

My Kingdom for a Valley: The Valtelline Episode and Richelieu's

*Raison d'Etat*

By

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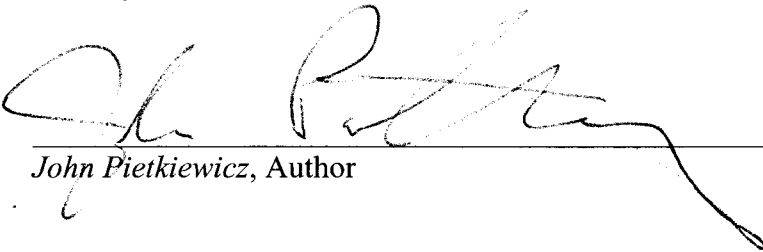
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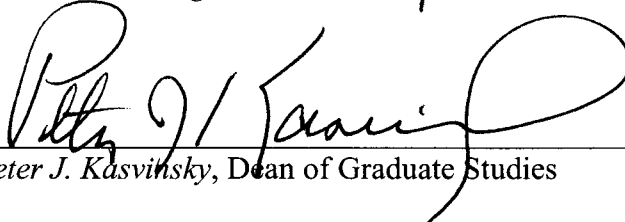
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## Abstract

Cardinal Richelieu, the First Minister of King Louis XIII's council, spent his entire career strengthening the position of France in seventeenth century Europe. Coming to power in 1624 during the Thirty Years' War, several major internal and external threats confronted his administration. The French Calvinists, or Huguenots, prepared to launch more revolts against the king; despite the rights and protection they received under the Edict of Nantes. The Catholic nobility also resisted the authority of Louis XIII, attempting to maintain their autonomy and prevent the establishment of absolute monarchy. The House of Hapsburg, the ruling family of the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, presented a constant danger to the borders of France. Their efforts to eliminate Protestant resistance in Germany and the Netherlands insinuated the development of Hapsburg hegemony across the continent. Recognizing the imminent threat posed by their recent military successes, Richelieu decided to make the Hapsburgs his first priority. Returning to the foreign policy of King Henry IV two decades earlier, the new First Minister occupied the Valtelline, a crucial valley in the Alps necessary for Spain to reinforce its army in the Spanish Netherlands.

Catholics in Europe were outraged by the Cardinal's actions, claiming he declared war on his own religion. The ultramontane French Catholics, or *dévots*, felt personally betrayed, since they supported his rise to power. However, he defended his policy in the French Court and in public, asserting that as a faithful Catholic kingdom, the growth of France coincided with the strengthening of the Church. This belief, formed during the

Valtelline episode, established Cardinal Richelieu's *raison d'état* and the justification for his actions throughout the Thirty Years' War.

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## **Introduction**

### ***The Transformation of Europe***

The development of European civilization spans several millennia of human history. Although every century made some mark upon the European continent, only a few periods define pivotal moments in the shaping of the Western world. More than any other recent century, the seventeenth century represented the entrance of Europe into the modern era of history. A large portion of this transformation included the continuing shift from the dominant and controlling presence of religion to the growth of monarchs functioning without papal influence. People slowly began to see themselves as inhabitants of a distinct culture instead of the subjects of an empire or the adherents to the Roman Catholic Church. The wars fought for religious unification that plagued European soil the previous century were replaced by the struggle to define a country or resist political hegemony.

Europe's transformation was not a peaceful process. The entire continent was plunged into a conflict that lasted nearly half a century. Known as the Thirty Years' War, the conflict tore apart old alliances and the political boundaries that held Europe together in the past. Provinces of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany and Italy turned against each other, battling for political and religious freedom from the emperor. The northern half of the Netherlands, known as the United Provinces, also revolted against the colonial rule of the Spanish throne. These conflicts formed the initial causes of the Thirty Years' War, and were supported by their Protestant neighbors, including England, Denmark and

Sweden. Another major country that supported a war against Spain and the Holy Roman Empire was the Catholic state of France.

King Louis XIII, the Bourbon ruler of France, was only sixteen years of age when the Thirty Years' War officially erupted. During his adolescence, the authority of the French crown was held under the regency of the Queen mother Marie de Medici, whose foreign policy promoted an alliance between France and Spain. In 1624, after numerous royal advisors were dismissed for corruption and inefficient policies, Louis XIII appointed a member of the Catholic clergy as his First Minister, Armand du Plessis, Cardinal Duke of Richelieu. Under his leadership, France began an active campaign to subvert the power of the House of Hapsburg, the ruling family of Spain, Austria, and the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. The Cardinal recognized this dynastic family as a serious threat to the sovereignty of the French crown. Therefore, he used the authority of his office to weaken the influence of Spain in the Netherlands and keep the Empire politically unstable until France was strong enough to directly intervene in the Thirty Years' War in 1635. This included the subsidization of several Protestant countries to maintain an armed conflict against the Catholic Hapsburgs.<sup>1</sup>

Richelieu also directed military intervention against Spain for the protection of French allies in strategic locations. His first confrontation with the Hapsburgs occurred in the Northern Italian province of the Valtelline. Primarily of Catholic Italian heritage, the Alpine valley was under the lordship of the Protestant Grisons, an ally of France. The passes formed by the Adda River were also a key land route for Spain's lines of communication between the port city of Genoa and the Netherlands, where the United Provinces continued their revolt against Madrid. In 1620, the joint efforts of Spain and

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Briggs, *Early Modern France 1560-1715*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 89-90.



Milan forced the Protestants from the province and erected Spanish garrisons along the border. After several failed attempts at negotiation, the papacy intervened, placing the valley under the protection of troops from Rome. When Richelieu came to power, his first priority was to sever Spain's link to Austria and the Netherlands by returning the Valtelline to the Grisons. In November 1624, a small French army expelled the papal garrisons from the province and blocked reinforcements from Milan. The plans of the First Minister positioned France against Spain, beginning a new era of French diplomacy in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

To those outside of the French court, Richelieu's foreign policy was an attack on his own religion. A Cardinal conspired with Protestant rulers to destroy the other major Catholic countries, particularly Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Some historians claim that the actions of the First Minister of France portray a greedy, power-hungry man willing to sacrifice his own religion and morality to advance his status in the realm of international politics. Rumors even existed that the Cardinal was plotting to overthrow King Louis XIII and place himself upon the throne of France.<sup>3</sup> However, an examination of Richelieu's policy and actions during the Thirty Years' War, as well as the corroboration of his state papers and personal *Mémoires*, showed an ambitious man dedicated to restoring the glory of France in the eyes of Europe.

Although his talents gravitated toward the political, his clerical duties were never neglected, as he remained a devout Catholic. Many believed his support of Protestant countries and his subversion of the Catholic Hapsburgs in Spain and Austria to be a

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<sup>2</sup> David Maland, *Europe at War 1600-1650*. (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 74, 101.

<sup>3</sup> James Breck Perkins, *France Under Mazarin, With a Review of the Administration of Richelieu. vol. 1*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1886), 103-104; Jacques Boulenger, *The Seventeenth Century*. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), 34-35.

betrayal of his own religion. This conflict never existed in Richelieu's mind. To him, the House of Hapsburg was a corrupt and degenerate family that continued to use the authority of the Catholic Church to further their own power. France, Richelieu believed, was the true defender of Christianity and represented the best hope for the future of the Church. This belief, developed during Valtelline Episode, formed the basis of the foreign policy used throughout his career and his theory of reason of state.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter One discusses the situation in Europe from the beginning of the sixteenth century to Cardinal Richelieu's rise to power in 1624. The roots of Richelieu's political and religious philosophy were buried deep in the century of his birth. In 1519, the power of the Spanish and Holy Roman Empires was combined under Emperor Charles V, representing the height of Hapsburg dominance in Europe. The unification of the two family lines in Madrid and Vienna created an enormous threat to the sovereignty of France. With the Hapsburgs surrounding the country on every border, the sanctity of the French crown was jeopardized.<sup>5</sup>

One factor that prevented Emperor Charles V from contemplating such an invasion was the advent of the Protestant Reformation. This division eventually spread outside the realm of religion, and the Holy Roman Empire was divided between Protestant and Catholic princes. Rejecting this heretical movement, both for its challenge to the Catholic Church and the power of the Emperor, Germany was enveloped in war among the imperial provinces. The Treaty of Augsburg, signed in 1555, provided a temporary reprieve from religious fighting inside the Empire. However, the stage was set for a future conflict to arise. After the slow disintegration of religious toleration in

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<sup>4</sup> D. P. O'Connell, *Richelieu*. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 43-45.

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Elliott, *Spain and Its World 1500-1700*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 7-8.

Germany, the Protestants ignited the conflict again with the Bohemian Revolt in May 1618. This uprising in the heart of the Holy Roman Empire set in motion the events that carried Germany into hostilities lasting another thirty years.<sup>6</sup>

Spain was also fighting for religious and political unity among its external provinces. Calvinism made considerable progress in establishing a foothold in Western Europe, including the northern provinces of the Spanish-controlled Netherlands. Being in open revolt against Madrid since the 1570's, the United Provinces battled the combined forces of the loyal provinces in the south and the Spanish army of King Philip II. With either side unable to conquer the other, Spain and the United Provinces agreed to a Twelve Years' Truce in 1609. Though this temporary cessation of hostilities offered no real hope of a peaceful resolution, it gave Spain the time needed to reinforce their supply lines and prepare for a quick end to the northern rebels.<sup>7</sup>

The Protestant Reformation and, in particular, the spread of Calvinism also created problems for France. Members of the nobility, who already struggled against the power of the French crown, supported the growth of the French Calvinists, or Huguenots. The French Wars of Religion, which consumed a large portion of the sixteenth century for France, kept the country divided and weakened against their foreign enemies. In 1598, King Henry IV of France, a former Huguenot turned Catholic, accepted another temporary peace with the Protestants by signing the Edict of Nantes. This gave religious toleration to the Huguenots and allowed France a moment of domestic peace. Unfortunately, as every other leader in Europe learned, these brief cease-fires only

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<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*. (New York: Military Heritage Press, 1987), 14-24, 48-49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 2-4.

inflamed the animosity of the two religious parties and increased the violence and damage when their conflicts inevitably resumed.<sup>8</sup>

Chapter Two follows the early life of Cardinal Richelieu prior to his appointment as First Minister to King Louis XIII of France in 1624. Born into a small noble family in 1585, Armand du Plessis was originally destined for a career in the military. However, circumstances within his family forced him to abandon his life as a promising young officer and enter the seminary. Armand was made bishop of Luçon and quickly applied his growing ambition to the improvement of his diocese. However, his desire for greatness could not be contained to his bishopric and expanded toward the French court. Armand began with letters of fealty and devotion to the Queen mother that earned him a place among her personal council. This led to his early appointment as a royal advisor to the adolescent King Louis XIII.<sup>9</sup>

The situation at court took an unfortunate turn for the bishop of Luçon when the King's Council was dismissed on charges of corruption and he was exiled back to his diocese. Despite this setback, Armand's connection to the regent of the French throne aided in diffusing his shame at court. The Queen mother influenced her son to petition the pope to ordain Armand a cardinal. Armand maintained a strong presence in the court, acting as a liaison between Marie de Medici and Louis XIII. Finally, in 1624, after the disgrace and arrest of the king's advisor La Vieuville, Richelieu regained the trust of the young king and was made First Minister. Much of his desires and ambitions during this period of his life were visible in his personal *Mémoires* and his state and private *Lettres*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Briggs, 29-34.

<sup>9</sup> C. V. Wedgwood, *Richelieu and the French Monarchy*. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 12-28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Chapter Three details the international maneuvers made by Richelieu during the opening years of his administration. From his initial moments in office, the First Minister changed the direction of France's foreign policy. The actions of the Queen mother were leading France into an alliance with Spain and Austria, seeking to diminish the power and autonomy of the French crown. Richelieu recognized the threat this policy held for his country and immediately shifted focus. A French army was dispatched to the Valtelline in 1624. The Grisons, a Protestant family aligned with France, originally controlled this strip of land in Northern Italy. In 1620, the Spanish expelled the Grisons from the Valtelline and manned the forts with papal troops, allowing them a direct line of communication with Austria and a potential overland supply line to the Netherlands. Richelieu removed the papal troops and restored the Grisons to power. Although France was unable to permanently keep the Spain out of the Valtelline, this maneuver clearly showed Richelieu's intent to weaken the influence of Spain throughout Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Chapter Four examines the individuals and organizations within France that opposed the Cardinal's renewed anti-Hapsburg policy began by Henry IV. The major antagonist for Richelieu was the same group that championed his rise to power: the Catholic *dévo*t party. Led primarily by influential members of the clergy, the *dévots* supported an alliance with all Catholic kingdoms against the growth of the Protestant Reformation, particularly the Huguenots. They also pressed the French court for a Franco-Spanish treaty, hoping to end the hostilities between the two countries and allow King Philip IV to continue his efforts against the rebellion in the Netherlands. Leading the charge for the *dévots* at court were Father Bérulle, Richelieu's advisor and close friend, and Marie de Medici, the Cardinal's greatest patron. Because of their sponsorship

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<sup>11</sup> R. J. Knecht, *Richelieu*. (London: Pearson Education Limited, 1991), 31-32, 88-90.

of the First Minister, the ultramontane Catholics in France felt betrayed by his assault on the Valtelline.<sup>12</sup>

Other groups in France also strived for peace between the Catholic states, though their own interests mitigated their opposition to Richelieu. Pope Urban VIII, who was forced to step between France and Spain by occupying the Valtelline with papal troops, abhorred the attack by Cœuvres in November 1624. However, like Richelieu in France, the papacy feared the possibility of Hapsburg hegemony across Europe, endangering the authority of the Holy See. The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, was also torn by the events of the Valtelline episode. Their allegiance to Rome and Urban VIII prevented the condoning of Richelieu's foreign policy. But the French Jesuits' reliance on the support and protection of Louis XIII made them unwilling to openly chastise the actions of the King's Council. These groups contributed to the difficulties the Cardinal fought against in the early years of his administration.<sup>13</sup>

Chapter Five describes the involvement of political propaganda and pamphleteering on the Valtelline episode. Pamphlet campaigns were a common form of social influence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, manipulating the opinions of the Third Estate during periods of conflict. The invasion of the Adda River valley incited a major paper war between the advisors of Louis XIII and the outraged *dévot* party. The ultramontane Catholics sought to denounce Richelieu's actions against the papacy and Spain, turning popular opinion from the First Minister. Understanding the importance of maintaining a respected public image, the Cardinal responded to their accusations with his own loyal pamphleteers, including Fancan, Father Joseph and Father Bérulle. Along

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<sup>12</sup>G. R. R. Treasure, *Cardinal Richelieu and the Development of Absolutism*. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972), 13-16, 27-31.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89, 218-219.

with providing an adequate defense of Louis XIII's foreign policy on political and religious grounds, these pamphlets established Richelieu's reason of state. This justification of the king's authority formed the basis of his plans against the House of Hapsburg.<sup>14</sup>

Cardinal Richelieu made these alliances with Protestant states not to support their cause, but to keep the enemies of France weak until the armies of Louis XIII were strong enough to directly act against the Hapsburgs. With its enemies defeated, France could finally take up the banner of Catholicism and promote a Europe unified under a single Christian Church. It must be understood that the House of Hapsburg in Spain and Austria was, in a similar fashion, using the same methods as France. However, Richelieu's skill and ambition with domestic and foreign diplomacy made his country as the leading power of the continent long after the end of the Thirty Years' War.

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<sup>14</sup>Anthony Levi, *Cardinal Richelieu and the Making of France*. (London: Constable & Robinson, 2001), 66, 88.

## Chapter One

### *The Opening of the Seventeenth Century*

To study the history of a single European country in the seventeenth century is to study the history of the entire continent. The complex system of marriage alliances and non-aggression treaties wove the politics of Europe tighter than a medieval tapestry. By 1624, France was in the process of marrying into the English court and already contemplating a marriage alliance with Spain. The United Provinces, in an effort to remain protected from Spain, signed treaties of friendship with England, France, Sweden, the German Protestant princes, and even the Ottoman Turks. The princes of the Holy Roman Empire also sought protection from threats to their sovereignty outside the empire and from within, forming the Protestant Union in 1608 and the Catholic League a year later. This interconnectedness produced a tension that made the continent of Europe ripe for conflict.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Germany*

In many ways, empires are similar to puzzles. They require skill, discipline, patience, and sometimes, physical violence to assemble. When they are close to completion, the builders bask in the glory of their creations. When they are as finished as possible, they are quickly disassembled and torn apart. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Holy Roman Empire neared completion. The House of Hapsburg established themselves as the dynastic rulers of the Empire and controlled the election of the Holy Roman Emperor for centuries. They ruled all of Germany, Austria, Hungary, and

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<sup>15</sup> Parker, 2-4, 70-71.



portions of Northern Italy. A separate branch of the Hapsburgs also sat upon the throne of Spain, commanding its own empire that was slowly stretching across the Atlantic Ocean. This European puzzle was completed in 1519 when both empires were combined under a single ruler.

