

The Prince

Niccolò Machiavelli

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

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

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

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Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dedication

To his Magnificence Lorenzo Di Piero De' Medici

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After six or seven years of this, Machiavelli

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

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

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

Part I

Kinds of principality How to get and retain them

Chapter 1

Different kinds of principalities, and how to acquire them

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

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

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

onto—the kingdom of Spain.

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

Chapter 2

Hereditary principalities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

what Machiavelli is getting at: ??

Chapter 3

Mixed principalities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let us enjoy the benefits of the passing of time

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If anyone objects:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 5

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We must bear in mind that nothing is

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 8

Principality obtained through wickedness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some may wonder how a man like Agathocles, after

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

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

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

Chapter 9

Civil principality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This kind of prince is most at risk when he is passing from •civil to •absolute government. Let us look at why this is so. The prince in question rules either personally

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

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

such times

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

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

Chapter 10

How to measure the strength of a principality

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

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

I have discussed **(1)** in chapter 6 and will return to it

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 11

Ecclesiastical principalities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part II

Other aspects of political power

Chapter 12

Different kinds of armies; Mercenaries

Now that I have •given a detailed account of the kinds of principality that I set out to discuss, •have paid some attention to the causes of their flourishing or failing, and have •shown the methods by which many men have tried to acquire them and retain them, I turn to a less detailed account of how each kind of principality can be attacked and defended. I have spoken of how necessary it is for a prince to have firm foundations •for his power•; otherwise he will go to ruin. The chief foundations for all states—new states as well as old or composite ones—are good laws and good armies. Because a poorly armed state can't have good laws, and a well-armed state will have good laws, I can set the laws aside and address myself to the armies.

The army with which a prince defends his state will be either

- his own, or
- mercenaries, or
- auxiliaries •i.e. soldiers belonging to and commanded by some other prince•, or
- some mixture of the above.

Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous, and any ruler who relies on them to defend his state will be insecure and in peril; because they are disunited, ambitious, undisciplined, and disloyal; courageous when they are with their friends, cowardly in the presence of the enemy; they have no fear of God •and don't keep their promises. [Although

he doesn't say so, Machiavelli is now talking only about mercenaries. Auxiliary armies will be his topic in the next chapter.] With them as his army, the only way a prince can hold off his own ruin is by holding off any military attack; in peace one is robbed by •them, and in war by •the enemy. Why? Because they have no affection for you, and no reason to go to battle except the small wages you pay them, and those aren't enough to make them willing to die for you! They're ready enough to be your soldiers while you aren't at war with anyone, but when war comes they either desert or run away on the battlefield. It shouldn't be hard to convince the reader of this, because Italy's downfall has been caused purely by the long period of reliance on mercenaries. For a while they looked good, and actually won some battles against other mercenaries; but when the foreign armies showed up, the mercenaries were revealed in their true colours. That's how it was possible for Charles VIII of France to seize Italy 'with chalk in hand'. [The phrase is a joke by Pope Alexander VI, suggesting that the French didn't need to fight, and only had to go through the towns putting a chalk mark on each house they wanted as a billet for soldiers.] Savonarola told us that our sins were the cause of Italy's troubles, and he was right; but the trouble came not from the sins he was thinking of but from the ones I have described. They were the sins of princes, and •it is fitting that• the princes have also suffered the penalty.

I want to show more clearly how unsatisfactory mercenary armies are. If a given mercenary commander is *virtuoso* [see Glossary] then you can't trust him because he will be busy pursuing power for himself either by turning against you, his employer, or by attacking people whom you don't want to be attacked; and if he isn't *virtuoso*, his incompetence will work against you in the usual way. Someone might object:

What you have said about mercenary commanders holds for *anyone* with soldiers under his command, whether mercenary or not.

The implication of this is that it doesn't matter what kind of soldiers a state's army has. I reply that it matters greatly, and that (1) when armed force is to be used by a prince then the prince ought to go in person and put himself in command of the army. And (2) when a republic goes to war, it has to send its citizens as commanders; when one is sent who doesn't turn out satisfactorily, he should be recalled; and when a commander turns out to be very capable, there should be laws that forbid him to exceed his assigned authority. Experience has shown princes and republics with their own armies doing extremely well, and mercenaries doing nothing but harm. And it is harder for a citizen to seize control of a republic that has its own army than to do this with a republic that relies on foreign troops.

Examples of the advantages of a republic's having its own army: Rome and Sparta stood for many ages armed and independent. The Swiss today are completely armed and entirely independent.

Examples of the troubles republics get into when they rely on mercenaries: In ancient times, the Carthaginians were attacked by their mercenary soldiers after the first war with the Romans, although the mercenaries were commanded by Carthaginian citizens. The Thebans, after the death of their general Epaminondas, gave Philip of Macedon

the command of their army, and after victory he took away their liberty.

When Duke Filippo died, the Milanese engaged Francesco Sforza to lead their troops against the Venetians. He defeated the Venetians at Caravaggio, and then allied himself with them to crush his employers the Milanese. His father, having been engaged as an army commander by Queen Johanna of Naples, left her unprotected, so that to save her kingdom she had to appeal to the King of Aragon for help. It may be objected:

There are striking counter-examples to your thesis about the danger of hiring mercenaries. The Venetians and Florentines extended their dominions by the use of mercenaries, and their commanders didn't make themselves princes, but defended their employers.

I reply that in this matter the Florentines were favoured by chance: of the *virtuosi* commanders who might have been threats, some weren't victorious, some met with opposition, and others turned their ambitions elsewhere. [That is what the text says, but Machiavelli's only examples concern mercenaries who met with opposition and therefore redirected their ambitions.] One who wasn't victorious was John Hawkwood; and since he didn't conquer, his loyalty can't be proved; but everyone will agree that if he had conquered, the Florentines would have been at his mercy. Sforza had Braccio's people always against him, so the two mercenary leaders kept one another in check. Sforza turned his ambition to Lombardy; Braccio went against the Church and the kingdom of Naples. But let us look at what happened quite recently. The Florentines appointed as their army commander Paulo Vitelli, an extremely shrewd man who from being an ordinary citizen had risen to great prominence. There's no denying that if this man had captured Pisa on their behalf, the Florentines would

have had to retain his services—because if their enemies hired him as a commander they (the Florentines) would be lost—and if they did keep him they would have had to obey him, .i.e. there would be nothing to stop him from installing himself as their prince. As for the Venetians: if we look at their achievements we see that they fought confidently and gloriously so long as they made war using their own men, with nobles and armed commoners fighting valiantly. That was in sea-battles. When they began to fight on land, they forsook this *virtù* and followed the Italian custom of hiring mercenaries. In the early stages of their expansion on land they had little to fear from their mercenary commanders because •they didn't have much territory for the commanders to eye greedily, and because •of their great reputation which will have scared off any mercenary who wanted to go up against them. But when their domain expanded, as it did under Carmignuola, they got a taste of the trouble that mercenaries can bring. They saw what a *virtuoso* soldier he was (they beat the Duke of Milan under his leadership); but they also saw that he was becoming lukewarm about the war against Milan, and were afraid that he wouldn't bring them any more victories because he was no longer victory-minded. So they didn't want to keep him on their payroll, but they wouldn't—*couldn't*—just dismiss him, because that would threaten them with the loss of all the territory they had gained, the threat coming from an enemy whose army was commanded by the able Carmignuola. To keep themselves safe, therefore, their only option was to kill him. They recalled him to Venice for consultations, then accused him of treason, and tried and beheaded him. After him they had several mercenary commanders [Machiavelli names three of them], who didn't create a fear of their winning victories and then getting out of hand because they usually lost—as happened at

the battle of Vailà, where in one battle they lost everything they had acquired through eight centuries of effort. The use of mercenaries brings a widely-spaced series of slow, minor victories, and a rapid rattle of large defeats. These examples concern Italy, which has been ruled for many years by mercenaries; and I want to discuss more fully the problem that they raise, because a grasp of its origins and its growth will contribute to finding a solution.

The essential background facts are that in recent times •the empire has been repudiated in Italy, •the Pope has acquired more temporal power, and •Italy has been divided up into more states. Many of the great cities took up arms against their nobles, who had ruled oppressively with the emperor's support; the Church sided with the rebels, as a way of increasing its temporal power; and in many other towns private citizens became princes. The upshot of this was that Italy fell partly into the hands of the Church and of republics; the Church consisted of *priests* and the republic of *civilians*; and both started to hire foreigners to do their fighting.

The first successful mercenary commander was Alberigo da Conio, of Romagna. It was through learning from him that Braccio and Sforza and others were in their time the arbiters of Italy. After these came all the other mercenary commanders down to the present time. And the result of all their *virtù* has been that Italy has been overrun by Charles [France], robbed by Louis [France], ravaged by Ferdinand [Spain], and insulted by the Swiss.

[A fundamental fact about the mercenary commanders, Machiavelli goes on to explain, is that their armies contained far more cavalry than infantry—sometimes a ratio of 10 to 1. The reason was that each soldier had to be paid and fed, so that there was reason to keep the sheer number of soldiers down. More territory can be controlled (and more respect

gained) with a given number of cavalry than with the same number of infantry; therefore. . . etc. He continues:] The mercenary commanders also did everything they could to lessen fatigue and danger to themselves and their soldiers; in battle they didn't kill, but merely took prisoners whom they then freed without even demanding ransom. [When a mercenary force was besieging a town defended by another mercenary

force, Machiavelli says, neither side was willing to attack at night; the besiegers didn't protect their encampments with stockades and ditches; and mercenary armies didn't campaign in winter. He continues:] All these things were permitted by *their* military rules, which they devised, as I have said, to enable them to escape danger and hard work. And so they have brought Italy to slavery and humiliation.

