HISTORIOGRAPHY EXAMPLES – THE OLD REGIME

**Marxist: Lefebvre, Soboul, Rude**

*“The French Monarchy lay midway between British constitutionalism and continental despotism. It did not share its power with the aristocracy… It let the French nobility keep its privileges but permitted ennoblement to flourish and the bourgeoisie to thrive.”*

*“Under Louis XIV the monarchy had become absolutistic, centralist and bureaucratic. Its supremacy was to all appearances firmly established; the nobility’s submission seemed final. In reality, the eighteenth century was marked by aristocratic revival as well as the bourgeois ascent”*

**Revisionist:** Schama, Doyle, Furet, Cobban

*“It is in forests of privilege which grew so luxuriantly in France that it is said purposes of government most seriously lost their way. Privilege after all, was defined by tax exemption. And the immunity of the clergy to direct taxes most obviously denied the royal treasury desperately needed funds”*

*“For a long time now, historians have argued that what ministers of the French crown did or didn’t do about the debt is of minor importance. For it was the nature of the old regime monarchy itself was that was the real problem. Hamstrung by privilege, how could a government consisting of men who bought or inherited their offices hope for even an ounce of bureaucratic efficiency?”*

**Post Revisionist:** McPhee, Darnton

*“The constitution by which the King governed France was customary, not written. Essential to it was that Louis was King of France by the grace of God, and the he was responsible to God alone, and that he was responsible to God alone for the well-being of his subjects”.*

*“Every aspect of the institutional structures of public life – in administration, customs and measures, the law, taxation and the Church – Bore the imprint of privilege and historical accretion (growth) across seven centuries of territorial expansion by the Monarchy”*

**Each of these quotes makes some attempt to describe 18th Century France and the Old Regime:**

1. **How does the Marxist view explain 18th Century France?**
2. **How does the Revisionist view explain 18th Century France?**
3. **How does the Post-Revisionist view explain 18th Century France?**
4. **Define the key differences between these interpretations.**