonstrated by the increased number of capable ships and their displacement.<sup>40</sup>

The activities of the Commission at the head of the navy can be divided into two five-year periods. The first period was distinguished by the considerable activity of the commissioners. Naval reforms were implemented, along with staff changes, and the issue of funding, etc., was handled.

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<sup>39</sup> Construction of new ships with a medium displacement of around 650 tons was preferred. These ships were considered more economic and sufficiently capable. Smaller ships were also more agile in manoeuvring and thus were frequently used to protect the coast against pirates. See more PENN, pp. 51–52; SHAW, pp. 11–12; McGOWAN, pp. 17–18, 21–25, 40, 50–52, 55, 135, 143, 208, 224–226.

<sup>40</sup> In 1618 the navy had 41 ships, but 23 of these required repairs. In 1623 the situation improved and 35 ships were in good condition and capable of sailing. A new base was gradually established in Chatham. For details see. PENN, pp. 54, 79; McGOWAN, pp. 70, 74, 139, 236.

During this period, several points from the report by the Commission at the beginning of its activities were successfully fulfilled. Most importantly, naval costs were reduced and naval administration and combat readiness, as well as the condition of the shipyards, also improved. This period is also linked to competent people such as Cranfield and Coke, while the second period was distinguished by the influence of William Russell, Robert Pye, Denise Fleming and Allan Apsley. Towards the end of the Commission's activities it was frequently criticised, and not just by Buckingham. He mainly criticised the inability of the commissioners to quickly prepare flotillas. However, this was not usually due to the abilities of the commissioners, but rather to the repeated lack of funds for the navy.<sup>41</sup>

Following the Prague Defenestration in 1618, James I promoted the peaceful resolution of disputes, as he had throughout his reign, and he endeavoured to appear as the arbiter in many of them. In the case of a dispute that culminated in the prolonged conflict known as the Thirty Years' War, he refused to become actively involved in the fighting until the very last moment (the practical occupation of the Palatinate and the subsequent handing over of the territory, along with the rank of Prince-elector, into the hands of Maximilian of Bavaria in 1623). James primarily wanted to maintain good relations with Spain, in which he was supported by the Spanish Ambassador, Gondomar. This Ambassador endeavoured to prevent the English King from interfering in military operations against the Emperor in the areas of the Holy Roman Empire and the Palatinate, and thus he proposed a renewal of marriage negotiations with more moderate terms. Faced with the intensive arguments of the prince, the duke and most of parliament, who were also in favour of the fight against the Protestant enemy and the rescue of Frederick V of the Palatinate, the King complied and focused the country's foreign policy in the direction of France and the subsequent active involvement of his soldiers in military actions during the second half of the 1620s.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the constant threat at sea from Algerian pirates and complaints by merchants, preparations began for an expedition to Algiers that was to be directed towards the main pirate base. The English and the Spanish would take part in the expedition with Dutch support. The pirates threatened Spanish and Dutch trade, so both nations were willing to join to achieve a common goal. The Spanish were concerned about letting

<sup>41</sup> McGOWAN, pp. 80, 85, 144, 265–267; VODIČKA, pp. 25–28, 126; SHAW, pp. 13–14.

<sup>42</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 88–96, 111; VODIČKA, p. 26; SHAW, p. 19.

the English flotilla into the Mediterranean. Although they were worried about the possibility that the English ships would turn against Spain, they still asked the English for help with this expedition. The Spaniards wished to use this expedition to try to improve relations and reduce the mutual distrust between both countries, which had arisen from the situation surrounding Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor, and Frederick V of the Palatinate in the Bohemian Lands. One possible problem with the English-Dutch alliance against the pirates was the dispute between both nations concerning fishing rights in the area of Greenland. Compromises had to be made by both James I of England and the Dutch in order to realise the planned expedition to Algiers.<sup>43</sup>