Chapter 13

Auxiliaries, mixed armies, citizen armies

Auxiliary armies—which are what you have when you call on some other ruler to come with his forces to help you to defend your town—are the other useless kind of armed force. Pope Julius tried them very recently: having seen how miserably his mercenaries performed in his Ferrara campaign, he turned to auxiliaries, and arranged with King Ferdinand of Spain to come to his assistance with men and arms. Such an army may be useful and good in itself, but they are almost never helpful to a ruler who asks for them to come across to help him: if they lose, he loses too; if they win, he is their prisoner.

There are plenty of examples in ancient history, but I want to stay with Pope Julius II's obviously dangerous decision to put himself at the mercy of a foreigner in his desire to get Ferrara. But his good *fortuna* brought a •third element into the equation, saving him from the likely consequences of his rash choice: his •Spanish auxiliaries were defeated at Ravenna; •the Swiss, to his and everyone's surprise, rose

up and drove out the •French conquerors; so Julius didn't become a prisoner of his enemies, because they fled, or of his auxiliaries, because they hadn't given him his victory. •But that was incredible good luck; it doesn't make the Pope's behaviour sensible. When the defenceless Florentines sent 10,000 Frenchmen to take Pisa •on their behalf, they exposed themselves to more danger than they had ever been in before. The Emperor of Constantinople, wanting to fend off his neighbours, brought 10,000 Turks into Greece; when the war was over, those Turks didn't want to leave; this was the start of Greece's domination by the infidels.

Who *should* use auxiliaries, then? Someone who wants to lose battles! Auxiliaries are much more risky than mercenaries, because with them the disaster is ready-made. An auxiliary army is united in its obedience to someone other than you. When a mercenary army has won your battle for you, it will need time and a good opportunity to do you any harm; they don't constitute a tightly bound unit—you chose

them, *you* pay them—and the outsider whom *you* have put in command of them won't immediately have enough authority to harm you. What is most dangerous about mercenaries is their reluctance to fight; what is most dangerous about auxiliaries is their *virtù*. [This comes close to saying: Mercenaries are dangerous because they won't fight, and auxiliaries are dangerous because they will.]

So the wise prince has always avoided mercenaries and auxiliaries, relying instead on his own men, preferring a defeat with them to a 'victory' with foreign troops, because he doesn't think that that would be a real *victory*. I never hesitate to cite Cesare Borgia and his actions. This duke entered Romagna with auxiliaries—the only soldiers he had were French—and with them he captured Imola and Forlì; but he came to think that these forces weren't reliable, so he turned to the Orsini and Vitelli troops, mercenaries, thinking them to be safer; but they turned out to be dangerous also, unreliable in battle and disloyal; so he got rid of them—disbanding the troops and killing their leaders—and turned to his own men. The difference between a home-grown army and those others can easily be seen in what happened to the duke's reputation as he moved from the French to the Orsini and Vitelli, and from them to relying on his own soldiers, whose loyalty to him increased as time went on. He was never esteemed more highly than when everyone saw that he was complete master of his own army.

I planned to stay with recent events in Italy, but I can't omit Hiero of Syracuse, whom I have already mentioned in a passage [page 12] where I reported that the Syracusans gave him command of their army in the third century BCE. He soon discovered that the mercenary element in this army was useless, because it was led—except at the very top—by officers much like our recent mercenary commanders. He didn't think he could retain the services

of these mercenaries, or disband them, so he arranged for them to be cut to pieces. [To attack 'barbarians' who had occupied Messina, Hiero brought his mercenaries and also the citizen component of his army; pretending that the latter were going to attack from a different angle, he sent the mercenaries in, unsupported, and they were slaughtered by the barbarians.] From then onwards he made war using his own forces and not foreigners.

A certain Old Testament episode is relevant here. David volunteered to fight the Philistine champion Goliath, and Saul tried to encourage him by letting him use his (Saul's) own armour. David tried it on, and immediately rejected it, saying that he couldn't use it and wanted to meet the enemy with his own sling and knife. The moral is that someone else's armour will fall from your back, or weigh you down, or hamper your movements.

Charles VII of France by *fortuna* and *virtù* liberated France from the English; and he saw the need to be armed with forces of his own, and passed laws to establish a national army with cavalry and infantry. His son Louis XI later abolished the infantry and began to enlist Swiss mercenary soldiers. That was the first of a series of blunders which, as anyone can now see, led that kingdom into great danger. Raising the reputation of the Swiss, he has depressed the standing of his own army: he has disbanded the infantry, forcing his cavalry to depend on foreign infantry; and they are now so accustomed to fighting along with Swiss that they seem not to be able to win any battles without them. The upshot is that the French cannot stand against the Swiss, and they can't do well against others without the help of the Swiss. The armies of the French, then, have become *mixed*—partly mercenary and partly national, i.e. composed of citizen soldiers. Such a mixed force is much better than a purely mercenary one or one composed entirely of auxiliaries; but it is nowhere near as good as a purely citizen army. The

French example proves this: the kingdom of France would have been invincible if Charles's military system had been developed or at least maintained.

But men are so lacking in prudence that they will start on something that looks good at the beginning, without noticing that there is poison hidden in it—compare what I said above [page 5] about diagnosing tuberculosis.

A prince who can't spot trouble the moment it is born—and very few people *can*—is not truly wise. What *started* the downfall of the Roman Empire? It was their starting to employ Goths as mercenaries. From that time the Roman Empire began to weaken, its *virtù* being drained off it and into the Goths.

I conclude that a principality that doesn't have its own

army isn't safe: it is entirely dependent on *fortuna*, having left itself with no *virtù* to defend it in times of trouble. Wise men have always held that 'nothing is as uncertain and unstable as a reputation for power that isn't based on one's own strength' [Tacitus]. What I mean by 'one's own' army is an army composed of one's own subjects or citizens or dependents; any others are mercenaries or auxiliaries. The right way to organize one's armed forces can easily be worked out from how the four men I have discussed—Cesare Borgia, Hiero, Charles VII, David—went about things, and from considering how Philip (the father of Alexander the Great) and many republics and princes have armed and organized their states, procedures that I wholeheartedly endorse.

Chapter 14

A prince's military duties

A prince, then, oughtn't to devote any of his serious time or energy to anything but war and how to wage it. This is the only thing that is appropriate for a ruler, and it has so much *virtù* that it not only enables those who are •born princes to stay on their thrones but also, often, enables ordinary citizens to •become princes. And on the other hand it's clear that princes who have given more thought to life's refinements than to arms have lost their states. . . .

Francesco Sforza, a private person with his own armed force, became Duke of Milan; and his sons by neglecting military matters went from being dukes to being private

persons. Apart from the other evils that come from having no military force, there is the contempt of others; and this is one of the disgraceful things that a prince should guard himself against, as I will show later on [in chapter 19, starting on page 39]. There's simply no comparison between an armed man and an unarmed one; and it is not reasonable to expect an armed man to be willing to obey one who is unarmed. Nor is it reasonable to think that an unarmed man will be secure when he is surrounded by armed servants [= 'soldiers']; with their contempt and his suspicions they won't be able to work well together. [The preceding sentence seems to warn the prince

against moving among his soldiers without carrying a sword; the next sentence warns him against inattentiveness to military matters. Perhaps one is meant as a kind of metaphor for the other.] So a prince who does not understand the art of war. . . .can't be respected by his soldiers and can't trust them.

A prince, therefore, should never stop thinking about war, working at it even harder in times of peace than in wartime. He can do this in two ways—physically and mentally.

Physical preparations for war: As well as keeping his men well organized and drilled, the prince should spend a lot of time hunting. Through this he can harden his body to strenuous exercise, and also learn about the terrain:

- how the mountains rise,
- how the valleys open out,
- how the plains lie, and
- the nature of rivers and marshes.

All this should be studied with the greatest care, because it gives the prince knowledge that is useful in two ways. A better grasp of the terrain of his own country will equip him to make a better job of defending it. And, secondly, his knowledge and observation of •that territory will make it easier for him to understand •others. (The hills, valleys, plains, rivers and marshes of Tuscany, for example, are quite like those of other provinces.). . . . A prince who lacks this skill lacks the main thing a commander needs, namely the ability to find his enemy, to decide where to pitch camp, to lead his army on route marches, to plan battles, to besiege towns to his advantage.

One of the things for which historians praised Philopomen (prince of the Achaeans) was the fact that in times of peace he thought about nothing but war. When he was

out in the countryside with friends he would often stop and invite them into a discussion:

- If the enemy should be up on that hill and we were here with our army, which side would be better placed?
- How could we attack him without breaking ranks?
- If he tried to retreat, how could we cut him off?

Along the way he would talk to them about all the situations that an army might be in, listen to their opinions, and present and defend his own; so that by these continual discussions he was prepared to cope with any emergency that might arise in time of war.

Mental preparations for war: The prince should study historical accounts of the actions of great men, to see how they conducted themselves in war; he should study the causes of their victories and defeats, so as to avoid the defeats and imitate the victories; and above all he should model himself on some great man of the past, a man who no doubt modelled *his* conduct on some still earlier example, as it is said Alexander the Great modelled himself on Achilles, Caesar on Alexander, and Scipio on Cyrus. Any reader of Xenophon's life of Cyrus will see how much Scipio profited from imitating him—how he conformed himself in honesty, affability, humanity and generosity to what Xenophon reported of Cyrus.

A wise prince will follow some such rules as these. He won't idle away times of peace; rather, he will use them as an opportunity to increase his resources to manage times of adversity, so that if his *fortuna* changes it will find him ready to fight back.

