



## THE FIRST GERMAN *REICH*: BETWEEN THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR AND THE CRISIS OF THE 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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**RESUMO** – Este ensaio procura traçar um panorama do século XVII durante a Guerra do Trinta Anos, cujo palco foi o Sacro Império Romano Germânico. Concomitante aos conflitos religiosos sangrentos, a Europa conheceu o significado das crises econômicas que se abateram no continente nesse momento de transição para o surgimento do Estado moderno.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** – Guerra dos Trinta Anos, Reforma, Contrarreforma, crise social.

### General aspects

To understanding 17<sup>th</sup> century German, it is necessary to know two fundamental aspects of the previous centuries: its political and religious structure. Politically, there was no German nation, for it was divided into more than three hundred semiautonomous states and each ruled by a prince, bishop, or count, despite the apparent unity imparted by the Holy Roman Empire, whose emperor was elected by the

**ABSTRACT** – This essay looks to trace a panorama of the 17<sup>th</sup> century during the Thirty Years' War, whose stage was the Holy Roman Empire. Simultaneous to the bloody religious conflicts, Europe knew the meaning of the economic crises that occurred in the continent at this moment of transition for the sprouting of the modern State.

**KEYWORDS** – 'Thirty Years' War, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, social crisis.

most eminent princes powerful – the Prince-electors. From a religious point of view, the region was the cradle of the Reformation, which would change the destiny of the Catholic Church and Europe, provoking a series of conflicts and wars.

Martin Luther, the herald of the dissatisfaction that swept through all the corners of Europe against the religious institution, knew how to take advantage of the precepts and the development brought



by the Renaissance ideals that dominated the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Paradoxically, we might consider that the Reformation was both a reaction against the Renaissance and its outcome, insofar as it were not for the innovations brought by the *Cinquecento*, there was hardly room for reform proposals to succeed; on the other hand, many aspects of freedom that were achieved in the period were also condemned by the reformers.

If, on the one hand, Luther had the religious inclination to make Christianity purer, it was not what many of his protectors, among them powerful princes, saw in the movement. That moment was the opportunity them of appropriating ecclesiastical goods as an outlet for bypassing the need for money both to support an increasingly complex administration, and to equip their armies, or even to acquire luxury objects for the ostentation of their position (GREEN, 1984).

However, what should only be a dispute between some princes with the prelates in their territories, assumed considerable proportions, causing the great European powers to fight each other. That conflict would be one of the most brutal wars known by humanity: the 'Thirty Years' War that began in 1618.

The limits of the known Holy Roman-Germanic Empire – a fragmented pseudo-State –, became the stage where would define the final phase of the struggle between Catholics and Protestants, well like political interests contrary to the Habsburgs. That is because, from its outset, it became clear that the motives for

belligerence went far beyond religious questions and into secular matters. That is made clear when nations of different creeds who were more concerned with seeking alliances to defeat the Habsburgs, the more powerful House of Europe, than, indeed, the expansion of their faith.

Francis I (1515-1547) of France can serve as an example in this situation: he allied not only with the Swedish and Danish Protestants but also with the Turkish Muslims (1543). All this to defeat Emperor Charles V (1519-1558). What about to say, years later, from the all-powerful French Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), who co-operated with the Protestant King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632)?

It is not difficult to understand that when the Treaty of Westphalia put an end to the war in 1648, the era of religious conflicts there was over and political conflicts established (LIMA, 1922); furthermore, it signaled that the medieval conception of Europe, long moribund, had come to term, giving rise to the emergence of the modern state.

### **Consequences of the Thirty Years' War**

It is commonplace to assert that human conflicts, especially wars, have their origin in events before their outbreak. The causes of the Great War – the fragile policy of alliances between European powers – are well known, but it needed a pretext: the assassinate from Archduke Franz Ferdinand. So like the invasion of the German army into Poland in 1939 triggered the successive war declarations that would lead to World War II. Why did nothing



happen after the *Anschluss* of Austria and part of Czechoslovakia by the Nazis, for example?



Figure 1

Destruction of religious images during the Puritan Era, London (?), s/d

In the face of these events, we are often led to think that only these were the worst moments in which a significant part of humanity fought on a world level. There was, however, a period when the European nations participated in a conflict of dimensions until then unknown in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and only revived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such a conflict was known as the 'Thirty Years' War, that extended from 1618 to 1648, and whose stage was central Europe,

in the territory comprised by the old Holy Roman-Germanic Empire.

