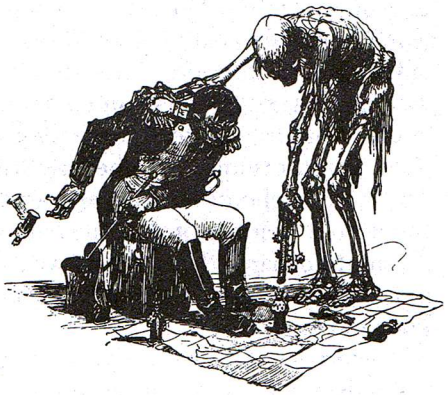
UNIT 6

Early Modern Times



The early modern period of history began about midway in the 17th century. For more than 150 years afterward, royal power in Europe steadily increased. The feudal nobility and the universal church had been humbled in the early stages of nation making, and the voices of the people were either unheard or unheeded. Therefore, with little to restrain them, the monarchs of Europe built up their power. Absolutism, a system of unchecked personal rule, became widespread.

One-man rule reached its height under Louis XIV of France. All over Europe, monarchs tried to imitate his style of living. On the opposite page is shown a magnificent staircase from the residence of the grand duke of Wurzburg in Bavaria. The halls and stairway are designed in the rich baroque style, with ceiling frescoes by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, a famous Venetian artist. The palace of Wurzburg symbolizes the pride, power, and extravagant tastes of European rulers in early modern times.

Absolute rulers often felt compelled to extend their power beyond the boundaries of their nations. Since each state was considered a law unto itself, unhampered by moral scruples, monarchs operated in a kind of political jungle of power politics. Competition among nations involved the skillful use of diplomacy and war to gain national aims. The attempts of ambitious rulers to seize desirable territories, destroy the commerce of rival nations, and otherwise enhance their own prestige resulted in a period of unrest and violence. It was the wish of Louis XIV, who headed the most powerful country of his time, to make France dominant in Europe. Fearful of Louis' ambitions, other nations came together in alliances against him in order to maintain a balance of power. A long series of costly European and colonial conflicts resulted.

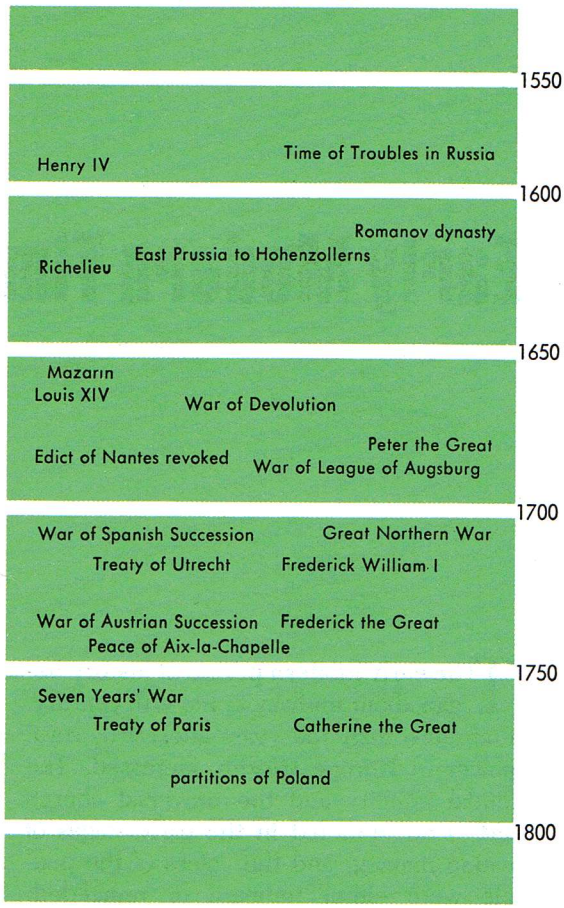
What made the early modern period different from preceding eras was not absolutism (whose roots lay deep in the past) but a new approach to life. Basic to this

change was the growth of science. Building upon discoveries which had been made during the Renaissance by Copernicus and Galileo, the English mathematician Sir Isaac Newton defined the workings of gravitational forces. New branches of mathematics (analytic geometry and calculus) were devised, and instruments were invented to observe and measure the world of nature: the telescope, the barometer, the thermometer, the microscope. The study of chemistry was separated from the pseudo-science of alchemy and put on a scientific basis. Physicists investigated magnetism and electricity, and medical knowledge increased.

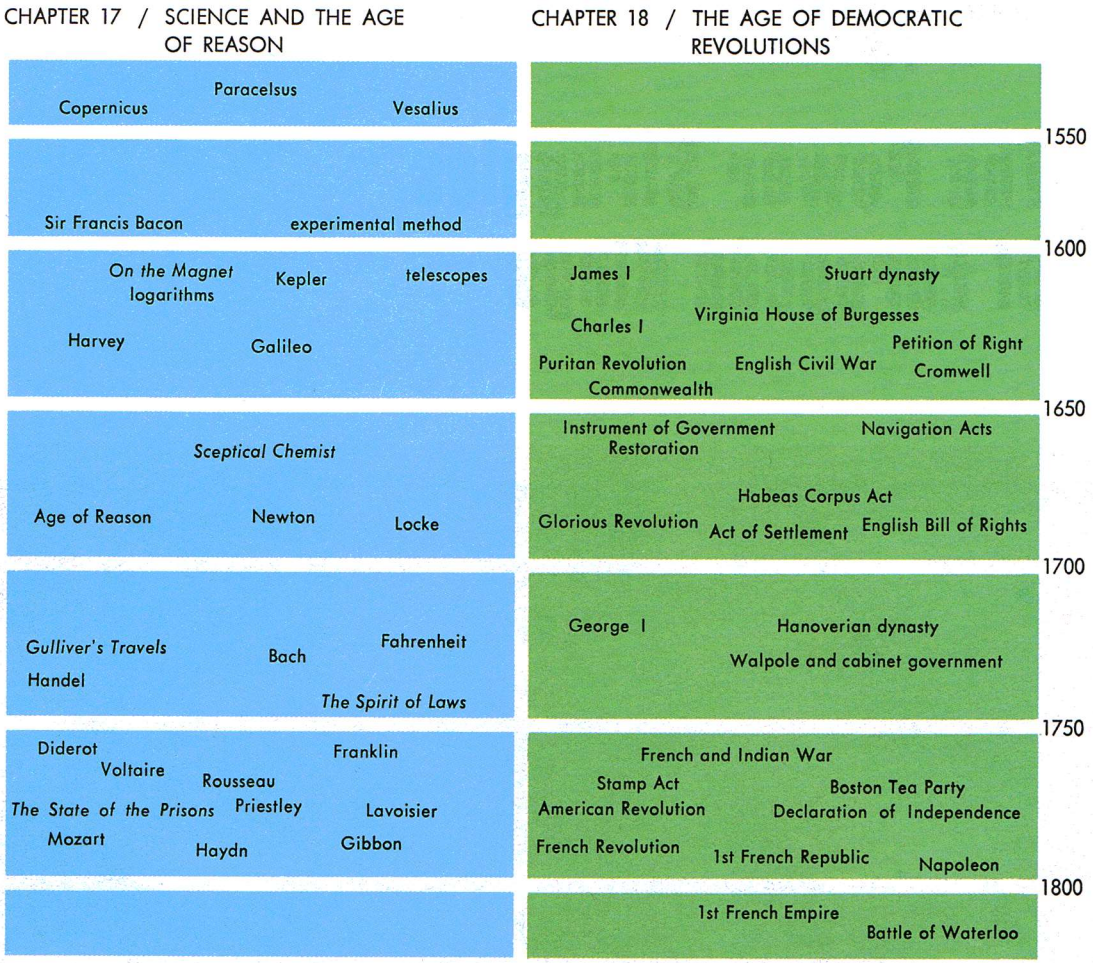
Underlying the developments in science was a firm belief that reason should be the guiding authority for human actions, a belief known as rationalism. So widespread was this conviction that the entire period from the publication of Newton's law of gravitation in 1687 to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 is termed the Age of Reason. Rationalist thinkers turned searching eyes on philosophy, politics, religion, and the arts in a kind of intellectual revolution, known as the Enlightenment.