Chapter 15

Things for which men, especially princes, are praised or blamed

The next topic is: how a prince should conduct himself towards his subjects and his friends. Many others have written about this, so I suppose it will seem rash of me to go into it again, especially given the difference between what I shall say and what others have said. But I am not apologetic about this: my aim is to write things that will be useful the reader who understands them; so I find it more appropriate to pursue the real truth of the matter than to repeat what people have imagined about it. Many writers have dreamed up republics and principalities such as have never been seen or known in the real world. And attending to them is dangerous, because the gap between how men live and how they ought to live is so wide that any prince who thinks in terms not of how people *do* behave but of how they *ought* to behave will destroy his power rather than maintaining it. A man who tries to act virtuously will soon come to grief at the hands of the unscrupulous people surrounding him. Thus, a prince who wants to keep his power must learn how to act immorally, using or not using this skill according to necessity.

Setting aside fantasies about princes, therefore, and attending to reality, I say that when men are being discussed—and especially princes, because they are more prominent—it is largely in terms of qualities they have that bring them blame or praise. For example,

- (1) one is said to be free-spending, another miserly,
- (2) one is described as generous, another as grasping,
- (3) one as merciful, another as cruel,
- (4) one as keeping his word, another as breaking it,
- (5) one bold and brave, another effeminate and cowardly,
- (6) one as friendly, another as arrogant,
- (7) one as chaste, another as promiscuous,
- (8) one as straightforward, another as devious,
- (9) one as firm, another as variable,
- (10) one as grave, another as frivolous,
- (11) one as religious, another as unbelieving,

and so on. We'll all agree that it would be a fine thing for a prince to have all the 'good' qualities in that list; but the conditions of human life make it impossible to have and exercise all those qualities; so a prince has to be wary in avoiding the vices that would cost him his state. He should also avoid as far as he can the vices that would *not* cost him his state, but he can't fully succeed in this, so he shouldn't worry too much about giving himself over to them. And he needn't be anxious about getting a bad reputation for vices without which it would be hard for him to save his state: all things considered, there's always something that looks like *virtù* but would bring him to ruin if he adopted it, and something that looks like vice but would make him safe and prosperous.

Chapter 16

The free spender and the tightwad

[•This chapter primarily concerns item **(1)** of the list on page 33, but a few turns of phrase indicate that Machiavelli thinks of item **(2)** as coming into it also. The next chapter goes straight to **(3)**. •Most (though not all) previous translations use ‘generosity’ to translate Machiavelli’s *liberalità*, but that is wrong—in one way too narrow, in another too broad, for what Machiavelli is talking about.]

Starting with item **(1)** in the list on page 33: it’s nice to be regarded as a free spender; but this is dangerous for a prince, as I now explain. If you spend freely in an entirely virtuous way, i.e. so that nobody knows about it, that won’t do you any good—indeed you’ll be criticised as a tightwad. So anyone who wants to have a reputation as a free-spender will devote all his wealth to this end, and will eventually have to burden his subjects with taxes and do everything he can to get money. This will make his subjects hate him, and in his poverty he won’t have anyone’s respect. Thus, by spreading his money around he has offended many and rewarded few; he is now very vulnerable, and at the first touch of danger he will go down. If he sees this and tries to change course, he’ll get a reputation for being a miser.

Because a prince can’t publicly exercise this *virtù* of free-spending without paying a high price for it, if he is wise he won’t be afraid of being thought to be a miser, because no-one will think that about him when they see that by reining in his spending he leaves himself with the resources needed •to defend himself against all attacks, and •to tackle various projects without burdening his people. His management of his wealth, therefore, works well for the countless people from whom he doesn’t take anything and

badly for the small group of people to whom he doesn’t give anything, and to whom he would have given gifts if he had followed the free-spending route.

Everything great that has been done in our time was the work of someone who was regarded as a miser; other people’s attempts at great things have all failed. Pope Julius II was helped towards the papacy by his reputation as a free spender; but after becoming pope he dropped that in order to be capable of making war. The present King of France has conducted many wars without imposing any extra tax burden on his subjects, because his additional war-time expenses have been covered by his cost-cutting measures. The present King of Spain wouldn’t have undertaken (let alone succeeded in) so many campaigns if he had had a reputation for splashing his money around. . . . Miserliness is one of the vices that enable a prince to govern.

It may be objected:

Caesar splashed his wealth around en route to the top position in Rome; and many others have reached the highest positions by spending freely and being known to do so.

I reply: Either you are •a prince already or you are •on the way to becoming one. If you have arrived, this open-handedness with wealth is dangerous, as I have shown; but if you are still on the way, you need to be regarded as free with your wealth. Caesar was one of those who wanted to become the prince in Rome; but if he had survived after coming out on top, and if he hadn’t then cut back on his expenses, he would have

the next three words: destrutto quello imperio.

which could mean: destroyed his power.

but could instead mean: destroyed the empire.

A possible renewed objection:

Many princes who have done great things with armies have been regarded as very free with their wealth.

In answering you I distinguish two cases: **(i)** A prince is lavish with wealth that is his own and his subjects'; **(ii)** A prince is lavish with the wealth of others. If **(i)**, he ought to be sparing; if **(ii)**, he ought to take every opportunity to spend freely. As for the prince who leads his army in a campaign supported by pillage, plunder, and extortion: he has at his

disposal wealth that belongs to others, and he had better spread it around or his soldiers will desert. . . .

Open-handedness with wealth *eats itself up* faster than anything: the more you do it, the less you have to do it with. So you end up poor and despised, or else (because of the means you took to avoid poverty) rapacious and hated. A prince should, above all, protect himself from being •despised and •hated; and open-handedness with wealth leads you to •both. So it is wiser to have a reputation for miserliness, which brings criticism without hatred, than to be led by the pursuit of a reputation for open-handedness to get a reputation that brings criticism and hatred.

Chapter 17

Cruelty and mercy.

Is it better to be loved than feared?

Coming now to item **(3)** in the list of qualities on page 33, I say that every prince should want to be regarded as merciful and not cruel; but he should be careful not to mismanage his mercy! Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; yet his 'cruelty' restored order to Romagna, unified it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. When you come to think about it, you'll see him as being much more ·truly· merciful than the Florentines who, to avoid a reputation for cruelty, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed. [In 1501–2 the Pistoians broke out in a small but desperate civil war between two factions. . . . Though the nearby Florentines were in control of the city, and actually sent Machiavelli to investigate, they

were afraid to intervene effectually, and so the townspeople hacked one another to pieces.' (Adams, p. 47n)] As long as a prince keeps his subjects united and loyal, therefore, he oughtn't to mind being criticised as 'cruel'; because with a very few examples ·of punitive severity· he will be showing more ·real· mercy than those who are too lenient, allowing a breakdown of law and order that leads to murders or robberies. Why? Because such breakdowns harm the whole community, whereas a prince's death sentences affect only one person at a time. A *new* prince is especially strongly bound to get a reputation for cruelty, just because new states are so full of dangers. . . .

But he shouldn't be too quick in believing what he is told and acting on it, and he mustn't be afraid of his own shadow ·as they say·. Rather, he should moderate his conduct with prudence and humanity—not being confident to the point of rashness, or suspicious to the point of being intolerable.

A question arises out of this, namely: Is it better to be loved than feared or better to be feared than loved? Well, one would like to be both; but it's difficult for one person to be both feared and loved, and when a choice has to be made it is safer to be feared. The reason for this is a fact about men in general: they are ungrateful, fickle, deceptive, cowardly and greedy. As long as you are doing them good, they are entirely yours: they'll offer you their blood, their property, their lives, and their children—as long as there is no immediate prospect of their having to make good on these offerings; but when that changes, they'll turn against you. And a prince who relies on their promises and doesn't take other precautions is ruined. Friendships that are •bought, rather than •acquired through greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned—bought and paid for—but they aren't secured and can't be relied on in time of need. And men are less hesitant about letting down someone they love than in letting down someone they fear, because love affects men's behaviour only through the thought of how they *ought* to behave, and men are a low-down lot for whom that thought has no power to get them to do anything they find inconvenient; whereas fear affects their behaviour through the thought of possible punishment, and that thought never loses its power.

Still, a prince should try to inspire fear in such a way that if he isn't loved he at least isn't hated, because being feared isn't much of a burden if one isn't hated; and a prince won't be hated as long as he keeps his hands off his subjects' property and their women. When he has to

proceed against someone's life he should have a proper justification—a manifest cause—for doing so; but above all things he must keep his hands off people's property, because a man will forget the death of his father sooner than he would forget the loss of the property his father left to him. ·This warning needs to be emphasized, because the temptation to go against it is so great·. There's never any shortage of excuses for seizing property, because a prince who has lived by plunder will always find pretexts for seizing what belongs to others; in contrast with reasons for taking someone's life, which are harder to find and, when found, are less durable.

But when a prince is ·on a campaign· with his army, with a multitude of soldiers under his command, then he absolutely *mustn't* worry about having a reputation for cruelty, because that reputation is what holds his army together and has it ready for duty. Hannibal has been praised for, among much else, the fact that he led an enormous mixed-race army to fight in foreign lands, and never—in times of bad or of good *fortuna*—had any troubles within the army or between the army and himself. The only possible explanation for this is his inhuman cruelty, which combined with his enormous *virtù* to make him an object of respect and terror for his soldiers. He couldn't have achieved this just through his other *virtùs*, without the cruelty. Historians who have admired his achievements while condemning ·the cruelty that was· their principal cause haven't thought hard enough. To see that it is really true that his other *virtùs* wouldn't have been sufficient on their own, look at the case of Scipio: his personal excellence made him stand out not only in his own times but in the whole of history, yet his army mutinied in Spain, simply because his undue leniency gave his soldiers more freedom than is consistent with military discipline. Fabius Maximus scolded him for this in the Senate, calling him a corrupter of the Roman army. One of Scipio's senior

officers led a part of his army that did terrible harm to the Locrians; but Scipio—the easy-going Scipio—didn't see to it that they were avenged, and didn't punish the arrogant officer. . . . If he had stayed in command of the army, Scipio's mildness would eventually have tarnished his fame and glory, but because he was under the Senate's control this harmful character-trait of his not only stayed hidden (i.e. its harmfulness stayed hidden) but actually contributed to his glory.

