

The Prince

Niccolò Machiavelli

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—The division into twenty-six chapters is Machiavelli's; the division into two Parts is not.—Previous translations that have been continuously consulted are:

- translated and edited by Robert Martin Adams (Norton Critical Edition, 1977). Don't confuse this Adams (b. 1915) with the now better-known Robert Merrihew Adams (b. 1937). [borrowed from on pages 35 and 45]
- translated by Russell Price and edited by Quentin Skinner (Cambridge U. P., 1988) [borrowed from on page 40]
- edited and translated by Peter Constantine (Modern Library, 2007),
- translated by Tim Parks (Penguin Classics, 2009). [borrowed from on page 53]

Of these, the most swingingly readable version is Parks's, though it embellishes the original more than any other version, including the present one. Each of the other three has helpful explanatory notes. Parks has a 'glossary of proper names'. The present version received many small helps from these predecessors in addition to the four acknowledged above.

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Glossary

Africa: At the time Machiavelli is writing about on page 18, ‘Africa’ named a coastal strip of north Africa, including some of what are now Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya. The site of city Carthage is now the site of a suburb of Tunis.

element: On page 5 Machiavelli speaks of ‘the more weak’ and ‘the more strong’, with no noun. He could be talking about **(i)** weaker and stronger *individuals* or *factions* within the acquired state, or **(ii)** weaker and stronger *substates* or *provinces* of which the newly acquired state is made up. The rest of that chapter hooks into **(ii)**; but page 5 also makes Machiavellian sense when taken in the manner of **(i)**; perhaps he meant to be talking about both at once.

fortuna: This word occurs nearly 60 times in the work. Most occurrences of it could be translated by ‘luck’, but for Machiavelli its meaning is clearly broader than that—something more like ‘circumstances beyond one’s control’. The interplay between this and **virtù** is a dominant theme in *The Prince*. [For a superb discussion of this theme, see J. G. A. Pocock’s *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton University Press, 2003), chapter 6.] So *fortuna* is left untranslated except where Machiavelli writes of someone’s *privata fortuna*, meaning his status or condition as an ordinary citizen (rather than someone with rank and power). The five occurrences of this are all translated by ‘ordinary citizen’. Italian lets us choose between ‘it’ and ‘she’ for *fortuna*, but nothing in this work invites us to personalize it except the striking last paragraph on page 53.

free: When Machiavelli speaks of people as living free (*liberi*) or in freedom (*in libertà*) he usually means that they are self-governing rather than being subjects of a prince. (An exception is *liberissime* on page 23.) On page 10 there is

a good example of why it won’t do to translate *libertà* by ‘self-government’ throughout or to translate it sometimes by ‘self-government’ and sometimes by ‘freedom’.

gentlemen: This seems to be the best we can do with Machiavelli’s *gentili uomini*, but his meaning seems to be something more like ‘men who have some kind of rank or title’. Thus, ‘making them *his* gentlemen’ [page 14] means ‘giving each of them some kind of rank or title or standing at his own court or within his own government’.

prince: In this work *principe* isn’t a title and doesn’t designate a rank; it stands for any ruler of a state, whether a king or queen or duke or count etc. The English word ‘prince’ also had that broad meaning once (Queen Elizabeth I referred to herself as a ‘prince’), and it seems the best word to use here.

temporal: It means ‘having to do with this world as distinct from the heavenly world of the after-life’. The underlying thought is that this world is in time (‘temporal’) whereas the after-life is eternal in some way that puts it outside time.

virtù: This word occurs 60 times in this work, and its cognate adjective *virtuoso* occurs another dozen times. A dominant theme throughout is the difference between *virtù* and **fortuna** as factors in a man’s life. Usually *virtù* means something like ‘ability’, but it can mean ‘strength’ or even ‘virtue’. It is left untranslated so that you can make your own decisions about what Machiavelli means by it on a given occasion.

you: Machiavelli sometimes switches suddenly from talking about •what a prince must do to talking about •what *you* must do, as though he were addressing the prince. Any such switch (the first is on page 3) is Machiavelli’s own and not an artifact of this version.

Dedication

To his Magnificence Lorenzo Di Piero De' Medici

Those who try to win the favour of a prince usually come to him with things that *they* regard as most precious, or that they see *him* take most pleasure in; so we often we often see princes being presented with horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments that are worthy of their greatness.

Wanting to present myself to your Magnificence with some testimony of my devotion towards you, the possession of mine that I love best and value most is my knowledge of the actions of great men—knowledge that I have acquired from long experience in contemporary affairs and from a continual study of antiquity. Having reflected on it long and hard, I now send it, digested into a little volume, to your Magnificence.

Without being sure that this work is worthy of being presented to you, I am trusting that you will be kind enough to find it acceptable, seeing that I can't give you anything better than the opportunity to get a grasp, quickly, of everything that it has taken me so many difficult and dangerous years to learn. Many writers decorate their work—*choke* their work—with smoothly sweeping sentences, pompous words, and other 'attractions' that are irrelevant to the matter in hand; but I haven't done any of that, because I have wanted this work of mine to be given only such respect as it can get from the importance of its topic and the truth of what it says about it.

Some people think it would be presumptuous for a man whose status is low to •discuss the concerns of princes and •give them rules for how to behave; but I don't agree. A landscape painter will place himself •on the plain in order

to get a good view of the mountains, and •on a mountain in order to get a good view of the plain. So also, to understand the nature of the people one needs to be a prince, and to understand the nature of princes one needs to be of the people.

Take then this little gift in the spirit in which I send it. If you read and think about it, you'll see how greatly I want you to achieve that greatness which fortune and your other attributes promise. And if your Magnificence, from the mountain-top of your greatness will sometimes look down at this plain, you will see how little I deserve the wretched ill-fortune that continually pursues me.

[1. Machiavelli worked for 18 years for the Florentine Republic; when the Republic collapsed in 1512 under attack by the Medici and their allies, he

- lost his elevated government position,
- was accused of conspiracy, questioned under torture, then released, and
- retired to his farm, where he wrote *The Prince* and other works.

After six or seven years of this, Machiavelli

- did administrative work for some Florentine merchants,
- was consulted by the Medici government on a policy question,
- returned to Florence where he was celebrated as a writer,
- was engaged by Cardinal de' Medici to write a history of Florence,
- hoped to re-enter high levels of government when in 1527 the Medici were again ejected and the Florentine republic re-established, but
- died in June 1527.

The continuing 'wretched ill-fortune' of which he writes consisted in poverty and the lack of worthy employment during his years on the farm. *The Prince* was not published until after his death.

2. The recipient of the Dedication was not the famous 'Lorenzo the Magnificent' (patron of Leonardo, Michelangelo etc.), but a grandson of his.]

Part I

Kinds of principality How to get and retain them

Chapter 1

Different kinds of principalities, and how to acquire them

All states, all powers that rule over men, are either **republics** or **principalities**. (I am saying all this about the past as well as the present.)

Principalities are either **hereditary**, governed by one family over very many years, or they are **new**.

A new principality may be entirely new, as Milan was to Francesco Sforza, or it may be (so to speak) a limb grafted onto the hereditary state of the prince who has acquired it, as when the kingdom of Naples was acquired by—grafted

onto—the kingdom of Spain.

A dominion acquired in this way **(1)** may have been accustomed—before the acquisition—to live under a prince, or may have lived in freedom [see Glossary]; and the acquisition **(2)** may have happened through the arms of the acquiring prince himself, or through the arms of others; and the acquisition **(3)** may have been a matter of *fortuna* [see Glossary] or a product of *virtù*.

Chapter 2

Hereditary principalities

I shan't discuss republics, because I have written about them at length elsewhere. My sole topic here will be principalities. My presentation will be organised in terms of the classification given in chapter 1, and will discuss how such principalities are to be ruled and preserved.

I say at the outset that it is easier to hold a hereditary state that has long been accustomed to their princely family than it is to hold a new state. A hereditary prince doesn't have to work very hard to retain his state; all he needs is to •abide by the customs of his ancestors and •get himself

through minor emergencies; unless of course some extraordinary and extreme force deprives him of his state, and even then he will get it back if the usurper runs into trouble.