King Carlos I had been ruler of the Spanish Empire, including its possessions in the Netherlands and Franche-Comté, since the death of his father, Philip the Handsome, in 1506 and his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand of Aragon, in 1516. The new king of Spain barely had time to realize the power of his newly acquired throne when another crown was presented to him. On January 11, 1519, while on his way to Barcelona, King Carlos I learned of the death of his paternal grandfather, Emperor Maximilian I. As the grandson of the Emperor, Carlos I held the greatest hereditary claim to the throne of the empire. However, the title of Holy Roman Emperor required an election held by the seven German electors of the empire: the king of Bohemia, the archbishops of Cologne, Mainz, and Trier, and the princes of Brandenburg, Saxony and the Palatinate.<sup>16</sup>

King Carlos I of Spain never visited Germany, nor did he know the language of any of the subjects in the Holy Roman Empire. King Francis I, the monarch of France and another contender to the throne, was well known throughout the empire and widely considered the most powerful ruler of Christendom. Despite the early successes of Francis I and several other candidates, the diplomats of Carlos I carefully outmaneuvered and outspent his rivals in the election, nearly bankrupting the Spanish government in the

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<sup>16</sup> Manuel Fernández Alvarez, *Charles V: Elected Emperor and Hereditary Ruler*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 15-17, 28-33.

process. On June 28, 1519, King Carlos I of Spain was unanimously elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and crowned Charles V.<sup>17</sup>

For the first time, all of the Hapsburg lands from the Spanish and Austrian branches of the family were united under a single ruler. Charles V, the king of Burgundy, Spain, and Holy Roman Empire, held dominion over three quarters of the European continent. This speedy acquisition of power also brought forth a groundswell of problems for the new emperor. The Austrian Hapsburgs were seeking to expand their control into Eastern Europe. Ferdinand of Austria, the younger brother of Charles V, was prepared to take the leadership of the eastern branch. In an agreement reached at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Ferdinand was granted Austria, Styria, Carinthia and Carniola. This allowed Charles V to retain direct control of Germany, the provinces in Northern Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain.<sup>18</sup>

The other major issue to be resolved at Worms was not a simple family matter. The German priest Martin Luther was summoned to the Diet to discuss his controversial teachings against the papacy and the Catholic clergy. Beginning with his famous posting of the *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of St. Augustine's Cathedral at the University of Wittenberg in 1517, Luther developed considerable popular support for his cause, especially among several important princes. He appeared before the Diet of Worms on April 17, 1521, expecting to engage religious leaders from the Vatican in a scholarly discussion on the problems weakening the Church and his concerns for the future of Christianity. Instead, the assembly and the emperor demanded Luther to recant his heresy or face exile from the lands of the Holy Roman Empire. The following day,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Otto von Hapsburg, *Charles V*. trans. Michael Ross. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 80-81.

Martin Luther stood by his convictions and was subsequently excommunicated by Pope Leo X. The events and decisions made by the princes and religious leaders at the Diet of Worms helped to determine the course of European politics and diplomacy for the next 150 years.<sup>19</sup>

The next three decades witnessed the rapid decay of Emperor Charles V's power and influence over his kingdoms in Europe. The teachings of Martin Luther spread across Germany like a virus, gaining support among both the peasantry and nobles, including the influential elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise. The increasing persecution of a growing Protestant Germany forced these heretical provinces to band together against an incensed Catholic empire. Another attempt was made to create a peaceful resolution between the two religions at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. However, neither side budged. Both Catholic and Protestant princes in Germany prepared for armed conflict. Directly after the diet, a coalition of Protestant princes, led by the elector of Saxony, formed the Schmalkaldic League for mutual protection against the Holy Roman Emperor. Although the League dissolved long before the start of the Thirty Years' War, many of its members remained in military alliances throughout the early modern period.<sup>20</sup>

Along with growing internal problems, Charles V also faced threats from outside the empire. King Francis I of France recognized the growing danger of Hapsburg hegemony across Europe and was engaged in a continuous war with Spain throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. With the advent of the Protestant Reformation and the accession of Emperor Charles V, France was given another handful of allies to turn

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<sup>19</sup> James D. Tracy. *Europe's Reformations, 1450-1650*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 52-53; Gordon Rupp. *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 93-98.

<sup>20</sup> Alvarez, 90-97.

against the Hapsburgs. Francis I quickly made alliances with the Lutheran princes in Germany and secured a treaty with England. France even secretly supported the Turkish invasion of Spain by Sulieman the Magnificent. To place the cherry on top of the emperor's woes, the papacy pulled its support from Charles V and used papal troops to assist the French army. All these circumstances pressed the emperor into a dangerous compromise.<sup>21</sup>

At the Diet of Regensburg in 1532, Charles V gave temporary concessions to the Lutheran princes, allowing them to practice their religion in private and granting the political autonomy necessary to govern their provinces. In return, the Lutheran armies joined the rest of the Imperial forces and drove the Ottoman Turks from Austria and Italy. With the Turkish threat sufficiently quelled, the emperor again turned his attention to the internal problems in Germany. Emperor Charles V, having the full support of the Hapsburgs and the Catholic princes, began the assault against the Schmalkaldic League of Lutheran princes. Neither side gained a considerable advantage over the other, and the German princes began to seriously consider a peaceful end to the wars.<sup>22</sup>

The religious convictions and personal honor of Charles V made him unwilling to accept a permanent toleration of Lutheranism. In 1554, he officially relinquished the power of the Imperial crown to his brother, Ferdinand of Austria. It was now the responsibility of future Emperor Ferdinand I to resolve the German conflict. Ferdinand called for a new diet at Augsburg in 1555, attended by all the Catholic and Lutheran princes of Germany. The Peace of Augsburg finally gave religious toleration to the Lutherans and the ability of the princes to determine the religion of their own provinces.

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<sup>21</sup> Alvarez, 40-48, 78; Hapsburg, 105-107, 135.

<sup>22</sup> Alvarez, 97-100, 130-135, 160.

However, Lutherans could not openly worship their religion and build churches in their own lands. Over the next fifty years, tensions grew between Catholics and Protestants in Germany, as both groups fought for their place within the Empire. Members of the clergy and princes loyal to Rome regularly appealed to the pope and the emperor concerning the threat posed by the legality of the Lutheran religion. Protestant rulers complained about continued harassment by local Catholics and slowly banded together for mutual protection against a future conflict they knew was imminent. The Peace of Augsburg did not offer rights to the Calvinists, who were more numerous than Lutherans in some areas. This uneasy truce among the religions in the Holy Roman Empire was short-lived.<sup>23</sup>

The beginning of the seventeenth century brought fresh leadership and renewed tempers over the Protestant issue in Germany. Beginning with the takeover of the strategic Protestant town of Donauwörth in 1606 by the Catholic prince Maximilian of Bavaria, concerns resurrected about an open breach of the Peace of Augsburg. This fear led the Lutheran princes of the empire to seek a military alliance with each other in 1608, known collectively as the Protestant Union. The Catholic princes, under Maximilian of Bavaria, quickly followed suit and formed the Catholic League in 1609. Once again, the Catholic and Protestant elements of the Holy Roman Empire prepared for war.<sup>24</sup>

The conflict officially began with the Bohemian Revolt in 1618. The current Holy Roman Emperor, Matthias I, was ill and sought to make his cousin, Ferdinand of Styria, the heir to all his titles. This included the crown of Bohemia. Although the title had stayed along hereditary lines, the noble estates of the kingdom elected their

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-162.

<sup>24</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 12-17.

sovereign. Through the Peace of Ausburg, Bohemia was designated a Catholic state by its ruler, despite the fact that a majority of its population adhered to one of several Protestant faiths. Emperor Matthias I kept Protestant support through his promise of the *Letter of Majesty*, guaranteeing religious toleration for Lutherans and their churches. The Hapsburgs feared that the Bohemian nobility might elect a Protestant prince to succeed Matthias, causing them to not only lose a valuable strategic and economic province, but also give a majority vote to Protestants in the election of the Holy Roman Emperor. After considerable political maneuvering, as well as threats of revoking the *Letter of Majesty*, the nobles agreed to crown Ferdinand as heir to the kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>25</sup>

The new king of Bohemia quickly went to work subverting the Protestants in his country. Royal judges were now required at all council meetings. The press was brought under government and Church censure. The most damning of all the changes was the appointment by Ferdinand of five deputy-governors, all fervent Catholics, to rule Bohemia in his absence. The new deputy-governors immediately imprisoned several members of the Protestant lower nobility. This enraged the people and set off cries of religious persecution. The leader of the Protestant movement in Bohemia, Count Heinrich Matthias of Thurn, called for a meeting of the nobles and the governors in May 1618 at Prague. When the deputy-governors refused to hear the complaints of the Protestant nobles, Thurn organized a siege of the royal castle of Hradschin, found two of the deputy-governors, Martinitz and Slavata, and threw them out of the second-story

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<sup>25</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 60-62; C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War*. (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 65-71.

window. Although the pile of refuge they fell on saved both men, Bohemia was now officially declared in open revolt against the empire.<sup>26</sup>

The Protestant nobles invalidated the election of Ferdinand and subsequently chose the young Frederick V, elector of the Palatinate, as king of Bohemia. However, the support of the Protestant Union, which Frederick V counted on for protection against the Hapsburgs, was rejected. Many of the members, including John George the elector of Saxony, disagreed with Frederick V's hasty acceptance of the Bohemian crown and refused to support him. Frederick V even lost the favor of his father-in-law, King James I of England. The armies of the Catholic League, under Maximilian of Bavaria, made short work of the Bohemian and Palatine forces. The revolt of Bohemia was suppressed in November of 1620, and the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II placed Frederick V under an Imperial ban, stripping him of his lands and titles. The Catholic League subsequently took control of the Upper Palatinate in 1622, and in January of the following year Maximilian was made Elector Palatine.<sup>27</sup>

With the loss of Bohemia and the Palatinate by the Protestants, the Catholic House of Hapsburg appeared stronger than ever. They strengthened the Catholic majority among the electors of the Holy Roman Emperor. The kingdom of Bohemia, a central state within the Empire, remained under the dominion of the Hapsburgs. Finally, control of the Palatinate, a strategic location that contained a key section of the Rhine River, transferred to the authority of the leader of the Catholic League. The Holy Roman Empire and its Catholic princes appeared ready to stamp out the flames of the Protestant Reformation and unify Europe under a single Catholic Church.

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<sup>26</sup> Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War*, 71-74.

<sup>27</sup> Maland, 65-77.

## *Spain and the Netherlands*

During most of the reign of Emperor Charles V, the Netherlands, or Low Countries, was not a unified country. The seventeen provinces that constituted the Low Countries each had their own governments, culture, languages, and personal animosities toward one another. In a final effort to consolidate his power and focus the revenues from the Low Countries into the Hapsburg effort against the revolting German princes and France, Charles V unified all the provinces in 1549 into a single, autonomous political unit.<sup>28</sup>

At first, the proposition of a unified Netherlands was not completely undesirable. A large portion of Charles V's reign as king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor was spent in his birthplace of Brussels, as was his son and heir Philip II. When Philip II became king of Spain in 1555, after the abdication of his father, he moved to Spain and left control of the Netherlands in the regency of his Catholic sister, Margaret of Parma. Pope Pius IV also established fourteen new bishoprics in the Low Countries, including the creation of the archbishopric of Mechelen that held the same political power as the greatest nobles in the Low Countries. The most powerful nobles in the Netherlands, including Count Egmont and William of Orange, persuaded the rest of the nobility of the States-General to resist the political and financial demands of King Philip II and his regency.<sup>29</sup>

Another blow to the authority of Spanish rule in the Low Countries was the teachings of the Protestant reformer John Calvin. Although Lutheran churches already existed in the Netherlands during the 1550's, Calvinism possessed several advantages

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<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 30-42.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 44-48.



that allowed the faith to spread quickly through the Low Countries. The close proximity of the French Calvinists, or Huguenots, near the southern border gave the Dutch easy access to the teachings and practices of the religion. The Calvinist preachers were also more convincing and passionate in their conversion of people already seeking an alternative to the corrupt Catholic dioceses. After the bloody persecution of the Huguenots in France in 1562, hundreds of Huguenots fled north to seek refuge in the Netherlands, making Calvinists almost as numerous as the Catholics.<sup>30</sup>

In an effort to ease the increasing political problems for Protestants, the States-General sent Count Egmont to Spain to plead their case. King Philip II gave Egmont every courtesy and informed him that he would reconsider the current policies in the Netherlands. Believing he won the king's favor, Egmont returned to the Low Countries extremely confident. However, not long after his return, Philip II sent instructions to the governor and the bishops to intensify the inquisition and execution of the Protestants. The problems in the Netherlands began to rapidly increase. The nobles, led by William of Orange, gathered considerable popular support against Philip II and openly threatened to resign their families from government. This forced Margaret of Parma to give undesirable concessions to the nobles and ease the heresy laws. But by 1565, the brushfire was burning and showed no signs of slowing down. The popular support raised by the nobles grew outside their control and Calvinists took to the streets in revolt. They broke into Catholic churches and destroyed statues and artwork that Calvinists considered idolatry. King Philip II refused to accept open Calvinist worship in the Netherlands, and the Low Countries were officially considered in rebellion.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-59.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-87.

The Low Countries remained in a state of rebellion leading up to the start of the Thirty Years' War. The first revolt of 1566 forced the members of the States-General into exile, allowing the Spanish to enforce Catholic rule. After gathering the support of England, the Protestant German princes, and the French Huguenots, the Dutch nobles reclaimed towns in the northern provinces of the Netherlands, beginning with Breda in 1590. By 1609, most of the northern territory above the Rhine River was under the occupation of the new States-General, called the United Provinces of Holland. After the death of King Philip II in 1598, his son Philip III renewed the attack against the Dutch to no avail. The Spanish throne was on the verge of yet another bankruptcy, and the United Provinces were firmly planted. It was finally time to consider peace again.<sup>32</sup>

The reasoning behind the negotiating of the Twelve Years' Truce in 1609 was "a direct consequence of financial, economic and psychological exhaustion."<sup>33</sup> The United Provinces needed to refortify their defenses and European alliances. Spain, after almost a century of continuous warfare, required breathing space to refill their coffers and build another army. The two parties gathered in 1621 to again discuss possible resolutions. However, Spain had regained its strength and secured an alliance with the Catholic League in Germany. The new Spanish monarch, King Philip IV, was prepared to resume hostilities in the Netherlands.<sup>34</sup>

After the Bohemian revolt was crushed and Elector Frederick V driven into exile, the fate of the United Provinces became extremely perilous. Catholic princes loyal to the Holy Roman Empire or Spain occupied the Rhine River, as well as the provinces it ran

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<sup>32</sup> John Lynch, *Spain Under the Hapsburgs*, vol. 1. (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 297-313; Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, 225-235.

<sup>33</sup> Elliott, *Spain and Its World*, 116.

<sup>34</sup> Lynch, vol. 2, 42-44.

through leading into the Netherlands. This gave the Spanish troops in the Loyal Provinces an unhindered supply route between Genoa and Brussels. With Frederick V, one of the United Provinces' greatest supporters, removed from power, Spain appeared ready to end the armistice and crush the Dutch rebellion once and for all.

### *Northern Italy and Switzerland*

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the lands collectively known as Northern Italy were mainly held together by geographical boundaries. Along the north of the peninsula was the Alpine Mountains, creating a natural barrier between the Italian city-states and the German provinces of the Holy Roman Empire. Running down the western side of the Alps and emptying into the Mediterranean Sea was the Rhone River. This natural boundary separated France from Piedmont and Savoy. Compared to the rest of the continent, Northern Italy was protected by its natural surroundings better than any other kingdom in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

The political divisions of the area were considerably more complex and less easily defined. Italy in the early modern period, particularly in the north, was not a unified country. Many of the people living below the Alps were citizens of one of over a dozen independent city-states, formed during the Roman Empire. Each province had different governments, cultures, and alliances, sometimes putting them in direct conflict with each other. Some states, like Venice and Genoa, were republics. They ruled through a council of nobles and followed a single constitution. Hereditary dukes controlled most others, such as Savoy and Mantua. Either France or Spain usually supported the election or

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<sup>35</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 8; Gregory Hanlon, *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 2-7.

succession of these thrones. The fractured nature of Northern Italy made its lands a key battleground at the start of the Thirty Years War.<sup>36</sup>

Northern Italy also held extreme importance in the foreign policy of the Spanish Hapsburgs. The largest portion of the Holy Roman Empire, which consisted of Germany and the Hapsburg hereditary lands in Austria, ran adjacent to each other. This allowed the emperor direct contact with the provinces and rulers under his control, without having to pass through other sovereign kingdoms. Spain was separated from the rest of Europe, both politically and geographically. The Pyrenees Mountains ran along the northern border of the peninsula, making ground travel north slow and difficult. On the other side of the mountains was France, who remained hostile to Spanish attempts at spreading into other parts of Europe. The waters of the Atlantic Ocean were also a danger from English pirates.<sup>37</sup>

In order to maintain contact with the Hapsburg hereditary lands and its interests in the Netherlands, Spain made alliances with or took control of key Italian provinces. The Spanish Hapsburgs owned the duchy of Milan, Finale, and the island kingdoms of Sardinia and Sicily. They were also allied with and built garrisons in the port city of Genoa, where the Spanish lines of communication began in Italy, and the duchy of Savoy-Piedmont, Mantua, and the kingdom of Tuscany. With these assets firmly under the control of the king of Spain, both branches of the House of Hapsburg kept a complex connection.<sup>38</sup>

The lands above the Alpine Mountains also held critical importance in the events of the seventeenth century. The Swiss Confederation consisted of thirteen independent

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<sup>36</sup> Hanlon, 47-51, 55-59.