Back for a moment to the question of being feared or loved: I conclude that

- men decide whom they will love, while their prince decides whom they will fear; and
- a wise prince will lay his foundations on what he controls, not what others control.

While not caring about whether he is loved, he should try not to be hated, as I said before.

Chapter 18

How princes should keep their word

[This chapter deals with item (4) in the list on page 33, though four others also come in for a mention.] Everyone knows that it is a fine thing for a prince to keep his word and to live with integrity rather than with cunning. But our recent experience has been that the princes who achieved great things haven't worried much about keeping their word. Knowing how to use cunning to outwit men, they have eventually overcome those who have behaved honestly.

You must know there are two sorts of conflict: one using the law, the other using force—one appropriate to humans, the other to beasts. But the first method is often not sufficient, so men have had to rely on the second. A prince, therefore, needs to understand how to avail himself of the beast and the man in himself. . . ., because neither of these natures can survive for long without the other.

For the 'beast' side of his nature the prince should choose

the fox and the lion: the lion can't defend itself against traps and the fox can't defend itself against wolves, so the prince needs to be a fox to discover the traps and a lion to scare off the wolves. Those who try to live by the lion alone don't understand what they are up to. A prudent lord, therefore, can't and shouldn't keep his word when that could be used against him and the reasons that led him to give it in the first place exist no longer. If men were entirely good this advice would be bad; but in fact they are dismally bad, and won't keep their promises to you, so you needn't keep your promises to them. And a prince will never be short of legitimate reasons for not keeping his promises. Countless recent examples of this could be given, showing how many promises have come to nothing because of the faithlessness of princes, and showing that the most successful princes have been those who knew best how to employ the fox.

But it's necessary to know how to camouflage this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler [*simulatore e dissimulatore*]; and men are so naive and so dominated by present necessities that a deceiver will always find someone who'll let himself be deceived.

There's one recent example that I can't pass over in silence. Pope Alexander VI was deceptive in everything he did—used deception as a matter of course—and always found victims. No man ever said things with greater force, reinforcing his promises with greater oaths, while keeping his word less; yet his deceptions always worked out in the way he wanted, because he well understood this aspect of mankind.

So a prince needn't •have all the good qualities I have listed [on page 33], but he does need to •appear to have them. And I go this far: to have those qualities and always act by them is injurious, and to appear to have them is useful—i.e. to •appear to be **(3)** merciful, **(4)** trustworthy, **(6)** friendly, **(8)** straightforward, **(11)** devout, and to •be so, while being mentally prepared to switch any virtue off if that will serve your purposes.

And it must be understood that a prince, especially a new one, can't always act in ways that are regarded as good; in order to reserve his state he will often have to act in ways that are flatly contrary to ·mercifulness·, trustworthiness, friendliness, straightforwardness, and piety. That's why he needs to be prepared to change course according to which way the winds blow, which way *fortuna* pushes him. . . .

So a prince should take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that isn't *full* of the five qualities I have been talking about, so that anyone who sees and hears him will think that he has all of them—i.e. that he is merciful,

trustworthy, friendly, straightforward and devout. This last quality (or the appearance of it) matters enormously; nothing matters more. Men usually judge things by the eye rather than by the hand; everybody gets to see, but few come in touch. Everyone sees what you appear to be, but few feel what you are, and those few don't have the courage to stand up against the majority opinion which is backed by the majesty of the state. And everybody's actions—especially those of princes, for whom there is no court of appeal—are judged by their results. [Just to make sure that this elegant paragraph is understood: Machiavelli is using the eyes/hands or seeing/feeling contrast as a metaphor for the appearance/reality distinction.]

So let the prince conquer and hold his state—his means for this will always be regarded as honourable, and he'll be praised by everybody. Why? Because the common people are always impressed by appearances and outcomes, and the world contains only common people! There are a few others, but they can't find a footing there

how Machiavelli ended the sentence: quando li assai hanno dove appoggiarsi.

according to one translator: when the many feel secure.

a second: when the majority and the government are at one.

a third: when the majority can point to the prince's success.

a fourth: so long as the majority have any grounds at all for their opinions.

A certain prince of the present time—I had better not name him [it was King Ferdinand of Spain]—preaches nothing but peace and trust, and is very hostile to both; and if he had ever practised what he preaches he would have lost his reputation and his kingdom many times over.

Chapter 19

How to avoid attracting contempt and hatred

[This chapter is supposed to deal implicitly with items (5)–(11) of the list on page 33, though only three are separately mentioned. The excellent verb ‘to contemn’, which will be used here, means ‘to have contempt for’.] Having spoken of the more important qualities in my list, I want now to deal briefly with the others by bringing them under a general point that I have already touched on, namely:

A prince must be careful to avoid anything that will bring **hatred** or **contempt** down on him. If he succeeds in *that*, he’ll have played his part and won’t have any reason to see danger in criticisms of his conduct.

What would most get him **hated** (I repeat) is his being a grabber, a thief of his subjects’ property and women; *he mustn’t do that*. Most men live contentedly as long as their property and their honor are untouched; so the prince will have to contend only with an ambitious minority, and there are plenty of ways of easily dealing with them.

A prince will be **contemned** if he is regarded as (9) variable, (10) frivolous, (5) effeminate and cowardly, irresolute; and the prince should steer away from all these as though they were a reef on which his ship of state could be wrecked. He should try to show in his actions (5) greatness and courage, (10) seriousness, and fortitude; and in his private dealings with his subjects (9) his judgments should be irrevocable, and his standing should be such that no-one would dream of trying to cheat or outwit him.

A prince who conveys this impression of himself will be highly respected, and that will make him hard to conspire against internally, and hard to attack from the outside, as long as he is known to be an excellent man who is

respected by his people. So a prince ought to have two main worries: (a) one internal, concerning his subjects, and (b) the other external, concerning foreign powers. (b) He can defend himself against foreign powers by being well armed and having good allies (if he is well armed he *will* have good allies!). . . . (a) A prince can easily secure himself against internal conspiracies against him by avoiding being hated and contemned, and keeping the people satisfied with him. . . . Conspirators always expect that killing the prince will be popular; when they learn that it would be unpopular, they’ll lose heart and give up, because conspiracies are hard enough to pull off anyway. History presents us with many conspiracies but few successful ones. The reason for the high rate of failure is this:

Someone plotting a coup against a prince can’t act alone; he has to select as fellow-conspirators people he believes to be dissatisfied with the status quo; and by revealing your plan to such a **malcontent**, you put him in a position to become very **contented** without you, because he can expect great rewards for denouncing you. When he sees a certain gain from turning you in, and great uncertainty about what good will come to him from joining your conspiracy, he’ll turn you in unless he is an amazingly good friend to you or a passionate enemy to the prince.

To summarize: On the conspirator’s side there is nothing but fear, jealousy, and the terrifying prospect of punishment; on the prince’s side there is the majesty of his rank, the laws, and the protection of his friends and the state. Add

to these factors the good will of the people and it's almost impossible that anyone should be so rash as to conspire against a prince. Conspirators usually have to fear that something will prevent them from going through with their plot; but in this case, where the people are on good terms with the prince, the conspirator also has to fear what may happen after the crime, because the people will be hostile to him and won't give him shelter.

Of the countless examples of this that could be given, I select just one, which our fathers might actually remember. Annibale Bentivoglio, who was prince in Bologna... was murdered by the Canneschi in 1445. The only one of his family who survived was an infant, Giovanni. Immediately after the assassination the people rose and murdered all the Canneschi. This came from the popularity that the Bentivoglio family enjoyed in those days in Bologna. It was so great that although after Annibale's death there were no Bentivogli left who could rule the state, the Bolognese heard about a Bentivoglio in Florence, who until then had been thought to be the son of a blacksmith, sent to Florence for him and gave him the government of their city; he held it until Giovanni was old enough to take over.

The lesson I draw from all this is that a prince shouldn't worry much about conspiracies against him if his people are well-disposed towards him; but if they are hostile to him and hate him, he should fear everything and everyone. Well-ordered states and wise princes have taken every care not to drive the nobles to desperation and to keep the common people satisfied and contented; this is one of a prince's most important tasks.

France is currently well ordered and well governed. The French king's liberty and security depend on countless good institutions that the French have, the most important of which is *parliament and its authority*. The men who set up

this system,

knowing the ambition and arrogance of the nobility, thought they needed a bit in their mouth to rein them in;

and on the other hand

knowing how much the common people hated and feared the nobles, wanted to do something to protect them.

[A reference to Louis IX, who apparently instituted the *parlement* of Paris about 1254; his grandson, Philip the Fair, clarified and defined its functions.' (Skinner, p. 66n)] But he didn't want either side of this to be the king's job, because he didn't want to be blamed by the nobles for favouring the people, or by the people for favouring the nobles. So he set up a third party, an arbitrator, parliament, which could hold back the nobles and favour the common people without bringing criticism down on the king. This has proved to be an excellently prudent way of protecting the security of the king and the kingdom. The lesson we can learn from this is that princes ought to leave unpopular policies to be implemented by others, and keep in their own hands any that will be accepted with gratitude. . . .