To understanding the core trigger and the confrontations' complexity in that period, it is necessary to know its genesis. Exactly one hundred years before the war broke out in 1517, Martin Luther had posted his 95 theses in Wittenberg, inaugurating the era of religious conflicts. His ideas soon gained the sympathy of the German nobility, for the Lutheranism had



become a sure ally of the political particularism of its princes. Whether or not the prince was genuinely converted to the truth of Lutheran ideas, he profited from the confiscation of church property. He increased his control over ecclesiastical affairs and acquired a higher degree of independence from the Catholic emperor. (GREEN, 1984)

Luther, being condemned by heresy in the Diet of Worms, is welcomed by German nobles and lays the foundations of its doctrine. That will be fought by the

emperor Charles V, for the reformer ended up also fomenting the particularism between the princes diminishing the imperial authority. Besides, that could break the unity of the empire, which the emperor intended to make powerful and centralized. Political, military, and religious quarrels such as the rivalry between the Valois and Charles V, were pursued and intensified, as well as social conflicts such as the Peasants' War that widespread in some German-speaking areas in Central Europe from 1524 to 1525. (fig. 3)



Figure 2

Pamphlet against the Luther Reformation ('The Seven Heads of Martin Luther'), Leipzig, 1529





Luther's ideas did not reach only the princes who saw benefits for themselves, but they also the less fortunate, represented by the peasants. Led by Thomas Münzer, they saw in the Reform movement the opportunity to break the feudal structure and bond that bound them to their masters, even if they had to use force to gain land from the Church and the nobility themselves. Luther, however, strongly condemned such an attitude, urging the princes to crush the insurgents, a fact which

occurred in 1525 with the death of Münzer, although insurgent foci were extending until 1526.

Despite this, the conflicts between the princes of the North and the Emperor continued, when a truce was established in 1555, the well-known **Peace of Augsburg**, when it was determined that each prince would decide which religion he would adopt (*cuius regio, eius religio*); Lutheranism or Catholicism.



Figure 3

A scene from the Peasant War, in which they imprison a knight. It is observed that the peasants carry the *Bundschuh* flag, literally "tied shoe," a symbol used by them in opposition to the boots, employed by the nobles, Augsburg, 1532

The treaty was not to defend tolerance since it only consented to the existence of two religions. Neither the people nor the Church would have the right to choose: either accept it or withdraw to another place, leaving behind all that is had built. It

was clear that such a commitment would eventually be challenged.

The challenge, by the way, was constant in the 16th and 17th centuries, as it became clear in European geopolitics with the continuous clashes between its powers,



which aimed at greater territorial, economic and political participation. Some examples may be mentioned:

- a) If, on the one hand, Spain sought to maintain itself as a hegemonic power on the European continent; France, on the other hand, tried to destabilize its performance and the power of the Habsburgs in its two branches, the Spanish and Austrian.
- b) If on the one hand, England sought conditions for its future domination of the seas; on the other, the United Provinces fought for their independence from Spain and the Empire;
- c) While Denmark and Sweden fought for hegemony in the Baltic region; the Ottoman Empire aimed to advance further on European soil to maintain control and trade with the East;
- d) The Catholic Church, in its turn, still a search for its restructuring post-Tridentine and counter reformist, when the doctrinal rupture between the Catholic Church and the Protestant has materialized. Now the Roman struggle is to regain the space lost by the Reformation.

This reconquest, it is evident, goes through the walls of the Church and gives us a clear idea of the exaltation of the moods as well as the feedback of the aggressive spirit between many princes. That were either arduous defenders of the Catholic ideals – like Maximilian I of Bavaria (1573-1651) – or the Protestants – like Gustavus Adolphus. Each of the groups did not see the advance on the other side, favorably.

Thus, while counter-reformism advanced, so did Reformed, whose members gained positions in the Diets, even though they were divided between Lutherans and Calvinists, which certainly weakened them. In May 1608, the **Evangelical Union** was founded which brought together the Protestant princes, accepting the inclusion of the Calvinists after the Peace of Augsburg. One year later, it is the turn of Catholics to join forces in the **Catholic League** led by Maximilian I of Bavaria.

In 1609, Emperor Rudolf II had established his residence in Prague and, in the face of an imminent rebellion in Bohemia, granted Protestants the **Majesty's Letter**, allowing them the freedom to practice their religion.



