Europe Faces Revolutions

MAIN IDEA

REVOLUTION Liberal and nationalist uprisings challenged the old conservative order of Europe.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The system of nation-states established in Europe during this period continues today.

TERMS & NAMES

- conservative
- liberal
- radical
- nationalism
- nation-state
- the Balkans
- Louis-Napoleon
- Alexander II

SETTING THE STAGE

As revolutions shook the colonies in Latin America, Europe was also undergoing dramatic changes. Under the leadership of Prince Metternich of Austria, the Congress of Vienna had tried to restore the old monarchies and territorial divisions that had existed before the French Revolution. (See Chapter 23.) On an international level, this attempt to turn back history succeeded. For the next century, European countries seldom turned to war to solve their differences. Within countries, however, the effort failed. Revolutions erupted across Europe between 1815 and 1848.

Clash of Philosophies

In the first half of the 1800s, three schools of political thought struggled for supremacy in European societies. Each believed that its style of government would best serve the people. Each attracted a different set of followers. The list below identifies the philosophies, goals, and followers.

- Conservative: usually wealthy property owners and nobility. They argued for protecting the traditional monarchies of Europe.
- Liberal: mostly middle-class business leaders and merchants. They wanted to give more power to elected parliaments, but only the educated and the landowners would vote.
- Radical: favored drastic change to extend democracy to all people. They believed that governments should practice the ideals of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

Nationalism Develops

As conservatives, liberals, and radicals debated issues of government, a new movement called nationalism emerged. Nationalism is the belief that people’s greatest loyalty should not be to a king or an empire but to a nation of people who share a common culture and history. The nationalist movement would blur the lines that separated the three political theories.

When a nation had its own independent government, it became a nation-state. A nation-state defends the nation’s territory and way of life, and it represents the nation to the rest of the world. In Europe in 1815, only
1. Forming and Supporting Opinions
Do you think nationalism has had more of a positive or negative impact on the world? Support your opinion with evidence.

2. Comparing and Contrasting
Which of the bonds used to create nation-states are found in the United States?
France, England, and Spain could be called nation-states. But soon that would change as nationalist movements achieved success.

Most of the people who believed in nationalism were either liberals or radicals. In most cases, the liberal middle class—teachers, lawyers, and businesspeople—led the struggle for constitutional government and the formation of nation-states. In Germany, for example, liberals wanted to gather the many different German states into a single nation-state. Other liberals in large empires, such as the Hungarians in the Austrian Empire, wanted to split away and establish self-rule.

**Nationalists Challenge Conservative Power**

The first people to win self-rule during this period were the Greeks. For centuries, Greece had been part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans controlled most of the Balkans. That region includes all or part of present-day Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, and the former Yugoslavia. Greeks, however, had kept alive the memory of their ancient history and culture. Spurred on by the nationalist spirit, they demanded independence and rebelled against the Ottoman Turks in 1821.

**Greeks Gain Independence** The most powerful European governments opposed revolution. However, the cause of Greek independence was popular with people around the world. Russians, for example, felt a connection to Greek Orthodox Christians, who were ruled by the Muslim Ottomans. Educated Europeans and Americans loved and respected ancient Greek culture.

Eventually, as popular support for Greece grew, the powerful nations of Europe took the side of the Greeks. In 1827, a combined British, French, and Russian fleet destroyed the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Navarino. In 1830, Britain, France, and Russia signed a treaty guaranteeing an independent kingdom of Greece.

**1830s Uprisings Crushed** By the 1830s, the old order, carefully arranged at the Congress of Vienna, was breaking down. Revolutionary zeal swept across Europe. Liberals and nationalists throughout Europe were openly revolting against conservative governments.

Nationalist riots broke out against Dutch rule in the Belgian city of Brussels. In October 1830, the Belgians declared their independence from Dutch control. In Italy, nationalists worked to unite the many separate states on the Italian peninsula. Some were independent. Others were ruled by Austria, or by the pope. Eventually, Prince Metternich sent Austrian troops to restore order in Italy. The Poles living under the rule of Russia staged a revolt in Warsaw late in 1830. Russian armies took nearly an entire year to crush the Polish uprising. By the mid-1830s, the old order seemed to have reestablished itself. But the appearance of stability did not last long.

**1848 Revolutions Fail to Unite** In 1848, ethnic uprisings erupted throughout Europe. (See the map on page 679.) After an unruly mob in Vienna clashed with police, Metternich resigned and liberal uprisings broke out throughout the Austrian empire. In Budapest, nationalist leader Louis Kossuth called for a parliament and self-government.
for Hungary. Meanwhile in Prague, Czech liberals demanded Bohemian independence.

