

Living like an absolute king: louis xiv in france

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Louis became king at the age of five after his father Louis XIII died in 1643. Louis XIV's godfather, chief minister Cardinal Jules Mazarin was responsible for guiding the young boy to success (Elena Seingard). Louis the XIV was in his early twenties when he took control of the French government, at this point in time France's economy was flourishing and had never been stronger. Louis the XIV was a king who made questionable foreign and domestic decisions at the most fragile times ultimately establishing a large economic debt on France during his reign from 1638 to 1715.

The Palace of Versailles is one of the most famous palaces to this day and also the most expensive. This was the first key mistake that Louis the XIV would make in his ongoing struggle for power. The palace was built for the sole purpose of housing the French nobility, royalty, and government officials which meant that only a handful of the French population would benefit from such a grand palace. The palace was extremely lavish and had an interior space of 721, 182 square feet. The most expensive part of the palace was the silver furniture that Louis had furnished with. This shows that money wasn't a concern for Louis while building the palace. The lengths Louis went to in building the perfect palace were unbelievable. Anything he wanted to be added to the palace he had done and if it wasn't perfect he'd order it to be redone until it was. He wanted to be in control the whole time to show the power he had over other people. The palace was built in 1682 and was finally completed 107 years later in 1789 which meant that Louis never did see the finished product. Many people would say that the palace was built for no reason because he never had the chance to fully enjoy the extent of his

work. He also placed a huge weight and responsibility on his grandson Louis the XV to finish the palace his grandfather put so much time and effort into.

The Palace of Versailles was estimated to have cost anywhere from 50 billion to 200 billion dollars. As a result the palace contributed to more than 20% of France's overall debt after it was built in 1789 (Owen Jarus). This had a huge influence on the French people because Louis had to increase tax on the poor to a mind boggling amount of 85% to pay for the huge project (Louis Writh). This drastically increased starvation rates and poverty levels on the french peasants. The reason he taxed the poor and not the rich was because he needed the support of the upper class in his kingship. This led the french people to see the real side of King Louis XIV, the side that showed little care for money or the people of France. Louis had no real need to build a palace on such a grand scale, it was used to show how much control and power he had over Europe.

Louis the XIV made many enemies during his reign as King of France which was a foolish mistake because it would end up costing him billions in debt and millions in casualties with almost endless war. Louis the XIV was a power hungry king that would cross any boundaries that would lead him to an expansion of his territory or a gain in power. This ultimately led to many conflicts with other nations around the globe. Some of the more notable wars that cost France the most were the war of devolution against Spain from (1667-1668) the Dutch war against the Netherlands from (1672-1678) the war, of grand alliance from (1688-1697) in which almost all of the major European countries were involved. Then finally the Spanish succession from

(1701-1714) (JP Summerville). As a result of so many wars many of the French people started to question the way Louis the XIV ruled France.

When Louis the XIV began his reign, France's economy was flourishing but when he reached the age of 45 he started to make mistakes that resulted in a large economic debt on France. When Louis died in 1715 his grandson Louis the XV succeeded his grandfather at the age of five. He was left with a huge task of paying off his grandfather's debt. When he wasn't able to make a dent in the debt poverty levels kept increasing, the french people began to get angry with the increases in taxes. A rebellion soon followed in 1789 and lasted until 1799 this resulted in France becoming a democracy but also contributing more money to frances overall debt (Chris Butler).

The enormous debt Louis the XIV put on France was the result of his constant need for power and control. It was also a cause of his carelessness towards money and thinking things through. He never acknowledged what the consequences of his actions would be and what the impact would be on the people of France. All these things would tie in to create a debt that France would never recover from.