Figure 4

Defenestration of Prague, an illustration of *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 1), Mathäus Merian (the Old), 1662

In 1612, Matthias I became emperor and promised the Bohemians to maintain their religious freedom, despite demonstrating the will to impose the Counter-Reformation in the region. The Protestants oppose, in the Bohemian Diet, and claim to the emperor to maintain the Majesty's Letter; nevertheless, the Emperor dissolves it, prohibiting its cult and meetings.

Enraged, the Protestants made their way to the Hradshin Palace and, after having stuck with the imperial regents, threw them out the window. That fact, known as the Defenestration of Prague (fig. 4), initiated the Bohemian Revolt, conflicts that culminated in the Thirty Years' War, which

"sank Germany into a sea of blood and tears." (GEISS, 1987, p. 180) The rebels established a new government and formed an army. In the meantime, Emperor Matthias I died and, outside the framework of the Rules, elect Frederick V (fig. 5b), elector of the Palatinate, as his king. They knew, however, that the throne would belong to Ferdinand of Styria, nephew of the dead emperor, who became the new emperor Ferdinand II (fig. 6). This one launches against the insurrectionists after receiving the support of the Spanish crown and the prince Maximilian I of Bavaria, whose military aid would be rewarded with the electorate Palatine.



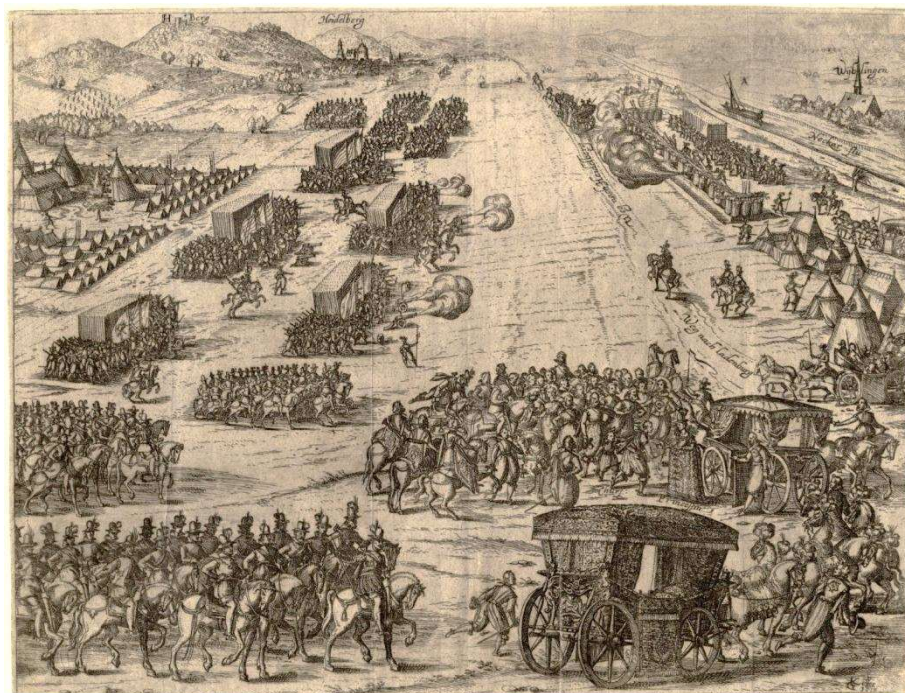


Figure 5a

Frederick V and the camp to welcome his bride from England, Elisabeth Stuart in Nuremberg, engraving by Georg Keller, 1613

In November 1620, Catholic troops – from the League and the Emperor – under the command of the Imperial General Johann T<sup>o</sup> Serclaes de Tilly (fig.7), invaded Bohemia and defeated the rebels on the White Mountain a few kilometers from Prague (fig. 8). After the defeat, Frederik V fled to Silesia and from there to Holland.

The emperor was ruthless with the insurgents: all the heads of the movement were executed, their families banished, their property confiscated and distributed to Catholic families loyal to him. Practically all the liberties of the Bohemians were extinguished: their crown became hereditary to the Hapsburg; the Catholic

religion was imposed by force, the Protestant churches were closed. The German language had the same weight as the Czech, and the Germanization of the region was intensified. The education was left to the Jesuits, and the Protestant teachers, among them Comenius, considered one of the exceptional educators of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were expelled. In a letter to Milton's friend Samuel Hartlieb, he exposed the arbitrariness with which it was processed and who were affected:

All those who have written about godliness, morals, science and the arts, whether Christian or Muslim, Jewish or Gentile, or whatever sect they have





always belonged to, Pythagoreans, academics, peripatetics, Stoics, Essenes, Greeks, Romans, old or new, doctor or rabbi, any church, synod, ecclesiastical council: everyone, I say, should be tolerated and listened to<sup>1</sup> (JESSEN, 1966, 123, **our translation**).