The English flotilla was prepared at Deptford, where King James himself often supervised preparations and tried to speed up the work. Despite this, preparation of the expedition proceeded very slowly. There was a shortage of the funds necessary to repair the ships, which remained in the docks in poor condition, and the escalating international situation seemed to be an even worse problem. Robert Mansell was appointed commander of the flotilla. Buckingham chose this capable sailor at the recommendation of Coke. He was expected to command a flotilla of six royal ships, ten merchantmen and several smaller auxiliary vessels of the pinnace type. Preparation of the flotilla was completed in October 1620. Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador to the English court, spent a lot of time in discussions with Buckingham, who had to assure him several times of the plans of King James I. The prepared flotilla was to be used purely for English and Spanish interests, not to attack Spanish ships filled with silver and gold sailing from South America.<sup>44</sup>

Mansell's flotilla set sail for the Spanish coast at the beginning of October 1620 with the order to pursue pirate ships in the area of Spain, Gibraltar and the Mediterranean Sea up to Algiers. A reconnaissance mission would continue at this point, in which several ships from the flotilla received the task of secretly monitoring pirate activity and attacking when the time was right. Towards the end of 1620 the condition of Mansell's flotilla at Algiers began to deteriorate. The sailors became ill, and the reinforcements he requested never arrived due to poor weather. In February of the following year, Mansell endeavoured to execute inconsequential attacks against pirate ships, but no conflict occurred. The flotilla's inactiv-

<sup>43</sup> PENN, pp. 54–58; LOCKYER, pp. 76–77; YOUNGE, p. 51.

<sup>44</sup> LOCKYER, pp. 76–77; PENN, pp. 59–65, 87, 89–91.

ity was not accepted well in England or in Spain. In May 1621, after the flotilla was supplied with new stores, Mansell made another attempt to approach the pirate fort in Algiers. The results of an attack using fire ships were catastrophic. Only a few pirate ships were damaged or completely destroyed; the remainder managed to flee to safety behind the gates of the harbour. Due to attacks against English merchants and voyagers in India by Dutch merchants, King James I decided that Mansell and his flotilla would be more use to him on English seas in defence of the country. The futility of the entire expedition also became evident, and thus King James I sent Mansell an order to return to England on 28 July.<sup>45</sup>

The failure of the expedition demonstrated the weakness of the English navy, along with its method of command and logistic organisation. Mansell was reprimanded for acting slowly and ineffectively and thereby allowing the pirates to prepare and defend themselves. Mansell argued that he had been given clear instructions and orders from England, which led to accusation of Buckingham, who had sent these to the Capitan.<sup>46</sup>

After Mansell returned to England, the flotilla underwent minor repairs so that it could be used to defend the English coast and particularly merchant ships, which were being threatened by the Dutch. As the lack of capable sailors in England was becoming a great problem, an order forbidding sailors from leaving the country without permission was approved.<sup>47</sup>

The King sent Buckingham to foreign courts as an official courier or negotiator several times during his life. Some of these journeys became practically legendary. The adventurous journey of Prince Charles and Buckingham to Madrid in 1623, where they were supposed to travel incognito in order to hasten negotiations regarding Charles' marriage to the Spanish princess, cannot remain unmentioned. However, during this journey both men also visited Paris, where Buckingham reputedly fell in love with the French Queen Anne of Austria. In Madrid, Buckingham's behaviour was criticised by the stiff and conservative Spanish court, and his diplomatic abilities were tested by the very skilful Olivares.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> LOCKYER, pp. 76–77; PENN, pp. 65–68, 94–98.

<sup>46</sup> PENN, p. 100.

<sup>47</sup> PENN, pp. 70–72; MCGOWAN, p. 124.

<sup>48</sup> As the confidante and favourite of the king, Count Olivares had a similar position in Spain to Buckingham in England and practically made decisions on behalf of Philip IV, even during negotiations regarding a potential English-Spanish marriage. However, compared to Buckingham, Olivares was a much more capable diplomat. For more details see DUCHEIN, pp. 114–115, 134, 140–142.