European politics continued to seesaw. Many liberal gains were lost to conservatives within a year. In one country after another, the revolutionaries failed to unite themselves or their nations. Conservatives regained their nerve and their power. By 1849, Europe had practically returned to the conservatism that had controlled governments before 1848.

Radicals Change France

Radicals participated in many of the 1848 revolts. Only in France, however, was the radical demand for democratic government the main goal of revolution. In 1830, France’s King Charles X tried to stage a return to absolute monarchy. The attempt sparked riots that forced Charles to flee to Great Britain. He was replaced by Louis-Philippe, who had long supported liberal reforms in France.

The Third Republic

However, in 1848, after a reign of almost 18 years, Louis-Philippe fell from popular favor. Once again, a Paris mob overturned a monarchy and established a republic. The new republican government began to fall apart almost immediately. The radicals split into factions. One side wanted only political reform. The other side also wanted social and economic reform. The differences set off bloody battles in Parisian streets. The violence turned French citizens away from the radicals. As a result, a moderate constitution was drawn up later in 1848. It called for a parliament and a strong president to be elected by the people.

France Accepts a Strong Ruler

In December 1848, Louis-Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, won the presidential election. Four years later, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte took the title of Emperor Napoleon III. A majority of French voters accepted this action without complaint. The French were weary of instability. They welcomed a strong ruler who would bring peace to France.

As France’s emperor, Louis-Napoleon built railroads, encouraged industrialization, and promoted an ambitious program of public works. Gradually, because of Louis-Napoleon’s policies, unemployment decreased in France, and the country experienced real prosperity.

Reform in Russia

Unlike France, Russia in the 1800s had yet to leap into the modern industrialized world. Under Russia’s feudal system, serfs were bound to the nobles whose land they worked. Nobles enjoyed almost unlimited power over them. By the 1820s, many Russians believed that serfdom must end. In their eyes, the system was morally wrong. It also prevented the empire from advancing economically. The czars, however, were reluctant to free the serfs. Freeing them would anger the landowners, whose support the czars needed to stay in power.
Defeat Brings Change  Eventually, Russia’s lack of development became obvious to Russians and to the whole world. In 1853, Czar Nicholas I threatened to take over part of the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War. However, Russia’s industries and transportation system failed to provide adequate supplies for the country’s troops. As a result, in 1856, Russia lost the war against the combined forces of France, Great Britain, Sardinia, and the Ottoman Empire.

After the war, Nicholas’s son, Alexander II, decided to move Russia toward modernization and social change. Alexander and his advisers believed that his reforms would allow Russia to compete with western Europe for world power.

Reform and Reaction  The first and boldest of Alexander’s reforms was a decree freeing the serfs in 1861. The abolition of serfdom, however, went only halfway. Peasant communities—rather than individual peasants—received about half the farmland in the country. Nobles kept the other half. The government paid the nobles for their land. Each peasant community, on the other hand, had 49 years to pay the government for the land it had received. So, while the serfs were legally free, the debt still tied them to the land.

Political and social reforms ground to a halt when terrorists assassinated Alexander II in 1881. His successor, Alexander III, tightened czarist control over the country. Alexander III and his ministers, however, encouraged industrial development to expand Russia’s power. A major force behind Russia’s drive toward industrial expansion was nationalism. Nationalism also stirred other ethnic groups. During the 1800s, such groups were uniting into nations and building industries to survive among other nation-states.

MAIN IDEA  Analyzing Issues

Why did czars push for industrialization?

TERMS & NAMES  1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- conservative
- liberal
- radical
- nationalism
- nation-state
- the Balkans
- Louis-Napoleon
- Alexander II

USING YOUR NOTES  2. Why did most of the revolts fail?

MAIN IDEAS  3. How were radicals different from liberals?
4. Why did France’s Third Republic fail?
5. What was the driving force behind Russia’s industrial expansion?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING  6. MAKING INFERENCES  Why might liberals and radicals join together in a nationalist cause?
7. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS  Why did some liberals disapprove of the way Louis-Napoleon ruled France after the uprisings of 1848?
8. EVALUATING DECISIONS  What consequences did Alexander’s reforms have on Russia?
9. WRITING ACTIVITY  [REVOLUTION]  Imagine you live in Europe in 1848. Write a letter to a friend, stating your political position—conservative, liberal, or radical. Express your feelings about the uprisings and the future of Europe.

CONNECT TO TODAY  WRITING A TV NEWS SCRIPT

Early in the 21st century, hostility between Greeks and Turks on the island of Cyprus was reduced. Prepare a TV news script about the current status of governing the island.