<sup>37</sup> Hanlon, 48, 62-75; Maland, *Europe at War*, 7-9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

cantons. Each canton had its own, government, laws, coinage, culture, and language, dependent on the country the individual it bordered. The thirteen cantons were loosely bound together under a federal constitution that offered minimal interference with the local assemblies. The Swiss Confederation was usually grouped with its close neighbors and allies, including the two republics of Geneva and Mulhouse, the Diocese of Basel, and the lands of the Grisons, who controlled the Valtelline pass.<sup>39</sup>

Switzerland differed from Italy in its relations to Europe and the religious composition of the cantons. Despite some groups being allied to either France or Spain, the governments of the Swiss Confederation were free of outside control. This kept the cantons away from the large disputes of the European powers. Because each government was independent of each other, the cantons also decided what religions were tolerated among their people. Four of them were exclusively Protestant and forbade Catholic worship, seven only allowed Catholicism, and the remaining two tolerated all forms of Christianity. These aspects made Switzerland a true anomaly among the other countries in Europe.<sup>40</sup>

In 1618, as the Thirty Years' War was about to erupt in Europe, Spain grew nervous. The Twelve Years' Truce between the United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands expired in 1621, where both groups reconvened to discuss terms of peace. King Philip IV of Spain had no desire for a resolution that did not involve the complete submission of the rebellion and the removal of the Calvinists. Spain used the time during Twelve Years' Truce to fortify and supply the garrisons in the Spanish Netherlands for a

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<sup>39</sup> Georges Pagès, *The Thirty Years War 1618-1648*, trans. David Maland and John Hooper. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 21-22.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

second assault, along with replenishing the king's war coffers. However, the opening of the Thirty Years' War disrupted their lines of communication.<sup>41</sup>

Charles Emmanuel, duke of Savoy-Piedmont, an aggressive opportunist, used the current distractions of Spain and France to expand his own lands. In 1613, Savoy broke his alliance with Spain and invaded the Italian province of Montferrat. Philip IV responded by sending an army from Milan to crush the Savoyard army. France, which was slowly turning pro-Hapsburg under the regency of Marie de Medici, also sent troops into Piedmont. Although Charles Emmanuel's ambitions were suppressed by 1617, Spain no longer trusted Savoy as a stable ally in their lines of communication to the Netherlands. Another connection to the Rhine River needed to be established.<sup>42</sup>

Switzerland and Northern Italy became the crossroads between the European powers and their provinces. With the ceasefire in the Netherlands about to end, Spain redirected its supply line from the unpredictable Savoy to the Alpine passes in the Swiss Confederation and Northern Italy. Utilizing the revolt of the Catholics in the Valtelline against their Protestant lords, the Grisons, Philip IV acquired a new route linking Genoa and Brussels. Unfortunately, the invasion of the valley by Spain drew France, the ally of the Grisons and the ancient enemy of the Hapsburgs, into the Thirty Years' War.

### *France*

In many ways, the kingdom of France faced problems very similar to their Spanish and German counterparts. King Francis I and his successor, Henry II, were both strong, willful rulers that forcefully guided the policy of France during the sixteenth

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<sup>41</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 37-39.

<sup>42</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 9; Domenico Sella, *Italy in the Seventeenth Century*. (London: Longman, 1997), 3-4.

century. However, the continuous conflicts engaged in by Francis I against Spain and the Holy Roman Empire exhausted the economic and military strength of the country. The tide of the Protestant Reformation also struck the core of France, as Calvinism quickly spread through the middle classes and the nobility. Both rulers violently persecuted the Calvinists during the 1540's and 1550's, but the new religion was already integrated into French culture. The result was a series of civil wars known as the Wars of Religion.<sup>43</sup>

Because of the division in the nobility, the French crown found it extremely difficult to gain support for a decisive action against the Huguenots. Many of the Catholic noble families, including the Guises, wanted an immediate purging of the Protestants from France. The regent of the adolescent King Charles IX, the Queen-Mother Catherine de Medici, sought a more diplomatic route and attempted to negotiate a compromise with the Huguenots. However, King Charles IX displayed his inept domestic strategy in 1572 when improper intelligence from advisors led to the execution of several prominent Calvinist leaders and the subsequent killing of nearly 2,000 Protestant rioters in Paris. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre was the final persecution needed to bind the Calvinists together in active resistance to the crown.<sup>44</sup>

The Wars of Religion ended in 1593 with the accession of King Henry IV, the first Bourbon ruler of France. The death of the previous ruler, King Henry III, in 1589 and his lack of a direct heir gave the throne to the Huguenot prince of Navarre. It took the nobles of the French Catholic League another four years before they accepted Henry IV as the king of France. The year 1593 also witnessed the conversion of Henry IV to Catholicism. Although he supposedly planned the change of religion since his accession

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<sup>43</sup> Robin Briggs, 4-6, 11-13.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 17-24.

in 1589, the Huguenots considered the conversion a great betrayal from the man they helped place on the throne.<sup>45</sup>

To help ease the fears of the Huguenots and gain their support for the coming conflict with Spain, Henry IV created the Edict of Nantes in 1598. This edict granted the Huguenots religious toleration and freedom, hoping the Calvinist revolts against the throne would cease. The Edict angered Catholics at first, even though Henry IV appeared to have no interest in making the Huguenots a permanent fixture on French soil. All evidence suggests that the new Catholic king of France converted for true religious conviction. However, as many rulers before in Europe felt necessary, a temporary peace with the Protestants was beneficial to advance greater national interests. For Henry IV, the more imminent threat to France came from Spain and Germany.<sup>46</sup>

The ambitions of the great French king were never fulfilled. On the eve of war with Germany in 1610, a radical Catholic zealot, believing the anti-Hapsburg policy was a direct affront to the pope and the Catholic Church, assassinated King Henry IV in his own carriage. The death of the first Bourbon king of France was a terrible blow to the renewed unity of the country. The leadership of Henry IV bound the fragile peace established under the Edict of Nantes. With his passing, the throne of France was held in the regency of the Queen Mother, Marie de Medici, until her eldest son, the nine-year-old Louis XIII, reached the age of majority. The regent and her extensive list of advisors

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<sup>45</sup> Henry M. Baird, *The Huguenots and Henry of Navarre*. vol. 2. (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 326-327; Briggs, 29-31; Ronald S. Love, *Blood and Religion: The Conscience of Henri IV 1553-1593*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 303.

<sup>46</sup> Baird, vol. 2, 414-419; Briggs, 77-79.



spent the next fourteen years entangling France into the web of European diplomacy, marrying the royal family into the courts of Spain and Austria.<sup>47</sup>

The events in France, Spain, Italy, and the Holy Roman Empire aligned the countries of Europe for a major conflict. With the suppression of the revolt in Bohemia and capture of the Palatinate by the Catholic League, Emperor Ferdinand II prepared to join forces with the Spanish army to deal a crushing blow to Protestantism in the Netherlands. The inconsistent nature of the duke of Savoy destabilized Spain's initial line of communication to their troops in the Loyal Provinces. The Adda River valley in the Valtelline was the next best option.

France, one of the Protestant states' greatest allies under King Henry IV, abandoned its support of the United Provinces and the Lutheran princes in Germany. After her husband's assassination, Marie de Medici actively pressed a pro-Hapsburg foreign policy and guided France into a position in Europe submissive to Spain and the Empire. Once King Louis XIII wrestled control of the French throne from the Queen regent, his advisors maintained a weak foreign policy, refusing to involve the kingdom in the escalating European war. In 1624, at the insistence of his mother, Louis XIII appointed Cardinal Armand-Jean du Plessis de Richelieu as the First Minister of the King's Council. His administration returned France to the anti-Hapsburg strategy of Henry IV and made France the dominant power in seventeenth century Europe.

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<sup>47</sup> Baird, 488-489; Briggs, 86-89.

## Chapter Two

### *The Early Years of Richelieu*

Armand-Jean du Plessis was born on September 9, 1585, probably in Paris. His father was François du Plessis, the lord of a small noble family from Poitou. His mother, Suzanne de la Porte, was the daughter of a successful Parisian lawyer in the service of King Charles IX. Together they produced five children: Armand-Jean, his two older brothers Henry and Alphonse, and his two sisters Françoise and Nicole. Along with membership in the nobility of Poitou, the marriage of François and Suzanne also brought together the estates of Le Chillou and Richelieu.<sup>48</sup>

François du Plessis was born in 1548, one of five children of a lieutenant in the French army. As the second son, François was initially destined to become a member of the clergy. However, the untimely murder of his elder brother Louis in 1565 forced François to abandon his prior ambitions and assume the position as head of the family.<sup>49</sup> He negotiated his marriage with Suzanne de La Porte in 1566 and was finally married in 1569. Joseph Bergin suggested that François du Plessis avenged the murder of his brother by ambushing and killing his assassin, the lord of Brichetières, though no formal charges were ever brought against him. Possibly to escape personal or legal retribution, he gained a position in the party of Henry duc d'Guise, who was elected the king of Poland in 1573. The Guises, a powerful and zealous noble Catholic family, were avid proponents of the Counterreformation and the removal of Calvinism in France. Their

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<sup>48</sup> Knecht, 1; Levi, 11.

<sup>49</sup> This quality was certainly passed on to Armand, as he also changed the course of his life and career for the sake of his family.

early ties to Spain also created early support for a French alliance with the House of Hapsburg.<sup>50</sup>

After the death of his brother King Charles IX in May 1574, Henry of Guise returned from Poland and was crowned Henry III of France. François remained in the service of Henry III, first as *prévôt de l'hôtel du roi*, and eventually granted the title of *grand prévôt de France*. This position forced him to remain in Paris for most of his career, accounting for the belief that Armand-Jean was born there and not in Poitou. Although the exact nature of his duties and responsibilities are vague, the *grand prévôt* was responsible for all matters relating to the safety and peace of the court. François du Plessis held jurisdiction over the legal cases concerning the members of the court. He was also responsible for fixing the prices and supervising the sale of goods bought for the court, including food and services. Members of the House of Guise maintained authority above the *grand prévôt*. However, King Henry III clearly wanted a loyal servant to act as a buffer between the hostile elements of Catholic and Protestant nobles. By all accounts, François du Plessis filled this position admirably.<sup>51</sup>

In a time when loyalty to a particular noble house or group of nobles was more advantageous, François du Plessis placed his trust in the laws of France and the traditions of the throne. The assassination of Henry III on August 2, 1589 created an immense power struggle for the French crown, since his successor was the Huguenot noble Henry of Navarre. Several armed conflicts broke out between the new court of King Henry IV and the Catholic League of France, led by the Guise family. François du Plessis was one of the first in the court to recognize Henry IV as king of France and fought along side his

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<sup>50</sup> Joseph Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 16-20.

<sup>51</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 24-32; Levi, 13-16.

new master during the conflicts of 1589 and 1590. Henry IV also sent du Plessis on several secret diplomatic missions on his behalf. However, his honored career was cut short when he suddenly died on July 10, 1590. François' children, particularly Armand, followed his father in a life of service and devotion to the throne of France.<sup>52</sup>

The widow, Suzanne de La Porte, was now responsible for raising her five children alone. François du Plessis left the family finances in considerable disarray. The du Plessis estate held major debts that François was only able to begin paying off prior to his death. These debts were so severe they forced the family to sell François' medal of the Order of the Holy Ghost, an honor bestowed on him by Henry III toward the end of his life. Despite receiving some monetary support from her family, Suzanne's superior business mind and practical knowledge allowed her to provide for her children and smooth out their financial problems until her eldest son, Henry, came of age. Although François was quite competent, the knowledge Suzanne gained from her father, a prominent Parisian lawyer and member of the growing middle class, better served their financial distress. This practical knowledge of finance and organization appears to be one of her greatest gifts taught to the young Armand, as the future First Minister required such skills in the recovery of France.<sup>53</sup>

His early education began in Poitou, where he lived until he was nine-years-old. His uncle, Amador de La Porte, brought him to Paris in 1594 and enrolled him in the Jesuit Collège of Navarre. He focused his studies on grammar and the arts, preparing for a career in the military. Armand's studies at the Collège de Navarre also gave him time

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<sup>52</sup> Levi, 16-17.

<sup>53</sup> Philippe Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*. trans. Patricia Wolf. (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), 19-20; Elizabeth Wirth Marvick, *The Young Richelieu: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Leadership*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 48-62.

to work through his adolescence. Along with rumors of general unruliness common to youth, he reportedly addressed himself by the fictitious title of the marquis of Chillou. Despite this early arrogance and flamboyant behavior, family problems soon required the young Armand-Jean du Plessis to mature ahead of schedule and display qualities that led him to the king's council.<sup>54</sup>

During François' service as *grand prévôt*, King Henry III rewarded his loyal servant by granting him the privilege of nominating the next candidate for the bishop of Luçon, effectively giving control of the see to the du Plessis family. After the death of Jacques du Plessis, the first bishop of Luçon under François, the bishop's hat was to be passed to Suzanne's second son, Alphonse. Once he completed his studies in the seminary, Alphonse shocked his family by rejecting his nomination and became a Carthusian monk at La Grande Chartreuse. This placed the fate of Luçon, and its revenues to the du Plessis family, in a state of uncertainty. Only one possible option existed for Suzanne: Armand must take the nomination in his brother's place.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the possible disruption this caused to his life, Armand gladly accepted his new course in the assistance of his family. He wrote to his uncle, saying, "Let God's will be done! I shall accept everything for the good of the church and the glory of our name!"<sup>56</sup> This portion of Armand's life was a strange parallel with his father's: François left the seminary to save his family, and Armand willingly entered the clergy for the same reason. Armand's enthusiasm to trade an officer's uniform for a robe and cap also display Armand's devotion to the Catholic Church.

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<sup>54</sup> Knecht, 2; Levi, 22-23.

<sup>55</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 58-63; O'Connell, 11-13.

<sup>56</sup> Knecht, 3.

Armand returned to the Collège de Navarre for several more years, shifting his studies to philosophy and theology for a career in the priesthood. Because he was under the canonical age, a special dispensation was required from the pope to take over the diocese of Luçon. Although King Henry IV was more than willing to make the request on behalf of his former servant's son, the king's former Calvinist relations already weakened his relations with the papacy. Armand decided to travel to Rome with the French ambassador in an effort to expedite the dispensation. He reached the Holy City in January 1607 and received several audiences with Pope Paul V. During these meetings, Armand greatly impressed the pontiff with his superior knowledge in political and spiritual matters. The French ambassador later claimed that Armand's linguistic skills were such that he not only received his dispensation, but also helped convince Pope Paul V of King Henry IV's genuine conversion to Catholicism.<sup>57</sup> The future bishop of Luçon's first and only visit to Rome was a great success. At twenty-two, Armand-Jean du Plessis was ordained in Rome on April 17, 1607.<sup>58</sup>

He returned to Paris, continuing his education at Navarre. Armand received his bachelors in theology on October 29, 1607. Several weeks of severe illness, including fever and horrible migraines, followed the reception of his degree that winter, likely the result of his extended efforts at Rome and in the Collège de Navarre. Armand recovered from fever in spring 1608. He spent several months preaching at the court of King Henry IV before deciding to accept his new position. With a small retinue of priests and a

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<sup>57</sup> Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 29-31.

<sup>58</sup> O'Connell, 13-14.

borrowed carriage, Armand arrived at his see in mid-December and performed mass as bishop of Luçon on Christmas Day 1608.<sup>59</sup>

The diocese of Luçon was in a horrible condition when Armand officially took control in December 1608. The problems confronting the young bishop were many, primarily caused by its geographical location. The land was only a few miles from the Atlantic coast and close to sea level, creating a dense marsh around the city. The roads leading through the Luçon were in terrible disrepair and constantly flooded by the overflowing drainage system. The peasants' huts were in a wretched state and the farmlands and pastures were little more than "mazes of mud."<sup>60</sup> The stench in the city was almost unbearable from the large piles of dried cow dung burned for heat, since most firewood was too damp to light.<sup>61</sup>

The bishop's residence in Luçon was in no better condition than the rest of the city. In a letter to Madame de Bourges, a friend of the du Plessis family, Armand described his wretched surroundings. There was no garden and the grounds were as muddy and water-flooded as the pastures. Much of the furniture inside the building was warped and rotting. The house was bitterly cold and lighting a fire only filled the rooms with smoke, since none of the chimneys functioned properly. The weather during the winter and spring of 1608-09, combined with the poor heating of the residence, did little to improve Armand's constant fever and migraines. His time in Luçon was extremely humbling and resulted in his obsession with beauty and wealth later in life.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 76-77; Knecht, 3-4; O'Connell, 13-15.

<sup>60</sup> Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 38.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> M. Avenel, *Lettres, Instructions Diplomatique, et Papiers D'Etat du Cardinal de Richelieu*. vol. 1. (Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale, 1853), 23-25. His correspondences with Madame de Bourges, which were quite frequent during his early years as bishop of Luçon, reveal Armand's ambitions inside and beyond the diocese in a manner more straightforward than those to other nobles at that time.

The new bishop also faced a serious spiritual crisis in the diocese of Luçon. Located in the southern region of Poitou, Luçon operated dangerously close to the provinces loyal to the Huguenots. The diocese was only three miles east of the seaport of La Rochelle; one of the few fortified keeps granted to the Huguenots by Henry IV and protected by the provisions in the Edict of Nantes. This forced Armand to confront a populace not only burdened by over taxation from the crown, but also contained a large minority of Calvinists hostile to the Catholic clergy.<sup>63</sup>

Armand's first priority as bishop of Luçon was to improve the physical conditions of his residence. In order to reestablish order and affect the changes necessary in the diocese, the bishop needed the conveniences and luxury of a nobleman. He ordered new furniture and bed linens, garments and clerical robes for himself and his staff, and sets of silver dinnerware. To ease the financial despair of the diocese, Armand successfully requested a reexamination and subsequent lowering of the tax burden on the people and parishes. Despite being one of the poorest dioceses in France, the bishop of Luçon made every effort to simultaneously appear as a "gentleman bishop" and reduce the poverty of his flock. Armand understood early in his public career the importance of appearance in government.<sup>64</sup>

The spiritual crisis in the diocese of Luçon required a solution beyond simple noble imagery or the relinquishing of monetary burdens. Many in the Catholic clergy in Luçon were ignorant and undereducated. The bishop's agitation on this matter is evident in his letters to the abbess of Saint Croix, explaining his rejection of several candidates

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<sup>63</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 100-101.