We have an example in Italy: the Duke of Ferrara couldn't have survived the attacks of the Venetians in 1484 or those of Pope Julius in 1510 if he hadn't been long established in his dominions. [This is about two Dukes of Ferrara—Ercole in 1484 and Alfonso in 1510. Perhaps Machiavelli's singular 'Duke' was meant to make the point that within a single hereditary principality it doesn't matter much who is the prince at a given time.] Because a hereditary prince has less cause to offend his people, and less need

to do so, he will be more loved—his subjects will naturally think well of him unless extraordinary vices cause them to hate him.

the next sentence: E nella antichità e continuazione del dominio sono spente le memorie e le cagioni delle innovazioni: perché sempre una mutazione lascia lo addentellato per la edificazione dell'altra.

literally meaning: And in the antiquity and duration of his rule the memories and motives that make for change are lost, for one change always prepares the way for the next.

what Machiavelli is getting at: ??

Chapter 3

Mixed principalities

Where difficulties arise is in a new principality. Let us take first the case of a principality that isn't entirely new, but is (so to speak) a limb of a larger state which taken as a whole could be called 'composite'—a combination of old and new, an old state to which another state has been newly annexed. The changes through which new principalities come into being always have a built-in source of difficulty: men who change their rulers willingly are hoping to better themselves, which is what gets them to take up arms against their present ruler; and they are deceived in this, because they always discover in due course that they have gone from bad to worse. Why? Because a new prince ordinarily—naturally—*has to* burden those who have submitted to him with the requirement that

they provide quarters for his troops and with countless other hardships. So you [see Glossary] have as enemies [*inimici*] all those whom you have harmed in seizing that principality; and you can't keep the friends [*amici*] who put you there because •you can't satisfy them in the way they expected, and •you can't take strong measures against them because you still need them. For however strong your armed forces are, in entering a new province you will need the goodwill of the people of the place. That is why Louis XII of France quickly took Milan, and quickly lost it. To turn him out the first time it only needed Lodovico's own forces [i.e. the forces of the duke who had been conquered by Louis], because those who had opened Milan's gates to King Louis, finding themselves

deceived in their hopes of benefiting from this, wouldn't endure the harsh treatment they were getting from their new ruler.

When a rebellious province is *retaken*, it won't be so easily lost a second time, because the prince will have learned from the rebellion not to hesitate to punish the delinquents, to sort out the suspects, and to fix any weaknesses in his position. Thus, whereas Duke Lodovico could take Milan back from France the first time merely by sword-rattling along its borders, to get it back a second time he needed *everyone's* help in defeating the French armies and driving them out of Italy. The reasons why this was so difficult are the ones I have just presented.

Still, Milan *was* taken back from France not just once but twice. I have discussed the general reasons for the first French failure; it remains to name those for the second. What resources did the French king have? How might someone in his situation have held on to his conquest better than he did?

Distinguish two cases: when a state with a long history acquires a new dominion, either **(a)** the new dominion has the same language as the other and is geographically right next to it, or **(b)** it doesn't and isn't. In any case of kind **(a)** it is easier to hold onto the new dominion, especially if its people haven't been accustomed to live in freedom; to hold it securely one needs only to destroy the family of the prince who was its ruler; because then, with conditions in the new dominion the same as before, and with pretty much the same customs established in the two territories, the people will live quietly together. We have seen this in Brittany, Burgundy, Gascony, and Normandy, which have stayed united to France for such a long time. And though there may be some difference in language, the customs are alike and the peoples can easily get on with one another.

Someone who acquires such a state, if he wants to hold onto it, must take care of two (and only two) things: that the family of this state's former prince is extinguished; and that neither the laws or their taxes are altered. With those things taken care of, it won't take long for the newly acquired dominion to become entirely one body with the long-standing principality that has annexed it.

But when **(b)** a country acquires a state that differs from it in language, customs, or laws, there are difficulties, and holding on to the new acquisition requires good *fortuna* and great energy. One of the best things that the acquiring ruler can do is to go and live in the newly acquired state, which would make his position more secure and durable. That's what it did for the Turk in Greece: despite all his other measures for holding that state, if he hadn't settled there he couldn't have kept it. There are at least three reasons for this. **(1)** If the ruler is on the spot, he can see troubles as they arise and can quickly deal with them; whereas if he isn't *there* he won't hear of them until they have grown beyond the point where he can fix them. **(2)** If you are living there, the country won't be pillaged by your officials, and if that does start to happen your subjects will be glad to have immediate access to their on-the-spot prince. **(3)** Subjects who *are* well-disposed towards the prince will have more reason to love him; and those who *aren't* will have more reason to fear him. Anyone wanting to attack that state from the outside had better go about it carefully: as long as the prince is living there it will be very hard to take it from him.

An even better procedure is to send colonies to one or two places within the newly acquired state, to serve as shackles (so to speak). It's a choice between doing this and keeping there a large garrison of cavalry and infantry. Establishing and maintaining a colony costs little or nothing; and the only people who are offended by are the minority whose

lands and houses are given to the new inhabitants, the colonists; and they can't do the prince any harm, because they are poor and scattered. And the remainder are easily kept quiet—they haven't been injured, and anyway they don't want to put a foot wrong for fear of being treated in the same way as the dispossessed minority. . . . This illustrates a general point, namely that men should be treated in such a way that there's no fear of their seeking revenge—either well-treated so that they won't want revenge or utterly crushed so that they won't be capable of it.

It costs much more to have an armed garrison than to have colonies; maintaining it can take the entire income of the newly acquired state, so that the acquisition of it turns into a loss. Also, shifting the garrison from place to place with a constant need to take over people's homes as quarters for the soldiers makes *everyone* angry; everyone suffers hardship and becomes hostile; and these are enemies who can still do harm because although they have been beaten they are still on their own ground. However you look at it, military occupation is as useless as colonisation is useful.

A prince who takes power in a country differing in laws and language from his own people ought to make himself the head and defender of the weaker of his new subjects, and to weaken the more powerful amongst them; and also to see to it that no foreigner as powerful as himself ever gets a footing there. If that does happen, it will be because the foreigner was invited in by subjects who are driven by ambition or by fear. We see this in the entry of the Romans into Greece, invited in by the Aetolians, and in every other country that they entered at the invitation of the inhabitants. What usually happens when a powerful foreigner enters a country is that the weaker elements [see Glossary] side with him, motivated by their hatred for the ruling power, so that

he doesn't have to work at getting them on his side. He has only to take care that *they* don't get too much power and authority; and then with his own forces and their goodwill, he can easily keep the more powerful elements under control and thus remain entirely master in the country. A ruler who doesn't properly manage this business will soon lose his acquisition, and for as long as he does have it it will give him endless difficulties and troubles.

The Romans went about things in just this way in the countries they annexed. They

- sent colonies,
- maintained friendly relations with the less powerful elements, without increasing their power,
- kept down the more powerful elements, and
- didn't allow any strong foreign powers to gain authority.

One example of this will be enough, I think—Greece. The Romans kept on friendly terms with the Achaeans and Aetolians, and humbled the kingdom of Macedonia, driving Antiochus out; but the services of the Achaeans and Aetolians didn't win them any permission to increase their power; Philip wasn't able to talk his way into friendship with the Romans until they had first humbled him; and the power of Antiochus didn't make them consent to his having any political status in that province [Macedonia]. What the Romans did in these cases should be done by any prudent prince who is concerned not only with present troubles but also with future ones. He must work really hard to prepare for those: they are easy to cure if you look ahead to them, whereas if you do nothing until they are almost upon you it will be too late for medicine—the malady will have become incurable. [Machiavelli compares this with what the physicians say about tuberculosis: in its early stages, hard to spot but easy to cure; later on, visible to everyone but incurable. He continues:] That's how it is in affairs of state. If future

troubles are foreseen (which they can be, but only by very intelligent people), they can be quickly fixed; but if they aren't foreseen and are therefore allowed to grow to a size where everyone can see them, they are beyond cure.

Accordingly the Romans, foreseeing troubles well ahead of time, dealt with them ahead of time. They wouldn't let them come to the boil, even if preventing them from doing so involved going to war; for they knew that in situations like that war can't be avoided, and putting it off will work to the advantage of others. So they chose to fight Philip and Antiochus in Greece so as not to have to fight them later on in Italy; they might have avoided both, but they chose not to try that way out. And they weren't believers in the saying that we constantly hear from the 'wise' men of our own day—

Let us enjoy the benefits of the passing of time

—because they were more interested in the benefits of their own *virtù* and foresight! They knew that it's no good relying for help on the sheer passage of time, because time herds everything along, bringing good things as well as bad, bad things as well as good.