**Figure 5b**  
Frederick V, illustration from *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 1), Mathäus Merian (the Old), 1662

Ferdinand II succeeded effectively in overthrowing the rebellion in Bohemia, and the Diet of Regensburg granted Maximilian of Bavaria the dignity of Elector in place of Frederick V, in addition to the Upper Palatinate. Meanwhile, the Emperor's extremely repressive policy prompted various reactions to the Habsburgs throughout Europe, prolonging and

extrapolating a revolution that would be intestinal.

Some factors that triggered this situation can be cited, like the end of the Truce of the Twelve Years (1621) between Holland and Spain. Also, the fear of the kings of Denmark and Sweden (Protestants) that the Emperor should take advantage of the situation to restore his power throughout Germany and forcefully impose the Catholic faith.

In the same way, the Catholic kings also wanted to ensure their hegemony in northern Europe. Thus, Christian IV, king of Denmark (fig 9), and Count Ernst von Mansfeld (fig. 11), a mercenary who was in the service of Frederick, invade the empire but are subsequently defeated by General Tilly, who occupies the duchy of Schleswig-Holstein, Jutland, Mecklenburg, and Pomerania.

A prominent figure emerges at the time of the war: Albrecht Eusebius Wenzel von Wallenstein (fig. 10) that defeats Mansfeld, who was aided by James I of England. After the victory of the imperial troops, the Treaty of Lübeck (1629) was signed. Whereby Denmark again received its territories so that it would no longer interfere in matters of the Empire, and abandon its pretensions to the bishoprics of Bremen and Verden.

The successive victories of Ferdinand II led him to promulgate the **Edict of Restitution**, nullifying the Peace of Augsburg. The Emperor aimed the return

<sup>1</sup> *Alle, die über Frömmigkeit, Sittlichkeit, Wissenschaftlich und Künste geschrieben haben, Gleichviel ob Christ oder Mohammedaner, Jude oder Heide oder welcher Seite imme angehört haben mögen, Pythagoräner, Akademiker,*

*Peripatetiker, Stoiker, Essäer, Griechen, Römer, Alte oder Neue, Doktor oder Rabbi, Jedvede Kirche, Synode, Kirchenversammlung: alle, sage ich, sollen zugelassen und gehört werden.*



of the secularized lands by Protestants to the Catholic Church, imposing the religion once more overall Empire.

The execution of the edict was delegated to Wallenstein, who did not see it with good eyes because it believed that it would lose the advantages conquered with the war. Those benefits, by the way, intensely irritated many German princes, among them Maximilian, who asked the emperor to leave the command of the troops far of the hands the bohemian. Despite the reluctance of Ferdinand II, he finally conceded.

The Wallenstein's exit was a demonstration of French's diplomacy

behind the political scenes in its quest for the dismantlement of the Empire through intrigues between Catholic princes and the Emperor. France was not yet in a position to intervene directly in the conflict, nor participate in belligerent agreements with other countries. Thus, French foreign policy consisted both in sowing discord within the Holy Empire and in other countries as a means of achieving its supremacy in Europe. That would be evident with Richelieu (fig. 16) who would support, financially, Gustavus Adolphus, the Protestant king of Sweden.



Figure 6

Coronation of Ferdinand II in Frankfurt in 1619, the illustration of *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 1), Mathäus Merian (the Old), 1662



Among the examples of these French activities, one can cite the Diet of Regensburg (1630) when some princes were against the sending of imperial troops to Mantua to aid the Spaniards to the detriment of the French. Posteriorly, the neutrality of Maximilian I concerning the French, for example, which would be later disastrous to Bavaria.



**Figura 7**  
Imperial General Jean T' Serclaes de Tilly,  
illustration of *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 1),  
Mathäus Merian (the Old), 1662

The Swede thus saw the possibility of dominating the Baltic, since its direct competitor, Denmark, had succumbed and signed the Treaty of Lübeck on May 2, 1629. With this agreement formally signed by Albrecht von Wallenstein and King Christian IV, Denmark's participation in that conflict ended, making the Reign neutral.

As for Sweden, was established between it and France the Treaty of Bärwalde (1631) for six years. According to it, the Swedes would receive money to confront the Habsburgs, as long as they respected the Catholic religion in the occupied territories.

