

## ABSOLUTE MONARCHIES

### Absolutism:

### Louis XIV of France

- born in 1638, ruled 1643-1715
- as a child, he had to face the **Frondes Revolt** when the French high nobles rebelled against him – he managed to take control but it left him very suspicious of nobility and Paris for the rest of his life
- before 1661, when Louis assumed personal control, France had been involved in the Thirty Years's War and war with Spain
- his advisor was **Cardinal Mazarin** (who helped him until his death in 1661)
- in 1685 Louis **revoked the Edict of Nantes**, as a result of that many Huguenots emigrated from France



#### **TASK 1:**

**Why was the Edict of Nantes important for France?**

#### **TASK 2:**

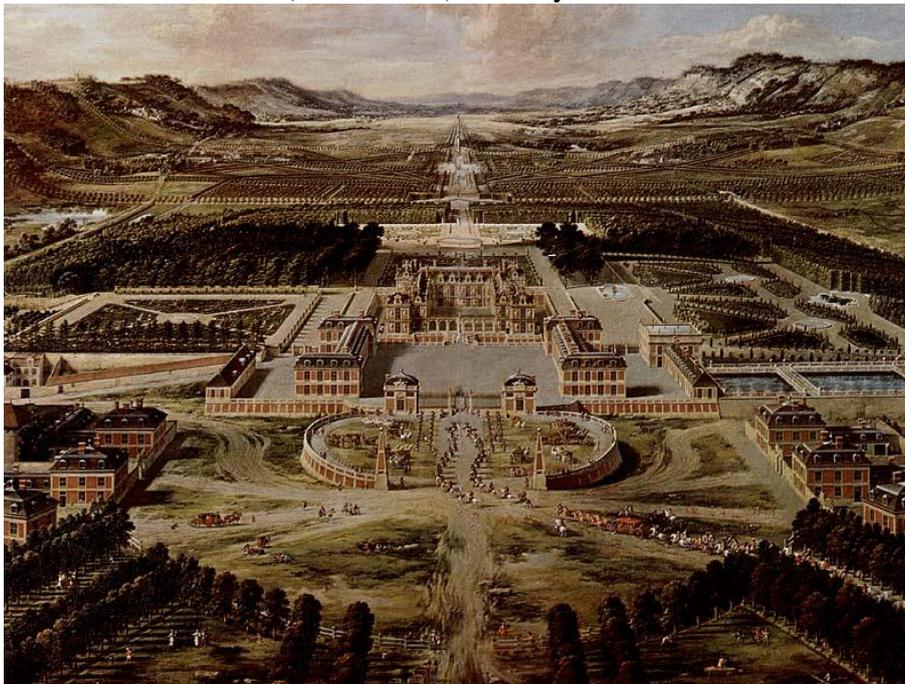
**Explain what Louis's most famous quote meant (which he never really said): "*The State is I.*"**

Louis' main goal was to establish French prestige in Europe, so he got France involved in many **conflicts**:

- **War of Devolution** against Spain
- **the Dutch War**
- **the Spanish War**
- **the Nine Years' War** about Palatinate
- **the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713)**
  - war with most of Europe over Spanish succession
  - Charles II of Spain died in 1700 and in his will, he left all his lands to Philippe, Duke of Anjou (Louis XIV's grandson)
  - but the Emperor feared that Spain and France would unite
  - Louis started a war with the HRE and most of Europe
  - four fronts – with Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Italy
  - the war was also fought in colonial North America
  - heavy French defeats
  - the war was ended by the **Treaty of Utrecht (1714)** - France kept her fortresses, Strasbourg and Alsace, Louis' grandson became Philippe V of Spain but had to renounce his place in French line of succession (so that France and Spain would never unite in future), and Britain emerged as the major power in North America and the West Indies and her navy controlled the Mediterranean (because they got Gibraltar)

### Versailles

- Louis XIV ordered a new royal residence to be build – a chateau in the suburb of Paris
- full of luxury and pomp
- Louis managed to keep the nobles around – under his surveillance (so they would not plot against him) – *What made him suspicious of the French aristocracy?*
- thus Louis made Versailles (and himself) the very centre of France



**TASK 3: Study this painting of Versailles from 1668. Why did the contemporaries consider the palace so impressive?**

#### TASK 4:

However, some Louis XIV's policies were very costly and threatened to ruin France. From what you have studied above, write down the things you consider very expensive:

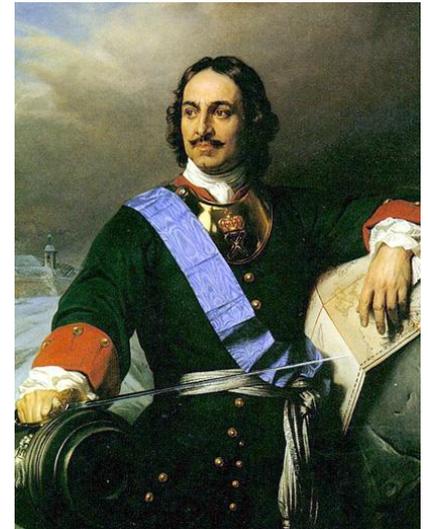
- As France was on the verge of bankruptcy, there were a few things which could help the situation
  - taxes were raised – which was always very unpopular, especially when aristocracy and clergy did not pay most taxes
  - **Jean-Baptiste Colbert** – French minister of finance, introduced the economic policy of **mercantilism** to France (a balanced budget, preference of export over import)
  
