

Absolute Monarchs

Historical Context:

Throughout history, governments have sometimes attempted to control the thoughts and actions of their people. Three such governments include Russia under the rule of Peter the Great, France under Louis XIV, and Charles I of England. The efforts of these governments greatly affected their societies.

Task:

Using the information from the documents and your knowledge of global history, answer the questions that follow each document. Your answers to the questions will help you write the essay in which you will be asked to:

Choose two governments mentioned in the historical context and for each

- Describe the efforts of the government to control the thoughts and/or actions of its people
- Discuss an impact of this government's efforts on its society

Document One

. . . A year later, in January 1700, Peter transformed persuasion into decree [law]. With rolling drums in the streets and squares, it was proclaimed that all boyars [Russian nobles], government officials and men of property, both in Moscow and in the provinces, were to abandon their long robes and provide themselves with Hungarian or German-style caftans. The following year, a new decree commanded men to wear a waistcoat, breeches, gaiters, boots and a hat in the French or German style, and women to put on petticoats, skirts, bonnets and Western shoes. Later decrees prohibited the wearing of high Russian boots and long Russian knives. Models of the new approved costumes were hung at Moscow's gates and in public places in the city for people to observe and copy. All who arrived at the gates in traditional dress except peasants were permitted to enter only after paying a fine. Subsequently, Peter instructed the guards at the city gates to force to their knees all visitors arriving in long, traditional coats and then to cut off the coats at the point where the lowered garment touched the ground. "Many hundreds of coats were cut accordingly," says Perry, "and being done with good humor it occasioned mirth [humor] among the people and soon broke the custom of wearing long coats, especially in places near Moscow and those towns wherever the Tsar came." . . .

Source: Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World*, Alfred A. Knopf

Based on this document, state one way Peter the Great tried to control the actions of his people.

Document Two

Peter the Great



Source: Chris Hinton, *What is Evidence?* John Murray, Ltd.

Based on the picture, what control did Peter try to wield over his nobles?

Document Three

Our express pleasure therefore is, that the laws of our kingdom and canons of our Church be as well observed in that county, as in all other places of this our kingdom: and on the other part, that no lawful recreation shall be barred to our good people, which shall not tend to the breach of our aforesaid laws and canons of our Church: which to express more particularly, our pleasure is, that the bishop, and all other inferior churchmen and churchwardens, shall for their parts be careful and diligent, both to instruct the ignorant, and convince and reform them that are misled in religion, presenting them that will not conform themselves, but obstinately stand out, to our judges and justices: whom we likewise command to put the law in due execution against them.

What areas of people's lives is Charles I restricting?

Document Four

. . . Peter's military reform would have remained an isolated incident in Russian military history had it not left a distinct and deep impression on the social and intellectual composition of all Russian society, and even influenced future political developments. The military reform itself made necessary other innovations, first to maintain the reorganised and expensive military forces, and then to ensure their permanency. The new recruiting methods, by spreading military obligations to classes hitherto [up to this time] exempt, and thus affecting all social classes, gave the new army a more varied composition, and completely altered existing social relationships. From the time that noblemens' serfs and servants joined the new army as ordinary recruits instead of only as menials or valets [servants], the position of the nobility, which had been preponderant [dominant] in the old army, was completely changed. . . .

Source: Vasili Klyuchevsky, translated by Liliana Archibald, Peter the Great, St. Martin's Press

3a According to Vasili Klyuchevsky, what was one way Peter the Great attempted to control the Russian people?

3b According to Vasili Klyuchevsky, what was one effect Peter the Great's reform had on the Russian nobles?

Document Five

Not only did he expect all persons of distinction to be in continual attendance at Court, but he was quick to notice the absence of those of inferior degree; at his lever, his coucher, his meals, in the gardens of Versailles (the only place where the courtiers in general were allowed to follow him), he used to cast his eyes to right and left; nothing escaped him, he saw everybody. If any one habitually living at Court absented himself he insisted on knowing the reason; those who came there only for flying visits had also to give a satisfactory explanation; any one who seldom or never appeared there was certain to incur his displeasure. If asked to bestow a favour on such persons he would reply haughtily: "I do not know him"; of such as rarely presented themselves he would say, "He is a man I never see"; and from these judgements there was no appeal. He always took great pains to find out what was going on in public places, in society, in private houses, even family secrets, and maintained an immense number of spies and tale-bearers. These were of all sorts; some did not know that their reports were carried to him; others did know it; there were others, again, who used to write to him directly, through channels which he prescribed; others who were admitted by the backstairs and saw him in his private room. Many a man in all ranks of life was ruined by these methods, often very unjustly, without ever being able to discover the reason; and when the King had once taken a prejudice against a man, he hardly ever got over it....

Source: Modern History Sourcebook: Duc de Saint-Simon: The Court of Louis XIV

What are two activities that nobles are required to do at Versailles

Document Six

Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, October 22, 1685

IV. We enjoin all ministers of the said R.P.R., who do not choose to become converts and to embrace the Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion, to leave our kingdom and the territories subject to us within a fortnight of the publication of our present edict, without leave to reside therein beyond that period, or, during the said fortnight, to engage in any preaching, exhortation, or any other function, on pain of being sent to the galleys. . . .

VII. We forbid private schools for the instruction of children of the said R.P.R., and in general all things what ever which can be regarded as a concession of any kind in favor of the said religion.

What restrictions did Louis XIV force on people under his rule?

Document Seven



From the photograph of the gardens in Versailles, what aspects of areas did Louis XIV control?

Document Eight

The Petition of Right (1628)

X. They do therefore humbly pray your most excellent Majesty, that no man hereafter be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such like charge, without common consent by act of parliament; and that none be called to make answer, or take such oath, or to give attendance, or be confined, or otherwise molested or disquieted concerning the same or for refusal thereof; and that no freeman, in any such manner as is before mentioned, be imprisoned or detained; and that your Majesty would be pleased to remove the said soldiers and mariners, and that your people may not be so burdened in time to come; and that the aforesaid commissions, for proceeding by martial law, may be revoked and annulled; and that hereafter no commissions of like nature may issue forth to any person or persons whatsoever to be executed as aforesaid, lest by color of them any of your Majesty's subjects be destroyed or put to death contrary to the laws and franchise of the land.

From The Petition of Right, what rights of Englishmen did Charles I violate?