

21029-7 ★ \$1.50

A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLASSIC • A BANTAM CLA

The Prince

by Niccolo Machiavelli





BANTAM CLASSIC • BANTAM CLASSIC • BANTAM CLASSIC • BANTAM CLASSIC • BANTAM CL

The Prince **by Niccolo Machiavelli**

Translated by Daniel Donno

**Edited and with an Introduction
by the Translator**



BANTAM BOOKS
TORONTO • NEW YORK • LONDON

THE PRINCE AND SELECTED DISCOURSES

A Bantam Book

PRINTING HISTORY

The Prince was first published in 1513

First Bantam publication / October 1966

Bantam Classic edition / March 1981

Cover painting by Botticelli.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 66-25554

All rights reserved.

Translation copyright © 1966 Bantam Books, Inc.

*This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by
mimeograph or any other means, without permission.*

For information address: Bantam Books, Inc.

ISBN 0-553-21029-7

Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada

Bantam Books are published by Bantam Books, Inc. Its trademark, consisting of the words "Bantam Books" and the portrayal of a bantam, is Registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Marca Registrada. Bantam Books, Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10103.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

was born in Florence in 1469. In 1498 he received an appointment to the chancellery of the Florentine Republic, serving as both an administrator and a diplomat. Machiavelli traveled to France and to Germany and knew political leaders throughout Italy, most significantly, Cesare Borgia, presumably the model for *The Prince*.

Machiavelli's official political life ended fifteen years later with the return to power of the Medici. Following his dismissal and banishment, he was accused of complicity, imprisoned and tortured. Although exonerated, he was without position and retired to his meager farm near San Casciano. It was in this bucolic setting of near poverty and of days passed in prosaic discourse with the local peasantry that Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, determined to prove that banishment had made him neither idle nor ineffective. He addressed *The Prince* to Lorenzo de' Medici, fervently desiring to induce the prince to emulate his creation—the ruler who would return Florence to its former glory. The city-states of Renaissance Italy had fallen into a morass of inept rulers and foreign domination; it was a time for desperate measures.

Machiavelli died in 1527. For centuries his reputation held that he had been inspired by the devil. But the man who gave his name to duplicity was in his own time a lover of liberty, a loyal patriot and a well-intentioned citizen working in behalf of his beloved Florence.

Bantam Classics

Ask your bookseller for these other world classics

CANDIDE, Voltaire

THE PRINCE, Niccolo Machiavelli

CYRANO DE BERGERAC, Edmond Rostand

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO, Alexandre Dumas

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, Victor Hugo

MADAME BOVARY, Gustave Flaubert

ANNA KARENINA, Leo Tolstoy

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH, Leo Tolstoy

FATHERS AND SONS, Ivan Turgenev

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, Fyodor Dostoevsky

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, Fyodor Dostoevsky

THE IDIOT, Fyodor Dostoevsky

Introduction	1
--------------------	---

The Prince

CHAPTER

Niccolò Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici		12
I The Kinds of Principalities and the Means by Which They Are Acquired		13
II Hereditary Principalities		13
III Mixed Principalities		14
IV Why Alexander's Successors Were Able to Keep Possession of Darius' Kingdom after Alexander's Death		21
V How to Govern Cities and Principalities That, Prior to Being Occupied, Lived Under Their Own Laws		24
VI Concerning New Principalities Acquired by One's Own Arms and Ability		25
VII Concerning New Principalities Acquired with the Arms and Fortunes of Others		28
VIII Concerning Those Who Become Princes by Evil Means		35
IX Concerning the Civil Principality		39
X How the Strength of All Principalities Should Be Measured		42
XI Concerning Ecclesiastical Principalities		44
XII Concerning Various Kinds of Troops, and Especially Mercenaries		46
XIII Concerning Auxiliary, Mixed, and Native Forces ..		50
XIV A Prince's Concern in Military Matters		53
XV Concerning Things for Which Men, and Princes Especially, Are Praised or Censured		56
XVI Concerning Liberality and Parsimony		57
XVII Concerning Cruelty: Whether It Is Better to Be Loved Than to Be Feared, or the Reverse		59
XVIII In What Way Princes Should Keep Their Word		62
XIX How to Avoid Contempt and Hatred		64

