CHAPTER 5

THE GROWTH OF THE STATE AND THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

5.1 THEMES

In the seventeenth century the political systems of the countries of Europe began dividing into two types, absolutist and constitutionalist. While no country typified either type and all countries had part of both, the countries can be separated. England, the United Provinces, and Sweden moved towards constitutionalism, while France was adopting absolutist ideas.

Overseas exploration, begun in the fifteenth century, expanded as the wealth of the New World flowing to Spain became apparent to the rest of Europe. Governments supported such activity in order to gain wealth as well as preempt other countries.

5.2 DEFINITIONS

Constitutionalism meant rules, often unwritten, defining and limiting government. Seeking to enhance the liberty of the individual as well as the individual as a person were goals; in this manner constitutionalism shaded over into Liberalism. Constitutional regimes usually had some means of group decision making, such as a parliament, but a constitutional government need not be a democracy and usually was not. Consent of the governed provided the basis for the legitimacy of the regime, its acceptance by its subject.

Absolutism emphasized the role of the state and its fulfillment of some specific purpose, such as nationalism, religion, or the glory of the monarch. The usual form of government of an absolutist regime was, in the seventeenth century, kingship, which gained its legitimacy from the notion of divine right or the traditional assumption of power.

Nobles and bourgeoisie, depending on the country, provided the chief opposition to the increasing power of the state. In constitutionalist states, they often obtained control of the state, while in absolutist states they became servants of the state.

5.3 POLITICAL THOUGHT

The collapse of governments during the wars of religion and the subjection of one religious group to the government of another stimulated thought about the nature of politics and political allegiances. The increasing power of the monarchs raised questions about the nature and extent of that power.

Both Protestants and Catholics developed theories of resistance to a government:

1) Luther and Calvin had disapproved of revolt or rebellion against government.

2) John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) advocated rebellion against a heretical ruler. His text was directed against Mary, Queen of Scotland.

3) In France, Huguenot writers, stimulated by the St. Bartholomew Day's Massacre, developed the idea of a covenant (contract) between people and God and between subjects and monarch. If the monarch ceased to observe the covenant, the purpose of which was to honor God, the representatives of the people (usually the nobles or others in an assembly of some sort) could resist the monarch.

4) Catholic writers, such as Robert Bellarmine, saw the monarch given authority, especially religious authority, by God. With the pope as God's deputy on Earth, the pope could dispose of a monarch who put people's souls in jeopardy by wrong beliefs.

Jean Bodin (1530 – 96), in response to the chaos of France during the civil wars, developed the theory of sovereignty. He believed that in each country one power or institution must be strong enough to make everyone else obey; otherwise chaos would result from the conflicts of institutions or groups of equal power. Bodin provided the theoretical basis for absolutist states.

Resistance to the power of monarchs was based upon claims to protect local customs, "traditional liberties" and "the ancient

constitution." Nobles and towns appealed to the medieval past when sovereignty had been shared by kings, nobles, and other institutions.

The struggles in the seventeenth century produced varying results. At the extremes, an absolutist country was ruled by a monarch from whom all power flowed while a constitutional country would limit government power and have a means of determining the will of the people, or at least some of them:

1) The French king dispensed with all representative institutions, dominated the nobility, and ruled directly.

2) The nobles controlled the English government through the representative institution of Parliament.

3) In Germany, various components of the Holy Roman Empire defeated the Emperor and governed themselves independently of him.

5.4 ENGLAND

5.4.1 *Problems Facing English Monarchs*

Religion. The English church was a compromise of Catholic practices and Protestant beliefs and was criticized by both groups. The monarchs, after 1620, gave leadership of the church to men with Arminian beliefs.

Arminius (1560 – 1609), a Dutch theologian, had changed Calvinist beliefs so as to modify slightly the emphasis on predestination. English Arminians also sought to emphasize the role of ritual in church services and enjoyed the "beauty of holiness," which their opponents took to be too Catholic. William Laud (1573 – 1645), Archbishop of Canterbury, accelerated the growth of Arminianism.

Opponents to this shift in belief were called Puritans, a term that covered a wide range of beliefs and people. To escape the church in England, many Puritans began moving to the New World, especially Massachusetts. Both James I and Charles I made decisions which, to Puritans, favored Catholics too much.

