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**Jean-Baptiste Colbert I**

**Lead: Jean-Baptiste Colbert, royal finance minister, was French King Louis XIV closest cabinet advisor. Louis' war with the Dutch, shot down Colbert's dreams of making France an economic superpower.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: When his father, Louis XIII, died, the future King was five years old. During the years before he reached maturity, France was wracked by popular unrest and governmental chaos. Once he took the**

**reigns of power, Louis determined that he would not depend on the services of a chief minister as had his father who elevated Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin to unprecedented power. Louis decided to rule France himself and that rule would be iron-fisted, competent and absolute. The closest that one of his servants came to having the chance to wield independent power was Jean-Baptiste Colbert and he had big plans for France.**

**Colbert was born in Rheims in 1619, the son of a merchant. He was sent to Paris and Lyon to learn the commercial trade, but returned to Paris and the service of several prominent royal officials including**

**Michel Le Tellier, Secretary of State for military affairs and eventually, Cardinal Marzarin. During the period of social upheaval known as the Fronde, Colbert remained in Paris representing the personal and business interests of the exiled Cardinal. After the turmoil dissipated, Mazarin returned, retained Colbert and the latter managed the churchman's affairs with such skill that both men grew fabulously wealthy from judicious use of patronage and their connection to the King.**

**Before he died in 1661, Mazarin recommended to the king that Colbert take his place in the administration. Thus, began his**

**meteoric rise in the royal service.  
Next time: conflicting ambitions.  
Research assistance by Gregory  
Pederson, at the University of  
Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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