<sup>64</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 24-25; Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 81-84.



for pastors due to lack of practical and spiritual education.<sup>65</sup> Armand had several important manuals written about Christianity and the proper administration of a parish and services. He also established, with the assistance of the head of the French Oratory Father Bérulle, seminaries in Luçon to help educate the generally illiterate populace. The bishop personally assisted in the education of his people with the writing of the *Instruction du Chrétien* (“Education of a Christian”) in 1609, a booklet designed to teach the common peasants Christian doctrine in simplified terms.<sup>66</sup>

Armand’s handling of the Huguenots in Luçon required considerably more subtlety and diplomacy. In his first public address at Luçon, he spoke of patience and tolerance of those outside the Catholic faith and loyalty to the king:

Thank you for this evidence of your good wishes, which I shall try to merit in carrying out my duties ... I know that among us there are some who do not share our beliefs, but I hope that affection will bring us together. I shall urge you in every possible way to embrace this purpose which will benefit them as well as ourselves and will gratify the King whose pleasure is our duty.<sup>67</sup>

His speech reflected the policy he used toward the Huguenots living in the diocese of Luçon. Armand was a man that believed in the king’s authority and sought to enforce the tenets of the Edict of Nantes, despite his spiritual objections to their religion. He believed the Calvinists in time could be peacefully returned to the folds of the Catholic Church. However, the young bishop of Luçon also supported the rights of the Catholics in Poitou and protected them against Huguenot subversion. He prevented Huguenot

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<sup>65</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 29-31.

<sup>66</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 92-96; Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 39-41.

<sup>67</sup> Account of a speech given by Armand du Plessis to a crowd upon his entrance into Luçon December 1608, reprinted in Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 38.

benefice-holders from collecting revenues from Catholic parishioners, and returned Catholic worship to areas under Huguenot persecution.<sup>68</sup>

Armand's sixteen-year tenure as bishop of Luçon was not the ideal beginning to his political career. There is little doubt from his correspondences that he detested the relatively poor conditions where he lived. However, Luçon represented an excellent microcosm of the problems Armand faced later in his life as the First Minister of King Louis XIII: government economics and finance, the nobility, and the Huguenots. The young bishop also displayed some of his early methods of rectifying those problems. Only a small portion of his time as bishop of Luçon was spent inside the borders of his diocese. But that time certainly had a positive effect on the lands and its people southern Poitou.

In all his actions to improve Luçon, Armand du Plessis never lost sight of his higher goals. During his early years at the diocese, he wrote *Instructions que je me suis données pour paraître à la cour* ("Instructions to myself on how to appear at Court"). This list of detailed directions was a simple reminder to him on the behaviors and mannerisms he witnessed in his short time at the court of King Henry IV. They included when and how a person should speak in the king's presence, the tone any royal correspondences should take, and how to recover from professional disasters. These *Instructions* offer an interesting perspective on the ambitions of this twenty-three year old bishop.<sup>69</sup>

Armand's political career was ignited by the events of 1610. The assassination of King Henry IV and the regency of Marie de Medici opened a window of opportunity for

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<sup>68</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 100-102.

<sup>69</sup> Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 42-43. Erlanger also highlighted several portions of the *Instructions* in his book.

the young bishop of Luçon. The king's untimely death had a profound effect upon Armand, as he wrote extensively in his *Mémoires* about the assassination and the events that followed at Court.<sup>70</sup> Although he was not personally in Paris in 1610, Sébastien Bouthillier, the bishop's close friend and confidant, was in the city at the time of Henry IV's death and wrote to him about everything that transpired.<sup>71</sup>

The first Bourbon king held the bishop of Luçon in high esteem. But his death gave Armand the chance to prove his abilities in the service of the regent, Marie de Medici. He immediately wrote three copies of a letter to the Queen Mother, swearing "upon our promised share of the celestial heritage to bear allegiance to her."<sup>72</sup> Armand spoke in the plural, as he expected his fellow clergyman in Luçon to also sign his letters of obedience. However, the letters were never sent to the Queen-regent. His brother, Henry de Richelieu, who was entrusted to deliver the letters at Court, considered their flattery improper and ill timed. Though his enthusiasm almost proved to be his undoing, the bishop of Luçon clearly declared his desire to enter the direct service of the crown.<sup>73</sup>

Armand de Luçon spent the following six months in Paris, from July 1610 until December of the same year. He arranged for Madame de Bourges to provide him a small residence during his stay.<sup>74</sup> The bishop expected to be received by some of Marie de Medici's advisors. Instead he received an audience with the Queen-regent herself and her son, the young King Louis XIII. Armand was extremely pleased with his first appearance at Court under Marie de Medici, as he apparently made a powerful impression on the

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<sup>70</sup> Le Cardinal de Richelieu, *Mémoires*, vol. 1. (France: Paleo, 2000), 5-22.

<sup>71</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 119.

<sup>72</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 53-54.

<sup>73</sup> Marvick, *The Young Richelieu*, 165-167.

<sup>74</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 55.

mother of France's young king. Although he was forced to return to Luçon that winter, this first move provided a necessary steppingstone for Armand's later ambitions.<sup>75</sup>

The year 1614 proved to be an important point in the life of Armand de Luçon and in the history of France. The regency government under Marie de Medici favored diversion and bribery instead of actual solutions to the problems plaguing the throne. Monetary gifts and titles were dispensed to maintain peace among the Catholic nobility, and an alliance between France and Spain was imminent. To further complicate matters, the Queen-regent's main advisors included members of her Italian party, Leonora Galigai and her husband Concino Concini. They repeatedly bought key titles in the French court, including Concini's post as marshal de Ancre, and awarded themselves false pensions, draining the royal coffers. The goals of these two advisors only served to strengthen their own power and wealth in France.<sup>76</sup>

Many of the other nobles in France became incensed by the dangerous misgovernment of the Queen-regent and her Italian "usurpers", particularly the Huguenots. Led by the First Prince of the Blood, Henry II de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, the nobility demanded for a calling of the Estates-General. This organization consisted of the three levels of power in France: the clergy, the nobility, and the professional middle class. The Estates-General could only advise and petition the king on the interests of the country. Marie de Medici and her advisors, hoping to avoid a direct conflict with the nobility, agreed to convene the Estates-General in 1614. Armand made his opinion of the matter and its participants known in his *Mémoires*, believing that both sides were acting

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>76</sup> O'Connell, 25-28; James Breck Perkins, *Richelieu and the Growth of French Power*. (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 38-39.

out of greed and personal power.<sup>77</sup> This particular calling was also monumental in French history, as it was the last time the group was convened until the French Revolution erupted in 1789.<sup>78</sup>

Armand de Luçon recognized the calling of the Estates-General in 1614 as the proper time to enter the politics of the French Court. He understood that gaining a position to affect change in France required the confidence and support of the Queen-regent and her advisors, even if he personally opposed their decisions. The first step for Armand was to further the recognition of his name at Court and gain the ear of its key players. On February 12, 1614, the bishop of Luçon sent a letter of support to Concini, pledging his loyalty to Marie de Medici and the policies set forth by the marshal of Ancre and his wife.<sup>79</sup> Armand then petitioned to be nominated as the representative for the clergy of Poitou. The support of Armand's brother, Henry de Richelieu, and several other noble families, as well as the bishop of Luçon's impressive oratory abilities, made his election as delegate for the First Estate of Poitou unanimous.<sup>80</sup>

The Estates-General officially opened on October 26, 1614 in Paris. After the initial ceremony and blessings by the archbishop of Paris, the three estates retired to the Hôtel Bourbon and began their deliberations on the issues. The first major concern for the groups was the authority of the papacy and clergy over the office of the king. Despite the best efforts of the First Estate and its figurehead, Cardinal Du Perron, neither the nobility nor the Third Estate was willing to support a resolution acknowledging the dominance of the Church. Armand de Luçon remained quiet during these deliberations,

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<sup>77</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. 1, 173-179.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 121-122.

<sup>80</sup> G. R. R. Treasure, 22.

choosing not to wreck his standing among the clergy by supporting absolute monarchy, which he later made his life's work.<sup>81</sup>

The young bishop of Luçon moved into the Court's confidence in December 1614 during the discussions about the Queen-regent and the Concinis. Several bishops openly chastised the regency and the excessive power granted to her advisors before the First Estate. To counter this verbal assault on Marie de Medici, Armand gave a speech before the clergy, vehemently supporting the regent and eloquently justifying the actions of the Concinis. The power and skill Armand displayed in defending the Queen-regent not only won the opinions of the First Estate, but also captured the attention of an extremely pleased Marie de Medici. This speech before the clergy, though not particularly important in the whole of the events discussed before the Estates-General in 1614, made the throne of France and Marie de Medici recognize the gifts of the talented and ambitious young bishop.<sup>82</sup>

Armand gained some immediate distinction for his efforts on behalf of the Queen-regent. Marie de Medici personally requested Cardinal Du Perron to grant the bishop of Luçon the honor of delivering the final declaration of the First Estate. On February 23, 1615, Armand de Luçon presented a speech before the three Estates, King Louis XIII, and the Queen-regent and her advisors. Armand covered both ecclesiastical and secular topics, supporting Church reform and the need for clergy to be exempted from taxes, reinforcing the authority of the regency, the value of the Concinis, and the importance of

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<sup>81</sup> O'Connell, 31-35.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

a marriage alliance with Spain. He received overwhelming applause from both the clergy and the members of the Court at the conclusion of his speech.<sup>83</sup>

Armand briefly returned to Poitou while the French Court prepared for the double marriage with Spain: Louis XIII of France to Anne of Austria and Philip IV of Spain to Elizabeth de Bourbon. Unfortunately, another uprising from Condé and the Huguenots distracted Marie de Medici from her plans for alliance. The bishop of Luçon provided valuable information for the Queen-regent during this period, reporting on the movements and actions of the rebels. When the Court traveled to Poitiers in September 1615, Armand again wrote a letter of devotion to the Queen-regent and personally paid his respects before they continued on to Bordeaux. It was during this visit that Marie de Medici approached Armand about becoming Chaplain to her new daughter-in-law, Anne of Austria. This was an extremely important position, as he would gain the direct ear of the throne of France. However, Armand was forced to wait another year before he finally joined the hierarchy of the French Court.<sup>84</sup>

After the wedding of King Louis XIII and Anne of Austria on November 28, 1615, Condé and the Huguenot leaders again revolted against the regency and the abuses of the Concinis. Their small army took a particularly devastating toll on the province of Poitou, resulting in the pillaging of the countryside and the destruction of the Richelieu estate. The French Court maintained a defensive, conciliatory position, seeking to again bribe the rebels into submission. Armand de Luçon and his brother Henry de Richelieu

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<sup>83</sup> Knecht, 8-9. Richelieu's writers in Avenel, vol. 8, 140-142, also highlighted this speech.

<sup>84</sup> Avenel, vol. 8, 9; Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 79-82; Knecht, 10.

were limited to sending letters of protest to the Comte de Sault and the Duc de Nevers, demanding the removal of the rebel armies from Poitou.<sup>85</sup>

The Treaty of Loudon was signed on May 3, 1616, silencing the threats of the Huguenots with more monetary bribes and titles. Although Armand played little part in the negotiations of the treaty, his diplomacy directly afterward furthered his standing at Court. In an effort to peacefully expel the rebels from Poitou, he held a brief dialogue with Condé, convincing him to remove his occupying forces from the province and return to Court.<sup>86</sup> Despite his continued suspicions of the Concinis, Condé apparently reacted positively to these overtures, removing his army from Poitou and finally reappearing in Paris by July 1616. Seeking to solidify his power, Concini, recently appointed lieutenant general of Normandy, arrested the Prince of Condé on September 1, 1616, and restructured the royal council with his own supporters. Concini clearly wanted advisors loyal to him and easily controlled, choosing people he felt possessed no threat to his authority. Through the urging of Marie de Medici, Armand de Luçon was appointed secretary of state on November 25, 1616.<sup>87</sup>

The new responsibilities of the bishop of Luçon were considerably more extensive than as a representative of the First Estate. He handled the foreign affairs of France with other countries, primarily Spain, and was responsible for assembling an army sufficient to counter the moves of the Huguenot princes. Despite the obvious importance of his position, Armand's policies were weak and ineffective for several reasons. As a simple bishop of Luçon, it was difficult to command the respect of the princes leading the fight against Condé's former allies. Although he improved army morale by ensuring the

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<sup>85</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 163-164, 167; Knecht, 10.

<sup>86</sup> Avenel, vol. 7, 319-320.

<sup>87</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 137-140.



soldiers were paid on time, Armand was unable to suitably motivate their commanders toward more aggressive military actions against the rebellious princes.<sup>88</sup>

The greatest threat to Armand's first term of office was its brevity. By aligning himself with the authority and prestige of Marie de Medici and the Concinis, his fate was irrevocably linked to theirs. During the early months of 1617, the sixteen-year-old Louis XIII became obsessed with gaining control of his own throne and throwing off the corrupt policies of Concini. However, he feared the Marshal de Ancre's power and dismissed the possibility of open confrontation. The young king confided in Charles Albert de Luynes, the captain of the Louvre. On April 24, 1617, Concini came to the Louvre to speak with the king on the current unrest in Court. After entering the courtyard, the gates of the palace were closed, trapping the Marshal de Ancre inside without his armed escort. The captain of the king's guard, Baron de Vitry, ordered five of his officers to open fire on Concini, who dropped dead instantly. The body of the former Marshal de Ancre was unceremoniously stripped of all valuables and left in the courtyard until Concini's entourage claimed it later.<sup>89</sup>

The extent of Armand de Luçon's prior knowledge of the assassination is uncertain. Some historians claim that Armand was alerted by a message given to him just before he retired to his bedchamber the night before. By not warning his patrons of the plot against them, Armand decided to create distance from the regent and her advisors.<sup>90</sup> The bishop of Luçon also explained the causes of Concini's death in his *Mémoires*, though this was probably written in hindsight.<sup>91</sup> Whatever Armand's understanding of

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<sup>88</sup> Knecht, 11.

<sup>89</sup> Erlanger, *Richelieu: The Thrust for Power*, 128-137.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>91</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. 2, 104-105.

the situation, he could not escape the king's blame. When he arrived at the Louvre that afternoon, he reportedly found Louis XIII dancing on a billiard table, proclaiming, "Now at last, Luçon, I am free of your tyranny!"<sup>92</sup>

Unwilling to allow his mother to share Concini's fate, King Louis XIII banished Marie de Medici to Blois. Armand followed the Queen mother into exile as the head of her personal council. For a time he stayed near Marie de Medici, sending letters to Luynes about the movements and plots of the Queen. Armand wished to mitigate his involvement with Concini and reenter the favor of the king.<sup>93</sup> When he realized the futility of his actions, he returned to Luçon to wait for another opportunity to gain the confidence of the Court. His problems grew in April 1618 as Luynes was comfortably slipping into Concini's shoes. After the assassination of the Marshal de Ancre, Luynes was given most of Concini's estates, wealth and titles. He later claimed Leonora Galigai's possessions, after he had her arrested and executed on false charges of witchcraft. Luynes' attempt to further strengthen his grasp on the king involved the continued denouncement of Marie de Medici's circle. On April 7, the bishop of Luçon was exiled from Poitou to the papal enclave of Avignon to await the king's judgment.<sup>94</sup>

The Queen mother had no intention of spending her remaining days in Blois. With the assistance of the Duke d'Épernon, Marie de Medici escaped from her confinement at the château du Blois and hid in Angoulême. Because there was no evidence of an escape plot, the flight of the Queen mother was declared a kidnapping. This prevented Luynes from retrieving Marie de Medici by force and potentially crushing his last major opposition to power. It is uncertain who pushed for his mediation, but in

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<sup>92</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 161.

<sup>93</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 541-543.

<sup>94</sup> Knecht, 13-14.

March 1619 King Louis XIII recalled Armand de Luçon from Avignon and requested he negotiate with the Queen mother to end her opposition to the king and his ministers. He gladly took the chance to prove his worth to Louis XIII and immediately left for Angoulême on March 7, 1619.<sup>95</sup>

The negotiations between Marie de Medici, Épernon, and the king's embassy, led by Philippe de Béthune and Father Bérulle, took several months and a military skirmish to finally settle. Armand's major concern was securing a safe location for the Queen mother to reside, which was granted by giving her the governorship of Anjou. The final peace settlement was reached on August 10, 1619, and was seen as an enormous success for the bishop of Luçon. Both sides of the negotiation were intemperate and extremely unskilled in the subtleties of diplomacy. Armand's calm demeanor and calculating disposition kept the discussions on point and were eventually responsible for their ultimate outcome. Although the king still distrusted him and Luynes continued to despise him, his mediation between Louis XIII and his mother greatly improved his name at Court and among Marie de Medici's circle.<sup>96</sup>

Armand de Luçon hoped his service in reuniting the royal family might earn him another position in the king's council. Unfortunately, Louis XIII and Luynes had other interests in their eyes. With Marie de Medici temporarily pacified, the Catholic king decided to redirect his aggression at another recurring problem: the Huguenots. The religious fire was again ignited when Louis XIII moved his army south to restore Catholicism to the independent state of Béarn.<sup>97</sup> As soon as the king left Paris with his army on November 7, 1619, the Huguenot nobles gathered at La Rochelle and started

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<sup>95</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. 3, 7-14.

<sup>96</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 179-195.