Let us turn now to France and inquire whether it did any of the things I have been talking about. I will speak of Louis XII and not his predecessor on the French throne, Charles VIII, because Louis had possessions in Italy for longer, so it is easier to see his conduct. What we find is that he did the opposite of what is needed if one is to retain a conquered state differing from one's own in language and laws.

King Louis was brought into Italy by the ambition of the Venetians, who planned to get control of half the state of Lombardy while letting him have the other half. I don't blame the king for his part in the affair; he wanted a foothold in Italy, and had no friends there—indeed he found all doors barred against him because of King Charles's behaviour—so he had to take what friendships he could get. He might

have carried things off very successfully if it weren't for the mistakes he made in his other arrangements. By taking Lombardy, the king quickly regained the reputation lost by Charles. Genoa yielded, the Florentines turned friendly, and he was approached with professions of friendship by

- the Marquis of Mantua,
- the Duke of Ferrara,
- the Bentivogli (of Bologna),
- the Lady of Forlì [the popular label for Caterina Sforza, the Countess Forlì],
- the lords of Faenza, Pesaro, Rimini, Camerino, Piombino, and
- the citizens of Lucca, Pisa, and Siena.

At this point the Venetians began to see the folly of what they had done: in order to acquire a couple of towns in Lombardy they had made the French king master of two thirds of Italy.

Consider how easily the king could have maintained his position in Italy if he had observed the rules that I have set down, and become the protector and defender of his new friends. Though numerous, they were weak and timid, some afraid of the Venetians, others of the Church, and thus all compelled to stick by him; and with their help he could easily have protected himself against the remaining great powers. But no sooner was he established in Milan than he did exactly the wrong thing, helping Pope Alexander to occupy Romagna [a part of Italy that included three of the city-states listed above]. It didn't occur to him that by doing this he was weakening himself, driving away his friends and those who had thrown themselves into his arms, while strengthening the Church by adding vast political power to the spiritual power that already gives it so much authority. Having made this first mistake, he was forced deal with its consequences. To limit Pope Alexander's ambition to become master of

Tuscany, he had to come to Italy in person. [Tuscany, a large territory that includes Florence, is Romagna's southern neighbour.] And as if it weren't enough to have •made the Church powerful and •deprived himself of his friends, the king •went after the kingdom of Naples and divided it with King Ferdinand II of Spain. Having been the chief power in Italy, he thus brought in a partner who could attract to *himself* everyone in the kingdom who was ambitious on his own account or dissatisfied with Louis. He could have left the King of Naples on his throne as a caretaker on his behalf, instead of which he threw him out, replacing him by someone—the King of Spain—who was capable of driving out Louis himself.

It's a very natural and common thing to want to acquire •territory•; men do it whenever they can, and they are praised for this or •anyway• not blamed. But when they can't pull it off and yet push ahead regardless, that is folly and they are to blame for it. If Louis could have •successfully• attacked Naples with his own forces, he ought to have done that; if he couldn't, then he oughtn't to have divided it •between himself and another king•. Dividing Lombardy between himself and the Venetians was excusable because it gave him a foothold in Italy; but he had no *need* to divide Naples, so he was at fault for doing so.

So Louis **(1)** eliminated the minor powers, **(2)** increased the strength of one of Italy's greater powers, **(3)** brought in a foreign power, **(4)** didn't settle in the country, and **(5)** didn't establish colonies. But these errors wouldn't have done him any harm during his lifetime if he hadn't also **(6)** deprived the Venetians of their power. If he hadn't **(2)** strengthened the Church or **(3)** brought Spain into Italy, it would have been reasonable, even necessary, to humble the Venetians; but given that he *did* take those other two steps, he ought never to have consented to pulling down the Venetians. As long as the Venetians remained •militarily• strong, they would have

protected Lombardy from attacks from the outside: they would never have permitted such an attack unless it led to *their* getting more territory; and no state would want to take •any part of• Lombardy from France in order to give it to the Venetians! Nor would any state have had the courage to tackle both Venice and France together.

If anyone objects:

King Louis let the Pope have Romagna and let Spain have •half of• the kingdom of Naples to avoid war,

I repeat what I have already said, namely that you should never let yourself be driven off-course by your desire to avoid a war, because •in such a case• you *won't* avoid it but will merely postpone it to your disadvantage. . . .

So King Louis lost Lombardy through not doing any of the things that others have done when taking possession of countries and wanting to keep them. There's nothing weird or mysterious about this; it is all very reasonable and natural. During a conversation about these matters that I had in Nantes with the Cardinal of Rouen, he remarked that the Italians don't understand war, and I replied that the French don't understand politics, because if they did they wouldn't have allowed the Church to become so powerful. [Machiavelli explains that this happened when Romagna was under the control of 'Duke Valentino, as Cesare Borgia, son to Pope Alexander, was commonly called'; this being an upshot of the aggrandizing of the Church that Machiavelli complains of. His remark to the cardinal was a warning, a prediction.] And so it turned out: France caused the Church and Spain to be great powers in Italy, which then led to France's downfall. We can get from this a general rule which never—or hardly ever—fails, namely: someone who •causes someone else to become powerful brings about his own ruin; because it takes skill or power to do •that, and these attributes will be seen as threatening by the one who has benefited from them.

Chapter 4: Why Darius's kingdom, conquered by Alexander the Great, didn't rebel against his successors after his death

Alexander the Great conquered Asia in a few years, and died before getting a proper hold on it. Given how hard it is to hold onto newly acquired States, one might have thought that the whole territory would rise in revolt. And yet—seemingly strangely—his successors managed to hold on, with no troubles except ones arising from their own ambition and mutual jealousies.

Why? Here is my explanation. All the principalities of which we have any record have been governed in one of two ways:

- (1) by a prince with the help of others whom he appoints to serve as his ministers in governing the kingdom, and whom he can dismiss at will;
- (2) by a prince together with his barons whose rank isn't given to them by him but is possessed by hereditary right.

These barons have lands of their own, and subjects who recognize them as their lords and are naturally devoted to them. Where a prince rules through his servants or ministers, he has more authority, because throughout the land he's the only person the people recognize as *above* them. If they obey anyone else, they're obeying him merely as a minister or official, and they have no special love for him.

These two forms of government are illustrated in our own day by the Turk and the King of France. (1) The whole Turkish empire is governed by one lord, with everyone else who is involved in government being his servants. Dividing his kingdom into Districts, he sends them different

administrators whom he shifts and changes at his pleasure. (2) The King of France is surrounded by a host of nobles with long-established hereditary titles, each acknowledged and loved by his own subjects, and each with a high rank that the King can deprive him of only at his peril.

If you think about the difference between these two States, you'll see that (1a) it would be hard to conquer that of the Turk but that once conquered (1b) it would be easy to hold onto. (a) Hard to conquer because an invader can't be brought in by a native nobility, or expect his enterprise to be helped by the defection of those whom the sovereign has around him. I have explained why: it's because all those people are the prince's servants and have obligations to him, so they aren't easily corrupted; and if they *are* corrupted they can't be much help because (as I explained earlier) they can't carry the people with them. So whoever attacks the Turk must reckon on finding a united people, and will have to rely on his own strength rather than on divisions on the other side. (b) But if an attacker overcomes the prince of a country governed as Turkey is, defeating him in battle so that his armies are beyond repair, he has nothing more to worry about—except for the prince's family, and once that is exterminated there is no-one else to fear.

(2) The opposite is the case in kingdoms governed in the French way. (a) You can always make inroads into such a kingdom with the help of a baron or two, because there are always some who are disaffected and want change. I have already explained how such people can open the way for you

to invade their country and •help you to be victorious. **(b)** But the effort to hold onto this territory will involve you in endless difficulties—problems concerning those who helped you and those whom you have overthrown. It won't be enough merely to destroy the prince's family, because there will be barons who are ready to lead new revolts; you'll never be able to •satisfy them or •destroy them, so you'll lose the state as soon as they see a chance to take it from you.