Contents

CHAPTER

XX	Whether Fortresses and Many Other Expedients That Princes Commonly Employ Are Useful or Not	73
XXI	What a Prince Must Do to Be Esteemed	76
XXII	Concerning the Prince's Ministers	79
XXIII	How to Avoid Flatterers	81
XXIV	Why the Princes of Italy Have Lost Their States	82
XXV	Concerning the Influence of Fortune in Human Affairs, and the Manner in Which It Is to Be Resisted	84
XXVI	An Exhortation to Free Italy from the Hands of the Barbarians	87

Discourses Upon the First Ten Books of Titus Livy

BOOK ONE

II	Of the Various Kinds of States and of What Kind the Roman Republic Was.....	91
III	The Events That Led to the Creation of the Tribunes of the Plebs, by Which the Roman Republic Became More Perfect	96
IV	That the Disorders Between the Plebs and the Senate Made the Roman Republic Strong and Free	97
X	Founders of Republics and Kingdoms Are As Much to Be Praised As Founders of Tyrannies Are to Be Censured	99
XI	On the Religion of the Romans	102
XII	The Importance with Which Religion Must Be Regarded and How Italy, Lacking It, Thanks to the Church of Rome, Has Been Ruined	105
LVIII	The Multitude Is Wiser and More Constant Than a Prince	108

BOOK TWO

II	The People the Romans Had to Fight, and How Obstinately They Defended Their Freedom	113
----	--	-----

BOOK THREE

XXI	How It Happened That Hannibal Gained the Same Results in Italy As Scipio Did in Spain by Contrary Means	119
-----	---	-----

Contents

CHAPTER

XLI That One's Country Ought to Be Defended, Whether with Shame or Glory, by Whatever Means Possible	121
Chronology	123
Notes to <i>The Prince</i>	125
Notes to <i>The Discourses</i>	142
Selected Bibliography	146

Introduction

It is a commonplace irony that *The Prince*—the classic handbook on power politics—should have owed its birth to the collapse of its author's own political career and to the practical failure of his most cherished military innovation.

Machiavelli's official entry into politics occurred in 1498 with his appointment as Secretary to the Second Chancery of the Signoria, a position rather loosely defined, involving him in military matters as well as domestic and foreign affairs. In this post he remained until the fall of the Florentine Republic in 1512. Through all his years in office, despite pronounced reservations about the generally conciliatory policies of his government, he remained loyal to it and served his superiors with tireless energy. When Pier Soderini was elected *Confalonier*, or chief magistrate, of the Republic in 1502, Machiavelli became one of his most trusted assistants. He was assigned to important missions both in Italy and abroad. The lengthy reports he submitted in the performance of these duties bear evidence of his sagacity as an observer, quick and sure in locating the center of power in any political situation and accurate in assessing its strength, but somewhat unskilled in the game of man-to-man diplomacy. They also attest to his passionate concern for the security of his homeland and his readiness to seek solutions that lay beyond the strict limits of his professional competence and authority. He was also ordered to draw up proposals on some of the vexing issues facing the Republic. These reveal in capsule form some of the important ideas we find in his later political writings.

Perhaps his finest hour came in 1509 when, after a fifteen-year struggle, the Florentines finally reduced Pisa into submission. Much of the credit for this feat belongs to Machiavelli. Though by no means a military man, he actually directed the land and sea blockade that brought about Pisa's capitulation. Moreover, the civilian troops who had manned the operation had come into being at his insistence and had been trained under his supervision. On

Introduction

this occasion his conviction, one which runs like a refrain through nearly all of his political writings—that a healthy state must rely solely upon its own citizen forces in war—bore fruit. It was to do otherwise three years later at Prato, when Machiavelli's career and the Republic foundered together.

Perhaps the real cause of this calamitous event goes back to Soderini's insistence upon friendship with France as a cardinal rule of his foreign policy. Costly and difficult as it often proved, this policy nevertheless served to protect Florence from the threats of her powerful neighbors so long as France continued to count in the affairs of the peninsula. In 1511, however, Pope Julius II (together with Venice, Spain, and England) organized the Holy League and launched a campaign to drive the French out of Italy. During the war that ensued both the Holy League and the French sought assistance from Florence, but Soderini, having sent a token force to the French, tried to avoid serious entanglement. The result was that Florence incurred the enmity of both parties and (as Machiavelli could have predicted) faced the likelihood of being pounced upon by whichever side emerged the winner. To avoid this danger, Soderini then labored to arm the Republic, relying not upon mercenaries, as had so often been done before, but upon a citizen militia of the sort that had proved its merit—so it seemed—in the struggle with Pisa. Machiavelli, the prime mover of this innovation, had doubtless inspired Soderini with some of his own confidence in it. Thus when the Holy League—thanks to the last-minute intervention of the Swiss—triumphed over the French, the scene of action shifted quickly to the frontiers of the Republic. Spanish troops, accompanied by Cardinal de' Medici, soon appeared and demanded the overthrow of the government. Assured that the unfledged forces Machiavelli had recruited could withstand the invader, Soderini refused to give way. The Spaniards then attacked, choosing Prato—heavily garrisoned with green recruits—as their target. After only a short struggle the enemy effected a breach in the city wall, poured through, overwhelmed the fleeing defenders, and sacked the town completely.