<sup>97</sup> Knecht, 15.

another revolt, beginning with the capture of Privas. Despite his position and title, Luynes had little knowledge of warfare and strategy. The royal army gained early victories at Saumur and St. Jean d'Angély, but Luynes decided to bypass the stronghold of La Rochelle and moved on the other fortified Huguenot town of Montauban. The Constable of France possessed the superior numbers, but paled against the well-trained and extremely experienced nobility behind the city walls. The conflict lasted into the winter of 1621, with many royal soldiers dying in battle or from a massive outbreak of typhoid. When reinforcements arrived from Rohan to assist the Huguenots, Louis XIII and Luynes withdrew the army and return to Paris. The failed siege of Montauban left a horrible scar on Luynes' mediocre political record, which followed him until his death from Typhoid on December 15, 1621.<sup>98</sup>

Armand remained politically docile after negotiating the peace between Louis XIII and Marie de Medici in August 1619, continuing his service with the Queen mother at the court of Angers but distancing himself from any discussions that might be considered treason. Marie de Medici intensified her support for Armand's career in 1620, requesting that her son petition to Rome to make Armand a cardinal. He was denied the red cap in September, partially from the king and Luynes secretly writing Pope Paul V about the bishop of Luçon's deceptiveness.<sup>99</sup> This rejection magnified by another personal disaster for Armand. On July 8, 1619, Henry de Richelieu died from wounds suffered in a duel with the Marquis de Thémynes. His brother's death had a

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<sup>98</sup> Perkins, *France Under Mazarin*, 71; O'Connell, 67-69.

<sup>99</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 216-222.

devastating impact on Armand, depriving the bishop of Luçon of a valuable political ally and the head of his family.<sup>100</sup>

The death of Luynes at the end of 1621 provided Armand with his last best opportunity to prove his worth to the king and enter the royal council. Louis XIII realized that he was quickly running out of competent and experienced advisors. The king finally gave in to Marie de Medici's insistence and supported the candidacy of Armand de Luçon for admission to the College of Cardinals. Armand was declared a cardinal on September 5, 1622 and was formally capped on December 12.<sup>101</sup>

Armand du Plessis, former bishop of Luçon, now formally called the Cardinal de Richelieu, slowly advanced in the hierarchy of the French Court. Throughout 1623, Marie de Medici continuously badgered the king and his new First Minister, the Marquis de La Vieuville, to place Richelieu in the royal council. Finally on April 29, 1624, the king and La Vieuville conceded and Richelieu was given a seat among the king's advisors. Realizing the same letters of flattery and oaths of loyalty that endeared him to the Queen mother were improper before Louis XIII, he bided his time and waited for the opportunity to display his skill and devotion. Richelieu aided his advancement by outwitting La Vieuville on his first day at the council. By giving a detailed explanation on the privileges a cardinal should receive, he prodded the chief minister to make an incompetent retaliation that only angered the king. This tactic weakened La Vieuville's position with Louis XIII and opened the door for Richelieu.<sup>102</sup>

On August 13, 1624, the king summoned his council, where Richelieu gave a long speech on the problems of the French government and the new direction foreign policy

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<sup>100</sup> Avenel, vol. 1, 603-616; *Mémoires*, vol. 3, 38-42.

<sup>101</sup> Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu*, 225-229; O'Connell, 70-72.

<sup>102</sup> Avenel, vol. 2, 6; O'Connell, 71-76.

should take. Explained in his *Mémoires*, he called for a more belligerent position against the Spanish and the looming threat of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>103</sup> This radical change in foreign policy, returning to the days of Henry IV, was exactly what Louis XIII wanted to hear. Although he still distrusted the cleric, the king knew that Richelieu's plan held the greatest chance to reclaim France's glory in the eyes of Europe. He dismissed La Vieuville and declared Cardinal Richelieu his new First Minister.<sup>104</sup>

Since his ordination as bishop of Luçon in 1607, Cardinal Armand du Plessis de Richelieu fought through the turbulent politics and personal intrigues of the Court, rising to the title of First Minister. He witnessed the glory and fall of several chief advisors during this period, making his new appointment far from secure. Richelieu also personally opposed the policies and actions of many of the nobles and members of the royal family he supported as bishop of Luçon. However, he understood the need to swallow his pride and gain the favor of those that best helped his advancement in Court. Richelieu kept this knowledge close and immediately set his plans in motion to elevate France to the pinnacle of European power.

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<sup>103</sup> This is the first instance where Richelieu openly declares his opposition to Spain and the Hapsburgs, though he clearly developed this ideology prior to 1624.

<sup>104</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. 4, 166-190.

## Chapter Three

### *The First Move of the First Minister: Intervention in the Valtelline*

In his *Testament Politique*, written near the end of his life as instructions to Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu explained the three major objectives of his policy to strengthen the French crown: the suppression of the Huguenot rebellions against the king, the weakening and submission of the French nobility to the throne, and removing the growing external threat to France from the House of Hapsburg. Through the Edict of Nantes, Henry IV gave the Huguenots limited independent rule within the borders of France. The Calvinist princes were permitted to maintain their own armies and fortify the keeps under their control. They were granted the freedom to practice their religion, as well as restrict the worship of Catholics within their own lands. Worst of all, prior attempts to appease the Huguenots through bribes and titles only encouraged the use of revolts to supply their greed, constantly distracting the French throne from other important concerns and weakening the whole of the country.<sup>105</sup>

The Catholic nobility of France also presented a serious obstacle to Richelieu and Louis XIII. Along with receiving the same monetary bribes and titles as those given to the Huguenot leaders, the nobles simultaneously enjoyed freedom from royal authority and power to influence the king's decisions. Prior to Richelieu's appointment, the king had no direct military at his command. Therefore, any conflict engaged in by the French throne first required the support of the nobles and the acquisition of their armies. This also gave nobles the power to influence the decisions of the king for their own ends,

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<sup>105</sup> Françoise Hildesheimer, ed., *Testament Politique de Richelieu*. (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1995), 43-45; Victor-L. Tapié, *France in the Age of Louis XIII and Richelieu*. trans. and ed. D. McN. Lockie. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 25-27, 72.

sometimes to the detriment of the kingdom's welfare. Richelieu believed that if the king of France was to gain absolute control over his kingdom and initiate the necessary domestic and foreign policies without interference, the French nobility must be made subservient to and dependent on the power of the throne.<sup>106</sup>

The third major obstacle for the administration of Richelieu was the growing threat of the House of Hapsburg across Europe, particularly in Spain. The ruling families of Austria and Spain together controlled a large majority of the continent. This was a serious danger for France, since three of its borders were shared with Hapsburg possessions: Spain to the south, the Spanish Netherlands to the north, and the Holy Roman Empire to the east. The Huguenots controlled several of the major port cities, including La Rochelle, on France's western border: the Atlantic Ocean. The trade wars and pirate raids between England, Spain and the United Provinces also made the Atlantic a continuous battleground. This further prevented France from reconstructing its nonexistent navy. If left unchecked, the Bourbon dynasty would be at the mercy of the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs.<sup>107</sup>

Richelieu recognized first two concerns were internal problems for France. The Huguenots remained a constant aggravation since the middle of the sixteenth century, revolting when their rights felt threatened or saw considerable weakness in the French crown. Because of the large minority of Calvinists in France and the popularity of the Edict of Nantes, dealing with the Huguenots required a long-term solution. The Catholic nobility in France were a necessary evil for Richelieu during the opening years of his reign as First Minister. Without a standing royal army, controlled exclusively by the

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<sup>106</sup> *Testament Politique*, 149-153; Tapié, 16-19.

<sup>107</sup> Wedgwood, *Richelieu and the French Monarchy*, 33-35.



king, to defend France from Spanish encroachment and the military uprisings of the Huguenots, Louis XIII requisitioned the troops and commanders loyal to the nobles. Richelieu tolerated their abuses because they currently served his interests. The only problem that demanded immediate attention and was feasible to accomplish was the disruption of Hapsburg dominance in the Thirty Years' War. The first step in the Cardinal's plan was severing the Spanish lines of communication through Northern Italy, beginning in the Valtelline.<sup>108</sup>

### *The Grisons and the Valtelline*

The ancient lands of Old Upper Rhaetia, commonly known as the Grey Leagues or Grisons, were unique to the rest of the European continent on a geographic, cultural, political and religious level. The Grisons occupied a key portion of the Northern Alps, running along the southeastern border of the Swiss Confederation. Like many countries in Europe, natural geographical barriers defined the borders of this territory. In this case, the Grey Leagues were protected by the almost impassable mountain ranges formed from two major river valleys: the Rhine River in the north and the Adda River to the south. Both river flatbeds provided one of the few areas in the Alps with good farmland for grain and grape vineyards. The third major river valley, the Inn River, held steep grassy cliffs capable of supporting extensive cattle farming. These mountain passes also established a land route across the Alps, connecting Germany and Austria with Northern

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<sup>108</sup> Perkins, *France Under Mazarin*, 98-99.

Italy. The lands of the Grisons were strategically and economically appealing to many of the European powers.<sup>109</sup>

The Grey Leagues were also a cultural crossroad for countries bordering the Alps. Settlers and religious refugees from Germany swelled the population of the towns along the Rhine River valley. By the middle of the sixteenth century, German became the language spoken by the majority of people living in the Grisons. As the valleys of the Rhine and Adda rivers became increasingly popular trades routes, traders slowly migrated from Northern Italy to secure their investments. Although their numbers were far less than the German immigrants, the growing importance of the valley for the business and communications of Italy made the integration of their language and culture unavoidable. The Rhaetians, the original occupants of this area of the Alps, represented the third major group living in the Grey Leagues. Holding to the traditions of the old Roman Empire, they spoke a vulgar form of Latin that mixed with the Romance languages from surrounding cultures. This produced a hybrid language known as Romantsch. Adding to the complication of three cultures, the Grisons also had different dialects for each town and valley region. Despite these divisions, the people of the Grisons existed in peaceful cooperation. Except for traders and politicians, most people did not leave their towns. Therefore, the need to learn multiple languages was only required for those that traveled beyond their home.<sup>110</sup>

One of the most interesting and unique characteristics of the Grey Leagues was the political structure that bound the separate provinces together. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the individual towns began forming into governing communes. Each

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<sup>109</sup> Randolph C. Head, *Early Modern Democracy in the Grisons*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36-37.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 42-44.

year, the citizens of the communes met in the town to vote on important decisions and elect a representative to speak for them in foreign affairs. The communes in a particular area also established mutual assistance agreements with each other, offering military and financial support in times of need. The representatives from each commune met regularly to pass laws and settle land disputes. These alliances formed early democratic governments in the Northern Alps.<sup>111</sup>

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the communes had assembled into three main associations: the Grey League, Chadé, and the Ten Jurisdictions. The Grey League controlled the western tributaries of the Rhine River and the Mesocco, including the western arm of the Domleschg. Chadé possessed the main portion of the Inn River valley and the largest geographical area of the three associations. The Ten Jurisdictions, recently severed from Hapsburg domination, held the land farthest north and the segment of the Rhine flowing into Switzerland and Germany. The outbreak of the Swabian War in 1499 between the Swiss Confederation and the Hapsburg dynasty pushed the communes to form a stronger, cohesive association.<sup>112</sup>

On September 23, 1524, the representative councils of the three Leagues signed the Letter of Alliance, binding all the communes into a single Rhaetian Freestate. Although the individual communes still held power over their local governments, the Letter now took precedence over all previous alliances. The noble and elected representatives of each region made decisions that concerned the whole Freestate. The Letter of Alliance also held dominion over the former Italian territories of Maienfeld, Malans, Bormio, Chiavenna, and the Valtelline. The official title of the new Freestate

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 44-46.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 47-57, 63-65; a political map of the area is on p. 39.

was the Three Leagues, but the Grey Leagues (Grisons) became the popular name. The political development in the Grisons represented the creation of democratic government in early modern Europe.<sup>113</sup>

The distinct government of the Grisons gave a unique amount of religious freedom to its citizens. The constitution of the Freestate, designed as Christian reformers and their teachings spread across Europe, offered protection to all faiths. The Protestant Reformation deeply impacted the Grey Leagues, converting over half of the region to alternative forms of Christianity over the course of the sixteenth century, particularly Anabaptism. Despite a large portion of the communes becoming Protestant, the First Ilanz Articles of the constitution kept a steady balance between church liberty and the responsibilities of the clergy to their parishioners. This semi-peaceful religious coexistence, unattainable elsewhere in Europe, lasted until 1573, when the counterreformation brought suspicion and resentment between the Catholic and Protestant elements in the Grey Leagues. The Hapsburgs later used this religious friction to invade the Grisons for their own political ends.<sup>114</sup>

### *Spanish Occupation in the Grisons*

Access to the trade routes of the Grey Leagues was extremely important to the foreign policies of France and Spain during the seventeenth century. In particular, the Valtelline offered a necessary connection between Western and Eastern Europe across the Alps and Northern Italy. For the French, the Adda River valley presented the only overland link with its strongest Italian ally, the Republic of Venice. With the Duchy of

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Head, 65-72; Thomas M'Creie, *History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy in the Sixteenth Century*. (New York: AMS Press, 1856), 190-192.

Milan and the Republic of Genoa loyal to the Spanish monarchy, the Valtelline pass was France's best way to remain in contact with Northern Italy. In 1603, King Henry IV renewed the alliance between the Grisons and France, helping to protect the Freestate from undesirable trade agreements and open hostility by Milan, Genoa, and Spain. As long as they had access to the Valtelline, the French were a threat to Spain's interests in Europe.<sup>115</sup>

For the House of Hapsburg, the Adda River valley held great importance in their continued domination of the European mainland. Although the Hapsburgs controlled a large portion of Northern Italy, the Republic of Venice stretched from the Grisons and the Swiss Confederation in the north to the Mediterranean Sea, preventing a direct link between the two branches of the family in Madrid and Vienna. The only safe passage from Spain to Austria involved traveling through the Stelvio pass in the Valtelline and into the Duchy of Tyrol. Using this route became problematic, since it crossed the path connecting France and Venice and required the permission of the primarily Protestant Freestate.<sup>116</sup>

The other major need the Spanish Hapsburgs had for the Valtelline involved their continuing efforts to suppress the Protestant rebellion in the Netherlands. The Twelve Years' Truce ended in 1621, forcing Spain to either begin negotiations for peace or reopen the campaign against the United Provinces. King Philip IV of Spain, who recently succeeded his father that same year, and his First Minister Don Gaspar, the Count-Duke of Olivares, refused to accept a compromise with the Dutch Protestants. To

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<sup>115</sup> A. D. Lublinskaya, *French Absolutism: The Crucial Phase, 1620-1629*. trans. Brian Pearce. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 175-176.

<sup>116</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 7-11, 24-27.

secure a victory in the Netherlands, Spain needed to maintain a safe route through Europe for transporting supplies and troops to the Loyal Provinces.<sup>117</sup>

Through the latter part of the sixteenth century, Spain held an alliance with Charles Emmanuel I of Savoy. This allowed the Spanish lines of communication to run from Genoa, crossed the Rhône River in Savoy, moved north through the Spanish-controlled Franche Comté and Lorraine, and finally ended in Brussels. However, Charles Emmanuel had his own ambitions that often disrupted the foreign policy of the Spanish throne. The allegiance of Savoy at any time in the early seventeenth century depended on the fluctuating strength and weakness of Spain and France. In 1600, he attempted to default on his agreement with Henry IV of France to relinquish control of Saluzzo. After the French army invaded Savoy and forced the duke to submit, Charles Emmanuel considered France the greater threat and turned his desire for expansion on Spanish-aligned Italian provinces.<sup>118</sup> He removed all Spanish garrisons from Savoy in 1609 and prevented the movement of troops and supplies to the Netherlands. The duke also signed the Treaty of Brussolo with Henry IV a year later, agreeing to invade Lombardy with French support. Charles Emmanuel further threatened Spanish interests in Northern Italy by claiming the Mantuan fortress of Montferrat in 1612. Without access to Savoy and the destabilization of the western Alpine region, Olivares and Philip IV sought another road to reinforce their army battling the United Provinces.<sup>119</sup>

The opportunity for Spain to acquire an alternate supply route appeared just after the start of the Bohemian Revolt and the Thirty Years' War. Since the beginning of the

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<sup>117</sup> J. H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 51-56.

<sup>118</sup> Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 171-172.