Buckingham's incompetence in the field of diplomatic negotiations became clear during the negotiations in Madrid. Even though the entire journey and the subsequent stay in Madrid had no great positive effect thanks to the parties' inability to come to an agreement, both Charles and Buckingham returned to England as heroes in the eyes of the English people. Although the betrothal agreement had been negotiated before Charles and Buckingham departed in July 1623, the marriage never took place. King James, who tried to maintain good relations with Madrid after these failed negotiations, realised that Buckingham was not himself directly responsible for the failure. It became apparent that the differences between the countries were so great that an agreement was practically impossible. The entire journey to Madrid evidently strengthened the relationship between Prince Charles and Buckingham, as well as their mutual loyalty. During the diplomatic journey to Spain, Buckingham received the honour of being granted a ducal title by King James on 18 May 1623. Granting ducal titles to nobles who were not immediate members of the royal family was not a usual occurrence in England, and thus his ducal title also helped Buckingham become a unique figure in English history at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup>

### **Changes to Alliances and the Expedition to Cadiz in 1625**

The period from September 1623 until August 1628 can be considered the period when the Duke of Buckingham had the greatest power. After returning from Madrid, he became so close to Prince Charles that both these men cooperated on issues related to domestic and foreign policy in the following years, while King James was still alive. From the end of 1623, the King's opinions also differed from his son's and Buckingham's, who used the King's prolonged illness and his presence in distant Royston to put increasing pressure on him to change the direction of his policy. Charles and Buckingham primarily wanted to terminate the agreement with Spain, or even declare war on Spain and then focus on relations with continental countries such as France, as well as the Protestants, which include the United Provinces and Denmark. The anti-Spanish opinion of the people also became apparent, and Charles and Buckingham expected a similar opinion from Parliament. James evidently assumed that if he agreed to convene parliament, the subsequent pressure by members of

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<sup>49</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 75, 114, 124–168; VODIČKA, pp. 134–138; LOCKYER, pp. 134–162; 151–154.

Parliament would force him to abandon his plans for an alliance with Spain. Parliament was convened in February 1624. In December 1623 Bristol was withdrawn from Madrid, whereby England terminated the negotiations with Spain.<sup>50</sup>

The parliamentary session in February 1624 can be considered a session during which most of the decisions were made by Buckingham and Prince Charles. King James appointed Buckingham as his representative during the session and the person who would give him reports about the progress of negotiations in Westminster. In this session, the previous journey by Prince Charles and Buckingham to Madrid, as well as future relations with Spain itself, were also discussed. Several Members of Parliament expressed the desire to accuse Buckingham, who was considered a hero at the time because he prevented an unsuitable marriage with the Spanish princess, of causing the failure of negotiations. The duke had the support of not only the people, but also Parliament, which also supported him in the case of attacks and various plots by Spanish ambassadors.<sup>51</sup> As a result, Middlesex and Bristol ended up before a court of law. In the case of future relations with Spain, Parliament decided to immediately terminate all diplomatic relations between England and this country and invalidate all concessions in penal laws against Catholics. Finally, it executed a petition to the King, stating its inclination towards declaring war on Spain. In March 1624, James agreed with Parliament's recommendation to declare war on Spain, but not for the purpose of a direct attack against Spain, but rather for the purpose of freeing the Palatinate from the hold of the armies of the Catholic League. The biggest problem of the entire activity, as became clear in future years and decades, was funds, of which the Crown did not have a large amount. And so, it resorted to loans and even forced loans. In April 1624 Buckingham also warned Parliament of

<sup>50</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 169–176; SHAW, pp. 35–36.

<sup>51</sup> The Spanish Ambassadors endeavoured to damage the trust between King James and the Duke of Buckingham by spreading information that Buckingham was preparing a plot, in an effort to kill James and put Prince Charles on the throne. In addition, there was subsequently a reputed agreement between Prince Charles and the duke regarding the potential succession of Buckingham's descendants to the throne, in the event that Charles did not have any children. This slander cooled relations between the King and Buckingham for some time but did not have the permanent effect that the ambassadors had planned. After Buckingham fell ill in April 1624, the King forgot any possible doubts about his loyalty and journeyed to visit him and reconcile. The letters that the two men subsequently sent each other are proof of this. For more details see DUCHEIN, pp. 185–189; SHAW, pp. 36–40; STEVENSON, pp. 2–3.

the on-going issue of piracy, and therefore the need to create a flotilla. Parliament approved the preparation of 12 ships, but the House of Lords simultaneously expressed its concern that the King would misuse and misspend the funds it provided for the ships. Despite the misgivings, preparation of the fleet began.<sup>52</sup>