This was on August 29, 1512. Two days later Soderini

Introduction

resigned and went into exile. The Medici, after an absence of eighteen years, reassumed control of Florence. Six weeks after Prato, Machiavelli was dismissed from office and banished from the city for the term of one year. Thus the scene was set for *The Prince* and *The Discourses*.

But not quite. Early in 1513 Machiavelli was suspected of complicity in a plot to overthrow the Medici government. He was arrested, tortured, and soon after released, his innocence having been satisfactorily established. The incident should have destroyed any lingering hope of a rapid re-entry into politics under the new rulers, but *The Prince* itself is ample evidence that it had no such effect.

Machiavelli withdrew to the meager farm near San Casciano which his father had left him. There impending poverty troubled him, though he had been short of funds before. But enforced idleness in rustic surroundings for this restless man of forty-three was an entirely new burden. Throughout his fourteen years of service he had been a high-level functionary. He had visited some of the key trouble spots of his day and had represented the Republic on difficult missions in France, in Germany, in Rome, and in the petty courts of Italian princelings. He had dealt with some of the leading figures of his age, the movers and shakers of his world. Now, in Polonius' words, he was reduced to

be no assistant for a state
But keep a farm and carters.

How he reacted to this suddenly slackened tempo and reduced circumstances we know from a letter he wrote to his friend Francesco Vettori less than a year later. The mingling of trifling details with serious matters, the shifting of tone, alternating between genial humor and hints of despair, are typical of Machiavelli's familiar letters in which the salient features of his mind and character stand out strikingly:

. . . What my life is, I will tell you. I get up at sunrise and go to a grove of mine which I am having chopped down. I spend a couple of hours there, checking up on the work of the previous day and passing the time with

Introduction

the woodcutters, who are never without some trouble or other, either among themselves or with the neighbors. On the subject of this grove, I could tell you a host of interesting things that have happened involving Frosino da Panzano and others who wanted some of the wood. Frosino in particular sent for a few cords of it without telling me, and when it came to paying he wanted to hold back ten lire because he claimed I owed him that much as winnings from a game of *cricca* we played four years ago at the home of Antonio Guicciardini. I began to raise the devil. I wanted to accuse the carter who had come for it of theft. But Giovanni Machiavelli came between us and made us settle. Battista Guicciardini, Filippo Ginori, Tommaso del Bene, and certain other citizens each ordered a cord when that ill wind was blowing.* I promised some to all of them and sent a cord to Tommaso. But it turned out to be only half a cord after it reached Florence because he, his wife, his servants, and children were all there helping to stack it. . . . Finally, seeing who was making the profit on it, I told the others that I had no more wood, whereupon they all made quite a fuss—especially Battista, who ranks this with the other misfortunes of Prato.**

When I leave the grove, I go to a spring and from there to my bird snares. I carry a book under my arm—Dante or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets like Tibullus, Ovid, or the like. I read about their amorous passions, and their loves call my own to mind, so I delight a while in these thoughts. Then I betake myself to the inn on the highway. I chat with the people going by, ask for news from their home towns, learn a few things, and note the various tastes and curious notions of men. Meanwhile lunchtime arrives and, together with my family, I eat whatever food my poor house and scanty patrimony afford. Having lunched, I return to the inn. There I generally find the innkeeper, a butcher, a miller, and two kiln-tenders. In their company I idle the rest of the day away playing at *cricca* and *tricche*.

* That is, when Machiavelli was arrested.

** Battista Guicciardini was Governor of Prato when it was sacked.

Introduction

trach—games that give rise to a host of quarrels, cutting remarks, and insults. Often we fight over a penny and are heard yelling as far off as San Casciano. Set down among these lice, this is how I keep the mould from my brain and find release from Fortune's malice. I am content to have her beat me down this way to see if she won't become ashamed.

