

Chapter 21

Absolute Monarchs in Europe (1500-1800)

Voices from the Past

In August of 1572, during the French Wars of Religion, the Catholic party decided to kill Protestant leaders gathered in Paris. One Protestant described the scene:

“In an instant, the whole city was filled with dead bodies of every sex and age, and indeed amid such confusion and disorder that everyone was allowed to kill whoever he pleased. . . . Nevertheless, the main fury fell on our people [the Protestants]. . . . The continuous shooting of pistols, the frightful cries of those they slaughtered, the bodies thrown from windows . . . the breaking down of doors and windows, the stones thrown against them, and the looting of more than 600 homes over a long period can only bring before the eyes of the reader an unforgettable picture of the calamity appalling in every way.”

— *The Huguenot Wars*, Julian Coudy, 1969

Conflict between Catholics and Protestants was at the heart of the French Wars of Religion.

- 21-1
- Absolute Monarchies
- Divine right
- Stability

The first characteristic of the sovereign prince is the power to make general and special laws, but-and this qualification is important-without the consent of superiors, equals, or inferiors. If the prince requires the consent of superiors, then he is a subject himself; if that of equals, he shares his authority with others; if that of his subjects, senate or people, he is not sovereign.

- Spain
 - Charles V
 - Philip II
 - Portugal, Netherlands, America
 - American gold
 - Catholicism
 - Muslim threat
 - Anglican threat
 - Armada and war with England



- Spanish Art and Literature
 - El Greco-Catholicism
 - Velazquez-royal family
 - Cervantes-Don Quixote-heroes for right
- Spain Weakens
 - Inflation
 - Taxes
 - Guilds-Labor Union
 - Spanish Netherlands (Dutch)
 - Calvinism vs. Catholicism
 - Economics

Tulips came to Europe from Turkey around 1550. People went wild over the flowers and began to buy rare varieties. However, the supply of tulips could not meet the demand, and prices began to rise. Soon people were spending all their savings on bulbs and taking out loans so that they could buy more.

- Dutch rebellion from Spain
 - Ruthless tyranny
 - Forced Catholicism
 - High Taxation
- Dutch Independence
 - Culture
 - Art
 - Rembrandt-merchant class
 - Vermeer-commoner
 - Economics
 - Dutch trade
 - Dutch East India Company



Voices from the Past

The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) was a devastating religious war. A resident of Magdeburg, Germany, a city sacked ten times during the war, reported:

“There was nothing but beating and burning, plundering, torture, and murder. Most especially was every one of the enemy bent on securing [riches]. . . . In this frenzied rage, the great and splendid city was now given over to the flames, and thousands of innocent men, women and children, in the midst of heartrending shrieks and cries, were tortured and put to death in so cruel and shameful a manner that no words would suffice to describe. Thus in a single day this noble and famous city, the pride of the whole country, went up in fire and smoke.”

—*Readings in European History*, James Harvey Robinson, 1934

This destruction of Magdeburg was one of the disasters besetting Europe during this time.

- 21-2 Bourbon France

- Henry IV (4)

- Catholics vs. Protestants (Huguenots)

