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Absolutism in Russia

Catherine the Great



In 1762, Catherine the Great, another absolute monarch, came to power. She reorganized the government and the laws. Under Catherine's rule, she gave more rights to the nobles, which caused the peasants to suffer. She set up state schools for boys and girls, and encouraged western ways and introduced French language and ways of life. Under Catherine, Russia finally won a warm-water port on the Black Sea. In the 1770s, Catherine and the rulers of Prussia and Austria agreed to divide up Poland. By 1795, the kingdom of Poland disappeared.

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Absolutism in Russia

Peter the Great



Peter the Great ruled Russia as czar from 1682 to 1725. Peter worked to centralize royal power and bring all Russians under his authority. He reduced the power of the nobility and gained control of the Russian Orthodox Church. Peter wanted to modernize Russia. He traveled to the Western European cities to study western technology and brought back ideas on how to westernize Russia. However, Peter sometimes resorted to force and terror to achieve his goals. Peter created the largest army on Europe in the late 1600s and used it to expand Russian territory and gain ports in the Baltic Sea. Peter failed at one of his goals. However: to gain a warm water port that would not be closed due to freezing in the winter. However, Catherine the Great, another absolute ruler of Russia, would successfully acquire Black Sea ports in 1795.

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Absolutism in France

Louis XIV "The Sun King"



By the late 1600s, France had replaced Spain as the most powerful European nation. It, too, was ruled by absolute monarchs. Inheriting the throne in 1643 as a five-year-old-child, Louis XIV ruled France for 72 years. He continued to strengthen the monarchy, taking the sun as the symbol of his power and commanding complete loyalty from his subjects. The king was entitled to unquestioning obedience. During his reign Louis:

- ⇒ Expanded the bureaucracy (system on managing government through departments run by appointed officials), appointing officials to collect taxes, recruit soldiers, and carry out his rule in the provinces.
- ⇒ Built the lavish (expensive), Palace of Versailles outside of Paris (put country in debt)
- ⇒ Organized a strong army
- ⇒ Persecuted the Protestant Huguenots, depriving the nation of many of its most hard-working and prosperous citizens.

Under Louis XIV, France was a wealthy, powerful state with great cultural influence. However, Louis's extravagant parties at Versailles and his costly wars left France in debt, and there was social unrest among the starving peasants. The French monarchy would not survive even a century after Louis XIV's death in 1715

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Absolutism in Mughal India

Akbar the Great



One place where absolutism appeared in the 1500s was India. In the last half of the 1500s, Akbar the Great ruled the powerful Mughal Empire in India. Akbar strengthened the central government and made his empire larger and stronger than any in Europe at the time. He modernized the army, encouraged trade, and introduced land reforms, promoting religious tolerance. Akbar's successors were not as strong. Mughal rulers in the late 1600s were much less tolerant, and Mughal power declined, allowing France and England to spread their influences in the region.

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Absolutism in Spain

Phillip II



Philip II of Spain

Ruling from 1556 to 1596, Philip II expanded his own power as well as the influence of the Catholic Church and the Spanish empire. Philip wanted to control all aspects of the government, believing that he ruled by **divine right**. According to this way of thinking, the king is an agent of God, and his authority to rule comes directly for God. Philip was a hard-working ruler, and he did much to promote a golden age in Spain. In the 1600s, however, Spanish power slowly declined as rulers spent too much money on wars overseas. The Spanish relied on gold and silver from their colonies and as a result neglected business at home. The middle class felt that they were being taxed too heavily and stopped supporting the government.