



FRANCE – THE ABSOLUTE STATE

During the 1600's and the 1700's much of Europe was ruled by kings, queens and emperors. These monarchs were extremely powerful. They were directly responsible¹ for the economic², political and social lives of their countries. Their word was treated³ like that of God – it had to be obeyed⁴. Louis XIV, ruler of France from 1643 to 1715, was the most powerful of these absolute monarchs – he became king when he was five. All decisions⁵ had to be approved⁶ by him – he had absolute power. He is said to have exclaimed: "L' état, c'est moi", which means: "I am the state!" Other European monarchs copied him and became absolute monarchs themselves, having complete control.

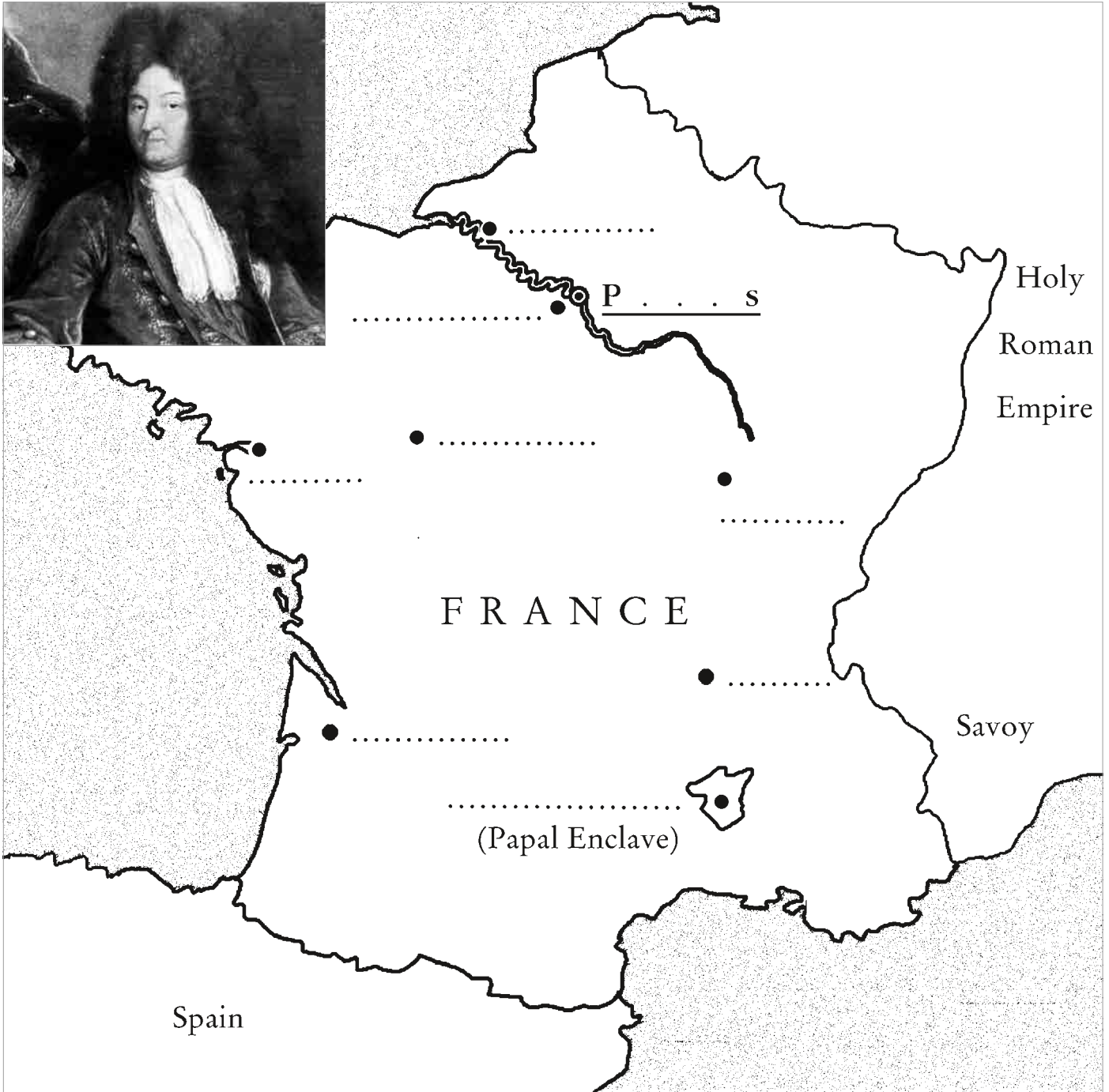


Louis XIV

¹ verantwortlich, ² wirtschaftlich, ³ behandeln, ⁴ gehorchen, befolgen, ⁵ Entscheidung, ⁶ hier: billigen



Under the rule of Louis XIV the French borders¹ were almost the same as today. They were safe from attack from the Hapsburgs, who ruled Spain, Italy and the Holy Roman Empire. Louis XIV ruled from his palace at Versailles, near Paris.



Now put in the following French cities: Avignon (the papal enclave²), Lyons (north of Avignon) and Dijon (north of Lyons). Tours is west of Dijon, and Nantes is west of Tours. Versailles is near Paris and Rouen is north-west of the capital.

