A citizen owes the State all the services he can render it as soon as the sovereign requests them. But the sovereign, for its part, cannot impose on the subjects any burden that is useless to the community. It cannot even will to do so, for under the law of reason nothing is done without a cause, any more than under the law of nature.[**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**][138]

CHAPTER 6

FROM WARRIOR-CHIEFTAINS TO RENAISSANCE KINGS

We are far from finished with a comprehensive discussion of the more scientific aspects of political economy. In a later chapter I will present the *laws of tendency* that influence the production and distribution of wealth. That these laws represent what has previously been described as a *closed system* means only that all wealth produced by *labor* and with *capital goods* from *land* is distributed to those who control each of these three factors of production based on supply / demand relationships. The relationship between supply and demand is, in turn, strongly influenced by the effects of socio-political arrangements and institutions.

Armed with a clear explanation of what *wealth* and other key terms mean when used in political economy, we are now able to use these

terms in deliberate fashion as we explore our history. The focus remains the significant changes occurring in socio-political arrangements and institutions and how these changes have impacted the well-being of individuals. Before we move too far ahead, however, what follows is a concise summary of our history through the period of the first empire-builders.

To repeat a key point already introduced, our societal structure experienced important changes following settlement by groups in fixed locations. The largely cooperative activities of the clan or migrating tribe were subjected to tremendous stress because of the increased specialization affecting division of labor within tribal organization. The result, as noted by sociologist Gerhard Lenski, was that even the earliest agrarian societies displayed "*marked social inequality.*"[139] And yet, even this degree of change was less than total; the cooperative instinct is reinforced by reason, generating ongoing conflict between the cooperative and competitive forces within any society.

Looking at human behavior from this perspective, our history must be viewed as a continuum and not as a series of events or collection of individual actions. Human behavior is seldom predictable at the level of individual actions because of the externalities affecting the individual at any given moment. Yet, there is a clear pattern of behavior over time that is consistent with the axiom that *we seek to satisfy our desires with the least exertion.*

Although crucial to an understanding of our species, the treatment of history as a continuum has, perhaps inevitably, suffered because of the practice of dividing the past into relatively defined epochs. In consequence, the assessment of how our socio-political arrangements and institutions have impacted on the advance of civilization is subordinated to a description of events and actions of individuals. At the expense of detail that can be obtained elsewhere with ease, I endeavor to identify consistent tendencies in human behavior that affect history. For example, I repeat the question (rhetorically) whether

it is not as true today as in the earliest agrarian era "*that the very unequal distribution of power, privilege, and honor in [societies] arises largely from the functioning of their political systems.*"[140] The accident of birth certainly placed and places still the individual at the mercy of whatever natural environment is available to his family and tribal group during the all-important period of nurturing; what encourages or thwarts the individual's natural talents, then, is the nurturing received and the opportunities provided within the constraints of socio-political arrangements.

Natural opportunities can be improved upon by as simple a means as migration, provided one's desire to migrate is not hampered by coercively imposed restrictions. Claims by some to sovereignty over portions of the earth are, therefore, declarations on behalf of inequality, a denial of the principle *that the earth is the birthright of all persons, equally*. Our history details a continuous resistance by the few to implementation of any laws that seek to remove the three main forms of sanctioned inequality; namely: privilege, monopoly license and claims of sovereignty over territory.

The so-called epochs of history are each and every one marked by the intrigues of a governing subgroup or class. When the adventures of rulers failed to secure new territories—and control over additional people from whom tribute could be extorted—despots turned their energies inward toward competitors within their own core societies. Where landed estates had already found their way into private hands, positive law and force were utilized to make sure these holdings remained intact, to be passed on from generation to generation in the same family. Where landed property was long held in common, the rulers demanded an ever-increasing share of production or, where a moneyed economy had developed, imposed heavy taxes payable in coinage. At the same time, the powerful also gradually took over the commons as their private property, charging producers a rent in return for access and the opportunity to apply their labor to the land.

Although the reigns of power changed hands again and again once societies arrived at a stage characterized by conflict-driven organization, rarely did more than a small minority ever share in the responsibilities and powers of governing. The predictable result has been exploitation of the many by the few and a redistribution of most wealth produced to the ruling non-producers. The differences in conditions present in ancient, largely agrarian societies and our modern, largely industrial and service-oriented societies are differences in degree only; in terms of foundation and structure they are all too similar. One merely has to remember that the source of all the wealth we produce and consume is derived from the land (i.e., from nature) and that issues relating to productivity, efficiency, distribution and (most particularly) redistribution are socio-political.

In the socio-political realm we find a clear pattern of redistribution throughout history in every settled society. One of the primary messages conveyed is the link between socio-political power and the increasing claim on wealth by non-producers. Gradually increasing in size over many thousands of years, the wandering hunter-gatherer groups were characterized by a generational hierarchy within an extended family structure. They accumulated few possessions; however, whatever wealth they did produce was generally treated as the common property of all members of the group. A division of labor occurred as a natural consequence of differences in strength, intellect, sex and age. This division of labor remained stable from generation to generation, subjected to the influences of what were almost imperceptible advances in technology and the limited range of their territorial exploration. Although this societal structure disappeared first from the groups occupying the fertile crescent and eastern Mediterranean, isolation protected other groups from change well into the modern era. When the first Europeans set foot on the Australian continent in 1788, for example, the indigenous population whom English-speaking people call *Aborigines* numbered some 300,000 and lived as hunter-gatherers in small, isolated groups. Their

socio-political structure was, to say the least, strikingly different from that of the European newcomers. The Aborigines "*lived in a state approaching that of primitive communism,*" writes Robert Hughes:

> No property, no money or any other visible medium of exchange; no surplus or means of storing it, hence not even the barest rudiment of the idea of capital; no outside trade, no farming, no domestic animals, except half-wild camp dingoes; no houses, clothes, pottery or metal; no division between leisure and labor, only a ceaseless grubbing and chasing for subsistence foods. ...They did not even appear to have the social divisions that had been observed in other tribal societies such as those in America or Tahiti. Where were the aboriginal kings, their nobles, their priests, their slaves? They did not exist.[141]

Until the arrival of the Europeans time had virtually stood still for the Australian Aborigine peoples. Throughout most of Eurasia change had been forced on the tribes at a pace dictated by the problems and opportunities faced by individual groups. The combination of long-term territorial association and population increase eventually reduced the local availability of game and other foodstuffs. Groups were forced to divide into smaller clans or family groups, with one or all factions moving off on their own.

STAGE TWO
Division and Migration

The smaller groups generally benefited by the much more bountiful natural environment into which they migrated. Smaller size also cemented the cooperative association built on blood relations and total dependency upon one another for survival, pushing into the distant future the conflict associated with hierarchical structures. To be sure, the migrations had to be far enough away from other groups to reduce the chances of

competition for the same game animals and other food sources. As one should expect, with the passage of generations the common language and other societal mores that bound these groups together were forgotten; knowledge of one another's very existence disappeared. Each lived in isolation and in competition only with other animals.

STAGE THREE
Re-Contact and the Dilemma of Competition

In this stage of societal development, tribes experienced the conflict arising over the control of disputed territory. Mutual population growth and diminishing natural resources available to each group forced another division into small groups and migration. Inevitably, these migrating groups came into contact with others about whom they have had no previous knowledge (even though at some point in their distant past they share a common ancestry).

Where the game animals and other foodstuffs were plentiful, a tenuous agreement to respect equal access might be reached. More often, however, the weaker groups were either driven off, subdued or exterminated. Long-lasting conflicts often weakened each group because of the loss of the younger warriors, allowing a late-arriving third group to displace them with relative ease. At the same time, war served as the stimulus for fundamental changes in the socio-political arrangements of these societies.

STAGE FOUR
The Appearance of the Warrior-Chieftain

The threat of external attack demanded the ongoing presence of a group of hunter-warriors assigned responsibility for protecting the

group. Settlement and the development of horticulture heightened this need, for now the tribes were accumulating a storehouse of wealth that could not be easily moved. Planted fields also had to be protected from destruction until the crops could be harvested and safely stored. From the subgroup of warrior-protectors a chieftain came to be selected—sometimes acting as a dominant chief over the entire tribe but in other instances powerful only during warfare. Whether acting individually or collectively, the powers attached to this position gradually expanded to include the administration of justice and arbitration of conflicts between individuals.

STAGE FIVE
The Appearance of a Class Structure and Hierarchy

This next, and seemingly inevitable, advance in socio-political structure appeared when the warrior-protectors acquired status and power sufficient to impose their will on those who engaged in wealth production. Those in power began to think less about the traditional responsibilities of their positions than of the personal wealth accruing as a result of the power they held. By means of elaborate rituals and the adoption of positive law (often under claims that such law was *divinely inspired*, property that had been treated communally was absorbed into the domain of the leadership group and eventually distributed to individuals within this subgroup.

Throughout history this attempt by non-producers to monopolize both wealth and access to land, thereby controlling both the production and distribution of wealth, eventually sparked intense resentment and violent resistance. The chieftain and warrior hierarchy recognized this threat and sought to protect themselves from any uprising that might occur. The physical evidence took the form of the citadel, constructed

as a barrier between the governing elite and those forced to produce for the benefit of their rulers.

STAGE SIX
The State

Recorded history begins at a time when many groups had advanced to a point where they were competing against one another for a position of dominance. Some tribal groups continued to live as hunter-warriors, uniting into loose confederations in search of conquest over settled societies. The defensive reaction to this threat brought together the relatively settled tribal groups into alliances that were sometimes brief and at other times evolved into highly structured empires of long duration.