- Edict of Nantes

- Cardinal Richelieu

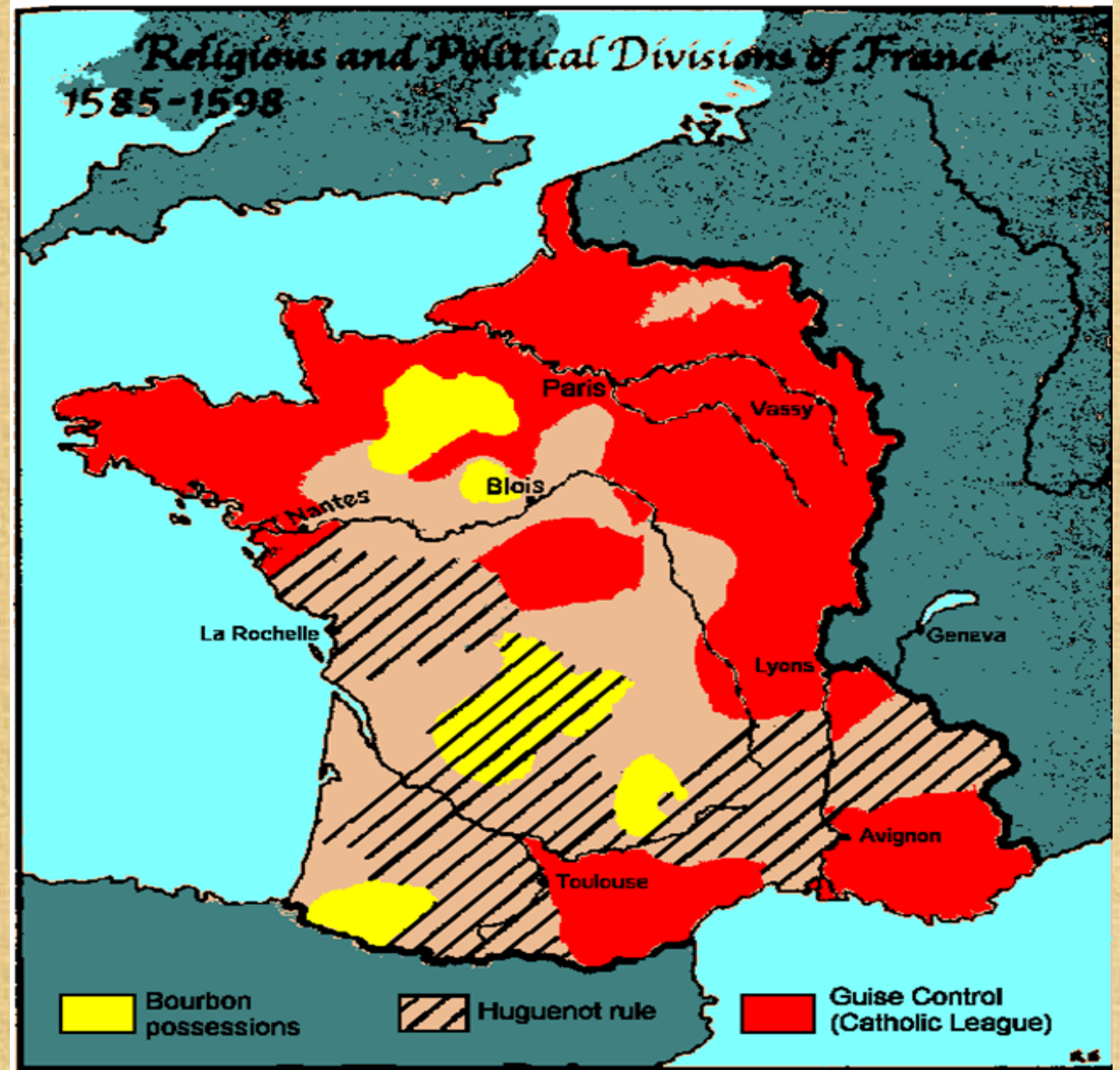
- Segregated Huguenots

- Weakened nobles

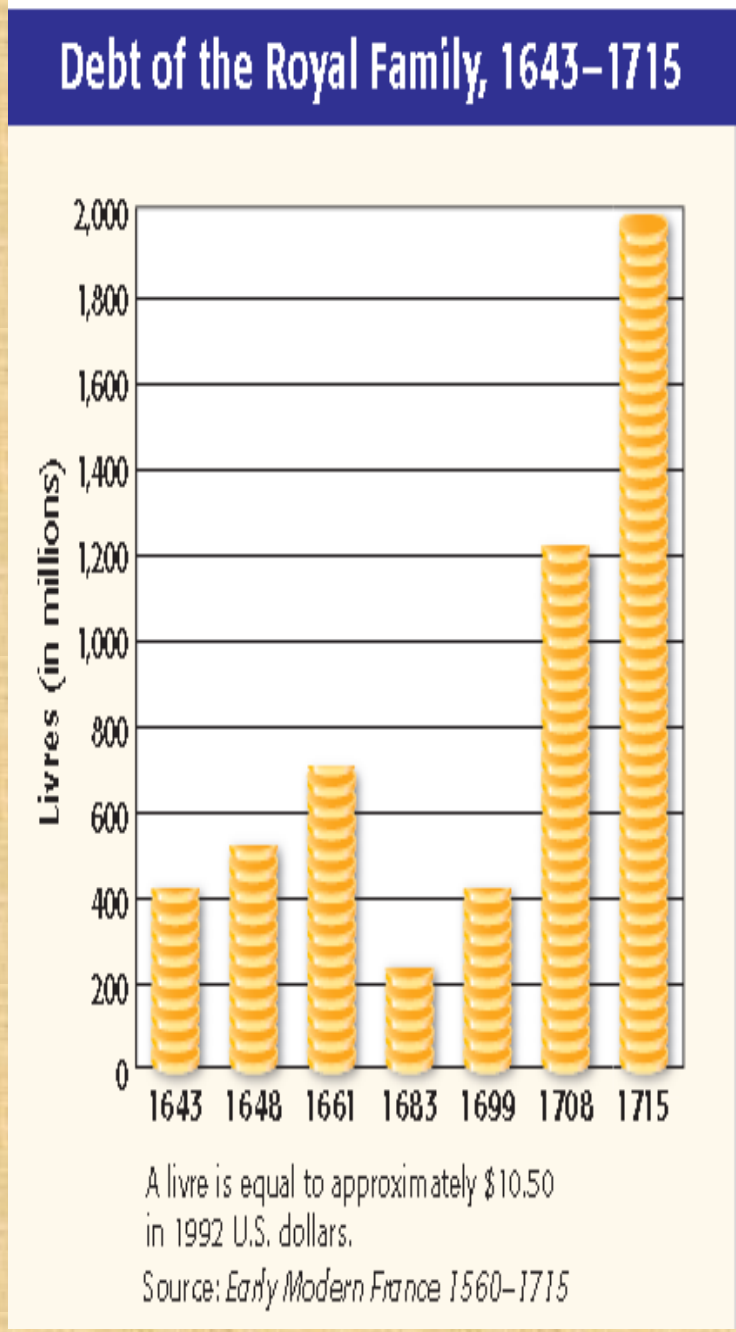
- 30 years war against Hapsburgs

- Skepticism

- Montaigne-essays
 - Descartes-philosophy



- Louis XIV (14) “Sun King”
 - Mazarin
 - End 30 years war
 - Increased taxes
 - Weakens nobles
 - Bureaucrats
 - Mercantilism
 - Revoked Edict of Nantes
 - Palace at Versailles, costly
 - More costly Wars:
 - Dutch
 - England
 - Spanish Succession



After Colbert’s death, Louis announced a policy that slowed France’s economic progress. In 1685, he canceled the Edict of Nantes, which protected the religious freedom of Huguenots. In response, thousands of Huguenot artisans and business people fled the country. Louis’s policy thus robbed France of many skilled workers.

- Absolute Monarchs Clash
- Thirty Years' War in Europe
 - Catholics vs. Protestants
 - Peace of Westphalia
 - Hapsburgs weakened
 - France strengthened
 - Holy Roman Empire breaks up

Peace of Westphalia introduced a new method of peace negotiation whereby all participants meet to settle the problems of a war and decide the terms of peace.

- Economics
 - Serfs freed, move to cities
 - Landowning nobles
- Politics
 - Losers
 - Ottomans
 - Holy Roman Empire
 - Winners
 - Austrian Hapsburgs
 - Charles VI
 - Maria Theresa
 - Hohenzollern Prussians
 - Frederick the Elector
 - Junkers
 - Frederick the Great
- Wars
 - Austrian Succession
 - Seven Years' War

A prince . . . is only the first servant of the state, who is obliged to act with probity [honesty] and prudence. . . . As the sovereign is properly the head of a family of citizens, the father of his people, he ought on all occasions to be the last refuge of the unfortunate.
-Frederick the Great

Voices from the Past

In the play *Richard II*, William Shakespeare wrote the following lines about England:

☞☞ This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-Paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house
Against the envy of less happier lands—
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England. ☞☞

— *Richard II*, William Shakespeare

In this play, one of the greatest playwrights of the English world expressed his patriotic enthusiasm.