Now, if you look at the kind of government that Darius had, you'll see that it resembled that of the Turk; so that Alexander had first to defeat him utterly and take control of his territory •with no inside help•; but after he had done that, and Darius had died, Alexander was securely in control of the country, for the reasons I have given. If his successors had stayed united they could have enjoyed it undisturbed, because the only disturbances in that kingdom came from their own infighting. But kingdoms organized in the French way can't be held •by their conquerors• as easily as that. Hence the repeated uprisings against the Romans in Spain,

Gaul, and Greece, because each of these lands was divided up into many •smaller principalities. For while the memory of •these lasted—i.e. as long as people felt loyalty to their local baron•—the Romans couldn't feel safe. But after a long period of Roman rule had erased those memories—•and thus extinguished those local loyalties•—the Roman grip became secure. It was maintained even when the Romans were warring against one another: in that infighting each •Roman governor• could rely on the support of the territory he governed and had influence in, because once the families of their former princes had been wiped out, the natives had no authority they could recognize except that of the Romans.

If you bear all this in mind, you won't be surprised by how easily Alexander got a firm grip on Asia, or by how hard it was for many others—Pyrrhus, for example—to retain the territories they had conquered. This came not from these conquerors' differing in *virtù* but from a difference in the characters of the states they had conquered.

Chapter 5

How to govern cities or principalities that lived under their own laws before they were annexed

When a conqueror acquires a state that has been accustomed to living under its own laws and in freedom [see Glossary], he has three options if he wants to hold onto his conquest. He can

- (1) destroy it, ·smash everything·,
- (2) go and live there himself,
- (3) let them continue with their present system of laws, while paying taxes to him, and setting up there a small governing group who will keep the state friendly to you [see Glossary].

Such a governing group, having been set up by the ·conquering· prince, will know that it can't survive without his friendly support; so it will do its best to maintain his authority. Someone who wants to retain his hold on a city accustomed to freedom will do best to get its citizens to co-operate with him.

Consider the examples of the Spartans and the Romans. The Spartans held Athens and Thebes, setting up a small local government in each place; yet they lost them. The Romans reduced Capua, Carthage, and Numantia to rubble and ·therefore· didn't lose them. They tried holding onto Greece in pretty much the way the Spartans did, allowing it to be free and to retain its old laws; and this failed. So they had to destroy a good many ·Greek· cities in order to

hold onto the territory as a whole. The fact is that there is no safe way to retain such a territory except by destroying it. Someone who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom and doesn't destroy it can expect to be destroyed by it, because in rebellions the rebels will always rally to the cry of *Freedom!* and to the old way of doing things—which are never forgotten. . . . And whatever steps are taken to prevent this, unless the people have fallen into disunity among themselves, or have been scattered, they will *always* remember the label 'free' and their old ways, and will rally to them at every chance they get, as Pisa did after a century of bondage to the Florentines.

But when a city or country has been used to living under a prince, and his family has been exterminated, the people won't be able to choose from among themselves a new prince to replace the old one; and having acquired the habit of obedience, they won't know how to live in freedom. So they'll be slow to take up arms, making it easier for an ·invading· prince to win them over to his side. Republics, on the other hand, have more vitality, more hatred, and a stronger desire for revenge, which will never allow them to forget their former freedom; so that the safest way is to destroy them or to go and live among them.

Chapter 6

New principalities that are acquired by one's own arms and *virtù*

I'm going to be dealing with entirely new principalities, and in this discussion I'll take the *best* examples of prince and of state. There's nothing surprising about this. People nearly always walk in paths beaten by others, acting in imitation of *their* deeds, but it's never possible for them to keep entirely to the beaten path or achieve the level of *virtù* of the models you are imitating. A wise man will follow in the footsteps of great men, imitating ones who have been supreme; so that if his *virtù* doesn't reach the level of theirs it will at least have a touch of it. Compare an archer aiming at a distant target: knowing the limits of his bow's *virtù* he aims high, hoping that the arrow as it descends will hit the target. So . . .

I say, therefore, that in an entirely new principality, headed by someone who has only recently become a prince, how much difficulty the conqueror has in keeping his new acquired state depends on how much *virtù* he has—the more *virtù* the less difficulty. Now, he can't have risen from being a private citizen to being a prince without help from either *virtù* or *fortuna*, and clearly *either* of those will somewhat lessen of the difficulties in holding onto the new state, though undue reliance on *fortuna* doesn't work well in the long run. Another aid such a new prince will have is that, having no other state where he can live as a prince, he is compelled to take up residence, personally, in his new state.

Now let us turn to the proper subject of this chapter, namely those who became princes by their own *virtù* and not through *fortuna*. Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and their like are the most excellent examples. In the case of Moses, there isn't much to discuss because he simply did

what God told him to do, though we should admire him for being found worthy to have conversations with God. But when we look into Cyrus and others who have acquired or founded kingdoms, we'll find that they are all admirable; and their actions and governing structures won't be found inferior to what Moses did under his great Instructor. And in examining their lives and their achievements we don't find them owing anything to *fortuna* beyond their initial opportunity, which brought them the material to shape as they wanted. Without that opportunity their *virtù* of mind would have come to nothing, and without that *virtù* the opportunity wouldn't have led to anything.

For the Israelites to be willing to follow Moses, he had to find them in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians. For Romulus to become king of Rome and founder of that state, he had to be abandoned at birth, which led to his leaving Alba. For Cyrus to achieve what he did, he had to find the Persians discontented with the government of the Medes, and the Medes soft and effeminate through their long peace. Theseus couldn't have shown his *virtù* if he hadn't found the Athenians defeated and scattered. So these opportunities enabled those men to prosper, and their great *virtù* enabled each to seize the opportunity to lead his country to being noble and extremely prosperous.

Men like these who become princes through the exercise of their own *virtù* find it hard to achieve that status but easy to keep it. One of the sources of difficulty in acquiring the status of prince is their having to introduce new rules and methods to establish their government and keep it secure.

We must bear in mind that nothing is

- more difficult to set up,
- more likely to fail, and
- more dangerous to conduct,

than a new system of government; because the bringer of the new system will make enemies of everyone who did well under the old system, while those who may do well under the new system still won't support it warmly. Why not? Partly because of fear of the opponents, who have the laws on their side, and partly because men are hard to convince of anything, and don't really believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them. So those who are hostile will attack whenever they have the chance, while the others will defend so half-heartedly that they don't get the prince or themselves out of danger.

For a thorough exploration of these matters, therefore, we have to ask concerning these innovators—these setters-up of new states—to carry through their projects

- must they depend on others, or can they rely on themselves? that is,
- must they ask others for help or can they use force?

If they need help they are sure to fail, and won't achieve anything; but when they can rely on themselves and use force they aren't running much risk. That's why armed prophets always conquered, and the unarmed ones have been destroyed. And along with all this there is the fact that people don't stay steady: it's easy to persuade them of something, but hard to keep them persuaded. When they stop believing ·in their new prince·, force must be used to make them believe; and provision for doing that must be made beforehand.

If Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus hadn't had

soldiers at their command they couldn't have enforced their constitutions for long. (See what happened in our own day to Father Girolamo Savonarola: he was overthrown, along with his new scheme of things, as soon as the mass of the people stopped believing in him, and he had no way of keeping steadfast those who had believed or of converting those who hadn't. [Savonarola, a fierce puritan and mesmerizing preacher, dominated Florence for four of the years when Machiavelli was an official there.]) So the likes of these (·i.e. of Moses, Cyrus, etc.·) find it hard to reach their goal because there is great danger on the way up, though their *virtù* will enable them to overcome it; but when this has been done and the danger is passed, and those who resented their success have been exterminated, they will begin to be respected, and they will continue afterwards powerful, secure, honoured, and happy.

A fifth example is not on the same level as the other four, but his case is somewhat like theirs, and I bring it in as stand-in for all the other cases that are like it. I am, referring to Hiero the Syracusan [3rd century BCE]. From being an ordinary citizen, this man rose to be the prince of Syracuse; and he (·like the others·) owed nothing to *fortuna* except the opportunity: in a time of military threat, the Syracusans chose him to head their troops. afterwards they rewarded him by making him their prince. He was of such great *virtù* even as an ordinary citizen that someone wrote of him that 'He had everything he needed to be a king except a kingdom'. He abolished the old army and established a new one, gave up old alliances and made new ones; and that gave him the foundation—his own soldiers, his own allies—on which he could build anything he wanted to build. Thus, it was very hard for him to acquire something, ·his position of power·, that he had little trouble holding onto.