During the parliamentary session, Buckingham appealed to King James to try to reinforce his relations, particularly with France and the United Provinces. He proposed that, following the failure of the plan for an English-Spanish marriage, Prince Charles should marry the French princess and sister of King Louis XIII, Henrietta Maria. This would reinforce relations with this country, which could then provide military and financial aid in the battle for the Palatinate. Most importantly, the French promoted an anti-Spanish policy and thereby appeared more acceptable (even though they were Catholics) to the English people. The first unofficial negotiations with Paris regarding a potential marriage took place in February 1624. After the termination of all treaties with Spain, James Hay, Viscount of Doncaster and Earl of Carlisle, was subsequently dispatched to Paris as the official Ambassador in April. The French dispatched Antoine Coiffier de Ruzé, Marquis de Effiat to London. As expected, the French had practically the same demands as the Spanish in relation to the issue of faith and the court of the French princess in London. Despite this, a marriage contract was concluded, with a so-called separate clause for the freedom of Catholics in England. However, the English refused to hold the wedding ceremony until the French provided a guarantee to fight Spain. The wedding was supposed to take place in Paris by proxy, and the Duke of Buckingham was dispatched on behalf of Prince Charles. During the wedding itself, which took place in May 1625 in Notre-Dame, Prince Charles was represented by Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse. King James did not live to see the wedding of his son. He died in March of the same year following a protracted illness. The Duke of Buckingham remained near the King throughout his illness and was subsequently accused by the opposition, during parliamentary sessions, of being involved in the King's death by poisoning him. However, this was just slander.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 179–192.

<sup>53</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 183, 194–198, 210; SHAW, pp. 35, 42–45; VODIČKA, pp. 143–144; LOCKYER, pp. 198–205.



The agreements with France included the English King's pledge to provide ships to France to fight against Genoa. Because of this agreement, Buckingham had to provide the French King Louis XIII with several vessels. Captain Pennington was originally meant to be dispatched with a squadron. However, he received an order to refrain from using English ships against La Rochelle. The French King stated that he had concluded a peace treaty with the Huguenots, and thus there was no risk that the provided English ships would be used to attack them. However, the promised peace was false. Pennington refused to release his ship to the French according to his orders, because they acted as if the English ships were their own and wanted to use them against La Rochelle. The captain returned to England. But the French used the remaining ships against the population of La Rochelle, which had a negative effect in England, particularly on the popularity of the Duke of Buckingham. The Members of Parliament, in particular, complained and pointed out the misuse of English ships against Protestants. Just as Buckingham was blamed for the failure of expeditions, including military expeditions, he was also accused of causing this situation. Buckingham defended himself by arguing that he had acted on the orders of the King and in the interests of English-French agreements. He also warned Members of Parliament of the need for a flotilla capable of competing against Spanish powers. However, it was clear that the speed of preparation of a flotilla was fully dependent on the funds provided by Parliament, of which there was a decided lack. It again seemed impossible to reach an agreement with Parliament, and so King Charles I decided to dissolve it.<sup>54</sup>

Preparation of a flotilla for an expedition to Cadiz began as early as May 1625 in Plymouth. This was to consist of 82 vessels, which planned to set sail led by Buckingham. In June of the same year, the First Parliament under Charles I went into session and, just like its predecessor, discussed the issue of preparing military action against Spain and providing aid to the Palatinate. Parliament was not very impressed by the King's lack of information or Buckingham's information about the plans for and precise use of the funds they had approved for him, after which the King informed the members that they should approve another loan for the war and not concern themselves with anything else. Even though Parliament approved a sum of 140,000 English pounds, the dispute between Parliament and the King continued. Members of Parliament forced the Duke of Buckingham

<sup>54</sup> SHAW, pp. 49, 53–58; YOUNGE, p. 56; PENN, pp. 107–114, 128.

