Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Thursday 23 May 2024 – Morning

A Level History A

Y313/01 The Ascendancy of France 1610–1715

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes

You must have:
- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS
- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer the question in Section A and **any two** questions in Section B.

INFORMATION
- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets **[ ]**.
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE
- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

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SECTION A

Read the **two** passages and answer Question 1.

1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages.

Explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the impact of Versailles. **[30]**

Passage A

In 1682, Versailles became the official home of the king, the court, and the government. One wing of the palace was an administrative block. From this time bureaucratic government developed rapidly. The vigour of the ministry declined, and the king took more matters into his own hands. Councils, apart from the King's Council, became purely administrative bodies. The king dealt directly with officials and individual ministers, but he was overworked and had many interests and concerns other than administration. The result was that officials, entrenched in their growing departments, became more and more their own masters, and at times the initiators of policy. The same process was of course going on in the provinces. By the time of Colbert's death, the intendants were all-powerful in most regions, and in defiance of his regulations, had built up their own bureaucracies. More and more they tended to remain in one administrative area.

The king's government had stagnated. Louis encouraged hard work, routine, and formalism. Faced with large issues, he was apt to plunge in and out of his depth without realising the consequences of his actions. His first great ministry had been a guiding force, but after the deaths of its members, and Louvois, the king's ministers were little more than clerks. Louis was almost indomitably complacent, his pride excluded criticism, and he believed in divine inspiration.

W. E. Brown, The First Bourbon Century in France, published in 1971.

Passage B

This famous palace [Versailles] is always seen as the physical representation *par excellence* of the Sun King's reign. And rightly so, for Versailles was planned and built in accordance with Louis XIV's wishes. A countryman at heart, he insisted on being surrounded by acres of carefully planned gardens and ponds, while the palace itself was all windows and balconies. Louis imposed his conception on reluctant ministers and courtiers who preferred the convenience and bustle of Paris.

It has been suggested that Versailles epitomised all that was wrong with French society between 1661 and 1715. Contemporaries and historians have depicted the Sun King surrounded by his courtiers indulging themselves while France starved. Or there is the familiar picture of Louis imprisoning his potentially creative nobles in an endless round of sterile court ritual. Or, while the artistic excellence of the palace is conceded, we are told this was an élite culture; ninety per cent of the population was left in ignorance. This morally rotten edifice was hallowed by the church, whose wealthy, absentee bishops scuttled round the corridors of Versailles, ignoring their dioceses. For, above all, Versailles allegedly represents the scandal of social and economic inequality, since the expense of financing the Sun King's and his courtiers' self-indulgence was met by the wretched tax payer. And it was the poor who paid most.

R Wilkinson, Louis XIV, France and Europe 1661–1715, published in 2002.

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SECTION B

Answer any **two** questions.

2* ‘Noble privileges were the greatest limiting factor to the development of absolutism in the period from 1610 to 1715.’

How far do you agree? **[25]**

3* ‘Noble and court unrest was a serious threat to the French monarchy in the period from 1610 to 1715.’

How far do you agree? **[25]**

4* ‘The Treaty of the Pyrenees was the most important turning point in the development of France as an international power in the period from 1610 to 1715.’

How far do you agree? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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