Many leaders of the Enlightenment were concerned with government. Voltaire was a sharp critic of the abuses of absolutism. Locke and Rousseau contributed new theories of society and government. Many people became convinced that absolutism must give way to more reasonable and democratic forms of rule. The English philosopher John Locke justified the use of force to remove despotic governments in these words:

> . . . Whenever the legislators endeavour to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people who are thereupon absolved from any further obedience, and are left to the common refuge which God hath provided for all men against force and violence. Whensoever, therefore, the legislative shall transgress this fundamental rule of society, . . . by this breach of trust they forfeit the power the people had put into their hands. . . .



Three great political revolutions occurred in early modern times. In England, one king was beheaded and another exiled as a prelude to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which established the supremacy of Parliament. In 1689 the famous Bill of Rights was enacted, marking the end of absolutism in England and guaranteeing the basic rights of the individual. The second revolution transformed thirteen British



colonies into the independent federal republic of the United States.

A third great revolution broke out in France in 1789. The aim of this revolt was to sweep away unjust feudal customs and to liberalize the government. At first, relatively moderate reforms were achieved. Later the revolution took a violent turn and the monarchy was replaced by a republic. Radical changes were enacted and the king was executed. A Reign of Terror began which finally resulted in a reaction against radicalism and bloodshed. A vigorous leader, Napoleon, then rose to the forefront. Although he restored order and gave the people prosperity and military triumphs, democratic government was scrapped and Napoleon became a virtual dictator. Finally a coalition of European powers destroyed the empire he had created. Following the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was proclaimed the "enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world." Exiled to St. Helena in 1815, he was left with little but his dreams of past glory.

CHAPTER 16

The Power Struggles of European Kings

CHAPTER 16 1589–1795

On the title page of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* appears a king towering over his land. His body is made up of his subjects and his hands hold the symbols of royal authority (the sword) and religious power (the bishop's staff). All-powerful monarchs controlled many European nations in the 17th and 18th centuries; conflicts among them made that period a time of constant, widespread warfare.

Political absolutism was not born during the 17th or 18th centuries, for its basic ideas can be traced back to the pharaohs of Egypt, Alexander the Great, and the Roman emperors. However, some of the typical forms of *absolutism*—a system of unchecked personal rule — developed during early modern times, following the upheaval and turmoil of the late Middle Ages and wars of religion. Many people believed that strong government was necessary to bring order, efficient rule, and prosperity to the growing nation-states. In addition, the medieval idea that God ruled the state through His chosen agents lingered on to support political absolutism.

One of the important theories developed to convince people to obey the government was the doctrine of the divine right of kings. According to this doctrine, the king, by the grace of God, was absolute in his power, sacred in his person, endowed with extraordinary wisdom, and responsible to God alone. The Grand Monarch, Louis XIV of France wrote to his grandson Philip V of Spain:

> You must be master; never have a favourite nor a prime minister. Consult your council and listen to what they have to say, but decide for yourself. God, who has made you a king, will give you the necessary wisdom, so long as your intentions are good.

Other monarchs, such as Frederick William I and Frederick the Great of Prussia, and Peter the Great and Catherine the Great of Russia, adapted these ideas to meet their own needs.

A second important theory of absolutism in government was developed by the Englishman Thomas Hobbes in his masterpiece *Leviathan*, published in 1651. He likened the state to a great leviathan, or sea monster, that forced people to do its will. Without the strong rule of the state, the life of humankind would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." People would be constantly at war with one another. Although Hobbes preferred a monarchical form of government, he conceded that a republic might supply the necessary authority to keep people at peace. In either case, the "great Leviathan" was formed by people surrendering their right of self-government to protect themselves at home and to defend themselves against foreign enemies.

Supported by these theories, the European kings waged internal power struggles and succeeded in crushing those opposed to absolute rule. Even though the central government affected all phases of town and city life, many men were willing to accept this strong monarchical rule because it promised a better life and seemed to be the answer to the religious, political, and economic difficulties of the age. Not only did the monarch seek to exert his will at home but he also sought to demonstrate his superiority and increase his prestige among his fellow rulers. This state of affairs resulted in a series of international wars among the absolute monarchs. These domestic and foreign power struggles are discussed in this chapter.

1. **Absolutism reached its height in France.**
2. **Powerful rulers helped Russia grow.**
3. **Prussia stressed militarism.**
4. **Power politics dominated Europe.**

1 Absolutism reached its height in France

King Henry IV of France, who ruled from 1589 to 1610, laid the foundations that enabled his country to become the first nation of Europe during the reigns of his son and grandson. Chapter 14 described how he established law and order

by ending the civil war in France and issuing the Edict of Nantes. To foster prosperity, he promoted the manufacture of fine textiles and tapestries. These luxury industries furthered the aims of mercantilism by keeping in the country large sums of money that had formerly been paid for importing such articles. During Henry's reign, agriculture improved, roads and canals were built, and the French made their first permanent settlement in the New World, at Quebec.

In 1610 Henry was assassinated, leaving the throne to his eight-year-old son, Louis XIII. Louis' mother, Marie de' Medici, acted as regent, and her mismanagement plunged France into disorder again. Soon, however, she came under the influence of an able, ambitious churchman named Richelieu. Largely because of her patronage, he was made a cardinal in 1622 and chief minister two years later.