RESURRECTION

My treatment of history has, up to this point, covered the period reflected in the above stages. As we have seen, the first empire-building era left its mark on civilization in ways that are not generally appreciated but have been thoroughly documented by historians, anthropologists, philosophers, political economists and others. The appropriateness of looking at our history as a continuum is revealed, as well, by an analysis of the medieval and feudal periods— of what societies retained of their empire-building heritage and how they experimented with new socio-political arrangements.

As the Greek, Roman, Moslem and Turkish empires rose and fell in succession, improved technologies served to bring people into closer contact with one another. During periods of relative peace, trade and commerce flourished and all societies tended to benefit. Unfortunately,

greed, intolerance and the desire to dominate others deemed inferior or merely different kept the destructive fires of warfare burning. Foundations based on privilege assured corruption and weakness within the ancient empires, and all would eventually fall victim to those more cooperatively organized and single-minded in purpose. Yet conquest proved far easier than effective administration, and the newer conquerors eventually suffered similar declines because their leaders had little appreciation for the lessons of history. In the process, material wealth that required the exertion of hundreds of thousands of individuals to produce was repeatedly looted and/or destroyed.

What is perhaps most remarkable throughout history has been the ability of individuals to persevere under such conditions. In the face of overwhelming obstacles, we have always looked to the future with hope and for the promise of a better life. Faith in a higher authority is partly responsible. Equally strong has been our ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Thunder Across The Eurasian Continent

Such a period of change occurred with the ascendancy of the Germanic tribes at the expense of Roman hegemony over the Mediterranean peoples. The vitality of the Roman republic had long passed when the various Eurasian tribes ascended in succession to rule as best they could over an empire that for centuries had been held together by military force and frequent reconquest. As the authority of Rome weakened over several centuries, the Germanic tribes engaged one another either in service to Rome or as hopeful conquerors. The weaker tribes were, as one would expect, either absorbed or decimated by the larger and more powerful.

Association with Roman authority had at least provided a foundation for acculturation and assimilation of these Eurasian tribes.

There existed among the tribal chieftains a strong desire to become part of the larger whole, to be Romanized and share in the glory of Rome. With the disintegration of the moral and political fiber of the Roman republic, the tribes merely resumed their natural inclination to acquire new territory by conquest; what they seldom brought with them was a societal infrastructure capable of exerting lasting influence over those they conquered.

For centuries Celtic, Slavic and Germanic tribes fought one another across the Eurasian continent, periodically tangling with the Greek and Roman empire-builders. The more nomadic Eastern tribes were on the move as well. The Baltic Visigoths were forced by invading Huns from territory they occupied north of the Danube River and close to the Black Sea. They fought their way into the Balkans and eventually down the Italian peninsula to Rome in 410, only to be subsequently overwhelmed in Gaul by the Franks and in Spain by the Moslems. Another Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths gained control of Italy in the late fifth century and held power until driven out by armies sent by Justinian from the eastern empire. In an ironic twist of fate, Justinian's success against these thoroughly Romanized Ostrogoths opened the door for the more complete collapse of the Western empire.

Only the Franks, particularly under Charlemagne, politically consolidated their conquests as they moved from the mouth of the Rhine River across northern and central Europe. Charlemagne's death then initiated a long series of wars between his sons and grandsons and the eventual disintegration of the Frankish kingdom. Holding the tribes together was far more dependent upon the force of individual leadership than any durable relationships built on a sharing of power and the creation of institutions capable of ensuring power was subjected to reasonable controls.

During the more than eight centuries following the loss of Roman hegemony over *Western* civilization, the governing of people and territory took on a largely decentralized character. Local chieftains

gradually assumed responsibility for the functions no longer performed by the Roman state. With the passage of time, their descendants acquired hereditary rights to large landed estates and positions of status that also included powers of government. Contained within a complex socio-political structure that bound peasant producers to their manors and the manorial lawlords, *feudalism* evolved and proliferated as a dominant way of life.

Interestingly, under feudalism and the manorial system, slavery as practiced in the era of the empire-builders largely disappeared. Those who worked the land and produced the wealth in feudal societies were, for the most part, tied to the land as serfs and had only minimal rights under positive law; however, custom and tradition played an important role in providing assurance that the manorial lords respected at least the basic right of access to land. In England, many peasant farmers acquired legal status and certain rights and were able to own land themselves. Dominating the socio-political structure were the nobles—professional warriors who for several centuries fought against or in alliance with one another in the ongoing struggle for control over territory. Gradually but inevitably the tribes these nobles ruled became more attached to the land, warfare among them became less frequent and the role of the noble shifted from that of conqueror and protector to that of administrator of justice and enforcer of the common law. The transition from exercising these limited powers and responsibilities to becoming extortionists and oppressors was, perhaps, difficult to resist, particularly after the Crusades emboldened the nobles and fueled their lust for luxuries.

By the beginning of the twelfth century, religion had become the one real common denominator among the European tribes. Roman Catholicism dominated in virtually all of Europe west of the Byzantine empire and Russia, where the Orthodox Christian church maintained its influence. From the southern Iberian peninsula, across northern Africa and into the eastern Mediterranean lands, the Islamic faith

expanded and became firmly entrenched. Politically, however, the tribes continued to war with one another at the fringe of one another's territory.

The drift toward centralized authority took a decided turn in the late tenth century, with the selection by a confederation of French lords of Hugh Capet as their king. Not long thereafter, ascendancy to the throne became a hereditary right not only in France but throughout much of Eurasia. Already, a German king had ruled since 911 and had been crowned emperor of what the German nobles likened the Holy Roman empire. After crossing the channel to the islands of Briton, William (the Duke of Normandy) defeated the Angles and Saxons at Hastings in 1066 and took the title of king of England.

In this period of consolidation, even very narrowly-applied moral principles were viewed with skepticism and as a source of anarchy. To the literate and privileged (and even to most of the peasants), the need for a strong, central authority made sense in a world where constant warfare and fear of invasion were ever-present dangers. The twelfth century English chronicler, William of Maimesbury provides us with this first hand view of his world:

> The world is not evenly divided. Of its three parts, our enemies hold Asia as their hereditary homes—a part of the world which our forefathers rightly considered equal to the other two put together. Yet here formerly our Faith put out its branches; here all the Apostles save two met their deaths. But now the Christians of those parts, if there are any left, squeeze a bare subsistence from the soil and pay tribute to their enemies, looking to us with silent longing for the liberty they have lost. Africa, too, the second part of the world, has been held by our enemies by force of arms for two hundred years and more, a danger to Christendom all the greater because it formerly sustained the brightest spirits—men whose works will keep the rust of age from Holy Writ as long as the Latin tongue survives. Thirdly, there is Europe, the remaining region we Christians inhabit only a part, for who will give the name of Christians to those barbarians who live in the remote islands and seek their living on the icy ocean

as if they were whales? This little portion of the world which is ours is pressed upon by warlike Turks and Saracens: for three hundred years they have held Spain and the Balearic Islands, and they live in hope of devouring the rest.[142]

In response, *Christian* knights raised their armies and embarked upon the Crusades, journeys which not only exposed the European warriors to new lands and ideas but contributed to major changes in the socio-political arrangements back home. The consolidation of power into the hands of fewer and fewer nobles during the previous two centuries had helped make possible the gathering of so many soldiers intent on taking the Holy Land for all of Christendom (and themselves). Yet, to do so, many of the feudal lords were forced to grant special privileges or virtual independence to towns in return for money to finance their adventures.

That the Crusades were possible at all attested to the growing ability of certain nobles to exercise their power and rule as kings. This was particularly the case in France and England, where the right to govern had been added to other rights and privileges of birth. There was, according to historians Robert Palmer and Joel Colton, good reason for people to accept hereditary power:

> Inheritance of the crown made for peace and order, for elections under the conditions of the time were usually turbulent and disputed, and where the older Germanic principle of elective monarchy remained alive, as in the Holy Roman Empire, there was periodic commotion.[143]

To the extent the kings brought order and peace, this was certainly a short-lived and marginal improvement. Consolidation of power fed the aggressive and expansionist mentality of these rulers and the nobles who were their advisers. We see, for example, how the coronation of the Duke of Normandy in 1066 as king over England swept the Angles, Saxons and other tribes of Britain into the orbit of French politics. The

Anglo-Saxon population fought against Norman rule for nearly a generation after Hastings, and even some of William's own Norman knights rebelled against his tyrannical rule. The new generations of Normans, now native-born to England, intermarried with the indigenous Anglo-Saxons, and quickly distanced themselves from their continental roots. Finally came the permanent loss of Norman power on the continent in 1203 at the hands of the French armies of Philip Augustus. Fearful of a long and fruitless conflict with Philip, the Anglo-Norman nobles forced King John to sign the *Magna Carta* at Runnymede in 1215. Relatively secure from invasion, few of England's landed nobility were anxious to jeopardize their rising prosperity in war on the continent.

Resistance by these English nobles to kingly ambitions increased during the reign of John's son, Henry III. Henry III's grandiose plans were calculated to once again return Norman authority to the European continent. He was openly opposed and eventually subjected by the nobles to the direction of a council made up of twelve powerful members of the nobility. Civil war erupted and, although Henry III managed to keep his thrown, he was prevented from governing as a sovereign authority. From this early sharing of power would emerge the institution of the British Parliament.

Successive generations of English kings and nobles subdued the Welsh and attempted to do the same to the Scots. On the one hand, this brought together the people of Britain under one socio-political system. At the same time, writes Winston Churchill:

> [T]he Welsh war...destroyed the physical basis of feudalism [because] the process of holding down the subdued regions required methods which were beyond the compass of feudal barons.[144]

What in fact displaced feudalism in Britain was a central authority within which power was shared between a monarchy and the landed

nobility. A rough balance of power between these factions arose until the emergence of a wealthy commercial class and a Protestant church hierarchy introduced more complex issues to the struggle for control over the machinery of the State.