A likely objection to what I have been saying is this:

Look at the lives and deaths of the Roman emperors! Some of them lived nobly and showed great *virtù* of spirit; and yet they lost their empire or were killed by subjects who conspired against them.

I shall respond to this by recalling the characters of some of the emperors in question, showing that the causes of their downfalls were not inconsistent with what I have been saying. . . . In arguing for this, I'll confine myself to the period 161–238 CE, during which the Roman empire was ruled by this continuous series of emperors:

- (1) Marcus the philosopher, known as Marcus Aurelius
- (2) his son Commodus,
- (3) Pertinax,
- (4) Julian,
- (5) Septimius Severus,
- (6) his son Antoninus Caracalla,
- (7) Macrinus,
- (8) Heliogabalus,
- (9) Alexander Severus, and
- (10) Maximinus.

The first thing to note is that whereas in other states the prince has only to deal with the ambition of the nobles and the insolence of the common people, the Roman emperors had a third problem, created by the cruelty and greed of their soldiers. It wasn't easy to satisfy both

- the common people, who loved peace and were drawn to unambitious princes, and
- the soldiers, who were drawn to princes who were bold, cruel, and rapacious, and were quite willing for a prince to exercise these qualities against the common people, so that they could double their incomes by adding loot to their regular pay and give vent to their own greed and cruelty.

This problem was so hard that many emperors were brought down by it. Specifically, emperors who weren't naturally authoritative and weren't trained in authority were overthrown. What usually happened, especially with newcomers to the role of prince, was this: they saw the difficulty posed by these two opposing attitudes, and tried to satisfy the soldiers and not worry about whatever harm this was doing to the people. They had to do this: princes might try to avoid being hated by anyone, but when they discover—as of course they will—that this is more than they can manage, they should

work really hard to avoid the hatred of the groups that have the most power. That is why emperors who had a special need for favourable support, because they were new to this, turned to the army rather than to the people; how well this worked out for each prince depended on whether he knew how to keep the army's respect.

That's why Pertinax and Alexander Severus, being men of modest life, lovers of justice, enemies to cruelty, humane, and benignant, both came to a sad end. (1) Marcus was equally excellent as a person, and was honoured throughout his life; that was because he had succeeded to the throne by hereditary right, with no help from the army or the people; and afterwards the respect he got because of his great *virtù* enabled him to keep both groups in their places, without being hated or contemned by either.

But (3) Pertinax was created emperor against the wishes of the soldiers, who, having become used to the laxity of discipline under Commodus, couldn't bear the proper discipline that Pertinax wanted to inflict on them. Thus, having given cause for hatred, with contempt for his old age thrown in, he was overthrown—killed—near the start of his reign. Notice that hatred is acquired as much by good works as by bad ones. . . .

Now for (9) Alexander Severus, who was such a good man that many praises were lavished on him, including this: in his fourteen years as emperor he never had anyone executed without a trial. Still, he was regarded as effeminate and as being under his mother's thumb; he came to be held in contempt, and the army conspired against him and murdered him.

The characters of Commodus, Septimius Severus, Antoninus Caracalla, and Maximinus are at the other end of the scale: they were all extremely cruel and rapacious—men who set no limits to how much they would harm the people

in order to satisfy their soldiers—and all of them except **(5)** Septimius Severus came to a bad end. *He* had so much *virtù* that he could keep the army on his side, although he oppressed the people, and he had a successful 18-year reign. His *virtù* made him remarkable in the eyes of the soldiers, who were respectful and satisfied, and of the people, who were numb with astonishment. This man's achievements were impressive, given that he was a new prince, and I want to give a brief sketch of how good he was at imitating the fox and the lion, which I said earlier [on page 37] a prince has to be able to do.

At the time when Pertinax was killed by his praetorian guard, Septimius Severus was in command of an army in Slavonia [approximately = Croatia]. Knowing that the emperor Julian—Pertinax's successor on the throne; he *bought* his election as emperor from the soldiers of the palace guard—was feeble and indecisive, Severus convinced his army that it would be right to go to Rome and avenge Pertinax's death. Under this pretext, and without revealing any ambition to become emperor himself, he got his army to Rome, moving so fast that he reached Italy before it was known that he had left Slavonia. On his arrival at Rome, the frightened Senate elected him emperor, and had Julian killed. [Pertinax had reigned for three months, Julian for two.] Severus now confronted two obstacles to his becoming master of the whole Roman empire: one in Asia, where Niger, commander of the Asiatic army, had had himself proclaimed emperor when Pertinax was murdered; the other in the west, where Albinus—also at the head of an army—aimed to become emperor. Thinking it would be too risky to declare himself hostile to both, Severus decided to attack Niger and deceive Albinus. He wrote to Albinus saying that having been elected emperor by the Senate he was willing to share that dignity with Albinus as co-emperor, and that the Senate had agreed to

this; and he gave Albinus the title 'Caesar'. Albinus believed all this. But after Septimius Severus had conquered and killed Niger, and calmed things down in the east, he returned to Rome and complained to the Senate that Albinus, instead of being grateful for the benefits Severus had given him, had treacherously tried to murder him; for this ingratitude (he told the Senate) he had no option but to punish him. Then he hunted Albinus down in France, and took from him his authority and his life.

Anyone who looks carefully at this man's actions will see that he was a very ferocious lion and a most cunning fox—feared and respected by everyone, and not hated by the army. It's not surprising that he, a newcomer to the throne rather than having been educated for it as the heir apparent, was able to hold onto power so well: his immense prestige always protected him from the hatred that the people might have had for him because of his violence and greed.

His son **(6)** Antoninus Caracalla was an eminent man with excellent qualities, which made the people admire him and the soldiers accept him. More than just 'accept' him, indeed: he was a hardened warrior who never got tired and despised all delicate food and other luxuries, so that the soldiers loved him. Yet his ferocity and cruelties were enormous—far beyond anything people had known before—so that after countless single murders he had a large number of the people of Rome killed, and the entire population of Alexandria. He came to be hated by the whole world, and also feared by those he had around him; so much so that a centurion murdered him in the midst of his soldiers. It's important to understand that a prince can't protect himself against that sort of murder, planned by a determined mind, because anyone can kill a prince if he doesn't mind dying himself. Still, a prince doesn't have to be much in fear of such an assassination, because they're very rare. He does have to

take care *not to do* any grave injury to any of his servants or of those he has around him in the service of the state—which is just what Caracalla *did*. He had shamefully put to death a brother of that centurion, and had continually threatened, the centurion himself; yet he kept him in his bodyguard! It was a rash thing to do, and proved the emperor's ruin.

Let us turn now to **(2)** Commodus. It should have been very easy for him to hold onto power, because as the son of Marcus Aurelius he had inherited it; all he needed to do, to please his soldiers and the people, was to follow in his father's footsteps. But he was cruel, bestially so, and freed himself to steal from the people by currying favour with the soldiers and letting military discipline collapse. And eventually the soldiers came to contemn him: he had no sense of the dignity of his position, often showed up in the amphitheatre to compete with gladiators, and did other sordid things that weren't worthy of the imperial majesty. So he came to be hated by the people and despised by the army; and fell victim to a conspiracy to murder.

It remains to discuss the character of **(10)** Maximinus. He was extremely warlike, and the armies, being disgusted with the effeminacy of Alexander [see page 41], killed him and elected Maximinus to the throne. He didn't keep it for long, for because two things brought hatred and contempt down on him. **(a)** Everyone knew about his lowly background: he had been a mere shepherd in Thrace. **(b)** When he became emperor, he didn't go to Rome to be formally installed. He had his prefects, in Rome and elsewhere, do many cruel things, which earned him a reputation for the utmost ferocity. So *everyone* was outraged by his peasant origin and afraid of his barbarity. First Africa rebelled, then the Senate with all the people of Rome, and all Italy conspired against him. His army, too: they were besieging Aquileia and running into difficulties; they were disgusted with his cruelties, and

when they found that he had so many enemies they were emboldened to kill him.

I don't want to discuss **(8)** Heliogabalus, **(7)** Macrinus, or **(4)** Julian; they were all contemptible, didn't last long, and were quickly wiped out; and I want to get finished with this topic. I'll just say this: it's not nearly as hard for princes today to make their soldiers very satisfied with them. They do have to make some concessions to them, but that—the unrest in the army, and its cure—doesn't last long: none of today's princes have armies with long experience of controlling and administering provinces, as did the armies of the Roman Empire. Back then, satisfying the army had precedence over satisfying the people, whereas now, for all princes except the Turkish and Egyptian sultans, satisfying the people outranks satisfying the army, because the people are the more powerful. [Machiavelli goes on to explain why these sultans are an exception. Then:]

But returning to my topic: What I have written shows •that what brought down each of the emperors was hatred or contempt, and shows •how it came about that. . . [The next bit is highly compressed. What it comes down to is this: Of the seven emperors Machiavelli has discussed, three approached the emperor's role in one way (call it 'gentle') and four in a different way (call it 'rough'). Each approach led to just one good upshot. Here is what Machiavelli has in mind:

gentle	successful	Marcus Aurelius
	unsuccessful	Pertinax, Alexander Severus
rough	successful	Septimius Severus
	unsuccessful	Commodus, Caracalla, Maximinus

That leaves five failures for Machiavelli to explain, and he does so:] Because Pertinax and Alexander were new princes, it was useless and dangerous for them to model themselves on Marcus Aurelius, who had inherited his position as prince;

and it was utterly destructive to Commodus, Caracalla, and Maximinus to imitate Septimius Severus, because they didn't have enough *virtù* to enable them to tread in his footsteps. So a new prince can't imitate the actions of Marcus, but doesn't

have to take Septimius Severus as a model either. What he should do is to take from Severus the courses of action that are necessary to found his state, and from Marcus the ones that bring glory to a state that is already stable and firm.