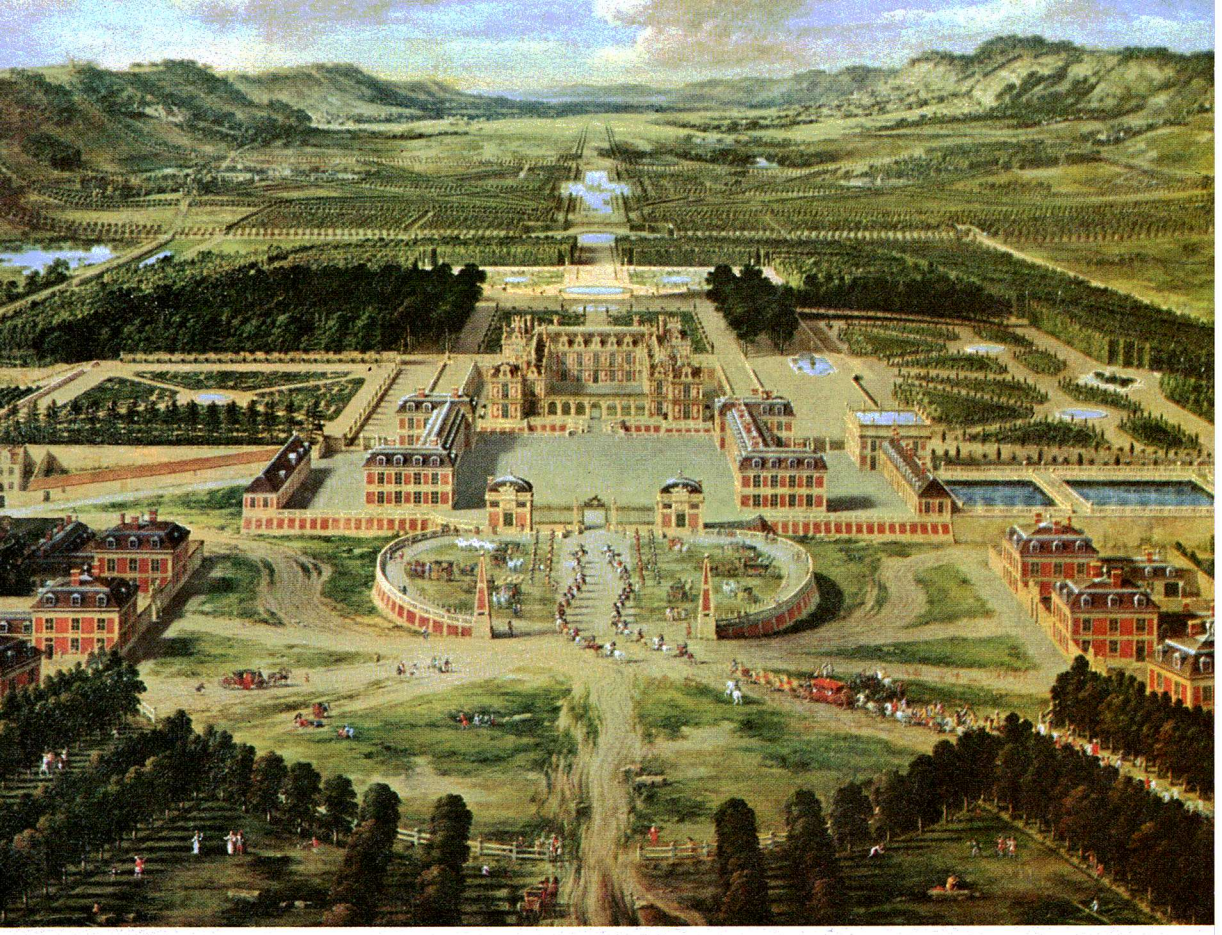
Richelieu and Mazarin ruled behind the scenes. When Louis XIII was old enough to reign as king, he proved to have little ability, and although he disliked Richelieu, he found him indispensable and allowed him virtually absolute rule over France. The cardinal, pale and delicate from an incurable disease, had a will of iron. He succeeded in his two aims: to strengthen the power of the king in France and to make France supreme in Europe. To accomplish the first goal, he took steps to destroy the political rights of the Huguenots and the power of the nobles. By attacking their chief town, La Rochelle, he forced the Huguenots to give up their privilege of maintaining fortified towns garrisoned by their own troops. He issued an edict for the destruction of all nobles' castles that were not necessary for national defense. Nobles lost their jurisdiction over local districts to new royal officials called *intendants,* who kept a watchful eye on the king's enemies.

Cardinal Richelieu achieved his second aim chiefly by weakening the power of the Hapsburgs. He plunged France into the Thirty Years' War, from which it emerged as the strongest nation in Europe.

Richelieu, harsh and relentless, showed little concern for the common people of France, who had to bear heavy tax loads, and they rejoiced at his death in 1642. Louis XIII died a year later, and his son became king—Louis XIV—at the age of four. Richelieu had trained Jules Mazarin, an Italian-born cardinal, to be his successor, and during Louis' childhood, Mazarin held the reins of rule in his capable hands. Strong nobles tried to gain control of the government, but after a civil war known as the *Fronde,* Mazarin in 1653 suppressed the challenge of the nobles to royal power. When Mazarin died in 1661, Louis XIV, then twenty-two years old, personally took over the direction of the government.

Louis XIV was one of the most powerful French kings. Louis XIV ruled France until 1715, and has been called the perfect example of an absolute ruler. He is supposed to have declared *"L'État, c'est moi"* ("I am the state"), a saying that accurately describes his attitude toward France. Louis believed in the divine right of kings and had a burning ambition to make his reign a glorious one. His courtiers called him *Le Roi Soleil* (the Sun King), and he was also known throughout Europe as the Grand Monarch. He ruled with unlimited power. Dignified and regal in his bearing, he fully enjoyed playing the part of God's agent on earth. People flattered the monarch outrageously, and a cook is said to have killed himself because fish for the king's dinner had not arrived on time.

Louis was intelligent and worked hard at being king. He kept a regular schedule and spent many hours a day in consultation and paper work. His capable economic adviser, Jean Colbert, made France



The Palace of Versailles was the center of European social life during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV. It was the site of many elaborate festivals held to impress visiting nobility with the glory of France. The royal family lived in the buildings at center, nobles in the surrounding mansions. In the 17th-century view above, a stately procession heralds the arrival of King Louis XIV in a red coach.

a model of mercantilism by fostering overseas development and minutely regulating business practices and the quality of merchandise. To compete with the powerful Dutch and English East India companies, the French East India Company was founded in 1664. Louis XIV also increased the powers of the *intendants*, reorganized the army, and strengthened the navy.

Luxury surrounded the court at Versailles. Louis XIV wanted a splendid setting worthy of his exalted conception of the monarchy. The Louvre in Paris, the traditional royal palace, did not suit him, mainly because he disliked the city itself; uprisings there in connection with the Fronde had humiliated and endangered the royal family, and Louis never forgot the unpleasant experience. He decided to build his palace at Versailles, a village about ten miles outside the French capital.

The palace required thirty-two years to complete, had rooms enough to house about 10,000 persons, and was lavishly decorated with mirrors, mosaics, priceless

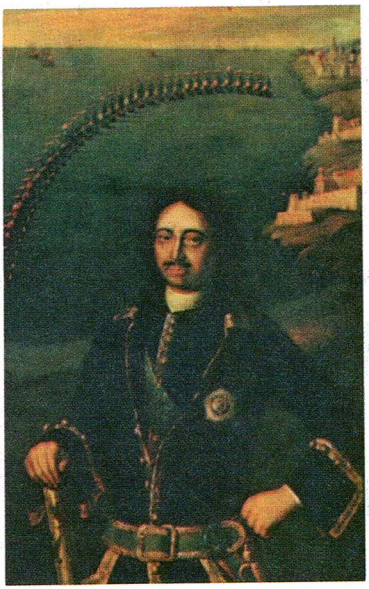
carpets, and tapestries. The marshland surrounding the palace was transformed into a vast park.

Louis maintained his officials and many of his nobles at Versailles, where they lived on the generosity of their royal master and had nothing to do but serve and amuse him. They idled away their time at balls and parties, hunting, gambling, gossip, and intrigue. Louis thus strengthened his absolutism by making the nobles dependent on him and by keeping them under his watchful eye.