<sup>119</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 57-58.

seventeenth century, the peace of the Rhaetian Freestate quickly deteriorated into religious and political tension between the communes. In the 1580's, the Republic of Venice and the Duchy of Milan both negotiated with the Grisons for trade access through the Adda River valley in the Valtelline. Although they resisted the heavy bribes from the Venetian ambassador Giovanni Battista Padavino and the military escalation along Lake Como by the governor of Milan, Don Gomez de Figueroa y Cordova (popularly known in France as the duke of Feria), the favorable position of Henry IV in the Freestate led in 1603 to a ten-year alliance with Venice. The Grey Leagues' involvement in the politics of Europe created a rift between the Catholic and Protestant communes in the Freestate.<sup>120</sup>

The gathering of the communal representatives, called a Bundestag, met in 1601 to discuss the growing disputes in the Grisons. The primary issues concerned the encroachment of Protestant settlers on land held by exclusively Catholic communes. Some problems were resolved, but the leaders of the Bundestag took a strong Protestant position. Several resolutions were passed to ease the spread of Protestantism throughout the Grisons and limit the objections of Catholics. These disputes were magnified for the communes in the Valtelline. After the Grey Leagues claimed the valley in 1513, the communes along the Adda River remained fiercely Catholic and Italian in their traditions. Protestant settlers began moving into the Catholic communes in the Valtelline, producing numerous conflicts between the two faiths. The Grisons restricted the rights of Catholics by preventing the clergy and missionaries from entering the valley, prohibiting papal bulls from being posted, and seizing Church lands for Protestant worship. The internal religious problems in the Valtelline gained the attention of adjacent Catholic states,

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<sup>120</sup> Head, 171-172, 179-180.

especially Milan, who shared the Italian see of Como with the valley. Under the direction of Spain, the archbishops of Milan actively encouraged Catholics in the Valtelline to rise up against the oppression of the Protestant Grisons. This tension finally exploded in 1620 when blood was spilled in the Valtelline.<sup>121</sup>

As early as 1617, small revolts from individual Catholic communes began in the Rhaetian Freestate. Many were resolved through the execution of the rebel leaders, including the death of priest Nicolai Rusca at Thursis in 1618. Protestants attempted to open a Reformed Church in the village of Boalzo in 1619, resulting in a riot that killed the new minister. The larger Catholic clans in the Valtelline, supported by agents from Milan, started planning for total rebellion across the Grey Leagues. On July 19, 1620, a mob of Italian Catholics, armed by the Milanese and led by the Spanish-aligned exiles from the Grey Leagues, began an open revolt in the main city of Tirano. They swept across the Valtelline, killing approximately 400 Protestants and driving the rest north into Chadé. The Thirty Years' War arrived at the doorstep of the Grisons.<sup>122</sup>

The Grisons attempted to retake the Valtelline from the Catholic rebels, but were met instead by a well-trained army from Milan. By October 1620, Spanish troops occupied the valley and fortified its borders, asserting the need to protect the rights of Catholics living in the valley. Louis XIII and the French Court demanded the restoration of the Grisons to power in the Valtelline. An agreement was reached on April 26, 1621, giving the Valtelline back to the Protestant Grisons in return for Spanish access to the valley route. The Treaty of Madrid was never truly fulfilled by Olivares, and Spain maintained their forts and troops in the valley. Incapable of backing up their threats with

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-184.

<sup>122</sup> Head, 191-193; O'Connell, 80.



military intervention, France continued to negotiate on behalf of the Grisons. In February 1623, after France secured an alliance with a terrified Savoy and Venice, Olivares agreed to replace the Spanish garrisons in the Valtelline with the papal troops of Pope Gregory XV, who agreed to keep the pass available to both parties. The pope's garrison was to remain in the Valtelline for only four months, after which the forts were to be razed and control given to the Grisons. However, Gregory XV died in July 1623, and his successor Maffeo Barberini, Pope Urban VIII, was persuaded by Olivares to extend the occupation.<sup>123</sup>

Spain lost official rule of the Valtelline, but kept their advantage in the supply route to the Netherlands. Olivares was able to redirect the troops in the valley to other fronts, believing France would never militarily challenge the pope and his army. In November 1620, the combined forces of Maximilian I of Bavaria and the Spanish army in the Netherlands led by Ambrosio Spinola defeated Frederick V, the Elector Palatine and elected King of Bohemia, at White Mountain. With the Lower Palatinate under the control of the Hapsburgs, the lines of communication from Genoa, up the Rhine River, and into Spanish Netherlands were finally secured for reinstating the attack against the United Provinces.<sup>124</sup>

### *Richelieu's First Move*

Cardinal Richelieu became the First Minister of France on August 13, 1624. He witnessed the movements of the Hapsburgs in Spain and Austria to dominate the entire

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<sup>123</sup> Levi, 86-87; A. Lloyd Moote, *Louis XIII, the Just*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 134-136.

<sup>124</sup> Maland, *Europe at War, 75-77*; David Parrott, *Richelieu's Army: War, Government and Society in France, 1624-1642*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 85-86.

continent. Richelieu also recognized that reclaiming the Valtelline for their allies, the Grisons, as a necessary first step to arresting the power of Spain. Upon taking office, he immediately sent his friend and advisor Father Joseph to attempt a final compromise with the papal nuncio, Cardinal Spada. Although the Capuchin monk made a strong case for the restoration of the Grisons, Spada was unwilling to recommend any treaty to Urban VIII that involved Protestant control of the Valtelline.<sup>125</sup>

Joseph François le Clerc du Tremblay, known across Europe as Father Joseph, was an important supporter of Richelieu's rise to power and a crucial instrument in France's foreign policy. The Capuchin monk first met Richelieu as the new bishop of Luçon, while attempting to reform the abbey of Fontevault. He sought the advice of the young Richelieu and both clerics became fast friends and religious allies. Like Richelieu, Father Joseph was a political animal and pursued his own agendas for the good of France and the Catholic Church. He believed the greatest threat came from the Turkish invasion of the European continent. The priest worked early to secure an alliance between the Bourbons in France and the Hapsburgs in Spain, placing him in the favor of Marie de Medici. However, by the time Richelieu came to power in 1624, Father Joseph realized the Hapsburgs would never agree to a unified crusade against the Turks. He abandoned conciliation with Spain and fully supported Richelieu's foreign policy and political ambitions for France.<sup>126</sup>

Richelieu never anticipated his peace offering to persuade the pope to remove his troops from the Adda River valley. While Father Joseph distracted the papal troops and the Spanish with empty diplomacy, Richelieu simultaneously sent the Marquis de

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<sup>125</sup> O'Connell, 86-87.

<sup>126</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Grey Eminence: A Study in Religion and Politics*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 111-115, 181; R. F. O'Conner, *His Grey Eminence*. (Philadelphia: Dolphin Press, 1912), 36-38.

Cœuvres to raise an army among the Swiss Protestants. After levying 3,000 men in the Swiss cantons and another 3,000 in the Grisons, Cœuvres moved south into Savoy in November 1624. In a secret alliance between France, Savoy and Venice, the three countries agreed to cut Spain's supply route in Northern Italy. On November 25, Cœuvres' army of 9,000 soldiers, half of them Calvinists, launched an attack against the papal garrisons in the Valtelline. Cannons from Venice were brought into the valley to reinforce the French army. By the start of 1625, the Valtelline was cleared of the papal soldiers and under French jurisdiction.<sup>127</sup>

Feria quickly reinforced the fortress of Riva, the last defense between Cœuvres' troops and Milan, which was besieged by the end of January. As part of the alliance, Charles Emmanuel I took 23,000 soldiers, a large portion belonging to France, and began an invasion of Genoa. By keeping Spanish reinforcements blocked inside the port city, the governor of Milan could only hold the French army to a standstill. In just six months, Richelieu transformed the foreign policy of France from a pro-Hapsburg Catholic alliance throughout Europe to severing the connection between the two branches of the family. Although Spain and Austria still held considerably more power than France on the continent, Cardinal Richelieu used the power of his office against the larger threat to the Bourbon dynasty.<sup>128</sup>

The outraged reaction from Rome and Madrid could have evaporated the Rhine River. Pope Urban VIII accused Richelieu of sins against the Catholic Church and demanded the immediate withdrawal of French troops. To expedite the process, the pope sent his nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, to press the issue to Louis XIII in Paris.

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<sup>127</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *Richelieu: A Study*. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1929), 216-217; Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares*, 222-223.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

Upon learning of his arrival in spring 1625, Richelieu instructed Father Joseph in Rome to argue the French position directly to Urban VIII. Barberini arrived in Paris on May 21, quickly drawing the ire of Louis XIII and Richelieu. The papal legate was firm in his resolution, rejecting any French compromises that involved the stationing of French troops in the valley or the restoration of the Grisons' lordship. Luckily, Father Joseph learned from the pope that Barberini's trip to Paris was an empty gesture, never intending to reach a successful agreement with Louis XIII.<sup>129</sup>

The bigger headache for Richelieu came from the Spanish throne. Along with preparing to launch a military assault to relieve Genoa from the army of Charles Emmanuel I and crush Cœuvres in the Valtelline, Olivares began spreading rumors across Europe about the evil of the alliance among France, Savoy and Venice. The battle for the Valtelline was slowly drawing France and Spain closer to a direct war that neither could currently afford. The French throne was barely able to feed and supply its army and all the available Spanish troops were committed to suppressing the revolt in the Netherlands. Olivares and Philip IV employed similar tactics inside France and secretly supported another Protestant uprising. In 1625, the Huguenots, led by the duke of Rohan, began another revolt in southern France. Unable to maintain two conflicts on two separate fronts, Richelieu was forced to recall the French troops from Italy and commence serious negotiations with Spain and Rome.<sup>130</sup>

When Cardinal Richelieu came to power in 1624, several major problems confronted the French throne that required immediate attention. The Huguenot princes

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<sup>129</sup> Avenel, vol. 3, 208; O'Connell, 87-90.

<sup>130</sup> Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares*, 226-228; *The History of the Government of France, Under the Administration of the Great Armand Du Plessis, Cardinal and Duke of Richlieu, and chief Minister of State in That Kingdome.* trans. J. D. (London: J. Macock, 1657), 52-79, 110-117; Levi, 88-89.

still threatened loyal Catholic provinces and Louis XIII with rebellion. The French nobility held enough influence to challenge the authority of the king and his laws. Despite these internal issues, Richelieu changed the priorities of government to foreign matters, which he perceived the greater menace to France. By reclaiming the Valtelline from the Hapsburgs and restoring the Grisons to power, he severed the lines of communication between Spain, Austria, and the Netherlands. The First Minister knew that France was militarily and financially incapable of sustaining a direct confrontation with the Holy Roman Empire or Spain. However, the brief disruption of their supply route through Northern Italy revealed the heart of Richelieu's policy and his vision for a dominant France.

## Chapter Four

### *Antagonists for Peace*

Richelieu's sudden assault on the Spanish Hapsburgs in the Valtelline changed the momentum of France's involvement in the affairs of Europe. Prior to the Cardinal becoming the First Minister of King Louis XIII, the advisors to the French throne guided foreign policy toward an alliance with the House of Hapsburg in both Spain and Austria. The Protestant Reformation took a devastating toll on the Spanish and Holy Roman Empires, creating religious division among the people, battles over the loss of Church lands, and the ingredients for rebellion in the Netherlands and Bohemia. The separation of the Christian faiths was irrevocably linked to the deterioration of Hapsburg control on the continent. Fervent Catholics in France, particularly the clergy and the nobles with strong ties to Rome, already suffered from the political and religious problems caused by the Huguenots. Catholic Churches and provinces existing close to La Rochelle and the Languedoc endured constant harassment and economic hardship from their Calvinist neighbors. They actively pushed for an alliance with Spain and Austria.<sup>131</sup>

The Hapsburg dynasty presented its own major threat to the Bourbon rulers. If the Lutheran princes inside the Holy Roman Empire were removed, and the Spanish army in the Netherlands successfully crushed the rebellion by the United Provinces, France would be surrounded on all sides by a hostile and cohesive Catholic alliance. No country in Europe could resist the establishment of Hapsburg hegemony. A triumphant counterreformation and the removal of Protestant resistance to Spain and Austria would also eliminate France's crucial allies in the struggle to secure its borders and reclaim its

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<sup>131</sup> Moote, 48-50.

authority on the continent. Richelieu and many of his supporters understood this danger and shifted French foreign policy to disrupt the plans of the Hapsburg empires. Sending Cœuvres and his army into the Valtelline to drive out the papal garrisons was the first step in the Cardinal's strategy.<sup>132</sup>

However, other Catholics in France still believed the existence of Protestantism was the greatest menace. The interests of the state were secondary to those of the Church, and the removal of heresy took precedence over political disputes. Catholics who supported a Franco-Spanish alliance, led primarily by the Queen Mother Marie de Medici, held considerable influence with the French court. They created major opposition to Richelieu's designs and distracted the First Minister from his campaign against the Hapsburgs.<sup>133</sup>

#### *Bérulle and the Catholic Dévots*

French Catholics were a religious group heavily divided in the seventeenth century. Matters of government and matters of faith were usually a single consideration for the rulers of Europe. Because the kings of Europe were seen as the earthly representatives of God's law, their decisions were legitimized by their noble heritage and the approval of the Church. After the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation and the deterioration of peace across the continent, concerns of Church and state began to diverge. Princes that converted from Catholicism or tolerated the worship of other faiths were denounced by the papacy for aligning with heretics. As tensions between countries became declarations of war, Catholic rulers established alliances with Protestant

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<sup>132</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 43, 98.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

governments for mutual protection. The monarchs of England, which were primarily Protestant after the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, remained key allies for France and Spain, despite papal mandates against such treaties. Policies that advanced the cause of a state sometimes ran contrary to the interests of Rome.<sup>134</sup>

France was plagued by internal struggle between policies beneficial to the Church or to the state. Catholics split into two major factions: the *bon Français* and the *dévots*. The *bon Français*, or “good Frenchmen”, witnessed the growing threat caused by Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. The ambitions of the Hapsburg dynasty reached beyond their own borders, and the Bourbons of France remained their bitter enemy. The papacy likewise sought unity among the Catholic states in Europe, supporting the Hapsburgs as the champions of Christianity against the Protestants in Germany and the Netherlands. The *bon Français* were good Catholics that followed the Church in purely spiritual matters. However, they also believed that the king, and not Catholic powers outside the state, must control the French government. The spread of Gallican thought, which promoted the development of French nationalism, further influenced the *bon Français*. Represented primarily by France’s growing middle class of merchants, lawyers and magistrates, the *bon Français* encouraged Richelieu’s foreign policy in the Valtelline and against the Hapsburgs.<sup>135</sup>

The other Catholic faction in France was the *dévo*t party. While the *bon Français* favored a policy of national security royal dominance, the *dévots*’ first loyalty was to the papacy and the promotion of Catholicism. The king and his advisors still ruled their state, but their primary concern must always be the welfare of the Church. The idea of

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<sup>134</sup> D. H. Pennington, *Europe in the Seventeenth-Century Europe*. (London: Longman, 1970), 123-128, 210-215.

<sup>135</sup> Tapié, 143-144.



Catholic countries declaring war with each other and Catholic kings signing treaties with Protestant leaders was unthinkable. For the *dévots*, the greatest danger for France in the seventeenth century was the persistence of the Huguenots and their rebellions against the king. They also embraced an alliance with the Hapsburgs in Spain against the Protestants elsewhere in Europe. The growth of the Catholic Church was more important than the feuds between the kings of France and Spain.<sup>136</sup>

The *dévots* had a sizable advantage over the *bon Français* in the French court. Many of the advisors and confessors of the Catholic nobility and the royal family pursued these beliefs and influenced their patrons' decisions. The man that guided the *dévo*t party and established a firm pro-Hapsburg position in the court was Father Pierre de Bérulle. Highly educated and deeply entrenched in his faith, Bérulle was originally taught by the Jesuit preachers in France. Their teachings instilled in him the need for serious clerical reform, which he spent his lifetime achieving. Bérulle also developed a strong fascination with Christian mysticism, including the invocation of spiritual visions and the study of demonic possession. He eventually separated with the Jesuits, who suggested that he join their order. Although he exhibited many of the beliefs and traditions of his former teachers, Bérulle felt their brand of education was too secular and not focused enough on religious matters. King Henry IV also offered him several positions of political and religious authority, first as a teacher and confessor to the Dauphin and later as a bishop. Focused on his passion for spiritual reform, he refused the gracious offers of the king, showing his initial disdain for entering the realm of court politics.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Charles E. Williams, *The French Oratorians and Absolutism, 1611-1641*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 31-34, 71-75.

In 1611, Father Bérulle founded the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in Paris. His project was funded and supported by the most powerful noble women of the age, including the Queen mother Marie de Medici. Along with being devout Catholics and strong pro-Hapsburg advocates, Bérulle's patrons also admired his beliefs in mysticism, which were gaining popularity among the nobility. The French Oratory was wholly dedicated to the training and reform of the Catholic clergy, becoming one of the premier schools for the seminary seventeenth century Europe.<sup>138</sup>

Bérulle was inevitably dragged into the politics of the French court through his association with Marie de Medici. After the assassination of Concini and the exile of the Queen regent in 1617, advisors close to the royal family were summoned to negotiate a peaceful reconciliation between Louis XIII and his mother. The two clerics mainly responsible for these talks were Father Bérulle and Bishop Armand-Jean de Luçon, the future Cardinal Richelieu. Marie de Medici sponsored both men in their rise through the ecumenical ranks, and they remained good friends after the crisis was resolved. Bérulle followed Richelieu's career in politics with admiration, supporting his candidacy for becoming a cardinal and pushed for his appointment to the King's Council. After the inept administrations of Luynes and La Vieuville, the *dévots* wanted a firm Catholic presence guiding the decisions of Louis XIII. Richelieu, as an early advocate of a Franco-Spanish alliance against the Huguenots and a close advisor to the Queen mother, made him the perfect candidate for the position. Bérulle pushed for his acceptance, and the rest of the *dévo*t party followed his lead.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-83.

<sup>139</sup> Levi, 52-55; Moote, 159.