¹ Grenze, ² päpstliche Enklave (E. = von einem Staat vollständig umschlossenes Staatsgebiet eines anderen Staates)

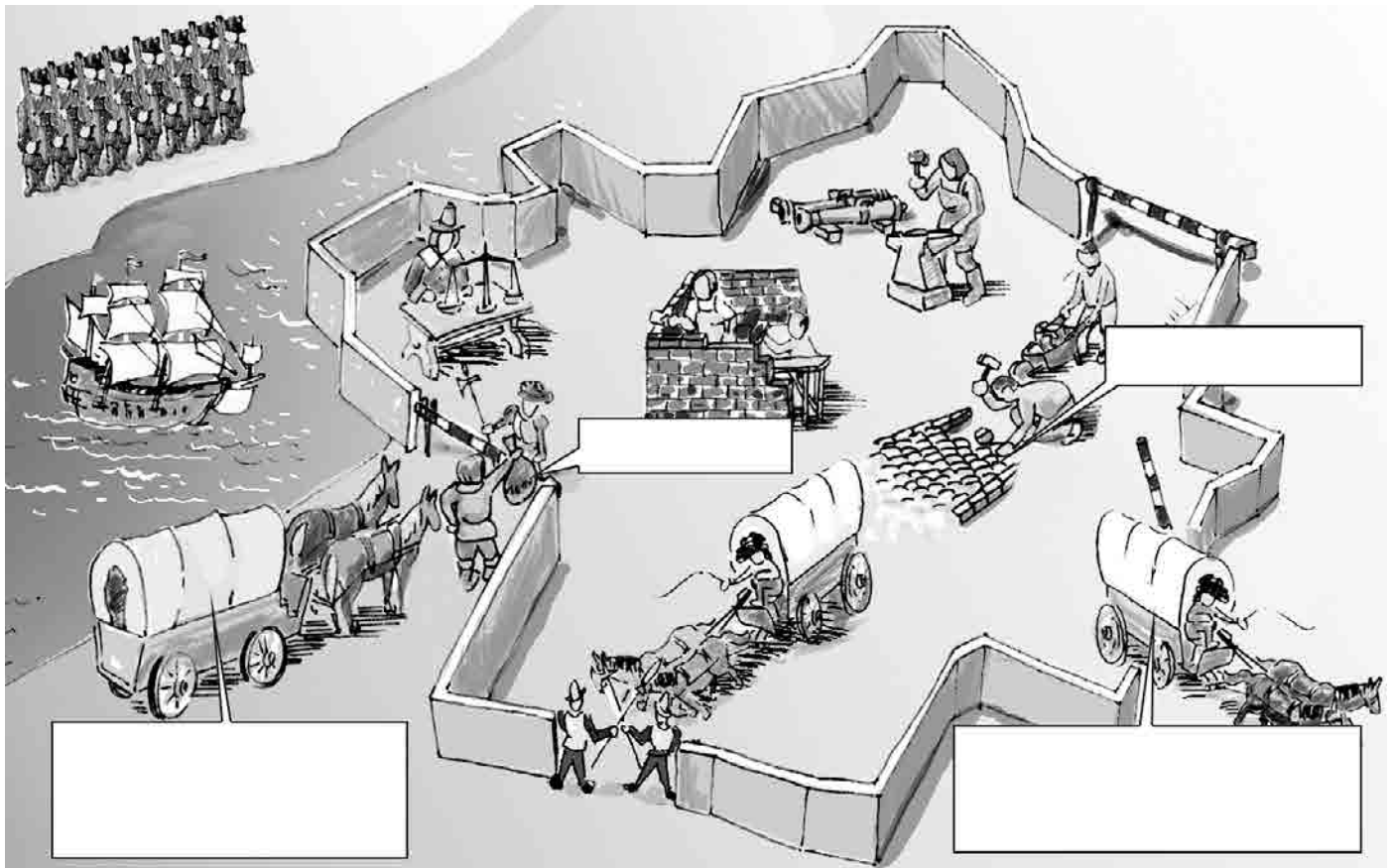


FRANCE – ECONOMY

Louis XIV was certain¹ that his way was right. There were rebellions between 1648 and 1653 by leading nobles² against Louis, but in the end France accepted the strong rule of its king. Louis' lifestyle and his many plans and ideas needed lots of money. He got this money by raising taxes³. He also got money from French colonies in Canada and the West Indies. He had the first great canal built in Europe since Roman times (Canal du midi). This canal links the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic. New roads were built and money given to firms⁴. This helped to build up industry and commerce⁵. This money was also used to make the French army the biggest in Europe and to fight wars. Louis' Minister of Finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert developed a system which was to bring France the highest possible income.



Look at the drawing below, which explains Colbert's financial system, and add the words in the word bank!



Word bank

raw material, roads, finished products, customs duty⁶

¹ sicher sein, ² Adeliger, ³ Steuer, ⁴ Firma, ⁵ Handel, ⁶ Zoll



THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES

Versailles is the largest palace in France and one of the most expensive buildings in the world. It was a royal residence from 1682 to 1789, when the French Revolution began. More than 36,000 workers worked on the project and the palace could house up to 5,000 people, including servants.



Cut out the puzzle and build up your own Palace of Versailles!