On the continent, Philip Augustus had successfully consolidated control over Brittany, Normandy, Aquitaine and Gascony on behalf of the Capetian monarchs of France. Claims by Henry III to ancient Norman lands on the continent were relinquished and became part of France by treaty in 1259. The southern provinces of Toulouse and Languedoc fell to Philip's son and grandson during this same period. Thus, in France, as well as Britain, the process of consolidation displaced the independent fiefdoms controlled by manor lords and established administrative districts subject to the rule of a monarchy. At the same time, these changes destroyed the basis for the socio-political arrangements on which the common law had for centuries held sway. Moreover, in France, officials of the crown were appointed to administer justice, and the common law—grounded in traditional social mores—was gradually subordinated to a growing body of positive law enforced by the State. Under Philip IV (1285-1314) the monarchy actually then achieved dominance over both the Catholic Church and the nobility; feudalism was effectively brought to an end.

In a move that would establish a pattern for centuries to come, Philip also carried out a purge against his creditors, effectively eliminating the State's debt and expelling foreign bankers (Jewish and Italian) from France. These bankers had failed to recognize the inevitable consequences of providing credit to kings and nobles anxious to resurrect the glory of the Roman empire with themselves in power. One reason the bankers and merchants supported the monarchs was the hope of ending the constant warfare and destruction practiced by the feudal lords. Soldiers in service to individual nobles tended to sack every town they came upon and steal whatever they could find of value. Wars, therefore, were always disasters for the local inhabitants and,

except for the arms providers, made the conduct of business quite difficult. To solve this problem, the bankers and trade merchants felt the need for a strong central power, a national state, to keep order.

Over several centuries, the monarchies were remarkably successful in consolidating their power. They taxed and borrowed to pay for standing armies whose presence quieted the aspirations of dissident nobles. An example of what the merchants obtained in the bargain was this 1439 declaration by the French monarch:

> To obviate and remedy and put an end to the great excess and pillagings done and committed by the armed bands, who have for long lived and are still living on the people...The King prohibits all, on pain of being charged with lese-Majeste...and deprived forever, he and his posterity, of all public honours and offices, and of the rights and prerogatives of the nobility, and the confiscations of his person and possessions, that no one of whatever estate he may be, may...raise, conduct, lead or receive a company of men at arms...without leave, licence, and consent and Ordonnance of the King ...[145]

The drift toward one dominant monarchy in central Europe had been thwarted for several centuries by a relatively stable balance of power among the nobles. With the disintegration of the Carolingian empire in the late ninth century, the military administrators of land held in western Germany eventually selected the Duke of Franconia as their king, although dissension and strife continued among the German rulers throughout the tenth century. Gradually, the Dukes of Saxony consolidated their power and assumed a dominant position over the others. What continued to plague the German peoples, however, was, as much as anything, the troublesome location they occupied, as explained by historian W.M. Simon:

> In terms of geographical features, Germany has never had either natural frontiers or a natural nucleus. In the east, the Germans for centuries encroached across open

country on Slav-inhabited territory through migration, colonization, conquest, and political organization. In the west, the boundary was determined by the division of Charlemagne's empire not long after his death in the ninth century. At that time the East Frankish kingdom was separated from its western neighbors by nothing more than dynastic expediency.[146]

Subsequent quarrels between the German rulers and the pope had the unanticipated result of subverting the monarchy. Henry V (1106-1125) sought support from the German princes in his battle against pope Gregory VII, who had attempted to depose his father. At issue was the right of the church to determine secular leadership over the empire. In return for their support, the German nobles exacted a heavy price on Henry V in both land holdings and power. As a consequence, a German state would not materialize to effectively compete with Britain and France until the nineteenth century. Each German duchy would, nonetheless, come under the rule of a centralized authority, dominated by a landed aristocracy. Between 1254 and 1272, no emperor was chosen to rule over the German duchies and the position of emperor ceased to be hereditary. The individual dukes formed an assembly to elect the emperor but ruled more or less independently based on their relative military strength and ability to resist the decisions of the others. Within their domains, the dukes expanded their own authority and power at the expense of feudal arrangements.

Other factors were certainly involved besides the consolidating efforts of the kings in the dismantling of feudalism. Population growth alone strained the limits of feudal society. The European world during the late middle ages is described anthropologist Marvin Harris as one in transition:

[T]owns and markets grew slowly as long as the serfs and free peasants could maintain a relatively high standard of living from their traditional agricultural

activities. The development of commercial life to the point where it threatened the feudal status quo had to wait for the build-up of population density. As density rose, efficiency declined, and so did agricultural profitability from the point of view both of the peasants and of the feudal lords. This encouraged the feudal lords to seek supplementary sources of income, the most important of which was the raising of sheep for wool, which in turn restricted the amount of land available for food crops, reduced the size of peasant holdings, pauperized much of the rural population, and stimulated migrations to the towns and wool production centers.[147]

The equilibrium of power between those who controlled access to land and those whose labored on the land meant the difference between survival and starvation was never a balanced affair. At an ever-quickening pace, now, the monopolistic arrangements that put *monopoly rents* into the pockets of non-producers yielded great personal fortunes to the kings, nobles and other private titleholders. Nowhere on the Eurasian continent was the production of wealth more effectively discouraged by privilege than within the Spanish and Portuguese states, emerging in unified fashion as the first empire-builders in the early sixteenth century.

The New Atlantic Core Powers

The Portuguese and the Spaniards were each driven by a hatred of Moslem rule as well as an uncritical attachment to the Roman Catholic faith. After driving most of the Moors from the Iberian peninsula and from northern Africa, they would begin their own expansionist voyages into the Atlantic Ocean and down the western coast of the African continent. Already by the mid-fifteenth century, the Portuguese had explored the Azores, fully a quarter of the way across the Atlantic Ocean. Trade monopolies with the Far East and, eventually, resource monopolies and exploitation of indigenous tribes in the Americas

supplied the nobles and the State with vast riches; unfortunately, this wealth did nothing to stimulate investment in productive infrastructure that would have brought prosperity to the general population. The monarchy spent its fortune to support Europe's largest standing army and to construct an ocean-going fleet. Another characteristic of Spanish and Portuguese expansionism planted the seeds of its own destruction; the indigenous tribes of the Americas were conquered by fortune hunters and adventurers—*Conquistadors*—possessed of very little socio-political conviction or conscience. Of their character, historian Lewis Hanke writes:

> The men who went to the New World during those early years were usually footloose ex-soldiers, broken noblemen, adventurers, or even convicts. One eyewitness reported that one could see riffraff who had been scourged or clipped of their ears in Castile lording it over the native chiefs in the New World.[148]

The State As Consolidating Landlord

If any generalization is possible, then, it is that the cooperative or *communitarian* aspects of feudalism were overpowered by princely quests for power over others and the wealth needed to sustain a military force. Practices such as *primogeniture* and *entail* assured that landed estates would remain in control of the few and, at the same time, directed lesser male offspring toward military adventurism in the hope of gaining their own landed estates by means of conquest. Military superiority was also essential for the European monarchs to establish even titular sovereignty over large territories and their inhabitants; and, with time, the kings would establish the bureaucratic institutions of central government to prevent lesser nobles from rallying against this intrusive power.

These princely quests for power and wealth required large sums that just were not obtainable under the manorial system. The nobles had to free themselves of their feudal obligations and claim a much larger portion of what wealth was being produced if they were to realize their ambitions. They needed to gain control over the land and turn the peasants into tenant farmers who would pay almost any monopoly rent demanded. And so, the nobles began by consolidating and converting croplands into pastures for cattle and sheep. They petitioned the kings to enclose commonly held lands and convey deeds to them in perpetuity as their private property. Increasingly displaced from the land, the peasants had little choice but to migrate to the towns and attempt to secure employment at the bottom level of a labor force constrained by the existence of guilds and an as yet undeveloped need for unskilled workers.

The dismantling of feudal arrangements slowed, however, during the mid-fourteenth century because of the Black Death. The loss of a large portion of the population in Eurasia (estimated at nearly one-third of the entire population) increased the dependency of the nobles on the peasant farmers. In the cities wages paid in money or goods rose, and on the manorial estates the portion of production demanded by the nobles was grudgingly lowered. Temporarily prevented from imposing their will on the peasants, the nobles embarked on a renewed period of conquest and hopeful territorial expansion. These ventures eventually resulted in the voyages of discovery and conquest of the Americas.

Peasant migrations also occurred during the late feudal era, so that agriculture expanded into the eastern frontiers of Germany as well as much of the previously uncultivated lands of the central and western continent. Yet, inherent in the socio-political arrangements under which this new settlement occurred were the seeds of a new, more destructive form of tyranny. In ***Man's Worldly Goods*** (1936), economic historian Leo Huberman suggests this was neither unanticipated nor inadvertent:

[The] lords of the land, both Church and lay, saw that, having their unproductive land converted into productive land by pioneers, who then paid an annual rent for the privilege of farming it, was indeed profitable.[149]

Opening of the frontier lands to cultivation not only expanded the supply of wealth and the opportunity for the nobility to gain new riches, this also fostered conditions under which an increasing population shared in a heretofore unknown prosperity. Within a few generations, however, Europe's population reached and then exceeded previous levels. The frontier gone, the nobles found themselves in a position to charge increasingly higher rents for access to land the peasants depended on for their subsistence. A precarious balance had existed for a time between an expanded group of producers, the lords of the land and a strengthened class of merchants, bankers and traders. This balance was now seriously threatened.