Chapter 20

Are fortresses, and other princely devices, advantageous or hurtful?

Princes wanting to make their state secure have variously

- (1) disarmed their subjects,
- (2) encouraged factions in their subject towns,
- (3) fostered hostility against themselves,
- (4) set out to win over those whom they distrusted at the start of their reign,
- (5) built fortresses,
- (6) destroyed fortresses.

A final judgment on these things can only be made in the light of the particular facts regarding each state; but I will discuss this matter as comprehensively as the topic permits.

(1) No new prince has ever disarmed his subjects. Rather, when any new prince has found the people unarmed he has armed them. Why? Because, by arming them you make those arms *yours*: the men whom you distrusted become loyal, those who were already loyal remain so, and your subjects become your supporters. Not all the subjects can be armed, and those who are armed are receiving a privilege. . . ., but this won't get you into trouble with the

others. They will understand that the armed men are bound to you, are likely to be put in harm's way on your behalf, and so deserve a greater reward; and they won't hold it against you that you gave given some and not others this privilege.

But when you *disarm* your subjects you at once offend them by giving evidence that you are either cowardly or naturally distrustful, and either of those opinions will make you hated. And since you can't survive without *some* army, and since you have disarmed your subjects, you have to turn to mercenaries—and I have already shown in chapter 12 what *they* are like! And even if you had good mercenaries, they wouldn't be enough to defend you against powerful enemies and subjects whom you don't trust. So, I repeat, new princes in new principalities have always distributed arms among their subjects. . . .

(2) Generations ago, the experts used to say that 'Pistoia can only be held by factions and Pisa only by fortresses'; and this idea—or a generalized version of it—led them to foment quarrels in some of their tributary towns so as to make them

easier to dominate. Back then, when there was a kind of balance of power in Italy, this may have been a sound enough policy, but I don't think it is acceptable today, because I don't think that *now* factions can ever be of use. On the contrary, when a city divided by factions is attacked from the outside, it will quickly be lost, because the weaker faction will always help the external attacker and the other won't be able to resist. I think the Venetians were following this policy when they stirred up trouble between the Guelph and Ghibelline factions in their subject cities; without letting the trouble come to bloodshed, they encouraged these disputes so that the citizens wouldn't unite against them (the Venetians). We saw that this didn't work out in the way they expected, because after the Venetians' defeat at Vaila in 1509, one of the two factions took courage and seized the state. A prince's following this policy shows that he is weak, because these factional quarrels won't be permitted in any vigorous principality. In times of peace it is a policy for managing subjects, but in times of war it is sheer folly.

(3) There's no doubt that a prince becomes great when he overcomes difficulties and obstacles. For this reason, when *fortuna* wants greatness to come to a new prince (who needs a personal reputation more than an hereditary prince does), it causes enemies to arise and turns them against him; this gives him the opportunity to overcome them, climbing higher on this ladder that his enemies have brought to him! That's why many people think that a wise prince should, when the opportunity presents itself, engineer some hostility against himself, so that he can crush it and thus elevate his level of fame.

(4) Princes, especially new ones, have often received more loyalty and support from men they had distrusted at the outset than from those whom they had trusted. Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, governed his state with more help

from those he had initially distrusted than from others. [No other historian records this judgment. . . . Machiavelli can scarcely have been unaware that the Medici, to whom he was addressing this book, did not much trust *him*. (Adams, p. 61)] But one can't generalize on this topic, because individual cases vary so much. I'll just say this: men who have been hostile at the start of a principality, and who don't have the rank or status needed to support themselves without help, can easily be won over by the prince. They'll be strongly bound to serve him loyally, because they'll know how important it is to them to act in ways that will cancel the bad impression he had formed of them. So the prince always gets better value from them than from men who serve him neglectfully because they are so sure of their position with him.

. . . I should warn any prince who has taken over a new state with the help of its inhabitants that he should think hard about their motives in helping him. If they were motivated not by any natural affection for him but only by discontent with their government, then he'll find it very hard to remain friends with them, because it will be impossible to make them contented with him. In the light of the reasons for this, look at all the ancient and modern examples: you'll find that it is easier for a prince to make friends of **(i)** men who were contented under the former government and are therefore his enemies than of **(ii)** those who were discontented with that government and wanted and enabled him to seize power. [This seemingly strange opinion, which Machiavelli doesn't explain, makes sense if one thinks of **(i)** as experienced civil servants and **(ii)** as now-unemployed revolutionaries.]

(5,6) Princes wanting to increase the security of their states have often built fortresses: a fortress can serve as a bridle and bit reining in potential enemies, and as a place of refuge from a first attack. I praise this as a time-hallowed practice. Yet in our times we have seen these events:

- Nicolo Vitelli demolished two fortresses in Città di Castello as an aid to holding onto the town;
- Guido Ubaldo, the Duke of Urbino, drove Cesare Borgia out of his dominion and then flattened all the fortresses in that province, which he thought he could hold more easily with the fortresses gone;
- the Bentivogli regained power in Bologna and followed the same policy.

Whether a fortress is useful, then, depends on the circumstances: if they help you in one way they harm you in another. Here is a way of looking at this: a prince who is more afraid of his own people than of foreigners ought to build fortresses, but one who fears foreigners more than he does his people ought to do without them. The castle that Francesco Sforza had built in Milan has given the Sforza family more trouble than any of that state's other troubles, and it will go on doing so. The best possible 'fortress' for a prince is *not being hated by his people*. If you have fortresses, and your

people hate you, the fortresses won't do you any good: an openly rebellious populace will have no shortage of foreigners wanting to come to their aid against you. No prince in our times has found fortresses to be useful to him, with the ·limited· exception of the Countess of Forli. On the death of her husband Count Girolamo ·in 1488·, her fortress enabled her to withstand the popular attack and wait for help from Milan, thus recovering her state. The circumstances at that time were such that no foreigners could help the ·rebellious· people. But fortresses didn't do much for her ·in 1499· when Cesare Borgia attacked her, and when her hostile people were allied with foreigners. At both those times she'd have been better off having subjects who didn't hate her than she was with fortresses. All these things considered, then, I'll praise any prince who builds fortresses as well as any who doesn't, and I'll blame any prince who doesn't mind being hated by his people because he is relying on his fortresses.

Chapter 21

What a prince should do to acquire prestige

Nothing builds a prince's prestige more than **(a)** his undertaking great enterprises and **(b)** his setting a fine example ·by his personal conduct·. **(a)** We have in our time Ferdinand of Aragon, the present king of Spain. He can almost be called a 'new prince', because his fame and glory have raised him from being an insignificant king to being the foremost king in the Christian world. At the start of his reign

he attacked Granada—the Moorish kingdom in southern Spain—and this campaign laid the foundations of his power. He proceeded quietly at first, with no worries about being interfered with: he kept the barons of Castile busy thinking about the war and not planning any changes ·inside Spain·, and they didn't notice that by these means he was increasing his prestige and his power over them. He financed his army

with money from the Church and from taxes, and through that long war he built a military establishment that has since brought him honour. Further, under cover of religion he embarked on greater schemes, with pious cruelty hunting out the Jews in his kingdom and expelling them; a pitiful state of affairs brought about by an extraordinary act. Under this same ·religious· cloak he attacked Africa, invaded Italy, and now has attacked France. Thus, he has always planned and acted on a grandiose scale, keeping his subjects' minds in a state of amazement and anxiety about what was going to happen next. And his actions have followed one another so quickly that there has never been a quiet time in which men could work steadily against him.

(b) A prince can be greatly helped by striking acts of government in internal affairs. King Ferdinand did well on this score also, and there is a striking example of it in the reported acts of Bernabò Visconti, prince of Milan: whenever any civilian did something extraordinary, whether good or bad, Bernabò would devise a reward or punishment that everyone talked about. A prince ought above all to try get, through all his actions, the reputation of being a great and remarkable man.

(c) A prince also gains prestige from being either a true friend or an outright enemy, i.e. says openly which side he favours in any conflict. This will always serve better than staying neutral. Here is why. Suppose that two of your powerful neighbours are at war, ·and you are wondering what to do·. Either

- (i)** the combatants' power level makes it the case that if you stay neutral then the winner will be a threat to you, or
- (ii)** their power level isn't as high as that.

[Here 'power level' translates *qualità*, which is ambiguous. But Machiavelli is thinking here purely in terms of •power, not bringing in •moral

or psychological qualities or anything like that. You can see that in his assumption that either both combatants are scary or neither of them is. (If their power levels were different, they wouldn't be fighting.) There will be more evidence shortly.] Either way, you'll do best by not •staying neutral but rather •picking a side and fighting hard for it, because: in case **(i)** you will inevitably fall prey to the winner, and you'll have no excuses, no defence, and nowhere to hide (and how the loser in the conflict will enjoy this!). Neither side will befriend you: the winner won't want 'friends' whom he can't depend on in times of trial; and the loser won't receive you because you didn't take sword in hand and share his danger with him. [The word translated by 'receive' seems to imply that here, as also a few lines below, Machiavelli is thinking of the safety of the prince as an individual, rather than any rescue for his state, his administration.] [Machiavelli illustrates this with an anecdote from ancient Greece, illustrating something that he goes on to say 'will always happen':] Thus it will always happen that the one who isn't your friend will ask you to keep out of it, while your friend will ask you to fight on his side. Indecisive princes usually try to avoid immediate danger by taking the neutral route, and they are usually ruined by this choice. But when a prince briskly declares himself in favour of one side, if the side you choose is the winner then you have a good friend who is indebted to you. (It's true that the winner may be powerful enough to have you at his mercy; but he won't use that against you. If he did, that would be a monument of ingratitude, and men are never as low as that.) Victories are never so complete that the victor has no need to be careful about anything, no need, especially, to be careful about justice. But if the side you choose loses, he may receive [same verb as above] you and help you for as long as he can, so that you become companions in a *fortuna* that may rise again.