Finance. Inflation and Elizabeth's wars left the government short of money. Contemporaries blamed the shortage on the extravagance of the courts of James I and Charles I. James I sold titles of nobility in an effort to raise money but annoyed the nobles with older titles as well as debasing the entire idea of nobility.

The monarchs lacked any substantial source of income and had to obtain the consent of a Parliament to levy a tax. The monarchs would face numerous concerns in dealing with a parliamentary body:

1) A Parliament only met when the monarch summoned it. Though Parliaments had existed since the Middle Ages, a Parliament never met for a long period of time.

2) Parliaments consisted of nobles and gentry with a few merchants and lawyers.

3) The men in a Parliament usually wanted the government to remedy grievances as part of the agreement to a tax.

4) In 1621, the power to impeach governmental servants was first used (since the Middle Ages) by a Parliament to eliminate men who had offended members of Parliament.

The Counties. The forty English counties had a tradition of much local independence. The major landowners—the nobles and the gentry—controlled the counties and resented central government interference.

5.4.2 *James I* (1603 – 25)

James ended the war with Spain and avoided any other entanglements, despite the problem that the Thirty Years' War in Germany involved his son-in-law, the ruler of the Palatinate and a Protestant hero. The Earl of Somerset and then the Duke of Buckingham served as favorites of the king, doing much of the work of government and dealing with suitors for royal actions.

5.4.3 *Charles I* (1625 – 49)

Henrietta Maria, a sister of the king of France and a Catholic, became his queen.

Charles stumbled into wars with both Spain and France during the late 1620's. A series of efforts to raise money for the wars led to confrontations with his opponents in Parliament:

1) A "forced loan" was collected from taxpayers with the promise it would be repaid when a tax was voted by Parliament.

2) Soldiers were billeted in subjects' houses during the wars.

3) People were imprisoned for resisting these royal actions.

4) In 1626, the Duke of Buckingham was nearly impeached

because of his monopoly of royal offices and his exclusion of others from power.

5) In 1628, Parliament passed the Petition of Right, which declared illegal the royal actions in connection with the loans and billeting.

Charles ruled without calling a Parliament during the 1630's. A policy of "thorough"—strict efficiency and much central government activity—was followed. Money was raised by discovering old forms of taxation:

1) A medieval law which required all landowners with a certain amount of wealth to become knights was used to fine those who had not been knighted.

2) All counties were forced to pay money to outfit ships—"ship money"—which had previously been the obligation only of coastal counties.

5.4.4 *Breakdown*

Charles, with the help of the Archbishop Laud, attempted to impose English rituals and the English prayer book on the Scottish church. The Scots revolted and invaded northern England.

To pay for his own army, Charles called the Short Parliament but was not willing to remedy any grievances or change his policies. In response, the Parliament did not vote any taxes. Charles called another Parliament, the Long Parliament, which attacked his ministers, challenged his religious policies, and refused to trust him with money.

Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford, the two architects of "thorough," were driven from power. The courts of

Star Chamber and High Commission, which had been used to prosecute Charles' opponents, were abolished. When the Irish revolted, Parliament would not let Charles raise an army to suppress them as it was feared he would use the army against his English opponents. John Pym (1584 – 1643) emerged as a leader of the king's opponents in Parliament.

5.4.5 *Civil War*

In August 1642, Charles abandoned hope of negotiating with his opponents and declared war against them. Charles' supporters were called royalists or Cavaliers. His opponents were called Parliamentarians or Roundheads because among them were London apprentices who wore their hair cut short.

Historians differ on whether to call this struggle the Puritan Revolution, the English Civil Wars, or the Great Rebellion. The issues which precipitated the war were religious differences and how much authority Charles should have in the government.

Charles was defeated. His opponents had allied with the Scots who still had an army in England. Additionally, the New Model Army, with its general, Oliver Cromwell (1599 – 1658), was superior to Charles' army.

With the collapse of government, new religious and political groups, such as Levellers, Quakers, and Ranters, appeared.

Following the defeat of Charles, his opponents attempted to negotiate a settlement with him but, with that failing, he was executed on January 30, 1649, and England became a republic for the next eleven years.

5.5 FRANCE

5.5.1 *Problems Facing the French Monarchs*

Provincial Autonomy. The regions of France long had a large measure of independence, and local parliaments could refuse to enforce royal laws. The centralization of all government proceeded by replacing local authorities with intendants, civil servants who reported to the king.