The personal wealth accruing to the landed and the others also provided the resources for a rebirth of patronage in the sciences and in the arts long described as *The Renaissance.*

THE *ASCENT* RENEWED

The Eurasian Renaissance period is generally described by historians as originating in the mid-thirteenth century and running its course by the early seventeenth. These are, of course, rather arbitrary divisions of convenience within the continuum that is our history. Change occurred at different rates and was characterized by peculiarities associated with each society affected. For many of the peasant producers, their condition materially improved under feudalism and the manorial system; there was, at least, a sense that the feudal lord and the peasants were tied together under arrangements of mutual benefit.

The twelfth century migration of peasant farmers into the frontier lands of Eurasia simultaneously invigorated and transformed feudalism by creating a much larger group of individuals who either gained direct control over land or acquired access at next to no rents. The promise of acquiring personal wealth stimulated production, creativity, the establishment of markets and the use of coinage in replacement of barter. Yet this was merely a window of opportunity soon to be closed.

As the medieval towns expanded into market centers, the hierarchical structure of the manor system adapted to the growing challenges of governing under more dynamic conditions. Change resulted, of course, in numerous unforeseen consequences, an important element of which is described by Lewis Mumford:

> Sometimes urbanization was deliberately promoted by feudal lords, seeking to increase their income by utilizing urban ground rents, taking a share of the tolls at the local market, making use of a big body of consumers to increase the value of the products of their own estates, not consumable on the premises. Often the demand by the towns for independence was opposed by the feudal proprietors: particularly by the Bishops, who were more formidable than war-chiefs because they were agents of a wide-flung institution, commanding both material and spiritual resources of an unusual kind. In some countries, as in England and France, municipal freedom was promoted by a temporary coalition with the central power, as a means of weakening the feudal nobles who challenged the king's dominion. But, opposed or helped, the population flowed into these protected centers, built and rebuilt them, and brought neglected parts of their life to a new pitch of activity and productiveness. In a few centuries, the cities of Europe recaptured much of the ground the disintegration of the Roman Empire had lost.[150]

Mumford also warns historians (economic historians, in particular) against crediting to the expansion of trade and commerce the appearance of cities in medieval Europe. In his view, medieval Eurasians experienced a gradual and uneven pattern of socio-political

change driven by the dynamic interaction of political consolidations, opening of the frontiers to settlement, and the use of Church wealth to construct houses of worship around which new communities grew. The market arose out of individual responses to these changing socio-political conditions and opportunities.

Contributing to the accelerated pace of change was also the experience of travel to new lands by the crusading warriors. After acquiring a taste for the luxuries found to exist in the Moslem world, the feudal lords of Europe returned from the Crusades intent on gaining control over the surplus production at home, and using this wealth to exchange for luxury goods. The prospects of gaining increased income from cash payments (the monetized representation of *rent*) charged to merchants for locations in the urban centers further accelerated the dismantling of feudal arrangements.

As previously mentioned, many feudal towns successfully purchased their independence from their feudal lords and adopted written charters. The lords were then rewarded over and over again as their landholdings became ever more valuable. Some lords became commercial farmers themselves, but most simply relied on the rental value of their landholdings to give them a considerable claim on the wealth produced. At the same time, the city leaders and the Church assumed responsibility for the development of physical and social infrastructure, eliminating the feudal responsibilities which had in large measure maintained a balance of power between the lords and the general population.

Positive law established formal rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in the post-feudal cities, and these decentralized regional centers were to rival and thwart the consolidating efforts of the monarchs throughout the Renaissance period. Some of the cities were well positioned for a resurgence in international commerce, exchanging ideas and culture as well as goods. And, with the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, many of the remaining Greek scholars fled to the

West and contributed much to the resurrection of scientific investigation.

Feudalism experienced its final gasps in the years following the great plagues and peasant revolts of the fourteenth century. Long before the arrival of the industrial revolution, the lords and some peasant farmers initiated the privatization of control over land and converted titles held by nobles (ostensibly as steward on behalf of the group) to deeds awarded to individuals. As a result, when the technologies of manufacturing and the credit-issuing capacity of early bankers blossomed, they combined with existing socio-political arrangements and institutions into the modern system, which I suggest is best described as *agrarian and industrial-landlordism* (a term far more accurate than that of *capitalism*, as subsequent discussion will make clear). Some landlords remained rent-seekers; others invested their profits from land in productive enterprise. Some producers invested their *wages* and *interest* into the purchase of land, becoming rent-seekers as well as producers. In the end, the freedom gained by the peasants was fleeting and their loss of security and place in feudal society a precursor of times to come. The cities had produced the craft gilds, and under the gild system barter was eventually replaced by a cash economy. These changes and their consequences are put into proper perspective by Leo Huberman:

> In the barter of the old natural economy, trading was carried on not to make a profit, but to benefit both buyer and seller. Neither party in an exchange of goods was expected to benefit more than the other.
>
> The gild merchant of the earlier days, which...had a monopoly of the trade of the town, had been supplanted by the craft gilds, each of which traded in its own goods. But in some cases the gild merchant gave up trading in general, dealt in one particular article, and instead of dying, now flourished as a great merchant gild. In other cases, the wealthy members of the craft gild gave up producing, and concentrated on trade, becoming exclusive corporations which shut out the working artisans...

From control of their own gilds to exclusive control of the municipal government was a short step and the members of the greater gilds took it. They became the real rulers of the town and almost everywhere the wealthiest and most influential were more or less identified with the town council. On the land the aristocracy of birth formed the ruling class; in the towns the aristocracy of money reigned supreme.[151]

What Huberman describes as the "*natural economy*" is the essence of what occurs under socio-political arrangements absent of coercive force; voluntary exchange flows naturally out of mutual need and the tendency of individuals to develop their natural talents into specialized skills. The socio-political institutions required to facilitate and protect the conditions under which voluntary exchange operate did not, however, become the focus of the town governments or the State. Acknowledging certain differences in degree and timing, Eurasian societies cast aside the communitarian isolation of feudalism and marched along a new path characterized by monopoly privilege and the consolidation of power by the State. To the extent that social mores and patterns of behavior adjusted to individual desires, the end results were socio-political conditions characterized by intense conflict, intrigue and privilege. The advance of civilization took a turn that was anything but cooperative.

INTERREGNUM: SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

From St. Thomas Aquinas and other sources we know that medieval religious values disdained the taking of interest as a charge for the use of cash money. *Usury* (which, at the time, meant charging any fees at all for the use of coinage or credit extended by merchants) was declared by the Catholic Church leaders a sin and by the State a social crime. International commerce, always dependent upon systems of credit and bills of exchange, survived only by finding ways to function outside the

Church/State environment. A small number of merchant bankers (few of whom were actually Jewish, contrary to conventional myth) were instrumental in laying the groundwork for the expansion of international trade associated with the Renaissance period. As the cities grew and gained independence, Italian merchants became the dominant group to establish themselves as a force in banking, practical considerations and potential for great profits overriding whatever inhibitions religion imposed. The Medici, for example, even became the fiscal agent of The Holy See, and other banking houses arose in the trading centers of Venice and Genoa. The Fugger family in Germany and Jacques Coeur in France arose in the early fifteenth century to serve the financial interests of merchants and the State, building tremendous fortunes for themselves in the process. At the same time, ambitious nobles looked to the bankers to finance their territorial adventures, diverting a considerable portion of wealth produced in the natural economy to the purchase of armaments. As is the case today, this redistribution benefited the few involved in weapons production—at the expense of those in need of basic goods and services.

When the nobles were victorious in their military adventures, the bankers might be repaid from the tribute and rents collected from whatever new territory was directly or indirectly added to the victor's domain. Defeat resulted in default. As one would expect where risks were so great, the fees charged by the bankers were correspondingly high.

Another element in the quest of the noble for territorial expansion and greater wealth was the degree of coercion exerted on productive citizens to support warfare. A pattern developed over several centuries with which we are all too familiar today:

> [Governments] would issue bonds instead of raising taxes and require wealthy individuals, including bankers, to buy these bonds. By overissuing debt they drove

down the value of bonds and this had the effect of significantly reducing the value of a bank's assets. Consequently, many folded.[152]

The fiscal and monetary practices of the State, employed with such devastating effect by the earlier empire-builders, were emerging once more in the smaller, post-feudal states of Europe. Privilege and exploitation, force and conflict, had subverted many of the constructive values associated with the cooperative, tribal societies. Contrary to our general understanding, medieval and feudal societies had, relatively speaking, thrived in semi-isolation because of their cooperatively-based socio-political foundation. Inter-tribal warfare was instrumental in upsetting the precarious cooperative balance of power between producers and non-producing rulers that for a time had blessed these societies, and increase in population served primarily to raise the monopoly rents the lords could extort from the peasants. The tragic irony is, that only the vast reduction in population caused by warfare and widespread plague interrupted the redistribution of wealth from producer to non-producer. At the same time, peasant uprisings put the nobility on notice of what could be expected under these conditions. In 1358, for example, peasants from the outskirts of Paris struck out against the nobles who taxed them heavily but provided no protections from invaders. The peasants gained a temporary satisfaction in the random murder of the landed aristocracy. Troops were quickly dispatched by the monarch to put down the uprising, who then made sure the peasants would not forget the consequences of dissent; whole villages were massacred in retaliation without regard to their involvement.

