Chapter 20

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON EUROPEAN SOCIETY

The French Revolution dramatically and quickly altered the political structure of France, and the Napoleonic conquests spread many of the revolutionary principles in an equally rapid and stunning fashion to other parts of Europe. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, another revolution-an industrial one-was transforming the economic and social structure of Europe, although more slowly and somewhat less dramatically.

The Industrial Revolution caused a quantum leap in industrial production. New sources of energy and power, especially coal and steam, replaced wind and water to run machines that significantly decreased the use of human and animal labor and at the same time increased productivity. This in turn called for new ways of organizing human labor to maximize the benefits and profits from the new machines; factories replaced workshops and home workrooms. Many early factories were dreadful places with difficult working conditions. Reformers, appalled at these conditions, were especially critical of the treatment of married women. One reported, “We have repeatedly seen married females, in the last stage of pregnancy, slaving from morning to night beside these never-tiring machines, and when . . . they were obliged to sit down to take a moment’s ease, and being seen by the manager, were fined for the offense.” But there were also examples of well-run factories. William Cobbett described one in Manchester in 1830: “In this room, which is lighted in the most convenient and beautiful manner, there were five hundred pairs of looms at work, and five hundred persons attending those looms; and, owing to the goodness of the masters, the whole looking healthy and well-dressed.”

During the Industrial Revolution, Europe experienced a shift from a traditional, labor-intensive economy based on farming and handicrafts to a more capital-intensive economy based on manufacturing by machines, specialized labor, and industrial factories. Although the Industrial Revolution took decades to spread, it was truly revolutionary in the way it fundamentally changed Europeans, their society, and their relationship to the rest of the world. The development of large factories encouraged mass movements of people from the countryside to urban areas, where impersonal coexistence replaced the traditional intimacy of rural life. Higher levels of productivity led to a search for new sources of raw materials, new consumption patterns, and a revolution in transportation that allowed raw materials and finished products to be moved quickly around the world. The creation of a wealthy industrial middle class and a huge industrial working class (or proletariat) substantially transformed traditional social relationships.

Chapter 21

REACTION, REVOLUTION, AND ROMANTICISM, 1815-1850

In September 1814, hundreds of foreigners began to converge on Vienna, the capital city of the Austrian Empire. Many were members of European royalty – kings, archdukes, princes, and their wives – accompanied by their diplomatic advisers and scores of servants. Their congenial host was the Austrian emperor, Francis I, who never tired of regaling Vienna's guests with concerts, glittering balls, sumptuous feasts, and countless hunting parties. One participant remembered, "Eating, fireworks, public illuminations. For eight or ten days, I haven't been able to work at all. What a life'" of course, not every waking hour was spent in pleasure during this gathering of notables, known to history as the Congress of Vienna. These people were also representatives of all the states that had fought Napoleon, and their real business was to arrange a final peace settlement after almost a decade of war. On June 8, 1815, they finally completed their task.

The forces of upheaval unleashed during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were temporarily quieted in 1815 as rulers sought to restore stability by reestablishing much of the old order to a Europe ravaged by war. Kings, landed aristocrats, and bureaucratic elites regained their control over domestic governments, and internationally the forces of conservatism tried to maintain the new status quo; some states even used military force to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries in their desire to crush revolutions.

But the Western world had been changed, and it would not readily go back to the old system. New ideologies, especially liberalism and nationalism, both products of the revolutionary upheaval initiated in France, had become too powerful to be contained. Not content with the status quo, the forces of change gave rise first to the revolts and revolutions that periodically shook Europe in the 1820s and 1830s and then to the widespread revolutions of 1848. Some of the revolutions and revolutionaries were successful; most were not. Although the old order usually appeared to have prevailed, by 1850 it was apparent that its days were numbered. This perception was reinforced by the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution. Together the forces unleashed by the dual revolutions-the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution-made it impossible to return to prerevolutionary Europe. Nevertheless, although these events ushered in what historians like to call the modern European world, remnants of the old remained amid the new.

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Chapter 22

AN AGE OF NATIONALISM AND REALISM, 1850-1871

Across the European continent, the revolutions of 1848 had failed. The forces of liberalism and nationalism appeared to have been decisively defeated as authoritarian governments reestablished their control almost everywhere in Europe by 1850. And yet within twenty-five years, many of the goals sought by the liberals and nationalists during the first half of the nineteenth century seemed to have been achieved. National unity became a reality in Italy and Germany, and many European states were governed by constitutional monarchies, even though the constitutional-parliamentary features were frequently facades.

All the same, these goals were not achieved by liberal and nationalist leaders but by a new generation of conservative leaders who were proud of being practitioners of *Realpolitik* (ray-AHL-poh-lee-teek), the "politics of reality." One reaction to the failure of the revolutions of 1848 had been a new toughness of mind as people prided themselves on being realistic in their handling of power. The new conservative leaders used armies and power politics to achieve their foreign policy goals. And they did not hesitate to manipulate liberal means to achieve conservative ends at home. Nationalism had failed as a revolutionary movement in 1848-1849, but between 1850 and 1871, these new leaders found a variety of ways to pursue nation building. Winning wars was one means of nation building, but these rulers also sought to improve the economy and foster cultural policies that gave the citizens of their states a greater sense of national identity.

