

# SSWH14: ANALYZE THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS



*Element A: Examine absolutism through a comparison of the reigns of Louis XIV & Tsar Peter the Great.*

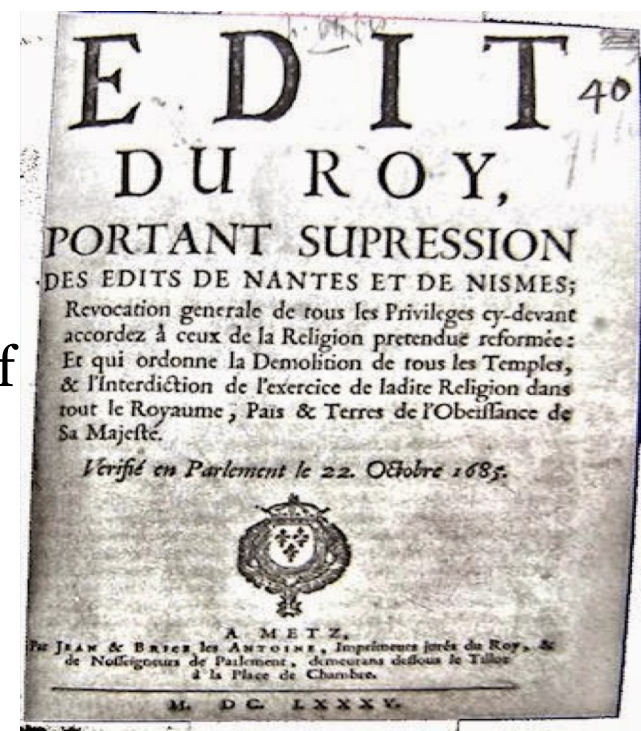
# LOUIS XIV

- ❑ Medieval European feudalism had placed the majority of political power in the hands of a vast and diverse landed nobility.
  - Beginning in the 1300s the kings of Europe began to consolidate their power
- ❑ By the late 1600s some kings, include King Louis XIV of France were able to wield almost total power over their states.
- ❑ Louis XIV became king at age of four in 1643.
  - In his youth the nobility of France violently resisted his minister's attempt to consolidate political power in the name of the king.
    - At times, this violence was so severe that it threatened the life of the young king.
    - In 1661 Louis assumed power over government.
      - With the memories of riots and rebellious nobles fresh on his mind, Louis was determined to consolidate his power over the state.



# LOUIS XIV

- Louis's power was threatened by three groups:
  1. the common people of France who could be quite dangerous when moved to rioting,
  2. the Catholic clergy,
  3. and the landed nobility.
- Louis devised effective strategies to deal with each of these threats:
  - To deal with the threat of riotous commoners, Louis simply moved his palace out of their reach.
    - In 1682, Louis moved his court and center of government to a enormous palace twelve miles outside of Paris called Versailles. The remote location of Versailles helped keep Louis safe from rebellious commoners.
  - The loyalty of the Catholic clergy was solidified in 1685 when Louis announced the repeal of the Edict of Nantes, an 87-year-old decree of religious tolerance that allowed Protestants to worship freely.
    - Louis's repeal of the Edict drove protestants out of France, hurting the economy but pleasing Catholic leadership.



# LOUIS XIV

- The biggest challenge to Louis's power was the nobility.
  - Louis implemented a number of strategies to deal with them:
    1. First, Louis replaced most of his government officials with commoners called intendants.
      - The intendants were much easier to control because they owed their status and power to Louis's generosity and they could be dismissed, arrested and in extreme cases executed at will.
      - Intendants collected taxes, administered justice, and served as the king's council.



# LOUIS XIV

2. To further control the nobility, Louis pressured the nobles to live at the Palace of Versailles with him.
- The enormous palace could house up to ten thousand people and its large staff organized lavish banquets, dances, and games that kept the nobility too busy to cause any trouble for the king.
  - Historians have called the Palace of Versailles the amusement park of absolutism for its ability to neutralize potential threats to the king with entertainment.



# CZAR PETER THE GREAT

- ❑ Like Louis XIV, Peter the Great of Russia came to power during a period of political consolidation. The Romanovs of Russia like the Bourbons of France spent generations slowly wresting power from a feudal nobility.
- ❑ Like Louis, Peter managed to build an absolutist state in which he wielded almost total power.
  - However, the challenges that faced Peter were far greater than those that faced Louis.
    - When Louis XIV came to power in 1643, France was already one of the most powerful countries in Europe with a modern army and navy and colonies in North America. Russia was only tenuously linked to the outside world by a small community of Dutch and German merchants in Moscow and a single port that was frozen most of the year in Archangel.
    - Russian society was still dominated by feudal tradition with a large and powerful landed nobility known as boyars who still depended on serfdom for labor.
    - Like Louis, Peter's power was threatened by this nobility and the Church clergy, in this case Eastern Orthodox instead of the Roman Catholic.
    - Unlike Louis however, Peter also faced the challenge of geographic isolation and a need to modernize technologically, politically, and economically.



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# CZAR PETER THE GREAT

- ❑ As a young man, Peter spent a great deal of time exploring the neighborhoods of Moscow where foreign merchants resided.
  - From this experience he learned that Russia would have to look to the west instead of the east in the future.
- ❑ Shortly after taking power in 1696 Peter set off on a grand tour of Europe.
  - Traveling in disguise, Peter studied the military, political structures, economy and cultures of the European states.
- ❑ Upon returning to Russia, Peter instituted a series of reforms to modernize and Westernize Russia and consolidate his power.
  - To modernize and Westernize Russian society Peter established a newspaper, elevated the status of Russian noblewomen, ordered Russian boyars to wear European style dress and shave their traditional beards, and established schools of navigation, arts, and science with European trained faculties.



# CZAR PETER THE GREAT

- ❑ To consolidate his power over the nobility, Peter used a similar strategy as Louis XIV.
  - Just as Louis removed the nobility from government positions and replaced them with intendants drawn from the commoners.
    - Peter removed the nobles of the most powerful families from his government and council of advisors and replaced them with men from lesser families.
    - He rewarded these new appointees with generous land grants which won their loyalty and respect.
  - To deal with the power of the Orthodox Church, Peter abolished the position of patriarch, the traditional head of the church and replaced it with a Holy Synod that was directly under his control.
- ❑ With power firmly in his hands, Peter modernized the Russian army and built a navy which allowed Russia to take territory from Sweden and establish a warm water port at St. Petersburg.
  - Peter ordered that the city at his new port be built in the western Baroque style as it would serve as his modern capital and “window on Europe.”