Life at Versailles was governed by a rigid etiquette, all revolving around the person of the king. Everything he did was accompanied by ceremony. When he rose in the morning, he was attended by 150 nobles, who considered it a privilege to hand him his clothing. When he dined, the food was carried into him in a formal procession, and courtiers stood while he ate. Other European kings tried to model their courts after that of Louis and even built palaces in imitation of Versailles.

Some domestic policies had unfortunate effects. Versailles was an example of the imprudence of some of Louis' policies. For one thing, it involved enormous expense. Its construction required the labor of 35 thousand men and may have cost as much

Powerful Figures dominated European politics in the 17th and 18th centuries. Richelieu, shown in a triple portrait at left, ruled France for Louis XIII. Skillful and unscrupulous, he did not hesitate to crush those who opposed the power of the king. Louis XIV, below center, in contrast to his father, kept royal authority in his own hands. The "Sun King" served as his own prime minister and forbade his advisers to sign any documents without his permission. The creation of a navy was part of the westernization program of Peter the Great of Russia, depicted below left against a background of ships. The new navy battled successfully against the Swedes and Turks. The Prussian King Frederick the Great, below right, a cynical and autocratic monarch in his youth, was an "enlightened" ruler in his old age. Influenced by contemporary philosophers, he instituted reforms aimed at relieving the burdens of the serfs.



as $100 million—the king himself destroyed the accounts so no one would know how much he had spent. Maintaining the large court was also a severe financial drain on France, and required approximately six out of every ten francs collected in taxes. In addition, by moving his court to Versailles, Louis isolated himself and his successors from contact with the French people, an isolation that had serious consequences for Louis' successors.

Louis' religious intolerance was as damaging to France as was Versailles. In 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes depriving Huguenots of their freedom of worship. As a consequence, thousands of these prosperous, industrious citizens fled to Prussia, England, and the English colonies in America. Louis' action weakened France economically by depriving the nation of some of its most progressive citizens.

In spite of these domestic policies Louis might have been one of the best kings in French history, but as he grew older he became interested in military conquest.

Louis' wars weakened France. Louis' great ambition—to increase his glory and that of his family—resulted in nearly fifty years of war. It was his desire for prestige, rather than concern for national security, that motivated his attempts to gain for

France its so-called "natural boundaries"—the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees. In trying to achieve this goal, he continued the Bourbon feud with the Hapsburgs, which had been initiated by Henry IV and continued by Richelieu in the Thirty Years' War. Because the other nations of Europe did not want France to upset the balance of power, they opposed Louis in four conflicts.

The first war, 1667–1668, is called the War of Devolution, or War of the Spanish Netherlands. It began when French armies invaded the Spanish Netherlands (now Belgium). The Dutch, fearing for their security, formed a *coalition*, or alliance, to stop the invasion, and forced Louis to halt his attack. Angered by what he regarded as Dutch interference, Louis bought off their allies, England and Sweden, and attacked the Netherlands in 1672. After desperate resistance and great peril, the Dutch managed to secure other allies, including Austria and Spain, and in 1678 ended this second war by halting the advance of the French king. A third conflict, the War of the League of Augsburg, followed after Louis had seized border districts along the Rhine. His actions alarmed Europe, and several rulers—including the Holy Roman Emperor and the rulers of Spain, Sweden, and several German states—formed the League of Augsburg to curb him. This coalition became the Grand Al-

liance when England joined it in 1688. The war—which lasted from 1689 to 1697—brought Louis a few border territories at the cost of heavy losses in men and money.

The last of Louis' wars was the most costly, however. It grew out of a conflict over who was to succeed to the throne of Spain, and was called the War of the Spanish Succession. Although Spain had declined since the 16th century, it still controlled a large part of Europe. Its territory included the Spanish Netherlands, the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, the Duchy of Milan, and Sardinia—and also land in the New World. Charles II, the last Spanish Hapsburg, died in 1700 leaving no direct male heirs but willing his possessions to Louis XIV's grandson Philip. Louis XIV promoted the claims of Philip, but the other nations of Europe refused to acknowledge him as king of Spain. They did not like the idea of Bourbon kings in both Paris and Madrid, fearing that Louis would unite the two crowns and thus gain an empire stretching from the Netherlands to Sicily.

England, the Dutch Netherlands, Austria, and Prussia allied themselves against France to keep Louis' grandson from becoming king of Spain. The war began in 1702, and was fought in Europe and in North America (where it was called Queen Anne's War after the English monarch). The allies were fortunate in having a brilliant English general, John Churchill. This officer was an outstanding statesman, a natural and popular leader of men, and a master of battle strategy. Under his leadership the allies won a number of victories over the French, notably at Blenheim on the Danube in 1704 and at Oudenarde in the Spanish Netherlands in 1708. These successes dealt a blow to French prestige.

Peace was agreed upon by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. France was allowed to keep some of the conquests of Louis XIV, but it lost Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and the Hudson Bay territory to England. Spain ceded Gibraltar to England; Austria received Naples, Milan, Sardinia, and the Spanish Netherlands, which then became the Austrian Netherlands. In addition, the treaty recognized two new royal families, that of Savoy in Italy and that of Hohenzollern in Germany. Louis' grandson was allowed to assume the Spanish throne as Philip V, but the crowns of Spain and France were never to be united. Thus the nations of Europe emerged from the war—and indeed from the entire fifty-year period of Louis' wars—having achieved a balance of power.

Louis' wars left France with an empty treasury and a large debt. As he grew older, Louis doubted the wisdom of his many military exploits. On his deathbed in 1715, he warned his heir: "Try to preserve peace with your neighbors. I have been too fond of war."

Section Review

1. What steps did Henry IV take to build France into a strong nation?
2. What were Richelieu's aims? How did he accomplish them?
3. In what respects was France an absolute monarchy under Louis XIV?
4. How did the court at Versailles enable Louis to strengthen his absolutism? How did it weaken France?
5. In the wars of Louis XIV and the peace treaties that followed, what steps were taken to preserve the balance of power?

2 Powerful rulers helped Russia grow

During the 15th and 16th centuries two famous Russian rulers—Ivan the Great and Ivan the Terrible—extended the power of Russia and centralized its government. A period of unrest known as the Time of Troubles followed the death of Ivan the Terrible in 1584. It ended in 1613 when a

popular assembly elected Mikhail Romanov as czar. The Romanov dynasty was to remain in power until World War I.

Peter the Great tried to westernize Russia. Mikhail's grandson, Peter I—usually called Peter the Great—came to the throne in 1682 (although he did not become sole ruler until 1696). One of the greatest figures in Russian history, Peter was tall, strong, and full of enthusiasm. He had a violent temper and could at times be extremely cruel. But he also possessed an excellent mind and a strong determination to work for Russian progress.

Peter was greatly impressed by European technology; he took a trip in disguise to Prussia, to the Netherlands, and to England, where he visited workshops and shipyards. When he returned to Russia, he took with him a large number of scholars, craftsmen, and engineers. He was determined to modernize Russia and to introduce European customs, by force if necessary. He tried to end the Asiatic practice of secluding women and encouraged the men to adopt European breeches instead of flowing oriental robes. He also decreed that men should cut off their long beards, and even carried a pair of scissors with him to snip off the beards of men he met in the street. However, Peter did more than attempt to change fashions. He founded scientific institutions, reformed the calendar and alphabet, and sent young men to western Europe to study. He created a small navy and modernized the army. A stanch mercantilist, he started new industries in order to make Russia more self-sufficient.