The Beginning Of Dissent

The conflict between ruler and ruled, between extortionist and producer, was slowly challenging the status quo. The same institutions

and dogma were also being challenged by a new generation of socio-political writers within a transnational intellectual community that could not be subdued. Beginning in the Italian port cities and spreading northward throughout much of Europe, the knowledge of antiquity was resurrected and studied; as a consequence, long held conventional wisdoms came under attack. With a newfound assuredness and confidence in the powers of scientific method, the Renaissance thinkers became a vanguard of individuals who felt compelled to reconcile theoretical postulates with experience by observation, recording and experimentation. Inadvertently, they also contributed the groundwork that would erupt into a new era of empire-building.

In addition to feeding the aristocratic appetite for luxury and demonstrating the continued tribal instincts governing human behavior, the Crusades also contributed a number of important advances in map-making and a greater appreciation for the study of geography. The very act of traveling great distances from their home territories also stimulated the expansion of international commerce.

At the same time, the prosperity experienced by those peasants who survived the Black Death was certainly resented by many of their rulers, whose very positions of power were increasingly threatened by a rising spirit of individualism. Unwittingly, by preserving the rigor of scholarship and providing an environment for contemplation, the Catholic Church also nurtured a transition to humanistic values. The preservation of Latin and Greek within the Church and among scholars attached to the various noble courts fostered renewed attention to the writing and philosophy of antiquity. Dante (1265-1321), for example, was one of the first Renaissance writers to include as a theme the separation of Church and State. Petrarch (1304-1374) was largely responsible for resurrecting interest in many of the ancient manuscripts and letters of Cicero and other Roman and Greek writers. At the same time, he chastised other medieval scholars for what he saw as a blind

adherence to Aristotelian rationalism. The influence of Cicero's writings on Renaissance thinking was great indeed. Historian John Rolfe actually suggested that Cicero's "*individualism...led to the Renaissance.*"[153]

Led by the Dutch theologian Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), sixteenth century scholars concerned themselves with development of a humanistic philosophy that combined the moral tenets of Christianity with the classical Greek and early Roman probings into the relationship between the individual and the State. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), was among the first to observe and describe the evolution of the secular state, the survival of which he concluded was dependent not on consistency with just principles but on the appropriate use of power. Conquest, the primary occupation of consolidating warlords, raised a peculiar set of problems for the victorious lord, to whom Machiavelli provided the following instruction:

> Conquered states that have been accustomed to liberty and the government of their own laws can be held by the conqueror in three different ways. The first is to ruin them; the second, for the conqueror to go and reside there in person; and the third is to allow them to continue to live under their own laws, subject to a regular tribute, and to create in them a government of a few, who will keep the country friendly to the conqueror. ...
>
> ... And whoever becomes master of a city that has been accustomed to liberty, and does not destroy it, must himself expect to be ruined by it. For they will always resort to rebellion in the name of liberty and their ancient institutions, which will never be effaced from their memory, either by the lapse of time, or by benefits bestowed by the new master. No matter what he may do, or what precautions he may take, if he does not separate and disperse the inhabitants, they will on the first occasion invoke the name of liberty and the memory of their ancient institutions. ...[154]

Machiavelli has evoked endless controversy among historians and others over his intent in writing ***The Prince.*** What seems clear, however,

is that he was among a vanguard of secular humanists who would eventually develop the expositions on which the science of political economy arose.[155] Neither defending nor attacking the actions of those in power, Machiavelli analyzed how power was obtained and held. As would Henry George, Machiavelli identified throughout much of history a consistency in human behavior that was on the whole dominated by destructive competition and conflict. He also recorded in his ***Discourses*** an observation very similar to something Thomas Jefferson would write two and one-half centuries later. Machiavelli concluded that "*the constitution and laws established in a republic at its very origin, when men were still pure, no longer suit when men have become corrupt and bad.*"[156] In 1781 Jefferson would argue with only partial success for establishment of a new society in which first principles were relied on as the basis for positive law. What Jefferson understood all too well was that a significant portion of the population had been well-satisfied with the degree of independent action enjoyed for so long in the colonies. Radical changes would be extremely difficult to achieve in the socio-political structure of the new North American states, where so much power was vested in large landowners and wealthy merchants. And yet, Jefferson tried:

> [T]he time for fixing every essential right on a legal basis is while our rulers are honest and ourselves united. From the conclusion of this war we shall be going down hill. It will not then be necessary to resort every movement to the people for support. They will be forgotten, therefore, and their rights disregarded. They will forget themselves, but in the sole faculty of making money....The shackles, therefore, which shall not be knocked off at the conclusion of this war, will remain on us long, will be made heavier and heavier, till our rights shall revive or expire in a convulsion.[157]

Not very much time passed before Jefferson's prediction came true, and several of the sovereign States warred over the right to secede from the Union. Once again, more than three centuries after Machiavelli's

death, the question of principles would be resolved on the battlefield by the force of arms.

To the extent the emerging Eurasian powers came into contact with the dwindling number of tribal societies, the outcome was predictably destructive for the less numerous and technologically less advanced groups. The same result was to occur in the Americas when Europeans established a permanent presence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Once again in history we find human actions to take on a consistency of behavior either advanced or thwarted by the externalities of natural, technological and socio-political environments—always with too few individuals aware of or concerned with the injustices.

Rent-Seekers Take Charge

By the time Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452, the quiet desperation of a disintegrating feudalism had become widespread, supplanted or being supplanted throughout much of Europe by the mercantile city-states and the kingdoms of consolidating nobles. The appearance of the metal plough and other advances in agricultural technology were turning northern Europe into a far more productive region than ever before. Population growth resumed, and the nobles of Europe lured peasant farmers into the unoccupied frontier lands with promises of greater freedom and cheap land for cultivation. By the end of the fifteenth century, however, the nobles had forcefully returned most of the small freeholders to serfdom. This was particularly the case in Eastern Europe.

Enriched by the wealth now being taken from peasant producers, the landed nobility was able to purchase the luxuries acquired by Italian merchants who traded throughout the Mediterranean, northern Europe's Atlantic coast and the East. Before the century ended, the quest for a new trade route to India and China would initiate a new age of

discovery. Of the events of these few decades, Adam Smith in uncommon overstatement would later write:

> The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind.[158]

What these discoveries eventually accomplished was to move what the political economists called the *margin of production* to new and (from the European point of view) available lands. At the same time, the rise of a prosperous merchant class operating within a socio-political framework of centralized bureaucracies readied the societies of northern and western Europe for their transition to nation-statehood. Permanence of government and a commitment to empire-building stimulated the introduction of a new system that married private fortunes with state-sanctioned monopolies. Trade monopolies attracted private investment in shipbuilding—stimulated further by the promise of finding gold, silver, other precious metals and jewels to satisfy the nobility's thirst for luxuries.

The skills that brought success to the merchants involved in the Mediterranean trade also had the effect of spreading literacy and a respect for learning. They first needed to recognize subtle differences in the quality of merchandise, as well as master *double entry* bookkeeping and the use of weights and measures—skills centered on the communication of information about prices in far-flung markets. This was a world little understood by the landed nobles or even the monarchs, which made the merchants very difficult to monitor and control. Not tied to the land, the merchants enjoyed great mobility and freedom of action. Inland, the transition from manorial estates and feudal arrangements to a system built on private deeds to land turned a large portion of the peasant population into landless beggars. These

circumstances would periodically lead to ever more violent uprisings, put down with increasing violence on the part of the landed aristocracy.

The Law And The Landed

Governing large territories and populations presented great challenges for fifteenth and sixteenth century consolidating monarchs. Retaining that power required an assertion of dominance in matters financial, military, judicial and spiritual. Feudalism provided very little guidance for governing the nation-state; therefore, the kings and their ministers looked back to the ancient law of Rome for instruction in the mechanics of governing. The result was sometimes harmonious with a *common law* evolved over nearly a thousand years and based on precedent and tradition; in most instances, however, the common law was subverted and eroded by edicts and institutions that advanced the interests of the State or specific individuals at the expense of the general citizenry or groups no longer holding power.

As important as trade and finance were becoming to the Renaissance state, the relationship of both lord and peasant to the land continued to dominate socio-political arrangements and institutions. Yet the principle of *ownership by use* as an ethical basis for control over land became increasingly ignored as the State sanctioned the privatization of large estates by privileged aristocracies and civil authorities. Inheritance and the near-permanent superior social position of the landed and the bureaucrats now operated in societies undergoing sweeping technological changes as well as *transnational* (i.e., principle-based) intellectual pressure. The result was inevitable: subtle and ongoing challenges to conventional wisdom, repressive institutional response, increasingly frequent civil wars and socio-economic (i.e., class) rebellions.

Reliance by the European states on the cornerstones of Roman law provided a basis for order, to be sure, but also imposed unworkable machinery on societies very different from their ancient counterpart. Roman law had, of course, continued to evolve throughout the history of the empire. What distinguished the Roman system from that of its predecessor and contemporary societies were two primary characteristics: {i} the law became practiced as a profession; and {ii} the law was implemented by a specialized tribunal. The early patriarchal structure displaced the system of tribal landholdings with unalienable titles to land granted to the leading families. Control of the land, in turn, fostered a strong adherence to ancestor worship and societal position based on family association. Out of this structure arose the early Roman Senate, in which one became a Senator only if ***he*** was by birth a Patrician. Eventually, the position of Senator came to be handed down from father to son, a weakness that removed merit and personal accomplishment as the basis for choosing those who would make the crucial governing decisions for the Roman citizenry. After a brief period during which the tribes elected a common king, the Roman state came to be ruled by two elected consuls; each consul given the power to veto the actions of the other.

