



## History 101

### Cardinal Richelieu

You know him....and you hate him!...But that's just because Alexander Dumas made him out to be the villain in *The Three Musketeers*. Really, he was a great guy, although, perhaps, not one you'd want to cross! Certainly, he was one of the ablest statesmen of his time.

Born in 1585, in France, for more than 18 years he would be the actual ruler of France. In the process, he made Louis XIII an undisputed absolute ruler and France a much stronger country. Pope Gregory XV had made Richelieu cardinal in 1622, and in 1624 he regained a place on the king's council, where he soon became the leading influence in the French government. From 1624-1642, he basically single-handedly ruled France while the little Louis XIII grew up from a small boy to a young man.

Richelieu faced two major problems in governing France: 1) the Huguenots (French Protestants) and the independence of the nobles. He saw both as obstacles to a centralized government and a strong ruler. Thus, he crushed both. His opposition to the Huguenots, by the way, was a major reason for such groups eventually immigrating to the New World colonies. Richelieu's greatest interest was in foreign affairs. When he came to power, Europe was struggling in the Thirty Years' War, the worst religious war in Europe's history—Protestants vs. Catholics. He fought several wars, and France and Louis XIII benefited greatly from his efforts.

I don't have many Richelieu covers as yet (only three, not counting the French battleship), but they always strike a special note with me when I run across them—blazing swords, swashbuckling swordsmen, lace shirts, feathered hats, D'Artagnon gleefully laughing as he skewers yet another of the Cardinal's soldiers. Ah, those were the days!

