JESUITS/JANSENISTS

- there was religious controversy between these 2 Catholic groups which had been raging for many yrs, mostly over religious doctrine & beliefs
- Jesuits believed in free will & influential at Versailles
- were fairly tolerant of sin & error so found it easy to ingratiate themselves with easy-going members of Louis’ court
- however, King’s courtiers disliked criticisms of their ways levelled at them by Jansenists
- Bishop Jansen had advocated simple life & Jans. believed in original sin & predestination
- opposed worldly life of Versailles
- main centre was at convent of Port Royal in Paris
- people influencing Jans. movement included intellectuals of the time such as Racine & Pascal, who wrote ‘Lettre Principal’ in which outlined Jans. ideas
- however, because Jesuits influential at Versailles, were therefore responsible for compulsory closing of educational activities at Port Royal
- 1661, Louis imposed Jesuit doctrine on Jans. & exiled main leaders
- 1664, nuns themselves expelled from Port Royal convent
- Jans. associated with remnants of Frondes & had incurred hatred of Mazarin
- however, nuns of PR came from educated & legal families & stood their ground
- as a result, were allowed to return to convent in 1669
- later Jans. not of same calibre as original founding fathers but movement was prolonged by offshoot group called Quietists
- these were influential in various parts of Europe, including 17th France
- believed soul could communicate with God & therefore an established Church not necessary
- Louis had no sympathy or with anything that wasn’t at all orthodox
- period 1669-95 was yrs of peace for Jans. after earlier persecution, helped mainly by more tolerant attitude from popes
- new Quietist leader called Quesnal emerged
- however, Madam de Maintenon, who disliked many Quietist ideas, influenced Louis to take steps against whole body of Jans
- Louis therefore persuaded Pope Clement XI to publish Bull Vineam Domini in 1708 which stigmatised Jans. ideas & theories
- as a result, establishments of Port Royal were suppressed & this time nuns were dispersed
- buildings demolished & even remains of notable Jans. were exhumed & buried elsewhere
- finally 1713, Bull Unigenitus, which condemned Jans. ideas, was published & last sacraments were to be denied to those who refused to accept this Bull
- however, Jans. problems went rumbling on throughout Louis’ reign
THE ECONOMY

COLBERT & THE FRENCH ECONOMY

− born in 1619 & was Louis’ most important minister up to 1683
− self-made man, song of a Reime’s draper
− had started out as clerk of Le Tellier, another Louis’ early advisors, & had tremendous energy, ability to get things done, a precise mind & clearly defined ideas
− ambitious, narrowly religious, rather strict, upright & nicknamed Le Mistral after strong wind
− combined offices of Controller General of Finance, Secretary of the Navy & Secretary of the Royal Household
− died in 1683

IDEAS:
1) ‘wealth is a source of power & everyone in state should contribute towards it’ - disliked the idea of the idle clergy & envied hard-working middle classes of England & United Provinces
2) wanted to remedy inequalities of taxation, but was up against privileges of 1st & 2nd Estates
3) wanted to unify & standardise weights & measures
4) state should be self-supporting with help of colonies (mercantilism)
5) international trade was form of warfare & rise of 1 country only at expense of another

FINANCE/TAXATION

Why was the French financial system so inefficient at the start of Louis XIV’s rule?
− in theory, French economy should have been doing relatively well
− France had emerged from turbulent period of European history (e.g. 30 Years War) with less damage to infrastructure & towns than many other states
− however, taxation system struggled to collect enough money, even before expense of Louis’ foreign policies & extravagances of Vers.
− privileged classes exempt from direct taxation, such as main tax, the Taille (= land tax)
− meant that wealthiest paid little tax
− the Church, despite being wealthy major land-owner, only paid voluntary contribution, the Don Gratuit, to National Treasury every 5yrs
− came nowhere near raising money direct taxation on their wealth could have reached
− burden of direct taxation therefore fell on 3rd Estate, 90% of whom were peasants living at subsistence level
− system of assessment was inconsistent & inefficient, with the Pays d’Etat (local councils) allowed to set own levels of taxation
− were even 3 different types of Taille:
  1) La Taille Personnelle – assessed on an individual
  2) La Taille Réelle – assessed on land holdings
  3) regional variations
− therefore caused further confusion in correct assessment
− indirect taxation came in form of the Gabelle, a salt tax
− dependency on this contributed to gov.’s failure to tax luxury items as effectively
− system of collecting tax led to further losses
– gov. often sold right to collect taxes to tax farmers who would take proportion of tax they collected as their fee
– inevitably led to corruption & siphoning off money into other hands before it even reached central gov.
– other forms of raising money, such as selling of offices (venality), gave a short term boost to royal finances but then obliged Crown to make regular salary payments in future
– absence of a national bank meant Crown had to rely on personal loans from financiers that often carried much higher levels of interest due to inherent danger & unreliability of lending to a monarch
– thus tied Crown into making long term interest payments