to surrender his command of the flotilla for the expedition to Cadiz. The Lord High Admiral therefore proposed Edward Cecil, First Viscount of Wimbledon, as commander of the expedition. Buckingham believed that a potential postponement of the parliamentary session along with a compromise on his part would help calm relations before Members of Parliament went into session again. This also concerned alliance treaties with Protestant countries (United Provinces), Sweden and Denmark. Parliament was prorogued and convened once again in August 1625 at Oxford (there was a plague in London at the time). Members of Parliament started to accuse Buckingham of causing disagreements with the King, and also to complain of the insufficient use of penal laws against the Catholics. The accusations against the duke also concerned his failure to fulfil his duties as Lord High Admiral. They refused to approve more money for the war until Buckingham precisely clarified how much money he needed to prepare the fleet and submitted clear accounts. Charles responded to the accusations and refusal to cooperate within the terms of the approval of loans by dissolving Parliament.<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, the dispute between the royal couple, Charles and Maria, culminated. Charles ordered the French retinue accompanying the Queen back to France. The King had English nobles from among Buckingham's family and friends appointed as the Queen's ladies-in-waiting. The disagreements between Maria and Charles had an international effect and, along with other events (see the loan of English ships to the French king), cooled relations between France and England significantly.<sup>56</sup>

The flotilla set sail for Cadiz on 8 October 1625 and arrived at its destination two weeks later. It became evident that Wimbledon was an inexperienced commander and had significantly underestimated the number of battle-ready men in the port town. Because the Spanish flotilla, loaded with precious metals from Latin America, was supposed to appear at Cadiz in several weeks, he commanded his men to attack the ships anchored in the harbour, of which most were merchants. Wimbledon himself subsequently set out with a group of men on dry land. The Earl of Denbigh was supposed to command the ship in his absence. The original plan to capture the Spanish ships failed. Wimbledon's crew encountered wine stores as they entered the town and his men soon became incapacitated. The population of Cadiz quickly took advantage of this opportu-

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<sup>55</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 226–234; SHAW, pp. 51–58; LOCKYER, pp. 255–267.

<sup>56</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 235–238; SHAW, p. 69; VODIČKA, p. 179.

nity and managed to warn the Spanish ships, which avoided Cadiz.<sup>57</sup>

The expedition was a great disappointment and failure, and this was ascribed to Buckingham. In February 1626 Parliament convened and pointed out the poor state of the navy during the session (sailors did not even have proper clothes, and the ships were in bad condition).<sup>58</sup> Charles and Buckingham believed that they were prepared for a session of Parliament because Charles had appointed his opponents sheriffs of various counties, and they were therefore not present at the session. However, Dudley Digges and John Eliot were the most problematic individuals. The accusations concerning the duke were extensive and practically summarised the efforts of previous Parliaments and opponents of Buckingham. The first accusation was raised by Bristol, who recapped events in 1623 and the negotiations in Madrid. The duke also became the target of accusation by Digges and Eliot for collecting titles and offices in one person, corruption, incompetence in commanding the navy, protectionism and nepotism in cases of assurance of offices for his relatives and clients, and also his involvement in the death of James I.

As Lord High Admiral, Buckingham was accused of selecting an incompetent commander and crew for the expedition to Cadiz, and also of poor organisation of the entire expedition, which had led to the subsequent catastrophe. In some cases, these accusations were justified, but in the case of involvement in the death of James I, Buckingham decided to appear before Parliament in June 1626 with his defence. He based this defence chiefly on the relationship he had with the King, one which he compared to the love between a father and son. King Charles responded to the duke's accusation by having his main opponents, Digges and Eliot, imprisoned in the Tower, and he accused the Members of Parliament of failing to provide him with sufficient funds so that the Lord High Admiral could prepare a capable flotilla for Cadiz. Members of Parliament were outraged, and the situation was made even worse by the appointment

<sup>57</sup> SHAW, pp. 59–60; YOUNGE, p. 55; J. GLANVILLE, *The Voyage to Cadiz in 1625*, Edinburgh 1883, pp. 1–25.

<sup>58</sup> For more details regarding the complaint against Buckingham and the actual parliamentary session of 1626. D. COAST, Reformation 'or' Ruin? The Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham and Early Stuart Politics, in: *Historical Research*, 90, 250, 2017, pp. 704–725; H. HULME, The Leadership of Sir John Eliot in the Parliament of 1626, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, 4, 3, 1932, pp. 361–386; T. COGSWELL, The Warre of the Commons for the Honour of King Charles': The Parliament-men and the Reformation of the Lord Admiral in 1626, in: *Historical Research*, 84, 226, 2011, pp. 618–636.

of Buckingham as new Chancellor of Cambridge University on 28 May. Because Parliament refused to approve funds for the King until Buckingham was put to trial, the King had Parliament dissolved on 15 June 1626.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Last Years: Expedition to Aid La Rochelle**