Conflict eventually erupted between the large clans, providing the less powerful *plebeian* families an opportunity to secure a share in political power for themselves. Plebeians eventually became eligible for the consulship itself and to new offices, called the *Tribunes*. As a consequence, Roman law at this stage evolved into a sophisticated system of checks and balances, favorably compared by legal historian John Zane to the best of the modern nation-states:

> The Roman race had certain characteristics, an intensely conservative character, a natural steadiness, steadfastness and dignity, a profound patriotism, and readiness to sacrifice for the common society. They had that natural social talent so marked in the Anglo-Norman, which enables one class to compromise with another. They had a sort

of native instinct for uniting in the presence of a common danger. At bottom they were a just race with a developed sense for justice and a fear of arbitrary power, which gradually hedged around all departments of the government with checks and balances that prevented any class from having its own headstrong way.[159]

The earlier examination of Roman civilization provided in this work suggests that Zane's description of Romans as a "*just race*" is one of those sweeping generalizations made to stress the importance of a point but is not seriously made in an absolute sense. Romans certainly had a moral sense of right and wrong that shaped their values and laws. To declare their sense of justice of a high order, one must first identify the moral principles against which to measure the degree of justice under Roman law. Although doing so is an important element in this work, a considerable amount of historical and philosophical groundwork must first be established. To that end, I divert once again from a strict chronology of events to describe the experience of life under Roman law.

Etruscan rule had introduced military and government organization to the Roman city-state, and upon this base was built an oligarchy within which power and wealth accrued, first, to patrician families, and then gradually shared with accomplished Plebeians. The result was a harsh but relatively stable republic, the leaders of which were able to raise and discipline armies, defeat and then absorb neighboring city-states into a loose confederation, and quiet Plebeian discontent by distributing newly-conquered frontier territories. These policies also secured the loyalty of nearly all tribes absorbed into the orbit of the Republic and greatly assisted Rome in its first war against Carthage (the First Punic War, 264-241 B.C.). Hannibal's war a quarter century later against the Roman legions did not succeed because, in part, Rome's allies largely remained faithful to the empire. Then, with Hannibal's forces far from home, fresh Roman armies crossed the Mediterranean and invaded northern Africa. A half century later Carthage itself was in

ruins and the Roman confederation absorbed the weakened Greek city-states as well. Although still expanding, Rome was poised for a tortuous decline into an imperialistic and arbitrary empire. Roman citizens increasingly produced little and relied on the force of arms to extort much of the wealth produced in the lands coming under their domination. The transition from constitutional-oligarchy to arbitrary rule—from republic to empire—has been perceived by some historians as inevitable. Arnold Toynbee, for instance, writes:

> The unannealed amalgam of patrician and plebeian institutions which the Romans had accepted as their ramshackle constitution proved [to be an] inept...political instrument for achieving new social adjustments [that] after a century of self-laceration, the Roman body politic submitted itself to a permanent dictatorship.[160]

The widespread disintegration occurred, in part, because the method of administration remained static and inflexible. Distant provinces were prevented from developing independently to meet local conditions, and the practice of building new towns and populating them with Roman Plebeians created both opportunity for improvement in status and a constituency dependent upon the Roman legions for protection from indigenous populations. In the process of empire-building, then, the Romans discarded whatever possibility remained to create a truly unique society built on the foundation of voluntary association and respect for liberty (even a liberty limited to those recognized as citizens of the Republic). Weighing the accomplishments of Roman expansionists against the day-to-day life of the Romans and their subjects, Lewis Mumford correctly focuses our attention on the importance of Rome as an example of what dooms such empires to failure:

As an empire, Rome had succeeded better than Athens, which had never been strong enough to protect, even for a generation, the areas it exploited. Yet Rome had not in fact succeeded. ...Rome's order, Rome's justice, Rome's peace were all built on a savage exploitation and suppression. ...The empire, which had pushed back the barbarous tribes that threatened its borders, had erected a greater barbarism at the very heart of its dominion, in Rome itself. Here the prospect of wholesale destruction and extermination from which the city had largely escaped, thanks to Roman arms, came back in the acting out of more pathological fantasies. Predatory success underwrote a sickening parasitic failure. ...

In Rome, a whole population, numbering hundreds of thousands, took on the parasitic role for a whole lifetime; and the spreading empire was turned into an apparatus for ensuring their continued existence, ...

The transformation of the active, useful life of the early Republican city into the passive and parasitic life that finally dominated it took centuries. But in the end, attendance at public spectacles...became the principal occupation of their existence; and all other activities fed directly or indirectly into it.[161]

One gets a strong sense of Mumford's moral indignation in his suggestion of how little our behavior has changed over the intervening centuries. "*The peace and justice that the Romans boasted had,*" he writes, "*about the same degree of reality as the 'competition' that operates under the current monopolistic control and forced consumption imposed by American business.*"[162]

To those who feel themselves a part of a larger but cohesive whole, the outsider has often been generalized as a barbarian and uncivilized. These attitudes facilitate aggression toward others without moral constraint. In such a manner did the parasitic imperialism of Rome favor the Roman citizen with little regard for others subjected to Roman domination. In our own era, societies governed under the constraint of constitutions and systems of positive law that sanction privilege and monopoly make no such distinction. The best we can say is that in some corners of the world the tyranny is imposed primarily

on minorities; the adherence in positive law to principles of liberty and equality of opportunity are inconsistently applied and ineffectively enforced. Just how far we still have to go toward the securing of a state of liberty is a question not easily answered. The framework of the State, which had smothered the cooperative and productive behavior by which the earlier Romans had been so well served, lingered on until invigorated by the arrival of a new era of empire-builders.

The administration of justice for non-citizens in the Roman empire was based loosely on whatever body of common law existed in the conquered territories. The differences existing between the civil code of Rome and the common law of the territories stimulated a determined effort by the legal professionals to identify underlying principles, from which general rules of law based on precedent could be established. Under this system the body of interpretative rulings grew with each case heard. Gradually, however, common law was displaced by new statutory law, and the relationship between written law and tribal customs (designed to promote a cooperative existence among members of the group) ended. We had reached an important crossroads but had taken the path leading to even greater conflict, warfare and destruction. Disappearing was an instinctive moral sense of right and wrong long associated with tribal values and the quest for group survival. This legacy of hierarchical structure brought Henry George to observe that "*when we find social disease and political evils we may infer that in the organization of society moral law has been defied and the natural rights of man have been ignored.*"[163] The Romans possessed a flawed moral sense that ignored instinctive moral principles; their laws did not and could not secure an protect universal human rights. To the extent the Renaissance states resurrected Roman law as a cornerstone of their institutions, the results were, therefore, rather predictable.

During the medieval and feudal centuries, the force of law was again and again determined by events on the battlefield. And yet, the law of Rome prevailed within the cities of the Italian peninsula. Portions of the

Roman civil code survived to govern commercial relations. Challenging Roman law and that of the State was a separate aspect of the rising sense of individualism, the demand for participatory government.

THE ROOTS OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNMENT

The Hundred Years' War proved to be critical to the future of the monarchies in France and England. In both countries the long, nearly continuous conflict generated considerable unrest, in no small part because of the incessant demands for financial reserves required to maintain standing armies and build modern navies. The increasing use by the monarchs of private armies to fight their battles also carried an additional heavy cost, as was found when English mercenaries returned from France in time to add their strength to the civil war[164] then erupting between a splintered royal family. What ruled supreme in England until 1485 was intrigue and instability. Then (with French support), Henry Tudor defeated the army of Richard III. Both men were descendants of the same ancestor, Edward III, whose death in 1377 brought on the family quarrels over who would occupy the throne and, equally as important, fostered the creation of England's Parliament. Over time this creation of the monarchy would increasingly resist royal prerogatives and attempt to expand the role of its membership as *de facto* governors of the State.

Edward III's grandfather, Edward I, had first called into assembly not only the English barons (the lowest level of noblemen and titleholders), but knights, burgesses and members of both the higher and lower clergy. This was England's first *Model Parliament.* By the fifteenth century the earls and barons of the realm were to break off to form the House of Lords, and the knights and burgesses acted similarly to form a House of Commons.

When Henry Tudor assumed the throne as Henry VII, he sought to consolidate his power at the expense of the other nobles. One measure he took was to create a new administrative court, known as the Star Chamber, comprised of members of his personal Council and given authority to bypass procedures established under common law (including the traditional *right* of trial by jury). Henry VII also rewarded his advisers with significant grants of lands confiscated from his opponents; and, to placate Parliament and the expanding class of merchants, he filled the treasury by invoking levies against the Roman Catholic prelates. The verdict of most historians is that he left to his son, Henry VIII, a well-run and orderly kingdom.

The French nobility, traveling a different course, emerged victorious and relatively united at the end of the Hundred Years' War. A cautious monarch, Louis XI, had assumed the French throne in 1461. His first political and expansionist successes occurred in the east arising out of his support of the Swiss against the Burgundian monarch, Charles the Bold. The defeat and death of Charles not only added new territories to the French State but also provided the opportunity to concentrate his attentions against the English in the west. With victory against the English and incorporation of much of the ancient Norman lands on the continent, the French state was rapidly evolving under a strong, centralized leadership.

Loss of the last vestiges of Norman power in France turned the attentions of the British nobility away from territorial desires on the European continent. Henry VIII now worked to consolidate royal authority in Britain. His reign would mark the beginnings of a truly English ascendancy in the global balance of power. As is well-known, a driving force behind much of Henry VIII's actions was his quest for a male heir. First to suffer was Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal of the Catholic Church and Henry's chief minister. Wolsey was dismissed when he failed to obtain papal approval for Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Finally, at the urging of Thomas Cromwell, Henry declared

himself supreme head of the Church, then approved his own divorce. The members of Parliament complied dutifully with Henry's desires and sanctioned his takeover; however, calling of the Parliament together had the unforeseen consequence of advancing the power of the nobles at the expense of royal prerogative.

