

PAGE # 1

In 1643 Louis XIV became King of France. He ruled for 72 years, the longest reign in French history. As a boy, Louis XIV lived through rebellions where French nobles and peasants had attacked the royal central government. Perhaps because of this experience, Louis worked to make the king's power absolute... Louis XIV was concerned with religious unity. He believed that the Huguenots disturbed the unity of France and weakened the authority of the central government. Thus, in 1685 he did away with the Edict of Nantes, ending France's policy of tolerance of Protestants. More than 200,000 Huguenots fled France rather than become Catholics.



Depiction of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre rebellion

PAGE # 2

The goal or mission of France was not only to settle this territory and prosper from the fur trade in North America, but also to possibly create a strong French outpost in the New World. In Canada, the French government under Louis XIV launched the first substantial European settlements. The initial plans involved setting up manor estates under great lords. French peasants were urged to emigrate to settle “New France.” The sense of creating a New France was lost, however, toward the end of Louis XIV’s rule with the loss of territory in North America in war against the British.



PAGE #3

Louis XIV insisted the most important nobles live at Versailles. In this way the nobles could only advance by gaining Louis's favor. As the Duke of Saint Simon stated in his biography of Louis XIV, *"He [Louis] looked to the right and to the left, not only upon rising but upon going to bed, at his meals, in passing through his apartment, or his gardens... He marked well all absentees from the Court, found out the reason of their absence, and never lost an opportunity of acting toward them as the occasion might seem to justify... When their names were in any way mentioned, 'I do not know them,' the King would reply haughtily."* The nobles showed their favor to the King by their presence at court and received support in return from the King.

The front of the Palace of Versailles



Nobles waiting in court for Louis XIV to notice their presence

PAGE # 4

The French population under Louis XIV developed pride in the French monarchy and in the successes of the French military. Louis was popular during most of his rule though he lost popularity toward his death. The loyalty to the French nation increases in this time with military victories spurring on the creation of a French nation.