What did Colbert do to strengthen the finances?
– problems Colbert had to overcome when became Controller General were many e.g.
  1) the nobles & clergy exempt from most taxation
  2) only small % of every tax collected reached the Treasury due to system & corruption within it
  3) long-standing loans which hampered a steady economy
– some of the measures he took included reducing Taille & provincial customs duties
– as result, within 6yrs, managed to double effective part of king’s income
– also, improved gov.’s authority by giving Intendants greater power to seek out corruption
– formed tax farms to render accounts & took strict proceedings against those profiteering
– also reduced interest on loans, esp. forced loans Fouquet had demanded
– therefore improved both finances & Louis’ gov. by asserting king’s control over nobility & making him wealthier
– 1662, reassessed Taille & France now beginning to show surplus
– however, was handicapped by Louis’ costly war (War of Devolution)
– yet still tried to settle loans & reduce privilege perks
– raised taxes on luxury goods, such as wine
– all these measures, despite war, did result in an increase in revenue
– however, by 1672 & beginning of Dutch War, Colbert forced to fall back on old methods to meet increased demands
– (by 1715, France had fought 4 major wars & was bankrupt, owing 3 billions livres)

How successful was Colbert in strengthening the finances?
SUCCESSES:
1) reform of taxation system brought notable success e.g. shift in emphasis away from Taille towards more indirect taxation
2) efforts to introduce statements of royal income & expenditure, plus estimates for coming year, made it possible for clearer financial planning
3) was success in reduction of corruption inherent in system of tax collection & tax farmers were made more accountable
   N.B. Colbert clear that more taxation would be collected if economy were improved

LIMITATIONS:
1) when Colbert died in 1683, France close to bankruptcy
2) whilst reforms to financial system had been effective, had done little to attack fundamental problem of privilege i.e. 1st & 2nd Estates’ tax exemption
3) internal customs duties continued to emphasise French provincialism
• PATRON OF THE ARTS: (not finance or economy)
  – patronised only arts which glorified Louis & suppressed those which didn’t
  – founded academies of painting & sculpture, & encouraged French artists & writers
  – reformed Académie Francaise & imposed certain restrictions on plays
  – also founded Imperial Observatory & Academies of Science & Architecture

– worked very hard for both king & country but many ideas ahead of his time (colonisation)
– Louvois (Minister of War) against Colbert, who had considered trade a form of warfare
– also, harsh tariff policy led to similar retaliation & even war e.g. Dutch War
– Desmond Seward’s books, ‘The Bourbon Kings of France’, highlights some of shortcomings:
  1) though attempted to control tax farmers, were not properly restrained in times of bad harvests & therefore peasants suffered
  2) no proper regulation of grain trade & wheat prices overall
  3) failed to attract sufficient investment for his many commercial projects
– much of this therefore would suggest was not genius of popular legend
– as long as could provide money for king, managed to promote reforms
– but in times of economic difficulties, many reforms ignored
– however, in so far as greatness in 17th century meant military success, then Louis owed much greatness to Colbert for providing him with money to fight wars
– finally, no doubt Colbert greatly hampered by cost of these wars & building of Versailles

How successful were Colbert’s reforms in strengthening the French economy?

SUCCESSES:
1) despite initial conservatism, development of domestic industry successful in achieving its limited aims. Establishment of state-run industries, e.g. Gobelins Tapestry Works & Van Robais woollen factory at Abbeville, were very successful. The Van Robais factory easily became largest industrial business in France.
2) the merchants of Languedoc had restrictive duties lifted, & consequ. were highly successful in competition with Dutch & English
3) successful encouragement of foreign craftsmen
4) creation of overseas trading companies further stimulated overseas trade & clearly encouraged private merchants to believe in new direction of a France keep to compete with Dutch
5) successful establishment of series of overseas colonies, esp. in N.America (e.g. Quebec) where Canadian fur trade did exceptionally well
6) need of war, & esp. development of navy & large ports such as Rochefort, Dunkirk & Brest, further stimulated economy
7) huge expansion in forestry, textiles & metallurgical industries can be directly attributed to needs of expanding military machine
8) development of internal communications, such as Canal des Deux Mers, & attempt at universal system of weights & measures, combined with new postal service, did much to aid economic development
9) removal of some internal tolls & reduction in custom duties further stimulated economy

