

# THE "GENERAL CRISIS" OF THE 17TH CENTURY

HSTE4302 #1

## I. ECONOMICS

- A. Geographic reorientation of trade and commerce
  - decline of Mediterranean (Italy, Spain)
  - rise of north Atlantic (England, Netherlands)
- B. Subsistence crises: famines 1630; 1659-62 (accession of Louis XIV)

## II. DEMOGRAPHICS

- A. 16th C. expansion: population rise; differential price revolution:
  - wages decrease; land, rent, food increase
- B. MALTHUSIAN CRISIS: population increases exceeds food production;
  - result = "demographic scissors," increase in death rate
- C. 17th C contraction: 1. 1620-1670 deflation: prices fall steadily
- 2. population stagnant or declining:
  - a) European Marriage Pattern: west of Trieste to Leningrad line
    - later marriage age ; 15-20% of population never marries
    - result = first recorded decline in European birth rate
  - b) some evidence of birth control (abstinence, coitus interruptus)
    - letters of Madame de Sévigné to daughter and son-in-law

## III. POLITICAL CRISES OF 17TH CENTURY

- A. General themes: court versus country; kings versus aristocracy
  - trends: absolutism on continent: France, eastern Europe
  - more representative govt. in England & Netherlands
- B. Specific crises:
  - Germany: 30 Years War
  - English Civil War and Glorious Revolution
  - France: from Fronde (1648-1653) to Louis XIV
  - Spain: decline of Hapsburg power, revolt of Netherlands
  - 1640's revolts in Portugal, Catalonia, Naples