The day-to-day administration of the realm was, in fact, being handled by Henry VIII's Privy Council, to which Cromwell was now appointed. Henry VIII now ventured into a new arena of power-grabbing, dissolving the monasteries and confiscating Roman Catholic Church lands. This was a program carried out with great efficiency by Cromwell and with eager support by nobles and others, anxious to acquire these new lands—for speculation as well as actual use. And, as observed by Winston Churchill, sentiment against the Church hierarchy in England was quite strong within much of the general population:

> Throughout the middle classes there was great irritation at the privileges and wealth of the Church. They resented the undue proportion of the national income engrossed by those who rendered no economic service.[165]

The attack on the Catholic Church was, however, waged by Henry VIII more on the basis of the Church's international influence and foreign establishment than because of its position of privilege. England and other Renaissance states as well, were in the process of displacing one existing state religion with another, rather than acknowledging the right of individuals to worship consistent with their own beliefs. For the institution of religion to be controlled and made useful to those who held socio-political power, religion had to be made subordinate to the State and nationalist in its doctrine. Today, with the exception of those most often described as *orthodox* or *fundamentalist* in their beliefs, we accept the idea that a person's spirituality is personal and not a matter for state interference. To accept as moral principles the principles of

cooperative individualism is to also instinctively reject law that requires individuals to practice any religion. Few societies have traveled far enough along that path toward just socio-political arrangements. In much of world, religious sects are in numerous ways subsidized by public revenue raised generally. This occurs because the believers, almost universally in the majority, have yet to broaden their understanding of *liberty* to include the liberty of others to be a non-believer and not be required to subsidize the religion of believers. Few, if any, politicians are willing to take on the cause of the non-believer.

Those of us who have a deep concern for human rights must not be sanguine over the liberty to practice our spirituality as we desire, provided we do not in the process interfere with the liberty of others to do likewise. Freedom from religion is as important to secure under law as freedom of religion. Acceptance of this fundamental principle, that freedom of conscience is a universal, human right, is infringed upon by positive law. Such measures can be formal and direct (as when one religion is advanced by privilege and others discouraged or prohibited) or subtle and more difficult to challenge (as when a sizable number of mainstream religions are advanced and the rights of individuals to practice nontraditional religions or declare themselves agnostic or atheist are adversely affected by positive law).

Throughout the community of nation-states, one very subtle but powerful privilege enjoyed by mainstream religions (and sometimes by nontraditional religions) is their ability to acquire deeds to land without appropriate compensation to the citizenry as a whole. To the extent the rental value of lands held by such religious groups is not appropriated by government for the benefit of the general population, the same fundamental moral principle previously presented (that *the earth is the birthright of all persons, equally*) is violated. The principles of *cooperative individualism* demand that provision be made under positive law to compensate the general population for privileges granted to the few; societal collection of the rental value of the land

controlled by any such group meets this requirement. Failure of government to act in accordance with this principle violates, in effect, a crucial element in the doctrine of separation of church and state, here commented on by Herbert Spencer:

> [B]y devoting a portion of its revenues or a part of the nation's property to the propagation of Christianity or any other creed, a government necessarily commits a wrong. If, as with ourselves, such government forcibly takes a citizen's money for the support of a national church [*or any church*], it is guilty of infringing the rights it ought to maintain—of trespassing upon that freedom to exercise the faculties which it was commissioned to guard.[166]

Across the Christian Eurasian continent pockets of resistance to the unilateral power of the Roman Catholic hierarchy arose, taking the path of reform that came to be known as the Protestant Reformation. A symbiotic relationship had evolved between church and state that could not be easily severed. Henry VIII set the stage for a prolonged conflict between Catholic and Protestant nobles for socio-political control of the England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Henry's confiscation of Catholic lands resulted in a significant redistribution of control over the lands and wealth within Henry's domain. At least to a modest extent, the Catholic Church had been more inclined than the nobles to allocate a portion of Church-held lands for use by those who were otherwise landless. The nobles and wealthy merchants who acquired the Church lands were interested only in personal profit and demanded rents from farmers that could only be paid when land was used commercially, for sheep or cattle, rather than for the growing of subsistence crops needed by the poor. The landed were exposed to "*temptations to grow rich quickly at the expense of others*," writes G.M. Trevelyan.[167] Their efforts to enclose the commons gradually succeeded, and grazing animals soon replaced people in the rural countryside.

Henry VIII, proving himself a more complex individual than is even suggested by his actions already examined, went on to oppose the Reformation and the Protestant demands for changes to Catholic orthodoxy. His quarrel had been with the papacy, not with his religion. More than any other result, his actions advanced the nationalist cause by his creation of a state religion independent of foreign influence. Although Protestants found a degree of support among the English nobility, the real expansion of Protestantism in Britain would not occur until Henry VIII had been succeeded by his son, Edward VI, in 1547. The reaction of the peasants to all these changes was not recorded. Some insight is gained, however, by the following excerpt from a sermon given in 1549, two years after the death of Henry VIII, by one of the more popular preachers of the day:

> You landlords, you rent-raisers, I may say you step-lords, you have for your possessions yearly too much...It is the King's honour that the commonwealth be advanced, that the dearth be provided for, and the commodities of this realm so employed, as it may be to the settling of his subjects on work and keeping them from idleness. If the King's honour, as some men say, standeth in the great multitude of people, then these graziers, enclosers, and rent-raisers are hinderers of the King's honour; for whereas have been a great many householders and inhabitants, there is now but a shepherd and his dog. My lords and masters, such proceedings do intend plainly to make of the yeomanry slavery. The enhancing and rearing goe all to your private commodity and wealth.[168]

Henry VIII and the nobles obviously cared little or not at all about the interests or concerns of the *yeomanry* as rents were increased and the commons enclosed. They were far too concerned with their own pecuniary interests to consider the long-term effects of their actions. Not surprisingly, this would eventually lead to even deeper upheavals in the balance of power in Britain than the conflict over a state religion. The positive law of the State in Britain underwent significant

modification in order to sanction titleholdings in land as individual property. A new statute of wills, for example, gave every landowner the right to pass title, and the creation of trusts came into practice in order to circumvent common law. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, in fact, common law had been completely reorganized into a codified system; the nobles were then able to seize and enclose the commons with little resistance, turning the land into pasture for sheep and displacing the peasant farmers.

Wool, rather than agriculture, was now becoming the source of vast new fortunes for the landed; and, in many counties as much as one-third of the arable land was turned into pasture for grazing. The landed aristocracy had not only benefited by Henry VIII's confiscation of the monasteries, their estates were also increasing in size and value at the expense of the feudal commons. The effect on wealth distribution is summarized by British historian, E.M. Leonard and provides additional support to Trevelyan's conclusions:

> Inclosure proceedings as conducted in England conduced to the destruction of...rural society. The labourers gradually ceased to own or occupy land; the farms increased in size; the possession of land became more exclusively the privilege of the rich; and an ever-increasing proportion of the people left the country for the towns.[169]

As a consequence, the peasant population absorbed between 1560 and 1630 a 250 percent increase in rents charged for access to farmland.[170] The rapidity of change enveloping socio-political arrangements and institutions caused numerous disruptions, and the consequences were just beginning to be felt by the general population.

The Moneyed Economy Arrives

During the sixteenth century, the arrival of large quantities of gold and silver from the Americas upset a very delicate equilibrium across much of the Eurasian continent. One consequence was a shift from subsistence farming to an export trade in agricultural goods. Under these conditions, only a significant addition to the supply of land under cultivation would have acted as a check on prices. With such a large portion of the arable land in Britain and elsewhere being converted to pasture, food prices inevitably increased.

Between 1560 and 1630 the price of grain rose fourfold, causing an equal increase in the price of cattle. Timber and other building materials rose threefold, and even wool and other textiles doubled in price. One view of what occurred is described conventionally as a classic form of inflation; namely, *too much money chasing too few goods.* A more appropriate description of what occurred was a failure of price to act as a clearing device where the land market was concerned. While production (i.e., goods) must be sold while they still have a useful economic life and price is a function of supply/demand relationships (including the supply of accurate information about markets), the same is not generally true of land as a commodity. In fact, one tactic used by farmers to maintain the highest potential productivity of land—its useful economic life—is to rotate cultivation from field to field, allowing some fields to remain fallow while nature regenerates fertility. On the other hand, as more and more land is withdrawn from cultivation for grazing, the tendency is for the price of wool to drop. Operating against this tendency, however, was the reduction in the quantity of land under cultivation, which made grains and other foodstuffs scarce relative to local and external demand. The impact of these changes in British land tenure have been closely examined by historians; in 1953, Eric Kerridge provided a detailed analysis of the movement of agricultural rents, concluding:

There can be little doubt that the profits of capitalist farmers increased in the course of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Even though the farmer's profit increment might be temporarily forfeited on the taking of a new lease, the rents paid by sitting tenants were static for long periods during which the price of their produce rose considerably. Even though the rents paid for new takings kept pace with prices, or even if they led them, the average rents paid by farmers as a whole lagged behind the prices of farm produce. Moreover, long leases enabled farmers to undertake improvements and increase their yields. All told, this would seem to have been a period of prosperity for the substantial cultivators.