Religion. The Huguenots, as a result of the Edict of Nantes, had separate rights and powers, a state within the state. All efforts to unify France under one religion (Catholicism) faced both internal resistance from the Huguenots and the difficulty of dealing with Protestant powers abroad.

Rulers. By 1650, France had been ruled by only one competent adult monarch since 1559. Louis XIII came to the throne at age 9 and Louis XIV at the age of 5. The mothers of both kings, Maria de' Medici and Anne of Austria, governed until the boys were of age. Both queens relied on chief ministers to help govern: Cardinal Richelieu (1585 – 1642) and Cardinal Mazarin (1602 – 61).

5.5.2 *Henry IV* (1589 – 1610)

Henry relied on the duke of Sully (1560 – 1641), the first of a series of strong ministers in the seventeenth century. Sully and Henry increased the involvement of the state in the economy, acting on a theory known as mercantilism.

Monopolies on the production of gunpowder and salt were developed. Only the government could operate mines. A canal

was begun to connect the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

5.5.3 *Louis XIII* (1610 – 43)

Cardinal Richelieu, first used by Louis' mother, became the real power in France. Foreign policy was difficult because of the problems of religion.

Due to the weakness of France after the wars of religion, Maria de' Medici concluded a treaty with Spain in 1611. In order to keep the Hapsburgs from gaining ascendancy in Germany, Richelieu supplied troops and money to Gustavus Adolphus, a Lutheran, after 1631.

The unique status of the Huguenots was reduced by warfare and the Peace of Alais (1629) when their separate armed cities were eliminated.

The nobility was reduced in power by constant attention to the laws and imprisoning offenders.

5.5.4 *Breakdown*

Cardinal Mazarin governed because Louis XIV (1643 – 1715) was a minor. During the *Fronde,* a series of civil wars from 1649 to 1652, the nobility controlled Paris, drove Louis XIV and Mazarin from the city, and attempted to run the government. Noble ineffectiveness, the memories of the chaos of the wars of religion, and the anarchy had the combined effect of persuading most people that a strong king was preferable to a warring nobility. Ironically, the movement's name foretold its failure, as a *fronde* is literally a slingshot, used by children to play in the streets in defiance of Parisian civil authorities. The stage was set for Louis XIV's absolutist reign.

5.5.5 *Absolutism*

By 1652, the French people were willing to accept, and the French monarchy had developed the tools to implement, a strong, centralized government. Louis XIV personally saw the need to increase royal power and his own glory, and dedicated his life to these goals. He steadily pursued a policy of "one king, one law, one faith."

5.6 OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL STATES

5.6.1 *United Provinces*

Politics. The seven provinces sent representatives to an Estates-General which was dominated by the richest provinces, Holland and Zealand, and which had few powers. Each province elected a stadholder, a military leader, and usually all the provinces elected the same man, the head of the house of Orange.

Religion. Calvinism divided when Arminius proposed a theology which reduced the emphasis on predestination. Though the stricter Calvinism prevailed, Arminians had full political and economic rights after 1632, and Catholics and Jews were also tolerated, though with fewer rights.

The merchants, dominating the Estates-General, supported the laxer Arminianism and wanted peace, while the house of Orange adopted the stricter Calvinism and sought a more aggressive foreign policy. In 1619 Jan van Oldenbarenveldt (1547 – 1619), representing the merchants, lost a struggle over the issue of renewing war with Spain to Maurice of Nassau, the head of the house of Orange. Until 1650, Maurice and then William II dominated, and the Dutch supported anti-Hapsburg forces in the Thirty Years' War. The merchants regained power,

and Jan de Witt (1625 – 72) set about returning power to the provinces in 1653.

The seventeenth century witnessed tremendous growth in the wealth and economic power of the Dutch. The Bank of Amsterdam, founded in 1609, provided safe and stable control of money, which encouraged investments in many kinds of activities. Amsterdam became the financial center of Europe. The Dutch also developed the largest fleet in Europe devoted to trade, not warfare, and became the dominant trading country.

5.6.2 *Sweden*

Gustavus Adolphus (1611 – 32) reorganized the government, giving the nobles a dominant role in both the army and the bureaucracy. The central government was divided into five departments, each with a noble at its head. The very capable Axel Oxenstierna (1583 – 1654) dominated this government.

