

Elizabeth I – from *Moving Ideas* by F. Salerno

Her mother was Anne Boleyn and she ascended the throne when she was 25. She could speak French, Latin and Italian and she wanted to avoid the excesses of religious fanaticism: fortunately she thought that every individual should be master of his own soul. She re-established the Anglican Church naming herself Governor of the Church of England with the second Act of Supremacy and, with the Act of Uniformity, she stated that only Cranmer's **Prayer Book** was to be used by the English people. She surrounded herself by a Privy Council of 20 noblemen and officials who helped her to rule England. She never married: as she said, "the Queen was married to her people"; in fact she travelled around the country to have closer contacts with her subjects but we must not forget that she was also an incomparable diplomat! England was becoming a commercial and sea power: explorations and oversea trade expanded, but not always thanks to economic abilities! The sea-dogs Walter Raleigh and Francis Drake, in fact, contributed to the success of English economy, with the Queen who secretly encouraged their acts of piracy against the Spanish ships because she also had a share in the profits of the colonial and commercial wealth of the time!

Elizabeth realized that Spain was her main enemy and not only from a commercial point of view: Philip of Spain, her sister Mary's husband, claimed the throne, and also her cousin Mary, James V's daughter, Queen of Scotland and great friend of French and Spanish Catholics, claimed the throne. Moreover she sent soldiers to the Netherlands to help the Dutch who were fighting against the Spanish troops. In 1588 the war against Spain started in the English Channel: the Spanish Invincible Armada was defeated more by the stormy winds than by the English strength. Anyway England reached its glory and national unity and preserved her so desired independence. When she died, because she had no heirs, the Tudor line died with her.