The invasion of the Valtelline by the marquis de Cœuvres in November 1624 and the immediate anti-Hapsburg foreign policy adopted by Richelieu shocked and angered Bérulle and the *dévots*. The First Minister was aware of the support he received in attaining his office from the pro-Hapsburg Catholics. His use of French and Swiss troops to cut the Spanish lines of communication in the Alps directly contradicted much of his spoken policies prior to 1624. The *dévots* were further angered that Richelieu had Cœuvres recruit Protestants for the assault upon the papal garrisons in the valley. At the time of the invasion, Bérulle was in Rome seeking the approval of Pope Urban VIII for a marriage alliance between England and France. When he returned to Paris with the papal nuncio Barberini, he pressured Richelieu and Louis XIII to accept a compromise with Spain. He agreed with the Queen mother that peace was necessary at any cost. His hope, which matched Richelieu's, was to keep the Spanish from using the Valtelline without thoroughly rejecting the papacy. Although Bérulle remained devoted to the *dévo*t cause and Marie de Medici's service, his willingness to mediate all sides of the conflict and support the foreign policy of the crown made him a valuable asset to France.<sup>140</sup>

The *dévo*t clergy was considerably less understanding of Richelieu's intentions. They believed the attack on the papal garrisons in the Valtelline was a declaration of war against the pope. Priests publicly denounced Richelieu's actions in their churches, demanding the immediate removal of troops from the Valtelline. The *dévots* also began a large propaganda battle with Richelieu, asserting his temperance with the Huguenots and violence with Catholic powers was tantamount to heresy. These pamphlets and sermons

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<sup>140</sup> O'Connell, 94; Williams, 376-378, 383-384.

had a profound effect on public opinion, further pressuring the council of Louis XIII into peace.<sup>141</sup>

In his book *Cardinal Richelieu and the Development of Absolutism*, Geoffrey Treasure argued that:

The central problems of [Richelieu's] life arose from political decisions which he knew to be necessary, but which ran counter to the principles of *dévôts* of one sort or another, which either complicated or contradicted the promptings of faith and morality. He was not, as is sometimes suggested, insensitive to this problem, even though hardened by experience. He was, and remained in his own way, a *dévôt*.<sup>142</sup>

There is no doubt that Richelieu agonized over his choice to abandon a pro-Hapsburg policy and reject the opinions of the people that sponsored his rise to power. However, the major principle that bound the *dévo*t party together was the creation of a treaty with Spain to remove the Huguenots from France and stop the spread of Protestants across Europe. This problem was the greatest threat to the Catholic Church and demanded precedence over any other concern of state. Richelieu's occupation of the Valtelline proved his resolve to subvert the plans of the Hapsburgs and his clear break from the *dévôts*.

### *Marie de Medici*

Before his assassination on May 14, 1610, Henry IV prepared for his own assault against the Hapsburg aggression in the duchies of Jülich-Cleves. John William, duke of the two provinces and ardent Catholic, died in 1609 without a direct male heir. His only successors were the Protestant elector of Brandenburg and the count Palatine of Neuburg,

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<sup>141</sup> Moote, 181-182; Tapié, 144-152.

<sup>142</sup> Treasure, 16.

who quickly sent their own representatives to present their claims. Just as they arrived, Emperor Rudolph II declared the duchies under the control of the Empire since no direct heir existed. He sent his younger brother Leopold, bishop of Passau and Strassburg, to secure Jülich-Cleves until a new Catholic duke was assigned. When the Protestant representatives refused to relinquish control of their claims, Leopold invaded Jülich, drawing the attention of both the Evangelical Union and the Catholic League.<sup>143</sup>

Henry IV prepared to take immediate action against the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, raising 31,000 troops to enter Jülich-Cleves and expel the emperor's brother. With the assistance of Savoy and Venice, another 41,000 were to attack the Spanish across the Pyrenees and in Northern Italy. Unfortunately, the fanatical end of the *dévo*t party delayed the war against the Hapsburgs. While Henry IV traveled to meet with his advisor Sully, the French cleric François Ravailiac jumped into the king's carriage and stabbed him three times in the chest. Because Louis XIII had not reached the age of majority, Marie de Medici, the Italian wife of Henry IV, became the Queen regent of France.<sup>144</sup>

The regency of Louis XIII from 1610 to 1617 marked a period of sharp decline in the politics of the French court. The Queen regent possessed few qualities needed to effectively rule on her son's behalf. She was not particularly intelligent and had little interest in the machinations of government. Her staunch Catholic beliefs made conciliation with the Huguenots even more difficult than during the reign of Henry IV. Instead of keeping the king's capable advisors, Marie de Medici replaced them with her foster sister, Leonora Galigai, and her husband Concini. She lavished them with pensions and titles, nearly bankrupting the royal coffers by the time the Estates General met in

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<sup>143</sup> Maland, *Europe at War*, 40-42; Moote, 39-40.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

1614. The Queen regent saw her position mainly as one of luxury and comfort, not duty and responsibility.<sup>145</sup>

Marie de Medici was a strong supporter of the Catholic cause, making her regency praised by the *dévo*t party. Bérulle profited from her patronage of the French Oratory, giving the Queen mother a valuable and influential ally with the clergy. She also pushed for the promotion of key politicians and court advisors, including Richelieu. After his efforts at the Estates General in 1614, Marie de Medici took an increasing interest in the Cardinal. Her backing brought him into the direct service of the king twice and assisted in his candidacy for a red cap. Richelieu's support for the Concinis and the Queen regent's pro-Hapsburg policy kept him in her favor. Their relationship changed during the fall of 1624.<sup>146</sup>

Marie de Medici's anger over the Valtelline rivaled that of the *dévo*t party. Even more than the other Catholic supporters of Richelieu, the Queen mother regarded the change in foreign policy as a personal affront. Since the beginning of her regency in 1610, Marie de Medici actively sought an alliance between France and Spain. Simone Bertière, author of the four volume series *Les Reines de France*, suggested that she hoped to assist the Spanish in creating Hapsburg hegemony across Europe. Her family connections in Italy and Austria gave credence to this theory. However, similar to the *dévo*t party, the Queen mother's devotion to the Catholic Church was a strong motivating factor in her decisions. Taking a pro-Hapsburg position in foreign relations coincided with the promotion of her faith.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Philippe Delorme, *Marie de Médicis*. (Paris: Pygmalion, 1998), 137-138; O'Connell, 25-26.

<sup>146</sup> Levi, 39-44, 56-58.

<sup>147</sup> Simone Bertière, *Les Reines de France au Temps des Bourbons: Les Deux Régentes*. (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 1996), 189.

Before his appointment to the King's Council in 1624, Richelieu's beliefs aligned with those of Marie de Medici. Once he gained the confidence of Louis XIII, the Cardinal changed direction and promoted initiatives against the Spanish Hapsburgs. Because of her patronage for his political and religious career, the Queen mother saw the First Minister's conversion as a betrayal. Only recently back from exile, her influence in the French court was limited by the suspicions of her son. She encouraged the peace talks arranged by Bérulle and used his influence to undermine Richelieu's plans to remain resolute against Spain. The comte du Fargis, the French ambassador to Madrid and a member of the *dévots*, was manipulated by Marie de Medici into signing a hasty treaty with Philip IV's First Minister, the Count-Duke of Olivares. Because a peace accord existed on paper, the king and his council were forced to honor the agreement and consider a truce long before they desired. Although the Cardinal attempted to minimize her authority over Louis XIII and the French court, the Queen mother held enough power with the *dévo*t party to help disrupt the new foreign policy of her former advisor.<sup>148</sup>

### *Urban VIII*

When a government goes through a regime change, the new ruler is often forced to cope with the situations left by the old one. Because numerous states had multiple political factions during the seventeenth century, The Thirty Years' War left many European leaders with these problems. With a religious connection to almost every country on the continent, the popes of the Catholic Church that presided over the decades-long conflict dealt with more than most rulers. This became the early fate of Pope Urban VIII.

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<sup>148</sup> Tapié, 153.

Cardinal Maffeo Barberini was elected Pope Urban VIII on August 5, 1623. His predecessor, Gregory XV, was only in office two years and left a large wake in his passing. A fanatical defender of the Catholic cause in Europe, his decision in 1622 to intervene in the Valtelline and station papal troops for the protection of Catholics placed the papacy in the middle of an escalating battle between France and Spain. Although the valley remained open to both countries, the agreement was more advantageous for Olivares and Spanish efforts to permanently extinguish Protestant resistance in the Netherlands. The papal garrisons were only to remain in the Valtelline for four months, though Gregory XV kept them in place through his death in July 1623. He left his successor sitting on a diplomatic volcano ready to erupt.<sup>149</sup>

Urban VIII's career followed the pattern of many popes during the Renaissance period. Born and raised in a wealthy merchant family in Florence, he was educated and trained for the seminary by the Jesuits. Showing early success as a diplomat, he became a papal nuncio to France, adopting much of the culture and people. As pope, Urban VIII was a great patron of the arts and Christian education, continuing a papacy tradition. However, he also took advantage of the wealth and status of the Holy See, offering large monetary donations to his family members. His nephews involved the Vatican in a devastating personal feud with the Farnese family, draining the Church coffers and aligning Venice, Tuscany and Modena against the Papal States. Although his pontificate exhibited the same behavior as other popes, the pivotal timing of Urban VIII's reign made his judgments critical in the events of the Thirty Years' War.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares*, 222; Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*. vol. 28. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), 22-23.

<sup>150</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 232-234.



The Valtelline Episode was the new pope's first diplomatic crisis, precipitated by the growing tension between two Catholic powers. Richelieu's attack on Urban VIII's garrisons placed the pontiff in a difficult position. Aggression shown against Rome from another Catholic state, especially one partly ruled by a cardinal, was an intolerable offense. A pope that allowed such actions displayed the waning authority of the Church to the Protestant rulers in Europe. He was also unwilling to deliver the Catholics in the Valtelline back under the control of the Protestant Grisons. However, Urban VIII was extremely sympathetic to the position of the Bourbons and France, having received significant exposure to the people as the papal nuncio. Similar to France, he feared the encroachment of a growing Hapsburg hegemony on the Italian states and the Vatican. Urban VIII had to handle the situation between France and Spain with cautious diplomacy.<sup>151</sup>

During the summer of 1625, the pope sent his nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, as a papal legate to Paris to negotiate for a peace treaty. Richelieu and the French court detested the appearance of Urban VIII's representative, who continuously rejected any offer of settlement that involved restoring the Grisons. Barberini left Paris several months later without any form of agreement. Sending his nephew to France may have been a ruse from the pope, as Urban VIII simultaneously levied the recruitment of Roman troops for the defense of Catholics in Northern Italy. Unable to take direct action against Richelieu and Louis XIII, the pope was reduced to intimidation and threats of religious impropriety. Urban VIII was forced to endure the conflict in the Valtelline

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<sup>151</sup> Pastor, 55-56, 73-75.

between the Hapsburgs and Bourbons until diplomatic and domestic problems in the French Court made peace necessary.<sup>152</sup>

### *The Jesuits*

Few organizations in France remained divided over the crown's foreign policy against Spain during the Thirty Years' War. Most groups fell into the unofficial associations of the *dévots* and the *bon Français*. As a religious organization in the Catholic Church, the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, was undecided on France's involvement in the Valtelline and against the Hapsburgs. Over the course of the Reformation and the years of religious wars, these priest scholars were persecuted and banished from the Protestant countries in Europe. Governments despised and feared the influence they had upon the nobility, particularly in their roles as confessors to princes. Promoting loyalty to the papacy and the Church before kings made the Jesuits a perfect target for Protestant aggression.<sup>153</sup>

The situation in France was even more complex than other kingdoms on the continent. The birth of Gallican ideals in the universities during the sixteenth century fostered a developing connection between the French people and their country. These sentiments affected both Catholic and Protestant subject of the crown, increasing suspicions of government interference from Rome. Concerns about the Jesuits exploded in 1594 when King Henry IV, a former Huguenot prince and recent convert to Catholicism, was the victim of a failed assassination attempt by Jean Chastel, a student of the superior general of the Order. In response to this attack, the Parlement in Paris

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<sup>152</sup> Levi, 88; Pastor, 74-75.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Bireley, *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2-3.

banished the Society of Jesus from France for eight years, forcing several colleges to close. Only through the skills of Henry IV's friend and confessor, Father Pierre Coton, were the Jesuits allowed to reenter France on September 1, 1603. Most provinces welcomed their reinstatement in the kingdom, as thirty-two applications for colleges were received within five months.<sup>154</sup>

After Henry IV's assassination in 1610, the Jesuits' fight for acceptance grew even more difficult. Father Coton became the confessor for the young Louis XIII and the Queen regent actively support their universities and positions among the nobility. However, the *bon Français* of the Third Estate relentlessly pressured the French court to reinstate the ban on the Order, especially after the publication of several articles on justified tyrannicide and papal authority. Richelieu, before and after his appointment in 1624, was a strong supporter of the Society of Jesus and protected their interests during the outbreak of war and rebellion. Muzio Vitelleschi, the new superior general since 1615, continually wrote the Cardinal, praising his efforts on behalf of his priests. This gave him an important ally in the upcoming conflict.<sup>155</sup>

French foreign policy in Northern Italy created a serious problem for the Jesuit leadership. Richelieu's invasion of the Valtelline and the condemnation by Urban VIII left the Society divided on what position to stand behind. An attack against the papal troops by another Catholic state was difficult to ignore. Father Jean Arnoux, who replaced Coton as Louis XIII's confessor in 1617, sided with Marie de Medici and the *dévo*t party in denouncing Richelieu's course of action against Spain. However, the Jesuits were very dependent on the goodwill of the French king and his First Minister.

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-13.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15, 65-66.

Their secular teachings also brought them closer to the Gallican ideology than most other clergy. The period from 1624-26 brought a renewed pamphlet war by the *dévots*, including more ultramontane literature on tyrannicide. While the public immediately blamed the Jesuits, Richelieu and Louis XIII openly defended them and forbade any form of retaliation. As a result, Vitelleschi remained neutral during the Valtelline Episode, despite the reprimands issued by Urban VIII. Although they refused to directly support French policy in 1624, the Jesuits became an unspoken ally for the king and his court.<sup>156</sup>

Multiple events and conditions forced Richelieu to abandon his foreign policy long before he desired. Marie de Medici and the *dévo*t party used their influence to pressure the French court toward reestablishing a pro-Hapsburg foreign policy. The loyal clergy that followed the pope, including Father Bérulle, abhorred the violence among Catholic states. While this motive also moved the Queen mother to action, her apparent support of the House of Hapsburg further encouraged the challenge against the First Minister's power. Despite his affections for the French people, Urban VIII refused to accept the Cardinal's hostility against the papal soldiers. Weakened by internal dissention and bankruptcy, his resistance took the form of threats of excommunication and constant peace talks. While Richelieu was in a position of power to transform French foreign policy against the Hapsburgs, key groups and individuals questioned his authority and prevented his influence from becoming absolute.

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 66-75.

## Chapter Five

### *A War on Paper: Political Pamphleteers*

In his *Testament Politique*, Richelieu addressed the necessity of a clean public image for a ruler. He stated that a prince must always look to the public interest when making decision on domestic and foreign policy. While this might temporarily hinder his personal objectives, a king in good standing with his people will achieve more during his reign than one less popular. Of all the types of power a prince possessed, power established through his good reputation was the most valuable. The Cardinal learned this lesson early in his career, using public opinion to eliminate his opponents and promote his strategy for France. The Valtelline Episode presented the first test of his ability to defend his actions and manipulate the perceptions of the subjects of the French crown. His major tools of manipulation were the printing presses.<sup>157</sup>

Printed pamphlets in seventeenth century France were far from the development of modern newspapers and magazines. Disguised as collections of articles meant to keep the public informed, they were primarily used for disseminating political propaganda into the Third Estate and the local governors. The use of leaflets, pamphlets, and small booklets to generate rhetorical discourse was not new to France. Aside from being very expensive to produce, they usually ran around ten pages in length. As a result, the French nobility and the crown sponsored or controlled the majority of the printing presses. Two massive pamphlet campaigns were waged prior to Richelieu's rise to power in 1624. The prince de Condé launched one during the Estates General of 1614, attacking the regency of Marie de Medicis and the Concinis; a second came around 1620 from Louis XIII and

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<sup>157</sup> *Testament Politique*, 285-286.

Luynes, attempting to discredit the Queen mother in exile. Both campaigns meant to influence public opinion, revealing the importance of a good reputation in government.<sup>158</sup>

Richelieu's tenure as First Minister under Louis XIII began the gradual development of royal control of printing presses and censorship of political propaganda. In 1626, an edict was issued that required printed materials designed for public distribution to gain royal permission. This involved proofreading by the King's Council and acquiring a notary stamp of the Great Seal from the Secretary of State before publication. Father Joseph further aided the French propaganda of the First Minister by assuming control the *Mercure français*, France's largest and most distributed annual newsletter. By recruiting pamphleteers loyal to his policies and censoring materials attacking the his administration, Richelieu filtered the flow of information to the nobility and middle class elite.<sup>159</sup>

One of Richelieu's earliest pamphleteers and supporters was the *bon Français* François Langlois de Fancan, a canon of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. Although a staunch Catholic, Fancan detested the influence of the Jesuits and the attempts to forcefully convert the Huguenots. He also held a strong hatred of Spanish dominance in Italy and the Netherlands, writing against the pro-Hapsburg initiatives of Marie de Medicis. Fancan began his service for the First Minister around 1618, just after the bishop of Luçon was sent into exile. He assisted in denouncing Luynes in 1622 with the *Chronique des favoris*. His vehement attack on the former advisor ensured that the King's Council changed their policy concerning domestic issues. Fancan's other major pamphlets assaulted the Luynes' successor, La Vieuville. The first, *Le mot à l'oreille de M. le*

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<sup>158</sup> Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 18-32, 38-45.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-140.

*marquis de La Vieuville*, questioned his fiscal practices and excessive draining of the royal treasury with unnecessary expenditures. The second, *La voix publique au roy*, directly accused La Vieuville of disloyalty and betrayal of the king, demanding his replacement. Along with fully describing Richelieu's anti-Hapsburg policy, Fancan all but named the Cardinal as the best candidate for First Minister. After becoming head of the King's Council, Richelieu continued to use the brilliant pamphleteer to promote his ideology with the people.<sup>160</sup>

The first pamphlet campaign of Cardinal Richelieu's reign occurred during the Valtelline Episode. After Cœuvres invaded the valley and expelled the papal troops, the First Minister knew Catholic *dévots* would denounce his policy and turn the public against him. The Queen mother, supported by members of the clergy, also condemned his actions at court and before her son, Louis XIII. In an effort to diminish the arguments of the *dévots*, Fancan published *La Cabale Espagnolle* in 1625.<sup>161</sup> The pamphlet discredited the pro-Hapsburg policies put forth by Marie de Medicis and warned against the dangers of a treaty with Spain. It stated that peace with Spain only benefited the Spanish, citing several instances when Catholic rulers, like "the Duke of Neubourg, the prince himself a friend, ally and very diligent to the Catholic religion," were betrayed by the "many religious abuses of Spain."<sup>162</sup> Fancan concluded the pamphlet by recounting the attempts of Spain to take advantage of alliances with France, beginning with King Henry IV and continuing with the current affairs of the Grisons in the Valtelline.