The arrival of Gustavus Adolphus (fig. 12) at the limits of the Holy Empire transformed undoubtedly the war into a European conflict. He represented the confluence of Protestant Baltic imperialism and French fear of the Habsburgs' ambitions. Moreover, the Swedish king was one of the most distinguished characters of the war and saw in his territorial expansion and the increase of the Swedish area of influence a more form of protection against the Hapsburg and Polish aggression. "Pomerania and the Baltic coast are the outer strongholds of Sweden," he wrote; 'are his guarantees against the emperor.'"(GREEN, 1984, p. 340) In addition to wanting to restore the depose Protestant princes and to defend religious, political freedoms in the Holy Empire he tried to carry forward imperialism Swedish. It was not surprising that most of the German princes were Protestants or Catholics, did not trust the Swedes.

For Gustavus Adolphus was relatively easy to invade Germany, for he had already three wars in his curriculum: in Poland (defeated his cousin Sigismund III in 1629), Denmark (in 1613) and Russia (in 1617). Therefore, he won significant victory over the imperial troops under Tilly in Breitenfeld (1631), which significantly extended its political and imperialist goals. He had ceased to fulfill his covenant with





the French by imposing Lutheranism wherever he went.

In 1632, the Imperial General Tilly died five days after being wounded near Rain am Lech, thus opening the way to the Swedish king on his way to Munich. (JESSEN, 1966) In the face of this event, there was no other alternative for Ferdinand II that to reconcile with the League and Wallenstein. This General defeated Gustavus Adolphus at Nuremberg – where the penury due to food shortages was already reigning. (*ibidem*)

Together with his army, the Swedish king heads north, and this time, he surprises and defeats the troops of General Gottfried Heinrich von Pappenheim and those of Wallenstein.

Meanwhile, during this battle, in Lützen, Gustavus Adolphus fell (fig. 13) and his army, one of the most disciplined and well prepared of the war, became a body of mercenaries, controlled mainly by Richelieu. (GREEN, 1984)

Ambitious, Wallenstein wanted to avenge himself on the emperor who had once deposed him. This desire increased even more with his defeat in Lützen when he plotted against the emperor with the enemy. Accused of treason, he is murdered in Eger (fig. 14), along with a large number of his *Friedländer*, at the behest of the Emperor himself.



Figure 8

Battle at White Mountain, near Prague, an illustration from *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 1), 1662





It is worth reading the letter of the Emperor's confessor, the Jesuit Wilhelm Lamormaini, dated March 3, 1634. In which he explains some of the reasons Ferdinand II found for dismissing him again, as well as condemning him to death for treason:



Figure 9

Christiano IV, king of Denmark, an illustration from *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 2), Mathäus Merian (the Old), 1646

*Friedländer's* secret machinations finally collapsed into a conspiracy on January 12. He [Wallenstein] wanted to ruin the Emperor, to extinguish the House of Austria, to have in his hands the Austrian kingdom and lands, to divide the goods and rule over the servants among his conspiratorial collusions<sup>2</sup>. (JESSEN, 1966, p.354, our translation)

After the death of Wallenstein, the command of the imperial troops passes to the count Matthias Gallas who together with the cardinal-infant D. Ferdinand, brother of Philip IV of Spain, and the king of Hungary regain positions to the north. They imposed a great defeat to the army of the protestant Duke Bernardo of the Saxe-Weimar and, on November 6, 1634, the Swedes defeat in Nördlingen. The Swedes cease to be a threat to the stabilization of the Empire. Protestants sought to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, for they were without their main allies. That action culminating in the **Treaty of Prague** (1635), when necessary concessions were made to Protestants and some resolutions of the Restitution Order were modified.

That seemed to be only an isolated negotiation between the Emperor and the Elector of Saxe, extended to the whole Protestant coalition. However, what would be the harbinger of peace was not, as Richelieu (fig. 15) threatened: "The Elector of Saxony made his peace, but this will not affect us other than to make us redouble our efforts to have everything ready." (GREEN, 1984, p. 343)

If at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, France did not act directly in the conflict because it was not prepared, it was now her turn to enter directly into the war to definitively destabilize the Habsburg power. The dominant fact for this had been

<sup>2</sup> *Die geheimen Machinationen des Friedländers mündeten schließlich am 12. Januarii in eine Verschwörung. Er wollte den Kaiser verderben, das Haus Österreich auslöschen, die Königreiche und*

*österreichischen Lande in seine eigene Hand bekommen und die Güter und Herrschaften der getreuen Diener des Kaisers unter seine Mitverschworenen verteilen.*



the defeat of his allies in Nördlingen. Thus, nine days before the Treaty of Prague was signed between the emperor and the Protestant leaders under the Elector of Saxony, France declared war on Spain.

