

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **EUROPE IN CRISIS, 1815 – 1833: REPRESSION, REFORM AND REVOLUTION**

The Vienna peace settlement signaled the triumph of the political and social conservative order in Europe. The dangerous ideas (Liberalism and Nationalism) associated with the French Revolution and Napoleonic period had been “contained” by the territorial provisions of the 1815 agreement. The status quo had been once again defined. “Order” and “stability” was expected in the European state system.

Underestimating the power of ideas, the Conservative leadership after 1815 was instead faced with a dramatic confrontation between those who had been converted to the “new” ideas (which required political changes) and the traditional ruling classes, who were reluctant to make any accommodation with the believers in the “new” ideas. The result of such confrontation in most states was government-sponsored repression followed by revolution. Few states chose to respond to the call for liberal reform. Only nationalist impulses in Greece and Belgium were successful for reasons which could hardly comfort

liberals. The intellectual climate of Romanticism provided a volatile atmosphere in which these events unfolded.

## **6.1 POST-WAR REPRESSION, 1815 – 1820**

Initially the great powers followed the lead of the Austrian statesman Prince Metternich (1773 – 1859) in suppressing any direct or indirect expression of liberal faith. Most leaders attempted to reinstitute conservative means of governmental control in order to prevent reforms in the direction of greater participation by more people in government. The literate middle class, supported by urban workers, demanded reform and were willing to use violence to obtain it.

### **6.1.1 *England***

The Tory (Conservative) government which defeated Napoleon was in control of England. Facing serious economic problems which had produced large numbers of industrial unemployed, the conservatives tried to follow a reactionary policy:

- 1) The Corn Law of 1815 effectively halted the importation of cheaper foreign grains, aiding the Tory landholding aristocracy but increasing the cost of bread and driving the poor and unemployed to protest and demand parliamentary reform.
- 2) The Coercion Acts of 1817 suspended “habeas corpus” for the first time in English history; provided for arbitrary arrest and punishment; and drastically curtailed freedom of the press and public mass meetings.
- 3) The “Peterloo Massacre” of 1819 where several members of a large crowd listening to reformers demanding repeal of the Corn Laws and other liberal changes were

killed and hundreds injured when police authorities broke up the meeting.

- 4) The Six Acts of Parliament in 1819 in response to the "Peterloo" episode were a series of repressive measures which attempted to remove the instruments of agitation from the hands of radical leaders and to provide the authorities with new powers.
- 5) The Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820 when a group of extreme radicals plotted to blow up the entire British cabinet. Provided new support for repression by the Tories as well as discrediting the movement for parliamentary reform.

By 1820 England was on the road to becoming a reactionary authoritative state when numerous protests among younger Tories argued that such repressive legislation was not in the English tradition and that the party itself may need to change its direction.

### 6.1.2 *France*

France emerged from the chaos of the long revolutionary period (1789 – 1815) as the most liberal large state on the continent. The period from 1815 – 1830 is always referred to as the Restoration era signifying the return of the legitimate royal dynasty of France — the infamous Bourbon line.

Louis XVIII (reign 1814 – 1824) governed France as a Constitutional Monarch by agreeing to observe the "Charter" or Constitution of the Restoration Period. This moderate document managed to limit royal power, grant legislative powers, protect civil rights, uphold the Code Napoleon and other pre-restoration reforms.

Louis XVIII wished to unify the French populace, which was divided into those who accepted the Revolution and those who did not. The leader of those who did not was the Count of Artois (1757 – 1836), brother of the king and leader of the Ultra Royalists.

The 1815 “White Terror” saw royalist mobs murder thousands of former revolutionaries.

New elections in 1816 for the Chamber of Deputies resulted in the Ultras being rejected in favor of a moderate royalist majority dependent on middle class support. The war indemnity was paid off, France was admitted to the Quadruple Alliance (1818) and liberal sentiment began to grow.

In February 1820 the Duke of Berri, son of Artois and heir to the throne after his father, was murdered. Royalists charged the left (Liberals) were responsible and that the king’s policy of moderation had encouraged the left.

Louis XVIII began to move the government more and more to the right as changes in the electoral laws narrowed the eligible voters to the most wealthy and censorship was imposed. Liberals were being driven out of legal political life and into near-illegal activity. The triumph of reactionism came in 1823 when French troops were authorized by the Concert of Europe to crush the Spanish Revolution and restore another Bourbon ruler, Ferdinand VII.