One of the most successful of these new conservative leaders was the Prussian Otto von Bismarck, who used both astute diplomacy and war to achieve the unification of Germany. On January 18, 1871, Bismarck and six hundred German princes, nobles, and generals filled the Hall of Mirrors in the palace of Versailles, outside Paris. The Prussian army had defeated the French, and the assembled notables were gathered for the proclamation of the Prussian king as the new emperor of a united German state. When the words "Long live His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor William!" rang out, the assembled guests took up the cry. One participant wrote, "A thundering cheer, repeated at least six times, thrilled through the room while the flags and standards waved over the head of the new emperor of Germany." European rulers who feared the power of the new German state were not so cheerful. "The balance of power has been entirely destroyed," declared the British prime minister.

Chapter 23

MASS SOCIETY IN AN “AGE OF PROGRESS,” 1871-1894

In the late 1800s, Europe entered a dynamic period of material prosperity. Bringing with it new industries, new sources of energy, and new goods, a second Industrial Revolution transformed the human environment, dazzled Europeans, and led them to believe that their material progress meant human progress. Scientific and technological achievements, many naively believed, would improve humanity’s condition and solve all human problems. The doctrine of progress became an article of great faith.

The new urban and industrial world created by the rapid economic changes of the nineteenth century led to the emergence of a mass society by the late nineteenth century. Mass society meant improvements for the lower classes, who benefited from the extension of voting rights, a better standard of living, and education. It also brought mass leisure. New work patterns established the “weekend” as a distinct time of recreation and fun, and new forms of mass transportation – railroads and streetcars – enabled even ordinary workers to make excursions to amusement parks. Coney Island was only 8 miles from central New York City; Blackpool in England was a short train ride from nearby industrial towns. With their Ferris wheels and other daring rides that threw young men and women together, amusement parks offered a whole new world of entertainment. Thanks to the railroad, seaside resorts, once the preserve of the wealthy, became accessible to more people for weekend visits, much to the disgust of one upper-class regular, who complained about the new “day-trippers”: “They swarm upon the beach, wandering listlessly about with apparently no other aim than to get a mouthful of fresh air.” Enterprising entrepreneurs in resorts like Blackpool welcomed the masses of new visitors, however, and built piers laden with food, drink, and entertainment to serve them.

The coming of mass society also created new roles for the governments of Europe’s nation-states. In the early nineteenth century, “nations” functioned as communities of people bound together by common language, traditions, customs, and institutions. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the “state” – the organized institutions of government – had come to dominate European lives. By 1871, the national states promoted economic growth and mass education, amassed national armies by conscription, and took more responsibility for public health and housing in their cities. By taking these steps, the governments of the national states hoped to foster national unity and national loyalty.

Within many of these national states, the growth of the middle class had led to the triumph of liberal practices: constitutional governments, parliaments, and principles of equality. The period after 1871 also witnessed the growth of political democracy as the right to vote was extended to all adult males; women, though, would still have to fight for the same political rights. With political democracy came a new mass politics and a new mass press. Both would become regular features of the twentieth century.

Chapter 24

AN AGE OF MODERNITY, ANXIETY, AND IMPERIALISM, 1894-1914

In 1889, the Eiffel Tower stood above Paris as a beacon of progress, a symbol of what technology and industrialization could accomplish. Constructed from iron to mark the entrance to the World's Fair, it was the tallest structure in the world, extending 1,000 feet above the city. Over a period of five months, 3.5 million visitors paid to ascend the tower and overlook the grounds teeming with throngs of people. Almost 175,000 people a day came to visit the fair's 60,000 exhibits, which included an Algerian bazaar, Swiss chalet, Indian palace, and Japanese garden. Guidebooks for the fair posited that a visitor would need ten to twenty days to see all of the displays. One awestruck visitor declared, "There is only one cry; this is the most grandiose, the most dazzling, the most marvelous spectacle ever seen."[1] For most in attendance, the modem era was indeed an age of progress that was providing more opportunities, higher standards of living, better cities, more goods to consume, and greater democratization.

The optimism found at the World's Fair and throughout Europe's cities was not unchallenged, however. Some were still struggling to achieve progress. Many workers continued to endure pitiful housing conditions and low wages, while women fought for the right to vote. Beneath the apparent calm, political tensions were also building, fueled by imperialist adventures, international rivalries, and cultural uncertainties. After 1880, Europeans engaged in a great race for colonies around the world. This competition for lands abroad greatly intensified existing antagonisms among European states.

Ultimately, Europeans proved incapable of finding constructive ways to cope with their international rivalries. The development of two large alliance systems – the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente – may have helped preserve peace for a time, but eventually the alliances made it easier for the European nations to be drawn into World War I.

The cultural life of Europe in the decades before 1914 reflected similar dynamic tensions. The advent of mass education produced better-informed citizens but also made it easier for governments to stir up the masses by nationalistic appeals through the new mass journalism. At the same time, despite the appearance of progress, European philosophers, writers, and artists were creating modern cultural expressions that questioned traditional ideas and values and initiated a crisis of confidence. Before 1914, many intellectuals had a sense of unease about the direction in which society was heading, accompanied by a feeling of imminent catastrophe. They proved remarkably prophetic ...