Chapter 7

New principalities acquired by the arms and the *fortuna* of others

Those who are raised purely by *fortuna* from being private citizens to being princes don't have much trouble rising, just *floating* up; but they find it hard to stay up there. I'm referring **(a)** to men to whom a state is **given**, as happened to many in Greece, in the cities of Ionia and the Hellespont, where Darius enthroned princes who were to hold the cities in the interests of his security and his glory; and **(b)** to men who **bought** their states, rising to the rank of emperor through the corruption of the soldiers. [In 193 CE the Praetorian Guard in Rome murdered the emperor and then put the city and its empire up for auction; a man named Julianus made the winning bid, was designated as emperor, and lived and ruled for 66 days.] Such people—in category **(a)** especially—depend entirely on two extremely unreliable and unstable things, namely the support and the *fortuna* of whoever raised them to the status of prince. Such a man won't have either the knowledge or the power to keep his position. Knowledge: unless he has an extremely high level of ability and *virtù* he can't be expected to know how to command, having always lived as an ordinary citizen. Power: he won't have an army that he can rely on to be friendly and loyal.

States that come into existence suddenly, like everything in nature that is born and grows fast, can't have roots and connections that will save them from being blown down by the first storm; unless (I repeat) the suddenly-elevated prince has so much *virtù* that he knows he must *immediately* set to work to make sure of his hold on what *fortuna* has given him, laying the foundations that another leader might have laid •before becoming a prince rather than •afterwards.

I'll illustrate these two ways of becoming a prince—though *virtù* and through *fortuna*—by considering two examples from our own times, namely Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. By choosing the appropriate means, and with great *virtù*, Sforza went from being a commoner to being Duke of Milan, and he hadn't much trouble holding onto the power that it had cost him so much effort to get in the first place. In contrast with this, Cesare Borgia—commonly called Duke Valentino—acquired his state through the *fortuna* of his father •Pope Alexander VI•, and when his father died he lost it, despite having taken every measure that a wise and *virtuoso* man should take to give himself firm foundations in the state that the army and *fortuna* of someone else had given him.

Someone who didn't lay his foundations before achieving power may be able with great *virtù* to lay them afterwards, but this will involve trouble for the architect and danger to the building. If we look carefully at everything Borgia did, we'll see that he did lay solid foundations for his future power; and I think it is worthwhile to discuss his efforts because I don't know any better advice to give a new prince than 'Follow the example of Cesare Borgia'. His arrangements failed; but that wasn't because of any fault in him but because of the extraordinary and extreme hostility of *fortuna*.

Alexander VI, wanting to achieve greatness for the duke, his son, faced many obstacles, present and future. Firstly, he didn't see how he could make him master of any state that wasn't a part of the Church's territory; and he knew that if he stole land from the Church, the Duke of Milan and

the Venetians wouldn't consent to that. . . . Furthermore, he saw that the ·mercenary· armies in Italy, especially those that might have helped him, were in the hands of rulers who had reason to fear his growing power, namely the Orsini and Colonnese clans and their allies. What he had to do, then, was to upset this state of affairs and create turmoil in the states of these rivals, so as to get away with seizing control of a part of them. This was easy for him to do, because he found that the Venetians, for reasons of their own, were planning to bring the French back into Italy; and the Pope, far from opposing this, made it easier to bring about by dissolving the former marriage of King Louis. So the French king came into Italy with Venetian help and the Pope's consent. No sooner was the king in possession of Milan than he supplied the Pope with soldiers for the attempt on Romagna, which yielded to him because he had the support of the king. ·The Pope's son, Cesare Borgia = Duke Valentino, was commander of the Pope's army.· The duke, having acquired Romagna and beaten the Colonna family, wanted to hold onto that and to advance further, but he was hindered by two things: •his suspicion that the army wasn't loyal to him, and •his worries about the attitude of France. He was afraid that the forces of the Orsini family, which he was using, would stop obeying his orders and not only block him from winning more territory but even take for themselves what he had already won; and his fears about the French king were pretty much the same. His doubts about the Orsini ·soldiers· were confirmed when, after Faenza had been taken, he saw how half-heartedly they went into the attack on Bologna. And he learned which way King Louis was leaning when he (Cesare Borgia) went on from taking the Duchy of Urbino to attack Tuscany, and the king made him turn back. This led him to a decision never again to rely on the arms and *fortuna* of anyone else.

He began by weakening the Orsini and Colonna factions in Rome by winning over to his side all their supporters who were gentlemen [see Glossary], making them *his* gentlemen, paying them well, and giving them military commands or governmental positions, each according to his rank. Within a few months they were all cut off from their former factions and entirely attached to the duke. [Reminder: this is Duke Valentino = Cesare Borgia.] In this way he scattered the Colonna family's adherents; and then he waited for an opportunity to crush the Orsini. This came to him soon and he used it well. The Orsini had at last come to realize that the growing power of the duke and the Church would be their ruin; so they came together for a ·planning· meeting at Magione near Perugia. This gave rise to a rebellion at Urbino and riots in Romagna, with endless dangers to the duke, all of which he overcame with the help of the French. Having restored •his credibility, and not wanting to rely on the French or any other outside forces to preserve •it, he resorted to trickery. He was so good at concealing his intentions that he got the Orsini to be willing to be reconciled with him. (His intermediary in this process was Paolo Orsini, whom the duke reassured with all sorts of courtesy—money, clothes, and horses.) The Orsini were so naive that they went ·at his invitation· to Sinigalia, where they were in his power. [In a separate essay that wasn't published until after his death, Machiavelli describes in details how Cesare Borgia went about murdering the top people of the Orsini faction, including Paolo Orsini; and Oliverotto de Fermo, of whom we shall hear more on page 18.] By exterminating the ·Orsini· leaders and making allies of their supporters, the duke laid solid foundations for his power, having all of Romagna and the Duchy of Urbino in his grip; and he won the support of the people, who were beginning to appreciate the prosperity ·brought to them by his rule·.

I want to spend a bit longer on this last matter, because it is important and deserves to be imitated by others. When the duke occupied Romagna he found it under the rule of weak masters, who preferred robbing their subjects to governing them, and gave them more cause for dissension than for unity, with the result that the territory was full of robbery, feuds, and every kind of lawlessness. Wanting to restore peace and obedience to authority, the duke thought he had to give it some good government, and to that end he gave complete control to Ramiro d'Orco, a man who always acted decisively and ruthlessly. It didn't take long for this man to restore peace and unity, getting a considerable reputation for himself. But the duke came to think that extreme severity was going to make him hated by the populace; so he set up a single court of judgment for the whole of Romagna—a court with a most excellent presiding judge, to which all the cities could send their advocates. He knew that d'Orco's severity had caused some hatred against himself, and wanted to clear that out from the minds of the people and win them over to himself; so he set out to show that if there had been any cruelty its source was not him but rather the brutal nature of his minister. At the first opportunity he had d'Orco arrested and cut in two [= 'beheaded'], leaving the pieces on the piazza at Cesena with the block and a bloody knife beside it. This brutal spectacle gave the people a jolt, but it also reassured them.

But now back to my main theme. Borgia had acquired an army of his own, and had pretty much destroyed the armies in his vicinity that could make trouble for him; so that now his power was consolidated and he was fairly well secured against immediate dangers; and he saw that if he wanted to conquer more territories he needed the support of the King of France, which he knew he couldn't get because the king had belatedly come to realize that it was a mistake to ally himself

with Cesare Borgia. So he began to seek new alliances, and to hang back from helping France against the Spaniards in the French attempt to conquer the kingdom of Naples. His intention was to make himself secure against the French, and he would quickly have brought this off if his father—Pope Alexander hadn't died a few months later.