The Riksdag, an assembly of nobles, clergy, townsmen, and peasants, nominally had the highest legislative authority, but real power lay with the nobles and the monarch.

From 1611 to 1650, noble power and wealth greatly increased. In 1650 Queen Christina, who wanted to abdicate and become a Catholic (which eventually she did in 1654), used the power of the Riksdag to coerce the nobles into accepting her designated successor.

As a result of Gustavus Adolphus' military actions the Baltic became a Swedish lake and Sweden became a world power. Swedish economic power resulted from copper mines, the only ones in Europe.

In both the United Provinces and Sweden, the government was dominated by rich and powerful groups which used representative institutions to limit the power of the state and produce non-absolutist regimes.

5.7 EXPLORATIONS AND CONQUESTS

5.7.1 *Motives*

Gold and silver were early and continuing reasons for explorations. Still further, the thrill of exploration explains the actions of many. Spices and other aspects of trade quickly became important, especially in Portuguese trade to the East Indies.

Religion proved to be a particularly strong motivation. To engage in missionary work, Jesuits, including Francis Xavier, appeared in India, Japan, and other areas by 1550. English unhappy with their church moved to North America in the seventeenth century.

5.7.2 *Results*

The wealth, especially the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru, enabled Spain to embark on its military activities. European inflation, which existed prior to the discoveries, was further fueled by the influx of gold and silver.

Disease killed perhaps twenty-five million or eighty percent of the Indians of the Americas. Syphilis appeared in Europe for the first time.

Many foods, such as potatoes and tomatoes, were introduced to Europe.

Europeans began transporting slaves from Africa to the Americas.

A large number of English settled in North America and a smaller number of Spaniards in Central and South America. In other areas, few Europeans lived.

5.7.3 *Early Explorations*

Portugal. Prince Henry the Navigator (1394 – 1460) supported exploration of the African coastline, largely to seek gold. Bartholomew Dias (1450 – 1500) rounded the southern tip of Africa in 1487. Vasco de Gama (1460 – 1524) reached India in 1498 and, after some fighting, soon established trading ports at Goa and Calicut. Albuquerque (1435 – 1515) helped establish an empire in the Spice Islands after 1510.

Spain. Christopher Columbus (1446 – 1506), seeking a new route to the (East) Indies, discovered the Americas in 1492. Ferdinand Magellan (1480 – 1521) started a voyage which first circumnavigated the globe in 1521 – 22. Conquests of the Aztecs by Hernando Cortes (1485 – 1547) and the Incas by Francisco Pizarro (1470 – 1541) enabled the Spanish to send much gold and silver back to Spain, and began the process of subjugating the American Indians.

In 1494, Spain and Portugal, by the treaty of Tordesillas, divided portions of the world they had newly discovered between themselves.

Other Countries. In the 1490's the Cabots, John (1450 – 98) and Sebastian (1474 – 1557), explored North America and, after 1570, various Englishmen, including Francis Drake (1545 – 96), fought the Spanish around the world. The English also discovered a route to Russia through the White Sea and com-

menced trading there. Jacques Cartier (1491 – 1557) explored parts of North America for France in 1534.

5.7.4 *Early Seventeenth-Century Explorations and Settlements*

Governments took an increasing interest in settlements and sought to control them and trading ports from European capitals.

England. The Virginia Company settled Jamestown in the Chesapeake Bay in 1607. Soon tobacco became a major export crop. Catholics were allowed to settle in Maryland after 1632.

The Pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts in 1620. Other settlers of the Massachusetts Bay, chartered by the king in 1629, soon arrived. Between 1630 and 1650, over 20,000 people unhappy with religious developments in England emigrated to Massachusetts.

Various West Indies Islands were also settled.

France. Following Samuel de Champlain's (1567 – 1635) first efforts in 1603, the French explored the St. Lawrence River. Trade, especially for furs, was the goal. The Company of the Hundred Associates, founded in 1627, undertook the development of Canada. The West Indies attracted groups of investors such as the Company of St. Christopher, which was organized in 1626.

Other Countries. The Dutch sent Henry Hudson (d. 1611) to explore North America in 1609 and soon established settlements at New Amsterdam and in the Hudson River valley. The Dutch founded trading centers in the East Indies, the West Indies, and southern Africa. Swedes settled on the Delaware River in North America in 1638.

EARLY EUROPEAN EXPLORATIONS