LIMITATIONS:
1) state regulations sometimes counter-productive & served to stifle innovation even further. Despite continued efforts, remained little innovation & the successful still focused on elevating themselves out of merchant class
Louvois
- created as Minister of War in 1666
- made army even more efficient by introducing father’s initial reforms
- very aggressive & urged Louis to wage war in order to gain glory
- also introduced new drill book & during next 18yrs was one of chief directors of French policy, both military & civil, succeeding Colbert as King’s favourite

Sebastian de Vauban
- made France impregnable with series of fortresses (Verdun)
- was expert in siege operations & said of him he never lost a position whether he attacked/defended it
- able to show genius during wars & credited with introduction of zig-zag trenches which lasted until WW1

Hugh de Lionne
- diplomat in charge of foreign affairs & became famous under Mazarin at Treaty of Westphalia 1648
- trained ambassadors & secret agents for specialised work
- his diplomacy built alliances & isolated enemies, & he helped make France’s diplomatic name great so her advice was much sought after, even after Louis’ death

- to compare all ministers is very difficult & perhaps irrelevant because each in charge of different areas, commanding influence with king to greater or lesser degree at different periods in 1660s, 70s & 80s
- most that can be said for them as group is helping Louis strengthen his gov/monarchy & position of France
- all go some considerable way in achieving Louis’ success between 1661-85 both at home & abroad

ECONOMY AFTER COLBERT

Capitation (1695) - halfway through Nine Years War; graded tax on all classes except poorest; largely evaded by the nobility

Dixieme (1710) - near end of War of Spanish Succession; income tax of 10%; again evaded by most noblemen

Tithe - 10% of 3rd Estate’s annual wealth to the Church

Corvée - feudal duces; free labour on provincial roads & bridges

Explain why Louis introduced new forms of taxation in the later years of his reign
• long term factors = need to tax the privileged. Both the Capitation & Dixieme taxes might be considered most significant & extended these direct taxes to individuals previously exempt from the Fiscal demands of the state
• debt France had acquired by late 17thC made clear existing system of relying on Taille as main form of direct tax was not providing sufficient income for the Crown. The growing size of the Royal debt was evidence enough. Indeed the amount collected by Taille had actually
Achievements
− Lord Acton: Louis gave people sense of unity after 30Yrs War & then Frondes
− also made territorial gains in reign, but at great cost in both men & money
− could be argued he undermined 2 great French institutions, Church & monarchy
− fall of French monarchy came towards end of century in which Louis died
− caused by political, financial & economic problems initiated by huge cost of Louis’ war & building of Versailles, which ruined royal finances
− Louis strong king & monarchy safe in his hands but left weaker successors a practically insolvable situation
− seemed to have subdued & conciliated nobles, ending their periodic attempts to improve themselves at expense of Crown
− yet under weaker kings, old desire to gain concessions & privileges from monarchy reappeared, ultimately to detriment of the Ancien Regime

Explain the ways in which the War of Spanish Succession had seriously affected France both home and abroad by 1715

• NEGATIVE DOMESTIC EFFECTS:
a) cost: deficit of 430mill livres by 1715
b) emergency taxation had to be introduced: both Dixieme & Capitation had to continue despite the war ending in 1713
c) tax burden fell disproportionately on 3rd Estate
d) gold and silver at Versailles melted down to raise funds for war
e) famine between 1709-10
f) smallpox epidemic also occurred & killed several members of Royal Family

• TERRITORIAL LOSSES:
a) France had been invaded in 1708, for first time in living memory
b) Treaty of Utrecht
c) loss of Lille to Austrian Netherlands

• DOMESTIC POSITIVE EFFECTS:
a) the loyalty to the Crown actually increased – either through sympathy for personal losses or due to the isolation of France

• NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES ABROAD:
a) Treaty of Utrecht was culmination of increasing European opposition to L’s foreign policy
b) strength of Grand Alliance & 4 big military defeats of Blenheim, Oudenarde, Ramilles and Malplaquet not compensated by only French victory in the war at Battle of Denain in 1712
c) Phillipe of Anjou might now be approved as King of Spain, but Utrecht ensured couldn’t become King of France as well
d) there was international disregard for France towards end of reign e.g. 1709, Louis asked for peace terms but enemies turned him down, happy to go on fighting

• POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES ABROAD:
a) at Treaty of Utrecht, France did retain 1679 frontiers which at one stage in War of Spanish Succession was thought unlikely, even if she did have to concede significant overseas losses