Although its military resources were relatively underdeveloped, France at least entered the war of refreshment. On the contrary, Spain had been fighting for fifteen years, and the fighting would have to last another twenty-five years and reach the Peninsula itself. (KAMEN, 1984, p. 333)



**Figura 11**  
 Albrecht Wallenstein,  
 from Anthonis van Dyck, ca. 1636/1641

France enters the war with regular troops alongside the Swedes, according to Richelieu, in a clear demonstration that the reason of state should prevail over that of the religious confession. In 1636, the Swedes won in Wittstock and advanced towards Moravia, arriving at Prague in 1645;



**Figure 10**  
 Ernst von Mansfeld, an illustration from  
*Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 1),  
 Mathäus Merian (o velho), 1662

the French, in turn, already dominate much of the Rhineland and come in Bavaria in 1646. In this way, Germany becomes a battlefield of the French and Swedish armies, which spread plague and fear; even the emperor himself had to leave Prague. Despite these achievements, there were no decisive battles at this stage of the war, except for Rocroi in 1643, when the French imposed a significant defeat on the Spaniards, thus initiating the peace talks.

These conversations lasted until 1648, with the **Treaty of Westphalia**, but until it reached it, there were lengthy negotiations. The parties involved did not reach a consensus, especially those who benefited most from the last years of the war: the French and the Swedes. Thus, peace was established in two blocks: on the one hand between the Emperor (and his allies) and







**Figure 13**

Death of Gustav II Adolphus, in a battle near Lützen, an illustration of the *Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 2), Mathäus Merian (the Old), 1646

Data points that more than 300,000 people killed on the battlefields, as well as thousands of civilians as a result of disease, malnutrition, the ferocity of troops (fig. 15, 17), significant exoduses and mass deportations. However, although there is much data on human losses in Germany during the war, that data will never be possible to indicate because they are contradictory. Some report that about two-thirds of the German population perished, as five-sixths of the empire's villages were destroyed. (HUBERMANN, 1985) One believes Germany had a population of about 16 million, a figure that reached nearly 10 million in 1650. It is probably possible to say that the most considerable losses were in the countryside (fig. 18) – whose population suffered most from the dire consequences of war (MOHRMANN,

1998) –, ranging from 35% to 40%; in the city – whose apparent protection was due to its impregnable walls –, between 25% and 35%. (HENNIG, 1974)

It is noteworthy, however, that not all places of the Empire were ravaged by war at the same time. Many were spared; others, on the other hand, were devastated several times.

Could it be that only war, with its brutality and inhumanity, could have caused such destruction on European and German soil? Were there parallel factors to such misery? Could such barbarism be justified only by religious quarrels, or would they also be social, despite their interrelation? Maravall (1986) states that

Shared crisis of the seventeenth century cannot be identified with a new





phenomenon derived from the general conflagration of the Thirty Years' War, because it began a long time before, affected spheres not threatened by war, was more serious in countries that did not suffer direct damages from the fire and the troops of battle, and its process of reestablishment did not follow the line

of recuperation of war losses. The crisis of the seventeenth century cannot be understood [...] without bearing in mind the broad European framework in which it unfolded [...]. Nor is that crisis understood by referring only to the economic difficulties (however serious they were) [...]. (p. 26)