That's how Borgia handled his immediate problems. For the longer term, he had to prepare for the possibility that Alexander VI might be succeeded by a pope who wasn't friendly to him and might try to take back from him the territory that Alexander had given him. For this purpose he made four plans:

- (1) To exterminate the families of the lords he had dispossessed, so as to deprive the Pope of *that* excuse for interfering.
- (2) To win the gentlemen [see Glossary] of Rome over to his side, so as to have their help in hemming the pope in.
- (3) To increase his control over the college of cardinals, which would elect the next pope.
- (4) To acquire as much territory as he could while Pope Alexander was alive, so as to be well placed to resist with his own resources any attack by the new pope.

By the time Alexander died, the duke had managed three out of four: he had (1) killed as many of the dispossessed lords as he could lay hands on, which was most of them, (2) won over the Roman gentlemen, and (3) brought onto his side a large majority of the college of cardinals. As for (4) further conquests, he planned to become master of Tuscany, thus:

He already held Perugia and Piombino, and Pisa was under his protection. He no longer had to fear anything from the French direction (because the Spaniards had robbed France of the kingdom of Naples, so that both sides had to buy his support); so he felt free to pounce down on Pisa. When he

had done that, Lucca and Siena would immediately capitulate, partly out of fear and partly out of hostility to the Florentines; and the Florentines couldn't have done anything about it.

If Cesare Borgia had achieved all this (and he was almost there when Alexander died), he would have acquired so much power and prestige that he could have stood on his own feet, relying solely on his own power and *virtù* and not on the *fortuna* and military power of anyone else.

But Alexander did die, a mere five years after his son had first drawn the sword. The duke's condition at that time was this:

- He had firm control of Romagna;
- His other planned conquests were up in the air.
- He was caught between two powerful hostile armies.
- He was mortally ill.

[This illness, which he survived, was the same one that had just killed his father, Pope Alexander.] But the duke had so much ferocity and *virtù*, and understood so well that men must be either won over or killed, and had (in the short time available) laid such firm foundations, that he would have surmounted every obstacle if the French and Spanish armies hadn't been bearing down on him, or if he had been in good health. It's clear that the foundations he had laid were indeed solid, for Romagna waited for him for more than a month. And he was safe in Rome, although half-dead; the Baglioni, Vitelli, and Orsini factions came to Rome, but couldn't stir things up against him. If he had been in good health when his father died, he would have managed everything easily: for example, he couldn't have dictated who would be the next pope, but he could have blocked the election of any candidate he didn't want. On the day that Julius II was elected as pope, the duke himself told me that he had thought of all the problems that might occur when his father died, and had

solutions for them all, except that it hadn't occurred to him that when his father died he himself would be at death's door.

Having set out all the duke's actions, I can't find anything to criticise; indeed, he seems to me (I repeat) to be a model for anyone who comes to power through *fortuna* and with help from the arms of others. A 'model', although he failed? Yes, because his great courage and high ambitions wouldn't have allowed him to act differently from how he did; and he failed only because his father's life was so short and he himself was so ill. So a new ruler who thinks he has to

- secure himself in his new principality,
- win friends,
- overcome obstacles either by force or fraud,
- make himself loved and feared by the people,
- be followed and respected by his soldiers,
- exterminate potential enemies,
- replace old laws by new ones,
- be severe and gracious, magnanimous and liberal,
- break up a disloyal army and create a new one,
- maintain friendship with kings and princes, so that they must openly help him or be very careful about harming him,

can't find a livelier example than the actions of this man. The only thing he can be criticised for is the election of Julius II as pope—a bad choice! As I have already said, the duke wasn't in a position to decide who would be the new pope; but he could block the election of anyone he didn't want, and he ought never to have allowed the election of any cardinal **(1)** whom he had injured or **(2)** who as pope would have reason to fear him. Men harm one another either from fear or from hatred. **(1)** The cardinals he had harmed included, among others,

the cardinal of San Pietro ad Vincula,
the cardinal of San Giorgio, and
Ascanio Sforza.

[The first cardinal on that list is the one who became Pope Julius II.]
(2) And each of the other cardinals had reason to fear him if he (the cardinal) became pope, except for the Cardinal of

Rouen and the Spanish cardinals. [Machiavelli gives reasons for these exceptions. Then:] So the duke's first choice for pope should have been one of the Spanish cardinals, failing which the cardinal of Rouen, and *not* the cardinal of San Pietro ad Vincula. Anyone who thinks that new benefits will cause great men to forget old injuries is wrong. Borgia miscalculated in this papal election, and that error was fatal.

Chapter 8

Principality obtained through wickedness

Of the ways in which a private person can rise to be a prince there are two that aren't entirely matters of *fortuna* or *virtù*. I can't pass them by in silence, though I shan't deal with them as fully as I would in a book about republics. They are these:

- Someone raises himself to being a prince through some really wicked conduct. This will be the topic of the present chapter.
- A citizen becomes the prince of his country by the support of his fellow-citizens. I'll discuss this in chapter 9.

My treatment of the first of these will consist in presenting two examples—one ancient, the other modern—without going into the merits of such a procedure. These two examples, I think, will provide enough instruction for anyone who has to go that way.

(1) Agathocles was a Sicilian who, starting not merely as an ordinary citizen but as a very low-class one (his father was a potter), became King of Syracuse. He was a scoundrel from the day he was born; but he accompanied his infamies with so much *virtù* of mind and body that, having joined the Syracusan army, he rose through its ranks to be commander in chief. Being established in that position, he decided to become Syracuse's prince and to use force—with no help from anyone else—to hold onto the power that had been *given* to him and to upgrade it to the power of a prince. He discussed his plans with Hamilcar, a Carthaginian whose army was at that time fighting in Sicily. [This was not the famous Hamilcar, father of Hannibal, who led the first Carthaginian war against Rome a few decades later.] Then one morning he assembled the people and the senate of Syracuse, as if he had public affairs to discuss with them; at an agreed signal his soldiers killed all the senators and the richest of the people; and with these

out of the way, Agathocles seized and held the principality of that city without any trouble from the people. And although the Carthaginians routed him twice and eventually laid siege to Syracuse, he was able not only to defend his city but also to take some of his men to attack Africa [see Glossary], and before long the siege of Syracuse was lifted, and the Carthaginians, at the end of their tether, were compelled to come to terms with Agathocles, leaving Sicily to him and settling for the possession of Africa.

If you study the actions and the career of this man, you'll see little if anything that could be attributed to *fortuna*: he became a prince, as we have just seen, not through anyone's favour but by steadily rising in the military profession, each promotion involving countless difficulties and dangers; and once he had his principality he held onto it, boldly, through many hostilities and dangers. And you won't see anything you could attribute to *virtù* either, for it can't be called *virtù* to kill one's fellow-citizens, to deceive friends, to be without faith or mercy or religion; such methods may bring power but won't bring glory.

Machiavelli's next sentence: *Perché, se si considerassi la virtù di Agatocle nello intrare e nello uscire de' pericoli, e la grandezza dello animo suo nel sopportare e superare le cose avverse, non si vede perché elli abbia ad essere iudicato inferiore a qualunque eccellentissimo capitano.*

That literally means: Because if we consider Agathocles' *virtù* in confronting and surviving dangers, and his courage in enduring and overcoming hardships, there's no apparent reason for judging him to be inferior to the most successful military leaders.

What Machiavelli may have meant: As for Agathocles' ability to confront and survive dangers, and his courage in enduring and overcoming hardships—if these are considered as *virtù*

then there's no reason not to admire him as much as the most successful military leaders.

But his barbarous cruelty and inhumanity with infinite wickedness do not permit him to be celebrated among the most excellent men and therefore it isn't right to count his striking attributes as *virtù*. So, summing up, what he achieved can't be attributed either to *fortuna* or to *virtù*.

(2) In our times, during the papacy of Alexander VI, Oliverotto da Fermo, having been left an orphan many years before, was brought up by his maternal uncle Giovanni Fogliani; and when still quite young he was sent to serve as a soldier under Paolo Vitelli, so that he could get some training that would enable him to have a successful military career. After Paolo died, he served under Paolo's brother Vitellozzo, and before long his resourcefulness and strength of body and mind made him Vitellozzo's top officer. But he had no enthusiasm for serving along with others and therefore under someone else's command; so he decided to *seize Fermo*, with Vitellozzo's support and help from some citizens of Fermo to whom the slavery of their country was dearer than its freedom [see Glossary]. He wrote to his uncle Giovanni Fogliani, to the following effect:

Having been away from home for many years, he wanted to visit his uncle and his city, and to have a look at the land his father had left him. He hadn't worked to acquire anything except honour, and so couldn't return home with an ostentatious display of wealth. But he wanted to return in style, so that the citizens should see he hadn't been wasting his time in the military; so he would be accompanied by a hundred of his friends and servants, all on horseback; and he asked Giovanni to have the Fermians receive him with a suitable ceremony—to honour not only himself but also his uncle and guardian Giovanni.