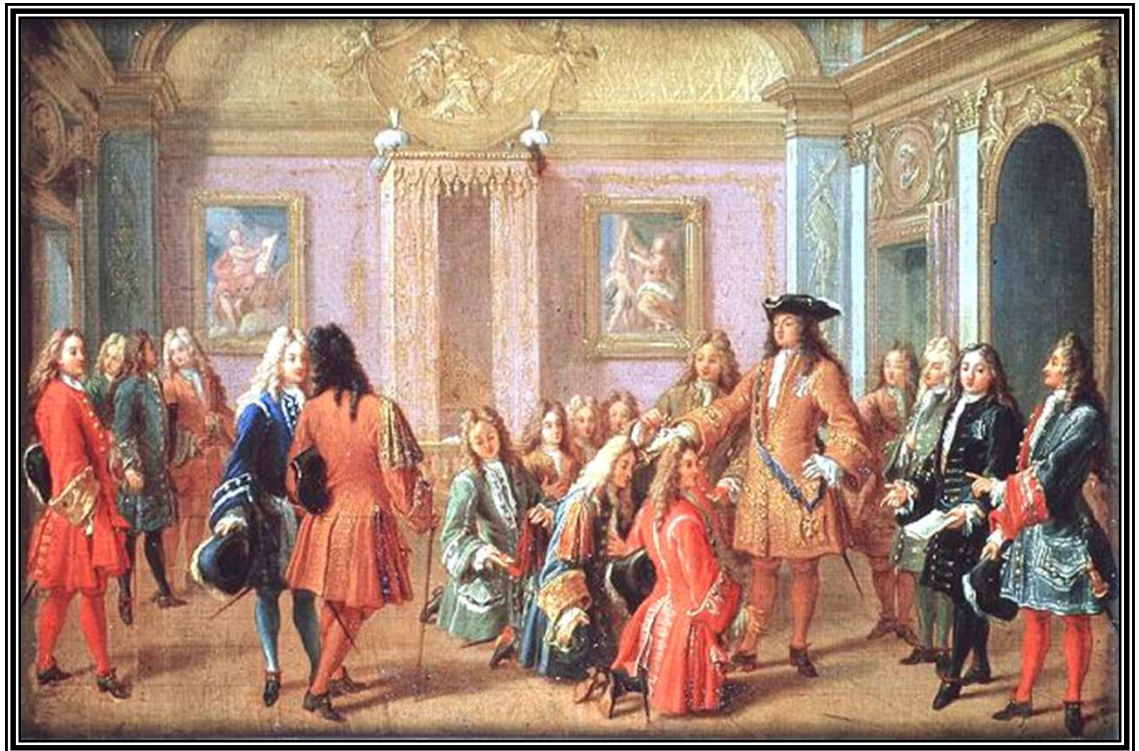
Louis XIV at the Siege of Namur

Under Louis, France was the most powerful country in Europe. In 1660, France had about 20 million people. This was four times as many as England and 10 times as many as the Dutch republic to the north. The French army, numbering 100,000 in peacetime and 400,000 in wartime, was far ahead of other states' armies in size, training and weaponry. The police force under Louis XIV was also great and strongly in control of the population as the people knew that these forces could control the population at any point in time.

Quantity of people in Louis XIV army				
in times of peace	Conflict	Infantry and artillery in times of war	Cavalry, police, navy, coast guard ships	Totally
60 000 (in 1662)	War of Devolution (1667-1668)	150 000	80 000	230 000
120 000 (in 1671)	War against Holland (1672-1678)	210 000	190 000	400 000
150 000 (in 1681)	War of the league of Augsburg (1689-1697)	380 000	120 000	600 000
150000 (in 1702)	War of Spanish Succession (1702-1714)	410 000	220 000	630 000

PAGE # 6

Every morning, the chief valet woke Louis at 7:30. Outside the curtains of Louis's canopy bed stood at least 100 of the most privileged nobles at court. They were waiting to help the great king dress. Only four would be allowed the honor of handing Louis his slippers or holding his sleeves for him. Having the nobles at the palace increased royal authority in two ways. It made the nobility totally dependent on Louis. It also took them from their homes, therefore giving more power to the intendants [Louis's government agents around the country]. Louis required hundreds of nobles to live with him at the splendid palace he built at Versailles, 11 miles southwest of Paris.



Members of the French nobility dressing Louis XIV in the morning

PAGE # 7

Throughout Louis's long reign, he was directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the French government. He also chose able advisors who, for the most part, worked under his direct supervision. One of the best of these was Jean-Baptiste Colbert, an expert in finance. Colbert aimed to increase French industry at home and to build French trade abroad. Colbert granted government subsidies to private companies to build new industries or to strengthen existing ones...



Jean-Baptiste Colbert,
Louis XIV's Minister of Finance

PAGE # 8

In his personal finances, Louis spent a fortune to surround himself with luxury. Everything about the Versailles palace was immense. It faced a huge royal courtyard dominated by a statue of Louis XIV. The palace stretched for a distance of about 500 yards. In fact, the palace was so long that food from the kitchens was often cold by the time servants reached Louis's chambers. Because of its great size, Versailles was like a small royal city. Its rich decoration and furnishings clearly showed Louis's wealth and power to everyone who came to the palace. The elaborate ceremonies there impressed the king's subjects and brought the admiration and envy of all other European monarchs.



The Hall of Mirrors at
the Palace of Versailles

Louis XIV adopted the sun as his personal symbol.

The sun's rays reached far and wide, just like his power. For this reason, Louis was nicknamed "The Sun King." Louis XIV was well liked by the people of France during his early rule, though after continuous wars he lost a bit of support. Louis, and the people of France, believed in the divine right of kings—that God had chosen him to rule the nation. "*L'etat, c'est moi!*" ("I am the state"), he proclaimed and at times held the support of all parts of society.



Louis believed France's security depended on the country having natural frontiers. Much of France already had such borders. The Atlantic Ocean, the Pyrenees Mountains, the Alps, and the Mediterranean Sea surrounded much of France. Louis wanted to expand France's territory east to the Rhine River in order to form a natural border. To accomplish this he fought four wars between 1667 and 1713.