(ii) In the second case, when the power level of the combatants is such that you have nothing to fear from either, there's an even stronger prudential reason for you to choose a side. Why? Because the side you choose is certain to win, so that you help in the destruction of one prince x with the help of another prince y who, if he'd had any sense, would have protected x against you; and y, having with your assistance won a war that he couldn't have won without you, is now at your mercy.

And here I should point out—as a reproach to prince y—that a prince should be careful never to make an alliance with a more powerful prince for the purposes of attacking others—unless . . . circumstances force him into this. If he wins, you will be at his mercy, and princes should do everything they can to avoid being at anyone's mercy. [Machiavelli gives two recent examples: the Venetians forming an alliance that led to their ruin, and the Florentines forming an alliance when they absolutely had to. He continues:] No government should ever think that it can choose perfectly safe courses of action. Every government should expect to have to run risks,

because in the ordinary course of events one never tries to avoid one trouble without running into another. Prudence consists in knowing how to weigh up troubles and choose the lesser ones.

(d) A prince ought also to show himself a patron of *virtù*, and to honour those who are talented in any art or craft. And he should encourage his citizens to carry steadily on with their ordinary occupations—in commerce, agriculture, and so on—so that no-one is deterred from increasing his holdings by the fear that they'll be confiscated, or deterred from starting up business as a trader by fear of duties and taxes. Rather, the prince should create incentives for doing these things and for doing anything else that improves his city or state. Also, he should entertain the people with banquets and shows at appropriate times of the year. And, as every city is divided into guilds or clans, he should treat such bodies with respect, go to some of their meetings, and present himself as a model of courtesy and generosity—though always maintaining the majesty of his rank, which he must never allow to be diminished.

Chapter 22

The ministers of princes

[Machiavelli's title for this chapter has 'secretaries', not 'ministers'—the sole occurrence of *secretarii* in the work. In his day, *ministro* covered high-level servants generally, but late in this chapter we'll see Machiavelli thinking mainly of *prime* ministers.] A prince's choice of ministers is important to him, and it's up to him—to his intelligent

foresight—whether he has good ones. The first opinion that one forms of a prince's intelligence comes from observing the men he has around him: when they are competent and loyal he should be regarded as shrewd, because he has known how to spot competence in people and to keep them loyal. But

when they are otherwise—mediocre or disloyal— one can't have a good opinion of *him*, because his choice of ministers was his first big mistake. Anyone who knew Antonio da Venafro in his role as a minister of Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, would regard Pandolfo as a very clever man to have such a minister.

There are three kinds of intellect:

- (1) a superb intellect, which understand things unaided;
- (2) a good intellect, which understands things when others explain them;
- (3) a useless intellect, which doesn't understand anything, even with help.

If Pandolfo's intellect wasn't of type (1), therefore, it was of type (2). Someone with enough judgment to evaluate what others say and do, even if he isn't capable of originality, can tell when a minister is performing well and when he isn't, and can praise in one case and scold in the other; so the

minister can't hope to deceive him, and is kept honest.

A prince has one infallible test of the quality of a minister: When you see the minister thinking more for himself than for you, keeping an eye on his own advantage in everything he does, he'll never be a good minister and you'll never be able to trust him. Someone who has another person's state—his government—in his hands ought to think never of himself but always of his prince, spending *no* time on anything in which the prince is not concerned. On the other hand, to keep his minister honest the prince should think about his welfare, honour him, enrich him, do him kindnesses, confer honours and offices on him [i.e. executive responsibilities, *ministries*, that will feed his desire for power and influence]. And at the same time the prince should let the minister see that he can't survive without the prince. He should be so rich and so honoured that he won't want more of either, and have so many offices that he'll be afraid of any change of regime

Chapter 23

How to avoid flatterers

I don't want to leave undiscussed an important matter—an error that it's hard for a prince not to fall into unless he is very shrewd or very good at selecting men to serve him. I'm talking about flatterers. Princely courts are full of them; and it's hard for a prince to protect himself from the plague that they bring, because princes, like men in general, are so pleased with their own doings and so deceived about them. A prince who tries to defend himself against flattery runs a

risk of being contemned: the only way to guard yourself from flatterers is to make it known that you aren't offended by being told the truth; but you won't get much respect when you are seen as someone to whom anyone can safely tell the truth!

So a wise prince will steer a different course between listening to flatterers and listening to everyone—namely assembling a cabinet of wise men and giving the freedom to

tell him the truth

- only to them, and
- only in answer to questions he has put to them.

But he should question them about everything, listen to their opinions, and then form his own conclusions. When dealing with these advisers, as a group or separately, the prince should implicitly convey to each of them the message ‘The more openly you speak to me, the better I will like it’. He shouldn’t listen to anyone else, but should resolutely stand by, and act on, the decisions he has made. If he doesn’t have this policy, either he’ll be ruined by flatterers or will change course so often, because of the different opinions he listens to, that people will lose their respect for him.

I want to illustrate this with a contemporary example. Father Luca Rainaldi, in service to Maximilian, the present emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, has said that his employer never consulted anyone yet never got his own way in anything; and this arose from proceeding in the opposite way to the one I have been advocating. The emperor is a secretive man—he doesn’t tell anyone what he is planning and doesn’t ask anyone about it either. But when he starts to carry something into effect it becomes revealed and known; his courtiers raise objections, and he changes course. The result is that he does something on one day and undoes it the next, no-one ever understands what he wants or plans to do, and no-one can rely on his decisions.

A prince, therefore, should always take advice, but only when he wants it, not when others want to give it; he should discourage everyone from offering advice uninvited; but he should constantly ask questions and listen patiently to the answers; and any time he learns that the answerer is *holding back* about something, he should let his anger be felt. It is sometimes thought that any prince who conveys an impression of intelligence owes this not to his own ability but to the good advisers that he has around him; but this is certainly wrong. Here is an infallible rule: a prince who isn’t wise himself can’t take good advice, unless he happens to have put his affairs *entirely* in the hands of one very prudent man. In this case things may go well, but not for long because such an ‘adviser’ would soon take his state away from him.

But if an inexperienced prince gets advice from more than one man, the bits of advice he gets won’t form a unity, and he won’t know how to pull them together into a unity. Each of the advisers will be thinking of his own interests, and the prince won’t know how to control them or even to see what they are up to. And it’s not a matter of finding better advisers: men will always be untrustworthy unless they are forced to be honest. Conclusion: •Good advice, wherever it comes from, is a product of •the prince’s wisdom—not vice versa.

Chapter 24

Why the princes of Italy have lost their states

A •new prince, if he carefully follows the procedures I have been recommending ·from chapter 12 onward·, will come across as having a principality that is •hereditary and long-established, and this will quickly make his government secure and stable. More so, indeed, than if he had been a prince for a long time, because a new prince's actions are watched more closely than those of an hereditary prince; and when they are seen to be *virtuosi* they win more men over and get them more committed than an old princely blood-line can do. Why would that be so? Well, men care more about the present than about the past, and when they like the way things are at present they just enjoy it and don't look any further; indeed, they'll do everything they can to defend a prince ·under whom the present is satisfactory· as long as he doesn't let them down in other ways. Thus it will be a double glory for him to have •established a new principality and •adorned and strengthened it with good laws, good arms, good allies, and a good example; just as it will be a double disgrace for someone who •comes into an hereditary principality and •loses power because of his stupidity.

Look at the gentlemen who have lost their states in Italy in our times—the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and others. They had two defects in common. **(1)** Their military

arrangements were poor; I have discussed this at length ·in chapters 13–14·. **(2)** Each of them had his people hostile to him, or had the people friendly but didn't know how to protect himself against the nobles. Any state that is strong enough to keep an army in the field *can't* be lost if it doesn't have either of those two defects. [Machiavelli illustrates this with an example from ancient Greece. Then:]

So our princes who have lost their principalities after many years of possession shouldn't blame their loss on *fortuna*. The real culprit is their own indolence, going through quiet times with no thought of the possibility of change (it's a common human fault, failing to prepare for tempests unless one is actually *in* one!). And when eventually bad times did come, they thought of •flight rather than •self-defence, hoping that the people, upset by the conquerors' insolence, would recall them. This course of action may be all right when there's no alternative, but it is *not* all right to neglect alternatives and *choose* this one; it amounts to voluntarily falling because you think that in due course someone will pick you up. If you do get rescued (and you probably won't), that won't make you secure; the only rescue that is really helpful to you is the one performed by you, the one that depends on yourself and your *virtù*.

Chapter 25

The role of *fortuna* in human affairs and how to withstand it

I'm well aware that many men, past and present, have thought that the affairs of the world are governed by *fortuna* and by God in such a way that human prudence can't get a grip on them and we have no way of protecting ourselves. [There is some evidence that 'by God', *da Dio*, was inserted into the text after Machiavelli's death. Everything else in this chapter concerns *fortuna*.] These people hold that we needn't sweat much over things, and that we should leave everything to chance. This opinion has been more widespread in our day because of the huge changes in affairs that we have seen and that are still going on—changes that no-one could have predicted. Sometimes when I think about this I am a little inclined that way myself. However, so as not to put our free will entirely out of business, I contend that *fortuna* decides half of our actions, leaving the other half—or perhaps a bit less—to our decisions.