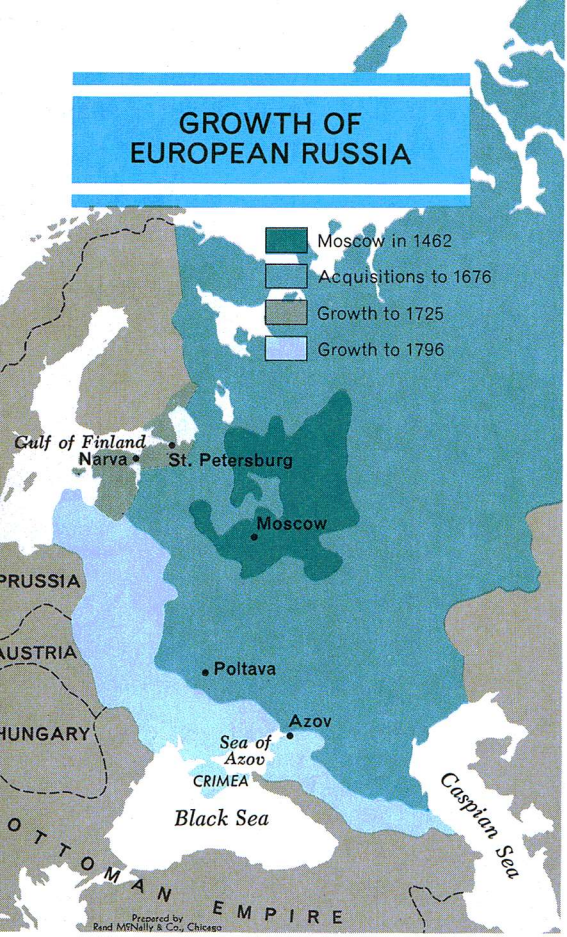
Peter the Great, like most other European rulers of the time, believed firmly in absolutism. He completely removed all traces of local self-government and authority. Under him the Russian Church became a tool of the central government and a strong supporter of Russian absolutism.

Peter extended Russian boundaries. The goal of Peter the Great and later Russian rulers in foreign affairs was to obtain "windows on Europe"—that is, seaports on the Black Sea or Baltic Sea that would enable Russia to trade with western Europe by water. To gain these "windows," Peter had to wage war against the Turks in the Black Sea area and against the Swedes, who controlled much of the Baltic region.

In 1695 and 1696 Peter sent expeditions against the Turks at Azov on the Sea of Azov. The second expedition won this port for Russia, but Peter lost it to the Turks again in 1711.

In 1699 Peter allied Russia with Poland, Saxony, and Denmark against Sweden. Denmark and Saxony began the Great Northern War by attacking Swedish possessions in 1700. Charles XII of Sweden retaliated by invading Denmark and crushing Peter's army at Narva on the Gulf of Finland. Peter was confident of success, however, and in 1703 laid the foundations of St. Petersburg (now Leningrad), his new capital, on a region of the Baltic shore he had captured from Sweden. The war later turned in favor of the Russian forces, which in 1709 won a smashing victory at Poltava in southern Russia. From that time on, Sweden was increasingly hard pressed by enemies, which by then included several German states. When the war ended in 1721, Sweden had lost nearly all of its possessions along the Baltic, and Russia had not only secured its Baltic "window" but had also become the dominant power in northern Europe.

Catherine the Great continued Peter's policies. Several weak rulers followed Peter the Great, who died in 1725. His grandson came to the throne as Peter III in 1762. He was mentally unfit to rule and antagonized many persons. His wife, a German princess, led a rebellion and seized the



throne for herself, taking the title Catherine II. (She later became known as Catherine the Great.) Her husband was murdered in prison, probably with Catherine's consent, but she announced gravely that he had died of colic.

By the time of Catherine's accession to the throne, the philosophical doctrines known as the Enlightenment had spread through the intellectual circles of Europe (Chapter 17). Several European rulers who tried to put into practice some of the new ideas about political liberty and religious toleration were called enlightened, or benevolent, despots. Catherine, gifted and well educated, corresponded with learned men in western Europe and considered herself an enlightened ruler. Although she continued Peter's westernization policy by improving schools and modernizing laws, she was rigid in her opposition to any reforms that threatened the absolutism of her rule. The condition of the peasantry actually became worse; Catherine extended serfdom to over a million peasants who had formerly been free.

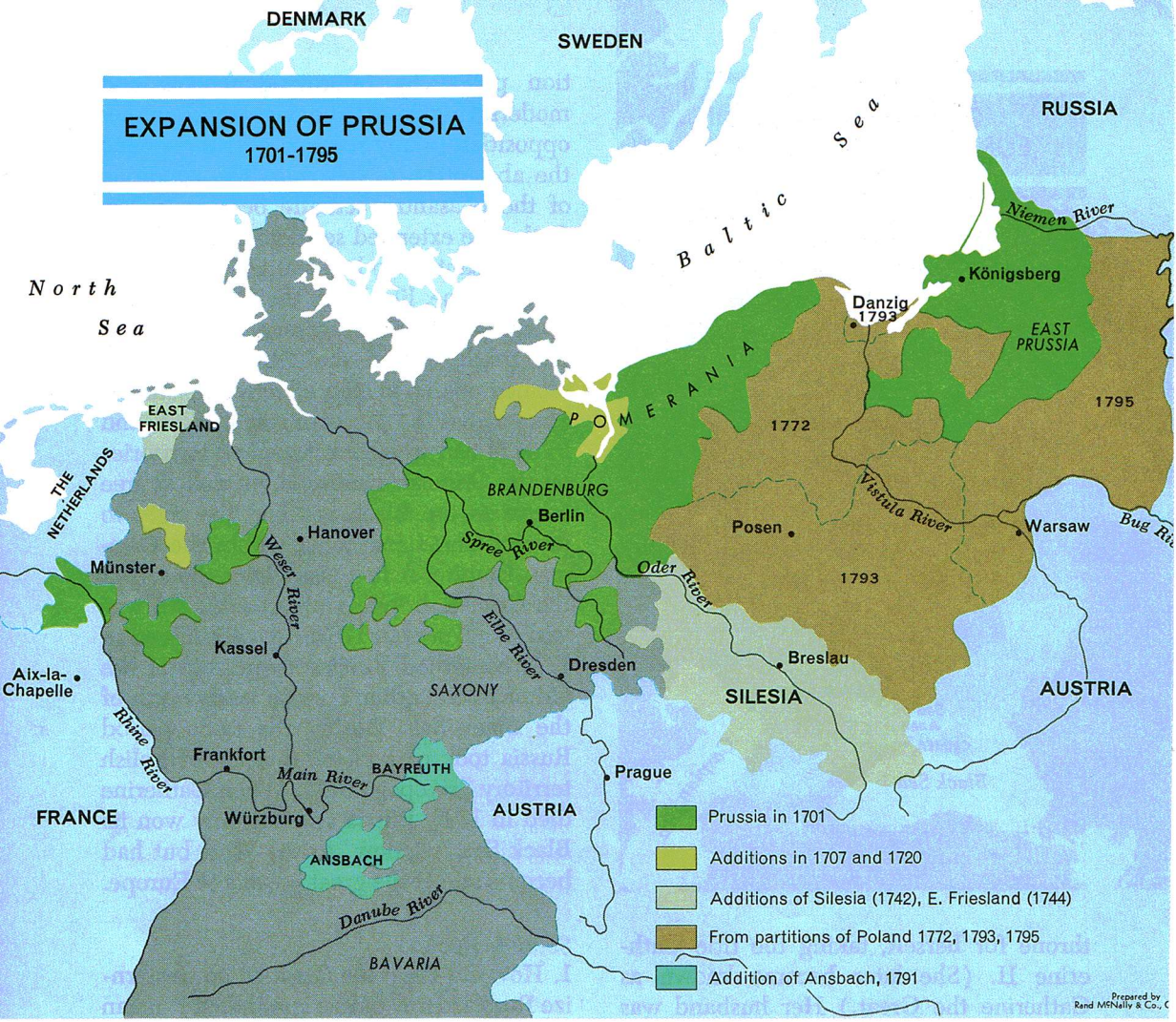
Catherine, like Peter the Great, wanted to expand Russian territory, especially in the south, where the Ottoman Empire seemed unable to offer effective resistance. She goaded the Turks to war in 1768, and by 1774 had won back Azov and territories on the Crimean peninsula, as well as free access to the Black Sea and the right to protect Christians living within the Ottoman Empire. A few years later she seized the Crimea, bringing about a second war with the Turks in 1787. A treaty signed in 1792 confirmed Russian ownership of the Crimean and other Turkish lands north of the Black Sea. During the same period Russia took part in the division of Polish territory (see page 371). When Catherine died in 1796, Russia had not only won its Black Sea "window" to the West but had become one of the great powers of Europe.