### 6.1.3 *Austria and the German States*

Throughout the first half of the 19th century the Austrian Empire and the German Confederation were dominated by Prince Metternich, who epitomized conservative reactionism. To no other country or empire were the programs of liberalism and nationalism potentially more dangerous. Given the multi-

ethnic composition of the Hapsburg empire any recognition of the political rights and aspirations of any of the national groups would mean the probable dissolution of the empire.

It was Napoleon who reduced over 300 German states to 39, and the Congress of Vienna which preserved this arrangement under Austrian domination. The purpose of the German confederation (Bund) was to guarantee the independence of the member states, and by joint action to preserve all German states from domestic disorder or revolution. Its organization of government was a Diet (assembly) presided over by Austria as President.

The two largest states in the confederation were Austria and Prussia. Austria was ruled by the Hapsburg dynasty and through Metternich's anti-liberal and nationalist pathology held the line against any change in the status quo.

Prussia was ruled by the Hohenzollern dynasty, a very aggressive royal family when it came to expanding the borders of this northern German state, sometimes at the expense of other German rulers. For a short time after 1815 German liberals looked to Prussia as a leader of German liberalism because of liberal reforms in government enacted after a humiliating defeat at the hands of Napoleon. These reforms were intended to improve the efficiency of government and were not the portent of a general trend. The Prussian government and its traditional ruling classes (Junkers) intended to follow the lead of Metternich in repressing all liberal-nationalist agitation.

Liberal-nationalist agitation was highly vocal and visible in and among German universities in the first half of the 19th century. Student organizations such as the Burschenschaften were openly promoting political arrangements which seemed radical and revolutionary at the time.

At the Wartburg Festival (1817), students burned various symbols of authority. Russian agent Kotzebue was assassinated in 1819 by Karl Sand, a student member of the Burschenschaft.

The Carlsbad Diet (1819) was summoned by Metternich to end the seditious activity of German liberals and nationalists. The passage of a series of decrees effectively ended the activities of these change-agents. In fact, the movement was driven underground.

#### 6.1.4 *Russia*

From 1801 to 1825 Czar Alexander I governed this traditional authoritarian state. A man of many moods, this Russian emperor thought he was called upon to lead Europe into a new age of benevolence and good will. After the Congress of Vienna he became increasingly reactionary and a follower of Metternich.

Alexander I was torn between an intellectual attraction to the ideas of the Enlightenment and reform and a very pragmatic adherence to traditional Russian autocracy (absolutism).

With the help of liberal adviser Michael Speransky plans were made for a reconstruction of the Russian government because of the czar's admiration for Napoleon's administrative genius. This and other liberal policies alienated the nobility and Speransky was dismissed.

Alexander I came to regard the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and Napoleon in biblical terms, seeing all three as anti-Christian. Turning to a new reactionary advisor, General Arakcheiev, repression became the order of the day. There could be no toleration of political opposition or criticism of the regime. The early years of possible liberal reform had given way

to conservative repression.

## 6.2 REVOLUTIONS I, 1820 – 1829

Nationalism, liberalism and industrialism were all key factors in the outbreak of revolution during the first half of the 19th century. All three “isms” were opposed by conservatives—including royalists, clergy, and the landed aristocracy—who were rooted in the way of life before the French Revolution. Promoting the new forces of change was a younger generation, the heirs of the Enlightenment who believed in progress. Romanticism was the backdrop against which these events were played out.

### 6.2.1 *The International System: The Concert of Europe*

At the 1815 Congress of Vienna the enforcement provisions of the settlement were designed to guarantee stability and peace in the international arena. The Quadruple Alliance (Austria, Russia, Prussia, England) that had defeated Napoleon was to continue through a new spirit of cooperation and consultation that would be referred to as the “Concert of Europe.” At the suggestion of Lord Castlereagh, England’s Foreign Minister, foreign policy issues affecting the international order would be worked out in a series of meetings or Congresses so that no one nation could act without the consent of the others. But under the leadership of Metternich, the Congress system became the means to preserve the political status quo of autocracy in Europe against all revolutionary ideas. The Congress system was short-lived because the continental powers could not always agree on cooperative action and the English refused to support interference in the domestic affairs of nation-states. In the end each nation became guided by its own best interests.