I compare *fortuna* to one of those raging rivers which when in flood overflow the plains, sweep away trees and buildings, pick up soil in one place and dump it elsewhere. Everyone tries to escape such a flood; no-one can do anything to hold it back; everyone capitulates to its violence. But despite all that, when the weather turns fair and the river calms down, men can prepare for the next time by building dykes and dams so that when the river is next in flood it will stay within its banks, or at least not be so uncontrolled and damaging. That's how it is with *fortuna*, which shows its power in places where *virtù* hasn't made preparations to resist it: it sends its forces in directions where it knows

that barriers and defences haven't been raised to constrain it. Think about Italy: it is the scene of such changes; it set them in motion; and it is metaphorically speaking open countryside with no dams, no dykes. If proper *virtù* had been put into building defences, as was done in Germany, Spain, and France, this flood of foreign invasions wouldn't have had such severe effects and might not have happened at all.

That's all I need to say in general terms about resistance to *fortuna*. But there is one more detailed matter that I want to discuss. We see that a prince can be happy today and ruined tomorrow without any change in himself; I think that this is to be explained mostly through the matter I have been discussing—a prince who relies entirely on *fortuna* is lost when it changes—but it may also be due to something else that I shall now present:

A prince whose actions fit the spirit of the times will be successful, whereas one whose actions are out of tune with the times will fail.

In projects aiming at what everyone aims at, namely glory and riches, it's clear that different men proceed differently: one proceeds with caution, another impetuously; one by force, another by skill; one prepared to wait things out, another plunging in with no delay; and each type of procedure can lead to success. It's also clear that these sometimes happen:

- Of two men who both proceed cautiously, one succeeds and the other fails.
- One man proceeds cautiously, another impetuously, and they both succeed.

This is all a matter of whether a man's way of proceeding conforms to the spirit of the times. . . .

Rises and falls in people's individual welfare are also affected by this. Consider someone who manages his affairs with caution and patience. If the times and circumstances come together in a way that fits his methods, his fortune is made; but if times and circumstances change, he is ruined. Unless he changes his whole approach—but no-one will do *that!* There are two reasons a man might have for refusing to change course: •he *can't* go against his natural inclinations, or •he can't be talked out of behaving in a way that has worked well for him for so long. So the cautious man, when the time comes to plunge ahead, doesn't know how to do it, and thus he is ruined. If he had changed his conduct to fit the times, his *fortuna* would have stayed level.

Pope Julius II did everything impetuously, and the times and circumstances conformed so well to that approach that he always succeeded. Consider his first campaign against Bologna when Giovanni Bentivogli was still alive. The Venetians didn't want him to do this, nor did the king of Spain, and he was discussing the enterprise with the French

king; but with his accustomed boldness and energy Julius embarked on this campaign, leading it in person. Spain and the Venetians stood by passively, the Venetians from fear and Spain from a desire to recover the kingdom of Naples; and France?—Julius drew the French king *into* the campaign because the king wanted him as an ally in checking the power of the Venetians, and now that Julius had made his move a refusal to help him would have been too much of a snub. Thus, Julius with his impetuous action achieved something that no other pope could have pulled off with all the prudence in the world; for if he had stayed in Rome until everything had been agreed and settled, as any other pope would have done, he would never have succeeded. The king of France would have made a thousand excuses ·for not helping·, and the others would have raised a thousand fears ·of how things might go wrong if he went ahead·. . . .

Fortuna changes, and men don't change in their ways of going about things; so long as the two agree, men are successful; when they quarrel men are unsuccessful. I think that it is better to be adventurous than to be cautious, because *fortuna* is a woman, and if you want to stay on top of her you have to slap and thrust [that clause is from Parks, p. 101]; and it's clear that she is more apt to submit to those who approach her in that way than to those who go about the business coolly. As a woman, she is always more partial to *young* men, because they are less cautious, more aggressive, bolder when they master her.

Chapter 26

A plea to liberate Italy from the barbarians

Thinking back over everything I have written up to here, I ask myself whether the time is now ripe for the entry of a new prince, and whether Italy now contains materials that a wise and *virtuoso* prince could shape into a new order of things that would bring honour to him and good to the people of this country. My answer is 'Yes'. So many things are coming together to favour a new prince, it seems to me, that I can't think of any time more fit than the present.

I have said [page 11] that the *virtù* of Moses couldn't have been shown if the people of Israel hadn't been in captivity, that the Cyrus's greatness of soul couldn't have been revealed if the Persians hadn't been oppressed by the Medes, and that the fine abilities of Theseus wouldn't have been put to work if the Athenians hadn't been scattered. If that is all correct, then the great *virtù* of a great Italian spirit couldn't be shown until Italy reached rock-bottom, as it has now done—more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians; with no leader, no government; beaten, robbed, lacerated, overrun, enduring every kind of desolation.

[Scholars agree that the topic of these next remarks is Cesare Borgia.] Not long ago there was someone who showed a spark of greatness that might have made one think God had ordained him to rescue Italy; but at the height of his career it was clear that *fortuna* had turned against him; so that Italy, half-dead, is still waiting for someone to heal its wounds and put an end to the ravaging of Lombardy and to the extortionate taxing of the Kingdom of Naples and of Tuscany, cleansing the sores that have festered for so long. It's clear that Italy

is begging God to send someone who will deliver it from this cruel ill-treatment at the hands of foreigners. It's also clear that Italy is ready and willing to march behind a flag, if only someone will raise one.

[This rest of this chapter can be seen as addressed to the person to whom *The Prince* was dedicated (see page 1) and, through him, to the Medici family in general. Re the 'prince' of the Church: the dedicatee's uncle, Giovanni de Medici, was elected pope in 1513 while Machiavelli was writing *The Prince*.] The only hope for Italy that anyone can see right now lies in your distinguished family, with its *fortuna* and *virtù*, favoured by God and by the Church, of which it is now the prince. It could be leader in the rescuing of Italy. This won't be hard to do, as you'll realize if you bring back to mind the actions and lives of the men I have named—Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus. They were indeed great and wonderful men, but still they were only *men*; and none of them had any more opportunity than is offered by Italy today; their undertakings weren't more just than this or easier than this, and God wasn't more their friend than he is yours. Our cause is utterly just, because 'wars are just when they are necessary, and arms are sacred when they are your only hope' [quoted from the Latin historian Livy]. The circumstances are utterly favourable, and when that's the case the difficulties can't be great if you'll only follow the three men I have presented as models. Furthermore, God has given us extraordinary, indeed unprecedented, signs: the sea has divided, a cloud has led the way, water has gushed from a rock, manna has rained down—events have come together to contribute to your greatness; it's for you to

do the rest. God doesn't like doing everything, depriving us of our free will and of our share in the glory. [The 'signs' are from *Exodus* 13–17; it's not clear what actual events in Italy they are a metaphor *for*.]

It's not surprising that •none of the Italians I have talked about have been able to do everything that I think your distinguished family can do, or that •in all Italy's wars and revolutions it has seemed that military *virtù* was exhausted. It was because the old way of doing things—in government or in war—was bad and no-one has been able to devise a new one. For a man who has newly risen to the top, nothing brings him more honour than devising new laws and new practices. When such things are solid and show vision, they will bring him respect and admiration; and in Italy there's no shortage of •matter waiting to be given •form.

Here •in Italy• there is great *virtù* in the limbs but it's missing from the head—i.e. individual soldiers are fine but the military leadership is not. Look attentively at the •individual duels and hand-to-hand combats that have been fought, how superior the Italians are in strength, dexterity, and skill. But when it comes to •armies, there's no comparison, and that's because they are badly led: the really able officers aren't obeyed, and everyone thinks that he knows best; and there has never been anyone whose *virtù* and *fortuna* have made him stand out so that the others would stand aside and let him lead. That's why it is that for so long—in so much fighting in the past twenty years—no wholly Italian army has done well, as witness what happened at Il Taro [1495], then Alessandria [1499], Capua [1501], Genoa [1507], Vailà [1509], Bologna [1511], Mestri [1513].

So if your illustrious family wants to follow those remarkable men who came to the rescue of their countries, the

main thing you have to do—the foundation of everything else—is to provide yourself with *your own army*, because no mercenaries or foreign auxiliaries can possibly be more loyal, more reliable, better soldiers, •than your own citizen soldiers will be. And good as each individual citizen soldier will be, taken together as a unit they will be even better when they find that they are commanded, paid, and honoured by their prince. That's the sort of army you *must* have if foreigners are to be beaten back by Italian *virtù*.

[Machiavelli now has a longish passage •discussing specific weaknesses of the Spanish and Swiss infantries, •sketching historical evidence for what he says about these, and •suggesting how an Italian army could be strengthened through an intelligent use of this knowledge about two of its potential enemies. The passage ends thus:] The introduction by a new prince of such new military procedures will increase his prestige and power.

This opportunity for Italy at last to have its liberator ought not to be missed. I don't have words to express •the love that would go out to him from all the provinces that have been washed out by the foreign flood, •the thirst for revenge, •the stubborn faith, •the devotion, •the tears. What doors would be closed to such a man? Who would refuse to obey him? What envy would hinder him? What Italian would deny him homage? This occupation by barbarians stinks in all our nostrils. So may your distinguished family undertake this mission with the courage and hope that go with all just enterprises, so that under your standard our country may be ennobled, and under your auspices what Petrarch wrote may turn out to be true: 'Valour will take up arms against wild attacks, and the battle will be short; for ancient valour is still strong in Italian hearts.'