After the following year of 1627, relations with France continued to worsen. Louis XIII demanded thorough fulfilment of the marriage contract, including the clauses regarding faith, and because Charles refused to do so, it was expected that war with France would break out. Preparation for the war was complicated, mainly due to the lack of funds. Funds for a war were not approved during the previous parliamentary session because of disagreements and attacks against Buckingham, and this is also why preparations and recruitment of soldiers was slow. Buckingham relied on the fact that he would be able to coordinate the attack on France with Lorraine and Savoy. Secret negotiations were also being carried out with Spain regarding a potential alliance, which the Spanish made conditional to the English withdrawal from treaties with Denmark and the United Provinces. Charles refused this concession and therefore, instead of entering into an alliance with the English, the Spanish concluded an agreement of neutrality with France.

The aversion towards France and its policy led the English to start enemy actions against French ships, which were attacked and taken to Plymouth, and the goods on them seized. The French subsequently acted in a similar manner. The next step in the new anti-French foreign policy was supposed to be the provision of active aid to La Rochelle. The Protestant town was under siege by French soldiers and requested help from the English King. The King and Buckingham wanted to start preparations for an expedition as soon as possible. In this regard, they relied on the help of the English Parliament, but the Parliament, influenced by the failure of the Cadiz expedition, started blaming Buckingham for previous failures instead of discussing aid for La Rochelle.<sup>60</sup>

Buckingham intended to personally lead the expedition to assist La Rochelle as commander. But during preparation of the expedition, he again encountered problems such as lack of funds and the people's marked lack

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<sup>59</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 244–250, 255–266; SHAW, pp. 61, 64–69; THOMSON, Vol. III, pp. 2–41; LOCKYER, pp. 426–436; YOUNGE, p. 55; PENN, pp. 122–124; MCGOWAN, p. 288; OPPENHEIM, pp. 219–225.

<sup>60</sup> SHAW, pp. 61–64; PENN, p. 132.

of enthusiasm for the planned expedition. Some parts of England even refused to provide sailors and soldiers, after their experience with previous failed expeditions. Despite the complications, a flotilla of 100 ships and 6,000 sailors was gathered. The flotilla was expected to sail toward the Isle de Ré near La Rochelle, which was a French fort, and hence a direct threat to the Protestant harbour town. The English intended to use the strategic position of Isle de Ré as an excellent base for attacks against Spanish and French merchant ships, and also for providing aid to dissatisfied Protestant towns in the south of France, after it was conquered.<sup>61</sup>

Buckingham disembarked on Isle de Ré at the fort of Saint Martin in July 1627 at the head of the flotilla. However, the inexperienced soldiers initially refused to leave the safety of the ships and attack the French soldiers fortified in Saint Martin's Fort. Nevertheless, in the end a clash did occur. Thanks to the initiative of John Brugh and Alexander Brett, it was possible to gather the English soldiers for an attack against the surprised French unit. In the meantime, Buckingham sent a messenger to the population of La Rochelle, to inform them of the position of the English flotilla and the planned aid for the town. However, the population of La Rochelle were not as enthusiastic about the arrival of the English navy as Buckingham had expected. Since they were concerned that the English were not strong enough to fight the French, they endeavoured to ally with other Protestant towns in the country but did not manage to do so by the time the English aid arrived.<sup>62</sup>

The English soldiers tried to defeat Saint Martin's Fort on Isle de Ré for several months. The fort was well protected, and Buckingham was without military experience and was incapable of properly leading and motivating his soldiers, who also lacked supplies (despite the fact that Buckingham had sent a request to King Charles to send supplies in August, and the King promised their rapid delivery) and began to rebel and demand that the flotilla return to England. But Buckingham refused and continued to try to prevent French ships reaching the port with supplies by means of a blockade. In September the French soldiers from Saint Martin's Fort began setting English ships on fire using burning missiles, and they managed to nearly sink 35 ships and break the English blockade. Several dozen French ships passed through the defences to the fort and provided

<sup>61</sup> SHAW, p. 71; YOUNGE, p. 57; MCGOWAN, p. 275; E. H. CHERBURY, *The Expedition to the Isle of Rhé*, London 1860, pp. 20–70.