Yet, although farming profit was partly at the expense of rent, it by no means follows that landlords were worse off. As far as can be judged...the gross rent receipts...rose about equally with the price of farm produce, but more than the prices of building materials, textiles and industrial goods. In addition, the price of timber and wood sold by landlords increased faster than most industrial prices.[171]

To an increasing extent, food came under the same dysfunctional market conditions as had applied to luxury goods; supplies went to the highest bidders, and those who had little or no incomes and no ability to produce their own food were forced to rely on charity, on crime, on rebellion or on migration, to survive. The struggle by peasants for access to land, generally referred to by economic historians by the term *agrarian discontent*, has never disappeared and is as much a point of societal unrest today as ever. And, as continues today, the concentrated control of land by a politically-powerful landed elite forced ever more people into the cities and towns in search of some means of employment. From this point on, the cities of Eurasia became home to a growing population of urban poor struggling to survive under horrible conditions. Private titleholdings, the enclosure of communal fields and the arrival of large-scale farming techniques rapidly displaced the rural peasant and destroyed the feudal equilibrium between producer and non-producer. The parallel mercantilistic marriage

between entrepreneurs and the State provided no replacement equilibrium for those who now migrated to the towns and cities.

The number of impoverished in Britain rapidly increased, reaching nearly half of the total population by the late seventeenth century.[172] Remarkably under the circumstances, this same century marked the emergence of England, Wales and Scotland combined as a core power, with Ireland a periphery appendage. Great Britain was the result, forged out of conquest and, ultimately, a population reconciled to English dominance. Surrounded by the sea, Great Britain found in trade and the resettlement of a large segment of its population the means by which to challenge its continental rivals for supreme position among the hierarchy of European nation-states.

By the seventeenth century, the Spanish empire, still the dominant expansionist power on the continent, was beginning to crumble under the weight of domestic problems. Prices for both agricultural and manufactured goods in Spain had by the end of the sixteenth century increased five times from what they had been in 1520. Spanish merchants suffered under the weight of heavy taxation and were unable to compete with much success against the Dutch or British. Huge quantities of gold and silver brought from the Americas were used to finance Spain's religious wars against the Turks, diverting vast quantities of goods from the general population to the military. Added to this, Ferdinand and Isabella exempted the landed aristocracy from taxation in order to win their loyalty and prevent resistance to their external adventures. "*The aristocracy, together with the higher ecclesiastics,*" writes L.S. Stravrianos, "*owned about 95-97 per cent of the land, while constituting only 2 per cent of the population. Thus, 95 per cent of all Spaniards were landless.*[173] Virtually all government revenue raised from taxation came from the 98 percent of the population who were either attached to the land as serfs—permitted to keep for themselves only enough of what they produced for a bare existence—or were among Spain's own urban poor. As the quantity of treasure coming

from the Americas diminished, the Spanish monarchs were compelled to do something in order to pay for their luxuries and to maintain the empire. The landed were ordered by the crown to put their land to pasture for sheep in an effort to secure needed export revenues. As a consequence of this decrease in land under cultivation and the occurrence of prolonged drought, periodically from the fifteenth century on the country experienced severe famine, and wheat had to be imported to prevent mass starvation. Similar occurrences were experienced in Portugal, Italy and Germany—aggravated as always by the destruction of crops and capital goods during warfare, as well as the infusion of large quantities of gold and silver coins, without a corresponding increase in the production of consumable goods.

In France as well the poor and merchant classes were heavily taxed to support to military needs of the State and the luxuries of the monarchy and aristocracy. Ever present was the mass poverty caused by the transfer of land to private titleholders and the confiscation by the landed of wealth as rent from producers.

Poised For the Age Of Discovery And Enlightenment

The aggregate result of actions taken by those who held power was to pull Renaissance Europe toward consolidation and the establishment of nation-states. At the same time, the spread of knowledge within the transnational community contributed to a rising individualistic spirit. An age of serious and objective scientific investigations was beginning, greatly facilitated by the development of movable type during the middle of the fifteenth century. By the early seventeenth century, the increase in literacy and widespread availability of the Greek and Roman classics (in addition to the Bible) suggested to the English philosopher, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) that knowledge was emerging to replace raw aggression as the true source of power in the world:

> We see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power, or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years, or more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities have been decayed and demolished?[174]

Scientific and philosophical societies were forming throughout Eurasia, fostering the creation of this transnational intellectual community operating outside the control of any individual governing elite. Thomas Aquinas had been among the vanguard of these Renaissance thinkers, and his works were now being studied along with those of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. Questions were being raised about the nature of power and the legitimacy of individual claims of the right to rule over others. Aquinas argued the need for power to be concentrated in one, benevolent ruler, a need consistent with what he reasoned as *natural law* and our social nature. Benevolence was to be the exception and not the rule.

Science and its technological outpourings advanced within this socio-political environment dominated by the consolidating monarchies, creating a symbiotic though not always harmonious relationship between the knowledge-bearers, the rulers and the ruled. The Florentine, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), and others of his generation came to serve the European nobles as engineers and architects, enjoying as well their patronage in the encouragement of the arts. The investigations and theoretical work of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), a Pole, overturned the accepted conventional wisdom relating to the physical world (displacing Ptolemy's earth-centered system of the universe); the Danish mathematician, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), showed that the planets moved in elliptical orbits and not in circles. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), an Italian, exposed himself to attack from the Church hierarchy by openly professing the Copernican system. Conventional wisdom was under attack on many fronts by

these scientific humanists; the social order was under attack by monarchists, idealists and reformers alike. Few had more influence than Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), who utilized his understanding of history and his personal experience as chancellor of the Florentine Republic to provide Renaissance rulers with a clear guide on how to acquire and hold power. Going in a wholly different direction, the Dutch theologian, Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), made a skilled use of satire to challenge the spiritual basis on which such power was exercised.

Once subjected to open debate and criticism—whether for altruistic or self-serving reasons—the old order began to crumble. Few of the individuals involved realized that tremendous changes were afoot, and those who held power did all they could to prevent any changes that diminished their power. The established order responded to these challenges by relentless suppression and by patronage to those scholars who argued the case for the status quo. Given the evidence, Bronowski and Mazlish offer a cynical view of how political philosophy interfered then, and continues to interfere now, with the objective investigation into human behavior:

> [P]olitical views are in part held for the practical reason that they support one's real, i.e., power, position. Political ideologies ought to be understood, therefore, not merely as abstract, logical systems, but in relation to the people and the party who hold them as rationalizations for their sectarian desires.
>
> Thus, the history of ideas must also be the history of the situations in which ideas have developed.[175]

None of the emergent Renaissance nation-states dealt constructively with the injustices caused by the concentration of power and wealth into the hands of the few. These arrangements were not even challenged by the German reformer, Martin Luther, (1483-1546) or his Swiss counterpart, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) in their efforts to cleanse the

Church of its corruptions, pomp and ceremonies. Strict behavioral codes and an unshakable belief in predestination marked the religious fervor of John Calvin (1509-1564), a Frenchmen; and, the influence of his teachings eventually spread beyond France to Holland, Scotland, and England. Jesuit reformers also contributed to the transnational movement by their establishment of new schools throughout Europe and their teaching of humanistic principles. *Transnational* scientific and philosophical investigations also fueled the fires of an activist fringe. The emergence of the transnational community could not be stopped, and even those who held the reigns of power were captured by the promise of the marvels to be discovered by investigations into the material world. Where moral philosophy was concerned, the primary beneficiaries of privilege eventually learned that a far more effective strategy for defending the status quo than suppression was to employ the moral philosophers in service to the State.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Spanish state had become under Philip II a virtual instrument of terror wielded against heretics of all sorts. A Spanish naval victory in 1571 over the Turks in the eastern Mediterranean firmly secured Christian control over the western Mediterranean; on the other hand, Philip II failed in his attempts to secure the thrones of France and England for Catholic monarchs. England's queen, Elizabeth, added fuel to the burning fires by providing assistance to Dutch Protestants in their war against Spain for independence. This, of course, precipitated Philip's dispatch of his naval fleet in 1588 on its ill-fated invasion of England. Despite the vast quantity of gold and silver still coming from the Americas, Spain did not have the population, the socio-political infrastructure or the resources to regain its momentum after the loss of this Armada.

This period of warfare in Europe ended in 1648 with what is known as the Peace of Westphalia. Catholic Spain and the Hapsburgs (spelled *Habsburgs* in the German language) of central Europe ceded territory to France and to Sweden, and several German princes were given

independence from the Holy Roman empire. Another result was that the countermovement toward participatory government gained a strong foothold when the seven northern Dutch provinces gained independence; these United Provinces formed a new republic that very quickly established itself as a global economic power and center of transnational thought and enterprise. Governed for a decade by a weak executive and a decentralized structure that left each province virtually independent, the Dutch experienced tremendous success until attacked by French forces in 1672. Thereafter, the Dutch felt compelled to put their faith in a strong central monarchy to ward off external threats.

Creation of nation-states, whether participatory or under a monarchy, also stimulated a strong sense of nationalism among the peoples of Europe. Rich and poor alike demonstrated a personal commitment, not necessarily to governments, but to love of *country*. One of the most moving statements in this regard is the following passage credited to William Shakespeare in *Richard II*:

This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise, ...
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea, ...
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

Some 3.5 million people in the British Isles—governed, pushed and led by a few thousand members of a landed aristocracy and a class of mercantilist financiers—were about to be unleashed onto the global arena. The socio-political structure under which they lived would be replicated in lands as yet sparsely populated at the dawn of the seventeenth century. In other places, mercenary armies and a national military would enforce a British-dominated hierarchy in which a few chosen indigenous figureheads prospered while the overwhelming

majority of people were exploited mercilessly. The new era of empire-building had been initiated by the Spanish and Portuguese but would quickly expand to incorporate the Dutch, British, Russians and Germans. The *core* group of empire-builders would challenge one another for more than three centuries, remaining a relatively cohesive force until the end of the First World War. Their aggressive adventurism would disrupt the natural development of long-standing civilizations in the Americas, in Africa and the Asian half of the world.