

Thirty Years' War -- A Long Fight Of Theology Rather Than Politics

I like history as much as the next person, but I gotta tell ya, the Thirty Years' War made my head hurt. I think banging my head on the desk in frustration had something to do with it. ;-)

The Thirty Years' War took place mainly in Germany (today's Germany, back then it was independent states and kingdoms) in the 17th century from 1618-1648. Yet, the underlying factors for the war went back almost a century. It was a powder keg waiting for the match.

The Thirty Years' War was more of a religious war (the last of its kind in Europe) than a political one. I'm not saying politics didn't have a minor role; it just wasn't the main factor.

Before you go off banging your head (I'll try to keep this as painless as possible), let me tell you who the players were. Fighting in the Protestant corner (with about a half-million men) were the Swedes, France, Brandenburg-Prussia, Transylvania, and England. On the Catholic side was the [Holy Roman Empire](#), Spain, Austria, Bavaria, and Denmark-Norway (fighting with an almost equal match of around 450,000 men).

Told you it was a religious war, the Catholics vs. the Protestants.

France is a bit of an odd-ball in this, fighting on the side of the Protestants since it was a predominately Catholic country. But, the French thought the Catholic Habsburgs had too much power (they ruled the region bordering France), so they fought on the opposing side. See, politics did have some parts in this.

Now the question becomes: why were they fighting? Again, I'll try to make it less confusing...

Look, I'm not placing blame on anyone; but, after the Reformation sweeping Germany in the mid to late 16th century Protestants (Lutherans, Calvinists) were fighting for their piece of the religious pie. The Catholic Church who had a monopoly in Europe, wasn't giving in so easily.

Wait, wasn't there freedom of religion? No way. Fat chance. Totally unthinkable.

The Peace of Augsburg (signed in 1555) stated that rulers could choose their religion (only Lutheran or Catholic) and force their people to follow what they chose.

An exception was Lutherans living with a Prince-bishopric (ruled by a Catholic bishop) could still practice their religion freely.

I'm saddened by the total devastation the war brought to not only Germany (some towns were

totally abandoned during the war), but also parts of Bohemia (modern day Czech Republic), Denmark, and others. It's been said that the Kingdom of Württemberg lost 75 percent of its population and about half the male population in the German states as a whole.

Of course, not all died in battle. Diseases such as Typhus, the Plague, and Scurvy affected not only those fighting on the battlefield, but refugees and townsfolk also suffered. So bad was a Plague epidemic at one point, places like [Dresden](#) and [Oberammergau](#) suffered horribly.

Sweden (a major powerhouse in all this) was reported to have destroyed around 2,000 castles and almost as many towns within Germany by the time the Thirty Years' War was over. The poor town of [Nördlingen](#) had not one, but two epic battles taking place there.

Some towns within Germany took almost a century before returning to their former glory. Many old framework houses had to be rebuilt, medieval churches were too (sometimes in the Baroque style that was all the rage by this time), and families settled again in their former homes or found new ones.

It kind of reminds me of Germany as a whole, constantly rebuilding itself into something new and improved.

I just hope I didn't make your head hurt as much as mine... ;-)