Section Review

1. How did Peter the Great try to westernize Russia? How did he strengthen Russian absolutism?
2. What was Peter's goal in foreign policy? To what extent did he achieve it?
3. How did Catherine the Great continue Peter's policies?

3 Prussia stressed militarism

During the late Middle Ages a new state began to take shape in northeastern Europe. This nation, later called Prussia, owed its rise to the Hohenzollern family, originally from the south German state of Swabia. The family produced a long series of capable rulers who wanted land and



power and obtained both with the aid of sharp diplomacy.

In 1415 the Holy Roman Emperor gave the province of Brandenburg to the Hohenzollerns as a reward for military services. In the 17th century the family obtained lands along the Rhine and the valuable region of East Prussia. By astute strategy the elector of Brandenburg emerged from the Thirty Years' War as the most important Protestant ruler in the German states. His successor aided the Holy Roman Emperor in the War of the Spanish Succession in return for royal rank; in 1701 he was crowned King Frederick I of Prussia.

Frederick William built up the army. Frederick William I, the second king of Prussia, ruled from 1713 to 1740. He transformed his country into a militaristic state, tripling the size of the army and making it the most efficient fighting force in Europe. His hobby was recruiting men over six feet tall for his Potsdam Guard—"My dear blue children," he called them. Frederick William, however, never risked his army in battle.

In addition to building a strong army, Frederick William did much to improve the efficiency of the Prussian government by developing a class of well-trained, obe-

dient public servants who had a strong sense of duty to their sovereign.

Frederick William was hard working and conscientious but a confirmed absolutist, considering himself the father of his people. He claimed that he alone knew what was good for them and once said, "Salvation belongs to the Lord, everything else is my business."

Frederick the Great increased Prussian strength. As a boy, Frederick William's son, Frederick, was not interested in a military life, preferring reading and music. After years of harsh discipline, however, he learned to be an excellent soldier and became a hard and cynical diplomat. Soon after he took the throne as Frederick II in 1740, he began a war with Austria. The forty-six years of his reign saw almost constant warfare, and by the end of this period, the army had reached a strength of 200 thousand men.

However, Frederick the Great, as he is usually called, had interests other than war. He enjoyed the study of history, poetry, and philosophy and never lost his love of music nor of playing the flute. He spoke and wrote French well and, like other benevolent despots, was interested in the humanitarian ideals of the Enlightenment. As an "enlightened" monarch, Frederick abolished torture in criminal cases, reformed the civil courts, and granted religious toleration to all people in Prussia.

He worked hard to improve the government and the living conditions of his people, believing that kings " . . . must be active, hard-working, upright, and honest, and concentrate all their strength upon filling their office worthily." Among other improvements, he promoted elementary education, and had canals extended and marshes drained. By fostering industries, especially the manufacture of woolen and linen textiles, he showed that he, too, was influenced by the policy of mercantilism. Careful management left the treasury well filled at his death. Like his father, Frederick was a strict absolutist and ruled with little interference. Both monarchs helped strengthen a state which later became the center of the German nation.

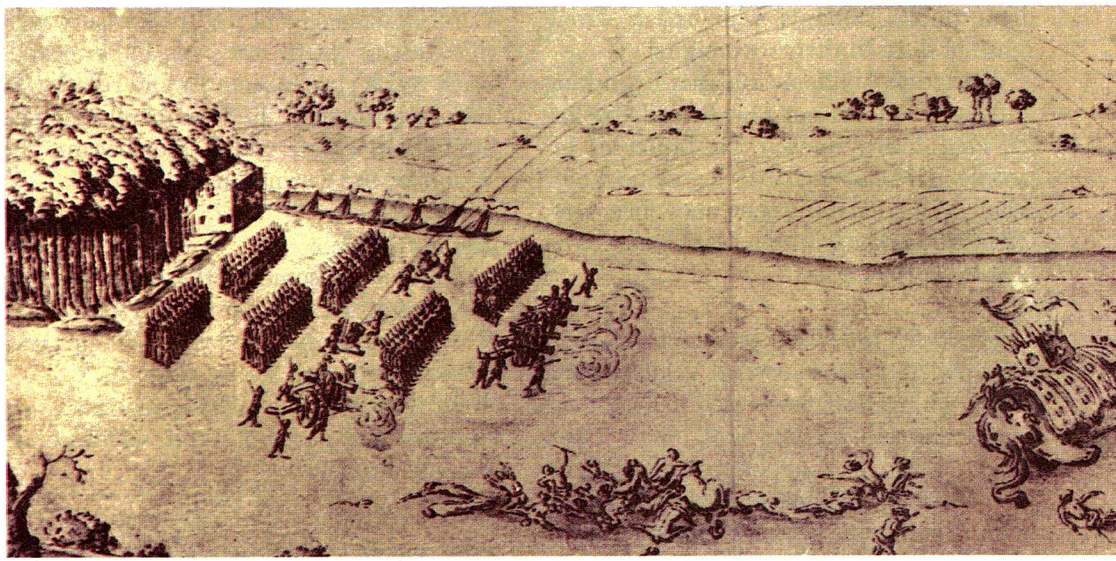
Section Review

1. What were some of the chief steps in the growth of Prussia prior to 1700?
2. What steps did Frederick William take to make Prussia a strong state?
3. In what ways did Frederick the Great improve the economic and social conditions of Prussia?