At nightfall I return home and enter my study. There on the threshold I remove my dirty, mud-spattered clothes, slip on my regal and courtly robes, and thus fittingly attired, I enter the ancient courts of bygone men where, having received a friendly welcome, I feed on the food that is mine alone and that I was born for. I am not ashamed to speak with them and inquire into the reasons for their actions; and they answer me in kindly fashion. And so for four hours I feel no annoyance; I forget all troubles; poverty holds no fears, and death loses its terrors. I become entirely one of them. And since Dante says that there can be no knowledge without retention, I have set down what I have gained from their conversations and composed a little book, *De Principatibus*, in which I probe as deeply as I can . . . into the subject, discussing what a principality is, what kinds there are, how they are won, how they are maintained, and why they are lost. If ever any trifle of mine has pleased you, this one should not displease you; and to a prince—especially a new prince—it ought to be welcome. Therefore I am addressing it to the Magnificent Giuliano [de' Medici]. . . .

I am going to waste. I cannot go on this way for long without becoming contemptible in my poverty. Besides, there is my wish that these Medici lords would begin to use me, even if they were to start by setting me to roll a stone, for if I should then fail to win their confidence I could only blame myself. Having read this thing, one will see that I did not sleep or gamble away the fifteen years I was engaged in the study of statecraft, and anyone ought to value the services of a man who has become richly experienced at another's expense. As to my loyalty, there should be no doubt, for having always kept faith, I am not about to begin breaking it now. Anyone who has been faithful and true as I have been for forty-three

Introduction

years can hardly change his nature, and my poverty is witness to my honesty and goodness. . . .

The letter is dated December 10, 1513, and this is the first mention of *The Prince*. There is really no need to look further for Machiavelli's motive in writing it. Yet this motive has not always been fully understood. Some critics, recalling Machiavelli's republican sympathies and his long service to Soderini's government, have attributed the work to crass opportunism and have charged the writer with hypocrisy. Such a view is, to say the least, an oversimplification. It overlooks the spirit of the book and tends to falsify the political temper of the times. If we assume that Machiavelli chose to play the devil's advocate merely to get a job, we will miss the warmth of feeling that informs his pages, for underneath the crisp and chilling logic the thought often glows with indignation, with hope that is wrung from despair and defies logic. Far from being a brilliant exercise in opportunism, *The Prince* is a desperate effort to find a remedy for the wretched conditions into which his country had fallen. "I love my country more than my soul," Machiavelli wrote, and *The Prince* reflects this.

To be sure, poverty and idleness weighed on him. But politics was his life, "the food that is mine alone," he says, "and that I was born for." For him to be cut off from political activity was like being deprived of vital air. The degree to which he was possessed by this *furor politicus* should be gauged not so much by his large body of writings on the subject as by the high place political matters held in his scheme of values. Surely nothing stood higher. And this helps to explain how he came to his major political discovery.

Machiavelli's chief contribution to political thought lies in his freeing political action from moral considerations. For him, the political imperative was essentially unrelated to the ethical imperative. This is not to say that he was an advocate of immorality. There is ample evidence, in fact, that he held moral views which, by and large, coincided with those of his contemporaries. But where political theorists had traditionally built their ideas upon theological and ethical foundations, judging institutions and rulers against a pattern of what ought to be, Machiavelli affirmed

Introduction

that religion and morals had no place in the political arena except insofar as they served political ends. For him, the value of an institution or a ruler was to be determined only by practical success, and, at least as far as *The Prince* is concerned, success meant the acquisition and preservation of political power. He regarded the ideas of his predecessors as mere "fancies." ". . . I depart from the rules set down by others," he tells us in Chapter XV. "But since it is my intention to write something of use . . . , I deem it best to stick to the practical truth of things rather than to fancies. Many men have imagined republics and principalities that never really existed at all. Yet the way men live is so far removed from the way they ought to live that anyone who abandons what is for what should be pursues his downfall rather than his preservation."

To be sure, history is replete with examples of rulers who, long before Machiavelli appeared, had often acted without any regard for ethical imperatives. But it remained for Machiavelli to affirm that such actions were in accord with the legitimate principles of political conduct. Without any theoretical sanction, these men had not scrupled to predicate their actions upon purely political criteria. Machiavelli provided the sanction their deeds—and those of subsequent rulers—required by declaring in effect that if statecraft was to be practiced successfully, conventional morality had to be set aside and replaced by what later writers were to call "reasons of state." Thus he established a cleavage between political conduct and personal morality—a cleavage that haunts the conscience of men even to this day.

