Machiavelli/The Prince Essay, Research Paper

Assignment # 7 Nicolo Machiavelli was the first great political philospher of the Renaissance. He was born in 1469 and died in 1527. He was born in Florence, Italy. At the time he was born, the country was in political upheaval. It was diveded between four dominant city-states, although each was always at the mercy of the stronger, more unified surrounding foreign governments. The Medici family+s reign, which had ruled Florence since 1434, was temporarily interruped by a reform movement that began in 1494, in which Machiavelli became an important diplomat. Spanish troops helped the Medici family to regain power. Machiavelli was tortured and removed from public life. In the next few years, he wrote many things, such as political philosophy, plays, and history. In the end, Machiavelli gained favor with the Medici+s are was called back to public duty for the final two years. Machiavelli wrote his most famous work, The Prince, in 1513, but it was not published until 1532, which was after he died. The Prince at once provoked argument of ideals and religious argument as well. Pope Clement VIII condemned it. It said that rulers should have abosolute power over the land they rule no matter what it takes to keep it that way. The focus of this book is how to properly rule a monarchy. The controversial parts of The Prince come in the middle sections where he describes how to control the ruling parts properly. Instead of giving advice which would be considered moral, he instead says that a ruler only must seem morally just to his subjects. He discusses “virtues” which can lead to the destruction of a prince, and “vices” which can lead him to be a successful monarch. The virtues he lists are those that are usually considered good in a person. He says that most think it is advantageous for a prince to be known as generous. If he is generous in secret, though, he will not aquire this repuation, but if he is publicly generous, then he runs the risk of growing broke and will have to collect more taxes from his subjects, causing them to dislike him in the end. Therefore, it is best for a prince to not be so generous. He says that some generousity should be shown to people such as soldiers when a village is robbed. A lot of the goods should go to them.

In parts, he also says that a prince should be harsh when it comes to punishment. It makes people less apt to commit crimes if they know a hefty price will be paid if they are caught. He also argues that for a prince, it is better that he is feared than loved, but not hated. He can avoid being hated by not confiscating his subjects+ property. He can be feared by punishing uncoopertave subjects with death, since, as he states: “people more quickly forget the death of their father than the loss of their inheritance.” Machiavelli also says that a prince should be able to be deceitful when it can help him gain advantage. This is probably the most controversial section of The Prince. When being deceitful, he must be descreet about it. He must always exhibit five virtures even if he is not really. These virtues are mercy, honesty, humaneness, uprightness, and piety. A prince must be avoid being hated at all costs. The best way to avoid being overthrown is by avoiding being hated. In many sections of The Prince, Caesar Borgia, a dispised tyrant of Spain was praised by Machiavelli. When Machiavelli was a diplomat, he was in contact with Borgia a lot. Although it never clearly states that Borgia is the ideal monarch, many believe that. Many others used to interpret The Prince as a satire on Borgia and rulers such as him because it showed the great dislike of Machiavelli for arbitrary power. This theory was discarded in 1810 with a letter by Machiavelli which stated that he wrote The Prince to endear himself to the Medici family and to liberate Italy from foreign governments. A lot of his points say that governments from the country being ruled are very important, no matter what.