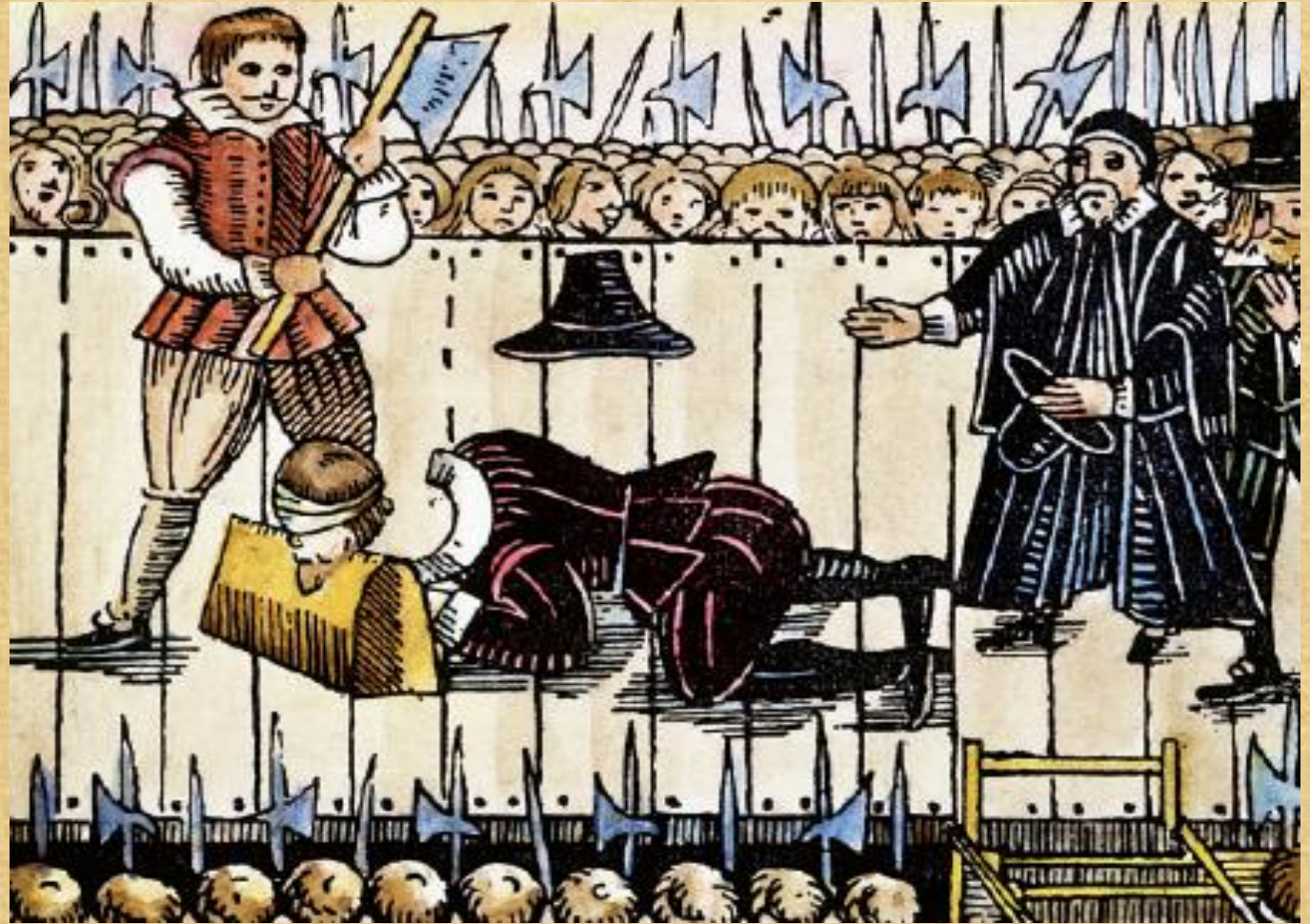
- 21-3 Absolute Russian Monarchs
 - Ivan the Terrible
 - Secret police vs. boyars
 - Rise of the Romanovs
 - 300 years
 - Peter the Great
 - Western
 - Modernize
 - St. Petersburg

Peter was 24 years old when he became the sole ruler of Russia. In 1697, just one year later, he embarked on the “Grand Embassy,” a long visit to western Europe. One of Peter’s goals was to learn about European customs and manufacturing techniques. Never before had a czar traveled among Western “heretics.”

For you know yourself that, though a thing be good and necessary, our people will not do it unless forced to.

---Peter the Great

- 21-4 English Monarchy
 - King vs. Parliament
 - James I, Charles I and the Petition of Right
 - Charles I agrees voids agreement
 - No taxes, instead many fees
 - English Civil War
 - Royalists vs. Cavaliers
 - Charles I vs. Cromwell's Puritans
 - Cromwell wins



- English Commonwealth
 - Cromwell's martial law
 - Religious toleration
- Restoration
 - Charles II
 - Rights of Habeas corpus
- Glorious Revolution
 - James II (catholic) loses
 - William and Mary of Orange (Protestant) wins
 - Results in Constitutional monarchy with bill of rights
 - Cabinet

Bill of Rights: To make clear the limits of royal power, Parliament drafted a Bill of Rights in 1689. This document listed many things that a ruler could not do:

- 1. No suspending of Parliament's laws***
- 2. No levying of taxes without a specific grant from Parliament***
- 3. No interfering with freedom of speech in Parliament.***
- 4. No penalty for a citizen who petitions the king about grievances.***