Giovanni ensured that his nephew received every courtesy. He caused him to be ceremoniously received by the Fermians, and lodged him in his own house. After some days there, making the needed arrangements for his wicked plan, Oliverotto laid on a grand banquet to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani and the top men of Fermo. When the eating was over, and all the other entertainments that are usual in such banquets were finished, Oliverotto cunningly began some solemn talk about the greatness of Pope Alexander and his son Cesare, and of their enterprises; Giovanni and others joined in the conversation, but Oliverotto suddenly stood up and said that such matters should be discussed in a more private place; and he went into another room, with Giovanni and the other citizens following him. No sooner were they seated than soldiers emerged from hiding-places and slaughtered them all, Giovanni included. After this massacre Oliverotto and his followers mounted on horseback and sped through the town to the palace of the governor; they laid siege to the palace, so frightening the governor that he was forced to obey him and form a government of which he (Oliverotto) made himself the prince. Having killed all the dissentients who might hit back at him, he strengthened his position with new rules and regulations governing civil and military matters; so that in his one year as prince in Fermo he not only made himself secure within the city but also came to be feared by all his neighbours. He would have been as difficult to destroy as Agathocles was if he hadn't—as I reported earlier [page 14]—allowed himself to be deceived by Cesare Borgia, who netted him along with the Orsini and Vitelli at Sinigalia, where one year after the massacre, he was strangled, together with Vitellozzo, whom he had made his leader in *virtù* and wickedness.

Some may wonder how a man like Agathocles, after

countless treacheries and cruelties, could live for years secure in his country, and defend himself from external enemies, and never be conspired against by his own citizens; seeing that many others who have also used cruelty haven't been able to hold onto their ruling positions in peacetime, let alone in the insecure times of war. I believe that it depends on whether cruelty is employed well or badly. **(1)** Cruel acts are used well (if we can apply 'well' to wicked acts) if they are needed for political security and are all committed at a single stroke and then discontinued or turned into something that is to the advantage of the subjects. **(2)** Cruel acts are badly used when, even if there are few of them at the outset, their number grows through time. Those who practise **(1)** the first system may be able to improve somewhat their standing in the eyes of God and men, as Agathocles did. Those who follow **(2)** the other can't possibly maintain themselves.

So someone who is seizing a state should think hard about all the injuries he'll have to inflict, and get them all over with at the outset, rather than having cruelty as a daily occurrence. By stopping cruelty very soon, the usurper will be able to reassure people and win them over to his side by generosity. Someone who doesn't proceed in this way—whether from fear or on bad advice—will always have to have a knife in his hand; and he won't be able to rely on his subjects, who will be alienated by his continued and repeated injuries. . . .

Above all things, a prince ought to relate to his people in such a way that nothing that happens, good or bad, will make him change his course. In troubled times you won't be able to fix the trouble by moving towards greater harshness, because it will be too late for that; nor will it help for you to move in the direction of greater mildness, because that will seem to have been compelled, and you'll get no credit for it.

Chapter 9

Civil principality

·At the start of chapter 8 I spoke of two ways of becoming a prince that aren't entirely matters of *fortuna* or of *virtù*. And now I come to the second of them: a citizen becomes the prince of his country not by wickedness or any intolerable violence, but by the favour of his fellow citizens. We can call this 'civil principality'. [Machiavelli adds in parentheses that what you need to become a civil prince is just *una astuzia fortunata* = a fortunate or happy or lucky cleverness or astuteness. What you *don't* need, he says, is *o tutta virtù o tutta fortuna*, a phrase that has given trouble to translators. Here are four published translations of it:

- nor is genius or fortune altogether necessary to attain to it.
- the prince doesn't have to depend wholly on skill or Fortune.
- you don't have to be wholly brilliant or extraordinarily lucky.
- it is not necessary to have only ability or only good luck.

Take your pick! Machiavelli continues:] Now, this kind of principality—this way of becoming a prince—is obtained with the support of the common people or with the support of the nobles. Every city-state has •common people who don't want to be ruled or ordered around by the nobles, and •nobles who do want to rule and order around the common people; and the conflict between these two opposite political drives results, in each city, in one of three things: a •civil-principality, freedom [see Glossary], or ungoverned chaos.

Whether a civil principality is created by the people or by the nobles depends on which group has the opportunity. When the nobles see that they can't resist popular pressure, they

- select one of their number,
- praise him to the skies, and
- make him a prince;

hoping to be able, under his shadow, to get what they want. When the people find that they can't resist the nobles, they

- select one of *their* number,
- praise him to the skies, and
- make him a prince;

hoping that his authority will be a defence for them. Someone who becomes prince with the help of the nobles will find it hard to maintain his position because he'll be surrounded by men who regard themselves as his equals, which will inhibit him in giving orders and managing affairs. It is easier for a prince who got there with the help of popular favour: he'll be able to exercise his principality single-handed, with few if any people unwilling to obey him.

Furthermore, a prince can't satisfy the nobles without acting wrongly and harming others, because what the nobles want is to oppress the people; whereas he *can* satisfy the people without harming anyone, because their desires are more honourable than those of the nobles—all the people want is not to be oppressed. Also, a prince can't secure himself against a hostile people, because there are too many of them, whereas he can secure himself from the nobles because there aren't many of them. ·I should add a few words explaining what the content is of 'secure himself against. . .', i.e. what the threats are from those two directions·. The worst that a prince can expect if the people turn hostile people is that they will abandon him; but if the nobles turn

hostile he has to fear not only that they will •abandon him but also that they will •attack him. The nobles are more likely to attack than the people are, because they look ahead further and more intelligently than the people do, and will always act •early so as to protect themselves from dangers •further down the line, and so as to obtain favours from whomever they expect to win. In one respect, though, the people are more of a threat than the nobles, namely: The prince has to live always with *the same people*, but he doesn't have to have always *the same nobles*, because he can make and unmake nobles every day, giving or taking away honours at will.

I'll try to set all this out more clearly. The first question that you, as prince, ought to ask about any noble is: Does he behave in a way that ties •his success in everything to •yours? If he does, and isn't greedy, he should be honoured and loved. As for those who don't tie their success to yours, there are two cases to consider. **(1)** The reason why a given noble doesn't link his success with yours may be that he is feeble and a coward. This is a man you should make use of, especially if he has good advice to offer. In times of prosperity he will bring you honour, and when things go badly you won't have fear anything from him. **(2)** A noble who doesn't commit himself to you because he has ambitious plans of his own shows that he is giving more thought to himself than to you; and a prince ought to keep a watchful eye on this man, fearing him as though he were an open enemy, because in difficult times that's just what he will be.

Someone who becomes a prince through popular favour, then, ought to keep the people friendly towards him, and this isn't difficult because all they ask of him is that he not oppress them. But someone who becomes a prince through the favour of the nobles against the people's wishes should make it his first priority to win the people over to

himself. And he can easily do this, by taking them under his protection. When men are well treated by someone, the loyalty they'll have towards their benefactor will be especially great if they had expected him to treat them badly. . . . The prince can win their affections in many ways, but I shan't go into those because they are too various, depending on circumstances, to be brought under fixed rules. The bottom line is simply this: a prince *must* have the people friendly towards him; otherwise he has no security in difficult times.

Nabis, prince of the Spartans, successfully defended his country and his government against an attack by all Greece, and by a victorious Roman army; to overcome this peril he had to make himself secure against a few •of his subjects, but a mere *few* wouldn't have been sufficient if the people had been hostile to him. Don't challenge what I am saying here by producing the trite proverb that 'He who builds on the people builds on mud', for this is •not unrestrictedly true. The proverb is true when a **private citizen** builds his power on that foundation, persuading himself that the people will free him when he is oppressed by his enemies or by the magistrates; *that* would-be prince may very well be disappointed by the outcome, as were the Gracchi in Rome and Giorgio Scali in Florence. But if it's a **prince** who has established himself on popular favour—a prince who

- knows how to lead,
- is brave,
- keeps his head in a crisis,
- takes the right precautions, and
- by his own resolution and energy keeps the whole people encouraged

—he won't be disappointed; it will turn out that he laid good foundations •for his power.