<sup>62</sup> SHAW, pp. 71–72; PENN, pp. 132–133; CHERBURY, p. 73.

the soldiers within the fort with supplies. Buckingham was aware that his months of effort had failed, and he again asked England for not only supplies, but also reinforcements. King Charles was forced to contend with the people's dissatisfaction with the duke and his unpopularity in both Houses, which refused to approve funds in support of the expedition. Because the supplies were still not forthcoming, Buckingham was forced to withdraw. The English situation on Isle de Ré worsened, particularly during the months of October and November. In October 1627 another French squadron arrived led by Marshal Schomberg, who immediately sent his 6,000 men to attack the English, who were then forced to flee to the small island of Loix. As they fled over the bridge to the island, several thousand English sailors fell as a result of constant attacks by the French. At the beginning of November, not even half of the original number of sailors returned to England, and those that were left suffered from several diseases and were in very poor health. The expedition, which was intended to improve the Duke of Buckingham's reputation and help the Protestants in La Rochelle, ended even more catastrophically than the Cadiz expedition.<sup>63</sup>

At the beginning of 1628, the English King realised that he would be unable to fight France and Spain at the same time and also attempt military action in the Holy Roman Empire to the benefit of Frederick V of the Palatinate. As a result, Charles decided to convene Parliament in March of the same year. The new Parliament, similarly to the previous Parliament, was highly critical of the King and Buckingham. Failure of the expedition, as well as the previous expedition, was ascribed by Members of Parliament to Buckingham. However, despite his military inexperience, he had not had much of a chance on Isle de Ré without supplies. Members of Parliament only approved funds for the war under the condition of prior discussion of the so-called Petition of Right, which was intended to restrict the King's authority. However, after another open attack against Buckingham by Digges and Coke, the King prorogued Parliament. In June, Charles finally agreed to the Petition, but the parliamentary session was postponed again until October. At that time Buckingham was in Portsmouth, where he was personally supervising preparation of a flotilla of 100 ships for the purpose of providing aid to La Rochelle. The attacks against Buckingham, his family and friends culminated in the murder

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<sup>63</sup> SHAW, pp. 72–74; PENN, p. 135; MCGOWAN, pp. 275–278, 288; CHERBURY, pp. 82–287.

of Doctor John Lambe in London and, two months later (on 23 August 1628), the duke was also attacked in Portsmouth by former sailor John Felton. Buckingham died as a result of being stabbed with a knife. Felton was sentenced to death and executed in November.<sup>64</sup> Buckingham's body was transported to London, where Charles had him quietly buried in the Chapel of Henry VII in Westminster.<sup>65</sup>

### Conclusion

The Duke of Buckingham was not considered a competent politician, diplomat or Lord High Admiral in his time. But it must be mentioned that even though he was not distinguished in many respects, he could surround himself with people with a lot of influence or with extraordinary abilities, which he used to improve his own standing and prestige. It is evident that such figures include the Archbishop of Canterbury, thanks to whom young George Villiers was able to come to the attention of King James I. It was his popularity with the monarchs, whether James I or his son Charles I, that was a crucial factor in Buckingham's ascension to power.

About the duke's activities as the head of the navy, he proved himself a supporter of changes and reforms. He continued to surround himself with capable colleagues in the navy, who often helped improve the state of the navy. It was they who were directly involved in implementing new reforms in the navy. Buckingham himself was actively involved in administrative activities and was interested in the condition of the ships and in the living and working conditions of the sailors. And despite the unfavourable circumstances and his lack of experience in commanding the navy, which often led to failed expeditions, the duke helped the English navy back on its feet and become world-class in the coming decades and centuries.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> More about the figure of John Felton and the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham. T. COGSWELL, John Felton, Popular Political Culture, and the Assassination of the Duke of Buckingham, in: *Historical Journal*, 49, 2, 2006, pp. 357–385.

<sup>65</sup> DUCHEIN, pp. 276–300, 301–314; SHAW, pp. 75–80; VODIČKA, pp. 197–205; LOCKYER, pp. 451–457.

<sup>66</sup> SHAW, pp. 74–79; PENN, pp. 136–138; MCGOWAN, p. 278; OPPENHEIM, pp. 233–234.