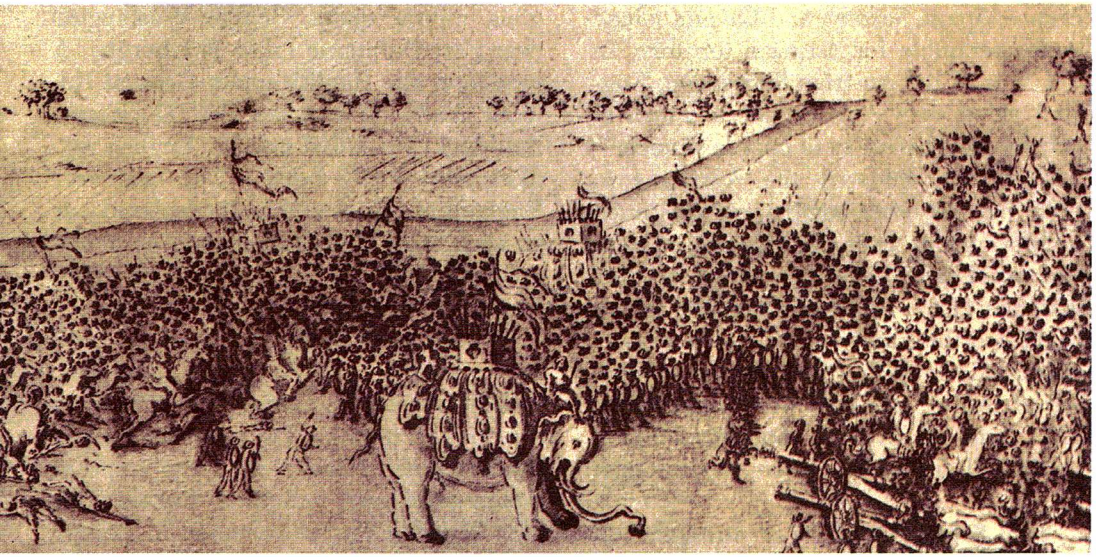
4 Power politics dominated Europe

The 18th century, like the 17th, witnessed one war after another. France and England were bitter enemies during this period because each wanted colonial dominion in America and in the East. Spain usually sided with France because Spain was ruled by a branch of the Bourbon family. Russia and Prussia had no fixed friends or enemies, but were interested in expanding their territories.

The War of the Austrian Succession involved many countries. The Austrian emperor Charles VI had no sons, and he foresaw difficulties when his successor, his young daughter Maria Theresa, should come to the throne. At that time only a male ruler had the authority to reign over Hapsburg lands. In 1713 he secured the Pragmatic Sanction, a pledge of several rulers, including Frederick William of Prussia, that they would respect Austrian boundaries and acknowledge Maria Theresa as the sole heir of his dominions. When the emperor died in 1740, however, Frederick the Great, ignoring the Pragmatic Sanction, led his troops against Austria, claiming the rich province of Silesia.



World-wide Warfare characterized rivalries among European nations in the 18th century. During the Great Northern War, the battle of Poltava, below, was waged on the plains of southeastern Russia. An exhausted Swedish army fighting far from home was defeated by superior Russian troops. Battles between France and England during the Seven Years' War were fought in Asia and in the New World. At Plassey field in India, above, the noise of British cannons caused frightened elephants to stampede the combined French and Indian forces. Quebec was besieged for two months by the British before the city's protective heights were captured from the French, as shown at right.



France, Spain, Saxony, and Bavaria joined in the scramble for Austrian territory. In this War of the Austrian Succession, England sided with Austria, not so much to help Maria Theresa as to oppose France.

Frederick defeated the Austrians in 1745, but the other combatants continued to fight, mainly over the question of colonial possessions. The war ended in 1748 with the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which confirmed the transfer of Silesia to Prussia (first made in 1742). Colonial possessions seized during the war were returned to their original owners, but resentments smoldered and soon warfare began again.

The Seven Years' War strengthened England. In the years immediately following the War of the Austrian Succession, European powers switched sides so completely that the realignment has been called the Diplomatic Revolution. By 1756, France was allied with Russia, Sweden, and its long-time enemy, Austria; England had made an alliance with its recent foe, Prussia. A conflict that erupted between these new rival alliances was called the Seven Years' War, and it was fought both in Europe and in the overseas colonies. It broke out over the question of colonial rivalries in North America, where it was called the French and Indian War.

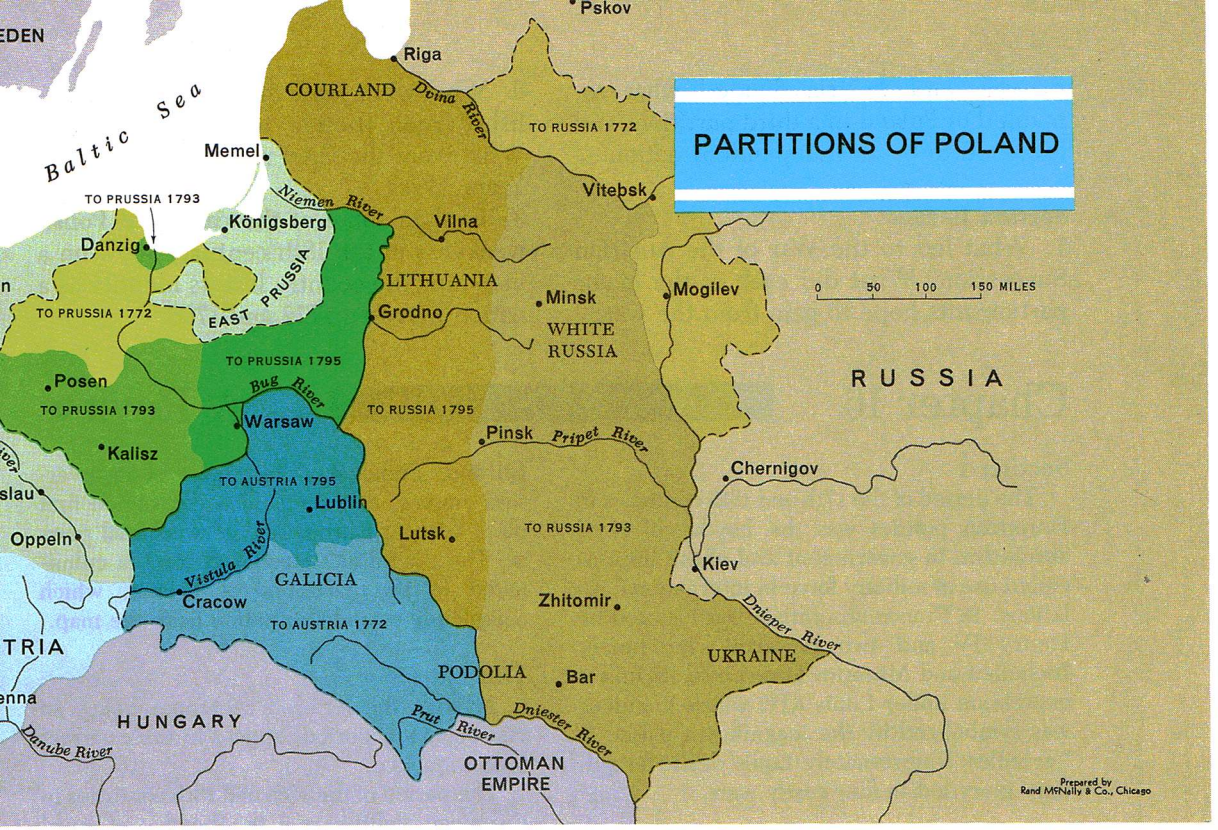
By 1733, England had established thirteen colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. The French were in possession of the St. Lawrence River Valley and had posts along the Great Lakes and the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The English were fearful that the French would hem in the British colonies along the Atlantic coast. Another cause of conflict was the continued British harassment of Spanish trade in Latin America, annoying to the French because Spain had become a French ally.