- Moreover, Louis was famous for his mistresses, the most famous being **Louise de la Valliere** and **Madame de Montespan** who influenced not only Louis but also the politics
- because of several deaths in his family, when Louis XIV died, his successor was his great-grandson, (five years old!) Louis XV

#### TASK 5:

Louis XIV is also known as the Sun King – based on his reputation. With a partner, prepare a short argumentation speech on why he might have earned this reputation. (Use your notes or any available sources)

## Peter I of Russia

- but better known as **Peter the Great (1682-1725)**
- Peter's character
  - a man of action, determined to modernize Russia and destroy its feudalism and backwardness
  - when he was young, he served in the army and navy with no extra privileges
  - self-confident, impatient, temperamental and but also sometimes cruel
  - socially very egalitarian. Very tall.
- **the Great Embassy (1697-1698)** – Peter travelled across Europe, visiting royal courts to learn. The aim was also to win support for his plans for Russia but had little real affect
- **army and navy** – Peter's greatest passion
  - interested in ships - By 1725 the Russian navy was the largest in the Baltic area.
  - large army (at the greatest forces reached over 250,000 one of the largest in Europe)
  - army regulations and training academies
  - 80% of the budget went on the military.
- **economy**
  - Peter supported mainly the production of metals, mostly for **military** purposes.
  - he also welcomed skilled immigrants
- **government**
  - the main problem of Russia was **complex bureaucracy**. To reorganize the government, Peter created a **Senate** of 9 officials and later 11 colleges to deal with departments under the Senate.
  - he used clerks to **fight corruption** (and that flourished in Russia!) and tax evasion.
  - In 1722 he created **the Table of Ranks** for the nobility (14 grades for each area of service (forces, civil service and court). All were supposed to work for the state but only the top 8 were hereditary.
  - Russia was divided into provinces called **gubernia**.
- **religion** - Peter established the **Orthodox Church** as a part of the state (**subordinate to state**). He claimed he favoured religious tolerance. He restricted the power of monasteries and took control of their wealth (partly for hospitals and almshouses).



**TASK 6: Peter the Great believed in religious toleration – but not for all religions. Can you suggest which two groups were not tolerated by him?**

- **education**
  - before Peter there had been a very poor standard
  - Peter **established about 40 schools** and several academies.
- **the Great Northern War 1700 – 1721**
  - against Sweden (ruled by the young King Charles XII.)
  - Sweden very successful at first - victory in the Battle of Narva (1700), they even pushed the Russian and Saxon armies out of Poland
  - however, in 1703 Peter I seized the Baltic coast (where he built St. Petersburg)
  - in 1708 the Swedes invaded Ukraine but were defeated in the **Battle of Poltava** in 1709
  - finally, when in 1721 the Treaty of Nystad ended the war, Russia was the stronger side

- **War on Turkey**
  - Previously, in 1695 Peter took part in an unsuccessful attack on **Azov**. Later, in 1696, he personally helped capture Azov from Turkey.
  - In 1711 Peter returned - but was defeated and had to surrender Azov.
- **policy on the east**
  - Peter also established a treaty with \_\_\_\_\_, confirming Amur River as their border.
  - He also invaded Persia and took **Baku**.
  - his forces got even as far as Kamchatka
- **St. Petersburg**
  - built between 1703 and 1725, planned by Peter as a **Window on the West**
  - **TASK 7:**  
**On the map locate St.Petersburg. Can you explain why it was nicknamed *Window on the West*?**



### TASK 8:

Due to his reforms, Peter made many enemies. Consider his many reforms in different spheres of life and suggest who his enemies might be.

- Many of Peter's **reforms were revoked after his death**.

## Frederick William I of Prussia

(1713-1740)

Prussia was the second largest state in HRE.

It began in the 10<sup>th</sup> century as the Mark of **Brandenburg**. Its rulers were **electors**. In 1525 Albert of **Hohenzollern** became the Duke of Prussia. In **1701** Duke Frederick was given the title **King of Prussia**.

### TASK 9:

Using your atlas, locate the Prussia of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Which countries did it border with?



- Frederick was uncultured, bad-tempered, not keen on education
- obsessed by the military
- very hard-working, moral
- despised intellectuals, foreigners and the Jews

### TASK 10:

What was the official religion of Prussia?

- Frederick tried to **reduce the state expenses** drastically – he reduced his court, sold many royal palaces and he and his family lived in just five rooms, with no servants
- reforms in **the military** – improved rifles, harsh discipline, officer training schools
- he also established a regiment of tall men (over six feet tall) nicknamed *the Potsdam Giants*
- he managed to create **4<sup>th</sup> largest army** in Europe
- **centralized government**, directories and councils to advise the King
- efficient **bureaucracy**, state income doubled!
- **religious toleration**
- **mercantilism**
- he also wished to abolish serfdom but finally he did little to improve the situation of the peasants
- he had a very difficult relationship with his son (future Frederick II), he was a harsh father
- in his testament he wrote to his son “*I beg you not to begin an unjust war because God forbids unjust wars. You must give an account for every man killed in an unjust war.*”

### TASK 11:

So, can we summarize what Frederick’s legacy for the future was?

**REVISION**

**TASK 12:**

**Fill in the chart the reforms and accomplishments of the absolute monarchs:**

<b>ABSOLUTE MONARCHS</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Culture, education</b>	<b>Economy</b>	<b>Army and wars</b>
<b>Louis IV</b>				
<b>Peter I</b>				
<b>Frederick William I</b>				