*The Congress System of Conferences.* The Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818) arranged for the withdrawal of the al-

lied army of occupation from France and the admission of France into the concert of Europe (Quintuple Alliance).

The Congress of Troppau (1820) was summoned by Metternich because of the outbreak of revolution in Spain. A policy statement (Protocol of Troppau) which would authorize armed intervention into any state which undergoes revolutionary change was opposed by England.

The Congress of Laibach (1821) authorized Austrian troops to end the revolutionary changes in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies where revolutions had spread from Spain. No decision was made concerning Spain.

The Congress of Verona (1822) was called because of the continuing Spanish Revolution and the outbreak (1821) of revolution in Greece. When Russia, Prussia and Austria agreed to support French intervention in Spain, the new English Foreign Minister, George Canning (1770 – 1827) (Viscount Castlereagh had committed suicide) withdrew England from the Concert of Europe. Verona marked the effective end of the Congress system.

*The Monroe Doctrine and the Concert of Europe.* British fears that Metternich would attempt the restoration of Spain's colonies then revolting in Latin America prompted George Canning to suggest and then support the foreign policy statement of the United States of America known as the Monroe Doctrine (1823) which prohibited any further colonization and intervention by European powers in the Western Hemisphere.

England hoped to replace Spain in establishing her own trading monopoly with these former Spanish colonies. Throughout the 19th century British commercial interests dominated Latin America.



***Latin America in Revolution.*** Inspired by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period, the rise of Latin American nationalism between 1804 and 1824 would witness the end of three centuries of Spanish colonial rule and the emergence of new heroes such as Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jose San Martin, Bernardo O'Higgins, Simon Bolivar and Miguel Hidalgo.

### **6.2.2 *The Revolutions of the 1820s***

***Spain (1820 – 1823).*** Beginning in January, 1820, a mutiny of army troops under Colonel Rafael Riego began in opposition to the persecution of liberals by the restored monarch King Ferdinand VII. The Congress of Verona (1822) authorized a French army to invade Spain and crush the revolutionaries.

***Italy (1820 – 1821).*** Incited to revolution by the activities of secret liberal-nationalist organizations ("carbonari"), liberals revolted in Naples in July 1820 protesting the absolute rule of Ferdinand I of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Congress of Laibach (1821) authorized Austria to invade and suppress the rebels. An attempted uprising (1821) in Piedmont was crushed by Austrian forces.

***The Greek Revolt (1821 – 1830).*** The revolution which broke out in Greece in 1821, while primarily a nationalist uprising rather than a liberal revolution, was part of a larger problem known as "The Eastern Question." Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire whose vast territories were gradually being recessed throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries. The weakness of the Ottoman Empire and the political and economic ramifications of this instability for the balance of power in Europe kept the major powers in a nervous state of tension.

Because of conflicting interests, the major powers were unable to respond in any harmonious fashion for several years.

The revolt was a leading political question in Europe throughout the 1820s. Occurring in the Romantic era the revolt touched the sensitivities of romantics in the West. A Greek appeal to Christian Europe did not move Prussia or Austria but did fuse England, France and Russia into a united force which defeated a combined Turco-Egyptian naval force at Navarino Bay (1827). Greek independence was recognized through the Treaty of Adrianople (1829).

Russian intervention on the side of Greek revolutionaries was based on Russian national interest (i.e., any diminution of Ottoman power increased Russian chances of further expansion into the Turkish empire).

Greek nationalism triumphed over the conservative Vienna settlement, and three of the five great powers had aided a movement that violated their agreement of 1815. The self-interests of the great powers demonstrated the growing power of nationalism in the international system.

*The Decembrist Uprising in Russia (1825).* The death of Alexander I on December 1, 1825 resulted in a crisis over the actual succession to the throne and in turn produced the first significant uprising in Russian history. The expected succession of Constantine, older brother of Alexander I who was believed somewhat more liberal than the late czar, did not materialize. Instead, the younger brother Nicholas, no liberal by any measure, prepared to assume the throne which Constantine had actually renounced.