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<sup>160</sup> Discussion of the *Chronique des favoris* found in Levi, 66; Fancan's pamphlet attack on La Vieuville in Lublinskaya, 265-267; background information on Fancan in Tapié, 145.

<sup>161</sup> *La Cabale Espagnolle, Entierement Descouverte, à l'advancement de la France, et contentement des bons François*. Paris, 1625; the certainty of Fancan's authorship of the pamphlet is discussed in William F. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 118.

<sup>162</sup> *La Cabale Espagnolle*, 4-6.

Ultimately, the Spanish were untrustworthy and any alliance made between the two countries should contain serious benefits and protection for France.<sup>163</sup>

Pamphlets from the other end of the pew were expected over the Cardinal's new foreign policy. Richelieu's authority in the French court was not yet strong enough to suppress publications written by his opponents, and the *dévots* wasted no time in challenging his power. The first distributed was the *Mysteria politica*, published in Antwerp in early 1625 and quickly translated into French. Written by Jacob Keller, the rector of the Munich Jesuit College and confessor of Maximilian of Bavaria, the treatise mocked the validity of French foreign policy and elevated the House of Hapsburg as the saviors of Catholicism in Europe. The pamphlet consisted of eight fictitious letters, comically portraying the Protestant allies of France plotting against Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor. Although somewhat embarrassing, the *Mysteria politica* did little damage to Richelieu's administration and was quickly refuted by the spinning leaflets of Fancan.<sup>164</sup>

The more potent document was the *Admonitio ad regem*, circulated in Paris around September 1625. The Jesuit André Eudaemon-Johannes, a member of Cardinal Barberini's retinue from Rome, most likely wrote and distributed the pamphlet during the legate's visit to Paris. The *Admonitio* severely damaged the foreign policies of Louis XIII and Richelieu, systematically destroying any previous attempts to justify their actions.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>164</sup> Church, 121-122.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 123, 126-127; Church gives an excellent summary of the *Admonitio ad regem* in his book, which was formed from the actual document.



While the *Mysteria politica* attacked French foreign policy mainly through political methods, the *Admonitio ad regem* made the Valtelline Episode and the Protestant alliances of Richelieu's administration a purely religious matter. Supporting the causes of heretics was forbidden by God and prohibited by the Scriptures, since it directly opposed the authority of His Church. Therefore, Louis XIII's taxation of his people, the Catholic nobility, and loyal clergy for the sake of maintaining these alliances was the greatest mortal sin that the Most Christian King committed.<sup>166</sup>

The *Admonitio* next attacked Richelieu and the rest of the king's advisors for their Machiavellian ideology. It stated that Louis XIII's council believed the European conflict a purely political matter, outside the purview and authority of the Church. According to the pamphlet, the Cardinal's foreign policy assumed that French power should be acquired at all costs, since religion is not affected by the troubles and disputes of rulers. They claimed that their actions intended no harm to the Catholic Church, but "He who lets in the wolves must answer for their deeds." The *Admonitio* argued that by choosing to make peace with the Huguenots and supporting the spread of heresy outside France's borders, Louis XIII betrayed his oath to God when he accepted the crown. It further accused the French ministers and their allies of atheism, mocking God behind the mask of the public good.<sup>167</sup>

This treatise concluded by addressing the French Catholics among the lower nobility and Third Estate. The *Admonitio* contended that the wars fought by the House of Hapsburg were justified, since their purpose was to stamp out heresy in Europe. Conversely, any Catholic prince who interfered on the side of the Protestants also

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

opposed the will of God and the defenders of the true faith. Louis XIII and his ministers, it claimed, waged war with Spain because of jealousy over their power and success, ignoring the virtue of the Hapsburg cause. If the king of France was unwilling to follow the righteous path, his subjects were empowered to reject his authority and rise up against him. The *Admonition ad regem* maintained the purpose of the Thirty Years' War and the conflict between France and Spain was a purely religious affair. It asserted that Richelieu's foreign policy was heretical and considered sin against the Catholic Church.<sup>168</sup>

Shortly after the publication and distribution of the *Admonitio ad regem*, Richelieu quickly responded with his own pamphlet campaign. Fancan was the first to meet the accusations, publishing a defense in his pamphlet series *Miroir du temps passé*. The tracts used past events to draw similarities with the seventeenth century, particularly concerning the *dévots* and the pro-Spanish advocates. He argued that the rhetoric of the ultramontane Catholics was the same as the *Ligueurs*, a former Christian faction that sought to make affairs of state subservient to the power of the Church. Despite Fancan's skill, Richelieu required a true defense of the religious piety of the king and his council, which the *Admonitio* directly questioned.<sup>169</sup>

Published and distributed in late 1625, a pamphlet appeared under the name Jérémie Ferrier, a converted Protestant minister, entitled *Le Catholique d'estat ou Discours politique des alliances du roy très-Chrestien contre les calumnies des ennemis de son estat*, known simply as "The Catholic Man of the State." Although accredited to Ferrier, Church argued that Father Joseph and Bérulle collaborated on the project, and

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

Richelieu himself oversaw the composition of the publication. Because it also appeared in other collections of his state documents, the work clearly represented the Cardinal's official position in matters of government.<sup>170</sup>

The *Catholique d'estat* opened with an address to King Louis XIII, proclaiming his glory and reminding all that he was a direct servant of God. God not only graced the king with power and authority, He was the true impetus that caused rulers to act and motivated their decisions:

And because [God] names you this, he wishes that you be gods and abhors all that seek to bind your hands, diminish your rights, decry your acts that should be venerated, and attempt to be judges and censors of Your Majesty in matters where only God is your judge.<sup>171</sup>

The *Catholique d'estat* claimed that the actions of kings were the inspiration of God, which were beyond the normal understanding of men and their criticisms. Because many of the decisions of the state were kept secret from the public, it was impossible for others to judge the king's purpose as immoral and unjust. The king's authority was the instrument of God's justice on earth. Because God anointed him, the king was beyond the questioning of men.<sup>172</sup>

The pamphlet continued by explaining the definition of a "Catholic of state." If God made kings and kings made a state, it was logical that the state was also a religious entity. As true Catholics, subjects of the crown should love both the ruler and country granted to them by God. A person that rejected this understand was "impious and an atheist who does not believe in the word of God or the practices of the Catholic

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<sup>170</sup> For information on the *Catholique d'estat*, see Church, 127-128; the pamphlet was reprinted in Paul Hay du Chastelet, *Recueil de diverses pieces pour servir à l'histoire*. Paris, 1935.

<sup>171</sup> Chastelet, 85.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

Church.”<sup>173</sup> A “Catholic of state” was the natural role of a citizen, to love and support God, the king, and the country created by them. This overarching rhetoric touched the souls of both the religious and Gallican ideologies: love for God and the state. Therefore, anyone that attacked the king and his policies was an enemy of God, and all true Christians of France were called to protect the king against such enemies.<sup>174</sup>

The *Catholique d’etat* justified the need to keep state secrets away from the public eye. The king had the authority to make war against the enemies of the state, without requiring the permission of the Church. Subjects of the crown were not qualified to analyze the actions of the king:

Governments would be very distraught if their secrets, the force that moves them, were handed over to the people for judgment and if they required approval by empty minds and perverse self-seekers who would judge states in the classroom and the guidance of monarchies and the rules of government like those of grammar.<sup>175</sup>

The pamphlet argued that men of one profession could not correctly judge the accuracy of someone in another profession. It was ludicrous to have a lawyer perform the duties of a surgeon. Similarly, the Catholic clergy were improper judges of the decisions of rulers. The passage contended that those self-proclaimed Frenchman who wrote the *Admonitio ad regem* were not true Frenchman, because no citizen who loved his country could hate his king.<sup>176</sup>

After further defining the justification of the king’s authority, the writers turned toward comparing the alliances of France with those of the Hapsburgs. France was

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-94.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-99.

aligned with the Turks when Spain was aligned with the Persians. France supported the Palatinate and Hesse as Spain did Saxony. France made an alliance with England only after the latter broke their treaty with Spain. The former Emperor Charles V legalized Protestantism in the Holy Roman Empire long before King Henry IV of France passed the Edict of Nantes. This section, written by Father Bérulle, challenged the author of the *Admonitio* in his claim that France made alliances with heretics. These were the political actions engaged in by all countries in Europe. To condemn one king for these relations was to declare the injustice and immorality of all the rulers on the continent. Bérulle solidified the argument by stating, “Without involving their religion or consciences, they entered into these relationships to maintain what they acquired and to conquer what they judged necessary.”<sup>177</sup>

The *Catholique d'estat* finally addressed the situation in the Valtelline, using prior arguments to justify the support of the Grisons against Spain. The writers stated that the Grisons were the subjects and allies of France, even before they converted to Protestantism. This alone did not invalidate their sovereignty over the Valtelline. The threat posed by the Hapsburgs was a threat to all the Catholic states in Northern Italy. Thus, the defense of the Grisons and the Alpine valleys was not done for the protection of Protestantism, but the “very liberty of all Christendom ... a much greater consideration than the liberty of a single valley.”<sup>178</sup> This explained why France made alliances with Protestant states while suppressing the Huguenots in their own country. To protect the

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<sup>177</sup> Chastelet, 113-117; the direct involvement of Father Bérulle in this passage in Church, 135.

<sup>178</sup> Chastelet, 126.

borders of France from the Hapsburgs, peace was necessary among other provinces that resisted the unjust plans of Spain and Austria.<sup>179</sup>

In one concise publication, Richelieu and his advisors simultaneously countered each assertion made in the *Admonitio ad regem* and defined the basis of their political ideology. Fancan's *Miroir du temps passé* adequately protected the king and Cardinal on a purely political level. However, the *dévo*t article attacked the administration from a religious standpoint, a position the fiery pamphleteer was incapable of properly defending. His caustic writing style and overt belligerence toward the clergy also detracted from the weight of his arguments. Richelieu understood that any serious and effective answer to the *Admonitio* involved a theological response from men of devout faith.

The *Catholique d'estat* was his answer to the *dévots*. The First Minister addressed his critics in the analytical form of the *Admonitio ad regem*, systematically disproving each contention using both political and religious justifications. God exalted the king and guided his policies, making Louis XIII an instrument of His law. Ordinary people, including the clergy, could not understand all the decisions of the king, making them incapable of judging his actions. This argument not only resolved the accusations made in the *Admonitio*, it protected against further attempts to question the throne. The *Catholique d'estat* also defended Louis XIII's assistance to the Protestant Grisons in the Valtelline. The true threat to the Catholic Church was the corrupt rulers of the Hapsburg dynasty. Richelieu contended that the sole motive for their European wars was not the elimination of heresy, but the satisfaction of their greed and desire to control the whole continent. Therefore, it was necessary to align France with Protestant rulers for mutual

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-127.

protection against Spain and Austria. The pamphlet denied that this policy advocated the spread of Protestantism. Rather, France was justified in making alliances to challenge the greater danger to Christendom.

The pamphlet campaign of 1624-26 established the basis for Cardinal Richelieu's *raison d'état*, or reason of state. France was a Catholic state and Louis XIII was a devout ruler. In matters of government, the king and his council was more qualified than the clergy to form policies for the protection and growth of the country and its people. Because advancing the goals of France directly strengthened Christianity, removing the menace of the Hapsburgs from Europe, even through alliances with Protestants, served the greater good of the Catholic Church. This understanding of *raison d'état*, developed during the Valtelline Episode, became the guiding principle of Richelieu's administration.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Church, 139.

## Conclusion

### *Raison d'Etat and a Modern France*

The Treaty of Monçon was not how Richelieu intended the Valtelline episode to end. By the beginning of 1626, the armies of France and Spain were at a standstill in Northern Italy. Although he maintained control of the valley, Cœuvres was unable to make any serious incursions into Milan. Olivares gathered his army in Spain and Urban VIII recruited troops from the Papal States; both prepared to launch a counteroffensive to reclaim the Valtelline from the French. General Spinola, the commander of the armies in the Spanish Netherlands, also arranged to move a small force down the Rhine River and enter the Alps from the north. Venice and Savoy, both allies of France, were involved in their own ambitions and incapable of coming to Cœuvres' aid. All sides seemed ready for war.<sup>181</sup>

The *dévots* in France escalated their pressure on the king and his council for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. All French Catholics, including Richelieu, understood the danger of a military confrontation with the papacy and began searching for alternative solutions. In January 1626, the comte du Fargis, the French ambassador to Madrid, signed a preliminary treaty at Monçon with the Spanish minister Olivares. The agreement restored the Grisons as the nominal rulers of the Valtelline, though worship was guaranteed for the Catholic settlers living in the valley. The key stipulation in the settlement gave Spain access to the pass and trade routes through the Alps, a compromise Richelieu refused to accept with the papal nuncio Cardinal Barberini during the summer of 1625. The original draft of the treaty was also extremely vague concerning the

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<sup>181</sup> Treasure, 90-91.



authority of the Grisons in the Valtelline and French access to its trade routes. Louis XIII and Richelieu were outwardly angered by the hasty actions of the ambassador, who apparently negotiated the terms of peace without consulting the king. On February 4, the Cardinal sent a letter to Fargis, demanding the treaty be rewritten to specify the benefits for France and the Grisons.<sup>182</sup> After the final revisions were agreed upon, the Treaty of Monçon was signed on March 5, 1626.<sup>183</sup>

The early consensus among historians was that Fargis, a member of the *dévots*, acted beyond his authority and against the wishes of Louis XIII and Richelieu. Both men appeared genuinely shocked by the news of the peace agreement reached in January. The king's letters of consolation to his allies in Venice, Savoy, and Denmark, showed his ire over the resolution of the treaty and the benefits given to Spain. Many also believed that Fargis' wife, who was lady-in-waiting to the Queen mother and a close friend of Father Bérulle, unduly influenced his decisions. If true, this scheme would display the overpowering weight the *dévots* possessed in diplomatic matters and the weakness of the Cardinal's government.<sup>184</sup>

A. D. Lublinskaya presented a more recent analysis of the Treaty of Monçon in his work *French Absolutism: The Crucial Phase, 1620-1629*. The author asserted that Richelieu instructed Fargis to secretly open a dialogue with Olivares at the end of 1625. The First Minister knew the French army was currently incapable of simultaneously resisting the external threat of Spain in Northern Italy and the internal rebellion of the Huguenots at La Rochelle. He also sought to avoid a military clash with Urban VIII. Therefore, the French ambassador discreetly negotiated the terms of the treaty as the

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<sup>182</sup> Avenel, vol. 2, 187-193.

<sup>183</sup> Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares*, 256-258.

<sup>184</sup> Moote, 182-183; Tapié, 152-153; Treasure, 91.

Cardinal informed him. When word reached the French court about the settlement on March 5, Louis XIII and Richelieu acted livid to save face with their allies. Richelieu set Fargis up as a political scapegoat to minimize the damage the peace accord caused among Venice, Savoy, and Denmark. Through this interpretation, the Treaty of Monçon was a resounding diplomatic success for Louis XIII and his council.<sup>185</sup>

Ultimately, the Valtelline Episode was resolved far earlier and more peacefully than Richelieu wanted it resolved. His desire to immediately disrupt the plans of the Hapsburgs in Spain and Austria was clear in the opening months of his appointment in 1624. Many problems still plagued France when the Cardinal came to power. The Edict of Nantes, ratified under Henry IV in 1598, suffered repeated abuse by the Huguenot nobility, who continued to threaten the French crown with rebellion. The economy remained in shambles, nearly bankrupted under the regency of Marie de Medici. Of all these problems facing the kingdom, Richelieu determined the greatest danger to Louis XIII's reign was the growing dominance of the House of Hapsburg in Europe. If he was unable to immediately upset the plans of Spain and Austria, France's ancient enemy would soon surround the kingdom on all sides.

The decision of the First Minister stirred up a hornet's nest inside the country, particularly with his greatest supporters, the *dévots*. By championing the Protestant Grisons in the Valtelline, many French Catholics felt betrayed by the cleric they helped acquire his office. Some used their influence inside the French court to speak out against the Cardinal's strategy. Others took the argument to the middle class elite, launching a propaganda campaign that questioned his political and religious motivations. Using his own pamphleteers, Richelieu responded to their accusations by defining his reason of

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<sup>185</sup> Lublinskaya, 279-281.

state and the nature of his foreign policy in the *Catholique d'Etat*. The protection of France, the true defenders of Christianity, offered the greatest benefit for the Catholic Church. His application of *raison d'etat* throughout his service to King Louis XIII brought the French throne into a golden age that lasted a century after his death.

Cardinal Richelieu survived numerous other events that defined his career. His success during the Mantuan Succession became the first true victory for France over the aggression of the Hapsburgs. The Day of Dupes secured the absolute authority of his position and confirmed Louis XIII's confidence in him. French subsidizing of Gustavus Adolphus, the King of Sweden, and his campaign in Germany shattered any cohesion left inside the Holy Roman Empire. However, the Valtelline Episode, more than any other event, established the direction of his leadership that guided France to the height of power in Europe.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Levi, 113-136.

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