

- The Bohemian rebellion—and the Thirty Years' War—began in May 1618 with an incident known as the *Defenestration of Prague*. In this, Bohemian Protestants threw two Catholic officials appointed by the Holy Roman Emperor from a window of the palace of Prague.

## The Thirty Years' War

Richelieu's foreign policy was as determined and coldly calculating as his policy at home. He did not allow his position as a Catholic cardinal to interfere with his primary goal of strengthening France at the expense of the Hapsburgs. The Thirty Years' War offered a golden opportunity to achieve this purpose.

The Thirty Years' War actually consisted of a series of wars interrupted by intervals of peace. It began because the religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in Germany had never completely died down following the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. Constant rivalry continued among the more than 300 German princes, who also wanted to be independent of the Holy Roman Emperor. In addition, France, Denmark, and Sweden were all looking for opportunities to diminish the power of the Hapsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire.

When the Holy Roman Emperor suppressed a Protestant rebellion in Bohemia in 1620, Protestant German princes and Protestant Danes went to war against him. The emperor defeated the king of Denmark, who had to promise not to interfere in German affairs. Sweden then took up arms.

Cardinal Richelieu favored the Swedes over the Catholic Hapsburgs, but he believed that it was in France's interest to prolong the war without involving France directly. The other nations would become weak from fighting, while France remained strong. Most of the battles of the Thirty Years' War took place in Germany, which lost about one-third of its population to casualties, famine, and disease. In 1635, however, France actively joined the war against the Hapsburgs. By 1648 the French and their allies had claimed victory.

The participants in the Thirty Years' War signed the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This agreement was a landmark because it made changes that affected western Europe for centuries. Territorial changes outlined in the treaty greatly strengthened France, which received Alsace, a valuable territory along the Rhine River.

The Treaty of Westphalia also recognized the Netherlands and Switzerland as independent nations, which weakened the Hapsburgs. The Hapsburgs suffered further blows because the peace made the princes in Germany virtually independent of the Holy Roman Emperor.

Because the Austrian Hapsburgs no longer exercised any real authority in Germany, they began to look eastward rather than westward. They became more interested in their own possessions—Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary—and eventually created a new empire centered along the Danube River instead of in Germany.

## The Sun King

Although France emerged powerful from the Peace of Westphalia, a series of rebellions erupted between 1648 and 1652. These rebellions are known as the Fronde, from the French word for "sling." The rebels—Frondeurs—were compared to mischievous schoolboys using slingshots when the teacher looked away. Nobles led the rebellions, but many peasants and the citizens of Paris also supported them. The Fronde threatened the centralized royal power that Richelieu and his successor Cardinal Mazarin had built up. The Frondeurs