Hoping to block Nicholas' succession, a group of moderately liberal junior military officers staged a demonstration in late December, 1825 in St. Petersburg only to see it quickly dissipated by artillery attacks ordered by Czar Nicholas I.

The Decembrists were the first upper-class opponents of

the autocratic Russian system of government who called attention to the popular grievances among Russian society. The insurrection developed in Nicholas I a pathological dislike for liberal reformers.

A program called "Official Nationality" with the slogan, "Autocracy, Orthodoxy and National Unity," was designed to lead Russia back to its historic roots. Through it Nicholas I became Europe's most reactionary monarch.

Domestically Russia became a police state with censorship and state-sponsored terrorism. There would be no representative assemblies and education was not only limited but university curricula were carefully monitored. A profound alienation of Russian intellectual life ensued.

In foreign affairs the same extreme conservatism was demonstrated. The Polish Revolution of 1830 – 31 was crushed and Russian troops played a key role in stamping out Hungarian nationalism in the Hapsburg Empire during the revolutionary uprisings of 1848 – 49. Russia's traditional desire for expansion in the direction of the Ottoman Empire produced a confrontation between France and Russia over who was entitled to protect Christians and the Holy Places in the Near East. When the Sultan of Turkey awarded France the honor, Nicholas I was prepared to go to war against Turkey to uphold Russia's right to speak for Slavic Christians. The result was the Crimean War (1854 – 56) which Russia would lose. Nicholas I died (1855) during the course of fighting this war.

### **6.2.3 *England Chooses Reform Over Revolution***

The climax of repression in England was the Six Acts of Parliament (1819). Yet even as these laws were enacted younger conservative politicians were questioning the wisdom of their party elders (Wellington, Castlereagh) and calling for modera-

tion. During the 1820s a new group of younger Tories would moderate their party's unbending conservatism.

***Liberal Tory Reform, 1822 – 1824.*** Reform was promoted by George Canning and Robert Peel, in opposition to the reactionary policies of earlier Tory leaders. With the help of liberal Whig politicians enough votes were found to put England on the road to liberal reform.

Canning inaugurated a liberal policy in foreign affairs, including abandonment of the Congress System. Robert Peel reformed prisons and the outdated criminal code as well as establishing an efficient metropolitan police force (“Bobbies”).

Mercantile and navigation acts were liberalized enabling British colonies to trade with nations other than England.

The 1673 Test Act, which was a religious test for barring non-Anglicans from participating in the government, was repealed. The Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) granted full civil rights to Roman Catholics, and was prompted by the election of the Irish leader Daniel J. O’Connell to the British Parliament in defiance of the Test Act.

The momentum for liberal reform would continue into the 1830s as Britain realized that accommodation with the new merchant and financial classes was in the spirit of English history. The acid test of liberal reform, however, would come to focus on the willingness of Parliament to repeal the Corn Laws and reform itself.

### **6.3 REVOLUTIONS II, 1830 – 1833**

The Conservative grip on Europe was challenged very quickly following the turbulence of the 1820s, when revolution broke out in France in 1830. By then, the forces of liberalism

and nationalism had become so strong that they constituted major threats to the security of many governments. In eastern Europe nationalism was the greater danger while in the West, the demands of middle class liberals for various political reforms grew louder.

### **6.3.1 *France: The July Revolution***

The death of King Louis XVIII in 1824 brought his brother Charles, Count of Artois and leader of the Ultra Royalists, to the throne as Charles X and set the stage for a return to the Old Regime or revolution.

Attempting to roll back the revolutionary gains, Charles X alienated the moderate forces on the right as well as the entire left in France. Continued violations of the Charter enabled French voters to register their displeasure in the elections of 1827 by giving the liberals a substantial gain in the Chamber of Deputies.

In 1829, when Charles X appointed a ministry led by the Prince of Polignac, the personification of reactionism in France, liberals considered this a declaration of war. Elections in 1830 produced a stunning victory for the liberals. Charles X responded by decreeing the Four Ordinances, which would have amounted to a royal Coup d'État if not stopped. The spark of revolt was set off by the radicals of Paris, with the workers and students raising barricades in the streets with the intention of establishing a republic. Charles X abdicated and fled France.