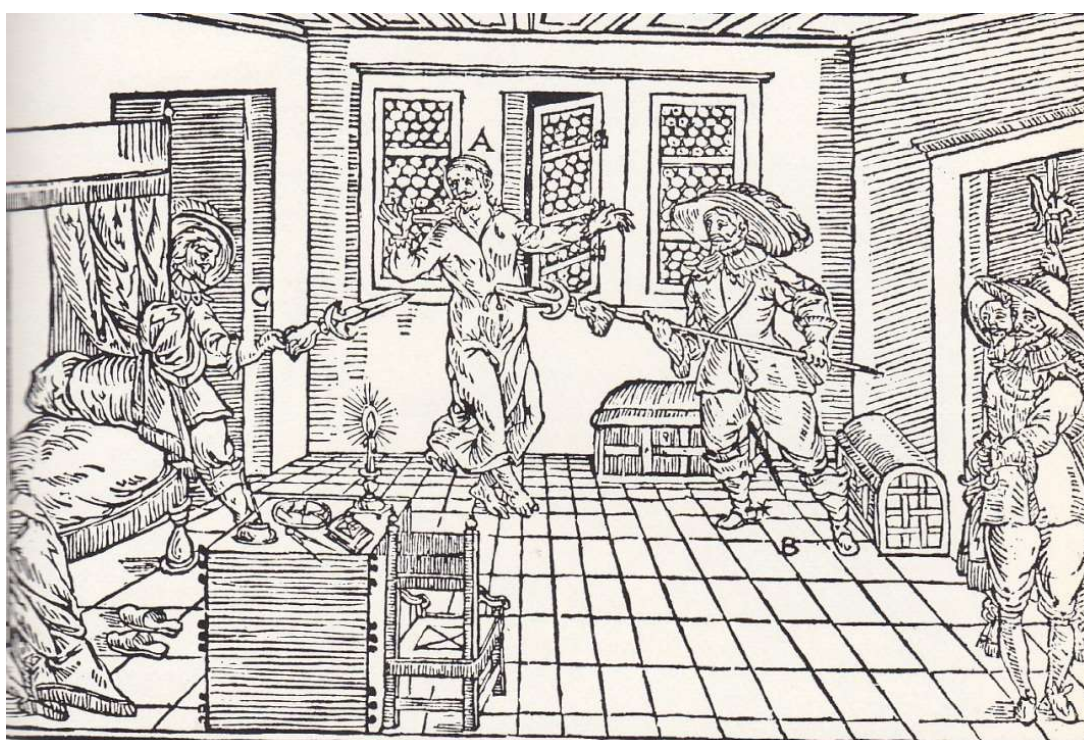


Figure 14  
Murder of Wallenstein, taken from JESSEN, 1966, p. 345



Figura 15

Inns were used by soldiers and then pillaged  
(CALLOT, Jacques *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre*, 1632)



Figure 16

Cardinal Richelieu, Armand-Jean illustration from  
*Theatrum Europaeum* (Bd. 2), 1646

A succession of banal conflicts was aggravated by economic crises in a moment of transition, when capitalism, which had given its vital signs already in the Renaissance, boosted the navigators in search of wealth. To make matters worse, he finds himself faced with an inept nobility, which would aim at wealth and easy profit through the exploitation of the wealth of others. Thus, the highest power of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Spain, whose House also dominated the Empire, is the reliable representation of the above. While England, Holland, and France accumulate enormous fortunes from commerce, the Spaniards discovered a more simple way to increase its treasure: exploiting America's gold and silver mines. (HUBERMANN, 1985)

The influx of metals into Europe has resulted in a price-revolution never seen before: "the prices of commodities in 1600





were more than twice as high as in 1500, and by 1700 they were even higher—more than three and a half times what they had been when the price revolution began”. (HUBERMANN, 1985, p.109)

Suddenly, Spain was plagued by unprecedented inflation that rapidly spread throughout Europe. The people could not buy anything and not even understand the

reason for this situation. Everybody sought to blame each other since it was unclear to them that this was of foreign origin. (p.110) Soon much of Europe was occupied by countless beggars spread on all the great centers; Paris, for example, in the 1630s, had a quarter of its population constituted by them. (p. 107)



Figure 17

Looting and burning a village

(CALLOT, Jacques. *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre*, 1632)

This mass of indigents, displaced and full of grudge, arose from wars, epidemics, the oppression of the powerful, and the lack of work came from the economic crisis. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they were everywhere: in France, in Germany, in Flanders. (p. 106)

That crisis exposed a great dichotomy in Europe of that period: if on the one hand, it was a time of significant economic development – due to the colonial expansion – on the other, it would be a time full of miserable people.

The bourgeoisie that had been the co-responsible for the discoveries, now found itself relegated to the background, while the nobility increases its patrimony. The nobles have regained its political power, taking small owners to poverty and forcing them to abandon the field, which grew the displacements of the human masses towards the cities. (MARAVALL, 1986)

There were, on the one hand, groups that tried to maintain and increase their privileges and riches – and could do so –



since they saw the crisis threatening them; on the other, a seemingly amorphous mass, plagued by pestilence, poverty, hunger, and war (fig. 19). The former, knowing that the resources of physical repression might not contain the latter, found themselves forced to seek other means like a coercive culture, to keep mass within the socially established order. (MARAVALL, 1986) Means of penetration in the consciences were sought, as well as the psychological control that favored the integration process, to combating grudges and violence. The nobility would thus ensure their superiority over the others. All the ideological, artistic, and social resources were used to keep the wills under control. (*ibidem*)