The French and Indian War began in 1754 without a formal declaration of war when the French defeated a force of Virginia militia under George Washington near Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh). A year later the English under General Edward Braddock attacked Fort Duquesne; Braddock was killed and his English regulars were badly beaten. The next year England and France formally declared war on each other, and, anticipating an attack upon his lands by Austria and its allies, Frederick the Great attacked Austria.

Things went badly for England until 1757, when a great leader, William Pitt, became secretary of state and took over direction of strategy. Pitt provided his ally Frederick the Great with large sums of money to be used in fighting France. This plan kept the French occupied in Europe and left England free to attack them on the seas and in the colonies.

Pitt's strategy paid off. In India a remarkable leader, Robert Clive, defeated the French and their Indian allies in the Battle of Plassey, in 1757. In America colonial troops and English regulars drove the French from the Ohio Valley in 1759. Another English army under James Wolfe attacked Quebec and won the city after a sharp battle in which both Wolfe and the French commander, the Marquis de Montcalm, were mortally wounded. The rest of New France passed into the hands of the British when French forces surrendered Montreal in 1760. Meanwhile, Prussia, fighting the combined forces of Austria, Russia, and France, managed to stave off defeat, although not without severe losses.

The European phase of the conflict was settled by the Treaty of Hubertusburg in 1763; Frederick did not gain additional territory, although he had greatly increased Prussian prestige by his success in war against heavy odds. War overseas ended the same year with the Treaty of Paris. France ceded Canada and all lands east of the Mississippi, except New Orleans, to England. (New Orleans and French territory west of the Mississippi had gone



to Spain in 1762.) In India no European rivals were left to obstruct English conquest. England emerged from the war as the leading nation of Europe and the greatest colonial power in the world.

Poland lost its identity as a nation. One of the outstanding examples of unprincipled statecraft during this period was the ruthless partition of Poland. Although Poland had enjoyed some influence and prosperity during the late Middle Ages, it had declined after the 16th century. At the beginning of the 18th century, it was still the third largest country in Europe, but it was growing steadily weaker. Its kings had little authority, while corrupt nobles, who still had great feudal power, were constantly quarreling among themselves. The backward peasants suffered grinding poverty. Lack of natural boundaries and an efficient army further hampered Poland.

The weakness of Poland greatly interested its neighbors, Russia, Prussia, and Austria. In 1772, Frederick the Great convinced Catherine of Russia and Maria Theresa of Austria that Polish territory could be easily seized. The three nations bribed members of the Polish parliament, which approved the first partition. Russia, Prussia, and Austria together took portions of Poland that totaled more than one fourth of the country.

In 1793 Rùssia and Prussia invaded Poland and forced it to repudiate a newly adopted constitution. They then seized more land in a second partition. The desperate Poles, determined to regain some of their lands, united in a national uprising behind a brave leader, Thaddeus Kosciusko, but it was too late. After an unequal struggle against the forces of Russia and Prussia, Kosciusko was taken prisoner and the insurrection collapsed. In 1795 Russia,

Prussia, and Austria divided what remained of Poland in a third partition, and it ceased to be an independent nation.

Section Review

1. What led to the War of the Austrian Succession? What did each of the major participants hope to gain from the war?
2. What were some of the causes of English-French friction in North America? What were the chief results of the Seven Years' War?
3. Explain some of the causes of Polish weakness in the 18th century. Show on a map how the country lost its identity as a nation between 1772 and 1795.

Chapter 16 A Review

Section 1

The period of the 17th and 18th centuries in European politics was the heyday of royal absolutism in government and of the unprincipled use of military force in international relations. In France absolutism was fostered by Henry IV and two powerful churchmen, Richelieu and Mazarin. It received its fullest expression under Louis XIV, whose grandeur was symbolized by the magnificent palace of Versailles. Unfortunately. Louis' desire for military glory led to four costly wars.

Section 2

In Russia, Peter the Great used his extensive power to modernize his country, strengthen the central government, and increase Russian territory. Probably his most lasting accomplishment was the establishment of his capital city of St. Petersburg on an arm of the Baltic. Catherine the Great, continued Peter's policies by adopting some Western ways and by seizing the Crimea and large areas of Poland.

Section 3

Another absolutist state, Prussia, emerged as an important nation under such strong rulers as Frederick William I and Frederick the Great. An excellent military machine and efficent central government enabled this relatively small country to exert an influence out of proportion to its size and population.

Section 4

During the latter part of this period, warfare involved an increasing number of nations and widespread areas of the globe. By the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, Prussia had become one of the foremost nations of Europe, France had lost most of its overseas empire, and England had assumed first place both in Europe and as a colonial power. The unethical statecraft of the era culminated in the partitions of Poland, which completely erased this nation from the map.

The Time

Arrange the lettered sentences below so that events or periods appear in their correct time sequence.

The period of the 17th and 18th centuries in European politics was the heyday of royal absolutism in government and of the unprincipled use of military force in international relations. (a) Louis XIV of France involved the major countries of Europe in a number of wars designed to increase French power. (b) Cardinal Richelieu, as the chief minister of France, took steps to strengthen the monarchy and make France the leading power in Europe. (c) The rise of Prussia as a major power began when Brandenburg became a Hohenzollern possession. (d) Frederick the Great increased the prestige of his nation by gaining Silesia from Maria Theresa. (e) By the time of his death, Peter the Great had acquired new and substantial territories for Russia. (f) In Russia, the Time of Troubles ended with the founding of the powerful Romanov dynasty. (g) The long French-English struggle in India and North America ended with the Treaty of Paris. (h) Three nations—Prussia, Russia, and Austria—destroyed Poland.

The Place

1. Why was St. Petersburg considered a Russian "window on Europe"? See the map on page 366.

2. Why would the Hohenzollern acquisition of East Prussia stimulate Prussian expansion from Brandenburg eastward?

3. From what countries did Prussia and Russia gain European territory during the 18th century? See the map on page 366.

4. For what reasons would Louis XIV regard the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees as the "natural boundaries" of France?

The People

1. What contribution to France did each of these figures make?

Henry IV	Louis XIV
Cardinal Richelieu	Jean Colbert
Cardinal Mazarin	

2. The men whose names are listed below were involved in the English-French rivalry of the 18th century. Explain the role of each.

Edward Braddock	James Wolfe
William Pitt	Marquis de Montcalm
Robert Clive	John Churchill

3. What contributions did each of these rulers make to the development of the Prussian state: Frederick I; Frederick William I; Frederick the Great?

4. What Hapsburg queen is discussed in this chapter? Name one event with which she is associated.

Key Historical Terms

1. Provide several examples of *absolutism* in early modern times.

2. With which internal struggle in the France of Richelieu and Mazarin are the *intendants* associated?

3. Explain the term *coalition* as related to the problem of maintaining the balance of power in 17th- and 18th-century Europe.

Questions for Critical Thinking

1. In what respects were both Catherine the Great and Frederick the Great enlightened rulers? Who was more enlightened? Why?

2. The 17th century may be considered the "French Century." During the next century, however, France lost its position as the leading power in Europe. What reasons can you give for French decline?

3. It has been said that in power politics national interest always takes precedence over morality. To what extent do the events of 17th- and 18th-century Europe prove this?