The Liberals in the Chamber of Deputies, under the leadership of Adolphe Thiers, preferred a constitutional monarchy without a Bourbon ruler. With the cooperation of Talleyrand and Lafayette, they agreed on Prince Louis Philippe, head of the Orleans family and cousin to Charles X.

France was now controlled by the bourgeoisie of upper-middle class bankers and businessmen. King Louis Philippe was “the Bourgeoisie King” who would tilt the government towards these interests. While the July Monarchy of Louis Philippe was politically more liberal than the restoration government, socially it proved to be quite conservative.

The news of the successful July Revolution in France served as a spark (“When France sneezes, the rest of Europe catches cold”) to revolutionary uprisings throughout Europe.

### **6.3.2 *The Belgian Independence Movement (1830 – 1831)***

Since being merged with Holland in 1815 the upper classes of Belgium never reconciled themselves to rule by a country with a different language, religion and economic life. Inspired by the news of the July Revolution in France, a revolt against Dutch rule broke out in Brussels led by students and industrial workers. The Dutch army was defeated and forced to withdraw from Belgium by the threat of a Franco-British fleet. A national Congress wrote a liberal Belgian Constitution. In 1831 Leopold of Saxe-Coburg (1831 – 1865) became king of the Belgians. In 1839 the Great Powers declared the neutrality of Belgium.

### **6.3.3 *Poland (1830 – 1831)***

The new czar of Russia, Nicholas I (reign 1825 – 1855) had his first opportunity to demonstrate his extreme conservatism in foreign policy when a military insurrection broke out late in 1830 in Warsaw. This nationalist uprising challenged the historic Russian domination of Poland. The Russian garrison was driven out of Poland; the czar was deposed as king of Poland; and the independence of Poland was proclaimed by a revolutionary government.

Nicholas I ordered the Russian army to invade Poland; it

ruthlessly proceeded to crush the nationalist rebellion. Poland became “a land of graves and crosses.” The Organic Statute of 1832 declared Poland to be an integral part of the Russian empire.

#### **6.3.4 *Italy (1831 – 1832)***

Outbreaks of liberal discontent occurred in northern Italy centering on Modena, Parma, and the Papal States. The inspiration for Italian nationalists who spoke of a unification process was (1) Guiseppe Mazzini and his secret revolutionary society called Young Italy; and (2) the Carbonari, the secret nationalist societies which advocated the use of force to achieve national unification. Still too disorganized, the Italian revolutionaries were easily crushed by Austrian troops under Metternich’s enforcement of the Concert of Europe’s philosophy. Still, the Italian Risorgimento (resurgence of the Italian spirit) was well under way.

#### **6.3.5 *Germany (1830 – 1833)***

The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819 had effectively restricted freedom throughout Germany. At the news of France’s July Revolution, German university students and professors led street demonstrations which forced temporary granting of constitutions in several minor states. These expressions of liberal sentiment and nationalistic desires for German unification were easily crushed by Metternich’s domination of the German Confederation (Bund) and his influence over Prussia.

#### **6.3.6 *Great Britain: Reform Continues***

The death of King George IV and the accession of King William IX in 1830 resulted in a general parliamentary election in which the opposition political party, the Whigs, scored major gains with their platform calling for parliamentary reform.

With the Tory party divided, the king asked the leader of the Whig party, Earl Grey (1764 – 1845) to form a government.

Immediately, a major reform bill was introduced designed to increase the number of voters by fifty percent and to eliminate underpopulated electoral districts (“Rotten Boroughs”) and replace them with representatives for the previously unrepresented manufacturing districts and cities.

After a national debate, new elections, and a threat from King William IV to alter the composition of the House of Lords, the Great Reform Bill of 1832 was enacted into law. While the Reform Bill did not resolve all political inequities in British political life it marked a new beginning. Several more notable reforms would begin to redraw the sociological landscape of British life.

## 6.4 EVALUATION

Neither the forces of revolution nor those of reaction were able to maintain the upper hand between 1789 and 1848. Liberalism and nationalism, socialism and democracy were on the march but the forces of conservatism and reaction were still strong enough to contain them. The polarization of Europe was becoming ever so clear: the liberal middle class West, which advocated constitutionalism and industrial progress; and the authoritarian East, which was committed to preserving the status quo. The confrontation would continue until one or the other side would win out decisively.