The modern reader should guard against the error of reading *The Prince* as though its author had been aware of philosophical and doctrinal systems relating to the state and society that had no existence in his time. Unless he does so, he will seek for answers to questions Machiavelli never considered. Indeed, it is important to remember that Machiavelli was not a systematic thinker. He was not concerned with the problem of rationalizing a complete and coherent political theory. His aim in *The Prince* was to describe the rules of power politics based upon his analysis of history—an analysis which, whatever its shortcomings, marked a long step forward in making sense out of the

Introduction

welter of conflicting events in his time. It has since helped in making sense out of those of subsequent times as well.

One of the most characteristic elements of his thought in this work is its proximity to action. He was not a scholar, and he did not have the temperament of one who finds knowledge an end in itself. Knowledge for him was a springboard for the deed. He doubtless regarded his analysis of men and events as the basis for a program, a blueprint which some likely ruler would take up and build upon. This aim helps to account for the fact that, surprisingly, he does not even pause to define the nature of the state or to develop what its relation to the society living under its laws should be. It also helps to account for his insistence upon logic and his air of scientific objectivity. He must have believed that he was not presenting the opinions of a mere expert, but that he had unlocked the very truth of things and was proclaiming that alone.

The skeptical reader will discover that Machiavelli's argument is neither as logical nor as consistent as it appears, and that the objectivity, though it is not just a pose, is not always real either. He will discover that the work is not purely a synthesis of keen and original deductions from fact. It is also a work of imagination. Where the author's own logic might have led him to despair for his country, his imagination stepped in, metaphor in hand, to reverse the direction of that logic and give life to his hope (a hope which is not fully revealed until the last chapter). Contrary to what some of his critics have said, *The Prince* is not the work of a man whose veins ran ice water. Instead, it is the work of a man who looked out upon the wreckage of history with anguish in his heart and insisted that a solution—not one that would emerge in the fullness of time, but now—could be found. Such a solution would require desperate measures, strength, courage, skill, and favorable circumstances—in two words, *virtù* and *fortuna*.

He must have believed that the man and the moment were at hand when, not long before his letter to Vettori in which he announced *The Prince*, he saw a chance to return to his proper sphere of action—politics. More than that, he saw a chance to play a leading role in the creation of a state based upon his own ideas—a state large and strong enough to be feared by its neighbors and to serve as

Introduction

a bulwark against foreign incursions. For he had got wind that Pope Leo X was planning to carve out a state for one of his nephews, either Giuliano or Lorenzo de' Medici. Thus, perhaps in July, 1513, he set himself to write *The Prince*. Working in haste, he probably completed it by the following December, since he stated in the letter to Vettori quoted above that it only needed to be "fattened and polished."

But *The Prince*, as we have it, does not show any great labor of the file, and this, strangely, is one of its virtues. Free of rhetorical flourishes, the style lays bare the mind at work, a mind impatient of all nuances and shadings of thought, but poised for irony and quick with sarcasm. Lively and ductile, it is irresistibly attracted to sharp antitheses, aphorisms, and half-concealed images. The pace is hurried, and indeed at times the writer's pen seems in danger of losing its battle to keep up with the headlong rush of ideas as clause follows upon clause. As a consequence, the syntax does not always flow smoothly, and even the grammar becomes shaky. Yet these are only minor flaws. Lacking grace, the expression nevertheless remains lucid, even if we sometimes wish that the diction were more precise and the pace more restrained. Whenever possible, the writer adheres to a simple pattern: every argument unfolds a lesson and comes to rest upon a political axiom, often new and always, in his view, incontrovertible. All in all, the style is in accord with the shape and temper of Machiavelli's thought.

But there is an appeal to the book that goes beyond the brilliance of its ideas and the vigor of its style. Time has dimmed some of the sparkle of its originality, and the modern reader is obliged to summon his historical imagination if he is to recapture the sense of shock and novelty which Machiavelli's first readers experienced. But time has not dimmed its direct and uncompromising honesty, its almost ruthless avoidance of every form of cant. Here there is no bowing to pious clichés, to pretended sensibilities, or hallowed euphemisms. Seldom has a writer done so little to ease the way for his ideas. And one may wonder, in fact, whether those who have reacted to Machiavelli with such voluble horror have not been more shocked by his candor than by the character of the ruler he describes.