This kind of prince is most at risk when he is passing from •civil to •absolute government. •Let us look at why

this is so. The prince in question rules either personally or through magistrates. If through magistrates, that is a source of weakness and insecurity in his government, because it rests entirely on the goodwill of the citizens who have been raised to the magistracy, and who can, especially in troubled times, easily destroy the government through intrigue or open defiance. And at such times the prince won't be able to exercise absolute authority because his subjects, accustomed as they are to getting orders from magistrates, aren't going to start taking orders from *him* in a time of crisis.

Also, at such times there will always be a scarcity of men the prince can trust. He can't rely on what he sees when things are quiet and **the citizens need the government**. At

such times

- everyone comes running,
- everyone promises to do what he wants,
- everyone wants to die for him (when there's no immediate prospect of death).

But in troubled times, when **the government needs the citizens**, he finds that very few show up. Mightn't the prince at least *try* relying on the citizens' loyalty? That would be a risky experiment, made all the more dangerous by the fact that it can be tried only once. So a shrewd prince ought to handle things in such a way that his citizens will always, in all circumstances, need the government and need him; then he will always find them loyal.

Chapter 10

How to measure the strength of a principality

In examining the character of any one of these principalities, we have to face the question: Does this prince **(1)** have enough power to be able to rely on his own resources in time of need, or does he **(2)** have to get help from others? Let me be clear about the line I am drawing. It is between

- (1)** the prince who has enough men or money to be able to raise a sufficient army to join battle against any attacker, and
- (2)** the prince who can't show himself against the enemy in the field, and has to shelter behind the walls of his city, waiting for help to come.

I have discussed **(1)** in chapter 6 and will return to it in chapters 12–14. All I can say about **(2)** is to advise such princes to provision and fortify their cities, and not to defend their rural areas. If a prince has fortified his city well, and has managed his subjects concerns in the way I have described and will return to later, others will be very cautious about attacking him. Men are never enthusiastic about enterprises that they can see will be difficult, and it will be seen to be difficult to attack a ruler who has his city well fortified and isn't hated by his people.

The cities of Germany are absolutely independent [*liberrime*]; they have little rural territory; they obey the emperor when it suits them to; and they aren't afraid of the emperor or of any of their neighbours. That's because they are so well fortified that everyone thinks it would be tedious and difficult to take them: they all have good moats and walls, enough artillery, and public depots with enough food, drink, and fuel to last a year. Also, to support the people without public expenditure ·on hand-outs·, they have a stock of raw materials that will provide a year's work in trades that are the city's life-blood and ·thus· a year's wages for the workers in them. They also have respect for •military exercises, and have many rules to make sure that •they are held.

Thus, a prince who has a strong city and hasn't made himself hated won't be attacked; anyone who did attack him would be driven off, humiliated, because this world is so changeable that it's almost impossible to keep an army idle, besieging a city, for a whole year. Someone may object:

If the people have property outside the city, and see it burnt, they won't remain patient; the long siege and self-interest will make them forget their prince.

I reply that a strong and energetic prince will overcome all such difficulties by giving his subjects hope that the trouble will soon be over, scaring them with tales of the enemy's cruelty, and moving nimbly to protect himself from those of his subjects who seem to him to be too bold.

Also, as the enemy approach the city they will, naturally, burn and ruin the countryside; this will happen at a time when the spirits of the people are still high and they are determined to resist. This should actually encourage the prince, because a few days later, when spirits have cooled, the damage is already done, the bad things have happened, and there's no remedy for them; so the people will be all the more ready to support their prince, because he seems to be under obligations to them now that their houses have been burnt and their possessions ruined in his defence. ·They will support him because he is obliged to them? Yes·, because it's human nature to be bound by the benefits one gives as much as by those one receives. All things considered, therefore, it won't be hard for a wise prince to keep the minds of his citizens steadfast throughout a siege, as long as they have food and weapons.

Chapter 11

Ecclesiastical principalities

·Up to here I have been discussing kinds of state and ways of become a prince. I am nearly finished with that whole topic·. All that is left for me to discuss are ecclesiastical principalities—church states·. The difficulties that occur in relation to these concern what happens on the way to getting possession, because once such a principality has been acquired, whether by *virtù* or by *fortuna*, it can be held onto without either. That's because church states are backed by ancient religious institutions that are so powerful and of such a character that their princes can stay in power no matter how they behave and live. These are the only princes who have states that they don't defend, and subjects whom they don't rule; and the states, although unguarded, are not taken from them, and the subjects, don't mind not being ruled and don't want to alienate themselves and have no way of doing so. These are the only principalities that are secure and happy. But they're upheld by ·divine· powers to which the human mind can't reach, so I shan't say anything more about them. They are raised up and maintained by God, and it would be presumptuous and rash to discuss them.

·Except for one matter·. Someone may want to ask:

How does it come about that the Church has so greatly increased its temporal [see Glossary] power? Before the papacy of Alexander VI the Italian rulers (not only of the great states, but every baron and lord, however minor) regarded the ·Church's· temporal power as almost negligible; but now a king of France trembles before it, and it has been able to drive him from Italy and to ruin the Venetians. What happened?

Though the answer is well known, it may be worthwhile for us to remind ourselves of it.

Before King Charles VIII of France moved into Italy, this country was dominated by

- the popes,
- the Venetians,
- the King of Naples,
- the Duke of Milan, and
- the Florentines.

Each of these powers had two main concerns: **(i)** that no foreign army should enter Italy, and **(ii)** none of the other four should seize more territory. Those about whom there was the most anxiety were the popes and the Venetians. The Venetians could be held back only by the other three working together. . . .; and to keep down the popes the others made use of the barons of Rome. They were split into two factions, the Orsinis and the Colonnas, who were always on the brink of outright fighting; so there they were, weapons at the ready, under the eyes of the Pope, and this kept the papacy weak and indecisive. . . . The brevity of each individual papacy contributed to this. Popes have on average reigned for ten years, and that is hardly enough for a pope to pull down one of the factions; and if, for example, one pope came near to destroying the Colonnas, he would be succeeded by one who was hostile to the Orsinis; that successor would pull the Colonnas up again, but wouldn't have enough time to ruin the Orsinis. That's why the popes' temporal powers weren't given much respect in Italy.

Then came Pope Alexander VI, who more than any previous pope showed what a pope could do with money and arms. Using Duke Valentino—Cesare Borgia—and exploiting the opportunity provided by the French invasion of Italy, he did all the things that I mentioned in chapter 7 when discussing the duke's actions. His aim was to build up the duke, not the Church, but his actions *did* make the Church more powerful; and that increased power was the legacy that was left to the Church after Alexander's death and the downfall of his son.

After Alexander there was Pope Julius II, who found the Church strong: it had control of all of Romagna, and the Roman barons and their factions had been wiped out by Alexander's severity. Julius also found the way open to a way for the Church to accumulate money—a way that had never been followed before Alexander VI. Julius didn't just follow these policies; he improved upon them. He planned to capture Bologna, to squelch the Venetians, and to chase the French out of Italy. He succeeded in all of this; and

what makes this especially creditable is that he did it to strengthen the Church and not to benefit any private person, as Alexander sought to benefit his son. He also kept the Orsini and Colonna factions within the bounds in which he found them; and although a few of their leaders were poised to make trouble, two things held them back: •the greatness of the Church, with which Julius terrified them; and •their not having their own cardinals. When these factions have their cardinals they don't remain quiet for long, because cardinals *take sides*, both inside Rome and out of it, and the barons are compelled to support them. In this way the ambitions of prelates generate disorders and tumults among the barons. For these reasons his holiness Pope Leo X—formerly the Cardinal de' Medici—found the papacy in a very strong condition, and it is to be hoped that where others made it great through force, he will make it even greater and more venerated through his goodness and his countless other *virtus*.