It is possible to verify that the baroque art with its characteristics become a

stationary drama: the subjection of the individual to the frame of the social order; the whole individuality is repressed. In Richelieu's France,

The traditional aspects in the structure of the power and society were in many cases not only maintained by force by that the subjection imposed on the people and the harsh repression of their protests – here *the people* also comprehends the group of bourgeois – revealed pre presence of conflict and the effort to contain it. "Punish was always the reason of state," wrote G. de Bocángel, but its *raison d'être* was never made a basic principle as it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. (MARAVALL, 1986, p. 39)



Figure 18  
Trees were used as a collective gallows  
(CALLOT, Jacques. *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre*, 1632)





That is clear in the relations within the army regiments, for there was no longer the old camaraderie, but a stern, lordly constitution. The commanders themselves and their officers used extreme violence against the soldiers (fig. 20), who were dominated by rigid discipline and subjected to punishment. (FLEMMING, 1937)

Against this state of tension, upheavals broke out throughout Europe. Part of the population rebelled against the local authorities; there were waves of revolutions and revolts that were promptly subjected by royal armies and nobles. Many of them, fearful of losing their *status quo* and of the evil consequences to which such acts could lead, did not even fulfill their only obligation: the military service. Some nobles thus avoided their responsibilities, preferring to contribute to the king or also claiming that they had no “funds to finance the expedition's expenses.” (MARAVALL,

1986, p. 49) Once again, the burden of this situation would fall on the poorest, who would go to the battlefields by force.

One demonstrated that the social foundations upon which this society was founded would begin to crumble in all strata. Faced with this state of misfortune, legions of thieves and robbers appear throughout Europe.

Undeniably there existed a relationship between the baroque and social crisis. We are faced – not only in Spain but in all of Europe – with an epoch that in all spheres of collective life, saw itself dragged along by irrational forces, by appeals to violence, the multiplying of crimes, moral laxity and hallucinating forms of devotion, etc. All these aspects resulted from the situation of the pathos wherein the underlying social crisis was exteriorized and expressed in the manifestations of the epoch's general mentality. (MARAVALL, 1986, p.53)



Figure 19  
Loot to a large farm  
(CALLOT, Jacques. *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre*, 1632)



Figura 20

Inns were used by soldiers and then pillaged  
(CALLOT, Jacques. *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre*, 1632)

That became the 'Thirty Years' War extremely perverse since there were no more limits to human actions. (fig. 18) Chaos had set in, as demonstrated by the relations between the members of the army, especially the soldiers. (fig. 21) Those were the most insecure professionals at that moment, because not only they saw the death all day, but also because they worked months, years, and suddenly their regiment disappeared when they saw themselves helpless on the street with wife and children. (FLEMMING, 1937) Not that the activity was worth it, especially in the face of so many sacrifices, because it was not: frequently the promised salary was not paid; even though there was the possibility of reimbursed through extortion and looting that were permitted. (*ibidem*.) Thus, the spoil of war was an element from which they could not put aside because it was the only guarantee for security of themselves and

their families. There was, therefore, a struggle for survival, in the first place, not a latent criminal tendency that led them to steal.

In this way, the local population was at the mercy of the regiments and armies that invaded their cities, forcing it to all sorts of ill-treatment and violations. In the five to six months of winter, for example, soldiers would quarter house in the homes of the inhabitants. (fig. 19-20) Those soldiers on foot stayed in the towns; the cavalrymen on the country, enjoying everything the villager could or could not offer. The exceptions were the houses of princes, nobles, and priests. (LANGER, 1998)

The compensatory exaction for not receiving the salary, imposed by the occupation of the armies, was extremely hard to the local population. In addition to the quartering, there was another request – the contribution imposed by the



commander, reaching both the field and the city, which was the single, short-term payment of a large sum of money. (*ibidem*)

We find, for example, this situation in the armies that waged the numerous battles in the 'Thirty Years' War, whose main characteristic was causality. There were, however, armies like Wallenstein's, whose soldiers had no commitments with any people, or the Gustavus Adolphus's, whose

formation was of the extremely religious and nationalist. (FLEMMING, 1937)

Therefore, "everything in it was accidental: its origin, its development, its enlargement, its end." (FRIEDEL, 1969, p. 414) That can be demonstrated in the formation of his armies, whose soldiers did not have another choice to enlist in the face of the misery that spread everywhere.



Figure 21

Renegade soldiers were punished in the public square, like the one hanging on the pendulum, or like the four on the left, mounted on the Spanish donkey  
(CALLOT, Jacques. *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre*, 1632)





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